



Edgewater Scrapbook

"Notes from the Past, News from the Present"

Vol. XXI, No. 3

Winter 2010

Edward Benson 1868 - 1939 Edgewater Architect

By Morry Matson

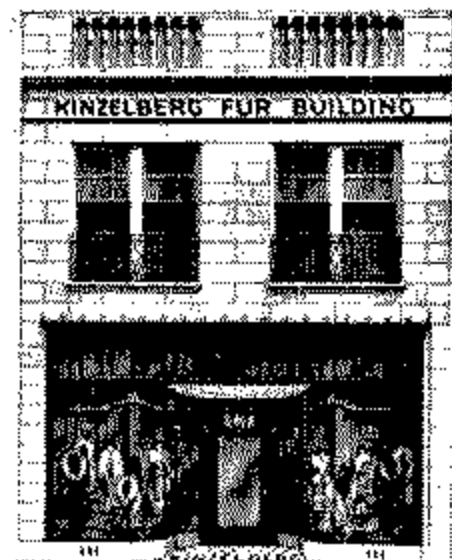
Edward W. Benson, architect and general contractor, was born in Upland, Sweden, in 1868. His family came to the United States two years later and settled in River Forest, Illinois. He studied architecture in Chicago and moved out west to Denver, Colorado in 1888, where he gained his first experience as a general contractor. The young architect returned to Chicago the following year and resided in Melrose Park.

Mr. Benson became a prominent citizen in the village's social and religious life. He served on the board of village trustees for five years prior to his election as president of that board and was also a member of the school board for three years. Mr. Benson was elected to three terms as the president of Melrose Park. He was active in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Epworth League and Royal Circle social organizations.

As an architect, Edward W. Benson was prolific in his trade. He easily erected over one thousand commercial buildings and private residences throughout his entire 40 year career in the Chicagoland area from the late 1890s to 1931, mainly in the North Side neighborhoods of Edgewater (Magnolia Glen, Edgewater Glen and Andersonville), Uptown and Lake View. He also designed and constructed private residences in Beverly, Forest Park and Wilmette, Illinois.

Mr. Benson and his wife Alice (1886-1950) had three children - Edward, Jr., George and Ida. He designed and built a house for each of his children. The one he built for his son George, who is listed as its original owner, still stands at 5043 N. Clark Street in Andersonville. His eldest son, Edward, Jr., was a soldier in the U.S. Army during World War I. After the cessation of the war, the Swedish architect made his son a junior partner in the family business until Mr. Benson's retirement in 1931. Edward, Jr. died in Long Island, New York in 1937, preceding his father in death by two years.

Edward W. Benson had several office locations in Chicago's North Side during his 40 year career. His last office was located in the Clark-Foster Building above what is now the North Side Federal Savings bank.



5413 Clark Street, designed by Edward Benson in 1921, is one of eight buildings designed by Benson in Andersonville

There once was a commercial building designed and built by Benson in 1911 at 5550-52 N. Clark Street. It was torn down to make way for the Jewel Osco supermarket at 5516 N. Clark Street. Sadly, this had been the fate of several of Benson's creations, from Andersonville to Edgewater to Lake View. Real estate developers today apparently are unaware of this forgotten architect's tremendous work output, superb craftsmanship, and overall important contribution of shaping the city of Chicago into the architectural standard bearer that it is today.

The unassuming storefront at 5438 N. Clark Street is one of Benson's more modest and utilitarian creations. Another later building at 5413 N. Clark was built in 1921.

In the "American Contractor" magazine database of permits from 1898 through 1912, Edward Benson was credited with 731 commissions of which 174 were located in Edgewater. In 1898, he had eight commissions of which none was in Edgewater; by 1912, he had 101 commissions of which 35 were in Edgewater.

Edward W. Benson has the distinction of designing buildings for a member of the fabled Kransz family, who were prominent in the business and social society of Edgewater from the mid 19th century to the early 20th century. Henry P. Kransz (1863-1947), son of Nicholas Kransz (1816-1896), commissioned Benson to design and erect a building for him at 5870-72 N. Ridge Avenue in 1909. His brother, Nicholas Kransz, Jr. (1851-

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From the President

I usually get to thank people; this time I want to thank an organization as well.

