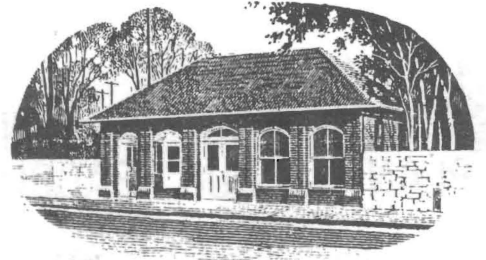


HYDE PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY Newsletter



Volume I, Number 2

April, 1979

Committee Organized to Save Rosenwald House

Whether by accident or a confluence of subliminal forces, the formation of the Hyde Park Historical Society preceded by only a few months a move on the part of the Chicago Landmarks Commission to make Kenwood a Landmark District and the nomination of Hyde Park-Kenwood for recognition by the National Register of Historic Places.

A 'FAMILY' GATHERING

The date was January 27. The place was the Windermere Hotel. The weather was terrible. Yet almost 200 people attended our annual meeting and dinner—and enjoyed it greatly.

In her welcome, President Jean Block said, "Recently there was a wonderful cartoon in the New Yorker depicting the usual lanky couple conversing over martinis. The wife says to the husband, 'I'd like to join the historical society, but I don't know if I want to be that kind of person.'

"If you look around this room, you will see that she wouldn't have that problem here. There isn't a Hyde Park Historical Society 'type.' In our membership we have all ages; renters and home owners; old-timers and newcomers: a cross-section that truly represents the diversity upon which Hyde Park prides itself...."

This is undoubtedly why so many people later praised the "family feeling" of the evening. ...to p. 3

Under these circumstances, the original objectives of the Society—to record Hyde Park's history, to preserve selected documents and artifacts, to promote public interest in Hyde Park and its history, and to educate and involve individuals and groups in an appreciation and understanding of its heritage—take on a new and larger meaning.

One of the "artifacts" we are eager to preserve is the Rosenwald House at 4901 Ellis, now threatened with demolition if neither a single family nor an institutional purchaser can be found. The house, by Nimmons and Fellows, is an important example of Prairie School architecture, a unique element of our Midwestern heritage. Its owner was one of Chicago's great citizens, a gifted businessman and enlightened reformer and philanthropist. Julius Rosenwald contributed generously to the University of Chicago, Jewish philanthropies, Hull House, and many other organizations. The Museum of ... to p. 4



*The State of the Station***VINCI PROVIDES RESTORATION PLAN FOR OUR HEADQUARTERS**

By Devereux Bowly, Jr.

The Hyde Park Historical Society headquarters, 5529 S. Lake Park Ave., was constructed in 1893 or 1894 by the Chicago City Street Railway, once the most extensive cable car system in the country. The building later served the trolley system and in relatively recent memory housed a tiny lunch counter.

Last fall, the well-known preservation architect John Vinci was hired to prepare a set of measured drawings of the building as well as a plan for its restoration. A grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation covered half his fee. His report and drawings are now complete. Here's a summary of the plan:

Because no original plans or early photographs of the building exist (so far as is known) and the interior has been extensively altered, it will be impossible to restore the building exactly as it was built. What will be done, however, is to create an authentic railroad station appearance as of the late 19th century, while at the same time adapting the interior to the uses of our Society.

The building's exterior dimensions are 20 by 40 ft. The chimney, which

has been demolished above the roof line, must be rebuilt. Most of the millwork must be replaced. The tongue and groove paneling on the interior walls and ceiling will be restored or replaced. The office of the Society will be located in what was once the station master's office, at the north end of the building. It will have a pullman kitchen and a renovated washroom.

The rest of the space will be outfitted as a station waiting room. It will have movable wooden benches, which can be supplemented for meetings by folding chairs, a wood-burning stove, ticket window openings, a sales stand, and facilities for display of historical material.

The building cost the Society \$4,000. More than \$10,000 was raised by the sale of Charter memberships. Architect Vinci estimates that the renovation will cost \$50 per square foot, or a total of about \$40,000. This figure assumes that some of the work will be done by Society volunteers. Unfortunately, however, most of the needed work cannot be done by amateurs.

It is hoped that most or all of the \$40,000 can be obtained from Chicago-area foundations or corporations, and a fund drive is in progress under the direction of Board member Clyde Watkins, Director of Development of the University of Chicago. Depending on the success of the fund drive, construction is anticipated for the summer of 1979 or for 1980.

COMING EVENTS

May 6: At the DuSable Museum of Afro-American History, Dina Epstein and Ruth Fouché will speak on "Myths of Black Music."

