

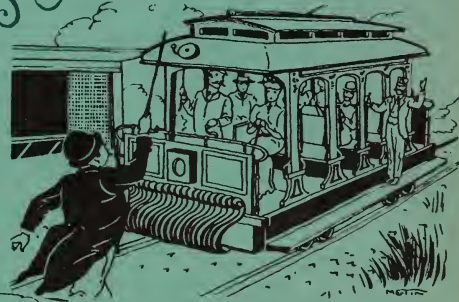


WILMETTE


and the

SUBURBAN WHIRL

HERBERT B. MULFORD



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WILMETTE AND THE SUBURBAN WHIRL

A sequel to "Frontiers of Old Wilmette"

A series of historical sketches of life in the suburb
from the turn of the century

By HERBERT B. MULFORD

Illustrations by MARY MARTIN ENGEL

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Dedicated to

The Third and Fourth Generations

*of those who made Wilmette a place for pleasant living,
in the hope that they will carry on.*

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Traditional Wilmette Civic Center around Village hall, bank railway station and east-side stores and offices.



New Commercial Center for Western Wilmette around Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co. shopping area.

THE GREAT TRANSITION

These two contrasting pictures indicate the sweeping changes taking place in Wilmette through the universal suburban whirl.

FOREWORD

Publication of these historical sketches of Wilmette since the turn of the century has been possible through the fine cooperation of the Wilmette Public Library, Wilmette Life, which published them serially, and civically inspired donors of financial support for the work.

I am deeply indebted for the assistance and counsel of Miss Helen Siniff, librarian, Messrs E. W. Weber and Frederick Favor, editors, and Paul Fiorio, planner, of Lloyd Hollister, Inc., publishers of the little volume and to Mrs. Mary Martin Engel for many illustrations.

Wilmette, November, 1956

HERBERT B. MULFORD

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OUR TOWN — AN INTRODUCTION



Communities, like people, often develop characteristics by which they are quickly identified. Sometimes historical or other significant landmarks set them apart. Sometimes it may be strikingly different architecture. Again it may be typically regional markings that prompt observers to classify them as "Yankee", "New England," "Deep South" or "Middle-western". Still others may be singled out dramatically as industrial or commercial or "melting-pot" in character.

Very likely few of the pioneers who drove an ox-plow around a hollow square to mark the new courthouse precincts of our first hamlets cogitated over just what sort of town would eventually spring from their early efforts.

Across Grosse Pointe headland along the old Green Bay Trail we can record half a dozen lake-shore log-cabins which were the seeds of future Wilmette. Starting from the south were those of Stephen Scott, the early school at Canterbury Court, the Joel Stebbins Tavern at Linden Avenue and Sheridan Road, the Ouilmette family homestead some hundreds of feet east of our present waterworks and now lost in the lake, Lombard Dusham's place near Elmwood and Michigan Avenues, the Beaubien-Dennis cabin east of Sheridan Road near Chestnut Avenue, and, further north, outside our precincts, the Doyle cabin where Elizabeth Ouilmette married Michael Welch in 1830.

These pioneers were probably simple seeking land and shelter for their families as they aided in opening up the Great West to civilization. In their minds there was probably little thought of populous settlement. In the log-cabin era of the neighborhood from about 1825 to 1845, probably few envisioned "greater" Wilmette of a century later, nor did they attempt a sociological study of Suburbia.

As told in "Frontiers of Old Wilmette", the tangible change came with railway transportation and the inspiration of the first group of real estate subdividers and village founders, including John G. Westerveld, Henry A. Dingee, Alexander McDaniel, Simon V. Kline, and Henry W. Blodgett. The die was being cast in 1869, when their first map was drawn for subdividing sections of the old Ouilmette Reservation under the unique name of Wilmette. The break-up of the Reservation had begun in 1835, when the Ouilmettes sold half their property to become eventually North Evanston.

By 1872, these pioneers had learned that county and township self-government was not close enough to the needs of the people to meet their rising requirements for water, sewers, fire and police protection and good roads. They established village government. Already church and school needs were being modestly met as the population of 300 began to be augmented by a tiny trickle of people dispossessed as a result of the great Chicago fire of 1871. Wilmette began to recognize itself as destined to be suburban, tied to the future of the rapidly growing metropolis. The 1870s marked municipal zeal, both in Wilmette and in the German farming village of Gross Point to the west. Progress took over.

Wilmette was not a ready-made

village. It was not bound up to any great commercial or industrial enterprise. It had no focal point like Northwestern University to direct its destinies. If one dare say that any municipal development is normal or typical, Wilmette grew as hundreds of other communities grew, in what we loosely call "the American way". Home-building, family, church and school ties, sociable, neighborly living and sharing in a small but effective "melting-pot" experience,—all these and their related influences and interests made for eventual civic consciousness of the first order.

Edna Ferber once called Wilmette "middle class". A well known Chicago society editor once advised young married couples to migrate to any of the North Shore suburbs for gracious living, except "con-

tract built" Wilmette. A North Western Railway conductor once remarked to a negligent commuter that, since he came from Wilmette, he had better not forget his commutation ticket. Yet the village lived down all these implied aspersions to become a cynosure of Suburbia.

In successive chapters an effort will be made to sketch post-frontier aspects of life in Wilmette in establishing this community of suburban homes and in meeting the unpredictable changes brought about by the perilous times in which we live. For, notwithstanding the stupendous significance of our almost baffling problems of modern self-government, it is a truism that we must continue to live if we are to aid in solving the issues.



HISTORIC TRAIL

Through these trees in Gillson Park once wound the Green Bay Road.

MAKING OF A SUBURBANITE

When Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple, just before the turn of the century, decided to go suburban and to pick a domicile in one of the little communities on the fringe of Chicago, they were not inventing anything. This way of life is common near any large municipality and has been since the beginning of recorded history.

It was largely a matter of how much living space the Young Couples wished to occupy and could pay for.

The neighborhood names still common on the North, South and West Sides of Chicago reflect the manner in which earlier housing shortages brought the Young Couples and real estate subdividers together. Lake View, Rogers Park, Ravenswood, Edgewater Beach, Austin and the "largest village in the world", old-time Hyde Park, Englewood and numerous others stood for a time to attract attention and then sank almost into anonymity in greater Chicago.

The Young Couples faced numerous conditions that prompted their rising interest. There was the lure of the more open countryside, the desire to escape encroaching congestion, the firm intention to bring up their children in the best possible surroundings away from physical contact with vice and crime, and their own personal attitude toward community life as social living. There were the additional factors of real estate opportunities and the universal urge to own their own home. Probably there was present a factor that might be called "hunch".

Against these the Young Couples possibly measured the difficulties of commuting, the time needed for Husband to go to business and return, and the problems of trains

when the Young Couples wished to go to the theater, opera, ball game or other places of Chicago culture or recreation. And always there was the question of how much it would cost to be a suburbanite and the kindred problems of getting acquainted and finding congenial soil for their disturbed rootings.

While Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple may not have attained affluence, there was always the consideration of whether Husband was well enough employed so that obligations of suburban life, as compared with flat-dwelling, did not present a problem of what we now call social security. Normally it seemed that the question of a modest nest-egg entered into the making of the suburbanite.

It might be social treason today to imply that economic pursuits of Mrs. Young Couple at that time rarely entered into consideration. Woman's suffrage was operative in school elections, but otherwise Wife did not have to give much thought to her franchise or to employment outside the household. Mrs. Young Couple in most cases was "protected", even though hard-working in the home.

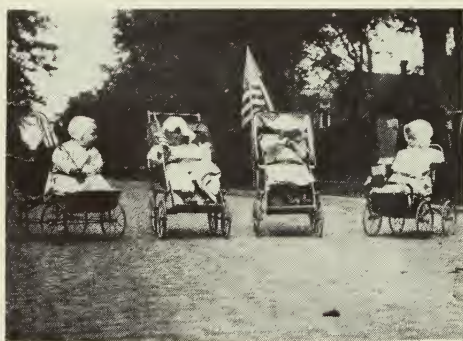
But always there was a composite of suburban life which contrasted sharply with that in a self-contained community down-state. For Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple there were dual aspects of life, dual loyalties and dual responsibilities. They were to be both of the City and of the Suburb. In most cases their livelihood came from gainful employment in the City, but their social, political and religious life pertained to the Suburb. They would be asked for charity support by identical organizations in both places. They would be expected to contribute effort in both places. And as they would gain in stature they would be criticized

for having deserted many interests of the City, although again and again they might make great contributions to both communities. Eventually they would become a type. Often they would be carica-

tured in the cartoons of the day which would picture them as constantly catching or missing trains, loaded down with bundles which they often lost enroute around the suburban whirl.



EARLY MEMORIAL DAY PARADE



*Going to the Baby Show
at the Country Club*

II WHERE SHALL WE LIVE?

A prime influence in suburban life is suburban transportation. In the wide Chicago area, early trails of Indians, explorers and missionaries, the later "traces", the plank-roads and finally steam railway and interurban street railway services spread out like a fan from the lake front.

Along these thoroughfares villages and towns sprang up as Chicago attracted people for business, who in turn wished suburban rather than congested living conditions. At the turn of the century, Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple confronted the choice of nearby semi-suburban living space in areas which undoubtedly would later be absorbed politically into Chicago, or of making the change, once for all, sufficiently at a distance to seem to be immune from annexations, at least during their life time. Many people guessed wrong.

Nearby transportation could be had both by street cars and by the several Elevated railroad lines. Further distant were the villages along such lines as the Illinois Central, the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern, the Chicago and Eastern Illinois, the Rock Island, the Burlington, the western reaches of the Chicago and North Western, the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul and again the northern reaches of the last two named. Interurban systems were about to develop by means of the South Shore, the Aurora and Elgin and the Chicago, North Shore, and Milwaukee. In this epoch, although the automobile would soon come into its own, reliance upon it for Husband's transportation into business was not a consideration in choosing the place of permanent abode.

Thus Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple began a new experience in house-hunting quite different from their previous conflicts over flat-hunting.

This pursuit entailed visiting friends who had already cast their lot in a particular community. Time-tables were almost as essential a piece of promotion literature as the flamboyant subdivision maps of the day. If the search was to be thorough, it meant traveling on some of the lines and a first-hand inspection of numerous villages, which included inquiries of numerous kinds regarding actual living conditions in the specific suburbs.

Then there arose the question as to whether it was wise to buy or to build before having tried living in the chosen community for a few years. Although foreclosed mortgages and tax foreclosures over many years testify to possibly inadequate inquiries and brash assumptions, the steady increase in suburban population indicated that the majority seemed to know what they were doing.

When Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple began to experiment along the North Shore, they found considerable contrast between the villages in respect to costs, modes of life and outlook. For the most part other young people had bought homes; therefore there was little property for rent. If preliminary life in a rented house was a requisite for Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple, that fact might be a determining influence in choice. If a suitable place could be found in one village instead of another, the moving plans would be changed. In Wilmette of that epoch there was little rental property. Inquiry usually revealed that residents owned their homes, even though equities were often overshadowed by one, two or even three mortgages. If the new suburbanites succeeded in renting, there was always the plan to build. Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple joined the numerous band of other home-seekers on Saturday after-

noons or Sundays and plodded future streets to explore the heavily wooded vacant acres in the search that was to be almost a vocation until their wants were filled. The profusely illustrated real estate pamphlets of the day are now very useful source materials for historical

purposes. At times, as adjustments were being made to fit events into business, home, school, church and social life, the suburban whirl took on aspects of a three-ring circus. But always there was the serious conviction and attitude that suburban life was worth the effort.

WILMETTE

THE ELM FOREST OF THE NORTH.

The Most Beautiful Suburb of Chicago, Situated on the North Shore and the Sheridan Road.

ELEGANT HOMES ON EASY MONTHLY PAYMENT

BEAUTIFUL GROVE LOTS \$250

AND UPWARD. ONLY \$5.00 CASH AND \$5.00 PER MONTH.



A VIEW ON OUR SUBDIVISION.

Have you ever stopped to reflect that every dollar paid to us in Monthly Payments toward a home is so much **SAVED?**

The money you are paying to your landlord **IS GONE.**

The money paid to us is **BUYING YOU A HOME**, which you will own in a few years' will then be worth **DOUBLE WHAT IT IS NOW.**

All lots covered with Beautiful Forest Trees, are 171 feet deep; with building restrictions such as will warrant a fine class of improvements.

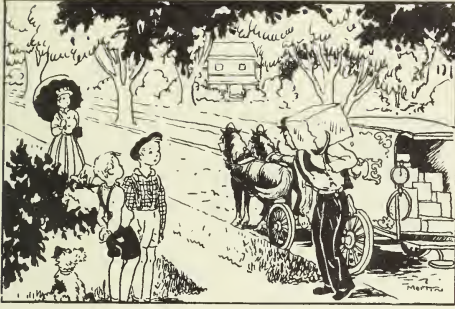
WE HAVE ONLY A FEW LOTS LEFT

In this, our fourth, subdivision. **BUY NOW, BEFORE PRICES ARE ADVANCED.** All **NORTH SHORE DEALERS HAVE ADVANCED THEIR PRICES EXCEPT US.** Wilmette has a population of about 1,600 people, and is situated on the Lake Shore immediately adjoining the aristocratic suburb of Evanston, with its fine schools and churches, and is only minutes' ride from Wells-st. Depot, and has 42 trains a day on the C. & N. W. Ry. Let us sell you this property before you make your purchases in any of the prairie suburbs. **TO SURE MEANS TO BUY.**

Call at our office for **FREE TICKETS** for following Trains: Week days—11 a. m., 1 p. m., 2:20 p. m. Office open Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 10:30. Call and get tickets for our 11 o'clock train.

E. T. PAUL & CO., Main Floor, 116 LaSalle Street.

III MOVING DAY



Having been successful in finding a house to rent in Wilmette, it became necessary for Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple to get moved. Husband was quite seasoned to this ordeal. When he had been brought as a lad to Chicago's South Side, his family pursued a course of steady improvement in living quarters as economic conditions permitted. From walk-up cold-water flat to eight-room house had taken four moves. What with the family being alternately increased and diminished by marriage and removals of members to other areas there had been eight more moves before his own wedding had put the couple on their own responsibilities. Now came the most heroic of all moves.

In those days there were no fast trucking services. Both time and cost had to be calculated. The upshot was that a horse-dray carted their modest household equipment to a South Side freight yard. The goods were tied and cleated into position through aid of a relation who had many dealings with the railroads. Then began a wait.

Railways were not particularly eager to haul household goods. It seems that such individual shippers did not have a good credit rating. Day after day, for more than a week, inquiry at the North Western Railway station elicited no news of the freight car. Then the relation broke in on railway headquarters and de-

manded an instant check on the routing of that car. Very promptly word came back that the aforesaid rolling stock was out in the Kedzie Yards, being shunted hither and yon day after day because freight charges had not been prepaid. That knot was promptly cut by the relation guaranteeing the charges.

What a sight met Husband's eyes when the car door was opened! The lid was off the upright piano and a bicycle was nestled among the piano-strings. One chair was broken in seven or eight pieces. A bag of flour had been punctured. In close proximity a jug of molasses had been broken. Flour and molasses in mixture were splattered copiously on rugs and furniture. It began to look as if suburban life had its penalties.

But observe the suburban compensations hard upon the heels of adversities. First was an uncommon landlord. The house, which his family had only recently vacated for a larger one, had been cleaned from top to bottom. The newly varnished floors were protected by newspapers. Since it was still chilly weather, the fire was laid in the furnace. Coal was in the bin.

Wilmette in its frontier days was known locally for its intimate neighborliness. Mother, grandmother, aunt or cousin was always prompt to see that the newcomer's larder was increased from her own bakings. Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple were quite taken aback to hear from milkman, grocer and butcher that the landlord had all but guaranteed their accounts about to be opened. This graciousness from a total stranger spoke well for the community.

It chanced that some of the furniture stayed out on the front porch the greater part of the day. Children of the neighborhood naturally

were curious. Some of them asked naively, "What's your name? Do you live here now?" But it was the father of one of these youngsters who capped the climax of events. He thought he knew Mr. Young Couple from boyhood days on the South Side. They had been in the same groups years earlier.

For the newcomers, strangers in a strange land, this was like a lease on life. It topped off the day but not the string of circumstances that

followed the renewed friendship. Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple had lived for four years in a flat building of 21 apartments and had barely become acquainted with four other couples. Within six months of moving to their chosen suburb they were taken into several groups and could rate friends with scores of interesting neighbors. Suburban compensations could now be chalked up on the scoreboard far to overbalance the initial, and by no means typical, inconveniences of moving day.



FIRST BLACKSMITH SHOP
Painting by Eugenia Reid Balmes

IV KNOWING THE NEW HOME TOWN

As we try to observe the motives and manners of many Mr. and Mrs. Young Couples bent upon going suburban in Wilmette, enduring historical perspective calls for two records: (1) What did the Young Couples find positively and negatively in this budding suburb? (2) What did they bring to it? There are many facets to the answers of both questions.

Wilmette presented a wonderful landscape, near a wonderful body of fresh water, many real estate opportunities, and a pleasant community of neighbors, most of whom commuted to the city. But the village was going through a great transition. The story of precisely what changes took place in what decade before the newcomers arrived depends upon the age and date of arrival of the teller of the story. But from the date of the incorporation, in 1872, of the tiny hamlet, already some 40 years old, to the modernizing which took place almost at the turn of the century, the suburban changes were essentially for the sake of convenience based upon pretty old patterns.

Two very tangible records are the surveys of both Wilmette and Gross Point made by Charles P. Westerveld, son of the earlier surveyor and founder. The contrast between the two was that Wilmette was a rapidly growing village of homes, whereas Gross Point, though incorporated, continued to show the rural influence of adjacent farms and truck gardens.

"Profiles of Wilmette" of 1884 disclosed surface drainage and curbside ditches with an occasional "big ditch". One of these traveled down Wilmette Avenue to help to establish that Indian trail into the confusing diagonal highway. The plats also showed a jumble of street names. To give the names significant system took changes of more than 40 of them and years of work of the Village Council.

This survey only hinted at the absence of effective local sanitation, village planning, zoning and water supply, and the struggling church and school accommodations. For pretty much of this transition period villagers had to dig their own wells.



EARLY VILLAGE HALL

Following old Library Hall, the first formal Village Hall was erected on the triangle now occupied by the latest Hall.

When these went dry they carted water from springs up on Ridge Road. Cisterns and rain-barrels caught rain off the houses. Toilet facilities of ancient design were to be had only in out-houses on the back of the family lot. Even after a sewer system was installed and a village law abolished the rights to these privies, debate was hot in the council because some die-hards did not wish to be pushed around by such health regulations.

The village was laid out upon the use of horse and buggy and did not envision the automobile. There was no effort at railway grade separation. The introduction of the newcomers to the village scene via the railway was marred by a huddle of make-shift stores, mostly on West Railroad Avenue (Green Bay Road). The railway station was on the other side of the tracks; now it serves as the freight house.

Needs were many. There were perennial efforts at town meetings. Local newspapers appeared from time to time and died. Evanston tried to annex Wilmette but sufficed with supplying the village with water for many years. "Coal oil" for both homes and street lighting gave way to gas. For many years wooden sidewalks sufficed, often on only one side of the street. A fire station was to be built on the eastern edge of the present post office grounds; for years it would serve a volunteer brigade. Police protection was hardly visible.

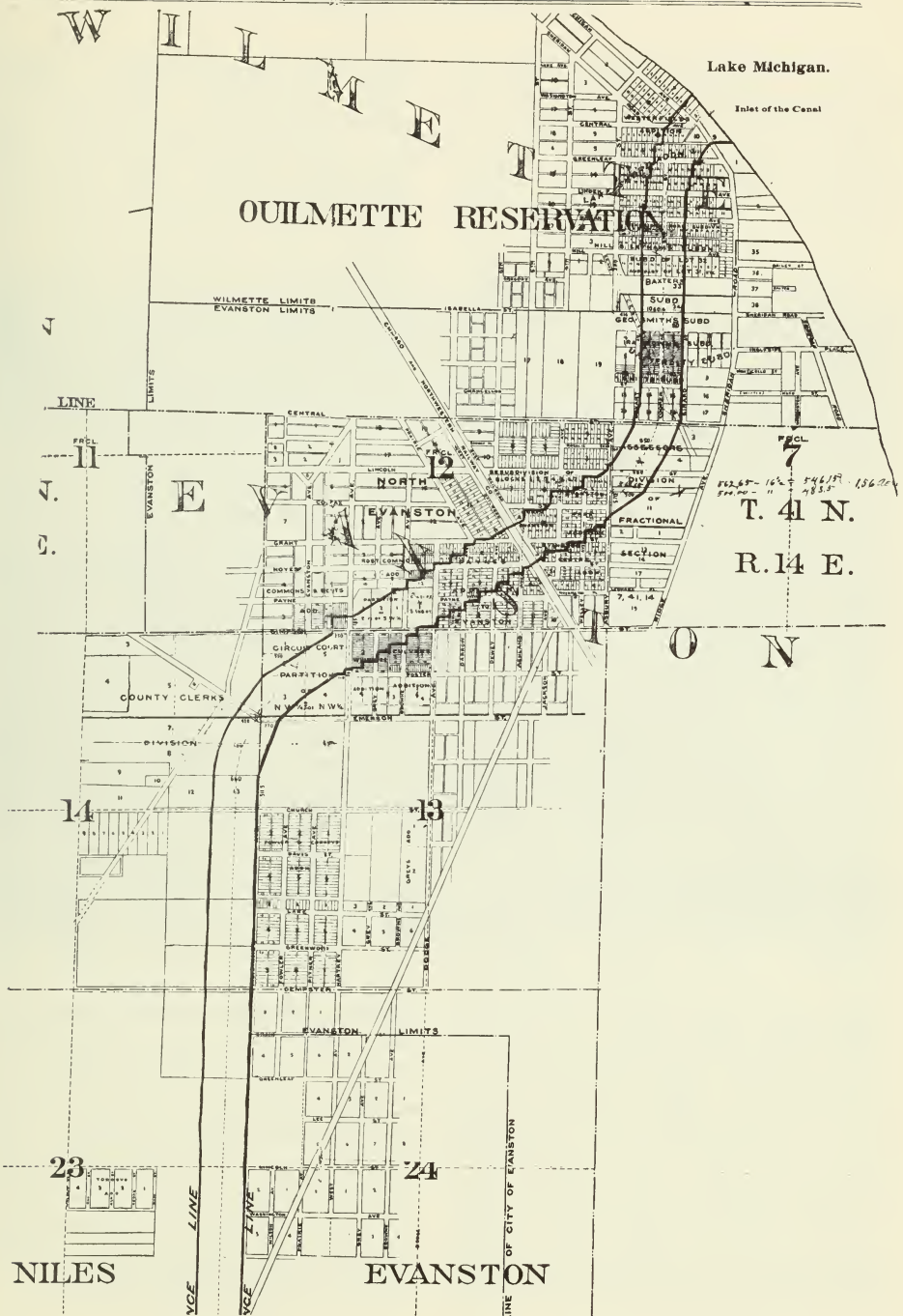
When the old frame school house was supplanted in 1892 by a new brick Central School, it forecast further progress. Now A. E. Logie and Miss Katherine Joy (Mrs. David Colbert of Evanston) would supply two years of high school to local youngsters, who in turn would finish at Evanston.

The Village Council, after years of meeting in old Library Hall at Cen-

tral and Wilmette Avenues, would build the first formal Village Hall at the present site. When that was outgrown it would be moved to become a remodeled residence at 625 Park Avenue. Library Hall would also serve for dances and dancing classes, the incipient Public Library and numerous types of village gatherings.

The first active local Protestant religious cooperative movement had begun to break up some years earlier. It had been composed of Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Protestant Episcopal denominations. The Congregationalists had separated in 1875 and built their first wooden meeting house some years later. The first cornerstone for St. Augustine's Episcopal Church was laid in 1898. As the wooden sheathing of that building arose, a carpenter was to scrawl upon it the legend that on that day the United States went to war with Spain over the Cuban question and the sinking of the Battleship Maine. Young men like David Colbert were to write back to the local paper telling of the Cuban campaign.

Entertainment was limited. The country club was sprouting its wings. A nine-hole golf course was to hug the lake shore. Numerous small groups organized to play cards and dance and to give gracious dinner parties. As Evanston felt the influence of Northwestern University, organized music, lectures and other cultural opportunities became available. The Wilmette Woman's Club building and the Carnegie Free Public Library would soon be under way. Now and then there was a scurry of interest when Fountain Square in Evanston was made the terminus of one of the great Chicago bicycle road races. By and large, social affairs centered around church and country club.



PLANNING THE DRAINAGE CANAL

Hoyt King, active Wilmette and Chicago civic leader, handled the real estate transactions for acquiring the canal right-of-way. The route followed that of the old "Big Ditch", which for more than fifty years drained North Shore farm lands.

V MIDDLE CLASS

One is forced to go back to the previous quotation of Edna Ferber, that Wilmette rated "middle class," in order to point up a fact that Young Couples might be slow in understanding. If the salty pioneers who broke the sod had given way to "middle class", it was due in part possibly to another fact. Evanston was long known as the "classical suburb." Northwestern University had been operating nearly 50 years and had turned out many North Shore graduates. Yet Culture in this epoch in Wilmette was more potential than real. The Young Couples were to sense this. They perforce asked themselves what they could or should contribute in the circumstances. What did they bring to the community?

The sobriquet "The Gay Nineties" utterly belies the Chicago of the epoch from which the Young Couples migrated for social living. Never before in the Middle West had popular education been so stimulated as by the marvels of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. About its vacated Midway Plaisance reactivated University of Chicago was rising to become one of the educational wonders of the world. Theodore Thomas was organizing and popularizing symphonic music in the new Auditorium. Opera from New York was a joy for a short season in the same theater; with his chums Young Couple had "suped" in many an opera. Legitimate drama trod the boards of many fine play-houses. The Art Institute and Armour Institute were born. Bands played good music in all the city parks. John Phillip Sousa was the fad. A Chicago

school of novelists began to attract national attention. There were so many newspapers in Chicago that the neighboring quarters were called "Newspaper Row." They were fostering the first columnists and cartoonists. The job of foreign correspondent was created. The Associated Press was coming into flower from careful nurture in this same "Newspaper Row." All this developed an overtone which almost put in the shadow Chicago's reputation as the railroad center and industrial giant of America.

To be blunt, a relatively small number of Young Couples were college trained. Nonetheless, the cultural overtones of the metropolis had produced a positive effect. The latent possibilities for cultural advancement became increasingly apparent to the newcomers. They were to contribute an insight and a determination to produce an environment second to none. This was not snobbish but practical. The growth might be slow. But as one of the steering group which planned the establishment of New Trier Township High School, put it, "If the school board has on it enough college trained citizens, we shall create a great institution." This vision was borne out (1899), even if one addition was early to be ridiculed for its "tremendous" size as "Louis Gillson's Folly."

The conjunction of many Young Couples and their advancing ideas and the wonderful setting of the frontier village on Green Bay Trail of the Ouilmette Reservation presented an accepted challenge for all concerned. Wilmette marched on!



YE OLDE TOWNE FOLKES

This is how local society of 1916 recalled the origins of the village at a banquet and story-telling fete in Brown's Hall on Wilmette Avenue. In the group are numerous leading men and women from whom many of these sketches were gathered. The rules of this organization provide that members must have resided in Wilmette 25 years or more. The society of Ye Olde Towne has passed on to the third generation of those who saw the incorporation of the little hamlet.

VI

THE 8:08 AND THE 5:15



Sooner or later everybody in Wilmette, and in the Village of Gross Point, too, for that matter, passed through the North Western Railway station. That was before the Elevated pre-empted a right-of-way across Laurel Avenue, and the North Shore and Milwaukee started its hectic career from Evanston northward through the shoreline villages.

True, the St. Paul station at Maple Avenue and Third Street, named Llewellyn Park, was a meeting place for the suburbanites of the southeastern edge of Wilmette. But at the base of the triangle made by West Railroad, Central and Wilmette Avenues, "the station" was the newest spot in town.

Mr. Young Couple soon realized that here and on the 8:08 to the City and the 5:15 returning home, one should grasp opportunities if one was to get acquainted and become oriented to suburban life.

"There are three kinds of us people here," volunteered one of the more sophisticated neighbors. "You are a worker, a clerker, or a shirker, according to the train you take." And this in a degree reflected the activities of the early rising craftsmen, of whom there were not many, the white-collared juniors who might be on their way to executive positions, and the still more substantial men who seemed to have arrived.

In the station the Chicago newspapers were for sale. From time to

time advertising placards told of events of some local interest. There was a constant chatter of gossip by the commuters. In years to come this often would be political, for one station agent of nearly 50 years tenure, Earl E. Orner was to be village clerk for some 25 years and also serve as village president. All local news worth knowing passed through the wicket or side-door of his office.

But it was on the trains that acquaintances were made and often cemented. Rarely did a suburbanite sit alone on his daily trips. Rarely did he walk alone from the Kinzie Street station to the Loop. On every side were companionable men. Not so often in morning hours were there women in those days. On the trains there often were informal meetings of members of various boards of municipal government, who could not get all their business ironed out at the formal meetings. Much more often, especially in the "smoking car", were continuous-performance games of cards.

Possibly most important of the events on the trains was the stimulus of the newspaper reading habit. Although Mrs. Young Couple normally had the advantage of the papers Husband brought home, the habit formed on the suburban runs became so deeply ingrained with him that it not only became a necessity but a powerful educator.

Of course, there were numerous minor adventures en route. One soon learned that it was possible to lose things from the hat-rack overhead. Flowers for Wife's anniversary, a leg of lamb bought at advantage near the Wells Street bridge, when the terminal was at Kinzie Street, certain haberdashery not procurable in the home town,—these and many other valuable impedimenta were often lost. So Mr. Young Couple

schooled himself to put his hat in the rack alongside other valuables, knowing that he would not leave the train bare-headed and empty-handed. Shot through the many experiences were the drolleries of "getting bridged."

From the more distant ends of the village occasionally a horse-drawn cab might convey the more opulent

to the station. For the most part the commuters footed it and enjoyed the possible mile at each end of the city journey. The cab became more important as the suburbanites went to visit relations elsewhere in the metropolitan area or caught precisely ordered specials for theater or opera. When the event was for the family, it usually ended with "Daddy, carry Baby."



CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY STATION



C. & N.W. RY. STATION



ONCE A RAILWAY STATION
now North Western Freight house

VII

SUBURBAN PATTERNS

From the turn of the century to the on-set of World War I, suburban life in Wilmette was more concerned with local than with national or international affairs. Serious as they might be for individuals and for later national government, the Spanish-American War, the freeing of Cuba, its Platt Amendment and yellow fever plague, the acquisition of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Panama Canal and the protection for the Gulf of Mexico, seemed almost mere episodes. The acquisition of the Philippine Islands, their long suzerainty, the annexation of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) and the political challenge of "American Imperialism" and "benevolent assimilation" of brown-skinned peoples were subjects for academic discussions or for political maneuvers more than for keen analysis and civic commitment. Local affairs were a constant preoccupation.

Historical hind-sight now shows us the somewhat rule-of-thumb decisions by which bevies of Young Couples, unconsciously in many cases, were taking steps to solve current local issues, which in fact were setting patterns for suburban life for years to come. There were over-riding attitudes which cropped up whenever an issue impinged on certain preconceptions of this type of life that was the goal of the Young Couples. Scores of minor issues were allowed to jog along, to be set in grooves by some "leader". But let the question of "flat buildings", racial intrusions, "political control" of the public schools or even beach regulations touch too closely upon imagined "individual rights" and issues were joined in such fashion as to spill blood in small-time political rows.

Repeatedly there were efforts at organizing for civic purposes. Sometimes this went only to the degree

of establishing a committee for a given street, which would collect a few dollars to mow overgrown grass and weeds and plant or trim a few trees in default of such action by the Village Council or subdividers. Sometimes it took the more comprehensive form of the Men's Club, a new Civic Association, or special inquiry commissions from the newly developing Woman's Club, parent groups or an occasional church group.

Underlying many of these transitory action groups, which were often groping to find the way to right action, there were several strong influences. One need not call them pressure groups to bring up invidious comparisons with similar pressures of the great metropolis. These influences, nevertheless, existed and they, in part, determined the flow of Young Couples from the city to Wilmette.

When Northwestern University was chartered by the State of Illinois, the sale of intoxicating liquors was banned by the state within four miles of the then Evanston campus. This line ran up to the separating Ridge Road between Wilmette and the Village of Gross Point. The result was a line of saloons along the west side of that street which made the German village "notorious" in the Chicago press for years. "Rowdyism, violence and frequent challenges for disrepute persisted" until the two villages were merged in 1924. But after the repeal of the Volstead Act, prohibition through local option became a basic issue again until settled by plebiscite of the whole Township of New Trier.

Of an entirely different type was the constant influence of real estate owners, both individual and subdividers. Constant was the rising influence of the increasing number of churches and their advocacy of

action tending toward morality. Educational influence was enhanced by the establishment of New Trier Township High School (1899), by the proximity of Northwestern University and the reputation of "Classical Evanston", and by the steadily increasing influx of new college people from the growing generation. The newspaper reading habit was having a beneficial effect.

During the period before World War I one may with some justification draw a parallel with Chicago experiences of the 1890's. Wilmette saw the development of the North Shore and Milwaukee Electric with its feeder pleasure-grounds of Ravinia Park, the switch over from the St. Paul railway, the extension

of the Elevated Railway system, the good roads campaigns as the result of the arrival of the automobile. The "Big Ditch" gave way to the North Channel of the Drainage Canal that reversed the flow of the historic Chicago River. Dissemination of local news passed through numerous experimental stages.

Each of these influences in a measure set patterns for themselves. In turn they tended to persist for many years. Each of these patterns calls for a record of its own formation before going on to some of the great basic changes which, in later years, were to play upon suburban life as seen through Wilmette.



