

The Downers Grove Historical Society Newsletter



Photographers of Downers Grove

Pictured here is William H. Baker (1853-1939) a man who used his skills to promote the village. Born in New York, Will (as he was known) came to Downers Grove in the 1890's. The family lived on Washington street and Will operated an art studio in Chicago. He specialized in landscapes and architectural photo work and published souvenir editions of Downers Grove pictures. In 1895 one of his souvenir editions included pictures like the one pictured above of Prince Pond. His publications did much to promote the village and encouraged people to move here. Will was also around town to take pictures of club members and activities in the village. Will and his wife Carrie Bryan (who was an artist in her own right) were known for their work producing calendars and Christmas cards. Will died on July 2, 1939 and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Downers Grove.



one of his pictures. Egde worth was born in Joliet Illinois on October 18, 1882. In the early 1900's he moved to Downers Grove and married Mildred Chessman in 1911. He opened a studio on Burlington Avenue and advertised his studio could take portraits, views and commercial pictures, but his postal photos are the ones that provide us with views of old Downers Grove. These postal photos (that we call postcards today) were sold in stores in Downers Grove and purchased by many in the 1900s to correspond with relatives far away, like we do with email today. Edgeworth moved on to California by 1920. He passed away in Los Angeles in 1964. His images of Downers Grove are valued for how they preserve the past for us to enjoy today.



Another photographer we can thank for documenting Downers Grove history is Fred Allen Edgeworth. This postcard of the Downers Grove train station is just

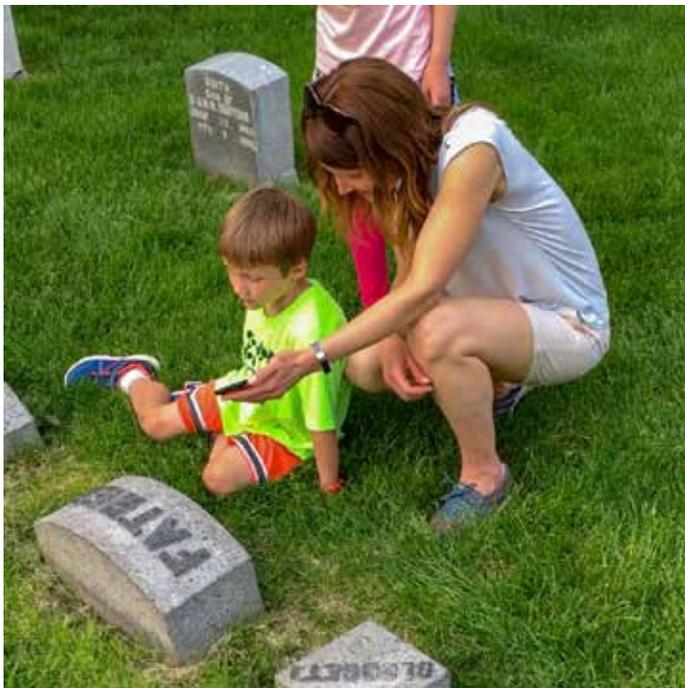
Listening to History

The Downers Grove Historical Society is pleased to announce the latest round of improvements to our Main Street Cemetery Web App at www.mainstreetcemetery.com Twenty-two (22) new audio biographies have been added to the web and mobile site experience, bringing the total to over one-third of the cemetery markers having companion audio. When viewing the cemetery map you will see a small speaker icon under the grave marker number. This icon indicates which markers have audio biographies available for them.

This advancement would not be possible without the hard work of our volunteers. We'd like to thank our volunteer voice-over team of former DGHS board member Jim Toth; his daughter Vivian Toth who attends Hillcrest Elementary in Downers Grove; and professional voice-over artist and history enthusiast Sally Beck of Chicago. As an example of these recent updates, at www.mainstreetcemetery.com/single.php?marker=6 you can now listen to 11 year old Vivian Toth tell the story as Gracie Wells, who died at the tender age of five, and how Gracie's life was honored after her passing. Also, this endeavor would not be possible without Greg Elisha and Marty Acks who worked on the website and Lois Sterba who provided the research for the new markers.

The app has also been updated with information and images for markers and headstones that have been added or replaced since the original release over two years ago.

Stay tuned in 2021 for further improvements to the Main Street Cemetery. We also have plans to provide the same web app capability for the Pierce Downer Burial Site this year.



New Historic Landmark

The Downers Grove Historical Society is pleased that the home located at 200 Shady Lane was designated a local historic landmark at the February 16 Village Council meeting. Built circa 1960 for John and Mildred Kotes, it is a Mid-Century Modern home, a style which was popular from 1935-1975. Constructed as either



ranches or split levels, typical characteristics of the style included the use of brick, stucco, and wood siding, low pitched roofs, and recessed entries. Mid-Century Modern homes were commonly designed with a connection to the outdoors and therefore incorporated large windows and open floor plans.

