



JUNE 2019

The Downers Grove Historical Society Newsletter

the Downers Grove HISTORICAL SOCIETY



FOUNDERS DAY 2019
Thank You

Photograph by Slav Polinski

Founders Day 2019 continued to grow with record crowds at many events. This year, we celebrated Henry Carpenter for being our first merchant in Downers Grove and someone who was instrumental in getting train service to run through and stop in our community, forever changing our community's future and fortunes. With 14 events, there was something for everyone. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the sponsoring groups and businesses that participated in and provided funding for these events. As you will see by the list below, celebrating Downers Grove history is a true community effort.



- **Downers Grove Handmade Market**
 - Downers Grove Junior Women's Club
- **Wild Flowers Walk**
 - Downers Grove Park District; Lyman Woods Interpretive Center
- **43rd Annual Pine Hollow Open**
 - Downers Grove Historical Society; Downers Grove Golf Club (Park District); Foundation

of District 58; Chamber630; Grove Players; Grove Foundation; Downers Grove Public Library; Downtown Management Corporation

- **Shop, Sip, and Stroll – Wine Walk**
Downtown Management Corporation + 22 downtown businesses
- **History of the Burlington Route in Downers Grove**
 - Downers Grove Museum (Park District) and Downers Grove Historical Society
- **Self-Guided 10k and 5k Historic Walks**
 - Windy City Walkers
- **Family Bike Ride**
 - Downers Grove Bicycle Club
- **Founder of the Year – Henry Carpenter-Graveside dedication**
 - Downers Grove Historical Society
- **Country in the Park (Historic exhibits, activities, crafts, and petting farm)**
 - Downers Grove Museum (Park District)
 - The Grove Foundation
- **Afternoon Story Time, Model Railroad Display, and Songs of the Civil War and Old West**
 - Downers Grove Public Library
 - Venture Crew 57 Boy Scouts of America

- **The History and Architecture of the Avery Coonley School**
 - Downers Grove Historical Society and Avery Coonley School

New App Enhances Downers Grove Main Street Cemetery Visitor Experience

One of the many activities of the DGHS is to serve as the steward for the village-owned Main Street Cemetery in the heart of our downtown. To fulfill the outreach part of our stewardship, we have released an app that allows visitors (and potential visitors) to learn more about the cemetery.



The easy-to-use app can be accessed from any device by visiting <https://www.mainstreetcemetery.com>. Visitors can learn about the lives of many of Downers Grove's early pioneers and most prominent residents who are buried there.

Using the Main Street Cemetery app, visitors can:

- **View an alphabetical list of individuals.**
- **Click on a cemetery map to help navigate during cemetery visits.**
- **Listen to stories and view pictures of some of the most prominent Downers Grove pioneers.**
- **Read bios on nearly every person buried in the cemetery.**
- **Learn more about the ceremonial markers located there.**
- **Use the app while visiting the cemetery or from any other location.**
- **View on any size device including phones, tablets, laptops, and desktops.**

Thanks to Marty Acks, Greg Elisha, Vale Farrar, Corey Roach, Lois Sterba, Jim Toth, the Village of Downers Grove, and Three Lakes Creative for help bringing the application to fruition. It was a great team effort.

The Flower Lady

LILLY ELIZABETH THOLIN (1894-1969)

Lilly Elizabeth Karlson was born in Hinsdale Illinois in 1894 to Emanuel and Matilda from Sweden. Her father operated a shoe store in Hinsdale.



Lilly married Edgar Karl Tholin of Downers Grove. Even through Edgar and his brother Victor had been taught to be tailors by their father Andrew who operated a men's clothing store in Downers Grove, Edgar decided to leave the business, becoming an accountant. Lilly and Edgar lived on Forest Avenue where they raised their daughter Virginia.

Lilly was not one to stay at home and by 1936 she was serving on the Downers Grove High School Board with Mr. Herrick, Mr. Groves and Mr. Scott. She held this position for several years.

Another interest of Lilly's was flowers. She belonged to the Chicago Plant, Flower and Fruit Guild of Chicago and the Garden Clubs of Illinois. During the time she belonged to these groups she helped organize the "Lilac Shower" started by the Chicago Tribune in 1929 as a movement to send flowers from all over Chicago and the suburbs to people who were in Chicago hospitals. Lilly was the chairperson of the Burlington section of this effort. Every year in the Spring she had school children, girl and boy scouts and her neighbors collect lilacs growing in the village. Some of the lilacs came from bushes on the Lyman homestead (near Ogden Avenue). These flowers had been used for many years to decorate soldier's graves on Decoration Day now called Memorial Day. So many flowers were collected for this good will effort that the Burlington trains had to put on more cars to carry them all to Chicago. Over 20,000 bouquets were sent to more than 30 hospitals. In addition to flowers being sent by train, Lilly started planting flowers in gardens by hospitals to cheer the patients. The people of Downers Grove participated in the "Lilac Shower" for more than 20 years.

Lilly Tholin was honored in 1956 by the Garden Clubs of Illinois for 25 years of service with the club. Lilly said "Working with flowers keeps you from getting old."

Lilly Tholin died in 1969 at the age of 75 and is buried with her husband and parents in the Bronswood Cemetery in Oak Brook.

