

## Blackburn Family Together Again

*By Lois Sterba, Historical Society Director/Treasurer*

Much research has been done on the people buried in the Main Street Cemetery and we still have questions about the families buried there. It can entail using old plot maps, pictures taken years ago, an old inventory from the 1960's, and many of the new research technologies, and it can still be very challenging to find answers.

One of the questions I've had was why was Isrel (or Israel) Blackburn, a former slave who came to live in Downers Grove after the Civil War (and one of the signers of DG's incorporation papers), buried in the Northwest corner of the cemetery when the old plot map showed he owned plot 77 which is next to the red walkway.

In my research to find any information on any unmarked graves in the cemetery I use the Wheaton Illinois Public Library-Webcat Vital Records Index. This source contains information recorded from the Wheaton Illinoian Newspaper from the 1880's. This newspaper contains much information about people who lived in Downers Grove. (As a free service of the Wheaton Library, you can find this on their Web page.) On this site I saw that I. Blackburn died November 29, 1885. Well, the gravestone we have in the Main Street Cemetery states Blackburn died in 1902 so why was the date different? Another click on this site showed me the sentence- Israel Blackburn, son of I.L. Blackburn

of Downers Grove died in Chicago on Nov. 29, 1885 and the remains were brought to Downers Grove for burial. The census records I found on Ancestry (which is free at the Downers Grove Library) showed there was a son named Isreal. Ancestry then led me to the Cook County Illinois Death Index 1878-1922 which stated Isreal Blackburn born 1844 died 1885 and buried Downers Grove Main Street Cemetery. To my surprise another Blackburn was listed in the death index, Malcolm another son who died in 1884 and buried in the Main Street Cemetery. So, Plot 77 was bought by Blackburn and used to bury his 2 sons. No marker was found on this plot when the inventory was done on the 1960's. So, my question was answered, Blackburn was buried in the corner plot because his sons were in plot 77.

In the near future a marker will be installed on Plot 77 with the names of Isreal Blackburn Jr. and Malcolm Blackburn. This is made possible by the continued support of the Village of Downers Grove to maintain and restore this historic cemetery. There will be a dedication of this stone in 2018 so watch for the date.

This question had been answered but I have more questions and will keep looking for more answers.

# December Historic Landmarks

In December, two homes were designated Downers Grove historic landmarks:

## 4632 Main Street



**Harris Home No. N-1033**  
The Plan 30 ft. x 34 ft. 6 in. 3 Rooms and Bath

**T**HIS building may just suit your lot! Good taste is displayed everywhere in this well balanced design. The exterior has all the charm of a full blooded California bungalow with its gables, exposed rafters, brackets, flower boxes and craftsmanlike exterior.

In selecting a home most people want something a little different than their neighbors, something that, in a measure at least, gives expression to their conception of hominess and beauty.

Here are five large rooms, space for breakfast nook, pantry, bath and good sized closets. The Blue Print Plans must be seen to be appreciated—order them today. This house can be reversed without extra charge.

**FLOOR PLAN**

HARRIS BROTHERS COMPANY, 35th and Iron Streets, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

*Home, Sweet Home, be it ever so humble, there's no place like Home.*

**Harris Homes Beautiful**

**To Every Wise Man and Woman Comes the Natural Desire to Own a Home**

**C**HIS Company realizing the needs and demands of the public, from many years of experience, presents herewith a handsome book of carefully selected plans for moderate-priced homes at prices so reasonable, that a home is easily within your reach even though your means be limited.

The character of these homes, and the quality of the material we supply is such as to at once convince you of the desirability of purchasing from this Company.

**HARRIS BROTHERS COMPANY**  
35TH AND IRON STREETS - CHICAGO

Built circa 1922, the home located at 4632 Main Street is a one-story Craftsman Bungalow and includes a low-pitched cross-gabled roof with wide eaves, brackets under the gable, exposed roof rafters, and battered brick columns that extend to the ground without a break at the porch floor. The Craftsman style was a movement that originated in California in the 1890s and was a reaction against the excessive ornamentation of the Victorian era. A bungalow can be defined as a one to one-and-a-half story house with a low-pitched gable or hip roof and wide eaves.