200 Shady Lane is a one-story home and consists of a low-sloped front gabled roof with deep overhangs. The exterior walls are clad with vertical wood siding which contrasts with the stone chimney. Natural light enters the home through floor to ceiling windows, as well as through clerestory windows located on the south facade.

A special thank you to the current homeowners, John and Christie Kenny, for making the decision to landmark their home.

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: Village Landmark Resolution - www.tinyurl.com/hhwukfd4
Photo courtesy of the Village of Downers Grove



New Historic Home Program Honoree - 1240 Gilbert Avenue (The Frazier House)

We have our first Historic Home for 2021. Last year, 2020, made it difficult to do the research we need for the homes we honor... and then we were able to figure out some workarounds with the help of our Committee Members. So onward and forward to honoring our

Historic Homes. 1240 Gilbert was first brought to our attention by the new homeowners, Susan & Scott Robinson. They moved in at the beginning of the Pandemic, so it was quite a memorable “new” home experience. They are only the third owners of this Dutch Colonial Home. Lucky for all that they were given title search at closing which was loaded with information helpful to our research on the home. William & Margaret Frazier purchased the land from Vigho & Anna Simonson in 1925 and tax records show this lovely home was built circa 1925. Mr. Frazier died in 1936 and his wife continued to live in the home with some other family members until August 1976...51 years! We congratulate Susan & Scott Robinson for making the decision to honor and preserve the history of their home.



The mission of the Historic Home Program is to preserve the written history of our wonderful historic architecture in Downers Grove. This program results in a file of information on your home being stored at the Museum for future generations to enjoy. The home owner also receives a bronze plaque for the home. For a look at the application for Historic Home status, please go to www.downersgrovehistory.org/uploads/



We Want You...To Renew!

It's that time of year again...and our member renewal notices have been sent out (email for our email members and hard copy for our mail members). The old adage “We Couldn't Do It Without You” is certainly true when it comes to our programs, recognition, and preservation efforts. For a peek at what has been keeping us occupied during the pandemic, and a sneak-peek at what we hope to accomplish in 2021, please check out our website at www.downersgrovehistory.org



We Interrupt Our Regularly Scheduled Programming

Even though some of our in-person programs had to be postponed to 2021...or maybe even until 2022...we've been keeping ourselves very busy preserving and promoting Downers Grove History.

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Grant E. Dicke Fire Station 2020 Historic Site Dedication
- Sold-Out Tivoli Theatre Tour
- Dr. Floyd Mizener, 2020 Montrew Dunham Award celebration
- New headstones and markers in the Main Street Cemetery
- Main Street Cemetery app updates with new information and more audio tracks
- Historical Society website updates
- Covid-compliant Main Street Living Cemetery event using audio tracks about those interred there www.mainstreetcemetery.com
- Quarterly newsletters
- Facebook posts
- Historic Home Program brochure updates

2021 GOALS

- Ground Penetrating Radar survey of the Main Street Cemetery to find unmarked graves
- Carol Wandschneider commemorative bench at the Museum. (A partnership program with the Downers Grove Park District)
- Develop an on-line resource page to give access to the research and databases created by Carol Wandschneider
- Install informational signage at the Pierce Downer Burial Ground (A partnership program with the Downers Grove Park District)
- Pierce Downer Burial Ground Historic Site Celebration
- Updated insert to the “Voices That Are Gone” cemetery guidebook for the Main Street Cemetery. Recent research has uncovered more names of people buried there.
- On-line publishing of the 1982 booklet “What You Didn't Know about Downers Grove and Didn't Know Who to Ask” by Bartle Herrick
- Add Pierce Downer Burial Site map and biographical information on the Main Street Cemetery Web App www.mainstreetcemetery.com
- 2021 quarterly newsletters (if you have read this far in this issue...we thank you!)
- Montrew Dunham Award – A recognition of a community volunteer who has made a significant difference in the past...and future Downers Grove
- Historian of the Year Recognition – A recognition of a citizen whose efforts increased awareness and preservation of Downers Grove history.

And...We Can't Wait to See You Again!

If we are allowed to meet in large gatherings by the end of the year, we will look for you at History On Tap II. This 2019 history-celebrating blowout of a pub crawl had such a great response that we want to keep it going...with more venues, more history, more attendees. Stay tuned for updates from us...and the CDC.



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

You really can make a difference! Reach out to our fearless leader Liz Chalberg at (630) 660-6767, or feel free to send her an email at president@downersgrovehistory.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

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www.dghistory.org

