



Main Street Downers Grove, circa 1900. Pictured left to right...Mertz and Mochel Hardware (before its expansion south in 1923), Carpenter's Drug Store, Klein's Meat Market, Downers Grove Fair (dry goods Store) image ©2017 Downers Grove Historical Society and © 2017 Downers Grove Museum

Welcome Back

The Downers Grove Historical Society is pleased to say -- "We're Back!" Of course...we never really went away, but our Newsletter did...so now you'll be hearing more from us in the future. We've been busy keeping history alive for future generations by preserving and promoting the heritage of Downers Grove. We rely solely on public support to continue these efforts. Please donate your time and resources as you can.

2017 Membership

As you may be aware, there was a lapse in our dues notifications last year while we reorganized, built up our event programming, and made progress using some of the social media technology to get our message out.

Dues pricing is as follows:

- Individual - \$15
- Family - \$20
- Senior/Student - \$10
- Business - \$25
- Life Individual - \$100
- Life Couple - \$200

We are always seeking additional support and if you would like to contribute, please feel free to support us in any way you can. Donate to the Historical Society today.

2016 Historian of the Year Lois Sterba.

Downers Grove Historical Society recognizes Lois Sterba as 2016 Historian of the Year.

The Downers Grove Historical Society is pleased to announce that Lois Sterba has been selected as the Historical Society's 2016 Historian of the Year. Since moving



to Downers Grove in 1991, Lois has dedicated countless hours both preserving and promoting the history of Downers Grove. Lois enjoyed many years teaching elementary students before retiring in 2008. Having been a college history major, she now leads a special yearly Downers Grove historical field trip (complete with a bus tour around town and a walking tour of the Main Street Cemetery) for local elementary 2nd graders.

Lois is the past president of the Oak Hill/Oak Crest Cemetery Foundation where she facilitated monument and grounds restoration and increased the information available about this historic cemetery. She has completed extensive research on the Main Street Cemetery 'residents' which is being used by the Historical Society to create a self-guided, interactive walking tour of the Main Street Cemetery. Lois was also an important contributor to the educational trifold brochure detailing the cemetery's history. She frequently gives presentations at the DG Library, and elsewhere, on Downers Grove history and important Downers Grove historical figures. Additionally, she has written articles for the magazines of the DuPage County and

Illinois Genealogical Societies.

Please welcome us in congratulating Lois with this well deserved nomination.

Historical Society President Liz Chalberg presents Lois Sterba with the 2016 Historian of the Year award.



New Historic Home Program Unveiled



We are happy to announce that six homes have already been recognized under the revised Historic Homes Program: 5320 Benton Avenue, 5130 Carpenter Street, 4540 Highland Avenue, 4925 Highland Avenue, 4836 Middaugh Avenue and 4803 Prince Street.

Last May the Downers Grove Historical Society partnered with the Downers Grove Museum to create a revised Historic Home Program. Previously known as the Centennial Home Program, this program recognized homes which were 100+ years old. The updated Historic Home Program expands the criteria to include homes which are 50 or more years old and have either architectural and/or historic significance to the village. Historic significance includes varied architectural styles, owners who have greatly contributed to the history and

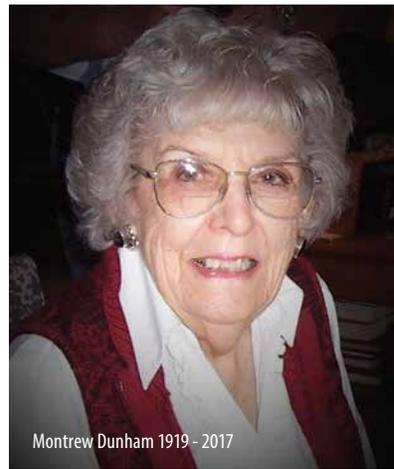
development of Downers Grove, and other criteria which recognize the importance of a home's character within the community.

Go to www.downersgrovehistory.org to download the application to register your home. Questions about the Historic Homes Program may be directed to: HistoricHomes@DownersGroveHistory.com

Sad News: Montrew Goetz Dunham passed away

Montrew Goetz Dunham of Downers Grove, 97, passed away peacefully January 8, 2017 at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, surrounded

by family, after a brief illness. She was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on September 19, 1919 and lived in Downers Grove for the last 60 years. She was a graduate of Butler University (1941) and received a Master's Degree from Northwestern University in 1966. She was a school guidance counselor at DG North and later at DG South High Schools. She



authored numerous books including the histories; Downers Grove 1832-1982 and Downers Grove Revisited in 2003. She wrote several Childhood of Famous American series biographies including Neil Armstrong and Ronald Reagan among others. She has also written several novels.

She was Director Emeritus of the Downers Grove Historical Society, longtime volunteer at Morton Arboretum, LOVE, AAUW, Good Sam Auxiliary, and participated in many other volunteer groups and civic committees for the Village of Downers Grove over the years.

