

# The Downers Grove Historical Society Newsletter

the Downers Grove HISTORICAL SOCIETY

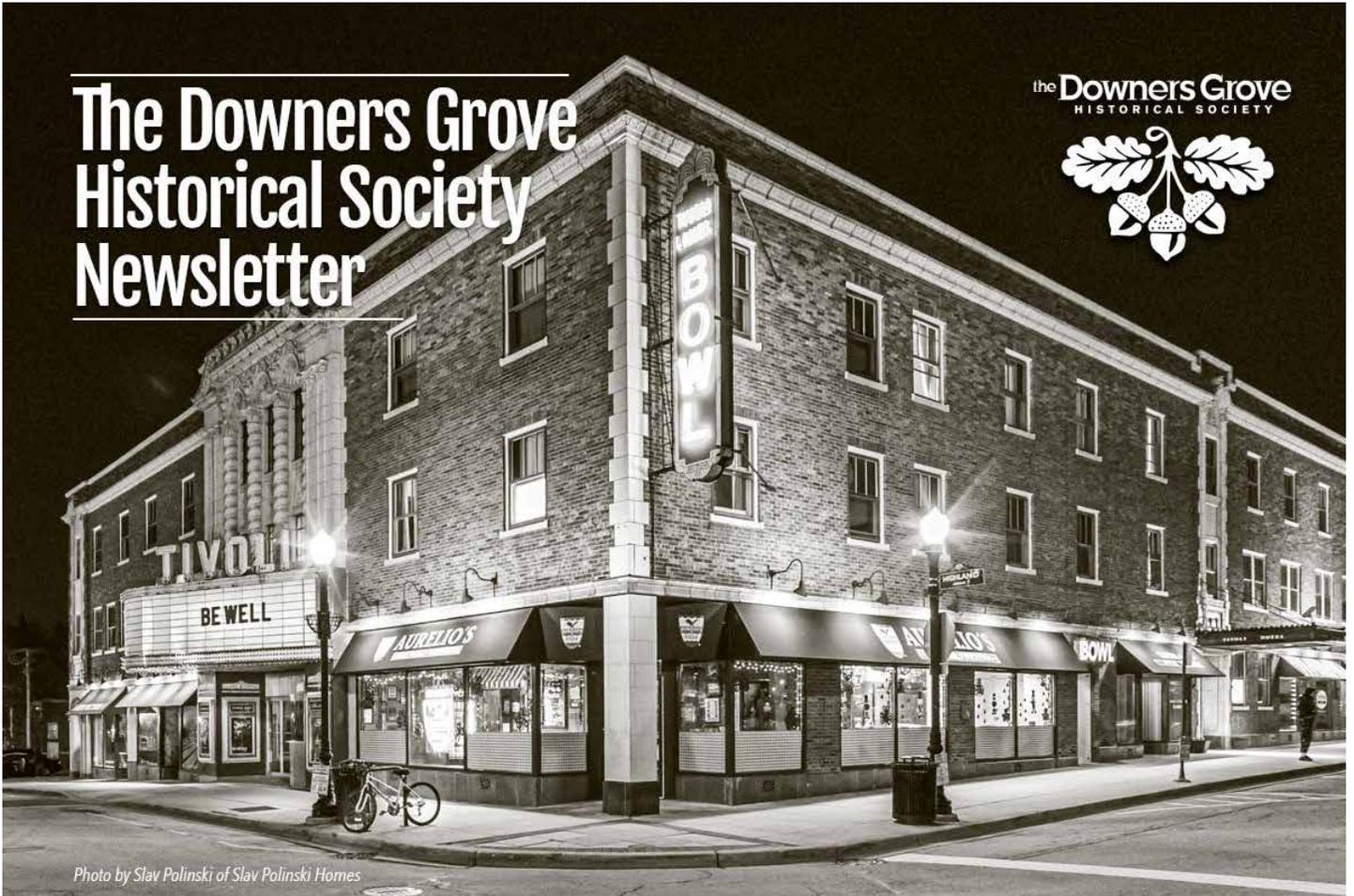


Photo by Slav Polinski of Slav Polinski Homes

## Pandemic Strikes Downers Grove ... in 1918

Do you feel like you are living in historic times? You are! And yet, when it comes to pandemics, your grandparents (or great, or great great grandparents, depending on your age) had to do the same thing during the 1918-1920 flu pandemic. Worldwide, over 50 million people died from that strain of the H1N1 flu, more than were killed during the 14th century Black Plague. And the nation was dealing with this life-threatening virus while also being actively engaged in World War I...a real double whammy.