*Whistling to the Birds
fountain in the outdoor
reading garden of the
Public Library*

VIII LITTLE MELTING-POT

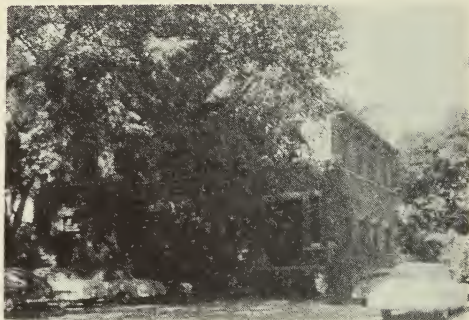
Closely entwined with the physical and business factors in the development of the suburb were several spiritual and intellectual influences which might be termed those of a tiny melting-pot. One of these was the very practical problem of the use of the mother tongue. Another was the difference in ideas of religious faith and worship. A third was the difference in customs concerning the contrasting uses of public and church-related schools.

In the earliest frontier days there was a period when European politics might have put the North Shore in the French tradition, like Quebec of today. That was overcome first by British and then by Yankee customs; but this was in the area nearest the lake. In the neighborhood west of the old Ouilmette Reservation the influence was almost wholly German.

To the east there was the prompt acceptance of American concepts of tax-supported, state-controlled public schools actually run by local citizen boards of education. Moreover, the religious leanings were essentially Protestant Christian.

To the west, centering on St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, the mother tongue was German and the expression of faith was Roman Catholic. This entailed as a matter of course the use of parochial instead of public schools wherever possible.

For several generations German dominated in spots in an otherwise English-speaking suburban area. This extended into the Lutheran families. Thus St. John's Lutheran Church used German for some time. Indeed, in both Roman Catholic and Lutheran circles it was the need for churches in English that forced both these early churches to turn to English. Moreover, the English influence largely determined the establishment of St. Francis Xavier Cath-



OLD GROSS POINT VILLAGE HALL

olic Church and the Wilmette Evangelical Lutheran Church, both to be erected on the east side of old Wilmette.

Meanwhile, the Yankee Protestant influence had been felt from the earliest days on old Grosse Pointe at the log-cabin school house at present Sheridan Road and Canterbury Court, later replaced by the frame school, which in turn was also the North Ridge Meeting House. As civic leaders were getting ready to incorporate Wilmette, they organized the Wilmette Evangelical Association of five Protestant denominations, and Luther L. Greenleaf gave them the land under the present Methodist Church. About the same time the Henry A. Dingees gave the land at Central and Tenth street for a public school.

Here we see two distinct types of



OLD GROSS POINT SCHOOL
Now used as Legion Post headquarters

life in an American setting. In time German was largely eliminated. Public schools were developed in both the Gross Point and the Avoca regions, but parochial schools served possibly a third of the children of greater Wilmette. Mallinckrodt High School was developed in association with Maria Immaculata Convent on Ridge Road. With the development of New Trier Township High School there was greater use of this aspect of public education by all religious faiths. The Lutherans conducted no schools. The Roman Catholics contributed greatly to New Trier High School through long membership on its board of education by Father William Netstraeter.

One historic aspect of the consolidating influence of the public schools came out of the Gross Point public school. Carved out of the Nanzig property at Wilmette Avenue and Ridge Road, then in School District No. 40, it had served the English speaking people of that area who wished public education. Service was quite inadequate. After Gross Point Village had been merged into greater

Wilmette in 1924, there were continuous misunderstandings because the Gross Point School District was not merged into the Wilmette public school system. Comparisons were often disparaging. Newcomers in the Indian Hill region thought they had the privileges of the Howard School, which they did not. Meanwhile Highcrest School was built. Shortly afterwards the two school districts did merge and the old Gross Point school house became post headquarters of the Peter J. Huerter Post of the American Legion. Avoca School District, with its expanding Wilmette population, maintained an independent existence outside the rapidly rising life and reputation of the Wilmette public school system.

Integration of the whole western area of Wilmette of today was slow. Not only in language and religion but in joining western areas to the Wilmette Park District, in lifting heavy loads of mortgages and tax delinquencies of many subdivisions during the depression and in stimulating home development. Progress took years of strenuous effort.



NEW FACES ON RIDGE ROAD

Once the area was dotted with saloons

IX REAL ESTATE INFLUENCES

Having become householders through benefit of mortgage and subdivider, Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple assumed a continuous attachment to what happened to Wilmette real estate. They soon observed two conflicting monetary interests in this important topic of conversation. One was their own investment, which they expected to utilize and at the same time to enhance in value regardless of wear. Whatever affected this value was good or not so good.

The other monetary interest was that which set up real estate as a commodity to be bought and sold for immediate profit. Here the measure of excellence was what could be got out of subdividing, irrespective of what eventually happened to the land and to the community because of the land's use. These two interests met in historic clashes. Constantly first land uses entailed blunders; many people seemingly could not learn



TORNADO TAVERN

Old Henry Gage House at Sheridan Road and Chestnut Avenue, now torn down. It lay in path of tornado of 1920. It was then a road-side restaurant and polling place.

from the historic blight and slums which had influenced treks from Chicago to Wilmette. On the other hand, there were those who insisted that something could be done about the blunders, especially to avoid new ones.

The wonderful lake shore presents some of the dramatic changes involved in these basic conflicts. Very early civic leaders realized the civic worth of this land. The idea was introduced of acquiring for public use the whole lake front in Wilmette. The price mentioned was about \$3,000. Property interests that would be affected by increased taxes obstructed the movement, which was too weak for success.

Before anything like comprehensive village planning got under way, two contributing factors developed. The Sanitary District of Chicago bought Wilmette land and dug the north channel of its huge drainage system so as to connect at our doorway the lake and the North Branch of the Chicago River. This line followed somewhat the line of the channel of the older "Big Ditch", which



INDIAN TRAIL TREE
at 932 Greenwood Avenue

in frontier days had drained nearby farm acres. The dredging piled up huge spoil banks to disfigure the landscape for a long time. Meanwhile the Wilmette Park District was established. A new group of vigorous Wilmette personalities began to create Washington (now Gillson) Park adjacent to the mouth of the canal. A yacht harbor was created. Then a whole procession of events followed over many years.

Farther north Morris Wilson of Evanston had acquired large acreage and later gave it to Northwestern University. For some years enough land was leased to maintain a nine-hole golf course along the shore. The corporate Village of Wilmette acquired land from Lake to Forest Avenue on the east side of Michigan Avenue. The old pickle and vinegar works in that area disappeared. Fishermen had small shacks at the foot of the lake cliffs, and small piers jutted out into the lake near open sewers where youngsters went in swimming.

The up-coming Ouilmette Country Club bought land for its club house at Michigan and Lake Avenues, to become a center of increased social activities, now replaced by Michigan Shores Club. Both north and south along Michigan Avenue arose numerous mansions.

As Washington Park took on its earliest shape, the fact that much of it was built upon property of the Sanitary District disturbed the park trustees. Perennially they negotiated with sanitary trustees in the hope that this land would be given to Wilmette outright. Just before Sanitary District elections there would be vague promises, which were promptly forgotten after the elections. But improvements continued. Land along the canal banks was landscaped for the Community Golf course operated jointly by Evanston and Wilmette recreational leaders. Income was shared between the two communities and Wilmette's share

helped to operate the later organized recreational services.

A Park District policy was becoming effective to retrieve as much of the bad effects of the original lake-front blunders as possible. Houses along the east side of Michigan Avenue south of Lake Avenue were bought and removed, revealing the double row of trees down which in frontier days had creaked the ox-carts and Conestoga wagons in the ruts and chuckholes of Green Bay Road.

Equally impressive, though not wholly achieved by public policy, destiny was institutionalizing the lake front. After a great controversy, the Village Waterworks was built opposite the country club. Squatters' shacks were driven out. The yacht harbor became a scene of great activity. The park was landscaped anew with added shore acres from spoils of harbor dredging. The U. S. Coast Guard Station was moved from the south side of old Grosse Pointe in Evanston to opposite the north side of the Pointe beside the harbor, and the Sheridan Shores Yacht Club became a neighbor.

Opposite, on the north bank of Grosse Pointe, Benjamin Marshall, the famous architect, built his fabulous studio-mansion, famed around the world, but a generation later to be sold and later razed to save taxes.

At Linden Avenue and Sheridan Road, it took a generation to rear the sky-reaching Baha'i House of Worship, dedicated in 1953, and surrounded by expansive gardens which contribute to making this spot one of the most photographed in America. Farther south within the extreme limits of Wilmette rose the buildings of the National College of Education. Strangely, this institution disowns Wilmette as its location by claiming Evanston as its situs, though, locally tax exempt, it claims and receives Wilmette municipal services free of charge.

If Village and Park District policies enabled the community to cor-



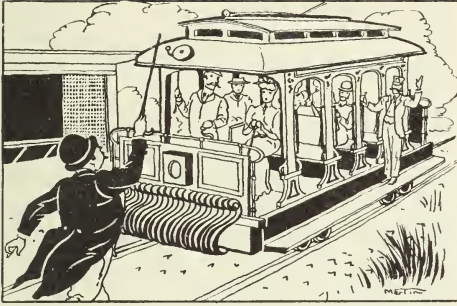
EXPANDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN WILMETTE

“Kindergarten college” and laboratory school become National College of Education.

rect in part the first lake-front blunders south of Chestnut Avenue, nothing similar occurred in notorious “No Man’s Land”. Private enterprise here fell on its face. Winnetka capitalists seemingly bent upon giving this area an Edgewater Beach tone, attempted the bizarre at Spanish Court, following the planting of the first gas station in this then unincorporated territory. Miralago, the dance hall, went up in flames, to produce litigation over water supply and fire protection. Vista del Lago, built like an ocean liner, for a time was patronized as a club, but fell into rot and decay. “The Breakers” never got beyond the grand staircase stage and still disfigures, though picturesquely, the shore line near the famous Gage’s piers that once served to stop the ravages of erosion on shore acres. Shacks sprung up like mushrooms to challenge the efforts for

decent planning around Teatro del Lago and the shops of Spanish Court. The area took on the worst aspects of Coney Island. Numerous discussions to produce a buffer zone park, as did Kenilworth with Mahoney Park, failed to accomplish anything. The annexation of the area to the corporate village provided the occupants with water, sewer, fire, police and similar municipal services. At the same time it presented one of the most difficult problems for solution, either by municipal action or through private enterprise. Property prices were too high and the area too badly blighted to open the way to simple development. Rowdiness, liquor offenses and worse became at times a public disgrace. Zoning was always a major stumbling-block. The real estate history of the north end of Wilmette’s lake front bogged down in the conflict between private profit and community welfare.

X CHANGING RAILWAYS



Very much like the development of suburban life produced by the pioneering community around the North Western Railway station instead of around the hopes of lakeborne transportation was the effect of the coming of two additional railway lines.

Albert G. Frost in 1899 had pushed the North Shore and Milwaukee Electric to Church Street, Evanston, southward through the shore-line suburbs. The promise of numerous stops through Wilmette brought eager consent for the tracks to use Depot Place (now Greenleaf Avenue). This brought all the sub-

urbs closer together socially. By special service for New Trier High School students, the line was a real boon, to be recognized almost plaintively in later years when North Shore went on strike and buses had to be substituted. Mr. Frost had developed at Ravinia Park a "high-toned" playground, movie center and music pavillion that would become internationally famous for opera, ballet, and symphonic music. The location of Fort Sheridan and Great Lakes Naval Station meant immense feeder patronage in war years.

This line, however, had its troubles. It offended Wilmette citizens by hauling freight through its streets. Stormy meetings of protest were held in the Woman's Club. For years the road ran its trains without consent of local franchise. With the immense expansion of Chicago and the competition of automobiles and trucks, as well as the Elevated line, serious problems of operating costs arose. Although the federal government aided both this line and



*When the North Shore Electric Began Service
This opened an important era in suburban traffic in 1899*

the North Western in depressing tracks through Winnetka, owners of the system abandoned the shore line services but wished to retain the western Skokie Valley line and to add buses through the shoreline suburbs.

At one time one could buy a round-trip ticket to Ravinia Park, including admission to the concert, for 35 cents. Service in train frequency steadily declined. The long history of this line reflects both constructive and destructive influences on suburban life.

The extension of the Elevated

Lines through Evanston to the terminus at Fourth Street and Linden Avenue, Wilmette, likewise greatly influenced real estate development and business enterprise for the suburb. Access to Wilmette came about through an over-night preemption of Laurel Avenue, a devious move which angered citizens. In time this was forgotten. The so-called Terminal shopping center developed apace by the addition of stores, parking lots and the erection of buffer zone multiple dwellings and apartment buildings.

These transportation facilities also



HOW WE LOOKED AT MID-CENTURY

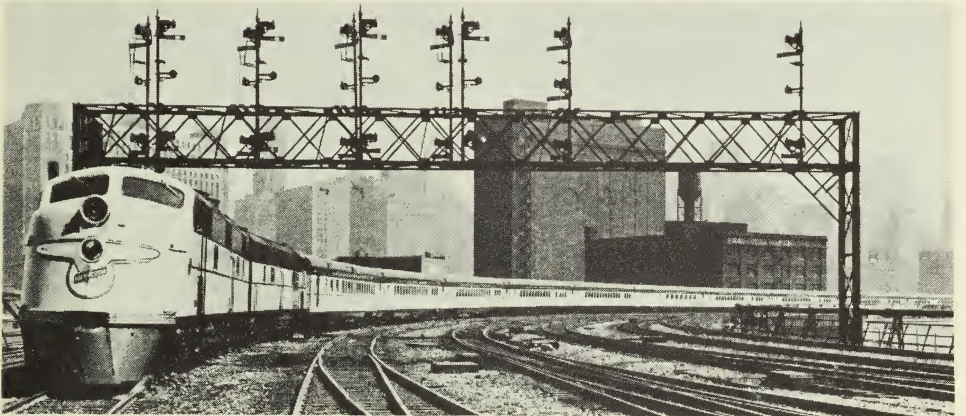
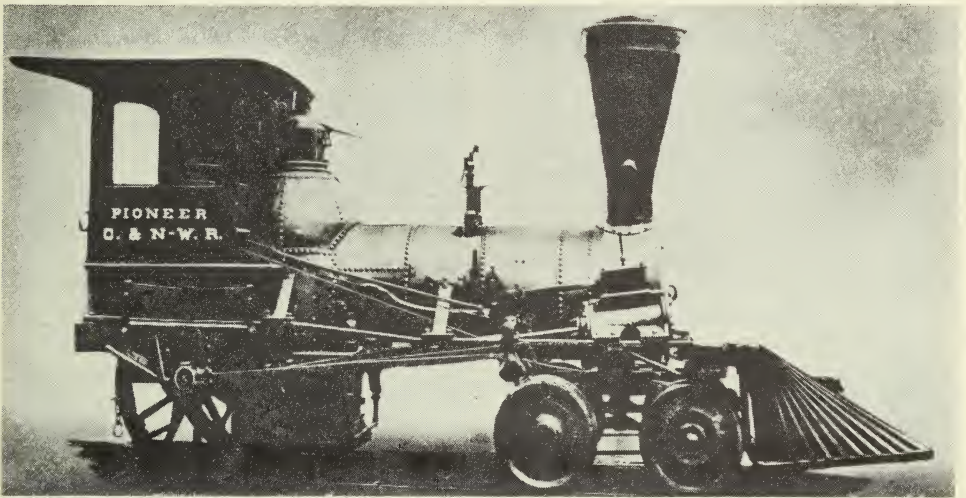
Flash-back in history at the demise of the North Shore Electric Line,
Courtesy of Chicago Tribune.

brought in hordes of picnickers and sight-seers with later years. As the Wilmette beach and park gained renown, partly through summer concerts in the park bowl. very serious problems of rowdyism arose, at times calling for protection by vigilantes.

The type of services by the three lines of railway varied greatly from time to time, especially in the infrequency of trains. With the financial necessities of the three systems constantly before the public, there was always the problem of instability of service. Action in the courts and at various types of hearings was constant. Lethargy of many

Mr. and Mrs. Young Couples helped to bog down all sorts of conferences. The problem of grade separation in the center of town was not solved.

These same types of problems were knocking at the doors of all Suburbia. Reliance on the automobile worked to bring dispersion of marketing centers in areas where off-street parking could be had. Population increase continued as a tremendous factor for years. Parking meters were installed at the busiest streets. Congestion was mounting. In later years the whole complex of suburban life was to change. The suburban whirl became in many respects a merry-go-round.



CONTRASTS OF RAILROADING

How the first trains were hauled through Wilmette in 1854 and how the North Western runs today.

XI

HOW WILMETTE BROUGHT SCOUTING TO THE MID-WEST

It was just the right sort of a summer night to have a campfire in the back yard. The four men wanted a hot snack of some sort; so they roasted weenies over the open fire. Two of them had sons twelve years old and they wished to know how effective Boy Scouting in England was under the famous Baden-Powell. So the four fell to discussing boys and how best to aid in developing their characters.

The place was the yard of Alonzo J. Coburn at 400 Eighth Street, Wilmette. The time was the summer of 1910. The men were Arthur L. Rice, Coburn, the Reverend Roy E. Bowers, then the new minister of the First Congregational Church, and Dr. Lucius O. Baird, western superintendent of the American Missionary Association.

They had read many articles then current of many methods for intriguing boys into wholesome activities. The new English method that was rapidly being organized in our eastern states appealed to the little group. They decided to give it a try and to form the first troop of Boy Scouts of America to be organized west of the Allegheny Mountains. That was Troop 1 of Wilmette. It still flourishes under its unique honors authenticated by the first scoutmaster's commission issued to Mr. Rice on October 28, 1910, and preserved in their scout-room in the First Congregational Church.

The history of those early days is important to the members of all troops in Wilmette. It is contained in a manuscript written by Mr. Coburn for the history files of the Wilmette Public Library, from which quotations are made:

"The two ministers were of the opinion that the work should be confined to the boys who were attendants at the Sunday school of the Congregational Church. The other men

felt that the work, while having its headquarters in the Congregational Church, should be community wide in its inclusion.

"Several meetings were held during the summer, invitations being sent to all who were interested. Father Vattman, who had been an army chaplain and who was a personal friend of Theodore Roosevelt, was of great assistance during the formative period, with his enthusiastic advice and counsel.

"It was decided to form Troop 1, Wilmette, Boy Scouts of America. Mr. Rice was the first scoutmaster and Mr. Coburn was assistant scoutmaster. . . . Actual work with the boys began in October, 1910. We met Saturdays at 2 p.m. in the basement of the Congregational Church, but most of the work was done out of doors. Among the men who aided early in the work were Mr. J. R. Harper, C. A. Lundberg, Dr. F. A. Karst, W. H. Kleinpell, and Mr. B. Frank Brown, superintendent of Lake View High School. We had no financial backing; the boys paid small dues and purchased their own uniforms and equipment. If we needed money for some special event, we begged it and got it. If the boys needed instruction in certain matters, which the scoutmasters were not able to give, we went over the names of the men in the village who were trained along the particular line needed and they simply had to come in and share in the work.

"We worked first with the English manual and were filled with joy when the first American manual and the first scoutmasters manual were published. . . . The scout work was received with such enthusiasm by the boys that we soon had 120 boys enrolled. When this point was reached we divided the troop and Troop 2 was formed, which met at the Methodist Church. Boys of all church af-

filiations were included in these troops, Protestants, Catholics and Jews."

The memoirs continue with aid in health given by Dr. M. C. Hecht, drill by Captain George R. Harbaugh and garden work by Mr. Kleinpell. There are stories of the first Fourth of July celebration which began with an over-night hike to New Trier High School. Also of the first camp at Saugatuck, Michigan. One high light was when Cornelius Van Schaack bought out a whole refreshment stand at the ball game at Evanston and tossed its contents to the boys in the bleachers. Women of the village did their share at refreshment tents. In time Mr. Rice was made scout commissioner and Mr. Coburn became scoutmaster, to be succeeded later by Captain Harbaugh.

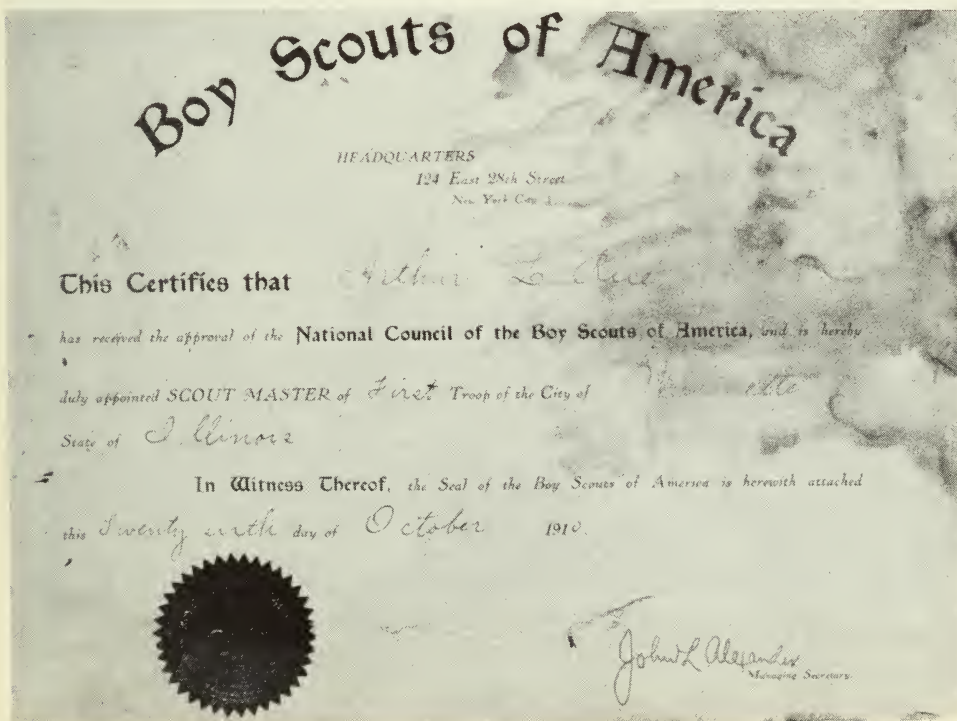
The start of scouting had been made. Its significance may be grasped by these figures of May 1, 1956: ten cub packs with 543 cubs enrolled; eight Boy Scout Troops with 372 members; six Explorer posts for those of 14 years or more with 115 explorers. All told boys and youth in the

work number 1030 individuals in Wilmette and there are 352 registered adults. The growth over 1955 was 12 per cent.

The movement to aid in character building for girls lagged somewhat behind that for boys. For a time the Camp Fire Girls had a popular appeal that was lost when the first joiners outgrew their childhood participation. To fill this gap the Wilmette Girl Scouts came into being at the Methodist Church in 1921 under the initial guidance of the minister, the Reverend Gilbert Stansell. Shortly a council was organized to hold the work together.

The appeal of scouting was popular and new troops were organized wide-spread. Professional guidance was obtained. The Community Chest gave its support and popular financial drives, cooky sales and other efforts produce a summer camp. The spread of Girl Scouting by 1955 produced the following record: Brownies 445; Intermediate Girl Scouts 474; Senior Girl Scouts 58; adults 386. Brownie troops numbered 30; Intermediate troops 37, and Senior troops 2.

FIRST SCOUTMASTER COMMISSIONED IN 1910



XII BRIDLE PATHS AND BUGGY RIDES



Scattered over Wilmette are mute reminders of the early days when the horse was man's good friend. Newcomers to the village may not realize that their modernized garages once housed pony and cart, riding horse or even the jingling harness and shiny epuipage drawn by proud high-steppers driven by prouder owners.

Some of these early barns were elaborately equipped with well furnished quarters for housekeeper and husband. The more humble structure had mere y a loft for hay, a stall or two for the animals and board flooring. On the alley side with usually a small window overlooking it was the inevitable manure box, sometimes to be emptied for gardens, but more often calling for a village drayman.

From these numerous evidences of minor opulence and eclat issued the Young Couples for a drive into the country or down to Fountain Square in Evanston or merely to do a little local shopping. In those days the street paving had much to do both with the custom and with comfort. Width of roadways was calculated, as we now know, for these same horses and buggies. Early pavements often were merely scraped clay-top with later addition of macadam and, still later, brick.

Time and again altercations arose with paving contractors over skimming the job. Dust, mud, wash-

ing the buggy, currying down the horse, and an occasional runaway were the price of an airing and impressing the neighbors. One of the greater compensations was the glee of the children when the family drove out to some woods for a picnic.

A considerable variant for keeping horses was the morning canter, either alone or with some boon companions before Husband took the 8:08 into the City for business. Once again the paving of the streets and roads was important. So long as the surface was reasonably soft the sport continued with straggling enthusiasts. With the advent of the automobile in considerable numbers, chuck-holes and ruts not only made riding and driving uncomfortable and even hazardous, but produced the demand for new paving with hard surfaces unfitted for shod horses. Meanwhile those who had driven fast horses promptly took to the auto. Horses and ponies became a chore and rapidly disappeared. Barns were converted into garages with cement floors, heaters and running water.

During the epoch of equitation there were several routes followed by groups of riders. Sometimes these went by way of Wilmette Avenue and Glenview Road out as far as Waukegan or Milwaukee Road. Here one became acquainted with Gross Point Village, Glenview, Niles or Morton Grove and the courses of the branches of the historic Chicago River. Here could be seen the earliest signs of newcomers spreading out from the City as they pioneered in new real estate subdivisions, later to be vastly consolidated into all Suburbia.

Another alternate route was to the south and through the winding bridle paths of old Northwestern University campus. Winding in and

out among the new buildings constantly going up to mark the expansion of the university, the riders skirted the route of the old Green Bay Trail, swung around past the lighthouse which marks Grosse Pointe and surveyed the possibilities of getting rid of the ugly spoil banks along the drainage canal to create new park acres along the Wilmette shore.

All this gave way to the automo-

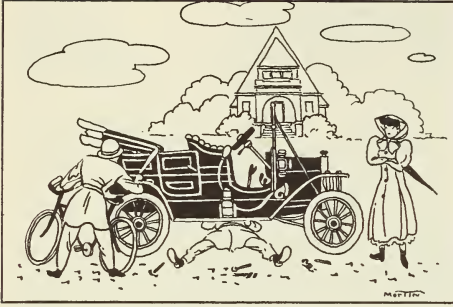
bile, save as the riders went in cars to some riding stable miles away to join the youngsters who had found new bridle paths in the Forest Preserve. For a time the pangs of nostalgia were quieted by going to the mountains and joining groups who climbed through the mountain passes with stumbling trail horses. But even this substitute for the suburban canter was pushed into limbo by opening the passes to the careening automobile.



TRUCK GARDENS GIVE WAY TO NEW HOMES

Once this rural scene greeted riders in many parts of Wilmette, even on Sheridan Road

"GET OUT AND GET UNDER"



Chicago of the 1890s had introduced suburbanites to a bare knowledge of horseless carriages. They were ungainly contrivances, merely motorizing the tall hansom cab, the milk-wagon and the family buggy.

They were considered fads. The jokes cracked at minstrel shows and the 10-20-30 cent continuous vaudeville were based in real fact. To "get out and get under" the automobile to correct mechanism or repair punctured tires was the subject of many a popular song, which carried over as good advertising into suburban Wilmette.

At all sorts of social gatherings and business round tables, the comparative merits of steam or gasoline, one, two, four or six cylinders and side or back entrance to the tonneau filled up gaps in the conversation constantly.

By about 1910 there were enough autos in Wilmette to make it apparent that garages would be a necessity. Pony barns were on the way out, but gasoline pumps were still a rarity. In order to have a sufficient supply of motor fuel and lubrication, the devotee perforce bought either large outside tanks with convenient spigots, or contrived a row of five-gallon red cans of the type later made famous all over the world by the oil companies.

Specially contrived funnels with chamois spread over the mouth for the purpose of straining out water

and other impurities were necessities. So many radiators froze up in zero weather that the more pretentious private garage was equipped with thermometers, formulas for mixing denatured alcohol and water for the radiator and, if possible, a portable heater so that the car would start upon application of the hand crank. Every motorist learned how to open pet cocks and inject fuel directly into the cylinders to overcome the cold-weather handicaps. Often electric lamps were placed under the auto hood to impart some warmth to the engine.

Tires were just as hard a problem. As we start in Wilmette we must recall that outer casings were merely "fabric"; the cord tire had not come into vogue as yet. Inner tubes were filled with imperfections. Even brand new outfits might not last up to Lake Geneva without a puncture from nails, tacks or jagged pieces of stone. Fortunate indeed were Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple if they could drive to the east coast or to the Rocky Mountains and back without punctures. And one caught plenty of them in one's own alley or on neighboring streets. This made necessary the constant companionship of the vulcanizing kit, both to be used in the home garage and to be carried as protection on touring jaunts. Strange indeed were some of the adventures; for instance, when one found a wooden vulcanizing block stuck inside the casing to pound a hole through the inner tube when out on the road, necessitating towing possibly 10 to 15 miles.

As for costumes for the road in the open pleasure car, the men were equipped with visored caps, goggles, linen dusters and huge gauntlet gloves. The women had the same sort of goggles, linen dusters and tremendous veils draped over their "picture" hats and tied securely un-

der chins. Tire chains were highly important in the days of the mud ruts in the roads, even in Wilmette. Dust was everywhere, to the degree that at the end of a country run faces of all the tourists, when they took off their goggles, showed up like black-faced minstrels.

As both oil companies and car manufacturers progressively pioneered, the family car, by 1915, had become a necessity instead of merely a luxury. Advertising was changed to emphasize "passenger" instead of "pleasure" types of vehicles. The lines of cars at the railway station now driven by Mrs. Young Couple to meet the outgoing 5:15 for Husband's convenience had increased materially. It had become an achievement for Wife to learn how to drive.

Inevitably the rapid changes from horse to gas brought with it the need for public garages, gas stations and changes in much paving of streets. Especially was this true at a distance from home base. Benjamin Franklin Affleck of Greenwood Avenue, possibly as much as any other one person, was responsible for "cement" roads in Illinois and neighboring states through his industrial program for the "steel trust" which was one of the huge producers of cement as a by-product. The old-time livery stables and horse drawn cabs were changed over to meet changing times. The newer Young Couples coming to Wilmette in later years pretty generally had put the necessary family car ahead of the purchase of their own domicile.



AS WILMETTE BECAME AUTO CONSCIOUS

There was a time when Wilmette had no garages and one ran into bad roads almost anywhere.

XIV

DANCING CLASS AND SATURDAY NIGHTS

Wilmette took its gaieties seriously. Its chief recreations, aside from gardening and doing things to improve the house, were golf, cards and dancing. Culture about which we have been talking was somewhat plodding and slow in flowering. And it was around dancing events that one found the real suburban whirl.

When Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple arrived in Wilmette they naturally had some knowledge of the old-time dances, such as waltz, two-step and Virginia Reel. These were long stand-bys for parties with the social eclat of the O.C.C. (country club on Michigan Avenue). These perchance had been learned at Bournique's in Chicago, or at some of the clubs or high school parties. But soon there filtered into the suburb the news of the newer dances such as fox-trot, tango, Charleston and the whole



OLD OUILMETTE COUNTRY CLUB

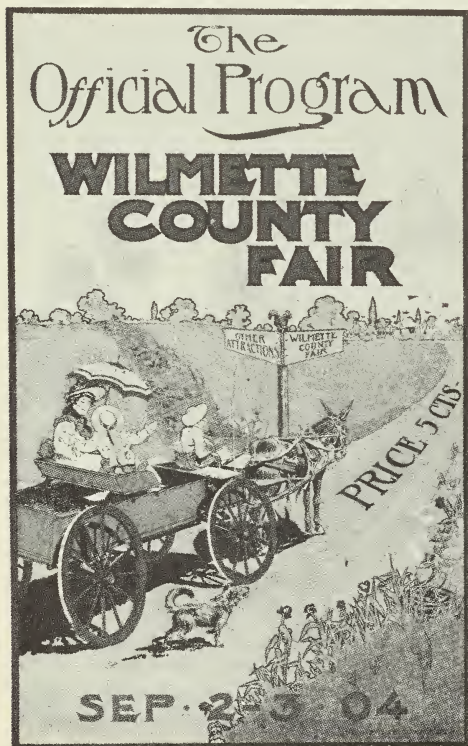
range of gyrations becoming popular in the ambitious cafe society of the city.

Promptly there blossomed the Thursday night dancing class. If the thing was to be done it must be done right. The "better" small orchestras were brought out from town and "one, two, three, kick" or its variant was drilled into the tired executive, who took it as seriously as the latest crop report or the dictum of the Interstate Commerce Commission on railway rates. These practice hurdles could be done in informal dress.

Not so the Saturday night events. Usually the dancing features were on alternate weeks, with possible cards in between. Here Dame Fashion had wide latitude with the ladies. But it was de rigueur for the men; nothing less than tails, white waistcoats and ties and either wing or poke high collars.

Not to be behind the competition elsewhere, the dancers needs must bring on exhibitions. None other than the famous Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle in their hey day would suffice for Wilmette. And this is said in all seriousness. The discussion over success in such ventures carried over to the commuters groups on the 8:08 and the 5:15.

On card nights the piece de resistance was either Five Hundred or Military Euchre, the latter often



COUNTRY CLUB ACTIVITIES



LATER CLUB HOUSE

played progressively on some patriotic holiday such as Washington's or Lincoln's birthday. Sometimes an American flag was a major prize. The time had not yet arrived for the complexities of door prizes contributed by the suffering local shopkeepers for advertising purposes.

All this gaiety did not center alone in the O.C.C. True, such great events as the kermess with its baby show, or the minstrel show with its bevy of Wilmette young matrons as pony ballets, could not thrive well outside the O.C.C. spacious quarters. But for dancing there were many smaller groups not ambitious enough to join O.C.C. For instance, the "Hiawathas" met for subscription dances at Jones Hall on Wilmette Avenue. Full dress was still expected, even if the gloves of the men might be gray instead of white. Also there was the "Three Dozen" who went up to the Kenilworth Club and the "Town Club" which rented the Woman's Club.