May 19: A natural history tour of Wooded Island, with Douglas Anderson.

Details later



Have you paid your
1979 dues yet?
Checks for \$5 to: H.P.H.S.,
5748 S. Harper Ave., 60637



"City House" Advice: Think it Through, Do it Well



By Lesley Bloch

Twenty thousand people made their way to Navy Pier on the weekend of Feb. 16-18 for "City House", the exhibit sponsored by the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Passing up the popcorn and the hotdogs for gathering free brochures from many of the 99 exhibitors, I spent 2 1/2 hours listening, watching and walking. Looking over the contents of my free "Make Chicago Great" shopping bag, I found information on shutter dealers, salvage companies, subscription forms for Old House Journal and the Time-Life Handyman series, information on security in the home, near the home, in the car and for the senior citizen as well as passouts from the neighborhoods of the Highlands, Kenwood, Wicker Park, Pullman, etc. With a list of all the exhibitors and their phone numbers I now have a ready source for any household improvement or problem.

Lectures were scheduled throughout the weekend. Among those I attended was Harry Hunderman's "Restoring the Historic Details of Your Home's Exterior." He says that you should THINK before you ruin your house by tearing down, replacing, repositioning or restoring badly. He showed slides of interesting houses which had become less so by the addition of aluminum siding, plastic awnings, glass bricks, etc.

To reinforce the impact of this lecture there was a display of page enlargements from an upcoming book, City House Guide, which tells the correct way to make many home improvements on older buildings. (Call Commission on Landmarks, 744-3200, for price and publication date.)

With new thoughts on restoring our front door to its original handsomeness and getting rid of the storm door, I took my enthusiasm home to our city house.

ANNUAL MEETING.... from p. 1

In addition to Irma Strauss's slide show, the President's Report, and the presentation of the first annual Paul Cornell awards, Devereux Bowly brought us up to date on restoration plans for our headquarters. (His report appears on p. 2.)

The songs and skits which followed dinner were, as Ned Rosenheim said, "a reminder of the local tradition of amateur theatricals, those labors of love by writers, producers, directors and performers who make their livings in every possible colorful Hyde Park way except the professional theater."

The songs "Oscar" and "Abe" came respectively from the 1963 Harper Court benefit and the 1958 Revels. The song "In Old Hyde Park" and two monologues--"A Voice from the Past" and "Are You There?"--were written for this occasion. Performers were Helen and Roland Bailey, Pat Billingsley, Mary Schulman, Stephen Thomas and Impresario Rosenheim.

This newsletter is published quarterly. Editor, Muriel Beadle. Typing, Corinne Seither. Graphics, Michael Conzen.

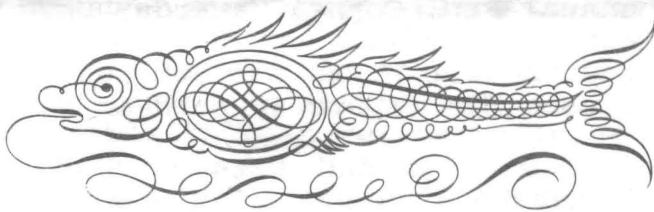
P.S. It would be a worthy HPHS project to collect memorabilia of the amateur theatricals that have flourished here. Anyone interested?

60615
 Chicago, Ill.
 4811 S. Kimbark
 Mrs. & Mrs. John W. Bennett

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Chicago, IL
 Permit No. 85

Hyde Park Historical Society
 & 5748 So. Harper Avenue
 Chicago, IL 60637

HP
 HS



J. DARTER HAPPY HERE

By Malcolm Collier

How many kinds of fish are there in the Jackson Park lagoons? Ask David Gordon, who spoke Feb. 22 at the Blackstone Branch Library on the ecology of the lagoons during the past century. Gordon is on a work-study program at the Field Museum, is a research assistant at the Shedd Aquarium and a student of the lagoon fish population and bottom sediments.

He said there are now about 15 species of fish in the lagoons. Among them are the tiny Johnny Darter and the yellow perch, whose presence indicates that these waters are reasonably healthy despite the loss of two feet of depth during the past decade and other hazards.

ROSENWALD.... from p. 1

Science and Industry is a constant reminder of his dedication to the city and its people. He espoused the cause of black education long before others became aware of this need.

The loss of this house would greatly reduce the aesthetic and historic value of the neighborhood. A group of concerned residents is working to prevent this from happening. You can join them by contacting Victoria Post Ranney, 4919 Woodlawn Ave., 548-0017.

From Hyde Park Herald,
 May 1, 1866

FOUND: A COW

Inquire Thos. Hunt, Kimbark
 Ave. and 55th.