This last year has been the 50th anniversary of the Edgewater Community Council (ECC), incorporated in January 1960, then launching five decades of continuous service and major accomplishments.

We at the Edgewater Historical Society (EHS) were born of ECC back in 1988 when the momentum of its successful oral history project (ably led by Kathy Gemperle, Betty Mayian and the late Sr. Mary Cramer, among others) led to our incorporation as a separate entity. This has been a productive and useful relationship; EHS proudly includes the present and three past presidents of the ECC on its current board. Our commitment to the community is fundamental to our mission.

Many other community institutions and programs exist for no other reason than that the community and ECC cared enough to make them happen. Started by community and religious leaders, ECC took on the nascent urban battles of the 1960s of safety, crime, housing, development, community institutions, immigration, recreation, etc.

Look around this compact 1.7 square mile community of Edgewater, packed with over 62,000 residents. You can't go far without seeing or being served by the many progeny of ECC. Besides EHS and its museum, there is Berger Park and Northlake Side Cultural Center; the Edgewater Library; the Armory as the city's largest indoor park facility; the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce; Edgewater Development Corp.; and especially Care For Real serving over 4000 of our fellow neighbors; the list goes on. In terms of programs, ECC can proudly point to its Operation Winthrop Kenmore which generated over \$50 million in

investment that turned around a declining neighborhood; or Operation Ridge, the Senn Park Plan, the Edgewater Sustainability Project, the Balkan Outreach Program, numerous safety programs, and on and on. The list is very impressive.

For fifty years, ECC was the magnet drawing community talent and desires, and focusing that energy like a beam of light - which led to the Anniversary Motto: Lighting the Way for 50 Years.

EHS is proud to be displaying an exhibit commemorating those 50 years, including wonderful memorabilia like the Miss Edgewater Contest, a photo of the world's longest picnic table, and the program agenda when the first bylaws were passed. The exhibit runs through January. Thanks go to Kathy Gemperle for again curating an important exhibit; and to LeRoy Blommaert, Dorothy Nygren, Tom Murphy and others for the finishing touches that can make all the difference in an exhibit. We hope you will all have a chance to enjoy this tour back to the 1960s before it closes the end of January.

There would not have been a 50th Anniversary Celebration Year, but for the persistent and caring leadership of ECC President Reggie Griffin and former ECC President Marion Kennedy Volini.

The symbol of the celebration has been the two dozen painted lighthouses throughout Edgewater. Built by Marion's wonderful sons Mike and David and their friends, they were painted by local residents and organizations to reflect their community view. You can't miss them. They are a great tribute to Edgewater.

This anniversary year celebration saw a lot of other wonderful achievements including a fabulous community cook book, with proceeds to help the work of ECC, Care For Real, and the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce. A wonderful summer Art Fair at Berger Park reprised the many July 4th art fairs that had been an Edgewater tradition thru the 1960s. Beautiful

banners flutter from light posts to spread the light house message. And finally, there was a wonderful October community celebration with walking and trolley tours of the lighthouses and a final celebration at the Armory, a fitting and robust symbol of ECC's many accomplishments.

Marion and Reggie, the anniversary co-chairs deserve special acclaim for their decades of devotion to Edgewater.



Marion was president of ECC during the 1970s when, would you believe, Lakewood Balmoral was "red-lined" and homeowners could not get insurance, because Edgewater was considered blighted! She went on to become Alderman of the 48th Ward, ably serving from 1977-86; she set in motion a model for community based politics that has continued to this day, and set the standard for other communities in Chicago. Many of Edgewater's successes occurred on her watch. Marion has stayed active in the community and continues to show her love of Edgewater and its wonderful citizens. Thank you, Marion, for all you have done.