Usually from church discipline or as a gesture to it, dancing quit with "Home, Sweet Home" at midnight promptly. New Year's Eve, the lights went off momentarily while Husband who was dutifully dancing with Wife gave her a hearty smack. Usually also dinner followed the dancing.

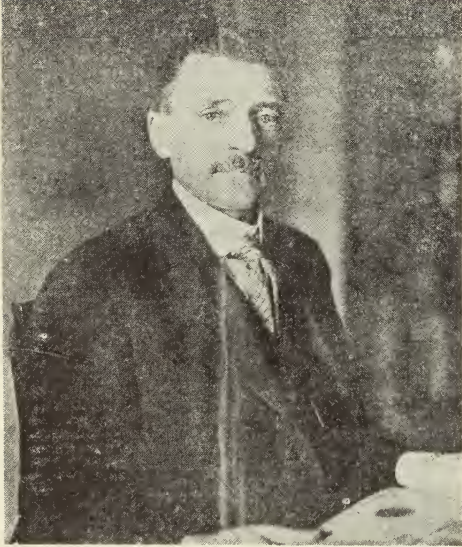
Then came the ordeal of getting home. Before the coming of the automobile, transportation was by Henderson's or Van Order's hired horse cabs. One had to be forehanded to engage one coming and going if one was not to be caught in the lurch of things. Often couples joined and thus there was a pretty hubbub at the club entrance to match up people and cabs. With the rapid introduction of the automobile, the problems were concerned with parking, cranking on cold nights and getting wet on rainy nights.

But did they not have fun?



MICHIGAN SHORES CLUB

A PIECE FOR THE PAPER



JUDGE RUSH

"If you want us to publish items about your carryings on, get your pieces for this paper here by Tuesday noon!"

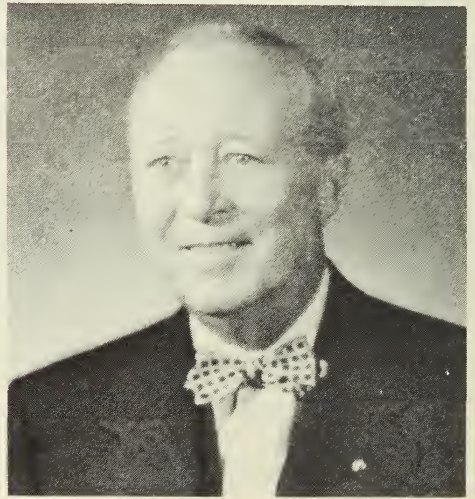
Such was the admonition that "Judge" Rush testily printed in his *Local News* week after week to inform Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple and to disclose the editorial frame of mind. In those days the sheet had only four pages, and half of those consisted of patent insides hardly calculated to entertain or inspire people brought up on the very wide range of the metropolitan press.

Over the decades, Wilmette had seen numerous attempts at purveying local news rise and fall. In the 1890s, "Ye Olde Towne Folkes" had regaled themselves at their gatherings through such journalistic flights as "The Lantern" and "The Town Pump". In the same decade, "The Wilmette Weekly News" had appeared and then disappeared. Similarly in Evanston, the *Index* and the *Press* had experimented even to the point of trying to issue a daily *Index*. These trials collapsed.

In Wilmette there was constant discussion on the subject of a local newspaper among suburbanites, on the trains, at the stations, in social clubs and civic groups. There was no adequate sounding-board to express or to mold local public opinion on numerous subjects not precisely fitted for the pulpit, the school rostrum or at meetings of the village board.

One basic stumbling-block seemed to be the ingrained reading habits of the community on suburban trains. It was to the Chicago newspapers that advertising patronage was going. Those papers tossed a few crumbs of local information when the local news was spectacular enough to warrant wide attention. There was a vicious circle which made the commuter neglect reading local news home-purveyed, thus retarding circulation and in turn advertising revenue. Residents mostly utilizing the local columns were the people who wanted to "put a piece in the paper about it."

Shortly before World War I involved our own participation, "Judge" Rush was mildly scolding



LLOYD HOLLISTER



about the dilatory habits of contributors.

"Judge", said one of his young contemporaries, "Some day, some bright young man is going to step in here and take this paper away from you and make a real paper out of it."

"Do you think so?" responded the "judge". "Any notion as to who any such young fellow might be?"

"Yes. I might do it myself."

And that was a high spot in the history of journalism on the North

Shore and in the life of the young fellow, who was none other than Lloyd Hollister, who some years later did acquire what had once been Judge Rush's paper. His editorial ethics, which ban personal exploitation, has had to give way in the present record to the insistence that this affair involves the history of this community.

The Hollister influence expanded to the large aggregation of communities in and around New Trier



THE STORY OF A CAREER

Lloyd Hollister, Inc., began its career in the small building with bay window to the right of this picture. Later it crossed the alley to become a leading publishing house.

Township. Local citizen committees were asked to aid in conducting contests to name the Hollister papers. Acquisition of several similar enterprises, especially sheets which circulated free of charge merely as advertising media, brought an expansion as a publishing house. Wilmette Life, Winnetka Talk, Glencoe News, Glenview Announcements and Northbrook Star went through changes in format and style until today illustrations perform a considerable function in their publication. Meanwhile the Hollister plant as a publication enterprise became a model whose activities outside the journalistic field far exceed those of

the news magazines and probably far beyond the earlier imagination of the young man who succeeded "Judge" Rush.



WILMETTE WEEKLY NEWS

ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE AT WILMETTE AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MAT'YER.

VOL. 1

WILMETTE, ILL., APRIL 7, 1894

NO. 41.

WILMETTE WEEKLY NEWS.
Published every Saturday by

campaign things which requires to
be "nailed with the hammer of

portunity to vote directly on the question,
whether or not they wish to support it. A

THE LOCAL NEWS.

Devoted to the Interests of the Village of Wilmette.

Vol. 2. No. 20.

WILMETTE, ILLINOIS, SATURDAY, SEPT. 23, 1890

PRICE THREE CENTS.

GROCERIES.

NOTIONS AND TOYS.

WHAT A MAN OWES TO THE
CHURCH IN HIS TOWN

are sincere and unselfish in their
motives in inviting people to go to
church. No one is making anything
out of the church. The minister is
supported, but the minister who is
not giving more than he receives

rebate warrants on special assess-
ments Nos. 3 and 4 be drawn and
delivered to the proper persons.
Carried.
A bid was read from John A. Me-
Gary & Co., of Chicago, to construct

Wilmette Bazaar,

[Extract from Rev. W. H. Walker's ser-
mon of last Sunday morning.]
"Dispel Ye the Church of God."

The Local News.

Public Library 2-1-7

Volume 9, No. 51.

WILMETTE, ILLINOIS, SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1907.

Price Five Cents.

THE

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TREASURER OF THE VILLAGE OF WIL-
METTE.
April 1, 1898 to March 31, 1907.
Wilmette, Ill., March 30, 1907.
To the Honorable President and Board of Trustees of the Village of Wil-

BOARD MEETING.
The last regular meeting of the
existing village board was held last
Tuesday evening with all member-
present except Trustee Vandevliet.
It was nearly nine o'clock when the
session was called to order but

The Wilmette Exchange State Bank
CLINTON C. COLLINS, PRESIDENT
No. 1200 Central Avenue, Wilmette, Ill.

THE LAKE SHORE NEWS

VOL. VII—NO. 23

Phone Wilmette 1640.

WILMETTE, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1916

Room 2, Brown Building.

PRICE FIVE CENTS

**CANVASS GIVES
SCH'L DEFENSE
3 MORE PLACES**

Final Checking-up Shows
Reformers Sweep Town-
ship's Important Jobs
on Progress Plan.

RECOUNT IS POSSIBLE

**See Boulevard
"Canned" After
Tuesday's Vote**

Sentiment Is Now Ranged
Against Special Priv-
ilege Scheme for
Few.

So pronounced is the opposition to
the introduction of Central avenue
streets with residents interested in
property along that thoroughfare, that
the project seems certain of defeat at
the polls on Tuesday next.
The fact that Harry J. Heck, 1238
Gregory avenue, L. S. Becker, 105
Pith street, and W. S. Freeman, 711
L. S. street, will be interested in the

THE MINUET



**OLD SETTLERS IN ANCIENT
GARB HOLD ANNUAL REUNION
IN FEAST, MIRTH AND SONG**

First Ladies of the Town Appear in Quaint Costumes
Century Old, While Youth Joins Aged in
Dance To Music of Olden Time.

AMEND BY LAWS ON MEMBERSHIP THIRD TIME

HANDLING NEWS OVER HALF A CENTURY

Deutsche Vereins = Zeitung

und Familien-Blätter

4. Jahrgang.

Wilmette, Ill., Samstag, den 16. November 1907.

No. 4.

**Vergnügungs-
Wegweiser**
für die nächsten Wochen:

2. Rhein groß' d'cht, Frau
Rinne (von) Gohberich
Zemflicher (Robertson) und
Tschiller
(Credittort von Saint Stefan)
3. "Sate hoch, je petit nous le
rendre" ... Post

Vereins-Anzeigen.
Genefelder

International Geneva Club
SECTION CHICAGO
International Geneva Association
1 & 3 N. CLARK ST.

Increase Your Sales of Beer
By Keeping Your Pipes Clean at a Cost of 2½¢ per Faucet

THE LAKE SHORE NEWS

Nearly Everybody in Wilmette Reads The Lake Shore News

VOL. VI, NO. 37.

WILMETTE, ILLINOIS, THURSDAY, JULY 24, 1919

EIGHT PAGES

PRICE FIVE CENTS

Bank Robber Dead After Daylight Gun Battle

**RECRUIT PATROLMAN
GETS BANDIT IN DUEL**

Henry Brautigam, Latest Acquisition to Police Force, Engages Quartet of Burglars in Gun Battle

MANY SHOTS EXCHANGED

Three Make Get-Away While Fourth

**PICNIC PARTIES ARE
CALLED BIG NUISANCE**

Lake Avenue Residents Enter Complaint of Paper-Littered Streets Following Beach Affairs

SAY VILLAGE RESPONSIBLE

Declare They Are Weary of Cleaning Parkways in Trail of Mierceant

*Robber Fires on State Bank Cashier;
Is Felled By Police in Gun Duel*

Wilmette is no place for handouts and police are death on crooks. Result, George Mücke, alleged burglar, is committing his misfortune to the black walls of his dingy cell in the Village Jail-upt. P. M. Swanson, bank bandit, is dead, pierced through the heart with a police bullet.

The story of George Mücke's capture on Monday night by Patrolman Henry Brautigam gives another column of the Lake Shore News and here is the account of how Swanson met his fate after a thrilling revolver duel with assistant chief of police Sam Roth.

**PHILATHEANS PLAN
ORPHANS' BENEFIT**

Annual Lawn Fete To Be Held at Panauha Home on Afternoon and Evening of August 2

HELP LAKE BLUFF KIDDIES

Affair Promises To Be One of the Season's Bright Events. Treat

Formerly The
Lake Shore News

WILMETTE LIFE

News of Wilmette
and Kenilworth

A Clean Newspaper for a Clean Community

VOL. XIII, NO. 2

WILMETTE, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1923

TWENTY-FOUR PAGES

PRICE FIVE CENTS

COUNT APPONYI

**MOTOR TRUCKS MUST
HAVE MIDDORS LAW**

6TH STREET BAD,

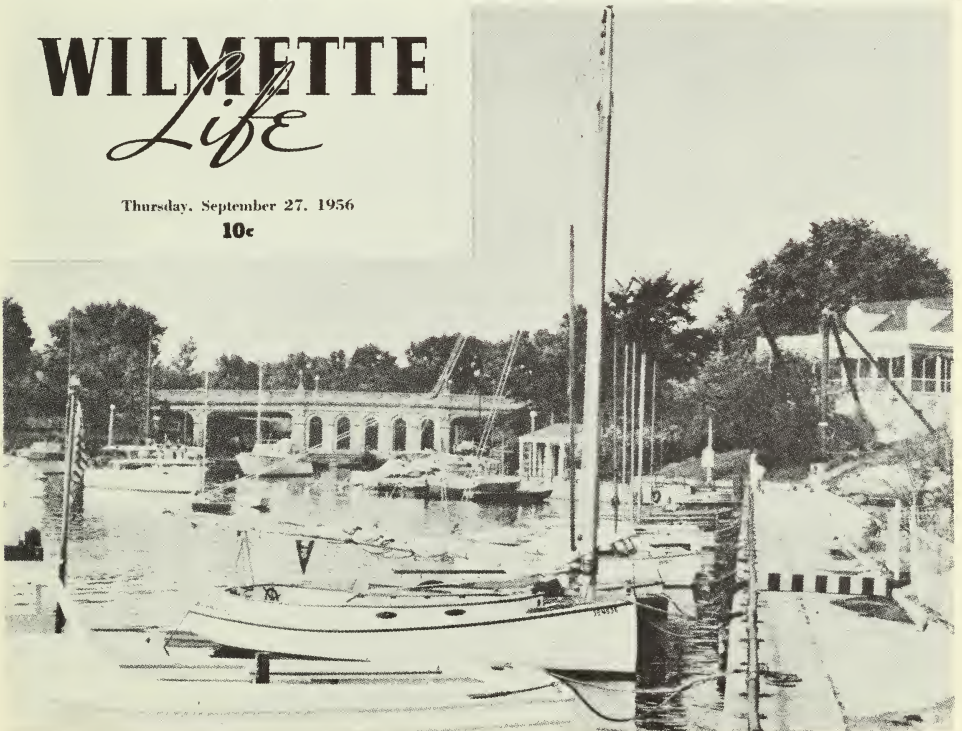
**YOU ARE INVITED TO
HEAR "DILL" STINGER**

GRAND JURY TO

WILMETTE *Life*

Thursday, September 27, 1956

10c



EVEN NEWS IN THE MOTHER TONGUE

XVI “PERILS OF PAULINE”

It was a gala night for Wilmette. The new moving picture theater building had been completed on Wilmette Avenue. The young local capitalists who had backed the enterprise had seen to it that the village history was remembered by including in the decorative sidewalk marquee an imaginative portrait of Antoine Ouilmette in his coon-skin cap. Word had gone out to local society and there were sponsors for opening night. Roses were presented to all feminine visitors. There was a grand preliminary program on the concert organ. Greetings were exchanged across the auditorium by “everybody who was anybody”. The checkered career of local moving pictures was on its way in Wilmette.

The industry was young. It was the day of the continuous story told in weekly serials. Pearl White in “Perils of Pauline” was an early favorite, along with Max Sennett’s “Bathing Beauties”, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford and meager localized news and advertising. Occasionally something pretty effective was produced for local civic action, as when the Gillette local still pictures of rubbish conditions in alleys brought village board action to institute better refuse collections. In an emergency now and then the organist would be borrowed to supply the music for a wedding ceremony at one of the adjacent churches. But the cinema did not pay off. The theater was closed, to be remodeled for the now defunct



FIRST MOVIES AND A NEW FIRE WAGON

*Posed in front of first motion picture theatre at 1150 Wilmette Avenue
later occupied by Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Inc.*

First National Bank, then for contracting firms and war workers, and finally for Encyclopaedia Britannica Films.

Later another similar effort was to be observed on Central Avenue, which ultimately met the same fate. One of the early drawbacks was the prohibition against Sunday performances. Different promoters visited the scene and opined that the extra performances on the added day made the difference between profit and loss. Canvass was made of public sentiment and Sunday performances went into effect.

Meanwhile, Teatro del Lago was opened in "No Man's Land" with large parking accommodations for

automobiles. Being at the conspicuous vantage point of Spanish Court, past which all the North Shore traveled at some time, and under expert management, Teatro thrived and sufficed for local patronage. In war days and for numerous civic enterprises the various theaters contributed greatly in molding public opinion. In them were to be heard the speakers for all the important drives. For a time both Teatro del Lago and the Wilmette Theater on Central Avenue were operated under the same management. As television came into vogue and hundreds of moving picture houses closed nationwide, the latter house closed and became additional quarters for Encyclopaedia Britannica Films.



"RING THE ALARM"

Volunteer fire-fighters brigade in front of old engine house, watch tower and fire bell on Central Avenue site now occupied by the post office.

“LET’S HAVE A BATHING BEACH!”



It was in the summer of 1916. Mrs. Donald M. Gallie was president of the Woman’s Club of Wilmette. She had been visiting in Highland Park and saw what that community was doing with its lake shore. Strolling over to visit with her neighbor, Mrs. George Martin, she fell to chatting on the subject of our own Wilmette shore.

“Let’s have a real beach,” they concluded.

“Very well,” said Harriet Gallie. “Pearl, you are chairman of a committee of your own choosing out of the club to do something about it.”

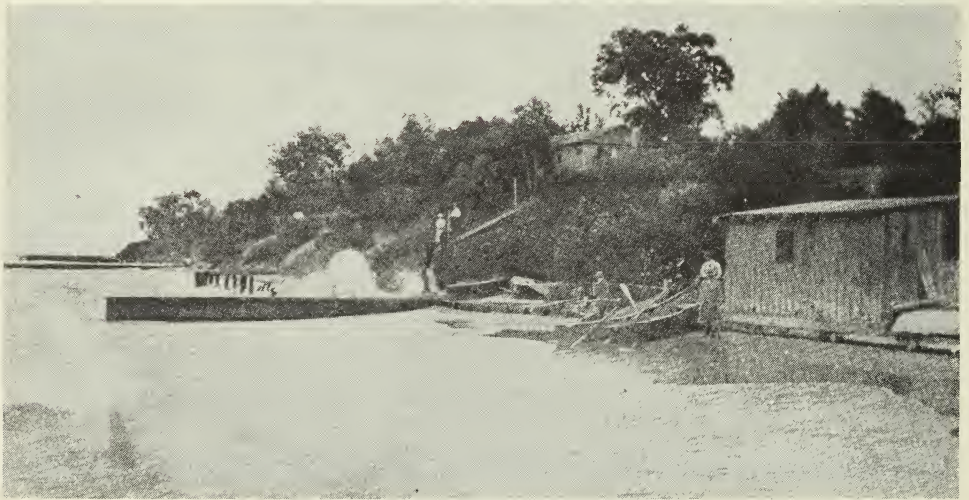
And that is the way the present or-

ganized conduct of the famous Wilmette bathing beach started. But O! what a controversy arose before desires became authoritative law and order!

The trouble concerned just how much of the human body should be exposed in public with public approval.

The first step was the formation of a co-operative association to collect fees and to supply meager beach equipment and beach guards. That was relatively easy. So good was the impression that one day two bankers, meeting on a new anchored raft began talking about the beach management. The one from Evanston said his town did nothing approaching what Wilmette was doing. Indeed, he said, he would like to send somebody a check to help defray the expenses. The Wilmettrian told him to send it to Pearl Martin.

But the other face of the new endeavor was vigorous protest by a few kickers who did not like to be pushed around by any organization. In older days, if one wanted to sport in old



“DON’T GO NEAR THE WATER”

How the beach looked before the women took over. Small piers, fishermen’s shacks and sewers have long since given way to sandy beach, waterworks and beach house.



AS THE WOMEN GOT BUSY ON BEACH ORGANIZATION



EARLY BEACH ACTIVITIES



BEACH HOUSE



PICNIC GROUNDS AT BEACH



WATERWORKS

Mitchigami, all that was necessary was to put on a bathing suit at home, grab a bath-robe and park the family bus at any convenient place along the lake cliffs. If the swimmers came from a distance and found dressing at home difficult, it was all right to pull down the storm curtains of the open touring car and change within their protective shadows. If the car top was down, one could sneak in behind some of the denser bushes on the cliff-side. But that was "agin the law." So the ladies had worked out a compromise.

The new regulations provided that there should be no passage through, nor loitering along, the bluff tops, long since converted into park area. It was permitted that adults clad beneath in "approved" bathing suits, could, if covered with bathrobe or long coat, walk across the park area and take off the outer wraps upon reaching the beach level. This regulation certain "indignant citizens" resented in LAKE SHORE NEWS of that year. The exchanges became violent, but the planning went on for beach control.



MRS. DONALD M. GALLIE

In those days also what was "proper" came in for much discussion. Men were expected to wear a top to their bathing suits. It was not an affront to show men's knees. But the feminine styles and customs were quite severe. Instead of halter and trunks with a liberal display of back



MRS. GEORGE S. MARTIN

and midriff, propriety ordained full length stockings, skirts that might be slipped off when under the water and in many instances something approximating a girdle to contain any overflow of avoirdupois, Suburbia has changed!

After the women had blazed the way toward beach control, it became only a matter of time to place voluntary civic service in the hands of Wilmette Park District commissioners. Here, with an eye to constant reclamation of land lost in the lake storms and to safeguarding lives, beach policy was worked out. The beach was required to be self-supporting through summer fees in which Wilmette families were given a better proposition than those of the great hordes of migrant visitors from all over northern Illinois. Always playing on the safe side, the beach controls hoist storm warnings if the waves are too rough for the average person. Perennially this rouses anger on the part of the same type of persons whose original objections might have thwarted any less determined ladies.

Park control has resulted in salvaging great areas of beach through employing wind-breaker fences which enmesh thousands of yards of storm sand yearly.

XVIII CORNER DRUGSTORE



As the "general store" with its cracker barrel and pot-bellied stove, where foregathered the gossips of the early town, passed into memory, the corner drugstore bloomed on the scene as something more than an apothecary shop.

Advertised by its brilliant red and green bottles, decade after decade, this village center of convenience sprouted up in different locations as population expanded and created new areas of patronage. Among the best known personalities of the early community life, extending down even to the present, were the druggists who did so much to accommodate Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple as they cast in their lot with the suburban North Shore.

It is impossible to relate a running story of everyone of these local institutions. But there is enough in common in all their experiences to bring them into a composite which their early patrons may recognize.

It was something of an event when Wilmette could boast of its first new drugstore, the Wilmette Pharmacy at West Railroad (Green Bay Road) and Wilmette Avenues. Run by Druggist Samuel C. Sexauer, for a time it housed the first local telephone exchange. It developed numerous drug students and changed hands many times. As Henry K. Snider took over and later Sexauer's young clerk, Edmond Gathercoal, opened a store further down the

street opposite the railway station, we record definite expansion.

Then came the erection by McGuire and Orr of the building on the site of the old Arcanum and later Library Hall at the corner of Wilmette and Central Avenue. Here young Gathercoal started the trek from west side to east side and opened the store which was later popularized by C. E. Rennekar and his nephew Carl.

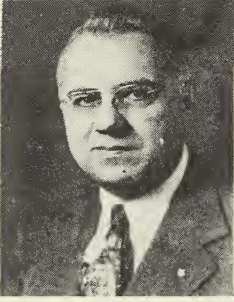
Ernest C. Cazell had become associated with Snider; after years these men moved eastwards and opened a store in the Cox Building just opposite Rennekar's. Here they were once burned out and again stricken, along with others, by the tornado of 1920. Similarly the store at Fourth and Linden Avenues suffered from fire.

Many of the early druggists became known for their civic contributions. It is not usually recalled that



ERNEST C. CAZELL
Pioneer druggist

Oscar W. Schmidt, one time village president and county commissioner, substituted for Rennekar when he was on vacation. In time Carl Rennekar spread his wings and opened a store in Glenview. Sometime after Snider's death, Cazell moved over to Ridge Road to carry on traditions and to serve as a veritable mine of



DR. MARTIN H. SEIFERT
*Wilmette Health Commissioner and
long-time druggist.*

information on people and village activities.

Flitting in and out of "every drugstore on the North Shore" was a personality who deserted drugs in the usual sense to become a physician. This was Dr. Martin H. Seifert, later village health commissioner, polio specialist, wit, fisherman and photographic enthusiast.

Before the days of competent local journalism, the corner drugstore almost vied with the railway station as a dispenser of local news. Here was the family counselor on baby-food formulas and favorite medications in emergencies. Here was a rendezvous for sweethearts and almost a marriage bureau. The druggist was almost better known than the postman and constantly obliged with the sale of stamps. In the great up-thrust of population, the corner drugstores began to assume the proportions and activities of small department stores.

Dr. Seifert tells of Snider's aversion to whistling in the store. The druggist often sat at his desk in the balcony at the rear of the store, from which he could see what was going on and greet customers. Ernest Cazzel had often cautioned "Marty" not

to whistle while he worked on powders, pills and capsules, Snider summoned the young clerk to the balcony one day.

"Do you know why I have called you up here?" he sternly asked the young man.

"Yes, sir. But I forget".

"Yes, you do forget," remonstrated Snider, "However, since you are the only person I know who can whistle all six parts of the 'Sextette' from 'Lucia di Lammermoor,' go ahead and whistle."

Oddly enough in the minds of many generations, the most popular service rendered by the corner drugstore is conceded to be the druggist's headache, that of dispensing soda water and its side lines.

Gordon was about six years old. He had saved his pennies and went to the store for an ice-cream cone. Coming from the store he tripped and his cone went into the dirt. Nothing daunted he returned to the fountain man, told him his ice-cream was spoiled and verily obtained another cone.

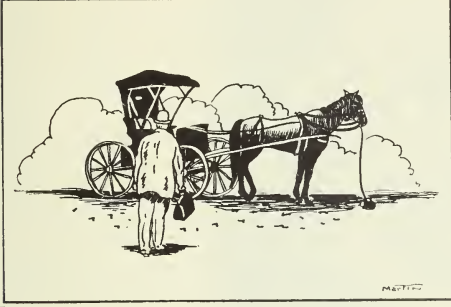
Nancy confesses that one of the attractions to Sunday School was that after services she could ensconce herself in a favorite nook in the drugstore window and observe the passers-by as she sipped an old-fashioned . . . chocolate soda.

The commuter, hearing these stories, added that on an occasion when he had sent the family to Lake Geneva and had neglected to get his dinner before coming home to barren Wilmette, he put it up to Carl Rennekar. Where could he get a steak and French fries?

"Sorry," said Carl. "All I can supply is a banana split. It is filling." That is the way it was in the early days of the suburban whirl.

XIX

FAMILY DOCTORS



In this age of great specialization, when suburban babies are no longer born in parents' double bed, and obstetricians, pediatricians, radiologists, anesthetists, nurses, dieticians and orderlies almost fall over one another in serving in their proper jurisdictions, one is prone to overlook the fact that Wilmettrians have long known the services of plain family doctors. Historical record can be made of two of such staunch friends when in need because they have passed away.

The first of these resident physicians was Byron C. Stolp, whose memory has been preserved in the name of the school on Tenth Street. He served in the period that bridged the gap from the primitive to the modern. Living near the "sugar bush" at 13th Street and Forest Avenue, he had found a tool which has been assumed to be one which Antoine Ouillette used for tapping sugar sap from near-by maple trees.

Dr. Stolp had his office above the Wilmette Pharmacy at Wilmette and West Railroad Avenues for some years. There his son Rufus also became a family doctor but removed as a resident to Kenilworth.

Dr. Stolp Sr. was to be had wherever and whenever there was need. He was so well loved and popular that even the corner drug-store was often referred to as "Stolp's." Later the two men moved to the Cox Building at Wilmette and

Central Avenues as part of the exodus from the "west side" as progress pushed up real estate development "east of the tracks." Only two events of his life will be recorded here.

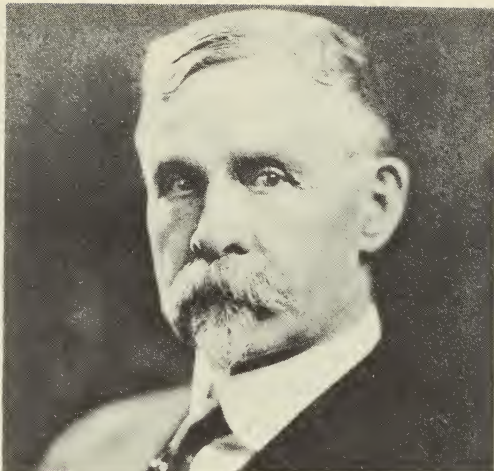
There had been a heavy snow; the MacLean first baby had arrived safe and sound.

"How about a sleigh-ride"? asked the doctor sometime later. And, bundled in blankets, buffalo robe, tip-pets and mittens, doctor, mother and baby drove off merrily to "jingle bells." But the muddy road had frozen in ruts well covered with snow. The runners struck a groove. Dobbin snorted; the sleigh turned over. But no one was hurt.

Not so much could be said years later. Still in his prime, Dr. Stolp was driving a car, for which he had discarded his horses, on a call to a patient. Out of the unknown streaked another car. The wonderful life of a family doctor came to an end.

At about the turn of the century Dr. George Butler became a well known figure as a family doctor. Versatile, neighborly, attentive, he soon took a position in a civic activity. He was at times president of the Men's Club and of the Ouillette Country Club. He had been prominent on the staff of the great Rush Medical College and had written medical texts that became famous. He delighted in writing detective stories based upon his own experiences as a doctor. At the Chicago Press Club and at the Cliff-Dwellers he vied with other celebrities in telling stories.

On one occasion in the ingle-nook of the Press Club, when stories were rife, a young adventurer came in from the gold rush to the Klondike. He told such vivid stories that the doctor insisted that he write



DR. BYRON C. STOLP
first resident Wilmette physician

some novels pertaining to these adventures. The present writer forgets whether this young man was Rex Beach or Jack London, with whom the doctor long corresponded.

In time Dr. Butler became superintendent of the sanitarium at Attica, Ind., and then of the North Shore Health Resort at Winnetka. His last adventure was to attend a great medical convention at Bos-

ton. His daughter Mary (Mrs. Percival N. Cutler), now of Evanston accompanied him. He had made one of the principal after-dinner addresses when his heart gave way. Mrs. Butler was called to Boston. After a period in the hospital to recuperate, the family with an attending nurse came home. During the night on the train another friendly family doctor of Wilmette passed into memory.



FIRST CORNER DRUG STORE

At Wilmette and West Railroad Avenue (now Green Bay Road), remodeled in 1956. Once it housed the tiny first telephone exchange run by first druggist. Upstairs next door, Jones Hall, where early dancing parties were held.

XX FEUDING

East side, west side! In later days many people did not wish to acknowledge that there was a time when civic leaders tried to "hush, hush" and live down the conflicting elements of Wilmette that silently "feuded" across the tracks. To a considerable degree this was a carry-over from what has been labeled in these sketches as "the little melting-pot."

There is no date on the letter in the Wilmette Public Library that was filed more than a generation ago and signed simply "Mr. Alles." It throws some light on one aspect of local history that must be recorded.

The differences depicted by this early contemporary operated pretty generally up to World War I. At the corner grocery, N.W. corner of Wilmette and West Railroad Avenues, run by Galitz and Schultz, these differences often came to light. East-siders usually did not come across the tracks to purchase their groceries. Nor did the west-siders often come to the east side stores of A. S. Van Deusen or Farland and Ward. These latter had more patronage from Kenilworth than from the west side.

There were reasons why certain aspects of development bloomed more quickly on the east side. One was the lake and another was real estate. As the cluster of churches grew up around Wilmette and Lake Avenues, commercial destiny prompted Cox, Brown and others to put up brick business blocks and for the old corner drug store to change hands and for the doctors and other professional men to move east and expand near Wilmette and Central Avenues.

Regional loyalties persisted except where a temporary monopoly, such as John Millen's first hardware store on West Railroad Avenue or the

post office on the same street, pulled patrons across the line. One talked about this situation casually with a sort of looking down the nose of superiority. There was no real adult tabu, but inferiority and superiority persisted for a long time. Had this scene been in Kentucky it might have been one with the Hatfields and the McCoys. With the children it was more serious.

This now becomes the story of a boy without a country.

Bud was a bright, likely and companionable chap of 10 years. His father had brought the family experimentally to Wilmette from Ravenswood. Like other Mr. and Mrs. Young Couples, the parents had rented a house on West Street (now Park Avenue) down near James Street (now Linden Avenue). Old Logan School had been largely subordinated to manual training and the four-room brick school, now passed into memory, was the home base for the "young terrors" who did not go to St. Joseph's parochial school. Bud was sort of "silk stocking." His manners were too polished for the gang. Life was one long series of encounters. But he took and gave in return as a matter of course. He was becoming accepted.

Father concluded that property would not enhance in value as readily on the west as on the east side of the tracks. Before Bud really had a stake in west side youthful acceptance, the family bought a home on the east side.

Now began a new series of encounters. The young future leaders of Wilmette would not accept Bud. They labeled him "west sider" and would have none of him. About the time of the burning of the old school Bud became a traitor to the west side.

Without understanding the significance of these tabus, Bud very really became a boy without a country. In truth he was stoned again and again by youthful partisans of both sides of town. He accepted the challenge as normal living and fought back. His parents were wholly unaware of this side of Wilmette life.

A house now occupies the one-time wooded corner lot where a final insult was piled upon injury. Several youngsters were shinnying up trees and swinging from limbs on "double dare you." Suddenly . . .

"Now we've got you where we want you." And for untold minutes three lads who later became village leaders, unmercifully pelted Bud with stones. Enough was enough. Bud slid down the tree. The record does not relate whether he took to his heels to his home in the next block or bloodied some noses or, perhaps, even compromised.

Happily the years have ironed out the differences. If Wilmette is getting crowded in many places, at least its provincial feuding is passing with the generations.



MASONIC TEMPLE

XXI

A BIRDIE

By the opening of the century golf had become an established pastime of the North Shore in general and Wilmette in particular. Not only men but women were paying serious attention to the game. Historically the Scottish import was affecting the community in two decidedly different ways. One was the obvious creating of many clubs and joining them for the sake of the game and its social contacts. The other was taking up vacant acres and building a course which could be patronized on a fee basis pending subsequent subdividing as a real estate speculation.