4632 Main Street is also a kit (or mail order) home manufactured by Harris Brothers Co. of Chicago. Harris Brothers Co. first started selling kit homes in 1907 and by 1918 had established “The Harris Way”; which highlighted the company’s distinguishing characteristics such as liberal terms for payment and money back for waste. Harris Brothers was one of several companies who sold kit homes, however they were unique in that they were initially in the business of wrecking and salvage as opposed to milling and manufacturing. The company was originally known as Chicago House Wrecking Company and has the interesting distinction of being responsible for the disassembly of the first Ferris Wheel, which had been constructed as part of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. The plan for 4632 Main Street was known as Harris Home Model No. N-1033. 4632 Main Street is the first kit home to be landmarked in the Village of Downers Grove!

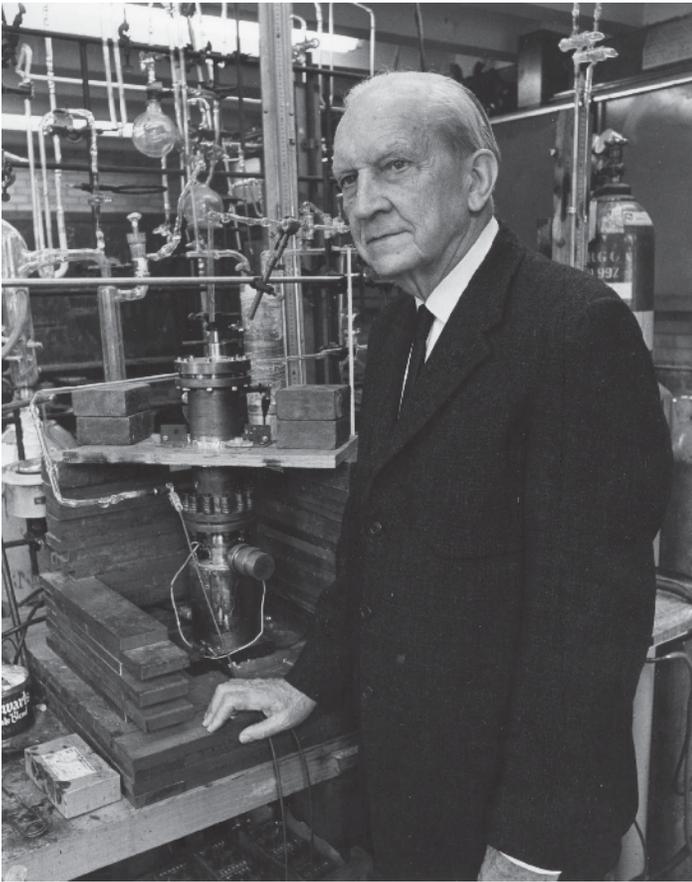
## 1324 Maple Avenue



**BUILT ON A SLOPING SITE**  
at Downers Grove, Ill., on World War

**J. E. Bellows Construction Co., Builders, Chicago**  
Robert W. Bellows, Architect, Wheaton, Ill.

**FLOOR PLAN**



Built circa 1936, the home located at 1342 Maple Avenue is the “youngest” home to be land-marked in the Village. Despite its “youth” it has an impressive history; and was landmarked for its historic significance, for one of its owners, and for its builder.

It was one of eight homes built in the Chicago area using winning designs from the architectural contest held in conjunction with the 1933 World’s Fair. It was designed by Robert Salisbury and built by J. T. Schless & Co., which also built the Tivoli Theater and was a primary contractor involved with the construction of Fermilab. The home featured an all-electric kitchen and central air-conditioning, both new technologies for the time. It was originally open for tours so that the public could see all the modern conveniences of the future.

The third owners of the home were Dr. and Mrs. William Jesse. Dr. Jesse’s early work in the field of physics dealt with cosmic rays, and is considered a precursor to space age research. He also went on to act as both a Group Leader and Section Chief for the Manhattan Project. Additionally, Dr. Jesse discovered a phenomenon that was named after him, which is known as “The Jesse Effect”. It’s described as “a minute amount of contaminants which greatly enhance the total ionization of helium gas by alpha particles.” There are still papers written today that discuss this phenomenon.