Reggie Griffin, known by most of us as "Reg," retired in 2010 as the longest serving president in ECC history. Limited by bylaws to no more than three consecutive yearly terms at a time (only equaled by six others in 50 years Reggie served not one, but TWO 3-year terms during the past three decades. He has continuously been on the ECC

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The Edgewater Community Council Remembered

Jack Markowski, former executive director of the Edgewater Community Council, presented a recollection and reflection on the activities surrounding what was probably ECC's most important contribution to the history of Edgewater, Operation Winthrop Kenmore (OWK), which brought together countless volunteers to become active in community improvement and to preserve the housing of Edgewater along what Markowski called the "Spine" of Edgewater. In the late 1970s and early 1980s ECC was able to get funding to support community action in safety and housing. It was the first community to get funding from the City of Chicago Department of Planning to work on the improvement of the existing residential housing.

Markowski started with surveys to get a better understanding of what was working and what was not working in the area. The statistics set ECC in the role of information giver right at the onset. Com-

munity volunteers went door to door and reported the building types and the names of managers.

What they found was a 24 block area with 354 buildings that were 95% rental. No private construction had been done there for years. Two-thirds of the buildings were SROs, four-plus-ones and apartment hotels. Density was one of the issues as there were over 10,000 units of housing.

The Council then set up some priorities for the improvement they hoped to achieve. From the perspective of 2010, Markowski said it was important that ECC took a stand and charted a direction. Markowski described the process as Identify, Focus and Carry Through.

With the information gleaned from the surveys volunteers worked on many different fronts. Some were charged with building the community's image while others pursued negligent owners in housing court. But the factor that brought on the most success was making available loans to building owners of many multi-unit buildings to get rehabilitation. Besides becoming a delegate agency for the City Department of Housing ECC was able to persuade the Community Investment Corpo-

ration, to loan to owners of residential housing. Another element was matching funds from Loyola University and Combined Insurance. Ed Marciniak, head of the Institute of Urban Life at Loyola mentored this project and wrote an account of its achievements, "Reversing Urban Decline"

In 1980, after a push from ECC and a presentation of community history by Leroy Blommaert, the City of Chicago created the last Community Area, #77, as Edgewater. Having this designation became the foundation of the Image building used to make the community an attractive place to live.



Jack Markowski and Bob Remer after the presentation at the museum.

POSTCARD



On a beautiful Saturday in October, these international students came to work as volunteers in our garden

Suthida, Kaing Ze, Ne, Htoo Poui and Hari and Thierry (not pictured) spent five hours with us and got a lot of work done. In November, they came back for more on a much colder day.

These young people attend St. Gregory High School and have been in Chicago less than two years. We are lucky to have their enthusiasm and energy.

Kathy

Benson

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1909), died that same year. Even more coincidentally, the Henry P. Kransz building was constructed on the same block where his brother Peter P. Kransz (1857-1945), resided at 5896 N. Ridge (demolished in 1958). The properties of the two brothers were buffered by the property of Alois Kransz, son of Peter P. Kransz, at 5888 N. Ridge Avenue (demolished in 1964).

It is possible that Mr. Benson and Mr. Kransz became acquainted through mutual public school functions, as both men were members of their local school boards at the time. They were more than likely members of the same popular social organizations of the day, and perhaps Mr. Benson made an obligatory appearance at the funeral of Nicholas Kransz, Jr. in 1909. Whatever the occasion, the chance meeting of the two men proved to be quite lucrative for Edward W. Benson. The Henry P. Kransz & Co. commissioned no less than 33 projects from Mr. Benson, of which 25 were constructed on the 1400 and 1500 blocks of Norwood Street alone between the years 1909 and 1911.

Edward W. Benson's architectural style runs the gamut of the designs popular during the early twentieth century from Chicago Craftsman to American Four-square to Italian Renaissance Revival. Several of his homes have been featured on previous home and garden tours by the Edgewater Historical Society.

Mr. Benson died in his Melrose Park home on October 22, 1939 at the age of 71. He is buried with his wife in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois.