Immediately involved in Wilmette history were two clubs: the earliest the Ouilmette Country club and the golf links beside the lake shore; the later one the Wilmette Golf Club which used the course off Lake Avenue and Hibbard Road. Northwestern University entered into both situations through ownership of the land and subsequent sale to people who built residences upon it.

It was about 1902 when Samuel S. Dingee, scion of the pioneer family that put Wilmette on the map and made pickles famous, was playing with Percival N. Cutler, once a Wilmette lad, later a resident of Kenilworth, and now of Evanston. The place was approximately at present Michigan and Greenwood Avenues, the latter street not having then been opened.

Nearby were telephone poles to supply the earliest patrons of the upcoming new industry. Sam was about to tee-off, according to the first hand tale of Mr. Cutler. Suddenly he spied a robin sitting on a wire.

"Watch my ball catch that robin,"

said he. Sure enough. The robin fell dead beside the pole.

"Well, that's my birdie for the day," said Sam.

The streets were being laid out for service to real estate buyers in the neighborhood. Elmwood (North) Avenue was already open. Northwestern decided to sell actively. The young club lost its lease. The members leased land for a new course to extend westward of the railway tracks at Kenilworth. In time this land also was opened for sale and the club reorganized as the North Shore Golf Club, whose grounds now are on Glenview Road.

The Wilmette Golf Club used grounds maintained by real estate investors. As Wilmette expanded westward to the tributary of the historic Chicago River, Northwestern University purchased the grounds, largely for the sake of providing its professors the opportunity to make longterm leases on sites for residences. Rapidly fine homes arose where pars and birdies had once been the subject of conversation at the golf tees. The club house was maintained and part of the golf course was continued in use. Latterly the university changed its policy by selling titles to the land.

These operations involved taxation problems for the village and other local governments because of tax exemption of the university's investments under its original state charter. The whole westward neighborhood continues to be involved in the problems of overlapping boundaries of Wilmette's school district, Avoca school district and corporate village with those of Glenview.

XXII

SLEIGH-RIDES AND SKATING PARTIES

Before the advent of civically organized recreation, good times were much more simply contrived in Wilmette than today. It was typical of the times that congenial Young Couples and their children initiated their own social affairs appropriate to the season.

As one observes the great care to create good skating rinks in many local playgrounds, there arises the sharp contrast with what the resourceful youngsters did for themselves in early Wilmette, and the bearing the local historical environment had upon their self-reliance and common skills.

Diagonally southwest from the site of our present yacht harbor to the North Branch of the Chicago river ran "The Big Ditch," which drained the farming acres of the pioneer settlers on the old Ouilmette Reservation. At times water in it ran both ways at once. In winter the water froze. James D. Kline relates how the young folks skated on this ice and sometimes, as in his own case, broke through for an icy ducking. Even the lesser ditches, in which they paddled in summer, and which accumulated water, froze in many a woods and could be used for the sport.

Home-made sleds came into play when the youngsters would create a slide down the lake cliffs near Gage's piers.

Percival N. Cutler, a former long-time Wilmette resident, tells a story that surprises newcomers to the North Shore. Driving, he says,

through the winding roadways among the seven Forest Preserve lagoons west of Winnetka and Glencoe which drain the Skokie Valley, brings to mind the nature of the "Skokie" or Indian marsh in its earlier natural state. Mr. Cutler vouches that when he was a lad a winter sport was to hike out Lake Avenue to the present boundary of our village where the bridge crosses the small river. Believe it or not, thence he skated the entire way through the Skokie Valley to Highland Park. Whether others went that far, numerous couples, even in later years, such as the Leslie F. Gates and the Robert D. Burtners, found pleasure when the ice was good on the several feeders of the Chicago's North Branch.

As accompaniment to this sport was the old-fashioned sleigh-ride. The two livery and cab stables run by Henderson and by Van Order kept on hand sled runners by which they could promptly convert a wagon box into a typical farm sled. Upon the arrival of the first heavy snow, social leaders got busy. By that time Henry Gates was running a good telephone service and enough other couples were rounded up for a jolly time. It did not matter much what the distance or where the temporary spot to warm up. The impromptu ride into the country wound up, for instance, at the then Elmwood Avenue home of the Percy B. D. Idlers, where the hostess graciously served copiously of hot oyster stew and pumpkin pie or popcorn. Was this naive?

XXIII JUST DOGS

What is childhood without a canine companion? What is the outdoors man without his bird-dog? Indeed, what was the feminine side of the household without a barking companion, possibly from Irene Castle's "Orphans of the Storm", during the Village blackouts for economy in the great depression, when burglars took toll in the suburb?

There are possibly as many stories of Wilmette's experiences with dogs as could be found in any other suburb. There was the early liberty when rabies were almost unheard of in the lexicon of police affairs. But there still was need of a dog-pound for revenue and to sort out the curs from the pedigreed.

One recalls the good-neighbor act when the orphan's number was telephoned to Mrs. Castle's establishment repeatedly and the tracing back which restored the adopted orphan to the bosom of the family. Indeed, there was that fine Castle touch to be remembered; the visit by the dog's probation social worker who called at homes and reported that the adopter was giving adequate attention to the orphan and seemed to be of good moral character.

One still sees signs of the happier canine days at the lake front. Mayhap it is a professional trainer of retrievers, showing his prize dog as he goes through training routine, even into the surf. Or, more commonly, it is the family pooch brought out for an airing in the family car to do stunts for Buddie, who throws sticks into the water. But with the municipal codes for hens, crowing roosters, cow stables and pony barns, the modern dog's life is a dog's life.

With suburban congestion beginning to mount there became such an ordeal as a dog nuisance. Later there was the sharp controversy between the vivisectionists and their opposites over disposal of strays and pets confused with strays.

As many a fond owner saw age creep up on his pal, it was near heart-breaking to have Patsy die in her basket before one's very eyes or to call in Ralph Fireovid or Olof Christensen to put Tag-along away for the long sleep. Even the young Negro yard-man who was studying for the ministry disliked very much to dig through the winter's accumulation of ice in the garden to make the last resting-place.

Wilmette even attained renown because of sprightly dog stories written by a local lady contributor to a national magazine. One of those stories not written but still told in many social gatherings concerns the manner in which one prominent Wilmettrian tried to break the neighbor's pet of the most common practice of harming lawn and shrubs. He had tried shouting, throwing stones and spraying with the hose to no avail. Realizing he might get into trouble, nonetheless he bought a few small cartridges with mustard seed shot. The offending pooch soon presented a rear end as an effective target. Charging instantly to a kangaroo posture, the dog galloped off as best he could, occasionally dragging to relieve the stinging sensation of the shot. For several days he did not show up. Then one day his owner came along with him on a leash. Oddly enough, he stopped and consulted the rifleman.

"What do you suppose is the matter with my dog?" was the query, displaying the irritated back end.

The crack shot mused for a time, then remarked sagely, "Well, that looks like measles".

In time the dog was back at his old tricks on lawn and shrubs. Much as he disliked to do it, the sportsman applied another dose of shot. For a time, no dog. Then again the owner came by with the dog, asking advice. "Well", came the diagnosis. "I guess he's had a relapse".

XXIV GOOD NEIGHBORS

There could hardly be a greater contrast in all Suburbia than the difference in experiences of Wilmette as they related to Gross Point Village to the west and another neighbor, Kenilworth, to the north. Here was a modern village, tailor-made for aristocratic living.

Joseph Sears was an opulent partner of the celebrated N. K. Fairbanks of Chicago. He lived on the near south side of the growing metropolis near the Potter Palmers and Marshall Fields. Not wishing to have his bevy of daughters summer in the city heat at home, the family trekked out to Winnetka each season to enjoy the lake breezes in a suburban setting. As he passed through Wilmette north-bound his eyes surveyed a farm which he thought would make an admirable site for the ideal community he had in mind. He bought the good acres from the lake to the Chicago and North Western Railway tracks and proceeded to occupy the years after his retirement from business in establishing a model village.

Unlike subdividers in many suburbs, he saw the job through completely. He laid out and paved all streets, planted trees, built cement sidewalks and waterworks, beautified the railway station, church and club-house and erected the famous fountain near the restricted business buildings. He even brought ivy from England to adorn the church.

Obtaining "the right sort" of purchasers of home-sites met with marked success. Society editors of the Chicago newspapers placed upon Kenilworth a quasi hall-mark of approval.

In those days it was the vogue to read Sir Walter Scott's "Waverly Novels." Joseph Sears was sufficiently impressed to name the streets and roads after characters and places in those novels. These

general facts so impressed the municipality of Kenilworth in England that Wilmette's northern neighbor was honorably cited.

For a generation Kenilworth followed the pattern set for it. Joseph Sears School bears the name of the founder. As the country club in Wilmette lost the lease on its lake-shore golf links to subdividers, the golf course was moved to the broad acres between the railway tracks in Kenilworth and Ridge Road to the west.

Time wore on. Pressure for annexation of these same acres caused the removal of the club to Glenview Road. In a measure the use of the vacated land was controlled by purchase by a local group, who hoped to regulate real estate development. Tax strikes and delinquencies and depression caused municipal difficulties, which in time were shaken off.

Business blocks appeared "west of the tracks." The Mahoney sisters willed their lake-front farm to the park district to serve as a buffer park against the potential "slums" of Wilmette's old "No Man's Land." The lovely park around the Union Church memorializes the contributions of the Charles Wares to the community. The body of the famous children's poet, Eugene Field, was moved to the cloister in the rector's garden of the Church of the Holy Comforter to attract thousands to the shrine.

For a time it looked as if this Village was to be a cul de sac, but Chestnut Avenue and Sheridan Road gave access into and across the village, and isolation was modified. The high school was a means of bringing social contacts with the other suburbs along the shore. Dancing parties from Wilmette often used the Kenilworth Club-house. For fourteen years the celebrated chamber concerts given in that club Sunday after-

noons cooperatively by music lovers of all the villages added to neighborly contacts.

Occasionally Wilmettrians bought property for new homes in Kenilworth. Villagers from that suburb, which has no library or bank, generally patronize Wilmette institutions. The good neighbor policy is further illustrated by the joint serv-

ice to both communities by the Wilmette Rotary Club. Wilmette Life serves both villages.

Municipally Kenilworth is fortunate, because of its compactness, in not having to struggle with many of the problems pressed upon Wilmette by a long series of indiscriminate annexations.



KENILWORTH, LOOKING EAST FROM RAILWAY STATION

Photograph by Violet Wyld



OLD LIBRARY HALL

used by early library and village council, now a plumbing shop.



FORMER CARNEGIE LIBRARY



NEW WILMETTE PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING



LIBRARY READING GARDEN



NOOK IN GARDEN
Presented to Library by Wilmette Garden Club.

XXV TROUBADORS



"It is a toss-up whether we wished most for entertainment or to express ourselves," said the old-timer. "It was pure fun to listen to the arias and choruses of Gilbert and Sullivan and the blackfaced jokes of Mr. Bones and Mr. Tambourine. But it was just as much fun to take part in the shows. Especially was there pleasure in the fine friendships made at rehearsals."

He was speaking of the era of the "Noise Committee" of the Ouilmette Country Club. In those days, when "The Mikado" or "Powhatan" was announced, it meant that a very large section of the village was interested, both as entertainers and as entertained. Exceptional singers who were not club members were induced to lend their services. The mine run of men were drilled so as to make as good a showing as possible. There always were enough singers among the women to bring the productions up to expectations.

As a seasonal variation, the men emulated Primrose and West or Lew Dockstader in black-face. Occasionally the women took over for an all female minstrel show. Then a bevy

of young matrons went in to Chicago and were trained to put on a pony ballet act.

What can one say of those amateur shows and still be impartial on personalities? The ensemble and the camaraderie were what counted, and today they record only one type of village life. Yet one remembers Leslie F. Gates in "The Mikado" almost as much as when he became president of the Chicago Board of Trade or when he threw himself whole-heartedly into the problems of New Trier High School. No minstrel show was complete without Billy Cornell as the Negro preacher, Brother Nicwodemus, as he separated the sheep from the goats of his congregation. In grimace and high-jinks as Indian medicine man, Dr. Charles Searle gave no hint of the man who was building a famous laboratory.

Of imitations there were many. Kelly and Kirchberg vied with the renowned Weber and Fields. Hoyt King paused from civic affairs to emulate Josh Hayseed and to recite from his family favorite, James Whitcomb Riley. The Gallagher girls could have given fresh ideas to the Duncan Sisters.

Suffice it that as one compares the roster of the Men's Club working for civic improvements with that of the troubadours one finds identical personalities; similar comparison with the Woman's Club reveals similar identities.

In those days, "it all came naturally."

XXVI

WILMETTE SUNDAY EVENING CLUB

One June Sunday morning in 1915, the Rev. Roy Bowers, a relatively new minister of the Congregational Church, asked the men of the congregation to meet him after the service.

“Why,” he asked, “are all the church buildings in this village dark Sunday nights? Can you men not do anything about it?”

They could and did. W. Frank McClure, a newcomer to the village with his wife and two growing children, volunteered the suggestion that Sunday evening clubs were taking the place of the usual Sabbath evening church services. For many years, the more astute clergymen were giving two different types of sermons. In the morning the service was for personal religion. In the evening there often were book reviews, current events or public challenges to virtue which might serve as the springboard for religious interpretations of outstanding happenings which concerned many people.

McClure thought that if the right type of speakers could be obtained, they would serve as sufficiently strong drawing-cards to produce audiences which would support such a movement both in public opinion and financially. He had observed this technique in the neighborhood of the University of Chicago and he had become chairman of the publicity committee for the Chicago Sunday Evening Club. As more than a coincidence, he was publicity director for the great Redpath Lyceum Bureau which sponsored great gatherings around the Chautauqua circuits of the nation. Thus he was experienced with great speakers and with the technique of obtaining and handling them inexpensively.

The circumstances seemed ideal. A committee was formed from among the men of the church, but a blunder came near being made

at the very start. Fearful that other churches might think their fields were being invaded, the Congregational officials had wished to make it



W. FRANK McCLURE
*Chief factor in Wilmette Sunday
Evening Club.*

clear that this was just a device to stimulate interest within the church. McClure and some of his associates on the new committee insisted that, while the meetings might be more easily handled in the Congregational Church auditorium, the only significance to challenge any effort was to recognize at once that the principal objective in working for “the social gospel” was to make this a community-wide movement. If there were those who, for sectarian reasons, did not wish to participate, they could go their ways. But the challenge was to recruit everyone who had a conviction that the fact that this is a religious nation had a

bearing upon all American life.

When church officials had this brought home to them vigorously, and the likelihood of collapse of leadership if there was not hearty cooperation, acquiescence was granted. As happens so frequently in many new movements, the institution became the lengthened shadow of a man. The leading ministers of the town lent their support. There was constant interchange of ideas with them on programs. But procuring speakers and musicians rested almost wholly as a responsibility of the founder of the club.

Among the galaxies of attractions were Vice Presidents of the United States, great rabbis and other leaders of theological thought. Among musicians were whole sections of a symphony orchestra, leading opera stars, the conductors of community singing, and youth from our own high school. Always uppermost was the religious significance of the programs.

Untiring effort produced recruits from other churches of all faiths to serve on the committee and to act as ushers. At the outset possibly 75 per cent of financial support came out of members of the Congregational Church. But soon this changed, until rough estimates placed the audiences as about a similar percentage made up of otherwise non-church-going people.

Then a peculiar reaction began to set in. The programs were so good, taken in the large, that attendance overflowed the church quarters repeatedly. When someone like Calvin Coolidge or William Jennings Bryan was to be the speaker, provision was made for later overflow meetings in the Methodist Church across the street. It became necessary to go very early in order to obtain a

seat. This began to discourage attendance. Meanwhile, the club finances were a chore. Expenses never were met currently and several of the committee signed notes at the bank every spring in order to tide over until collections from voluntary subscriptions came in the next fall. Always admission was free of charge as a basic policy for the school youth.

During the years of the first World War, the Sunday Evening Club played an important patriotic part in the life of the village. Directly flowing from it came the assistance which produced the first North Shore Symphony concerts, in 1922. Always there was the thought uppermost that the programs should reflect religious thinking on American life.

In 1927, a committee discussed with New Trier High School the possibilities of moving the meetings to the high school. The report was unfavorable for the reasons that the movement would be divorced from Wilmette, and secular setting might result in loss of both religious prestige and religious programs.

In 1934, Mr. McClure raised the question of paid admissions instead of wholly free meetings and of getting bigger crowds. The change was made in meeting place, name and organization. Admissions were charged. The whole tone of the meetings was changed. Secularization set in. The pattern set by the Chicago Sunday Evening Club was completely forgotten. The club was no longer a vital segment of Wilmette life.

But for 19 years the Wilmette Sunday Evening Club had been the bridge for thousands of people over the gap between religious and secular culture for the entire community.



BAHA'I



BAPTIST



CHRISTIAN SCIENCE



CONGREGATIONAL



PRESBYTERIAN



METHODIST



MALLINCKRODT HIGH SCHOOL
AND MARIA IMMACULATA CONVENT



ST. AUGUSTINE'S EPISCOPAL



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER PAROCHIAL
SCHOOL



WILMETTE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN



ST. JOSEPH'S PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

XXVII

CHANGING HOLIDAY CUSTOMS

Holiday customs and traditions have changed greatly in Wilmette and on the North Shore since the era of the log-cabins on the Green Bay Trail in the 1820s and the 1830s.

We have no real historical knowledge of what the Scotts, the Ouilmettes, the Dennises, the Beaubiens, the Dushams, the Doyles, and Joel Stebbins did in those cabins to celebrate the holidays. It has been said that because Charles Beaubien was a good fiddler, the Ouilmette girls must have had a chance to dance.

Elizabeth Ouilmette's wedding in the Doyle cabin suggests fraternizing among the cabin folks as the community was beginning to form.

With shore acres being washed into the lake along with cherished corn crops, one can hardly guess that the youngsters had pop corn. More likely the tid-bit was parched corn fried in the long-handled skillet over the hearth. Gilt and tinsel were probably missing.

There was no church or mission for a long distance, nor even a school to establish practices which the pioneer squatters might have carried with them from points longer settled. We have no real knowledge of what took place when finally the first log school house was built by Uncle Billy Foster "about 1839" out near Wilmette Avenue and Eighteenth Street adjacent to M. Hoth's first blacksmith shop at present 1827 Wilmette Avenue. His daughter, Martha, the first North Shore teacher, may have been resourceful enough to have brought the small brood of youngsters into contact with Christmas carols, Santa Claus and such customs, for the settlers were by then going down to Ridgeville (Evanston) for worship.

Anyway, soon that school was abandoned as the Fosters expended their energies on building a new log

school house in the 1840s, recently marked by a memorial tablet erected at Canterbury Court and Sheridan Road by the Daughters of the American Colonists.

If we do not know actual history it is not because Wilmettrians have not tried to imagine what took place. The late W. Frank McClure, long-time civic leader in both Wilmette and Chicago and founder of the Wilmette Sunday Evening Club back in 1915, published a remarkable story in his Fort Dearborn Magazine of December, 1920, which, because of its details sounds as if it were not, what it was, fiction.

It described how Antoine Ouilmette cut the first Chicago Christmas tree for a celebration of the holidays in Fort Dearborn in 1804. Whether there were trees even available in the neighborhood of the fort did not deter imagination of what might have taken place. So, following suit, the Chicago telecasters and newspapers have repeated the story unqualifiedly enough to begin to establish a new Ouilmette legend. For the story ran, "some of the boys warmly clad in deerskins and aided by Ouilmette, the Frenchman whose cabin adjoined the Kinzie house, brought down a goodly tree, which by means of ropes, they dragged across the river and up the incline to the fort."

These publicists always neglect to say that Ouilmette was the first permanent white settler of Chicago, that later his wife and eight children owned the reservation from which our village was carved and that he was enough of a "patron saint" for our founding fathers to name the village after him.

As log cabins gave way to "board and batten" and fine substantial suburban homes, as a public school arose in 1871 and hard-by the first community church, we may be as-

sured that church and school, as well as the many households of the 300 population village of incorporated privileges, began to practice the customs they had learned "down east." The story of St. Nicholas, Christmas carols, the story of the Nativity, Christmas trees, stockings at the chimney-shelf and widespread commercialization of the holidays became a part of American life of the locality. Contrast a few experiences.

At the turn of the century Christmas cards were so rare that Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple, coming in one of the waves of trekking from Chicago, upon mailing a few cards received thanks by letter and telegram in return.

Today Postmaster Lea Orr reports that the daily mailings from the Wilmette post-office in the rush holiday season run 100,000 to 125,000 pieces.

Early in the century it was common for the Nativity to be staged in

the public school. When the automobile came in there were organized groups, some with trumpets and drums, who drove around to sing carols to the shut-ins. Then Homer E. Cotton started the massed seasonal singing at New Trier High School. With his untimely death, his widow, long known as "Mama" Marian Cotton, perfected these Christmas concerts for the whole North Shore. Now the many churches of the village pour forth glad tidings on every hand.

As for decorations, mark the big business in Christmas trees, the organized trimmings on homes all over the village, with their glowing lights. Colorful trappings entwine the lamp-posts at the hands of the cohorts of the Chamber of Commerce. The various clubs give yearly dinners to gleeful children. Broadcasts of carols sound out over the roofs or within the village stores.

One cannot mistake the meaning.



LAYING CORNERSTONE OF ST. AUGUSTINE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN 1898

XXVIII WAR YEARS



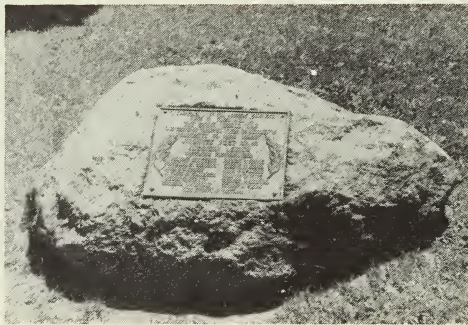
WILMETTE RECRUITS

In front of Village Hall before it was remodeled

World War I came as a surprise to many Wilmettrians. They looked at Europe with vague uneasiness. But since they did not understand European jealousies and politics, they assumed the conflict was none of their serious concern. True, war profits were making the United States a creditor instead of a traditionally debtor nation and prosperity rubbed off. But since, from the President down through officialdom, they heard the doctrine of neutrality, they were inclined to observe that policy.

Came "spurlos versunkt," the deliberate sinking of the Lusitania and the United States entry into the con-

flict, and Wilmette changed pace and purpose. Activity was everywhere. Twice a year the great Liberty Loan campaign recruited both workers and contributors on all sides, with the invention of buttons, car stickers, window displays, processions and four-minute speakers on trains, and in local churches, schools, Sunday Evening Club, culture groups and the theater. War films that had been the vogue took on American emphasis. Publicity and propaganda flooded newspapers and periodicals. Women were busy around the clock knitting and doing other work for Red Cross and other causes.



MEMORIAL STONE IN GILLSON PARK
*marking grove of 13 trees in honor
of war heroes.*

A serious approach to protection specifically for Wilmette came first through a committee and later through guard companies D and K. These activities brought together men outside the draft and provided sparks which powered civic interest, not only for immediate war time, but for years to come.

Drafting youth was something wholly new to the thinking of most people. Carrying identification cards was just as novel. There was turmoil over rooting out German spies and sympathizers, wheatless, sugarless and gasless days and writing to unknown "Sammies" overseas. The village took it in its stride.

A full quota of Wilmette's finest youth went into the armed services. News came of similar recruiting in the neighboring communities. War stories were avidly read. Then came the reports of battles that concerned the home town. Then the lists of dead and wounded. The influenza epidemic took its staggering toll.

Only three war incidents are re-

called here as somewhat typical for all suburbs. Young Peter J. Heurter, the first Gross Point lad to die, was memorialized by a post of the American Legion bearing his name and housed in the old remodeled Gross Point School.

Louis Bruch, aviator, was shot down just the day before the guns ceased firing. A tree with bronze plaque in front of the Methodist Church recalls the services in which fellow aviators from his college fraternity officiated.

In time, the circle of trees memorializing all Wilmette boys in the services was planted immediately opposite the entrance to the Bowl in Washington (now Gillson) Park.

As the hysteria over the armistice wore off, the other post of the American Legion was organized. Legion officers for years stimulated the observance of Memorial Day. The names of the heroic dead were cast in bronze and posted at the entrance of the Village Hall

"Lest We Forget"



COMPANY "D"—THE "HOME GUARD"

Among those in the picture are, standing: Frederick Z. Favor, Lorin A. Bower, Miles McMillen, R. J. Mulvey, Robert L. F. Biesemeier, Herbert Lilly, Karl D. King, H. H. Culver, Dr. D. R. Brown, S. W. Lusted, Herwig Toeppen,

G. W. Carrington.

Rear row, seated: J. Robb Harper, J. R. MacFarland, S. C. Bennett, George R. Harbaugh (Captain of Company "K," National Guard), Herbert Mackie, F. L. Miller, F. A. Bedlan, Harry Hammill, J. C. Nitz.

Second row: Dr. George D. Upson (second from left), John J. Peters, Lewis Starkel, J. M. Mills, W. G. Beyrer, Edward P. Fatch, (company clerk), Ed Kirchberg, Herbert J. Leach, Ira Jones.

Foreground: J. N. Macalister, C. Miles McDonald, G. S. Martin, Albin Carlen.

XXIX THE TORNADO

It happened on Palm Sunday of 1920. Many of the dutiful were just coming home from church. The less dutiful husbands, having finished eighteen holes on neighboring golf courses, were preparing to join wife and children for Sunday dinner. Two storm currents converging from the west developed the whirling vacuum that was to crush obstructions in its path across Northwest Evanston and Wilmette.

People who passed through the experience told different stories, all of which doubtless had large elements of fact. The sky turned a brassy yellow. The rain was torrential. At the outset many people thought it was only a cloudburst.

It was only in the afternoon, when an estimate was made of the destruction, that something of a real picture of events could be sketched. Then it appeared that the long twisting tail of the funnel-like formation had slapped at things right and left in its path much as if the mooring lines of a captive balloon trailed down the path as it escaped before a strong wind. In the case of the tornado the path as it struck Wilmette was pretty much along the line of Wilmette Avenue.



Destruction was severe in the middle of the town around the Village Hall and business blocks. Vacuum produced internal pressures which blew out windows, toppled watchmen's shelters at the grade crossings and draped telephone wires with lace curtains and other household effects.

Roofs of old and new St. August-



tine's Episcopal churches were ripped up. Trees were uprooted or splintered northward on Wilmette Avenue. Here and there a garage was set askew on its foundations. Finally, after giving the barn of the Henry Gage house at Sheridan near Chestnut Avenue a vicious slap, the storm hopped over No Man's Land to be lost in the lake. Capitalizing on the publicity of the event, the Gage's tenants who were running a sort of road-side restaurant in the old landmark, called the house thereafter until it was razed to save taxes, "Tornado Tavern."

Four brief stories are gleaned out of the many experiences of the day.

One North Evanstonian was driving in an open "touring car" of current mode with his young son. Going east on Central Street, Evanston, as the direction away from the storm, he reported that only when the tin roof of a building shot over his head did he realize what was happening. Then he just kept on driving as fast as he could until he got out of the reach of the funnel.

One family coming out of the Congregational Church at Wilmette and Lake Avenues, paused to visit some friends in Wilmette Inn on Eleventh Street, while the man of the family rushed home to get the family bus. All that was expected was a heavy rain. Returning from the north, he drove along the east side of Eleventh Street, honked his horn and hurried

his family into the car, down to Central Avenue and east on that street just in time to get buckets of water in the tonneau but to escape the whiplash of the tornado. The house maid was badly frightened because a storm-window had been blown out and a tree badly tilted. It later developed that had the car approached the Inn from the south it would have encountered a fallen tree every fifty feet on the way home.

A tragedy on the North Western Railway was narrowly averted. Earl E. Orner, station-master and civic leader, realizing that an approaching fast train might be wrecked by debris on the tracks, ran up the tracks and flagged the train at Kenilworth.



A quasi-military supervision was set up against possible vandalism in the center of the village. Damages were rapidly repaired. The Village made news for the Chicago newspapers. Pictures were taken by the present writer for future historical reference.



Topping all local experiences were those of "Chuck" and his family, who lived near the Public Library. In preparation for dinner a cup of sugar rested on the table; it was completely emptied and then filled with dirt. A tree was uprooted and in the cavity a pony was buried up to the neck. "Chuck" himself, aged about four years, was blown out of one window and through a next door window and under a bed, where he cowered for a long time lest he be blamed for the whole affair.



XXX

RETURN TO NORMALCY

After World War I, the nationwide call for a return to "business as usual" struck a responsive chord in Wilmette. On all sides there was a feeling that the nation had taken the war in its stride.

The admonitions concerning the Bolsheviki and their revolution, the brash adventure into Russia, the negotiations at Versailles, the huge inter-allied debts and the problems of the League of Nations were the responsibilities of national personalities.

Time and again, the executives of the Fifth or Victory Liberty Loan campaign in Chicagoland were patronized pityingly by the mine-run of citizens who acted as if these financial responsibilities were none of their concern. War mementoes, such as captured enemy flags, iron crosses, Verdun medals, German helmets and scores of other war reminders were treated as curiosities. But the bereaved did not forget.

Churches and Sunday Evening Club began to hear national speakers on the many abstruse aspects of international affairs. Few people realized what it meant to go within a few years from the position of a debtor to that of a creditor nation. The great majority began to work on business and civic problems that had been pushed aside for the war effort. It was good to forget gasless and sugarless Sundays.

In the decade from the close of the war to the great panic of 1929, suburbanites of the Wilmette area far surpassed "business as usual." The migration of many Mr. and Mrs. Young Couples from the city grew apace. Building for homes, business and institutions presaged even over-expansion. The corporate limits of the village were sharply extended. There was need to increase school facilities so that kindergartners would not have to be accommodated in the Public Library and in the cafe-

teria in Melvin Brown's Boulevard Building.

The period was to see the beginning of the great Baha'i House of Worship, the erection of the Masonic Temple, the expansion of the Woman's Club, the creation of the supervised village recreation through services of the Recreation and Playground Board, the erection of Howard School and the contemplation of its later use as a junior high school, the annexation of a major portion of the Village of Gross Point, with many subsequent problems entailed thereby, and the speculative ventures of brash real estate subdividers which resulted in another decade of financial difficulties during the depression era.

Possibly as significant as any of the changes in this great period of transition was the development of scores of new personalities who became leaders in social, business, cultural, religious, and civic enterprises.

Women, now that they had received the full franchise, became more active. The Woman's Club had already produced marked leadership. Now came the League of Women Voters. Service clubs for men budded forth in the Optimists and Rotary. The last named initiated a survey which produced the Wilmette Community Chest. Local men who worked in Chicago felt the need of understanding the sources and reasons for local civic problems; they founded the Wilmette Civic League, which for a time seemed a proper vehicle for village-wide planning. The failure to distinguish between civics and partisan politics rang down its curtain.

All these developments had been in a measure forecast by Wilmette's first village planning. Had it not been for the panic, depression and wreckage pressed on the suburb by its over-expansion, real village planning might not have been postponed.

XXXI

EARLY VILLAGE PLANNING

The overlapping of specialized taxing powers and administrative authorities of corporate Village, School District, Park District and New Trier Township High School District and their conflicts with State, County, Township, Sanitary District and Forest Preserve officials were never adequately understood by the postwar rising population of Wilmette.

Always there were gaps in needed services between some out of this multitude of local governing boards. As these gaps showed that what was everybody's business was often nobody's business, efforts were made to set up some new type of control that might bridge the gaps. Often the plans were for voluntary groups, such as had been the forerunner of bathing beach management. Minor civic groups or clubs were insufficient for major purposes. And Wilmette was feeling growing pains.

As frequently was the case, the Woman's Club sponsored the English study on social services. Citizen George E. Cole, assisted by Hoyt King, both of Wilmette, had been successful through the Municipal Voters League of Chicago in routing the "gray wolves" from the Chicago city council. In the English survey Cole thought he saw possibilities for Wilmette agencies to cooperate to meet deficiencies. At his own expense he printed the report for the women.

Ere long there was a gathering of representatives of 26 organizations of the village. They pooled their ideas, organized a board of 52 directors and then waited. Sub-committees issued plans. Carol singing, which had been initiated by the Congregational Church, was passed over to the unwieldy group along with its Christmas tree, which was transferred to the ground before the Village Hall. A valiant band got out

their cars on snowy Christmas eve and serenaded the shut-ins. Then the association folded up.

Much better was the official adoption of village planning. Edward Zipf, a prosperous Chicago coal merchant, had been elected village president on a sound management platform. His administration appointed a formal planning commission headed by Edward L. Scheidenhelm. In 1922, a report was issued recommending several important procedures. One of these was architecturally to lift Wilmette's face by developing a Queen Anne style of facade for the "shacks" and more substantial business structures in the center of the village. This practically died a a-borning.

More important it was recommended that Village and School District co-operate in buying the best of the unoccupied land on the west side of town for a much needed school building and playground. We must bear in mind that at this time the corporate Village, the Wilmette School District and the Park District territory extended westward only to Ridge Road. Practical co-operation came with the report. By the time of the 1922 contested east-side versus west-side school election, options had been acquired on the land between Seventeenth Street and Ridge Road south of Lake Avenue.

Arthur H. Howard was elected president of the board of education. The major occupation of the board became the purchase of practically the east half of the property, while the corporate village purchased the remainder. Bonds had been voted to erect Ridge School. Mr. Howard died just before the completion of his dream for a junior high school building. The name of the new school was effaced from the building and at dedication time that of Mr. Howard was substituted with general acclaim. But it took a whole gener-

ation to rearrange the grades to create a junior high school as envisioned by that village leader. None the less the playground cooperation was born.

The rest of the village's compre-

hensive plan gathered dust in files. But planning had been recognized. The women, now that they had been granted reluctant franchise nationwide, were to be heard from time and again.



