

The Downers Grove Historical Society Newsletter

the Downers Grove
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Below the Surface

at the Main Street Cemetery

If you were walking through the Main Street Cemetery recently and saw all the orange flags you might have been puzzled. Well, there was a very important reason they were there.

For many years research has been ongoing to restore the cemetery established in 1856. The Historical Society relied on old plot maps and visual inventories. Over the years many monuments were destroyed or never placed on a grave. So, this made it impossible to locate all who are buried here. In order to locate every grave, we've recently resorted to new technology.

In July the Village and the Historical Society partnered to hire Ramaker & Associates, and Architectural and Engineering Firm from Sauk City Wisconsin. They used Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to locate every grave in the cemetery. In 2 days, they were able to mark all places where remains were buried. They placed orange flags in these areas and have since furnished us with a thorough report using GPS markers so this information will never be lost again.

One of the most gratifying finds was locating one of the first grave stones ever placed in the cemetery. Now we know where John Richard Pye is buried. John died in 1852 at only 4 years old and was buried on what was then farmland near Main and Maple. In 1856, his body was brought to the newly opened cemetery. The monument, which was found lying just below the surface, was uncovered by the GPR scan and has given us the exact location of his grave.

Additional findings identified burials where currently there are no markers. We are already tracing family records to identify them. Some families have recently contacted us with information that will help us with this task. We welcome any help from families who might have relatives they think may be buried in the Main Street Cemetery. We will do all we can to research and find answers for you. The Downers Grove Historical Society hopes to respectfully mark the graves of all those buried in the Main Street Cemetery.



2021 Historian of the Year Announced

The Downers Grove Historical Society is pleased to announce that Marilyn Ludwig has been selected to be the 2021 Historian of the Year. Ludwig, a beloved Downers Grove teacher, author, director, and historian, has combined these roles and interests over the years through her participation in



the Downers Grove Historical Societies annual* "Living Cemetery" event. Working with Junior High aged drama students, Ludwig supports them with costumes, scripts (researched by Historian Lois Sterba), and dramatic motivation to stand in for the early pioneers buried in the Main Street Cemetery. This creative endeavor has helped to bring Downers Grove history alive and make it fun for all ages. To find out more about Marilyn's background and contributions to keeping Downers Grove history in the here-and-now, go to www.dghistory.org.

The recognition ceremony will be held on October 16th at 1pm at the James Henry Breasted Auditorium at Lincoln Center 935 Maple Avenue. Seating is limited, so we ask that everyone please register at www.dghistory.org

**2020 and 2021 Living Cemetery events have been impacted by the pandemic. We plan to resume this well-loved event in 2022. See separate article in this issue.*



The Fayette McAllister House Approved as Historic Home

You've probably driven past 5223 Carpenter a million times and admired its striking curb appeal and architecture. Soon this bungalow will sport a bronze plaque stating that it is the Fayette McAllister House, one of several recent applications to be approved for Historic Home status with the Historic Home Program. Built circa 1915 by Fayette and Clara McAllister, Mr.



McAllister is believed to have worked at the Farmer's and Merchant's Bank (now Pierce Tavern). Because McAllister's were the original owners, the home is named for them. Union Army during the Civil War. He and his wife lived in their house until their deaths. Allan died in 1921 with Elizabeth dying in 1923. He and his wife are buried in Oak Crest Cemetery. They had 8 children, 3 of whom are buried in in the Main Street Cemetery.

The following owners imparted quite a bit of history to Downers Grove. In 1923 the home was sold to Charles & Marie Baker. Conveniently, Baker's grandfather lived in a house across the street. In 1909, Mr. Baker established Baker's Livery and Boarding Stable which changed with the times to Baker's Motor Express, a business which lasted until 1993. He also started Baker's Dairy in 1925 which was bought by Cloverleaf Dairy in about 1941. Sadly, newspaper accounts in 1933 show Baker's wife and daughter being killed in a car accident caused by a blowout. Mr. Baker lived almost his entire life in Downers Grove.

Thank you to the current owners for making sure the history of this home is kept for generations to come.

Research completed by C. Holtzen



The Frank & Marie Kavka House Approved as Historic Home

The home at 4610 Douglas Road was originally built by Frank & Marie Kavka, circa 1930. The style of this home is considered Dutch Colonial. It boasts that it retains most of the original hardwood flooring and trim work. The home is



located in the Shaffer Subdivision which was recorded in 1928, so this is probably one of the early homes built in this subdivision. Although much delving has been done into newspaper articles of the time and other research avenues to catch a glimpse of the people who originally lived there, there was little to be found. If more is discovered we will share it with our readers.

Thank you to the current owner for preserving the history of this home for future generations.

Research completed by C. Holtzen



Find Out the History of YOUR Home

The Historic Home Program is a partnership between the Downers Grove Historical Society and the Downers Grove Museum. The program's mission is to preserve the history of our community's architecture by completing research on a home's origin, and when available, on the people who have lived there. By contacting the Historical Society info@dghistory.org or the Downers Grove Museum museum@dgparks.org you can get started on your application to receive a bronze plaque for the front of your home showing its approximate build date and the name of its most prominent or first owner. The home must be at least 50 years old and must meet one of the following criteria: have architectural significance; have historic significance; a significant person has lived there, or a significant architect or builder was involved with its construction.