Is your residence or business a creation of the architect Edward W. Benson? As this goes to press we are planning a link on the Edgewater Historical Society web site so visitors can inspect a list of hundreds of buildings designed and erected by this and other important Chicago architects in the Edgewater neighborhood



Undated photo of Edward Benson

SOURCES OF REFERENCE

1. "History of the Swedes of Illinois - 1908", on-line research
2. Chicago building permit index, "American Contractor", 1898-1912, Chicago History Museum, on-line research
3. City of Chicago official website, list of prominent Chicago architects
4. 1930 U.S. Census, National Archives, on-line research
5. Chicago Tribune, 10/23/1939 obituaries, microfilm
6. Oak Ridge Cemetery, office records, Hillside, IL
7. City of Chicago Telephone Directory (1926-1931), microfilm
8. Edgewater Historical Society Museum

The Edgewater Community Council Lighting the Way 50 years of service in Edgewater

The exhibit will be open at
the Edgewater Historical
Society Museum until
February 6, 2011

From the President

(Continued from page 2)

board since 1976-77. I remember when he, Kathy Osterman, and I joined the board when a new phase of activism began. I fondly remember when he and I used to go out on the ECC Safety Program radio patrols on weekends, long before there was a CAPS program in the city. When he wasn't President he served as the Chair of the Care For Real board; he distinguished himself and Edgewater by his many city wide leadership roles in community safety and feeding the hungry. We are also proud to have him on the EHS board where he ably chairs our Board Development Committee. I can say without equivocation that nobody has put more heart and soul into Edgewater than Reggie Griffin. Our hats are off to you, Reg! Nobody cares the way you do, friend.



As ECC looks to its new future, we know that, like many non-profit service organizations in this tough recession, its leadership faces difficult financial challenges and must consider the best way to go forward and how to best serve Edgewater. We hope that its history will help light the way - to use the fabulous talent and devotion that exists in this community, whether in

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Bob Remer chief docent for the trolley rides celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Edgewater Community Council on October 24. Bob is holding the poster for the event. The EHS exhibit telling the story of ECC will be on display at the museum until the beginning of February.

From the President
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the religious institutions, the schools, the neighborhood associations, and the business community and channel it to tackle what will be the unique needs of our urban community for the next 50 years. Much of that talent is now being channeled into the very programs and institutions that ECC spawned. And that is all good. But that only raises the bar to find new ways to channel community spirit and keep ECC vibrant and relevant.

We wish you the best. You were there for us. We are here for you now. Thanks, ECC.

Robert Remer
President

Andersonville Historic District Exhibit

Planning has begun for the Historic District exhibit which will open at the museum mid February. We are searching for resources about the original owners or businesses. Most buildings were built between 1900 and 1930. If you have ever taken a photo of a business on Clark Street, especially before 1960 we would like to borrow it in order to scan it. Many architects are credited with building the buildings on Clark Street including Edward Benson and Carl Almqvist. Other architects of note are A. E. Norman, Charles Strandel, H.L. Newhouse, Oscar Peterson and Oscar Johnson.

Be sure to stop by the museum to see this exhibit during March, April and May.

**Lighting the Way
The Lighthouse
Crawl**

On the balmy, and nearly rainless, Sunday, October 24th afternoon, six trolley loads of visitors stopped by the museum for refreshments, and to take a quick glance at our new exhibit on the 50th anniversary of the Edgewater Community Council, before continuing on their way.

The free 5-mile Lighthouse Crawl, was organized by ECC for residents to see 24 individually decorated lighthouses that served as the symbol of the year long celebration, and to hear historic commentary by trolley docents Bob Remer and Tiffany Middleton.

A score of crisply dressed and attentive Rickover Academy students helped the museum docents Barb Strauss and Pat Duffy to welcome our visitors.

EHS printed the community self guided tour guide in conjunction with the ECC. A special web site was set up to promote the event, and guidebooks can be downloaded for free from

LighthousesOfEdgewater.org/tourbook.html

The website also has a photo slide show of all the decorated lighthouses.

The EHS lighthouse was designed by Kathy Gemperle and Elizabeth Szegho, with big assists from Tom Murphy and Thom Greene. It stands at the corner of Ashland and Balmoral, depicting historic photos and postcards of Edgewater.



Students from Rickover Academy enjoy the trolley tour

Edgewater Teaser

Teaser (13)

In last month's issue we asked "What other Edgewater institution moved to Rogers Park."