Seated left to right: Lloyd Hollister, E. C. Cazel, D. F. Hall, A. K. Mestjian, L. J. Schildgen, David Nelson, R. L. F. Biesemeier, D. E. Allen, R. M. Johnston, E. W. Weber, Dr. H. I. Jones, G. A. Schoenrock and F. J. Budinger.
 Middle row: Victor Blavacek, Rev. C. M. Crowe, Dr. O. N. Christensen, P. L. Schaefer, Charles Genge, James Crabb, R. B. Mathieson, L. P. Steffens, Leroy Zick, Lea J. Orr, Dr. Paul B. Bass, Ralph Clay, Dr. George G. Fischer, Gordon Storm, Robert A. Wolff, Harry T. Moore, Haydn Jones, C. C. Henderson, F. D. Anderson, A. J. Bushey, W. L. Brown, C. M. Phillips, D. Pagliarulo, W. A. Wolff, W. C. Drager, James E. Pearson, Rev. A. B. Allison, C. E. Peaster, A. C. Pearson, M. D. Bell, Dr. W. F. Schur, Dr. H. O. Welshaar and Melvin Brodstaug.
 Top row: Philip Foster, Frank S. Cellier, L. F. Todd, A. W. Jensen, J. J. Schneider, R. C. Anderson, E. W. Hammond, H. J. Himes, H. M. Bradshaw, Dr. M. H. Seifert, F. D. Frisbie, Dr. R. T. Fireoed, G. H. Rigler, H. C. Kinnc, Horace Holley, Fred W. Bray, H. W. Bvier, E. E. Henderson.

Rotary Club of Wilmette, 25th Anniversary, February 23, 1949

TYPICAL BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL MEN OF WILMETTE

XXXII

BUSINESS WAKES UP

For many years after the founding of Wilmette, local business and the real estate needs for housing local business were over-balanced by suburban home building. So much patronage of the many Young Couples went through customary channels to Chicago stores and professional people that there was a frequent wail that this should not be so, that Wilmette should patronize Wilmette services.

For this long period real estate development around the North Western Railway station and along Ridge Road was catch-as-catch-can. Numerous frame shacks sprouted up for temporary needs. Services were so meager that when Husband sent Wife and the children off for summer vacation at some Wisconsin lake, he had to remember to get his meals in Chicago; they were not available in the suburb.

Slowly, adventurous souls began to figure on possible returns from investing in substantial brick or frame stores. As population increased and as new schools, clubs, and churches became focal spots, needs of business and professional men expanded. This in turn led to larger buildings.

Meanwhile building codes were developed by the Village Council. A sharp contrast was drawn between slow-burning and fireproof construc-

tion. The excessive cost of the latter led to restrictions in many cases to one-story structures. Thus Wilmette exhibits a large number of sprawling business blocks. With ingrained fears of a rapid spread of flat buildings once the use of apartments started, many suggestions to utilize unused land for apartments in buffer zones between residences and stores raised controversies. Often these disputes were carried to the polls in bitter elections. In time zoning set in. Law suits were begun against non-conforming uses. Hundreds of non-conforming flats crept into many neighborhoods irrespective of building laws.

By this time business organized to speak up for itself. It is difficult to pinpoint this type of influence upon the whole community. But local business services became more and more a necessity to Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple, now no longer so young except as the term applies to new recruits from the City. Business became more vocal; it advertised. But so did the branches of the Chicago stores which had spread to Evanston. Thus we find a merging of influences, from both local business and the needs to house it and at the same time needs to utilize casual space for living quarters. A considerable change was taking place in one of the greatest factors in Wilmette suburban life.

XXXIII

CIVIC MUSIC

Two Wilmette friends chanced to meet on the Chicago-bound 20th Century train and fell to chatting. One man had been entertained out on Long Island where the conversation turned to music. The name of Pablo Cassals, the great cellist, was mentioned. With dead-pan expression, the Wilmette man said, "Yes. He is very fine. He plays for us at our school house."

The rest of the party raised their eyebrows.

The names of Elizabeth Rethberg, Rosa Raisa, Richard Crookes and other singers brought out the same casual remark: he or she sang in our school house. The company could not believe that such celebrities would demean themselves thus in a small midwestern suburb.

The episode points up a combination of musical events that made the North Shore celebrated for its musical taste and patronage. As patrons and producers for fine civic music, Wilmette did its considerable part. Possibly the greatest stimulus came in the 1920's. There had been long association with Ravinia Park enterprise and with the Northwestern University musical festivals under Peter Lutkin. But channeling civic activities into music through a chain of local events came about in a way that became part of North Shore history.

The Wilmette Sunday Evening Club had introduced "The Little Symphony" made up of 25 members of the Chicago Orchestra conducted by George Dasch. A chance remark was made to the music supervisor of the Wilmette public schools that such music could easily become a regular part of North Shore life. Mrs. Homer E. Cotton had become director of music at New Trier High School and had brought her glee club to Wilmette to sing. She also had devised the music memory contests

in the high school for pupils of all villages of the township. Time and again different schools won pianos as prizes for their excellence in music appreciation. There came a time when this same "Little Symphony" played a student concert. It was suggested that co-operation of all four villages could produce the support needed to give afternoon concerts for the children and evening concerts for adults. A committee was formed which for seven years, and until the panic, made music and social history for the whole township.

Among the many capable members of the committee was Mrs. Roland D. Whitman of Winnetka. wishing to bring during the winter months the best of individual musicians to the high school, she arranged with the Winnetka Music Club to sponsor the Artists' Series, which has continued ever since.

Meanwhile, a group centering in the Kenilworth Club, organized by Mrs. A. B. Spach, now a resident of Wilmette, introduced and nurtured chamber music at that club in a remarkable manner. She gathered about her such Kenilworth people as Mr. and Mrs. Walter Marx and Mr. and Mrs. Percy B. Eckart and other committee members from all four villages. The best of quartets, trios and occasional ensembles performed for fourteen seasons. Dr. Frederick A. Stock said at that time that this was the longest endeavor known to him in this field. And not least of the results was the fine acquaintances made at the teas held immediately after the Sunday matinees.

With the panic and subsequent depression, the symphony concerts could not be supported. The committees were tired. The chamber music also faded away. The Artist Series alone persisted. But the potential audiences were still here.

In 1935, the Federal government

in aiding the unemployed, stimulated in music, as in many other cultural fields, activities which produced the Illinois Symphony Orchestra. For a time its concerts were made at student matinees and evening adult concerts at the high school. The cost was roughly one-tenth that of the earlier symphony efforts. The orchestra wished a wider field. Wilmette rose to the challenge the next year by employing this orchestra weekly for a season on the esplanade of the village waterworks.

Meanwhile, the Wilmette park commissioners were creating the lake-front park Bowl, whose stage in its unique sylvan setting was made available through a gift of \$10,000 by one trustee . . . the late Charles A. Feltman.

Before the Bowl was completed, bleachers were borrowed from the high school, and through the co-op-

eration of the Village, Park and the Chamber of Commerce, weekly free summer orchestra concerts were provided for thousands of music lovers from many areas. They put Wilmette on the map. At the peak of success, Philip Maxwell, director of the Chicago Tribune music festivals and the opera diva, Miss Edith Mason, at a huge concert demonstration stated that the music privileges provided by Wilmette were unique.

Then came World War II and unemployment vanished and with it the Illinois Symphony Orchestra. Civic enterprise of nearly two decades had set the pattern which the Park and Recreation boards could follow in later years in the same Bowl. Possibly the inspiration flowed over into the community artists concerts. Certainly the high school leadership was the source of much of the civic music history of the community.



WILMETTE PARK BOWL

Here in season are to be heard concerts, religious services and community gatherings.

WE ANNEX GROSS POINT VILLAGE

Possibly the most far-reaching act affecting the Wilmette suburban area was the annexation in 1924 of most of the territory previously governed by the Village of Gross Point, west of Ridge Road. This movement can hardly be attributed to conscious long-term planning, though leaders meant it to be. Yet it created a "greater Wilmette" with a new outlook on suburban life.

Like other annexations, it was something that had to happen. Yet it left a motley of boundary lines for village, school districts, and park districts. Although most of the land area was tilled by truck gardeners, the heritors of the German pioneers of this section of the North Shore, this land was too valuable to remain agricultural. Real estate investors took over large acreages for subdivision. They needed greater public services for sanitation, water supply, fire and police protection.

There were recurrent discussions over school and park inadequacies in Gross Point and adjacent Glenview areas. Many Wilmette people had suffered from auto speed-traps at Illinois Road and Lake Avenue. Blind pigs were notorious. The Village of Gross Point practically went broke and gave up its charter even before merger plans were ripe. There was a threat that, through no municipal protection in that large area, Wilmette would be harboring a municipal cancer.

Nearby Skokie was to exhibit erratic real estate subdividing. Leaders in Wilmette did not wish to see this village follow the rush of mushrooming with added problems of flat buildings, liquor, and political conflicts. Ensued the annexation, with others to follow which would carry the Village corporate boundaries to the Chicago River, the Wilmette School District only part way and the Park District erratically with

changing boundaries for a generation.

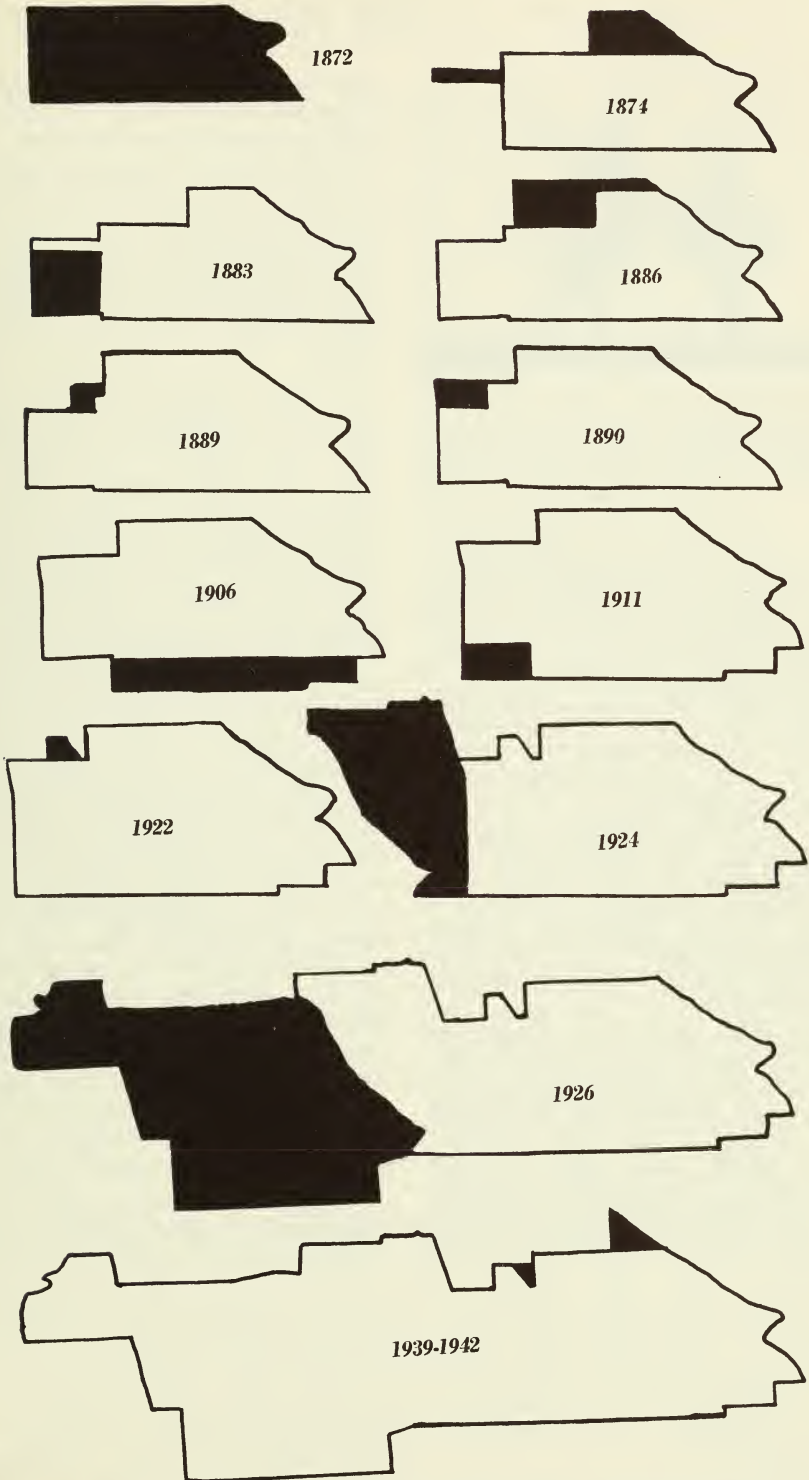
The fresh alignment brought many problems. Misunderstandings arose which affected politics. Property owners who resided in Gross Point School District No. 40, assumed they had school rights in the Wilmette School District No. 39. Misleading signs on vacant real estate implied that new residents who purchased in Indian Hills Estates were entitled to services at Howard School, which was not the case, until years later when the two districts merged.

The over-expansion of real estate developments in the whole western area entailed much mortgaging of farm properties long before they could be profitably developed for homes. Development of storm-water drainage under heavy special assessments brought collapse and foreclosure of many properties. Exploratory tests among the farmers for extending the Wilmette Park District west of Ridge Road brought the bucolic reply that the children could play on the farms.

As these problems arose, the old Gross Point School on Wilmette Avenue was closed and for a time was a recreation center and finally an American Legion Post headquarters. New Highcrest school rose to serve those of the west end who did not use St. Joseph's.

Important as were the complexities of land development, municipal facilities and financial chaos for many, it was to take a generation to bring about a semblance of order. The cross interests of Wilmette and Glenview Park Districts, Wilmette and Avoca School districts and Wilmette logical village planning brought up the serious question as to whether there were not many people who felt Wilmette's western areas presented impossible municipal problems.

A Little Village and How It Grew



SUCCESSIVE ANNEXATIONS TO ORIGINAL VILLAGE

“WHY SHOULDN’T GIRLS PLAY BALL, TOO?”



“It isn’t fair. The boys have the baseball diamond all the time. They say girls are not supposed to play ball on the school grounds. They are so!”

The young miss of twelve years had burst into the superintendent’s office during a chat with the school board president on the evils of irregular and overlapping areas of local governments. The young lady was placated — possibly “stalled”. But hers was the spark that helped to power a long chain-reaction in local civil government.

The areas of school districts, park districts and village were such that Wilmette, the community, was not the same as Wilmette, the school district, or Wilmette the park district. “No Man’s Land” was in reality no man’s land.

What could be done to foster supervised recreation and play on the grounds of the various boards? The matter was brought up in school board meetings. J. Robb Harper, Enoch Steen and Clark Gapin were named a committee to investigate the best experiences in such supervision. Board members and the committee took the stump to recommend action under state laws to create a recreation and playground board with a special tax rate in the Village levy to support the board’s activities. The campaign was successful.

Through a gentlemen’s agreement representatives to the new board

were named from the schools, village and parks. There was need for much preliminary exploration, due to differences in opinion on the types of activities most to be emphasized. Income fluctuated through later tax delinquencies and the rise and fall of income shared from the cooperative management of the Community Golf Course beside the Drainage Canal.

It was perhaps natural, since much of the work of this activity was with children, that sports and games were most emphasized. This phase of organization was developed over a number of years by the first recreational director, Daniel Davis. Upon his death, the directorship was taken up by Howard Copp, who emphasized the numerous aspects of local history by taking children of the board’s day camp to numerous local historical spots. Meanwhile, stimulated by other groups, music had been brought to the waterworks esplanade and later to the Bowl in the lake-front park. Here for many years free concerts were given weekly by a full symphony orchestra during summer months. This was made possible by public donations and by the fact that the Federal government supplied services of a Public Works Administration orchestra almost free of charge. This type of cultural recreation has now been revived under the direction of the present director, Russell Perry.

Doubtless the expanding recreational needs of the children and youth of Wilmette would have brought action from some quarter to counterpart, for instance, the success of the bathing beach under park district supervision. But, whether it is a far cry or not, local guidance was pressed forward by the young miss who insisted that girls had just as much right to play ball as did the boys.

XXXVI

SERVICE CLUBS AND CIVIC LEAGUE

Continuously over the years, the men of Wilmette have felt the need for a sounding-board from which they might express themselves on many divergent local affairs. For a time some group would organize, wax significantly and then wane and be forgotten. Often these groups got together for one political campaign and then broke up.

In the 1920's, the need for fellowship and community service bred an interest in such organizations as the Optimists, Rotarians and (in 1940) Lions, both in Wilmette and in Chicago. These business and professional men found significant gaps in their affiliations. If they were organized strictly among local men, their group did not reach effectively into the preponderating majority of men of the village who worked in Chicago. What the local clubs had to offer in service and civic understanding was not communicated effectively to the mass of men citizens. Here the new upgrowing civic and political intelligence of the women's groups had the men at a distinct disadvantage.

Sensing this discrepancy in service to men and concerned over repeat small-time political brawls, more than 100 men organized to bridge the gap as the Wilmette Civic League. The group tried to protect itself against political embroilments, wishing to thrash out civic problems before they became partisan issues at elections.

For several years the League's monthly luncheon meetings in Chi-

cago purveyed factual information. Membership mounted several fold. Then a blunder was made through implementing the group ideas by political action. A village election of 1931 raised such bitter enmities that one could see the handwriting on the wall. Possibly the trials of the great depression may have been hurdles. The steady development of the idea of a well organized Harmony Convention may have removed some of the urge for local political action. Rapid strides in population worked against citizen solidarity. Without formal action the Wilmette Civic League passed into limbo.

The other local service clubs prospered and became increasingly effective within their restricted memberships. But the big suburban gap persisted. Local business and professional men functioned effectively for themselves but there was no formal method by which Wilmette men of Chicago occupation in numbers could meet continuously to discuss strictly Wilmette affairs. Even more importantly, there was no rapprochement between the male and female elements of the suburb in areas of suburban thinking except intermittently or in emergencies. Always when significant issues arose, steering leaders called for mass meetings, which often became pressure groups. When the die was eventually cast at elections, the lack of a continuous sounding-board again and again resulted in large and disgruntled minorities quite out of keeping with the amenities of gracious suburban living.

XXXVII

STORM WARNINGS

Few people engaged in community affairs in the late 1920's realized the significance of the storm warnings disclosed through tax troubles. It was only after the panic and during the ensuing great depression that cause and effect were put together. Then at a meeting of the Wilmette Civic League an assistant states attorney in charge of tax matters explained that nearly half a billion dollars of errors had occurred in the 1927 real estate assessments. This was at last so serious that the Illinois state tax authorities ordered a fresh assessment. This meant the most serious kind of complexities.

A Wilmette personality, the late Oscar W. Schmidt, one-time village president and at that time a county commissioner, interposed a question. How long would it take to make a fresh assessment of Cook County realty and how much would it cost? The estimate was three months and a cost of about \$125,000. State authorities had no idea of the magnitude of county business in Cook County compared with other counties down state. It took Champaign County only three months to have new tax bills in the mails; there was almost no delay in the tax collections. But in Cook County the time for reassessment stretched out for nearly a year and a-half and the cost was well over \$1,000,000. This delay meant no tax bills for nearly two years.

The penalties resulting to all the taxing boards in the county were staggering. But they did not come to a head at once. Meanwhile speculation in stocks produced the panic of 1929, with the drying-up of many lines of credit. Also real estate speculation had been rife. Many subdividers in Wilmette vacant property were in default on their tax pay-

ments and on their mortgages. Foreclosures began to appear. The usual buyers of delinquent tax titles disappeared from the markets. Tax objectors became tax strikers. Roughly half the real estate properties of the county were in default. In New Trier Township more than 7,000 properties out of a total of a little more than 18,000 were in default.

The period of expansion was over. Many people lost their homes. Real estate became a drug on the market. The expansion of civic responsibilities occasioned by the earlier annexation of most of Gross Point Village to corporate Wilmette and of Gross Point School District to the Wilmette District in 1932 was a serious strain on volunteer civic leaders.

It became necessary for most local governmental bodies over the whole county to resort to the use of interest-bearing tax anticipation warrants in order to operate. This put a tremendous additional load on all local governments; and it bought no normal services.

Then began the doubts about the fiscal integrity of many villages schools, parks and their boards. The banks were shortly to face the great moratorium. Necessarily they began to pick and choose those municipalities to whom they could lend credit through the purchase of tax warrants. Three adverse influences were now combined: the tax delinquencies, the shortening of municipal credit and the beginning of the depression.

Wilmette and the North Shore in general shortly had to contrive how they would get out of this impasse and provide necessary services on shortened tax rations that were to persist for a decade.

XXXVIII POWER OF THE WOMEN

Throughout the entire history of Wilmette women have been an important civic influence. Sometimes this has been due to marked leadership of individuals. Probably more often power has been beneficial when it has been formally organized.

From time to time these sketches have reflected accomplishments because of action by the Woman's Club of Wilmette. It would be a mistake to imply here that all effective woman's work was channeled through the Woman's Club. This would eliminate

much work of women through churches, PTA and various charitable and other civically inspired groups. Yet a deliberate choice is made here to point to a group of club women because they were typical of their own and subsequent time and personalities. For another reason, an accompanying photograph brings together graphically nearly a score of women who for a long generation, aided by colleagues, were constantly in the forefront of all sorts of Wilmette social, cultural, religious and civic activities.



AFTER LAYING THE CORNERSTONE FOR THE WOMAN'S CLUB

The building committee of 1929-1930 of the Woman's Club of Wilmette just after they had laid the cornerstone of their new building, long to be a center of women's activities.

Left to right, lower row: Mesdames A. J. Dixon, Hayes McKinney, president, Frank J. Scheidenhelm, chairman, Harvey A. Bush, Herbert B. Mulford, vice chairman, John G. Mannerud; Center row: Mesdames George W. Kibby, A. E. Beirnes, R. E. P. Kline, Nathan P. Colwell, Frederick M. Bowes, William A. Durgin, Top row: Mesdames Thomas C. Moulding, F. E. Parry, R. P. Huff, Arthur H. Howard, G. P. Berg, O. E. Thaleg.



WOMEN'S CLUB OF WILMETTE

The period immediately after World War I was marked by village expansion, geographically and in population, by the erection of important new buildings, by the granting of the universal electoral franchise to women and by the inception of the League of Women Voters. The Community Chest was established. The nation was experimenting with prohibition. There was marked development of music and art through New Trier High School. All this implies opportunities and responsibilities for organized women.

In 1929, Mrs. Hayes McKinney, as president of the Woman's Club of Wilmette, was fortunate in having

as a new building committee a group of personalities among whom were past and future presidents, vice presidents and group chairmen who with their associates that year broke ground and laid the cornerstone for the splendid new building fitting as the center of many activities for generations. Obviously similar groups could be recorded, period after period. Suffice it here to indicate one typical group of women who dared to face up to the panic and depression and to build for the future. Wilmette's well-known artist, Mrs. Alonzo J. Coburn memorialized their names in sculpture at the entrance of the building they erected.



GETTING READY TO VOTE

Early leaders of Wilmette League of Women Voters. Left to right, back row: Mesdames Thomas E. Almdale, William A. Durgin, John Clark Baker, C. Warren Cozzens, Henry K. Snider, John Weedon, Doan, Irving H. Adkins, Roache; front line: Mesdames William J. Weldon, C. P. Evans, Shelby Singleton, president, G. T. Hellmuth, Roy F. France.

XXXIX

COSTS OF EXPANSION

Although storm signals were flying over all municipal government in Chicagoland, the urge for suburban expansion and efforts to anticipate government needs of the rising population persisted in Wilmette into the 1930's. This was to be seen in both private and public enterprises.

Speculation in real estate subdividing brought the big project of storm relief sewers to connect with the Drainage Canal. Costs were met by special assessment bonds which soon became a drag on Wilmette credit. There were failures among contractors. Subdivisions that had been created from truck farms were bogged down; some went down under foreclosures. Tax defaults mounted. Many people were caught in the deflation and lost their stakes.

Trying to plan on street lay-outs into the future, one municipal commission suggested that Oakwood and Ashland Avenues be made boulevards. Instantly the residents of those streets demanded that the Village Council should stop any such plans. The row in the council chamber soon spread politically, with many misunderstandings. Meanwhile, Wilmette was working out plans for the village manager type of local government which produced an ordinance that was almost ideal. But differences in political opinions brought this issue as well as streets, into the 1931 municipal election. The row was historic.

Then came a controversy with Evanston over water supply and rates. Municipal ownership of a waterworks became an issue which ripped the voters apart for months before the present plant was built. At the outset the costs were increased materially. But soon the Village of Glenview began to get its water supply from Wilmette and later the U. S. Naval Air Base did likewise. This patronage eventually produced in-

creased village profits which helped to defray village expenses and to call for current plant expansion attended by water rationing.

Meanwhile, New Trier High School started expansion plans which ran into serious difficulties. The long delays in tax collections and the fact that only a part of the taxes were collected for many years caused wide-spread curtailments of education and teacher salaries in many areas of all Suburbia. There was no comprehensive planning by state or county tax authorities in time to stem difficulties. Work on a sixty-room addition to the high school plant, which was about 80 per cent completed, was shut down for lack of funds for nearly two years. In February of 1933 the fiscal situation was so critical that the board of education of the high school voted to close the school the following school year.

Wilmette public schools repeatedly had been bailed out by public drives to borrow money through selling tax warrants. In Glencoe four departments in public schools were closed in order to try to get on a cash basis. These circumstances were calling for some sort of cooperation of all taxing boards in the township. Evanston was no exception to these problems. Schools began to close all over the state.

While all private expansion enterprises did not suffer identically, still the new building erected by the Ouilmette Country Club caused the club to be reorganized twice. The magnificent Methodist Church edifice entailed very serious problems for that congregation. The Woman's Club new building brought a problem financially which was several years in solving. Through all the troubles, however, there was insistence that Wilmette would rise to its obligations and somehow or other would get out of the red.

XL RUN ON THE BANK

Wilmette was not without its dramatic perils in the days when financial disaster and depression rolled across the nation.

It was on a Saturday morning, June 25, 1932. The young clerk of the woman's shop, in the absence of her employer away on a buying trip, was about to open for the day's trade, when street news told her that the local First National Bank had failed and that there was a mad run on the Wilmette State Bank. First she telephoned her home, where a frightened housekeeper wished to return to Finland to build herself a house with her savings. She had the right to know what was going on. Then the clerk telephoned her employer's spouse for instructions about the customary week-end bank deposit. Came the reply, "Do as you always do. The directors of that bank are honest, capable men. They will not let it fail."

True to the appraisal, the directors immediately had a poster distributed about the village announcing that they were personally guaranteeing every deposit. Nonetheless, this was one of the most exciting days in Wilmette's business history.

During the day the episodes in the bank were dramatic. The most surprising to the customers crowded in the lobby was the arrival of an armored truck with a large amount of currency at the very moment when the president of the bank, Judson F. Stone, had mounted a chair to tell the depositors that the bank, which usually closed at noon on Saturday, would remain open as long as anyone was there asking to withdraw money.

A Message From Your Home Bank After 27 Years of Service to the Community

This community represents but a little section of America. And, knowing the people of this community, its friends and neighbors we believe it is a better than average section. Living and working together, we have built up here in Wilmette a fine spirit of mutual confidence which this bank, as a wholly local institution, is proud to share.

It is probably not stretching the truth to say that the forward march of Wilmette as a progressive community cannot be continued without the services of a local banking institution. And it is our purpose, as it always has been, to provide such an institution, conducted in such a manner that Wilmette's progress can be assured.

It is, of course, true that we have tried and will continue to try, through the kind of service we render, to keep the confidence and the co-operation of every citizen of Wilmette. We want them to look upon us as more than merely a bank run for profit, for as a matter of fact, we are more. We are an institution, a part of your community performing a necessary function.

The stability of a bank depends upon its assets and the men behind it. Approximately 70 percent of the assets of this bank is held and owned by its board of directors. These directors are as follows:

W. W. BUCHANAN
LYMAN M. DRAKE
PHILIP HOFFMANN
E. F. LEWIS, JR.
J. ALDEN SEARS

FRANK J. SENG
C. N. STEVENS
JUDSON F. STONE
HENRY TAYLOR, JR.
S. A. WHELOCK

The directors of this bank, as individuals, stand solidly behind the bank with the pledge of their personal resources, if required, as an assurance that depositors' money shall be fully safeguarded. The bank, therefore, is solid—and it proposes to remain so.

We are invited to come in and visit us. We want you to know us and we want to know you. Furthermore, we all have a common purpose after all—to see Wilmette go forward, always with Wilmette's place as a fine example of an American home community.

The WILMETTE STATE BANK

1200 Central Ave.

Capital and Surplus \$400,000

GUARANTEED DEPOSITS
placard and advertisement used during run on the bank.

It was a touching anti-climax when the frightened railway crossing flagman came in, fearful that he was too late to save his life earnings. Mr. Stone said he could withdraw his money, but that it was not safe to have so much money on his person. Would he care to rent a safe deposit box and to safeguard his money in the bank vault?

"I think maybe you should still take care of my money as you have always done," replied the flagman.

The housekeeper could not be persuaded to forget her fears. She took her money home with her. Eventually she bought her house in Finland.

XLI

RENTING A LAMPOST



During the many queer gyrations of the suburban whirl, the course of street lighting marked municipal progress as well as village customs.

Early in our history young Melvin Brown and John Peters, the scions respectively of east side and west side pioneers, were assigned about a dozen lampposts each to attend for a modest stipend. These posts were wooden, with holes bored in their sides. The lamp-lighters carried in their kit wooden plugs which could be inserted in these holes, thus forming an impromptu step by which to mount and trim the lamps. These latter were of the "coal oil" model. Doubtless the boys learned something of the way in which the lamp chimney should be cleaned of soot from having been drilled to this task in the family kitchen. They had wagons by means of which to haul their cans of kerosene for filling the lamps. Any way it was a job.

Of the same era was the ubiquitous family lantern. Sidewalks were often washed away. The town was as dark as a pocket. In order to go to or from railway station at night or to some social gathering, one and all resorted to the lantern.

These circumstances called for improvement. When gas became the vogue for the more opulent, the street lighting spruced up. But still there was need for the lamp-lighter with his long stick and match both to turn on the gas-cock and to light

the flame. Finally came the electric era with its tall street lamps.

As the great depression challenged village fathers to resort to every possible means to economize in deficit financing, Wilmette had to get used to gray-outs and then black-outs. As one drove into the village at night it was a distinct shock to see the poor lighting. This was caused, first, by cutting off the mid-block lamps entirely; second by complete shut-out of all lamps shortly after mid-night.

Here was an open invitation for thieves and burglars. Time and again one would see tire-thieves "casing" a group of automobiles near some home where a party was in progress.

C. M. Osborn, then village manager, was sitting in his office one day when a bothered citizen told him of a robber locking his wife in the bath-room while he searched the house for money. Screams of the daughter of the household had brought patrol cars to ease the situation. But the block was too dark.

"C. M.," said the citizen, "I want to rent the lamppost in our block."

The manager hesitated, but opined that a dollar a month would pay off. And that is the way it worked until the lights went on about six months later.

The pedestrian in strolling about the village often observes a tree near some curb whose trunk is badly scarred. These are the marks of the early careening autoists who did not drive straight in turning corners. Today the wounds are of a different sort. Every now and then one observes a tall wagon and men at work with equipment to place lampposts in their proper setting. Nowadays the autoist, instead of clipping trees, sheers down the lampposts. If he is properly insured, his policy may foot the bill for this job, which is close to \$200.

XLII BOONDOGLING

The epithets applied to activities to create work for the unemployed during the depression were pretty much a misnomer in Wilmette. True, a wave of protest went up in many quarters, for "coddling," "raking leaves," "made work," and general results which flowed from financial hand-outs by the Federal government loomed very large at the time and since.

Various changes in the administration of public works assisted by Uncle Sam confused many citizens over what they were paying for by local and by Federal taxation. Likewise there was uncertainty as to what was mere made work to help out the unemployed and what was highly necessary. There were examples of both.

Possibly the most effective was the aid given New Trier Township High School in completing a sorely needed new addition of some sixty rooms, or their equivalent in space, at the north end of the institution. Here was a project to cost about \$850,000 that had been begun too late to avoid the impact of the depression. Twice Federal assistance was

a comprehensive project to add to the park area through increased acreage retrieved from the lake was to become a major feature of Wilmette. The Bowl in that park is now an important feature in recreational activities.

Many of the streets on Wilmette had fallen into bad condition. Resurfacing and repaving aided the village to keep up on physical conditions in the midst of depression.

Farther distant, through the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps of young men, the great project to trap the flow of the waters through the great Skokie marsh resulted in the development of the seven lagoons and the wild-life sanctuary.

On the cultural side, the opportunity to use the Illinois Symphony Orchestra at the high school, at the waterworks esplanade and later at the park Bowl brought thousands of people to see Wilmette's magnificent lake-front setting.

One fly in the ointment, was the failure to produce graphic art of the type acceptable to the high school. Under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Treasury Department painters were given the opportunity to help decorate the newly completed high school building. Artists were told to present the American scene. The conception of those chosen to do the work on the North Shore was pretty doleful in representing life as made up all of bread-lines of the depression and butchering of the Indians by our forebears. The idea died a-borning. In a not-so-fortunate neighboring institution the murals after having been completed were boarded from public vision. To such disagreeable episodes there was a pleasing contrast in the historical murals by the late George Lusk in the council chamber of the Village Hall. These are a constant focal point of historic interest, alike for old and young.



MEMORIAL TO LOUIS K. GILLSON
in the park named for him

granted,—the second time to complete what was for the time the largest indoor swimming pool.

In Washington (now Gillson) Park



YACHT MOORING BASIN



DRAINAGE CANAL
toward Sheridan Road bridge.