English Cottage-Style Home Latest Landmark

The Historical Society is pleased that the home located at 5 Jacqueline Drive was designated a Downers Grove historic landmark earlier this year. Built circa 1927, it is best characterized as being English Cottage (or Cotswold), which is a variant of the English Country Revival style. The house is located off of Gilbert Avenue and backs up to St. Joseph's Creek and Gilbert Park. A special thank you to Judith Erickson for making the decision to landmark her home.

(Source document: Village Landmark Resolution: <https://bit.ly/2th9ETP>)



Main Street Cemetery Receives Landmark Approval

The Downers Grove Village Council moved unanimously to approve the Landmark Application, providing future protection from development for this treasured



historic site without further review. The Village is the owner of the property and took the necessary steps to protect this important focal point of Downers Grove history. The Main Street Cemetery is the final resting place of many of our early pioneers and founding families.

Gordon Goodman

RECIPIENT OF MONTREW DUNHAM AWARD

The Downers Grove Historical Society is proud to announce the recipient of the first Montrew Dunham Award. This award has been established in memory of local historian and long time friend of the Historical Society, Montrew

Dunham who died in 2017. In her honor we wish to recognize a person who has promoted the Historical Society's mission "To preserve the history of Downers Grove so that future generations can better understand the past."



Gordon Goodman, resident of Downers Grove since 1965, has done much to deserve this award. Working with many local groups he has directly helped preserve and improve Downers Grove. He has served with the Pierce Downer Heritage Alliance since he helped found the group in 1996. The group is dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the village. They worked to raise money to preserve and keep Lyman Woods as a natural area and safeguard Belmont Prairie, which in 1979 became the first Illinois Nature Preserve to be dedicated in DuPage County.

Also interested in preserving the architectural history of Downers Grove, Gordon worked in 2004 to save the Orange Lyman house on Maple Avenue, one of the oldest homes in the village. The 1846 Blodgett House was another home preserved through efforts of the 1846 Blodgett House Group that combined Gordon's support with that of many other concerned citizens. As a result, he was one of the "Volunteers of the Year" award winners from the Downers Grove Park District in 2011. The historic 1846 Blodgett House, which was built by pioneer Israel Blodgett, was moved, restored and is now on the way to becoming an important part of the Blodgett Homestead on Maple Avenue. Its early construction style and history of being a stop on the Underground Railroad make it very important to Downers Grove's history.

Gordon's passion for historic preservation continued with his efforts as part of the 2014 campaign to preserve the Edwards House on Maple Avenue. Gordon spoke eloquently at the Plan Commission and Village Council meetings of the value to Downers Grove of saving the circa 1898, high style Queen Anne home. Although the House could not be saved, Gordon's contributions helped form the foundation of recent successes in historic preservation in Downers Grove.

Gordon's individual efforts and his volunteer work with many other civic and not-for-profit groups have helped the Village retain much of its

historic character today.

The Downers Grove Historical Society is pleased to award Gordon the Montrew Dunham Award. Gordon will be presented this award at the dedication of the Montrew Dunham History Center on July 13th at 10am (see "Save the Date" article).

Save the Dates for Upcoming Events

Montrew Dunham History Center Dedication

July 13 (Saturday) 10am - Museum Campus - Free Event

The Park District will be renaming the annex building on the Museum Campus at 831 Maple Ave to honor historian and author Montrew Dunham. A longtime Historical Society member and Director Emeritus, Montrew worked with Pauline Wandschneider to co-author Downers Grove, 1832-1982, and in 2003 authored Downers Grove Revisited.



Historic Colors and Finishes

September 12 (Thursday) 7-8:30pm - Gatto's Italian Restaurant

Construction Consultant Neal Vogel will take you back in time to see what colors and finishes were popular in our vintage homes and how to protect or replace them today. To be held at Gatto's Italian Restaurant and Bar; tickets required; discount for members. Watch for our separate invitation and Facebook announcements in August.



Living Cemetery

October 26 (Saturday) 10am-Noon - Main Street Cemetery - Free Event

Experience Voices Not Forgotten -- interact with living historians who will bring to life an essence of our earliest Downers Grove settlers, Civil War soldiers and those who contributed to the history of our village. Their stories and lives represent the history of Downers Grove.



Make a Difference in Your Community

The Downers Grove Historical Society is looking for help in the following areas:

- Writers
- Social Media
- Public Relations
- Interviewers
- Photographers
- History Lovers
- Leaders



Volunteers make the difference. Learn about fun ways to share your talents and promote the rich history that Downers Grove has to offer.

Contact Liz Chalberg at 630-660-6767 or send an email to info@downersgrovehistory.org

Our Volunteers Are Making History

Without your help we wouldn't be able to preserve and promote Downers Grove history. The Historical Society is

lucky to have volunteers (both members and non-members) who have stepped up to the plate to help with a variety of activities and committee work in the past few months. We would like to thank you for making a difference:



Dan Lassiter, Sue Lassiter, Bill Chalberg, Irena Paronis, Margaret Cho, Annie Kasinecz, Jessie Luchsinger, Chuck Keenley, Chuck Holtzen, Byron Holtzen, Deb Howard, and Joyce Tumea.



Like us on Facebook