This was not a very difficult teaser. The answer is: The Edgewater Golf Club.

The Edgewater Golf Club was one of the earliest non-religious Edgewater organizations to be formed. It was formed by five Edgewater residents no later than August 1897. One of the five was Edgewater's first architect Joseph Lynnan Silsbee. It was he that Edgewater founder John Lewis Cochran selected to design the Guild Hall and the first Edgewater homes in his new subdivision. According to a 1950s source, the golf course was west of Broadway between Foster and Balmoral; according to an August 15, 1897 *Chicago Tribune* account it was a 7-hole course on between 40 and 45 acres and was intersected by roads.

The Edgewater Golf Club did not remain long in Edgewater. An item in the January 16, 1898, issue of the *Chicago Tribune* indicates that "A. T. Galt has leased to the Edgewater Golf Club at a nominal rental an eighty acre tract of land at the north west corner of Devon and Evanston avenues, Edgewater. The property will be improved and the club will build a clubhouse. The lease is for three years with the privilege of a long term if the property remains unsold." Though the article indicates the new property as being in Edgewater, we know that it was just across the border in Rogers Park. The area was largely vacant at the time. The Jesuits did not purchase the land for what became Lovola University until much later, and the first campus building was not dedicated until 1909.

In September 1901 a fire broke out in the club house causing a reported \$3,000 damage, mostly in the women's locker rooms. It would



An early photo of the grounds from J.L. Cochran's brochure on Edgewater

have been much worse but for the club mascot, a dog named Jack, that woke the caretaker upon the start of the fire. The club house was rebuilt and enlarged, though it still remained a relatively modest affair as shown in Figure 2. In this it was not very different from most other clubs at the time. Interestingly in 1901 John Lewis Cochran was listed at the club's president. He was probably one of the original founders too.



Figure 2: An old photo of the rebuilt club house

Though the area around the club grounds remained largely vacant for a time, things started to change with the coming of the "L" in May 1908. Residents complained that the club had illegally blocked off public

property and that it required residents to walk out of their way to get to the new Hayes Ave (Lovola Ave) "L" station. The club officers apparently saw the "handwriting on the wall" and began to look for a new location far away from encroaching development. The June 15, 1910, issue of the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the Club purchased 87.06 acres of land from seven parties for a total of \$125, 543. The property began at the south east corner of Western and Pratt and continued south to almost Arthur and east almost to Ridge Ave. At the time this land was far from any development.

The club opened at its new location in June 1911. Edgewater architect J.E.O. Pridmore was listed as one of its members. Though an earlier issue of the *Chicago Tribune* showed a sketch of an elaborate new club house designed by the architectural firm of Holabird and Roche, the commission went to the firm of Hill & Woltersdorf. This is the same

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Figure 3: Clubhouse at Pratt and Ridge

Edgewater Teaser

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firm that designed the brick house at 6018 N. Kenmore, the source of so much controversy in 2007-08. The new club house was much more elaborate than the earlier club house. See Figure 3. The previous site of the course was subdivided, and two-flat buildings were being built as early as June 1912.

The Edgewater Golf Club achieved a national reputation primarily because of the renown of one of its members, Chick Evans, who won many competitions. It was also the site of many tournaments.

In August 1965 the club received an unsolicited offer for its property and on August 15, the members voted to accept the offer, which was for \$7,600,000. The club shut its doors soon afterwards, and a resulting battle ensued on how the land would be developed - or not developed. On one side were those who wanted it developed for commercial and residential use; on the other side were some residents in the three communities of Northtown, Rogers Park and Edgewater who wanted the land to become a public park. In this case, the "open lands" side won out and today the land formerly occupied by the Edgewater Golf Club is Warren Park—named after Lawrence Warren, president of the North Town Community Council, who led the effort to preserve the land for public use. Ironically, part of Warren Park is today a 9 hole golf course.

Sources: For commission of club house in Rogers Park: The Architectural Record, July-December 1915, Vol. XXXVIII (38), p. 222 & ff; Chicago Tribune

Teaser (14)

What is the story behind this structure at 5755-57 N. Ridge (photo to the right)?