COAST GUARD STATION



PARK PIER



PARK SCENE



YACHT HARBOR and ADJACENT SCENES

XLIII MUNICIPAL CONFUSION

As Wilmette faced the great depression of the 1930s, possibly no other set of circumstances more aptly justified the title "suburban whirl" to these sketches than the municipal confusion that confronted the poorly informed citizens. Getting order out of local government conflicts was almost an obsession. Even many local officials did not seem to realize how the situation was brought about or how to produce order democratically. Efforts to spread information were faltering. Let us retrace a few steps.

When the Ouilmette family began to sell land off its reservation in 1835 the state of Illinois was only 17 years old and the county only just born. The two areas that were to become Ridgeville (Evanston) and New Trier Townships were then known as Grosse Pointe Voting Precinct. Local government was almost nil. New Trier Township was not created until 1850 and then its government services were few. From that time we inherit township tax assessments and collection, road and highway supervision, poor relief and a few other responsibilities, mostly, however, with overhead county authority. The jurisdiction of the high school district is township wide.

About this time the first school law was enacted to enable citizens to organize tax-supported school districts. Local people had run their first log-cabin schools on private enterprise until 1871, when the Wilmette school district was organized. It was not until the next year that the Village of Wilmette was chartered and in 1874 that our former western neighbor, Gross Point, came into legal being.

Here we see the beginnings of the overlapping governments of State, County, Township, School District and Village, each empowered to borrow and to tax locally in order to provide services in each of their lim-

ited fields. It was not until 1899 that New Trier High School District was organized. Meanwhile the Chicago Sanitary District was taxing to dig its canals and later the Cook County Forest Preserve began taxing. In 1907 the Wilmette Park District was chartered as an additional governing body.

With the breakdown of village government in Gross Point, Wilmette Village in 1924 annexed much of its area. But the Gross Point School District was not merged with the Wilmette School District until 1932. Avoca School District, which serves much of western Wilmette, remains an independent organization. "No Man's Land" had not been annexed as a means for possibly stopping its cancerous growth. Wilmette Park District then extended only to Ridge Road, while a large area of western Wilmette until recently paid taxes to maintain Glenview Park District. Yet the Recreation and Playground authority covers the entire village area, as does the Wilmette Public Library. In addition there is the Mosquito Abatement District. Wilmette did not succeed as well as its neighbors in making the boundaries of its many boards coterminous.

All these independent authorities were created for three general purposes:

1. To render special services not normal for other governments.
2. To have the taxing power to operate such services.
3. In many cases to have bonding power for capital outlays.

For the period up to about 1890 to 1900, needs of our little hamlet were few and modest. Then came the time for volunteer fire-fighters, cement sidewalks, paved roads, underground sewers, water piped in from Evanston, real estate exploitation and its consequences in schools and parks. Local government followed very

much the ideas of private enterprise. Rugged individualism prevailed, yet various board members gave liberally of their services without compensation. School board members sometimes almost acted as janitors in emergencies. A long string of village presidents such as George Springer, John Couffer, Edward Zipf, Earl E. Orner, Carbon P. Dubbs, and Harry Kinne, made almost full-time jobs of their services.

Partly as a result there were often sharp differences of opinion among citizens over what policy was best. One recalls a village council which for a long time was split acrimoniously three to three. At times sharp clashes existed between various boards. Once the village council entertained a suggestion that all water be shut off from the parks because a disputed bill for water had not been settled. The village council in preparing to open 17th Street asked the school board both to give the land free of charge for the street and to pay for the street assessment. The Village considered all delinquent taxes as quick assets in making tax levies, which resulted in both Public Library and Recreation Boards having no tax levy for one year. The Library pulled through on fines and rentals. No other local governments would follow the Village lead in this situation.

Often these clashes carried into elections. On the other hand, many

of the elections for park district, township, schools and high school were poorly supported except in serious disputes. Lethargy was reflected in the carelessness of registrations for voting. The present writer on one occasion registered by filing his business card on the spindle on the desk of the chief of police. Repeatedly school bond elections were carried on total votes of less than 100.

The fact of the organization of so many overlapping boards and the actual creation of parks and playgrounds, erection of new village, school and high school buildings and vigorous pressure for improvements after World War I indicated a determination to put the general municipal house in order. Yet with the great files of the public, often what was everybody's business was nobody's business.

Out of this municipal muddle had to come coordinated ways and means to raise money temporarily to keep necessary but greatly curtailed services going, to force the collection of taxes to the point where budgets could be balanced for restored services, to produce a back-log surplus for emergencies, to correct chronic tax objections, to enhance the quality of services through more professionally trained personnel and to go forward in the light of an expanding population. It must be remembered that cooperative community planning was only in its infancy.

XLIV GETTING OUT OF THE RED

Year after year, as the effects of tax troubles, banking failures and the depression were felt by local governments, their respective boards fought a retarding rear action. First they went to the banks to sell tax anticipation warrants. These were in effect promissory notes secured by receipts from the specific tax levy of the given board. They could be issued only to the extent of 75 per cent of the given levy. Inasmuch as there were more than 400 taxing boards in Cook County, all in similar difficulties, the banks could not respond fully. Soon most of the banks declined to buy warrants, except occasionally when great pressure was put on them by influential people. Wilmette benefitted by one of these latter episodes.

As the boards scraped the bottom of the barrel, now and then private investors came to the rescue for a given payroll, possibly attracted by the high rate of interest which by that time had risen to six per cent. Sometimes the boards had to pay a brokers' commission as high as three per cent to negotiate a sale.

Then came the decision by necessity to pay teachers and other employees only fifty per cent in cash and fifty per cent in tax warrants. For this reason the warrants in many cases were supplied in denominations of five or ten dollars to pay to those merchants who would accept them for goods or services. As this process developed there was a tendency for teachers to sell their warrants at a marked discount.

Then entered a new practical phase of barter and sale. Large oil and meat-packing companies who were willing to hold warrants on good communities until they were paid off a year or more later announced that they would barter books of coupons calling for so many dollars worth of goods for a similar

amount of tax warrants. Gradually there arose a definite movement to canvass housekeepers and car users to negotiate sales of the coupon books for the citizens' current domestic needs. Teachers' warrants were pooled and traded for coupon books and the teachers given cash. Elmer D. Becker, one-time village councilman, made himself a one-man committee to conduct this business for many teachers and was given a citation for his efforts.

Meanwhile, mass meetings were held in Wilmette to bring parents to a realization of what was needed. They were asked to lend ten dollars per child in school for one semester. The response, while inadequate, tided over the school year with the assistance of reduced salaries.

This situation brought out much public opinion over the inadequacy of state and county leadership. Citizens volunteered to call on numerous of the larger food purveyors of the North Shore to importune them to give local government employees food for warrants. The solicitations possibly were of some help. Year after year these devices were continued, awaiting sufficient collection of general taxes both to pay off warrants, and thus stop extravagant interest charges, and to have enough left over to meet expenses. Services were curtailed as much as possible, while at the same time the Federal government was handing out money contributions if these same taxing boards could put up their share of costs of needed improvements which would give work to the swarms of unemployed.

Meanwhile, what about general tax delinquencies? In 1932 under the lead of the high school, some surveys were made of tax objections for the purpose of asking the county judge to take action to resolve the issues on which the objections were

based. Results were not significant. The next year several meetings of boards and executives of the several villages resulted in the four elementary and the high school boards, four park boards and four village boards organizing a township committee with a working fund of \$500 to start to solve local problems. Audits of all tax delinquencies were made. Circular letters were sent to both delinquents and citizens who had paid their taxes, explaining the dilemmas of the boards. Threats of involuntary foreclosure for delinquency were made. Threats also were made under the Skarda act which permitted income producing property to be put into receivership for non-payment of taxes.

Across this situation spread the shadow in Wilmette of the additional delinquency of the Village on special assessment bonds. Owners of real estate could be penalized for such delinquencies just as well as on general taxes. Since those special assessment bonds were badly viewed in the financial markets and in some cases were selling at a discount of

fifty per cent, institutions that had taken in subdivision titles on foreclosed mortgages began to pick up assessment bonds and to apply them against liens from such assessments. Then gradually general taxes began to come in on a better scale. All this took years. The state legislature in order to get tax levies synchronized with the calendar, made the tax year ten months instead of twelve until the year 1940.

Meanwhile many of the thirteen boards had organized merely village-wide committees to press the work on tax collections which was none of their obligation, but which had to be done because of laggard county effort. Incidentally professional workers engaged to expedite work through county officials found errors on tax entries sufficient to give many a tax-payer a headache. And, over all, the delinquents in many cases had to pay a pretty penny in penalties. But generally, before we entered World War II, most taxing boards in the township were on an even keel.

XLV

EDUCATING SCHOOL BOARDS

No history of Chicago suburbs is complete without some record of how out of depression experiences flowed a remarkable movement to train school boards to the major obligations of their educational avocation.

Hardly had the panic, bank failures and delayed tax collections showed their heads than a group of vigorous Chicago business men serving on suburban school boards decided that something must be done to fend off the worst of depression effects on the rising generation of children. They began meeting in a tentative fashion to explore basic causes for school troubles that would soon close many schools. Among the group were bankers lawyers, labor representatives, and industrialists from not only the North Shore but from western and southern suburbs in Cook, DuPage and Lake counties. Soon they had 29 school districts lined up to work cooperatively to solve the problems of school boarding. Among the North Shore leaders were Bert M. Kohler and Amos Watts of Glencoe, Howell Murray of Highland Park, Clarence B. Randall of Winnetka, later Harold Norman and Edward Seese of Highland Park and Bannockburn areas, Morris E. Houser of Des Plaines, Alden Mills of Evanston and Burton B. McRoy of Deerfield, later of Kenilworth. The present writer was privileged to meet with these men for more than a dozen years. The place of meeting was the University Club of Chicago. The name of the group was Tri County School Boards.

The early purpose of cooperation was to ascertain both from theory and practice the legal stumbling-blocks to normal education progress. Immediately they ran into the facts of inadequate school laws, interrupted financial support, a multiplicity

of inadequate one-room schools over the state and inadequate and greatly neglected state leadership for the children. University professors, such as Dr. Eugene S. Lawler of Northwestern University, Oscar W. Weber and Thomas Benner of the University of Illinois, William C. Reavis and Ralph W. Tyler of the University of Chicago, were tapped for gratuitous service. As often as 35 consecutive weekly meetings for discussions within a year rapidly led to significant findings for permanent organization. In 1934, a request came from the Illinois Association of School Boards to join that body as a regional division. This was soon accomplished. Because of the solidarity of this group, its activities soon set patterns by which other divisional groups were established over the state. In time the success in the development of understanding of the school board gained national renown and in a large measure influenced the development of the National Association of School Boards.

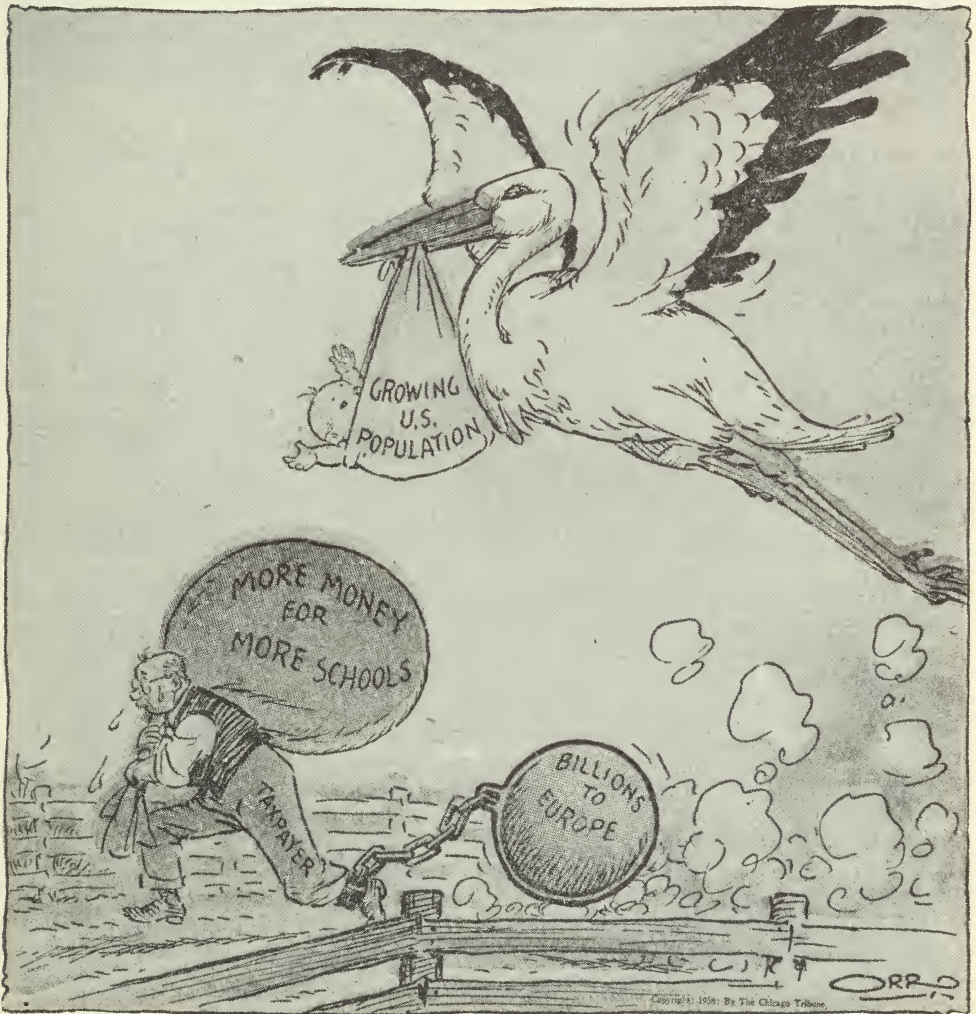
As prestige was attained, the state association for eight years received a State appropriation of \$15,000 per biennium to conduct its studies. At the end of that period the association voluntarily gave up this subvention lest it in some way hamper its activities. These are now financed by direct contributions from the member school boards.

Among the accomplishments in Illinois education that may be largely attributed to action that flowed from the depression-bred North Shore cooperation are: the definite recognition by the state legislature that it is a good thing to educate school boards, the reduction of the number of school districts in the state from above 12,000 to around 2400, orderly codification of the school law, support of tenure for

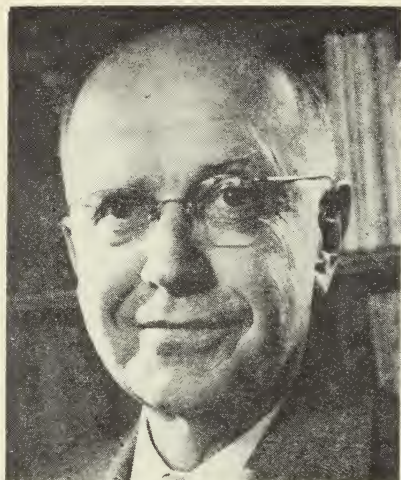
members of the educational profession against capricious dismissal, development of financial and legal board clinics to understand how to fend off capricious tax objections, increase of state support for schools from about \$10,000,000 to above \$200,000,000 per biennium, organization of the school board book shelf and the School Board Reference Library written expressly for it and a continuous flow of information to school boards to aid them in their procedures.

Perhaps the most salutary development flowing from the whole move-

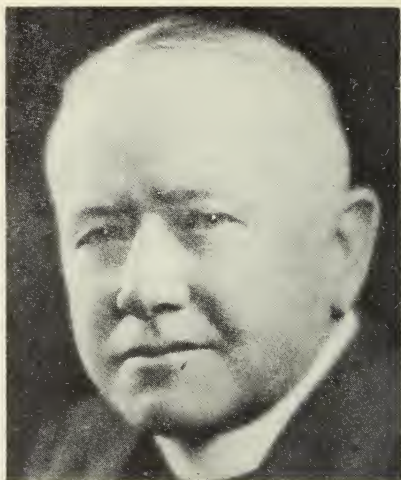
ment has been a fine rapprochement between members of the profession and school board members throughout the state. In the Tri County area three times a year,—in fall, winter and spring, school board government and school professional workers join to the number of possibly 600 or 700 to work out problems in half a dozen practical discussion groups in an afternoon and to hear a pertinent and inspirational address in the evening to aid in guiding them in their uncompensated contribution to childhood.



TAX-PAYERS RACE WITH THE STORK
Courtesy Chicago Tribune.



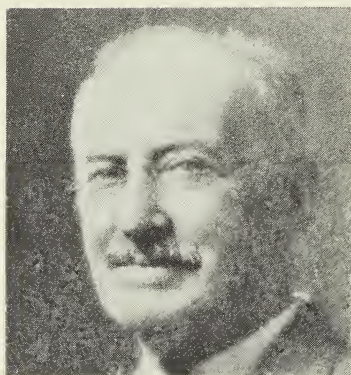
MATTHEW P. GAFFNEY
*Long superintendent of
New Trier High School*



DR. HUBERT CARLETON
*Long rector, now emeritus of
St. Augustine's Church*



MSGR. JOHN NEUMANN
*Since 1923 pastor of
St. Joseph's Church*



LOUIS K. GILLSON
*Co-founder of Park System
and pioneer high school
board member.*



J. ROBB HARPER
*veteran Wilmette school superintend-
ent for whom school was named; long
president of Public Library trustees.*

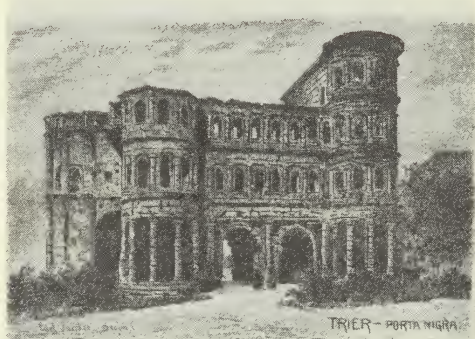


**OLD CAMPUS AND TOWER BUILDING OF
NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL**

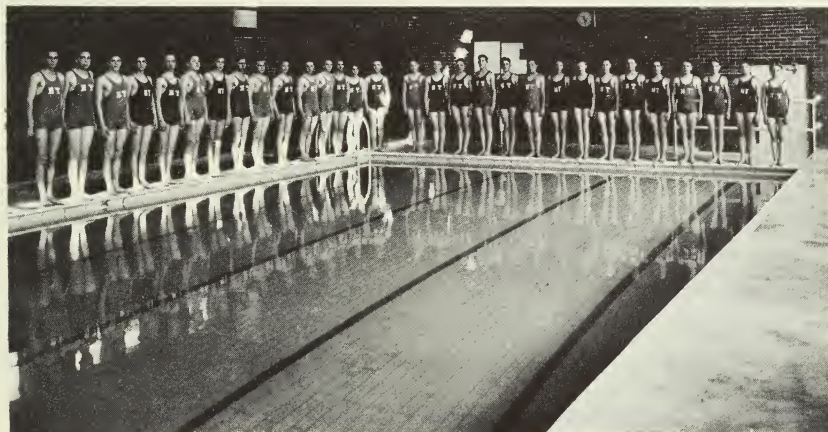
Expansion caused its demolition to make room for new building.



NEW TRIER HIGH SCHOOL SEAL



**OLD TRIER, GERMANY
PORTA NIGRA**



OLD SWIMMING POOL AT NEW TRIER
*Reputed to have been the first high school
swimming pool in the country.*



ARTHUR H. HOWARD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Planned in 1922 as a junior high school, but not used as such for a generation. Originally it was to have been named Ridge School, but subsequently was dedicated in honor of Mr. Howard and his civic activities.

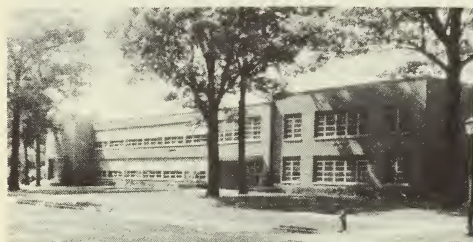


LAUREL SCHOOL

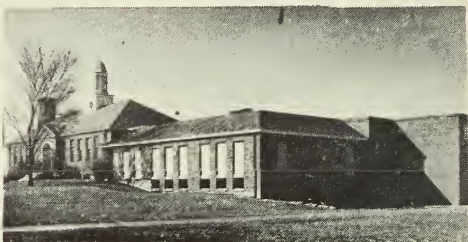


STOLP SCHOOL

Named for pioneer Dr. Byron C. Stolp

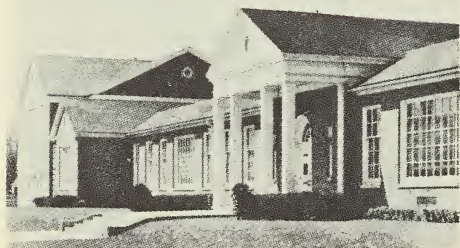


CENTRAL SCHOOL



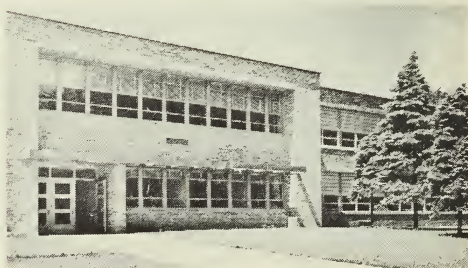
HIGHCREST SCHOOL

Legacy from School District No. 40



LOGAN SCHOOL

Named for Gen. John A. Logan



HARPER SCHOOL

named in honor of J. R. Harper

XLVI

CAUCUSES AND CONVENTIONS

"A school board member always serves too short or too long a term," said a very wise observer. "Those who won't learn their real jobs are dead wood from the start; any term is too much. Those who are really diligent are prone to quit or be left out long before they have contributed their best."

"That makes the task of the caucus very important," said the college professor.

"What do caucuses know about the needs of Schools, or for that matter of the Village or the Parks?" was the rejoinder. "I have gone before some conventions, it is true, for whom I should have liked to nominate candidates; they were better material than those they named."

"Do you think democracy suffers because some self-perpetuating board carefully picks candidates to run for office of one of their colleagues who is retiring?" asked the professor.

"In the last analysis," said the first speaker, "the device of picking candidates is not important. The crux of the matter is getting the kind of candidates who will be an asset to the work of the board, whatever type of local government he or she may serve."

Along the North Shore there are several types of conventions to fill political positions. There are also several types of philosophy respecting them. The smaller the political subdivision the less attention it is likely to get. Since usually there is no compensation for service, except for the Village board in Wilmette, infrequent competition for elective positions is largely dependent on issues. Many capable persons decline to run for office if they think there is to be a political contest. On the other hand, when a given board has been giving satisfaction and there is no live issue, many elections are,

in effect, merely gestures of courtesy or negligent approval of board policies. In such circumstances nomination by an organized convention is equivalent to election. The casual citizen, having had no part in selecting members of the caucus or convention, has no choice in the matter. He votes merely pro forma. Bossism can creep into the convention, just as it may at the polls.

There is Still Time to Vote Right

Vote the Regular Caucus Ticket

This Circular Tells You Some of the Reasons Why

The Election is Tuesday, April 17th, 1906

Polls Open at 7 A. M. and Close at 5 P. M.

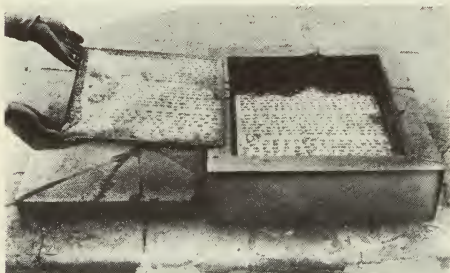
Better vote before you go to Chicago. Polling places are Meisner's Barber Shop, 1215 Wilmette Avenue, and Village Hall, for voters respectively residing west and east of railroad.

For Village Board elections, after serious conflicts, the late Albert McKeighan developed the Harmony Plan, which has served many years. Various village-wide organizations send delegates to a formative group, which tries to neutralize "political" partisanship by naming the main convention members. Gradually Park, and Library board candidates were added to the task. Objections to High School "picking" resulted in a caucus issuing from a township citizen's committee. The local School caucus has been independent of all others, with a strong influence by women's organizations, including the PTA.

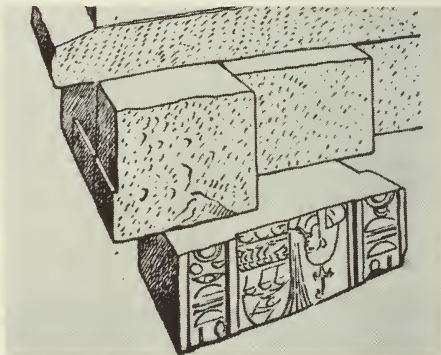
Wilmette has often been stirred by efforts to work out the best means for picking candidates. Town meeting type of caucus was common for Village elections years ago. Yet local party lines were drawn time and again. The school law provides in part the manner for putting candidates in nomination by petition. For years school officials would scurry around just before election time and beg some group to set up petitions democratically. The Park board for years consistently would appoint a man to fill a vacancy for a few months so that at election time its other members could test out the novice and he could decide whether he would care to continue in office. At the High School, in default of conventions, board members frequently canvassed the situation to try to select candidates best fitted in their judgment to make adequate contributions.

The community has been remarkably free from tainted elections. Generally candidates are chosen for their integrity, civic interest and background, both social and occupational.

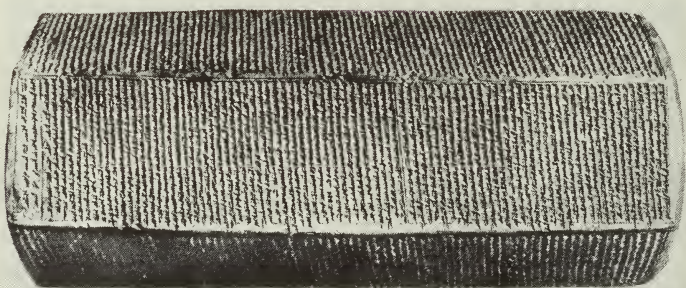
Because we live in a democracy, it is always possible for any ambitious group to upset all plans for harmony and to put independent candidates in the field for any local office. Usually vast numbers of non-voting local citizens are content to "let George do it," until some issue has become critical. Then there is much wondering over why they had not been aware of the difficult responsibilities of their local servants.



BOX-LIKE CORNERSTONE
of Darius I of Persia at Persepolis
about 500 B.C. Courtesy Oriental Institute,
University of Chicago.



**"STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS
REJECTED"**
Fragment of another temple used as
"seed" for temple of Amon Re-
Montou, Luxor, Egypt.



**A PRISM FROM SENNACHERIB'S
CORNERSTONE**
Courtesy the Oriental Institute, Uni-
versity of Chicago.

XLVII CORNERSTONES

Scattered over Wilmette are perhaps two dozen objects in stone that over the years have been used in pre-dedication of institutional landmarks. In prominent positions in the exterior walls of churches, temples, schools and other buildings, these cornerstones for a time focussed public attention on their respective edifices, usually with ceremony. Now they await the passing generations to disclose their historical contents,—reminders of the period when they marked a tradition almost wholly obscure to the people who laid them.

Cornerstone-laying is a custom that circles the globe and goes back to the earliest archeological discoveries, possibly through sixty centuries. Its variants of foundation, foot, or first stone laying, turning the first spade of earth for a structure, or clipping ribbons to open a road, bridge or building,—all suggest ceremony and dedication. But that is about as far as the celebrants go in understanding the why of the celebration, except that "It is the customary thing to do."

It may be risky history to try to say what buildings first employed cornerstones in Wilmette. St. Augustine's Episcopal Church used one in 1898. The date on the First Congregational Church's first cornerstone is 1904. Buildings now razed and replaced by newer structures may, or may not, have used cornerstones. Moreover, this writer may have missed some of these objects in his research. But to show the breadth of the custom locally, these are the dates on the principal cornerstones:

Central School 1949; Christian Science Church 1955; First Congregational Church school 1950; Logan School 1950; Masonic Temple A.D. 1925 and A. L. 5925; Methodist Church 1929; Presbyterian Church 1931 and 1951; St. Augustine's Church addition 1951; St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church 1938 and school 1923 and 1955; St. John's Lutheran Church 1923; St. Joseph's Catholic Church 1938 and school 1934; Wilmette Evangelical Lutheran Church 1922 and 1929; Wilmette Woman's Club 1929; Wilmette Village Waterworks 1933; Wilmette Post Office 1935.

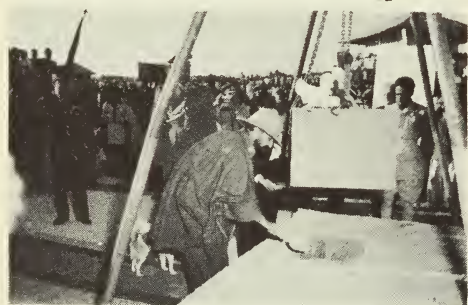
Bronze tablets in the Village Hall and Arthur H. Howard School, Mrs. A. J. Coburn's sculptures of the Woman's Club and Congregational Church and a boulder in the foundation of the Baha'i House of Worship are all significant memorials but do not have the historical receptacle feature of the traditional cornerstones of antiquity. The cornerstones of former Gross Point Village Hall and old Gross Point school-house have no date or contents. July 27, 1956, cornerstone ceremonies were conducted at the new Wilmette-Kenilworth "dial" exchange for the Illinois Bell Telephone Company. The history receptacle was bricked up within an interior wall. No dated cornerstone was used.



UNITED NATIONS CORNERSTONE
IN NEW YORK CITY

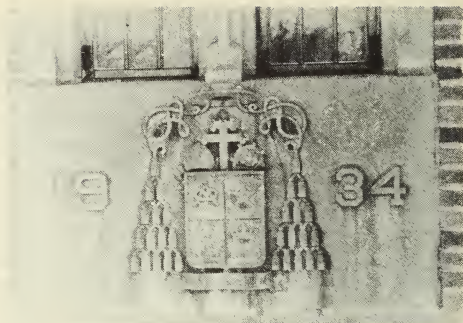
It is passing strange that the basic reason for laying cornerstones is generally not mentioned in the ceremony. Only in isolated record books can one find satisfactory data on the custom, and then it requires research every time an inquiry arises as to why, how, when, where and by whom corner or foundation stones were first employed. This historical neglect by archaeologists, historians and anthropologists, not to mention builders and architects and their publications, becomes a mystery in that in the literature and common parlance in many modern languages there is a present metaphorical use of such phrases as: "The cornerstone of character", "The foundation-stone of our liberty."

It took centuries of the physical operation to lay the ground-work of experience for the rhetorical custom and tradition. Yet there is not enough popular curiosity over these deeply ingrained customs to make it profitable to publish even a brief history on the subject. Theodore Roosevelt laid the cornerstone for the Pan American Union in Washington and called it "An Act of Faith." United Nations used the same phrase



IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
Haile Selassie lays stone
for first university.

for its building in New York. A similar connotation applies to the mediaeval ceremonies at Westminster Abbey in London, Oxford University, and St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Darius I, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Esarhaddon and Noah laid such stones in Mesopotamia, and the pharaohs placed them in the



ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL, WILMETTE
elaborately sculptured cornerstone

pyramids and esoteric temples of the River Nile in Egypt.

Two biblical quotations used for more than 3000 years are still part of ceremonies used for ecclesiastical buildings. One is from Psalm 118; "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner". Biblical Jacob's pillar, which attaches, probably fictitiously, to the Stone of Scone of Westminster Abbey, London, has long been considered a prototype of cornerstones.

The answers to our questions involve a wide variety of ceremonies. There appears to be no real civilization that has not used this device or its equivalent. The earliest of records was found in ruins of temples, palaces and walls of Chaldean cities such as Kish, Ur, Lagash and others. But Egypt runs a close second. Altogether too greatly simplified, the purposes of the ceremonies and the historical contents of the hollowed stones common to the first cornerstones were threefold:

1. To present a plea to the gods to preserve the building;
2. To record the glory of the builder;
3. To curse anyone who should despoil his work or treasure.

As the custom became a fixed tradition, especially in Egypt, a greater emphasis was placed on the aspect primitively perhaps most important. The cornerstone was considered a seed which should germinate and at last bloom in the completed edifice.

EVANSTON DID NOT ANNEX WILMETTE

For more than a hundred years the land that was early Wilmette was closely enough related to its southern neighbor in the suburban whirl to raise the question of merger. In a sense, the affair began in 1826 when Stephen Scott squatted on Grosse Pointe. Legend says that in 1831, when he asked Uncle Sam for a patent on the acres his small farm and squatters cabin occupied, he was told that he was encroaching upon the grant of the reservation to Archange Ouilmette and her children. Had the land been free, the Scotts might have speeded up cultivation.

As it turned out, in 1835 the Ouilmettes, contrary to the terms of their grant, which prohibited sale without consent of the President of the United States, sold the southern half of their reservation, 640 acres, to Nelson R. Norton, Allen P. Hubbard and Isaac K. Palmer for \$1,100. This acreage became North Evanston.

The close relationship to old Ridgeville was manifested in many ways as our first little farming hamlet began to appear on the Green Bay Trail. It was a generation before Wilmette proper had churches within its incorporated confines. This drove many of the early farmers to seek out church life in Evanston. St. Joseph's church was conducted in German and it was far distant up on Ridge Road. In time, the nucleus of pioneers, who were to call their community Hillville and later Llewellyn Park, began to use the old school-house at present Canterbury Court and Sheridan Road for religious services and later to call the place the North Ridge Meeting House. Here began a separation from Evanston, whose name had been modernized from Ridgeville.

One should record here a belated anecdote of this location vouched for by James D. Kline, long local his-

torian and scion of the founding Kline family. It seems that the first log-cabin school-house erected on that site, of which Widow Mary Dennis related she could hear the builder's saw and hammer through the wooded wilderness, had among its pupils a youngster who did not relish grubbing on his Three R's. There may have been some fancied grievance he wished to avenge. At any rate, he set off a charge of gunpowder which blew the logs sky high and necessitated building the next school, which Kline's mother attended. The bronze plaque commemorating that site as a community center of long ago was erected before this tale came to light.

