



The Downers Grove Historical Society Newsletter

The Tivoli ... a Town Treasure

The Tivoli Theater event on February 26th proved to be a treasure-trove of images and stories from the past and present for the sold-out crowd. Attendees entered this restored French Renaissance style “movie palace” accompanied by music from the Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ. Tivoli Theatre owner Willis Johnson presented the history of Downers Grove movie-going which had its start in the early 1900’s. Guests got to hear facts and see many photos covering the fascinating history of the Tivoli ...from construction to grand opening in 1928! And then...the movie!!! Early film actor Buster Keaton starred in the evenings feature film “Sherlock Jr.” showing amazing special effects and harrowing stunts. Guests were then taken on a guided tour of the theatre which included backstage, the projection room, fully restored downstairs dressing rooms where performers (then and now) prepare to go on the stage, and the underground passage to the Tivoli Bowl with its bowling alley, billiards, and lounge. Today, the Tivoli is equipped with state-of-the-art surround sound and digital screening capabilities, but you can still see the theater’s original—and still viable—light board and many of the original film projection technologies in the projection booth. There were theatre

personnel available to explain the progression of presentation media in the last century, sequencing from film run through spools, to cassettes, and finally the current satellite-driven media downloads. Four lucky theater buffs ended the evening by winning \$25 gift certificates to the Tivoli. It was a delightful evening giving guests a great appreciation of the art, technology, and history of this Downers Grove treasure!

By contributing writer, Tricia Eastwood

2020 HINDSIGHT

100 YEARS AGO, HERE’S WHAT WAS HAPPENING

- The acreage was bought from Marshall Field for Maple Grove Forest Preserve, the first forest preserve in DG.
- Women received the right to vote
- The population in Downers Grove in 1920 was 3,543 (10 years later it would be 8,977). Real estate was booming.
- Famed Egyptologist Henry Breasted (who grew up in Downers Grove) led a party of men across the Syrian Desert for a preliminary survey for excavations at Armageddon.

Carol Wandschneider

August 20, 1944- January 5, 2020

This photo shows long time member and Society secretary Carol Wandschneider at the annual Living Cemetery event, just one of many events where Carol kept track of everything. It is hard to imagine our



Historical Society without her. She brought with her a deep understanding, memory, and love of all things Downers Grove and kept the organization, well...organized. Honored as the Society's 2015 Historian of the Year, her tribute touched on the many organizations and history preservation projects she contributed to over the years. We are so fortunate that the Downers Grove Historical Society was one of them. Carol, you will be missed!

Texas Longhorn Sighted in Downtown Downers Grove

In the late 1800's, it wasn't uncommon for cows, sheep or pigs to be herded down Main Street on their way to the livestock pens at the train station in preparation for shipment to the Chicago stock yards. That led to plenty of 'residue' and shocking smells in the downtown area.

One of the greatest shocks stemming from animals in the streets of the main thoroughfare, though, came one early morning as one of the first of the commuters was making his way to the station. To his horror, a great long-horned steer with lowered head came charging down the street directly for him? The man ran into the depot and slammed the door after him. Word spread fast throughout the Village about the huge, charging steer barging through the Village streets.

Several cattle cars had been derailed and smashed just west of Downers Grove in a train wreck the previous night. The Texas steers had clambered from the wrecked freight cars to freedom and the open fields. All, that is, but this one rangy long-horned steer who simply charged up the railroad tracks to downtown where he settled into the grass of Railroad Park to graze.

Frank Rogers, on his way to work in the hardware store across from the depot, met an excited man who shouted at him to beware of the raging steer. Carefully he made his way to the back door of the hardware store. Unlocking the front door,

he went through the store to look out the front window and there was the steer who had returned to the Park.

Rogers looked over at the depot where he could see the door open a crack as the commuters looked fearfully for the huge beast. Up and down the street villagers were hiding for their lives, afraid to stir onto the street. Suddenly the steer looked up, tossed his long horns, and then lowered and charged toward an unsuspecting man coming toward the Park.

Rogers seized his loaded shotgun and ran out the front door toward the animal. At the sound of the door the huge beast wheeled, lowered his head, and charged Rogers. Frank stood his ground as he aimed the shotgun. He waited until the maddened steer was within a few paces of him, and then fired both barrels of the gun into its head, dropping the enormous steer almost at his feet.

The smoke had scarcely cleared when the frightened citizens ran from their hiding places to gather around the unlikely carcass in the Village Park.

By Montrew Dunham & Pauline Wandschneider
"Downers Grove, 1832-1982", pg 74



Celebrating the "GROVE" in Downers Grove

Our 2020 Founders Day Celebrations have had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope to reschedule many of these fun programs and events sometime later in the year. Please keep watch on our Facebook page and in future newsletters for future events. front and rear facades.

New Volunteers

Welcome Sydney Musselman and Matt Binder, two new volunteers on the Historic Home Committee. Their enthusiasm for understanding and preserving the history of Downers Grove's historic homes is a wonderful addition to this work area.

5329 Meadow Lane Landmarked



Photo courtesy of the Village of Downers Grove

We are pleased that the home located at 5329 Meadow Lane was designated a Village of Downers Grove historic landmark last December. Built circa 1965, it is a Mid-Century Modern home, a style which was popular from 1935-1975. The home is a split level home and consists of a low-sloped cross gabled roof with a deep overhang. The exterior walls are clad with brick and vertical cedar siding, and natural light enters the home through clerestory windows located on the front and rear facades.

The home was built for John and Doris Mochel by architect John Wendell. Mochel was a third generation owner of Mochel's Hardware, a store located on Downers Grove's Main Street since 1884 and is still standing.

To learn more about the Mid-Century Modern style, and for more information about this home and its history please see the link below:

(Source document: Village Landmark Resolution <https://tinyurl.com/yjmooteh>)

Welcome Deb Howard

Welcome to our newest board member and board Secretary, Deb Howard. A Downers Grove resident for 67 years, she and her husband Barry have 2 grown children and 4 busy grandkids. Formerly a teacher in District 58, Deb spent the last 15 years of her career as a Preschool Director.

Deb appreciates the growth and changes she has seen in Downers Grove through the years.



Reflecting on the towns' rich history, she commented, "It's the perfect balance of past and present that helps Downers look to the future. A great place to live!" Deb brings enthusiasm and an always-positive approach to everything she does. We are very happy to have her on the board.

Social Distancing/Shelter in Place... History in the Making

The COVID-19 pandemic finds us in an historic time. Only in war time have such over-arching directives for public safety come from our federal, state, and local governments. Even though this is a time of uncertainty and challenges, our early pioneers and our residents over the years have weathered many wars and hardships. We are in the best of company! Stop by the Main Street Cemetery on your "social-distanced" walks and learn about those who came before. As an added bonus, the flowers are in full bloom! Visit www.mainstreetcemetery.com



Make a Difference in Downers Grove



It's true that you can volunteer, have fun, and not feel like you have a second job. The Historical Society meets once a month in our mission to promote Downers Grove history, although not in a text book, slide

show, boring kind of way. We're looking for fresh new ideas that will excite a younger audience about the history all around them. To be more specific, we are looking for people like you who have talents in the following areas:

- Writing
- Social Media
- Public Relations
- Interviewing
- Photography
- Passion for History
- Leadership

You really can make a difference! Hurry up and reach out to our fearless leader Liz Chalberg at 630-660-6767, or feel free to send her an email at president@downers-grovehistory.org.

We look forward to hearing from you!
www.downersgrovehistory.org

PROUD MEMBER OF