Meet Your Docent

MARIEUISE KAILING is one of our ablest and most enthusiastic docents. Many years ago, she and Kathy Gemperle, one of EHS's founders, forged a friendship through their mutual participation in the Edgewater Singers. Marieluise has followed the expansion of EHS over time and, with a tiny bit of persuasion from Kathy, agreed to participate in the Home Tour and then, one year after EHS Museum opened, volunteered to be a docent.

In addition to a full time job and other volunteer efforts, Marieluise is a member of St. Ita's choir and involved in the Wedgewood Society, an international arts group. With all this going on, why is it important for her to volunteer for EHS? "EHS is important because it serves as a resource for preserving the history and stories of the Edgewater neighborhood. I think it's important to have a sense of the people who shaped the community, who have cared for these older buildings and homes and preserved them for future residents."

As for the Museum, Marieluise



has a strong belief that "you should not forget your history." The Museum is a neighborhood resource for the community and the exhibits are informative and interesting, but the exhibit on the "L" was definitely her favorite.

Editor's note: This is a new series in the Edgewater Scrapbook and more stories will follow. If you are interested in becoming a docent, please contact Dorothy Nygren through the web site at the address at the bottom of the page.



News from the Front: Committee Communiqués

HISTORIC SITES

Co-Chairs: Thom Greene and LeRoy Blommaert



The opening of the new Dominick's at Foster and Sheridan was a positive community event this past month. Also, some interesting projects include the addition of floors above a building on north Clark Ashland which show the preservation of the two story façade. The closing and removal of a used car lot on the 5700 Block of Broadway arouses our curiosity.

PROGRAM

Co-Chairs: Bob Remer and Kathy Gemperle



A committee meeting in November involved brainstorming for more ideas for exhibits. Coming up in 2011 is the Andersonville Historic District exhibit which will included some information about the larger Andersonville area.

Later in 2011 we will feature a community organization that has contributed to the history of Edgewater. This will require some research.

Also part of our brainstorming was trying to add more creative programming such as poetry readings or music or some performances. We created a tentative calendar for several years which will need some refining. If you have an exhibit idea reach us through the website.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Chair: Reggie Griffin



The Board of Directors elected Tiffany Middleton to the Board at the Nov. 19, 2010 meeting. Tiffany has been involved with EHS for the past 8 months and served as one of the tour guides on the EHS conducted trolley tours of the ECC Lighthouses on the streets of Edgewater. Welcome to the Board!

Additional opening area available on the board. The next election will be in March. Contact us through the website.

MEMBERSHIP

Co-Chairs: Betty Mayian and LeRoy Blommaert



Since membership is the life blood of this organization the board is encouraging all members to give gift memberships this year. The chief benefit is the newsletter which is filled with information and stories. Perhaps you know someone who does not get out much and though they live far from Edgewater they would enjoy reading about it. Now is the time to send them a gift. Use the membership form in this newsletter and send the application and check to Betty as shown on the form.

Our year end membership report: 396 members, of which 59 are new members.

PROPERTY

Chair: Marty Stewart



The garden has been prepared for winter. Thanks to six students from St. Gregory

High School who spent two Saturdays at the museum. Everything is being rearranged and we hope you stop by during the month of January. We will be open on both Saturdays and Sundays in the new year.

FINANCE

Chair: Jim Puralewski



A review of the third quarter income and expenses shows the finances on the plus side. A big boost came from the successful Home Tour in September.

COLLECTIONS

Chair: LeRoy Blommaert



Work continues with interns and committee members going through the collections and sorting. In the meantime Chairman Blommaert has been working with the Past Perfect software to answer the questions that come up.

COMMUNICATIONS

Chair: Kathy Gemperle



This is the last newsletter of 2010 and it's a record of lots of activities at the museum and in the community. Special thanks to Gloria Evenson for attending so many events and photographing the activities of the community.

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Celebrating the Lucia fest in the Daley Center is Andersonville's June Murphy from Erickson Deli (center). On the far right is Kerstin Lane, former director of the Swedish American Museum and now representing the Swedish Consulate.

Collectibles Corner



The EHS appreciates the contributions made to date of money and items of historic value.