Connection with Evanston took on various forms. John Brown told how he trudged southward along the North Western tracks with sack on back to buy comestibles not as yet

[Circular No. 1.]

REASONS

Why the People of Wilmette Should Oppose Annexation to Evanston.

- 1st. We have a more beautiful territory than any to be found within the present limits of the City of Evanston.
- 2nd. We have within ourselves the power and ability to economically avail ourselves of the benefits of the natural beauty of our surroundings.
- 3rd. We will have no power or ability within ourselves to do any public work if we annex to Evanston.
- 4th. We have no assurance that Evanston will do anything for our advantage or benefit after annexation.
- 5th. We have the example of North Evanston to which to refer as evidence that Evanston will do nothing for us after annexation.
- 6th. It is not true, as claimed by some parties who own real estate in Wilmette, that they will be ruined if Wilmette is not annexed to Evanston. The assertions of such parties making such claim is made purely for the purpose of influencing the better judgment of men by an appeal to their sense of charity; and as the appeal is based upon a false premise it should be disregarded as unworthy of consideration in the issue involved.
- 7th. It is not true that by annexation to Evanston we would have the right to the use of the Evanston Township High School without expense. And it is not true that Mr. Boltwood, principal of the High School can give any assurances in relation to the subject. Such assurances can only come from the Trustees of whom Mr. Boltwood is an employe. And it is not true that if Wilmette is annexed to Evanston its territory can be added to and become a part of the Evanston Township High School Territory, as asserted by parties seeking to influence votes for annexation upon this ground.

available in the first settlement. As the North Shore and Milwaukee Electric pushed northwards from Church Street, and better roads were available for Dobbin and buggy, shopping in Evanston became a habit. Evanston supplied most of the early banking services. Northwestern University was an attraction sufficiently strong to have been a determining influence in the migration of numerous families, including the Hubbard Lathams, to old Hillville. Later, when Dean Peter Lutkin for many years conducted the great Evanston Music Festival, a goodly group of Wilmette men and women and a host of children participated in the great choruses.

Meanwhile, the Village government established contractual relations with Evanston by which for many years it received its water supply. By 1933 Wilmette, after an acrimonious election battle, had cut its leading strings by laying the cornerstone for its own waterworks.

The headlines of this sketch may

[Circular No. 2.]

The High School Question.

Township High Schools may be established in this state as follows: See Section 38 of Article 3 of an act entitled "An Act to establish and maintain a system of free schools," approved May 21, 1889 and as amended and approved June 19, 1891, which reads as follows:

"Upon petition of not less than fifty voters of any School Township, filed with the township treasurer at least fifteen days before the regular election of trustees, it shall be the duty of said treasurer to notify the voters of said township that an election 'For' or 'Against' a township high school, will be held at the said next regular election of trustees, by posting notices of such election in at least ten of the most public places throughout such township, for at least ten days before the day of such regular election, which notices may be in the following form, viz.: (Form of notice of election omitted.) And

"Provided that when any city in this state having a population of not less than one thousand, not over one hundred thousand inhabitants, lies within two or more townships, then that township in which a majority of the inhabitants of said city reside shall, together with said city, constitute a school township under this act for high school purposes."

Section 41 of said Article 3 reads as follows:

"For the purpose of building a school house, supporting the school and paying other necessary expenses, the township shall be regarded as a school district, and the township Board of Education shall have the power and discharge the duties of directors for such district in all respects."

A careful perusal of the above law will show to any reasonable person that its primary object is the establishment of Township High Schools for the education of the more advanced pupils, in districts where no such schools exist. That it does not make any difference whether the district comprises a township, or under the proviso, a city located in two or more townships, as to the application of the law in that regard. Query: How could that in any way benefit us if we should be annexed to Evanston? Evanston township already has a high school; its boundaries are fixed; its organization has long been established; its school buildings have been erected and proper provision made for its maintenance. It has availed itself of the provisions of the law. There is no law by which its territory can be increased and no law by which it can be diminished, except by a vote of its people to discard it altogether. If some of the promoters of annexation were as industrious in presenting to our citizens the whole law in the matter, as they are in furnishing them with slips containing the proviso "as to cities lying in two or more townships," and at the same time withholding from the public an opinion of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, on the very point in issue, wherein it is stated that we should receive no benefit from the Evanston High School if we should be annexed to the city of Evanston, the legal voters of Wilmette might then feel assured that the annexationists had no personal motives which prompted their acts, but on the contrary, were working for what they deem to call it, the best interest of the village.

WILMETTE CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION,

Francis B. Law, *Pres.*

seem out of place unless we go to the records to relate that the general superintendent of the telephone company, which in 1896 had eleven Wilmette patrons, suggested that the rumors that Evanston would annex our village had quieted down so that he recommended an exchange to serve Wilmette.

Although Wilmette voted down annexation to Evanston and Evanston escaped merger with Chicago, serious thought on the part of citizens brought up basic theories concerning boundaries of taxing boards. Broadly, approval was given to the idea that village, schools, parks and sometimes other local governmental agencies were considered best planned when the boundaries were coterminus. So long as these boundaries served to outline a community interest, suburbanites seemed to approve them. But they shied away from bigness of the character that gobbled up smaller public governments into one huge authority like Chicago.

The long history of Wilmette showed the gradual process of expansion and merger of those agencies which served the Wilmette community as a whole. The exceptions had been due largely to the evolution of two suburbs side by side: Wilmette and Gross Point. The line was drawn when suburbanites felt that expansion carried beyond the probabilities of community solidarity and neighborliness.

Chicago endeavored to annex and extend so that its over-all governments were coterminous, but it developed objectionable hugeness. At the same time, however, there arose the basic necessity of cooperation in many areas common to both the huge city and the hundreds of taxing boards in Cook and adjacent counties. These problems embraced water and sanitation, police, transportation, health services and some others at times. The Chicago Sanitary District, with its feeder drain-

age canal running from the Wilmette yacht harbor to the North Branch of the Chicago River, is an example of service for common needs of many independent communities. The Cook County Forest Preserve, with its Skokie Lagoons nearby, is another type. The inability of the separate

suburbs to solve the North Shore Electric railway problem or the elevated railway problem without participation by Chicago marks another need.

These difficulties are now in flux. Planning to meet them is not adequate.



GOOD-BYE TO THE HELLO GIRLS

New dial telephone exchange on Twelfth Street which will serve both Kenilworth and Wilmette subscribers for instant dialing to the millions of telephones across the nation.

XLIX

“NUMBER, PLEASE”

As we follow old customs and radical changes of suburban life, the telephone, as its history touches Wilmette, provides two of the sharpest of social and industrial contrasts.

In the winter of 1892, a public pay station was placed in M. E. Mueller's store on West Railroad Avenue (now Green Bay Road). Gradually the idea of fast voice communication caught on, and by 1896 there were eleven patrons in residences and stores. Mrs. J. Melville Brown still has No. 11.

The next year an exchange was placed in the back of the Wilmette Pharmacy at the southwest corner of Wilmette and West Railroad Avenues to be managed by the pioneer druggist Samuel C. Sexauer. By rapid stages the telephone service was expanded until, in 1956, 150 operators were helping about 14,000 local subscribers to about 70,000 local connections daily. At the same time the Evanston exchange was handling long distance calls for Wilmette across the nation. This is a far cry from the days when Mrs. Byron C. Stolp, wife of the first resident physician in Wilmette, used to blow on a cow-horn to advise neighbors that if they chanced to see the doctor they were to let him know he should communicate with her at once.

During the long period of development, obviously the service of the telephone created many changes in domestic, social and business life in Wilmette. On Palm Sunday of 1920, when the great tornado struck the

village, heroic efforts of the operators kept the services going amid the showers of rain and glass and the disruption of power.

On the side of telephone engineering, the present writer may be indulged with telling a heretofore unpublished high-light on the changing policy of all Bell lines. It was his duty to decide upon the manner in which, in 1911, intercommunication of departments of the new Harris Trust and Savings Bank Building should be established. Nathan C. Kingsbury, who had been president of the Michigan State Telephone Company, was an officer of the bank and a member of its new building committee. Naturally his advice was sought on automatic dialing for calling departments.

“Don't get mixed up in that new-fangled device”, said Kingsbury. “We tried that for private service at the Detroit Country Club and we were sorry. The points kept corroding. Automatic dialing is a failure.” Mr. Kingsbury shortly succeeded A. N. Vail as president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. Persistent efforts by research engineers got the “bugs” out of the dialing system. In 1956, the Illinois company erected a building on Twelfth Street to provide automatic service for Wilmette subscribers across the nation.

Nothing in suburban living could be more significant of modern change than the passing of the “hello girl” for “the new-fangled” dial.

L SUBURBAN SLUMS

We have seen how loyalties to Chicago because of the suburbanites' business affiliations frequently crossed with those to their home town. To the latter they often could give too little time and assistance. Often this turned into neglect. Many times it was said of suburbanites that they used their home town only for sleeping.

As the generations slipped away, houses and stores began to deteriorate. Not a few old-time residents moved away, some to Florida or California. Sale or lease of the former homes brought into the village numerous new-comers who required home remodeling. Coal gave way to oil and then to gas for heating. Here and there old houses were moved to new sites, often bringing families with children into an area from which youngsters had almost disappeared.

Sociologists began to discuss the possibilities of population trends and congestion creating slums in the older suburbs. In 1954, Harper's Magazine printed posthumously striking challenges of its late editor, Frederick Lewis Allen, to suburban leadership to observe what was going on. Plaintively the picture of former pleasant acres of woods and rivers of Suburbia was painted in increasingly somber colors. Often there was a serious over-tone to commentary which suggested the grave danger of creeping ruin. We have a suggestion of this in our own village in the crumbling structures of "The Breakers" and "Vista Del Lago Club" on the beach of former "No Man's Land" hard-by the rotting piles of the old Gage's piers. These broader threats held the challenge for perpetual face-lifting for individual houses and smaller business buildings, as well as for the more significant larger institutional edifices of the community. There were calls

for modernizing the high school, elementary schools, library, clubs and the whole miscellany of buildings.

Meanwhile two particular phenomena were striking. One was the radical change in the architecture of residences from large three-story houses, with roomy porches for airy summer living, to the one-story ranch-house. This change apparently was largely influenced by the shortage of domestic help. The other important suburban influence was the wide-spread movement for certain types of light industry, laboratories, printing plants and similar enterprises to move out of run-down slum areas of Chicago into vacant farmlands adjacent to the suburbs. A variant of this development was the large marketing center, with numerous other facilities centered around one major store. The chain-stores and super-markets had set many new patterns.

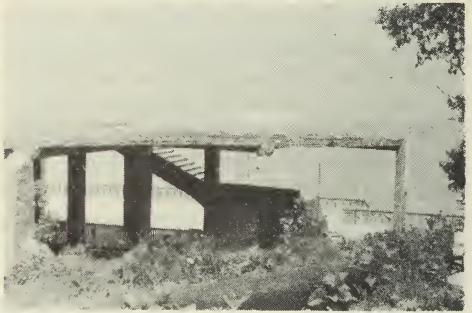
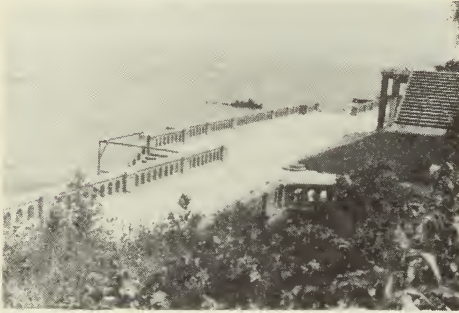
Wilmette had escaped heavy industry, and continuously struggled to maintain its traditional residential character. As various devices evolved, there was much debate over their influences. Congestion of heavy metropolitan traffic produced changes in roadways and their control for Sheridan Road, Green Bay Road, and Skokie and Edens Expressways. More and more accidents occurred. Despite traffic lights and gates the problems mounted. Youngsters with their "hot-rods" often were involved.

As Wilmette crossed the 23,000 population mark, with estimates of 30,000 soon to follow, one of the greatest drawing-cards for newcomers was the excellence of schools. Especially did New Trier High School's nation-wide reputation attract new residents. This was in some degree influenced by community life of the North Shore villages, which was reflected in the High School. For instance, many high

schools in Chicago held a very small percentage of students through to graduation (as low as 25 to 40 per cent) and some other suburbs featured preparation for industrial work. But New Trier High School held practically 100 per cent of pupils to graduation, sent as many as

90 per cent directly to college, and consciously did much to prepare them for higher education.

Between the pressures of sharply rising population, much poor housing, commercialization and much deterioration, there was great need for careful cooperative planning.



BREAKERS RUINS



"NO MAN'S LAND" IN 1956

LI

MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPING



VILLAGE HALL

After the tornado of 1920 a second story was added to the building. Later municipal activities pushed out police and fire departments to Green Bay Road

As the 1930s plowed along from bad to worse and then slowly to better, suburbanites began to sort out their various responsibilities as they affected their Chicago business affairs, their domestic lives and the cooperative life of their suburb. The whole metropolitan area was given a lift in 1933 and 1934 by the Century of Progress Exposition. People more generally began to pay attention to international aspects of government, with the looming dread of another world conflict. Gradually there began to appear a sharp distinction between municipal house-cleaning necessitated by tax troubles and the depression and orderly municipal housekeeping. This meant imagination and continued effort towards progressive innovations which had been necessarily postponed.

There was much talk about village affairs being important enough to occupy the full time of a village manager. Other neighboring villages had benefited from such an organ-

ization. Professor Augustus Hatton of Northwestern university repeatedly discussed this plan in Wilmette. But three times there were election clashes over what should be done. Three village managers, C. M. Osborne, Boyne Platt and Adolph Koenig, resigned before Wilmette found its stride and William Wolff was given real village-manager authority.

In the field of Village zoning the situation was long a checkered one. The horrible example of "No Man's Land" indicated what can happen without municipal controls. Both community opinion and Village Council action held to basic Village zoning principles aimed at preserving the residential character of Wilmette. The rise in population constituted a long and serious challenge, as owners of vacant and "fringe" real estate properties sought to produce profits from their speculations. Large numbers of unlawful apartments, constituting non-conforming

uses, crept into many areas. Some of these cases went to the courts for adjudication. Many partial solutions to such problems, which builders were eventually to put into effect, were postponed as war clouds thickened in Europe.

In time the public attitude toward labor compensation and social security for public employees of the high school, elementary schools, parks and village began to have its effect in the state legislature, local referenda and budgetting. The puny school pensions were put on sounder actuarial bases; municipal pensions were made effective; state tenure laws developed for teachers, and local civil service began to create a feeling of permanence among more proficient public servants.

Meanwhile the aggressive action begun by the schools to clear up tax delinquencies and carried over into coporate Village action began to produce improvements on vacant land. This soon called for expanded municipal services and increased school facilities, chiefly in the western part of the village. People in Chicago

once more began to talk of the suburban advantages for pleasant living and to give more attention as to how to attain them. True, there were difficulties, such as strikes on the North Shore and Milwaukee line and its later abandonment, the many losses of homes through mortgage foreclosures and frequent failures to carry home to citizens the meaning of local self-government.

Municipal housekeeping in all its varied departments and activities was becoming orderly. Yet the more orderly it became the more the citizens were inclined to sink back into complacency. Always there was gross ignorance concerning how the many local governments operated. In 1941, long after the demise of the Wilmette Civic League organized to dispel this ignorance, Wilmette Life ran a long series of articles comprehensively describing local government. Yet more than a decade later the League of Woman Voters had to come to the front for the same purpose and published its local government handbook, "Spotlight on Wilmette."



POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Expansion forced erection of these buildings at Green Bay Road and Lake Avenue.

AMBULATORY POST-OFFICES

It took generations for Uncle Sam's postal headquarters for Wilmette to stay put. It is not surprising that in pioneer days slow service shifted from Mulford's Tavern at Ridge Avenue and Mulford Street, Ridgeville (Evanston) to Buckeye Tavern further north on the old Green Bay Trail at Noyes Street and still later (1870) to Alexander McDaniel's in Wilmette. But as the village began to mature, the constant moving became almost a nuisance. For a time the office was on West Railroad Ave-

nue. Then it shifted to the north end (alley) of McGuire & Orr's block at Central and Wilmette Avenues. Then came another move to the site next to St. Augustine's Episcopal Church.

During these numerous shifts the changing post-masters were constantly trying to push up the rating of the office by stimulating postage sales. Often services did not harmonize with their boasting. For example, the old Ouilmette Country Club on Michigan Avenue had a size-

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.



JOHN A. J. CRESWELL,

POSTMASTER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

Whereas, On the 19th day of April, 1870, Alexander McDaniel was appointed Postmaster at Wilmette, in the County of Cook, State of Illinois; and whereas he did, on the 25th day of April, 1870, EXECUTE A BOND, and has taken the OATH OF OFFICE, as required by law:

Now know ye, That, confiding in the integrity, ability, and punctuality of the said Alexander M^c Daniel, I DO COMMISSION HIM A POSTMASTER, authorized to execute the duties of that Office at Wilmette aforesaid, according to the LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES, AND THE REGULATIONS OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT: To hold the said Office of POSTMASTER, with all the powers, privileges, and emoluments to the same belonging, during the pleasure of the Postmaster General of the United States.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the Post Office Department to be affixed, at Washington City, the Twenty-fifth day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy, and of the Independence of the United States the ninety-fourth.

J. W. Marshall
Acting P. M. Gen'l.

FIRST POSTMASTER'S COMMISSION

Village pioneer, Alexander McDaniel, granted authority April 19, 1870, before Wilmette was incorporated as a village.



OLD POST OFFICE ON WEST RAILROAD AVENUE

able mailing list. Its secretary was constantly importuned to buy postage locally rather than to take the work to Chicago and buy postage there. When, however, the club's mailings were put into a nearby post-box there were not only days' delays in the pick-up, but the P.M. scolded the secretary for even expecting such pick-ups.

Then there was the time when the P.M. and his helpers wished the post-office closed on Sundays. Mailmen

circulated petitions. Probably few patrons suffered from the change, but there was grumbling because Uncle Sam was thought to be pushing citizens around too much.

Came the day when postal business demanded greater facilities. One congressman sent out a franked mailing to his Wilmette constituents suggesting they get busy and have a new post-office while there was still money in the postal pork-barrel. With the failure of the First National Bank,



PRESENT WILMETTE POST OFFICE ON CENTRAL AVENUE

its building was available. East-side business and civic leaders urged the convenience of that building. As an alternative they suggested the property directly across the street that was eventually used for off-street auto parking.

The hopes of some village planners that West Railroad Avenue from Central to Wilmette Avenues would see a civic center seemed to harmonize with Uncle Sam's planners. The old fire station gave way and the new post-office was placed at Central and Park Avenues directly opposite the Lloyd Hollister, Inc. printing plant. This was at the north end of the block that was rounded out by another public building at its southern end on Wilmette Avenue, the Public Library. The community center that

many people thought might serve as a World War II memorial and might have tied the other two public areas together in an architectural whole, never developed.

Sales of postage constantly rose to successive new peaks as population increased. Christmas patronage reached phenomenal proportions. In 1955 sales were about \$300,000 as contrasted with \$64,000 in 1934. The office is now rated in the first class. Christmas mailings frequently reach 125,000 pieces daily. The local residents have almost forgotten the reduction of house deliveries to once a day in sympathy with reported Federal economies and the lessened foot mileage of the mail-men, who now average about thirteen daily miles on the pedometer.



CHRISTMAS CONCERT AT NEW TRIER HIGH SCHOOL
Photograph by Donald F. Smith

LIII

DEFENSE AND WAR

Hind-sight suggests that suburbanites had plenty of notice that they were to suffer from another world war. But that may be harsh judgment. True, many were reading Karl Marx and Adolph Hitler and Lenin. Attendance mounted at meetings in Evanston, Chicago and at New Trier High School when international discussions were on the program. People coming back from visits to England, France, Germany and Russia were plied with questions about Russia's atheistic constitution and the changing entente of Italy, Germany and Russia, the Munich appeasement, and the Japanese-German axis. Yet throughout the waves of war news that began to break with the dedication of the Chicago boulevard bridge in 1937, the suburbs indulged in wishful thinking, "It can't happen here".

Wilmette had not yet balanced its budgets from depression shortages. Civic improvements that had been delayed because of hard times were pushed back still farther, except as Federal aid for employment stimulated recognition of the most necessary work.

Politically there were many cleavages between New Deal and Anti-New Deal, free enterprise and social security, going off the gold standard, unbalanced budgets and deficit financing by the billions. As defense mobilization, "lend-lease" and inflation became national policy and unemployment and stagnation were displaced by debt-stimulated production for war, "Rosie the riveter" became a national type of the epoch. A dean entering a North Shore meeting of educators set a pattern of thinking for more than a decade by whimsically saying, "I have just had a request for a thousand chemists".

The suburbs met these influences by beginning to distinguish three streams of government activities in

the large: that which was primarily associated with war; that involved in the national social and industrial economy, and the more intimate affairs of High School, Elementary Schools, and corporate Village and Park District. These were all interwoven so clumsily in taxation that few people had a clear picture of events.

As the hypnotized public awoke to Pearl Harbor, suburbanites recalled what they had tried to contribute twenty years earlier and doubled their miscellaneous efforts. Numerous charities were consolidated. Personal services to the recruits at Fort Sheridan and Great Lakes multiplied. Men in uniform with dufflebags thronged suburban trains and stations. In the center of town there was a mid-street enclosure with a huge collection of scrap metal destined for ammunition. Old paper and rubber salvage became the rule. Liberty farms were the vogue. Public discussion and reading groups emphasized world history and foreign affairs. Special organized mailings of news and letters flowed to camps and over-seas from individuals, high school and churches. "One world" was the rallying cry for many social and political drives. We tried to understand Communism and glued our ears to the radio for news.

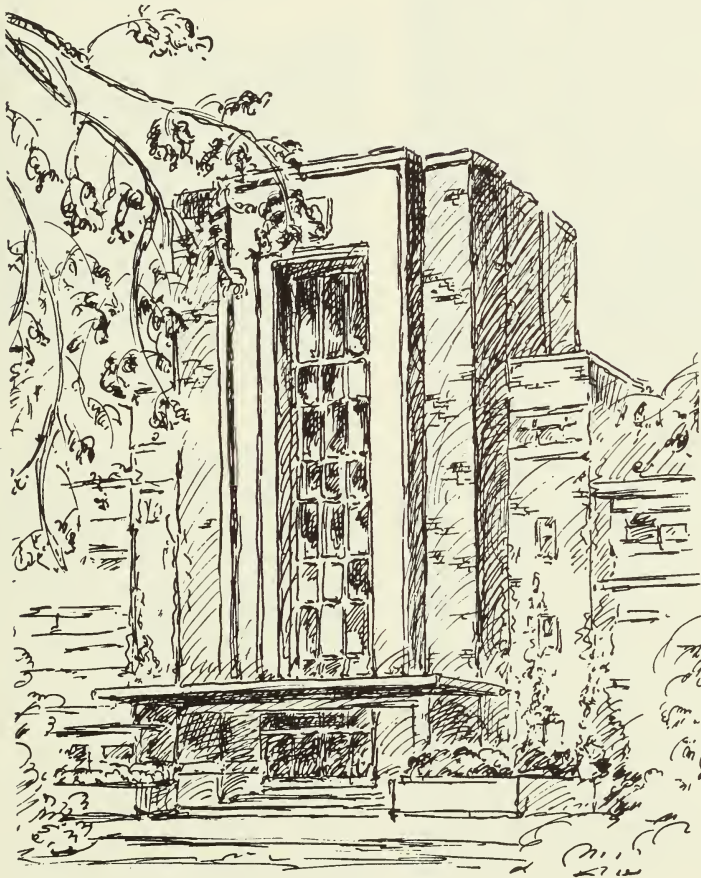
As death rolls mounted everywhere, war became the preoccupation wide-spread. The draft, universal military training and ROTC changed education. Even hasty or postponed weddings became subjects for educational philosophy, as well as for church sermons. War contracts and profits likewise entered into much ideology, morally, economically and politically, for they were not one and the same thing with equal emphasis.

In this confusion, prosecution of the war brought food rationing close

to citizens and school teachers, who were recruited to handle ration books. Gas rationing and its violations brought many people into disrepute. Local merchants were loaded down with much bookkeeping. The armed services had first call on anything that they needed. With the Navy Airport located at Glenview, Wilmette's famous Grosse Pointe, Baha'i Temple, the Coast Guard station and the Sheridan Shores Yacht

Club became "Point Oboe" as a landfall for pilot training. "Buzzing" the Wilmette area by low-flying pilots became the common experience, to be carried over year after year with the increasing tumult and tragedy of jet flyers. Eventually the record showed loss after loss, as pilots went down in Lake Michigan at our shoreline, or crashed in take-offs.

Every pursuit and activity hung on "Peace!"



NEW TOWER OF NEW TRIER HIGH SCHOOL

LIV

MONEY AND BANKING

The impact of the vast changes in the field of finance during the immediate post-panic days hit suburbanites importantly in two ways. Most of them as Chicago business men were largely influenced by one or several aspects of national changes. But, living domestically in Wilmette, they were also tied into any local happenings that might influence life of the whole community.

Of the wider influences were the individual bank failures preliminary to the great moratorium and forced bank liquidations; going off the gold standard; the debasement of the dollar and of the buying power of fixed incomes from life insurance, endowments and estates; the shift from state "blue sky laws" to Federal S.E.C. regulations; divorce of corporation bond departments from banks and trust companies; limited insurance for bank deposits and for Federal home loan savings; enhanced power of the Federal Reserve system; rescue work of solvent banks nationwide through government purchase of newly issued preferred stocks; and sharper state and federal attention to banks and savings associations. Marked changes also took place in investment services, with the advancement of investment counseling and changes in the handling of estates. The deliberate Federal policy of inflation and deficit financing of government budgets, staggering doles to foreign allies and equally staggering taxes, plus trying to understand anti-trust laws, fair trade and employment practices, and the aggrandizement of centralized Federal government, all these problems kept the suburbanite on his toes.

The long period of low-interest rates made normal practices in conservative banking, which had prevailed before the great moratorium, unprofitable for many banking insti-



WILMETTE STATE BANK

tutions. There was a tremendous shrinkage in the number of banks of suburbs and outlying regional areas of Chicago. With all types of payrolls being handled by means of employer checks, there arose a new kind of "currency exchange", which cashed checks for a fee. In order to stimulate the development of formal banking services where needed, Federal and State laws, which had made ownership of bank stocks a double liability to protect deposits, were revoked.

The intervention of wars called for intensive stimulation of sale of government bonds. The huge outlay for interest on these bonds called for both increased Federal taxation and Federal pressure to hold down interest rates. There was a tremendous amount of new financing of all types in order to take advantage of depressed interest charges. The delay in the popular recognition of the spiral of inflation producing inflated costs of living and all sorts of costs in industry gave way to an almost abrupt and startling rise in prices. Rent controls were long in effect. Advancing costs of building vied with these rent controls and tremendous housing shortages as GIs came out of service and married.

It may take another generation to understand what has taken place and to evaluate its social significance. In



**FIRST FEDERAL SAVINGS
AND LOAN ASSOCIATION**

Wilmette the cleavages now reflected after a score of years are typified by two local institutions:

The Wilmette State Bank evolved essentially from an early private mortgage business. Incorporated in 1905, it assumed marked local identification through its stockholders and directors among leading Wilmette citizens. For a long time it catered to the small needs for checking and savings accounts and loans, both on real estate and commercially to local business. Constantly its officers were called upon to participate

in local civic affairs. Having passed through the ordeals of 1929, 1932 and 1934, it grew rapidly with the growth of Wilmette, until resources on June 30, 1956 mounted to \$24,635,668.

In 1934, a group of citizens, called together by the Chamber of Commerce, organized the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Wilmette. Its chief objective was to make loans on home real estate. Prior to the national home loan movement to stabilize such lending operations, home loans usually ran about five years. Upon the maturity the home owner frequently needed to extend the loan or borrow through a new loan at considerable cost through commissions. Rapidly there came into vogue longer terms for mortgages to be amortized by regular monthly payments like rent. The Wilmette institution became a significant factor on the North Shore in financing homes and accepting insured savings accounts. After 21 years of experience, the association, July 1, 1956, reported 7089 shareholders and assets of \$16,688,261.

LV

LESSONS IN CIVICS

In time, suburbanites began to anticipate the end of the war. They began to sift out the more necessary local improvements and to try to understand which division of government had responsibility for a given phase of accomplishment. What was everybody's business and interest was bogging down. Public opinion had to be prepared for the approaching time when Wilmette should "have its face lifted".

Wilmette Life tried an experiment by sending questionnaires to all members of all local taxing boards to inquire the policies of those boards on the most important problems confronting them. Here were some of the more obvious and insistent questions:

1. Should the territorial boundaries of local villages, elementary school districts and park districts be co-terminous?

2. How big should New Trier Township High School be allowed to grow?

3. Should Wilmette have its own high school?

4. When would the original plans to make the Arthur H. Howard school a junior high school be accomplished?

5. Should school board policy include limiting feeder school buildings to six grades prior to sending pupils to a future junior high school?

6. Should Wilmette Park District be extended west of Ridge Road?

7. What should be local taxing policies?

8. What of "No Man's Land"?

Many other matters were elicited.

Answers to questions disclosed no basic cooperative policy for overlapping boards of local government. There were joint consultations of school superintendents in respect to curriculums. Village managers met over wide county areas on subjects of common interest. In the midst of a long series of resulting civic articles in *Wilmette Life*, in 1941, occurred one of the most acrimonious elections battles in years. Many lessons had not been learned from the tax delinquencies of the previous decade.

Meanwhile the State of Illinois and its 102 counties began work on equalizing property values for tax assessments in all counties. Also there were roughly 10,000 inadequate and poorly financed school districts in the state which school boards ultimately decided should be merged out of existence. As pros and contras of county school survey commissions were debated, legislative red tape and delay pushed basic problems back to individual local governments.

Wilmette was not as greatly affected by these problems as some less populous districts that were feeling the impact of trebled school enrollments from areas of war industry and trailer camps. School laws and many tax regulations needed renovation. A thousand school districts in Illinois closed classrooms. The lessons of planned cooperation so harshly learned by an earlier generation had to be re-learned by newcomers to the village that would begin to burst its bounds with "Cease fire".

LVI

COMMUNITY EFFORTS

The long accumulation of unfilled needs of the community burst the bounds of complacency with the close of the "hot war" that girdled the globe. There was plenty for suburbanites to worry about to the point of fatalism. Scientific fright over the Frankenstein monster of nuclear fission, the continuous "cold war", the tragedies of Korea and China, riotous outbursts on many foreign fronts and perpetual nationalistic aspirations of dark-skinned peoples were the continuous themes of commentators of all persuasions. Notwithstanding numerous frustrations, the anticipated needs for the fast-rising suburban population drove many groups of the Wilmette community to start doing postponed "face-lifting."

Contributing most strikingly physically were the religious edifices. Four churches had been replaced with new buildings over a period of years. But threat of inadequacy stimulated congregations to add facilities for assemblies and religious education buildings for Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian and St. John's Lutheran fellowships and for the replacing of the half-century old Christian Science Church. The Baha'i Temple was completed. Although such religious enterprises can hardly be said to stem from broad sources of community planning, still they sprang from the common need felt in many areas. They contributed powerfully to moral and spiritual values at a time when men and women in places of high responsibility were trying to combat delinquencies of all sorts.

Closely akin to religion in childhood and youth training were the efforts to increase high school, elementary school, library and park facilities. Self-starting boards of local governments began to put before the people ideas for expansion of grounds, build-

ings and reconstruction that mounted to more than \$10,000,000 in debt. The village council started doubling its water plant, contributed new facilities for fire and police departments and put into service parking meters and parking lots. In public education, the numerous plans had contemplated tearing down the Stolp school, but pupil enrollment rose so rapidly that the building was kept in service. Elsewhere, particularly in the extreme western part of the district, the population increase outstripped planning, leaving future community problems for prompt solution.

In the general process, the people pushed the Wilmette Park District beyond Ridge Road, authorized new parks and solved the problem of taking over the western Wilmette area which had formerly been in the Glenview Park District. There was no community agreement concerning the possibility of merging Avoca School District into the Wilmette public school system, as had been recommended in 1943 by the Cook County School Survey Commission. "No Man's Land" continued to be a sore problem of non-conforming uses.

As the progressive elements in civil government got to the point of real action, an experiment of promise resulted in a planning board whose members geared into recreation, parks, elementary schools, library and village boards. Here was an effort to coordinate local debt and tax loads and civic needs and to publicize plans worked out by the individual boards. Needs of both Avoca elementary and New Trier Township High Schools were not brought to the public by the coordinated planning group.

There had been hope by special groups that a community center would be established as a war memorial. This failed, possibly because of fear of mounting local debts and taxes. However, an opportunity arose

to make the new library at the rebuilt High School a memorial. Excess fees for collecting taxes by the township collector had accumulated to upwards of \$300,000. By means of shifting township funds, new building costs could be met from these fees.

Meanwhile real estate subdividers and building contractors were riding the crest of the inflation and meeting demands for new housing by erecting houses by the hundreds in western Wilmette. These operations never contemplated the deficits created by local tax bills insufficient to meet costs of local government or pupil facilities in the schools. Try as planners and local administrators might to meet exigencies of mounting population, Wilmette's suburban whirl was almost chronic.

Repeatedly emerging from the record of these continuous suburban changes were two contrasting types of experiences. As the population rose and the limits of the village expanded, the compactness of early neighborliness around a few limited social contacts changed, and with it much of social life. Partly to meet new and specialized interests and partly to produce centers of human contacts, numerous groups organized and made great inroads on the sub-

urbanites' limited time schedules.