The Downers Grove Historic Home Program is not affiliated with the Village of Downers Grove's Historic Landmark Program. The Downers Grove Historic Home Program is strictly honorary and does not limit the homeowner from making alterations to the home; it simply preserves the history of the home. Go to www.dghistory.org and click on Historic Homes for more information.

Tim Bodden Day - December 3, 1971

Fifty years ago, the Village of Downers Grove held Tim Bodden Day. On a walk through Fishel Park this plaque nestled in a green bush is a reminder of that day. The plaque called Freedom Memorial is dedicated to all who have answered the call to serve the country, especially some 1700 MIA's that never returned home. The life of Marine Master Sgt. Timothy Bodden inspired this memorial.



Tim Bodden was born on November 6, 1942 in San Francisco, California. By the time Tim was ready for High school his family moved to Downers Grove. Shortly after graduating



from North High, Tim joined the Marines on July 8, 1961. He was a crew chief and door gunner on a Sea Knight helicopter and was known for his skills as a mechanic. Called "Mr. Avionics" by his crew, Tim was made crew chief because of his easy going nature and knowledge of the CH-46A that he called the modern day war-horse of the air.

On June 3, 1967 his helicopter with 7 crew members and a number of South Vietnamese personnel aboard crashed over Laos. Tim and his crew were listed as MIA and that would be his status for years. Tim's mother Dorothy did not want to except this so she spent years writing letters to find out where Tim was. The Village of Downers Grove did not forget about Tim either. On December 3, 1971 the day was declared Tim Bodden Day. Organized by the Jaycees of Downers Grove (a leadership and training civic organization), a program was planned at North High School. Robert Finch, former Secretary of Health and Welfare and then Counselor to President Nixon, attended with Tim's mother and former POW M/Sgt David Pitzer. Those who attended were asked to send a letter to Hanoi requesting release of the POW's. A memorial called Freedom Flame was installed at Fire Station No. 3 on Highland Ave with a plaque in memory of Tim and others lost in Vietnam.

Over the years the memorial suffered damage and in 1989 the plaque from the memorial was relocated to Fishel Park. All this time Tim was still listed as MIA. But on June 16, 1999 the remains of Tim's helicopter were found, some 33 years after his death. Tim and his crew were interred in Arlington National Cemetery with full honors on September 29, 2000. Tim's memorial was removed from Fishel Park in 2010 when

the Veterans Memorial Pavilion was being built and it was not returned for some years. Today the memorial and plaque can be found again in Fishel Park at the SE corner of the park.

Tim's dad died in 1996 but his mother Dorothy and brother Richard lived to see Tim laid to rest. A monument in Arlington National Cemetery is in honor of Tim Bodden, John Gardner, Stephen Hanson and Billy Laney who died in the helicopter crash. All their remains were buried together. Tim Bodden is now at rest and he is remembered by this monument in Fishel Park.

Historical Society Welcomes New Board Member

Ian Ogdon is a lifelong resident of Downers Grove. He has always been very interested in technology, which is how he found his way to a career in IT, and will be part of his focus as he gets started working with the Society. He is an avid reader, and has a special interest in the history of Downers Grove. He is one of only a few residents who can say he has read our history book, Downers Grove, 1832-1982 from cover to cover. Living in a vintage home, he also has an appreciation for historic Downers Grove architecture. We are very happy to have Ian on our team and look forward to working with him.



HISTORY ON TAP

2021 TRIVIA PUB CRAWL

**Thursday
November 11
5:30pm**

Come take a stroll through time on our second annual pub crawl, with a side of trivia and a chance to win prizes! Explore Downers Grove history while enjoying a beverage (included in the ticket price) at six locations throughout downtown Downers Grove. The last stop is the Tivoli Bowl for food, drinks and the chance to win gift certificates to each of the participating locations.

SPACE IS LIMITED. PURCHASE TICKETS AT

www.dghistory.org/tickets

Tickets: \$40 Members: \$35
 5 white tickets are good for 1-12oz beer, 1-5oz wine, or 1-10oz soft drink at any of the 6 locations. 1 gold drink ticket is good only at the After Party at the Tivoli Bowl. Pizza and snacks will also be available.

*Must be 21 to participate. ID will be required at registration.
**Liquor establishments have the right to refuse service to anyone who appears to be intoxicated.

Coming Up...

- **October 16:** Historian of the Year – You won't want to miss this chance to thank our next honoree for the time, talents, and treasure dedicated to preserving and promoting Downers Grove history
- **October 23:** Living Cemetery (Modified) – 9am-5pm – Main Street Cemetery
- **November 11:** History on Tap – get your tickets at www.dghistory.org/tickets
- Still to Come with Date to be Determined: Historic Site and Founder of the Year dedication – Pierce Downer Burial Ground

www.dghistory.org



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