Jane Grunewald Cohen: 120 photos of a 1982 party thrown by Albert Cohen (Senn class of 1926)

Kenny Filmore: Leather bound dictionary stamped with the Edgewater Beach Hotel Logo

Nancy Schroeder: 1979 ECC neighborhood tour brochure

Gloria Evenson: Rosehill Memorial Day Service brochure 2010

Richard Seidel: Photos of the Edgewater Golf Club

LeRoy Blommaert: Four Senn Forum books from 1918, 1919 (purchase)

Bob Remer: book, "Chicago's Lake Shore Drive"

Dawn Wyman: one b/w photo of early ECC meeting; various documents including the first ECC newsletter; and an Edgewater Beach Hotel magazine

Kathy Gemperle: People of Chicago, census data 1910-1970

Edgewater Chamber of Commerce: various promotional items from Edgewater businesses

Pat Lofthouse: donation of antique kitchen tools

New Museum hours for 2011

Saturdays: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Sundays: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

We can open the museum for groups of visitors at other times by appointment. Contact us through the website listed below.

Committee Communiqués

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FUNDRAISING

Chair: Betty Mayian



We had a wonderful Home Tour this year with about 200 guests who helped bring our net total to \$8,925. The ads in our tour book were also part of this total. We are very happy with the support we received from our business community. Thanks to all who supported this event!

Our Spring fundraiser has not been set up yet. Any ideas? Just call us at the Museum or stop by.



Mae Johnson and Kathy Gemperle pose in front of their handiwork, a dress figure modeling the ECC volunteer of the 1980s with multi-tasking as the theme. The ECC volunteers performed endless tasks during that decade and Sandee Remis came up with this idea for a Halloween costume one year. Note that this was before cell phones and volunteers had to be prepared to make any space an office.. (Photo courtesy of News Star)



This donation of a Bryn Mawr Historic District sign (designed by Thom Greene based on a design from the Belle Shore Apartments) came to the Museum in October thanks to Thom Greene and Ernie Constantino.

Home Tour 2010

The success of the Fall Edgewater home tour in the Edgewater North Neighborhood is due in large part to the efforts of Nancy Schroeder to enlist her neighbors in the event. Nancy found four will families to participate and four more were added to make the tour one of the most successful. In all 232 tour goers walked the three block tour on a pleasant Sunday afternoon. The homes on the tour ranged in age from 1895 to 1910 and as typical in many Chicago neighborhoods the older homes were larger wooden buildings that have survived more than a century.

Of particular interest were the two homes built for the sons of George Lill who owned the Lill Coal company which provided coal to heat many north side buildings. One of the Lill coal yards was at Berwyn and Broadway. These homes built in 1895 on Granville were right next door to each other until a brick apartment building was built between them years later. Another interesting fact was the similarity of these homes to the large home on Lakewood that was also in the tour. Further detection is needed as we were unable to find the architect for all three buildings.

Special thanks goes to the Granville Avenue United Methodist Church and Rev. William Green for hosting the tour on Sunday afternoon, giving tours of the beautiful church and hosting the pretour dinner the night before. This is a busy, active church and we are fortunate that there was time available to add more activities to their schedule.

We'd like to thank the homeowners for their generous donation of time and their homes for this tour. Thanks to Nancy Schroeder and Larry Ebert, Connie and James Whitesell, Pat Sharkey and Jack Markowski, Brian Treglown and Carl Smith, Amy and Jason Schigelone, Kelli and Stephan-Hutton, Tom Pace and Natalie

Spears, Ann and Tom Tharavil. We also thank all the docents who guided people through the homes and introduced them to the architecture including Lerov Blommaert, Sandee Remis, Will Rye, David Gemperle, Thom Greene, Marty Stewart, Lori Lynch, Sylvia Lynch, Ed Gross, Nancy Freedman, Peter and Sandra York, Morry Matson, Marieluise Kailing, Catherine Kailing, Dorothy Doherty, Paige Helpin, Judy Nocek, Tiffany and Jonas Middleton.