These phenomena are constantly disclosed through the growing departmentalization of the columns of Wilmette Life. A generation ago there were no departments. For instance, social items were scattered through the paper to the extent, perhaps, of a page. Now a dozen or more pages are needed by society, clubs, etc. A directory provides for more than sixty churches, temples and synagogues of the North Shore. Frequently more than a page is needed to record activities of Wilmette elementary schools contributed through specialists of the PTAs, and additional space is given for New Trier Township High School and bulging Avoca. The paper overflows with organizational news for several women's clubs, garden clubs, church groups, local sports, service clubs, the American Legion posts "great books courses", welfare work, activities in higher education, music and recreation ad inf.

Often these groups overlap through group memberships. Now, as newcomers arrive in increasing numbers they seek acquaintance and service through a newcomers club. Everywhere it is obvious that "This is a changing Wilmette".



AVOCA SCHOOL

LVII

ADVENTURES WITH LOCAL HISTORY



“LITTLE MOCCASIN”
OF THE MIAMIS OF 1698.

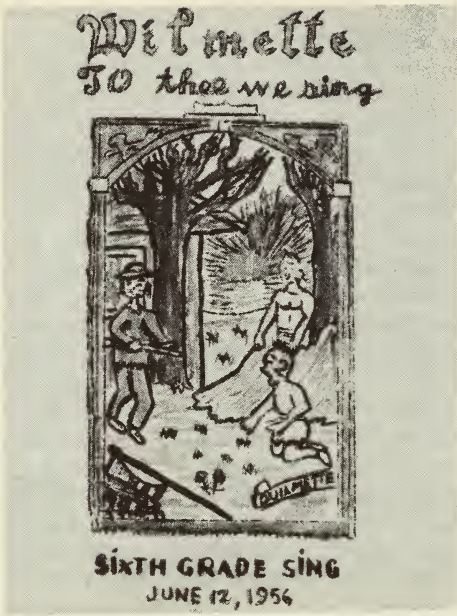
The little village of Wilmette had not reached its corporate majority before early settlers and their families began to think of the time when its history would have a meaning to those who followed after them. Capturing significant events began socially in gatherings of the group that in time would become known as Ye Olde Towne Folkes. First there were reminiscences, sometimes in papers to be read under the fetching titles of “The Town Pump” or “The Lantern”,—the latter suggestive of the lights the old settlers had to carry through the dark streets on the way home from the train or to those social gatherings.

Often there were letters from those who had moved away or for the historical record, such as from Henry A. Dingee or Alexander McDaniel. Mrs. Frank L. Joy acted as long-time historian. Her daughter, Mrs. Edward L. Scheidenhelm, began to

write of Antoine and Archange Ouilmette and of the Indian trail trees of the neighborhood. To these papers in time were added others by Mrs. Byron C. Stolp, J. Melvin Brown and his wife, Louis K. Gillson, and others. Many of these contributions to local history found their way into the Wilmette Weekly News or The Local News, or still later into the bulletins of the Woman’s Club of Wilmette. Meanwhile, as schools, churches and social groups began to enact little pageants based upon earlier events, local history began to take shape. The older generation began to be supplanted by the second.

As the Public Library movement gained the financial stimulus from Andrew Carnegie and old Library Hall gave way to Village Hall and the Wilmette Carnegie Free Public Library, the early librarians began to realize the need to accumulate what they could of local historical source materials; for instance, as when they preserved the letter of thanks from the widowed Mrs. Andrew Carnegie for condolences written by Miss Law in the name of the community, or the letter from Theodore Roosevelt complimenting Father Vattman for his patriotic services as war chaplain. As librarians came and went, methods of handling library materials differed. Fresh endeavors at accumulation by Miss Ann Whitmack gave a stimulus which in marked measure began to produce reciprocal efforts between both Ye Olde Towne Folkes and the Library. But war work and tax troubles retarded the best accomplishments.

As James D. Kline became vice-president and then president of the old town group, he determined that the history movement should take on both permanence and precision. Albert B. Tucker made a point of housing some of the valuable relics of frontier days in the vaults of the



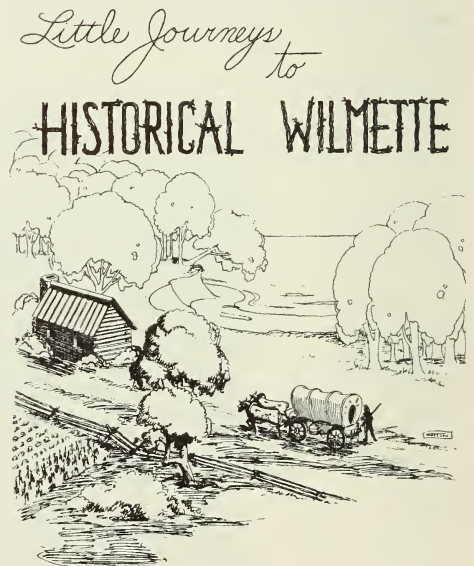
SIXTH-GRADERS
at Central School put on a historical-ly founded "sing".

bank. Miss Rebecca Fitch compiled the records of Ye Olde Town Folkes. Esther Dunshee (Mrs. Lorin A.) Bower became historian. History readings continued from year to year at annual dinners. Then Mr. Kline made noteworthy deposits of reminiscences, maps, pictures and other memorabilia to the Public Library. Shortly after this, Miss Helen Siniff came to Wilmette as librarian and the stage was set for a very considerable number of events that followed in rapid order.

There are four distinct aspects of local history by which, in the words of the sponsors of "American Heritage", "Local history is living history."

1. Capture of a record of events.
2. Preservation of these source materials.
3. Orderly organization of the more significant events.
4. Implementation of the record through books, films, lectures, pageants and any medium that will portray the story.

Over the years the various local newspapers had recognized these points and had contributed much space in recording the local story so that it should not be lost. With the close of the second world war, the Public Library had need for a new building, which made great inroads on time and normal activities. Nonetheless, it became possible to bring into meetings at the Library a small number of persons who wished to see the history job completed to the point where newcomers and children could grasp its most significant aspects. By this time, Wilmette Life had long since become the principal means of local news communication in the village. It continued to voice the ideas of many people that the history movement should be pressed to conclusion.



Herbert B. Mulford
GUIDE TO HISTORY JOURNEYS

It was just after the close of an evening dinner of the Wilmette Rotary Club at Michigan Shores Club, in the fall of 1946, that three men gathered before Mattie Akeley Withers' well known painting of the Potawatomi Indian encampment idealized on our cliff-side lake front. Said one to Lloyd Hollister, "That scene is part of Wilmette's origins. The record should be made available so that we should have script for an accurate historical pageant in the Wilmette Bowl."

William H. Alexander at the time was Village president. "May I eavesdrop?" he asked. "You know that next year is the 75th anniversary of the incorporation of Wilmette. We should have a celebration."

"Lloyd, will you play up such an event?" asked the first speaker.

"Yes. That rates a special edition next fall", said Hollister. And soon plans were made on all sides to do creative work that would make the people of the village history conscious for years to come.

The village celebration was a marked success. Wilmette Life of September 18, 1947, contained so much authentic detail of early Wilmette happenings that an excess printing of 1000 copies disappeared over night. Meanwhile, the Public Library distributed 1500 copies of a bibliography of materials in the Library which could be used constructively toward a definitive history if anyone was of a mind to write and print it.

Partly in order to prove the value of history to some of the many local organizations that might be interested, numerous magazine articles were published in national periodicals, both putting the village on the map and showing how local history was being used educationally. An energetic recreational director in the person of Howard Copp answered the call to make little journeys to historical sites a feature of the activities of day camp. In order to capture such an opportunity, a small pamphlet with itineraries was published;

the Library aided in its distribution to the extent of 1000 copies.

At about this juncture Mr. Alexander and Mr. Tucker of the Village Council were importuned successfully to establish a formal municipally appointed Wilmette Historical Commission to carry on the historical work officially. Horace Holley was first chairman. The Council answered the plea of the first group of members to appoint a charter day as of September 19 each year, in commemoration of the incorporation of the Village. The first celebration on that day made both the community and a large segment of Chicago and other suburbs conscious of the local history project. A phenomenal group of original local historical paintings by both adult and children artists of Wilmette was presented to the Commission. In quick succession came the marking of two Indian trail trees, the collection of many historical museum pieces and their display in the Village Hall, the distribution of illuminated village maps, and the later marking of the neighborhood of the old Ouilmette lake-front cabin. Each charter day provided some demonstration. In addition, the Daughters of the American Colonists marked the site of the old log-cabin school-house and meeting-house at Canterbury Court and Sheridan Road.

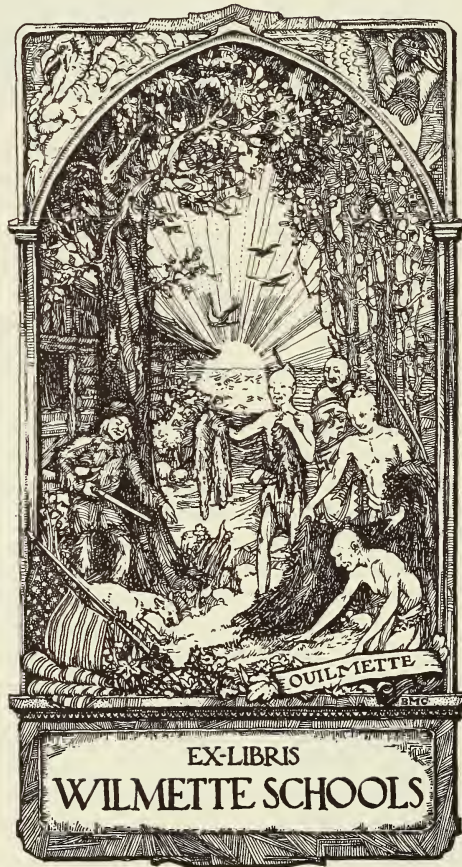
Continuously school children were brought within the influence of historical events. They were often taken in tow by intelligent teachers to visit trail trees. Local histories were deposited in the cornerstones of Central and Logan new school buildings. Repeatedly talks were given to children in class-rooms. Scouting utilized the history effectively.

The stimulus given the whole history project by these and other events presented the opportunity to place in the hands of the public something planned specifically for permanent use. With the fine cooperation of the editors of Wilmette Life, a series of sketches entitled "Frontiers

of Old Wilmette" appeared over a long period, and then under the auspices of the Public Library was printed in a small volume. Copies were provided for the kits of every teacher in both the public and parochial schools to aid teachers in using history constructively with their pupils to open doors to many educational disciplines. Repeatedly local history was dramatized. The Wilmette Garden Club used its theme to dedicate

the outdoor garden reading-room which it presented to the Public Library.

Upon the completion of this effort, Miss Siniff and the Library Board urged that similar treatment be given typical episodes from the close of the early volume until mid-century. The present volume of reprinted sketches is in response to that request.



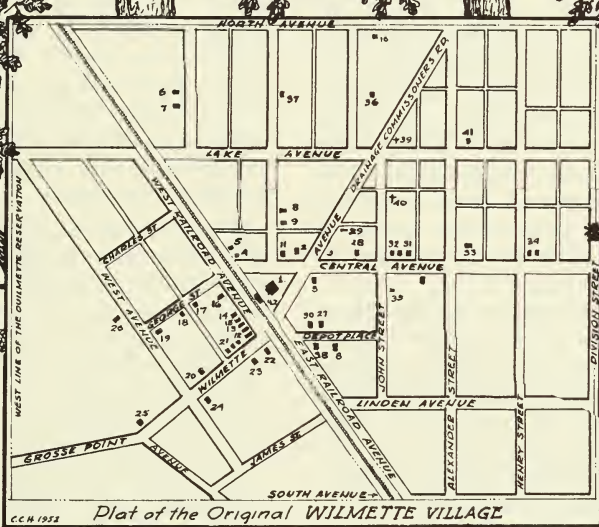
BOOK-PLATE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS
*depicting Ouilmette trading
with the Indians.*

WILMETTE

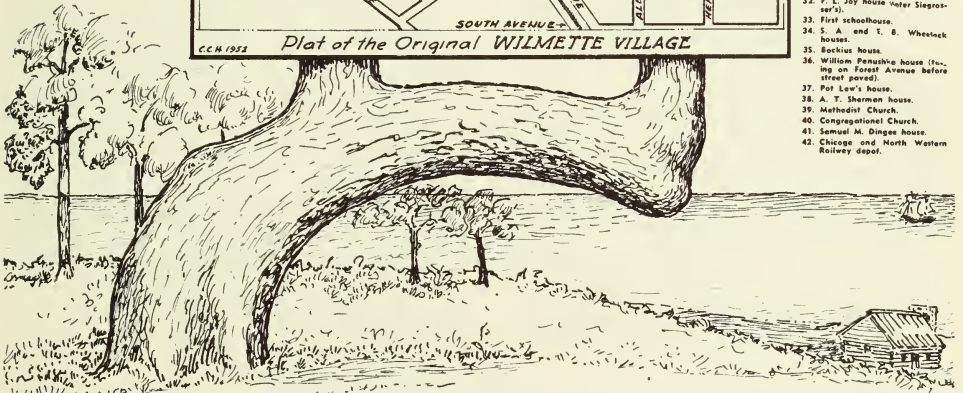
Life

Thursday, September 18, 1952

10c



0. Cow pasture, later playground.
1. First Village Hall, facing C.&N.W. railroad.
2. Library Hall.
3. Dr. Ralph Child's house.
4. Ice office.
5. Hoffmann's (later) Originally at 1208 Central Avenue.
6. Dr. Byron C. Stolp's house.
7. "Grandpa" Seider's house (Mrs. Stolp's step-father).
8. Dabnicka tailor shop.
9. Fred Will home — end dairy.
10. Edmond P. Dashee house.
11. John G. Westerfield survey shop (later King and Schultz grocery).
12. Max Mueller's general store.
13. Hubbell hardware store (later Hubbell and Jenkins).
14. William Kinney grocery and post office (later Frank Smith grocery).
15. John Steffens butcher shop.
16. A. C. Wolff tin shop.
17. Henderson's tin shop.
18. Fire station.
19. Mrs. Curley's boarding house.
20. Early house.
21. Baptist Mueller houses (three).
22. Nettleton's drug store (later John Seesauer's).
23. I.O.O.F. hall. (Dad Fellows).
24. Russell house.
25. Luer grocery store.
26. Early house.
27. Westerfield house (maved, now Scott's).
28. Sheldon home (later I. R. Adkins).
29. C. H. Brethold house.
30. John G. Westerfield farm house.
31. Springer and Ling houses.
32. F. L. Jay house (later Siegrasser's).
33. First schoolhouse.
34. S. A. and T. B. Wheelock houses.
35. Sackus house.
36. William Penushke house (moving on Forest Avenue before street paved).
37. Pol Lew's house.
38. A. T. Sherman house.
39. Methodist Church.
40. Congregational Church.
41. Samuel M. Dingee house.
42. Chicago and North Western Railway depot.



Fuller Lane Trail Tree
Winnetka, Ill.

Fourth Annual Charter Day
WILMETTE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

LVIII

WILMETTE SPEEDS UP

The migration from congested slum-ridden Chicago to the suburbs at mid-century became epic. The "face-lifting" in Wilmette related previously was essentially to improve the traditional residential village and bring it up to date. Within six years, the building activities pyramided spectacularly to bring about changes that made history.

Most dramatic were the physical changes by which corn, pumpkin and cabbage fields of pioneer truck gardeners almost over night became a landscape of roof tops. Month on month trucks, bulldozers and concrete-mixers cleared land, dug ditches and made foundations, to be followed by hordes of other construction workers employed by scores of organizations speculating on the demand for housing.

The statistical story reads thus: In 1873 the population was estimated at 300. Successive census reports showed: 1880, 419; 1890, 1458; 1900, 2300; 1910, 4943; 1920, 7815; 1930 (decade of annexation of Gross Point) 15,232; 1940, 17,226; 1950, 18,162; 1956, estimated, 23,000.

Both Northwestern University and the University of Chicago produced studies on the presumptive suburban trend that showed a steady exodus of white people from Chicago to the suburbs, and a similar number of Negroes and Puerto Ricans flocking to Chicago. Wilmette had no "Negro problem," such as that of Evanston. The Chicago Regional Planning Association circulated maps exploring the trend.

Numerous other signs of the times should have made residents conscious of the significance of the expansion. The Village government had to ration water for both Glenview and Wilmette users pending doubling the waterworks facilities. The collection of fees for new building permits reached almost \$100,000 a year and made a very considerable item in the Village budget. The Public Library circulated more than 300,000 volumes yearly in addition to other services, or about 78 per cent increase since opening its new building. Bonded indebtedness of all local taxing boards soared and with it taxes for interest and amortization made new high records.

Chicago big business decided to take advantage of the new suburban population. A large shopping area was developed at Edens Plaza. The sponsor was Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co. The project was to bring into western Wilmette a large number of shops and offices around its own branch department store. Large areas were provided for free automobile parking, emphasizing the degree to which shopping was done on wheels. It was a far cry from the days of "get out and get under".

The plans previously carried out for new parks and new schools to provide for the great migration were none too soon. Land was rapidly being bought up in speculation. Fresh surveys were made in May of 1956 for the Wilmette school board to support the plan to create still another school for the west end.

HOMES AND PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT — 1946. 1953, 1958

School	1946		1953		1958	
	Homes	Enroll. 1-6	Homes	Enroll. 1-6	Homes	Enroll 1-6
Attendance District						
Central-Laurel	1,969	462	2,078	569	2,161	703
Harper	375	158	824	253	1,051	355
Highcrest	362	24	788	214	3,474*	545
Logan	1,171	470	1,323	437	1,407	460
Totals	4,077	1,114	3,013	1,473	8,093	2,065
Kindergartens		204		276		380
Howard Junior High		317		428		655
Grand Totals	4,077	1,635	5,013	2,177	8,093	3,100

* 10% over 1953 estimate, due to subdivisions counts.

Two schools were feeling the pressure most. Highcrest of the Wilmette system had tributary to it an area as thickly populated as almost the entire Wilmette system only a few years earlier. Independent Avoca school was in a situation that called for new building.

It was striking that Wilmette children and youth were receiving education from three public school systems, two Roman Catholic parochial schools and a high school, one college laboratory school and at least two popular private schools. Broadly the public schools served about twice as many pupils as the parochial schools. Wilmette's position at New Trier High School was rapidly expanding. Although seriously more distant now from the school because of the abandoned North Shore Electric line, Wilmette's population rapidly approximated the population of all the other school districts in the township combined.

Roman Catholic parochial schools felt the pressure also. On the far eastern side of the village St. Francis Xavier school added an assembly room and gymnasium. In the far western area Loyola Academy erected its new building. Land was acquired for Regina Dominican Convent and High School, which required new zoning action by the Village.

This religious activity was in sharp contrast with what had been traditional in "old" Wilmette. The history within the Ouilmette Reservation showed the early village to be essentially Protestant, almost until the annexation of Gross Point. The latter village had been chiefly German Catholic, centered on St. Joseph's Church and school of Ridge Road. Notwithstanding that large numbers of the new migrators from Chicago were Protestants and Jews, there were no church facilities for them, with one exception, west of the C. & N.W. Railway. The result was a definite expansion of east-side churches and a small drift to other suburbs for worship. These expansions produced marked efforts within church-

es already established to activate their congregations in order that they might get acquainted. As some well known commentators were saying, migrant populations, instead of nurturing alliances and loyalties around mother-tongue language groups, might be centering socially and politically around religious faiths. This seemed to indicate a great gap in the social process in the west end.

Meanwhile services by scores of groups to aid in activities for health, recreation, adult culture and general welfare expanded over the community. The Community Chest of 1924 became the United Fund of 1956. The loss of the North Shore Electric was a drag on transportation not made up by taxicabs or bus lines.

Financially two aspects of the expansion caused concern to the conservatives who had labored through the consequences of a dozen years of panic, depression and two wars. Purchases of new houses were accomplished by assistance of parents and by heavy mortgaging. The demand for housing that sent rents up to about \$50 per room per month had behind it two inflationary influences,—the devalued dollar and the premium caused by a scramble for a place to live. In many respects there was a repetition of the inflation of the 1920's. At the same time, the taxation per house in the new housing areas might not cover schooling costs of the smallest families. East-side old established homes and businesses might have to make up the difference. The new shopping center would add a little in taxes, school aids from which would go only to Avoca district. Efforts to bring additional light industry into the area to aid in balancing tax budgets failed in preliminary talks.

At this juncture Wilmette began overtures to influence television Channel 11 Station WTTW to use its facilities to inform the hundreds of thousands of migrating families on the subject of suburban life and local government. Information is sorely needed by newcomers.

LVIX L'ENVOI

It is an axiom that history cannot be well written during the generation that creates it. Perspective demands that events be interpreted so that none will be so over-emphasized as to create biased opinion. This is just as significant in relating tales of modern suburban life as of national or international affairs with which it is interwoven.

In trying to catch for these sketches episodes of the past fifty years or more that seem suggestive of suburban life as lived in Wilmette, two points have been in mind:

1. Changes have been sufficiently rapid and often so unpredictable as to suggest the idea of life being in constant and almost tumultuous civic movement.

2. Without conscious understanding of the trend of this movement, residents are caught in a whirl of various activities common to all suburbs on the fringe of any great metropolis. They may think they are in control of their own destinies and those of their homes and general environment. But often they allow their rights to deteriorate or to go wholly by default.

Eminent students of civil government, city planning, regional zoning, economic dispersion, slum clearance, suburban cooperation and transportation are pointing to changes common to all Suburbia. In 1956, the conference of state governors recognized the need for much metropolitan planning in the given states if concentration of Federal authority was not to be permitted to dominate home-rule of local communities. For instance, Federal aid to public education was a repeated cause for sharp controversy. Conversely metropolitan cooperation of many suburban governments was increasing.

In an opening sketch of this series, it was pointed out that when Mr. and Mrs. Young Couple threw in

their lot with Wilmette in the hope of pleasant living, they had carefully viewed the Chicago scene. This showed the rapid absorption into metropolitan anonymity of the once thriving neighborly communities of Hyde Park, Englewood, Austin, Lake View, Rogers Park and other areas, some of which are now dotted with slums. They came to Wilmette to avoid congestion, vice and crime and to find morality, spirituality and culture purposely in the forefront of community life. Time and again through their negligence they found the community "had a bear by the tail". What was everybody's business was often nobody's business, until force of circumstances produced rule-of-thumb changes, often very expensive. Planning was often by hindsight instead of by foresight.

Gaps in economic, civic, political, social and religious thinking often seemed to be due to leadership over-specialization in *one* field and to a lack of thoughtful cooperation by formally chosen leaders from *all* fields. It seems to be impossible to conduct multifarious civic affairs successfully if civic leaders do not carefully study the whole trend of modern suburban changes.

Clergy, educators, business leaders and professional men,—all have identical common responsibilities, in which the women play a truly great role. Cultural life in this setting cannot be adequate on a purely materialistic basis. Churchly admonition for moral and spiritual protests against delinquencies of many sorts may be ineffective if aloof from civic life as it is lived.

Any review of Wilmette activities shows repeatedly the loss of leadership in highly important places at just the time when, had it been sustained, it would have been a great aid in solving future problems. Wilmette has no comprehensive over-all organization competent to do

what once was conceived for the Wilmette Community Service Association, or for the Wilmette Civic League, or for the Wilmette Sunday Evening Club, or should have been a continuous popular impelling force behind the Wilmette Planning Board. Wilmette has no action-group with a sounding-board for the stimulus and exchange of public opinion among 23,000 people on its constantly rising issues, — current and in times to come.

The objective roving reporter, tramping over the village to record events, is forced to observe many scenes and issues. The older terrain is crowded with lovely verdure. In season, trees, shrubs, grass and flowers soften every vista. Parks and many street triangles glow with beauty.

There seems to be a universal attitude to remodel, refurbish and constantly clean up until the neighborhoods of older architecture vie with the most modern. Especially have potential commercial and slum areas been helped through the erec-

tion of multiple housing projects for fringe zones.

Population is positively racing forward to higher and higher points, entailing expansion of all sorts of facilities, which mean higher taxation. Yet the number of building lots now available in our west end is limited. The real estate splurge must end. Limits on municipal expansion are in sight.

Traffic congestion is mounting. Local transportation is inadequate and calls for constant study. Its influence on community cooperation and solidarity is highly important.

Most happily Wilmette is still a pleasant place for family life. Neighborliness has been a fine human expression in times past. Community life has been at times exciting for those who lived in Wilmette during the times depicted here. Fortunately Wilmette has met its problems. Its people must continue to do so intelligently and to realize that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" and of gracious suburban living.



ACTIVITIES AT NEW TRIER HIGH SCHOOL
Photographs by Donald F. Smith

APPENDIX

IMPORTANT DATES IN WILMETTE HISTORY

- Dec. 3 1674 Pere Marquette explored Grosse Pointe, the headland where the village of Wilmette later originated on the old Green Bay Trail.
- 1790 Antoine Ouilmette arrived in Cheecagau as its "first permanent white settler".
- About 1796-97 Somewhere on Grosse Pointe Antoine Ouilmette married Archange Chevalier, "a Potawctomi Indian woman".
- About 1825 Squatters and Indian camps along the North Shore.
- 1829 Indian treaty of Prairie du Chien, granting Ouilmette family reservation. Their cabin possibly had been built earlier.
- 1833 Indian treaty of Chicago, evacuating Indians from general area.
- 1835 Ouilmettes made first sale of half of reservation to become part of Ridgeville, or North Evanston.
- About 1839 William Foster built first log school-house for his daughter Martha to teach; at about present 18th Street and Wilmette Avenue, "near M. Hoth's first blacksmith shop".
- About 1841 Foster built another log school-house near present Canterbury Court and Sheridan Road (then the Green Bay Road). This school is said to have been blown up with gunpowder by prankster pupil.
- 1841 to 1843 Mary Dennis acquired the acres north of Elmwood Avenue; later sold to John Gage.
- By 1845 Many farms were being cultivated on the Ouilmette Reservation, which was generally called Grosse Pointe and "Wilmet's field". A second school had been built at Canterbury Court, which became a community center for the farms and later the North Ridge Meeting House.
- About 1843 Settlers from the neighborhood of Trier Germany, pioneered in the region of later Gross Point Village, west of Ridge Road.
- 1850 Incorporation of New Trier Township, named after settlers' homeland.
- 1854 Chicago and Milwaukee Railroad (the North Western) built through Wilmette to Waukegan. For some time it did not make stops at Wilmette.
- 1869 First plat drawn of Wilmette.
- 1871 First tax-supported public school in Wilmette at 10th Street and Central Avenue.
- 1871 First church in original Wilmette built cooperatively for Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian and Protestant Episcopal denominations at Wilmette and Lake Avenues.
- 1872 Incorporation of Village of Wilmette.
- 1874 Incorporation of Village of Gross Point.

- 1899 Organization of New Trier Township High School District.
- 1899 Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee Railway built through Wilmette; entry over right-of-way of old St. Paul road.
- 1901 Organization of Wilmette Free Public Library through aid of Andrew Carnegie.
- 1904 Excavations for north channel of drainage canal of Chicago Sanitary District.
- 1907 Organization of Wilmette Park District
- 1912 Elevated railway established Wilmette terminal.
- 1922 First Village Plan adopted.
- 1923 Dissolution of Village of Gross Point.
- 1924 Annexation of former Gross Point to Wilmette.
- 1926 Village boundaries extended to Skokie Valley.
- 1926 Recreation and Playground Board organized.
- 1930 Council-manager system adopted for Village government.
- 1932 Wilmette public school system annexed Gross Point school district.
- 1933 Cornerstone of Wilmette Waterworks laid.
- 1942 "No Man's Land" annexed to Village of Wilmette.
- 1946 Appointment of second village planning board.
- 1946 Wilmette Park District annexed part of area west of Ridge Road.
- 1948 Appointment of Wilmette Historical Commission by Village Council.
- 1955 Abandonment of shore line route of Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee electric line.
- 1956 Glenview Park District released remainder of western Wilmette area to Wilmette Park District.

Wilmette Street Names Have Changed

Present Name	Former Name	Derivation of Original Name
Ashland ave.	Fifth ave.	Counting from Central avenue
Beechwood ave.	Kenilworth Dr. N.	Extension of a Kenilworth street
Birchwood ave.	Seeger st.	
Blackhawk road ¹	Liberty st.	
Catalpa place	Doyle court	For early settler
Central ave. ²	George st.	For George McDaniel
Central Park ave.	Nanzig ave.	For Paul Nanzig
Chestnut ave.	Sixth ave. ³	Counting from Central avenue
Colgate st.	Forest ave.	
Cornell st.	Oxford st.	
Dartmouth st.	Alles st.	For Alles family
Elmwood ave.	North ave.	North reservation boundary
Green Bay rd.	W. Railroad ave. ⁴	
Greenleaf ave.	Depot Pl.	C. & N. W. Ry. Station
Greenwood ave.	Fourth ave. ⁵	Counting from Central avenue
Greenwood ave. ⁶	Franz st.	
Harvard st.	Brown st.	
Illinois road	Happ rd. ⁷	For Happ family
Iroquois rd. ¹	Union st.	
Keating ave.	Kilpatrick ave.	
Kenilworth ave.	Kenilworth dr. S.	Extension of a Kenilworth street
Knox ave.	Maple ave.	
Laurel ave.	Michigan st. ⁸	
Lawndale st.	Eighteenth st.	
Linden ave. ²	James st.	For James Kline
Lockerbie lane	Lowler ave. ⁹	
Maple ave.	Hill st.	For B. F. Hill
Michigan ave.	Sheridan ave.	
Oak Circle	Horse Shoe Curve	
Oakwood ave.	South ave.	South limits of village
Park ave.	West ave.	West limit of First Subdivision
Prairie ave.	Kline st.	For Simon Veeder Kline
Ramona rd.	Miami rd. ¹⁰	
Sheridan Rd.	Central ave. ¹¹	
Thornwood ave.	Barklay ave.	
Walnut ave.	Greenwood ave. ¹²	
Washington ave. ²	Charles st.	For Charles Westerfield ¹³
Washington ave. ¹⁴	Blum st.	For Lambert Blum
Wilmette ave. ¹⁵	Gross Point rd.	Gross Point to Ridgeville
Wood court	Greenwood st.	
Second st. ¹⁶	Fifth st.	Counting from present 7th st.
Third st.	Fourth st.	Counting from present 7th st.
Fourth st.	Third st. ¹⁷	Counting from present 7th st.
Fifth st.	Second st.	Counting from present 7th st.
Sixth st.	First st.	Counting from present 7th st.
Seventh st.	Grove st.	
Eighth st.	Division st.	East edge of first plat
Ninth st.	Henry st.	For Henry Dingee
Tenth st.	Alexander st. ¹⁸	For Alexander McDaniel
Eleventh st. ¹⁹	John st.	For John G. Westerfield
Eleventh st. ²⁰	William st.	For William H. Kinney
Twelfth st.	Park st.	
Thirteenth st. ²¹	Gage st.	For Gage family
Thirteenth st. ²	Bennett st.	Extension of an Evanston street
Fourteenth st.	Foster st.	
Fifteenth st.	Elm st.	
Sixteenth st.	Oak st.	
Seventeenth st.	Walnut st. ²²	
Eighteenth st.	Fernleaf st. ²³	
Twentieth st.	Cambridge st. ²⁴	
Twenty-First st.	Melvin st. ²⁵	
Twenty-Second st.	Princeton st.	
Twenty-Third st.	Greeley ave.	
Twenty-Fourth st.	Wentworth ave.	
Twenty-Fifth st.	Hancock st.	
Twenty-Sixth st.	Sherman st.	

The following streets have apparently retained their original names: Broadway, Central²¹, East Railroad, Forest, Lake, Linden²¹, Washington²¹, and Woodbine avenues, and Isabella street.

Footnotes: ¹west of Romona road. ²west of railroad. ³also Clover avenue. ⁴also Main street. ⁵also Hollywood avenue. ⁶west of Twenty-third street. ⁷also Avoca road, Reinwald avenue, Ashland avenue. ⁸also Bryan street. ⁹also Summers street. ¹⁰also Spruce street. ¹¹also Grove street, Seventh street, and State street. ¹²also Columbus street. ¹³or Charles Gedney, Charles Kline, or Charles Vail. ¹⁴west of the ridge. ¹⁵west of Kline street. ¹⁶now vacated and occupied by the North Shore channel. ¹⁷also Meridian street. ¹⁸part of Wilmette avenue north of North avenue. ¹⁹south of Lake avenue. ²⁰north of Lake avenue. ²¹east of railroad. ²²south of Wilmette avenue called Hoefler street. ²³also Maple street. ²⁴also Clark street. ²⁵also Oak street and Pine street.

READING REFERENCES

These serial sketches were written as a sequel to "Frontiers of Old-Wilmette". They were based on many personal experiences and observations of many local residents over the past half-century. During that time the author served officially on many boards and commissions from which were drawn many episodes. Among these were war finance appointments for the Seventh (Chicago) Federal Reserve banking district, the Wilmette public schools, New Trier Township High School, New Trier Township Tax Committee, New Trier Orchestral Association, Cook County School Survey Commission, Wilmette Congregational Church, the old Ouilmette Country Club, Wilmette Sunday Evening Club, Wilmette Civic League, and others in which he assisted in founding activities, such as the Recreation and Playground movement, the Wilmette Historical Commission and the Wilmette Bowl concerts.

The history files of the Wilmette Public Library contain much supporting information to which access may be had by readers who may wish to go more deeply into local history. The information contains much of the following:

Pioneer Days

"Frontiers of Old Wilmette"

Herbert B. Mulford

Minutes of Ye Olde Towne Folks

Special Historical Number of Wilmette Life of September 18, 1947

Various monographs by early residents

Civic Problems

Planning Commission Reports of 1922 and later

Recommendations of Cook County School Survey Commission of 1943

School Board Reference Library of Illinois Association of School Boards

Tax Clinic Reports of Tri County School Boards

"Work of the School Board in Illinois"

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