Back then the flu disrupted life as much as Covid-19 does today. In one of its issues, the Downers Grove Reporter showed a man with a mask with the message asking all to do the same. The headline below looks

strikingly like those of today.

As many as one million cases were reported in Illinois and some 14,000 died. It was the sudden and unexpected death of young healthy people that made the flu so terrible. The newspapers printed lists of things to do stop the spread of the disease like not shaking hands, avoid large groups, no spitting on the street, eat healthy food and get plenty of rest. Even with all these guidelines people got sick and died. Some of the deaths in Downers Grove can be remembered by a walk through the Oak Hill Cemetery. Some of the victims' stories are on the following page.



**DRASTIC ACTION TO HALT EPIDEMIC**  
Schools and Theaters Closed and Public Gatherings Prohibited.



## Olive Lamb Drew (1880-1918)

Born in Downers Grove she was the daughter of Milton and Luella Lamb and the granddaughter of Dr. Franklin Roe one of the first doctors in Downers Grove practicing medicine here back in 1862. Olive was born into a very musical family. Her mother Luella Roe Lamb taught melodeon lessons and played the organ at the age of 80 for the Downers Grove Centennial in 1932. Olive's uncle Charles Roe sang at many funerals and his daughter Thelma was also a gifted musician (and future mother of world famous opera singer Sherrill Milnes). Olive was a respected teacher before leaving to marry Thomas Drew. Together they had 2 children Donald and Mildred. At the age of 38 Olive died of the flu leaving her young children to be raised by her husband and her mother Luella in the home pictured here on Carpenter Street. Donald lived to be 102 serving as organist for the Congregational Church for 48 years. Mildred lived to be 98 and both of the Drew children are buried in Oak Hill near their mother Olive Lamb Drew.



## Melville Downer (1851-1918)

Born in St. Charles, Illinois, Melville was the grandson of Pierce Downer and the son of George Downer. After working for the railroad for some years he moved to Downers Grove in the 1880's and began work with the Union Publishing House of Chicago. He lived with his wife Adelaide and their children in a house on Maple Avenue. Melville was only 67 years old when an attack of the Spanish Flu left him with some complications and he died suddenly in October of 1918. He was remembered as a man of great personality who put his all in whatever he did.



## Hattie Bryce (1889-1918)

Hattie's death touched the lives of many of the children of Downers Grove. Pictured here as the young girl in the middle of this family picture, Hattie was only 29 when she died of the flu after an illness of just a few days. Hattie was born in Downers Grove attending school here and getting her teaching certificate from DeKalb Normal School. In 1918 she was teaching in the high school here, a position she had already held for 4 years. She was remembered as one who was sweet and with a lovable character. Her



whole class of students came to her funeral in Oak Hill Cemetery. Hattie was the only one in her family to die of the flu. Her sister Jessie served as one of the first librarians of the Downers Grove library, a position she held for 38 years. Hattie's short life was remembered by many.

The flu of 100 years ago left its mark on Downers Grove but the memories of these people live on in the Oak Hill Cemetery.

*\*\*Managed by the Township of Downers Grove, the Oak Hill Cemetery has several thousand graves and was established in 1836. It is located between Maple and Elmore Avenues with an entrance on Glenview and Maple Avenue.*

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## On a Street Where You Live - The Woelfersheim Carriage Stone

On a walk down Maple Avenue it is hard to miss this carriage stone in the front of 717 Maple Avenue. It's an old reminder of the history of Downers Grove when carriages were used for transportation. This stone tells the story of the family who lived here.



The house at 717 Maple Avenue was built about 1898 by Henry H. Woelfersheim. Henry was born in Naperville on August 22, 1862 his parents John and Magdalena were from Alsace-Lorraine France coming to America in 1856. By 1860 John and Magdalena had a farm in Naperville and would raise 8 children there. Henry went to the local Naperville schools and attended North Western now North Central College. After graduating he became interested in the stone mason business and opened a contracting company in 1890 in Downers Grove. He would operate this company for about 50 years helping in the construction of many buildings in the village. He also helped lay the drainage pipes for St. Joseph Creek under the center of town and worked as an inspector for building projects for the village. Perhaps he had his own company fashion this carriage stone, allowing family and visitors to comfortably step down from a carriage ride.