This is the major fundraising event for the Edgewater Historical Society each year. Besides the docents and homeowners other volunteers helped make it successful. Betty Mavian and Marty Stewart worked on outreach to the advertisers., Lerov Blommaert directed the installation of signs throughout the neighborhood with a team of helpers and many gracious homeowners. J.T. Vander researched the homes and Larry Rosen who produced the beautiful tour guide book.

Thanks to all who made this such a successful event.

Kathy Gemperle



Dramatic view of one of the homes on the tour with the detailed brackets showing on the porch, roof line and turret roof on this 1895 home.



President Bob Remer (center) sending tour goers off from the check in at the Granville Methodist Church.



Sandee Remis speaks to a group of tour goers on Granville Avenue at the 2010 Home Tour.

Vera Peterson Nelson 1921-2010

A woman known in the community for her compassionate, professional service to many as they dealt with the passing of loved ones, was herself laid to rest October 30, 2010. She was born Vera Peterson on June 20, 1921 in Chicago, of Swedish ancestry. According to her longtime employee, Rick Ruzicka, Vera grew up in the Andersonville neighborhood. Her family was involved with Ebenezer Lutheran Church, where she married John A. Nelson.

John's father, August Nelson, had founded the Nelson Funeral Home at Ashland and Foster in 1929. After John's untimely death in 1967, Vera took on the family business herself, and successfully ran the business in addition to raising eight children.

If that wasn't enough of a challenge, Vera is also credited with being a member of three Swedish lodges - Verdandi Lodge #3 I.O.S., Kronan Lodge #179 V.O.S.A. and



Brage Lodge #2 I.O.V. - the Swedish American Museum, American Daughters of Sweden, Three Crowns Park Service Guild, Swedish Cultural Society, Pi EPSILON CHI Sorority and the Swedish Historical Society. Oh yes, this formidable Swede also remained a member of Ebenezer Lutheran Church. That church was filled with family and friends who came to honor and

remember Vera after her passing October 26, 2010 at age 89. Daughter Janet, who now manages Nelson Funeral Homes, and son Richard shared stories of letters he would write as a child for their mother to read when she got home from work. Daughter-in-law Lois recalled Vera as someone who not only knew how to run a business, but how to give a hug and a cup of coffee when needed.

Vera Nelson is survived by seven of her eight children, 21 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. She is buried at Memorial Park Cemetery. Nelson Funeral Homes operates at two locations, 5149 N. Ashland in Chicago and 820 Talcott Road in Park Ridge.

Gloria Evenson

**Mark your calendars for
the Andersonville Historic
District exhibit which will
open on February 13, 2011**

Edgewater Historical Society - 2011 Membership Application

I would like to support the **Edgewater Historical Society** by becoming a member for **2011**.

Type of Annual Membership (Check One):

- | | | | |
|--|-------|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$20* | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (over 65) | \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$30* | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Org. | \$75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Lifetime | \$1000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Organization (Not for Profit) | | | \$25 |

(* fee assistance is available upon written application)

Museum donation: \$ _____

_____ DVDs (mailed at \$20/copy): \$ _____

Make checks payable to:

Edgewater Historical Society

Mail the completed form with your check to:

**Elizabeth Mayian
6033 N. Sheridan Road #36K
Chicago, IL 60660**

For further information, call: (773) 506-4849

I am interested in learning more about the following committees and activities:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collections | <input type="checkbox"/> Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Property |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Bd. Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications |

Special activities:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum Volunteer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibit Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Research Volunteer |

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____

Email: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Date paid (office use only): / /

The Edgewater Historical Society is an Illinois not-for-profit corporation. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law for 501(c)(3) organizations.



Edgewater Community Council
 Edgewater Historical Society
 6044 N. Broadway
 Chicago, IL 60660

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**Hear Ye!
 Hear Ye!
 Public Notice**

This newsletter is published by the **Edgewater Historical Society**, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1988 and affiliated with the Edgewater Community Council.

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**We Welcome Guest
 Columnists At Any Time**



For the Family Tree

Officers of the Edgewater Historical Society and the Board of Directors

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Previous Issue: Vol. XXI, No. 2
 The deadline for the next issue is January 30, 2011

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