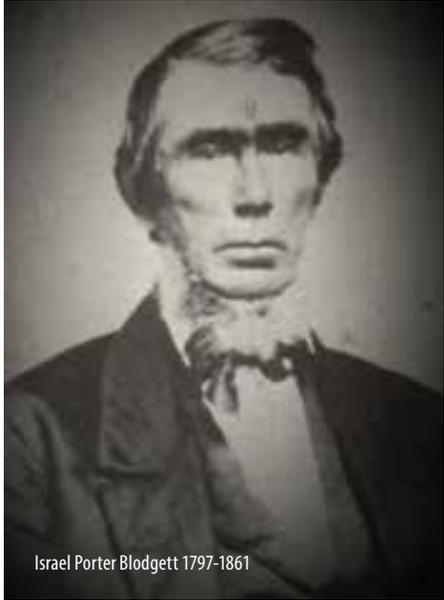
She was married to the late Robert E. Dunham for 48 years. She was preceded in death by her brother Byron Goetz of Downers Grove. She is survived by her children: Chuck (Barb) Dunham, Diane (Late Nathan) Massey, Denise (Mark) Schiele and Jim (Nancy) Dunham; grandchildren, Mackenzie (Harriss) D'Antignac, Sara and Lauren Massey, Griffin (Heather) and Graham Schiele, Davis and Grace Dunham; great grandchildren Cecilia, Henry and Antoinette D'Antignac; and many nieces and nephews.

Interment was a private ceremony at Clarendon Hills Cemetery on January 11, 2017.

A memorial service is planned for February 19, 2017 at 2 PM at the First Congregational Church of Downers Grove, 1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to American Cancer Society, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, DG Historical Society, or the charity of your choice.

Founders Day 2017 Save the date - May 6th

Celebrating the history and founders of Downers Grove can be traced back to the Centennial celebration held in 1932 when the village was 100 years old.



Israel Porter Blodgett 1797-1861

The founders were honored with a parade and historical play. In 1982 another celebration was held to mark the 150th birthday of the village. It was called Heritage Fest, included activities and entertainment for all, and became a yearly event. In the past few years the Downers Grove Historical Society felt a day should be set each year to honor the founding

citizens of Downers Grove. (The first weekend of May was chosen because it celebrates Pierce Downer's arrival to settle here in May of 1832.)

In 2014 the founder of the year was Pierce Downer, 2015 Samuel Curtiss, and 2016 John Stanley. The Historical Society has named Israel Porter Blodgett as the founder to be honored in 2017. Founder's Day this year will include the dedication of a plaque in the Main Street Cemetery honoring the effort of Blodgett and others who were part of the Underground Railroad.

This years Founders Day Celebrations will be held Saturday, April 28th and May 6th, please save the dates and stay tuned for details.

Israel Porter Blodgett 1797-1861 Founder Of the Year 2017

Born in Amherst, Massachusetts on March 4, 1797, the day that John Adams was inaugurated second president of the United States, Israel Porter Blodgett was the 5th generation of Blodgetts to live in America. His ancestors were from England and his grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War. They were blacksmiths for generations and passed the

trade down to Israel. Israel was the oldest of the 12 children in his family and as a young man became an apprentice blacksmith at the United States Armory in Springfield and went to work at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. His co-workers were slaves and after advising them how to escape north to freedom, he lost his position. Returning to Massachusetts he made wagon wheels, gun barrels and anchor chains with swivels for ships. He married Avis Dodge in 1820 when he was 23.

By 1830 he made the decision to move west and organized the Hampshire Colony, a group going to Illinois, leaving his wife and children in Massachusetts until he could find a place to settle. His first stop in Illinois was Naperville where he brought his family to live. It was here in 1832 his family fled to Ft. Dearborn during the Black Hawk War while Israel volunteered under the command Capt. Joseph Naper to defend the homesteads.

By 1836 the Blodgett family moved to Downers Grove. They purchased about 500 acres of land on what is now Maple Avenue to farm and set up a blacksmith shop. In 1846, after ten years living in a log cabin, Israel built a one-and-a half story house with rustic hand-hewn black walnut joists and simple clapboard exterior. This home became a stop on the Underground Railroad as the Blodgett's helped slaves to escape to freedom. Today, the house is one of the oldest in Downers Grove and is currently the site of the Downers Grove Museum campus.

When Israel Blodgett died in 1861 he left a wife and six sons. He was recognized for being a friend to the pioneers and the local Native Americans. He was an experienced blacksmith, an inventor of a self-scouring plow to cut thru the prairie grass and an abolitionist. One of his last wishes was to be buried in a simple pine coffin as he found it would last better in the wet prairie ground. He told his sons to cover it with black cloth if they wanted to hide the pine box. This burial method would soon be used by many. His grave can be found in the Main Street Cemetery in Downtown Downers Grove.

The Downers Grove Historical Society is happy to honor Israel Porter Blodgett as the Founder of the Year for 2017.

Main Street Cemetery App

With the delightful announcement of our Founder's Day selection, this newsletter ends with new information regarding Mr. Blodgett's final resting place. An exciting project is underway to bring to life the rich history of those interred in our Main Street Cemetery. Forgotten voices will be heard once again as an interactive tour of our Main Street cemetery will soon be available on smart phones and computers. People standing graveside (and even

all the way around the world) will be able to learn about the founding members of our town along with the others who are buried there.

As you visit each headstone you will be able to listen to audio biographies or read along on your phone, look through relevant, historic photos and documents and interact with real Downers Grove history. Please stay tuned for launch details about this ambitious initiative this Spring.

Also, please be reminded, that we are 100% fueled by donations so, continue to donate time and dollars as you can to support additional programs like this in the future.

Our mailing address is:
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www.downersgrovehistory.org