Henry's father died in 1883 and his mother went to live with a daughter in Chicago where she died in 1917. (The Woelfersheim name would make the Chica-

go news in 1931 when Henry's brother Louis, a grocer in Chicago, was on the jury that convicted Al Capone of tax evasion.)

Henry married Amelia Hammerschmidt on October 15, 1891. She was also from Naperville and the daughter of Conrad and Josephine who came to America from Germany in the 1860's. They settled in Naperville by 1880 and Amelia went to North Western College graduating in 1888. She taught school in Chicago for 3 years before she married Henry. In 1894 their only child Henrietta was born. After a long illness Amelia died in 1929 and in 1930 Henry married Nellie Florence Tuchband, the widow of William Heinze.

Henry died in 1941 and Nellie continued living in the house on Maple Avenue. When Nellie died in 1967 Henry's daughter Henrietta now lived here with her husband Roland Schulz. Roland grew up in Downers Grove, his parents coming here from Germany in the 1880's. Roland was a salesman and served as Postmaster of Downers Grove from 1954-1958. Roland and Henrietta would live in the house until Roland died in 1967 and Henrietta in 1972.

For more than 70 years this house would belong to the Woelfersheim family. The carriage stone still keeps the name Woelfersheim alive on Maple Avenue today.

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## A Notable Woman Who Fought for Women's Rights - Caroline Alden Huling

On the 100th anniversary of the passing of the 19th Amendment we should remember the life of Caroline Alden Huling. Her life was dedicated to many causes including women's rights. She was brought to Downers Grove after her death to be buried in the familyplot in the Oak Hill Cemetery.

Caroline's story was uncovered when research was done on her brother, John B. Huling (1852-1917), a well known resident of Downers Grove.

She was called an American journalist writing many articles for the Chicago Tribune, and was an editor, publisher and reformer. Born in Saratoga Springs, NY, she started writing at age 12 for her father's newspaper in New York. Although later trained as a teacher, she was looking for a more diversified life in business. In 1884 (at the age of 28) she moved to Chicago and attended a national suffrage convention. She was determined to support herself as a journalist and to work for woman's enfranchise-



ment. Over the years she belonged to the Women's Christian Temperance Union, was a board member of the Humane Society and secretary of a Woman's Suffrage Society. Interested in the history of her family in America as she could trace that the family was descended from John Alden, she belonged to the Alden Kindred of America and the Chicago chapter of the D.A.R. She wrote 2 novels and was said to be the founder of the Illinois Women's Press Association. Caroline never married but was survived by several nieces and nephews. The Caroline Alden Huling papers are housed in the Special Collections at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She lived many years in Chicago, but when she died her niece Grace Huling Littleford, daughter of John, brought her to be buried in Downers Grove. A detailed description of Caroline's interesting life is available by checking the Find A Grave website for Oak Hill Cemetery Downers Grove Il. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/17006430/-caroline-alden-huling>

A bit about her brother, John Beekman Huling, who's daughter Grace brought her Aunt Caroline to Downers Grove: John was born in Saratoga Springs, New York and moved to Downers Grove in 1893 building a large Victorian house at 909 Maple Avenue. There he raised 7 children with his wife Mary Eberwine (1859-1951). For four generations the Huling family was involved in the printing and newspaper business. John's ancestors brought the first printing press from England to America in the 1600's. John would follow in the family business spending some 30 years in the printing trade which included becoming publisher for the Inland Printer Magazine in Chicago, an American trade journal for the printing industry. John was well liked in Downers Grove as a man of principal and fair to all. When John died in 1917 he was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery along with his wife who would die in 1951.

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## Wandschneider Memorial Services Moved to 2021

In our last issue, we noted that the Celebration of Life for Carol Wandschneider would be this September. Due to the continuing concerns about Covid-19 and large gatherings, her services have been moved to May 22, 2021. Please make a note in your calendars. More details will be forthcoming as we get closer to that date.



## AUDIO “Open House” Planned for Main Street Cemetery on October 24th

The Historical Society will revamp this year’s Living Cemetery event so folks can still enjoy learning about



our many heroic founding families. Stop by anytime on October 24th (the same day as the downtown Halloween store window painting) and find the designated graves marked with a bright sign. The QR code on the sign will take you to an audio track about the person buried at that site. A smart phone is required for audio enjoyment, or you can just wander around and read headstones to see how settlers came from all over the world to live in Downers Grove.

### 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](mailto:president@downers-grovehistory.org). We look forward to hearing from you! [www.downersgrovehistory.org](http://www.downersgrovehistory.org)

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