### Historic Home Program



5325 Fairmount Avenue

The Downers Grove Historical Society and Downers Grove Museum are pleased to announce that the Frank Rogers House, located at 5325 Fairmount Avenue, has recently been



recognized through the Historic Home Program. Frank Aldrich Rogers Jr. was a carpenter and most likely constructed the home in 1926. It appears that he never lived in the home but instead used it as a rental property. The 1930 census records indicate that Raymond and Estelle Schultz were renting the home at that time. Rogers sold the home in 1937.

The house represents the distinguishing characteristics of a bungalow. The term “bungalow” is derived from the Hindi word “bangle” meaning a low house with a porch. Bungalows were built throughout the United States from 1890 to 1930 and are one of the dominant building forms found in Downers Grove. A bungalow can be defined as a one to one-and-a-half story house with a low-pitched gable or hip roof and wide eaves. The Frank Rogers House is a one-story bungalow and includes a low-pitched jerkinhead (clipped) gable roof with wide eaves. Many of the original architectural features of the home are still present; including lead glass windows, built-ins, doors and hardware. The eastern-most portion of the home is an addition that was constructed in 1956.

The Historic Home Program is open to homes which are 50 or more years old and have architectural and/or historical significance to the Village. Owners fill out an application which helps establish original and subsequent ownership through the years; including deed transfers, tax history and other useful information. Recognized homes are given the opportunity to purchase a Historic Home Program plaque for their home. The resulting research is permanently housed at the Downers Grove Museum for future generations to learn more about these important architectural structures in our community. For more information about the Historic Home Program or to download the application, please visit either:

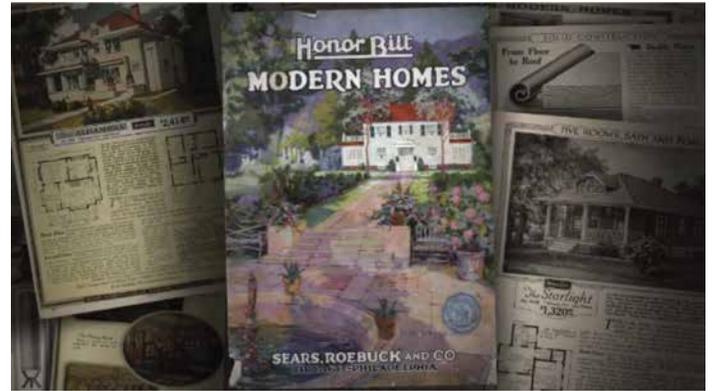
<http://downersgrovehistory.org/historic-homes.html>  
<http://www.dgparks.org/places-to-go/the-museum>

Contact us at [HistoricHomes@DownersGroveHistory.org](mailto:HistoricHomes@DownersGroveHistory.org) valued today and will be appreciated for generations to come.

## Founder's Day 2018! Save the Dates!

Founders Day will be May 5th this year and we will be celebrating Downers Grove history throughout the week leading up to it with a variety of events, discussions, seminars, and historic recognitions of people and places. Civil War Captain Walter Blanchard will be recognized as our Founder of the Year. Come celebrate Downers Grove history! More details to come, so ... SAVE THE DATES!

## Sear's Catalog Home Tours are back!



The Village of Downers Grove has produced a new walking/driving tour of Sears Catalog Homes. Take a look at the recently produced video about Downers Grove's collection of these iconic homes ([https://youtu.be/UMJk7ydZ\\_Wc](https://youtu.be/UMJk7ydZ_Wc)) and drop by Village Hall for a free brochure to start your tour soon.

## DUES will be DUE soon!

Watch for your Historical Society membership dues notice which will be coming out in the next few weeks. Our annual membership rates remain the same and are used solely to support the preservation of, education about, and promotion of Downers Grove history. Annual rates are as follows

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

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