



Edgewater Scrapbook

"Notes from the Past, News from the Present"

Vol. XXXII. No. 4

Winter 2021

Wikstrom's Made Me Do It...

... or how I ended up buying a house in Andersonville

By Margie Nelson Best

My heritage is Scandinavian on both sides, mostly Swedish with a bit of Norwegian and Danish thrown in. Growing up in Wisconsin, lots of folks we knew were Scandinavian and we often compared our traditions, especially around the Christmas holidays. My family loved having traditional Swedish foods on Christmas Eve. My mom would make her Carlson family Swedish meatballs, and we were usually able to get Limpa rye, lefsa (like tortillas but made from potato dough), lingonberry preserves and jarred pickled herring at our local grocery store. The store would even offer frozen fillets of lutefisk, the Scandinavian delicacy that makes some people swoon and others run for the hills. What is lutefisk? Dried cod that is reconstituted in a lye solution instead of water. The alkaline lye denatures the proteins and, after multiple rinses in cold water, leaves delicate soft fish fillets with an equally delicate flavor. Cooked very briefly in heavily salted water, then served with melted butter or cream sauce, it's positively delicious at least in my family's opinion. Of course, many a Swede will tell you lutefisk was a big reason Swedes emigrated to the U.S.

In the late 1970s, my family moved from Wisconsin to Glenview when my dad took a job with Kraft Foods. He would take the Metra

downtown to the old Peshtigo Court Kraft headquarters. The old yellow brick building with a view east overlooking Lake Michigan has since been torn down and replaced with - what else - a residential high-rise. Our first year in Glenview with the holidays approaching, we faced a dilemma: where to find our Swedish foods for Christmas Eve? My dad asked his colleagues, and one woman in the know gave him the answer: Andersonville on Chicago's North Side. So began an annual tradition of driving down the Edens, coming east on Peterson/Ridge and turning south on Clark street to Scandinavian mecca. I loved the bustling city neighborhood, and when we would park on a side street I would gaze at the brick apartment buildings and three-flats and think, "someday maybe I'll live in a neighborhood like this." There were several Swedish businesses on Clark back then, but we settled on Wikstrom's for its broad food selection and efficient staff. Every time I entered Wikstrom's, the musty aromatic mélange of cheese, bakery and fish was a holiday homecoming for me, and the official start of holiday celebrations for our family. No matter how early we got to the shop, we had to pull a number and wait - typically for two hours or more. We didn't mind.

We'd walk further south to the Swedish Gift Shop (since closed) for some Christmas shopping, or we'd venture across the street to the Swedish Bakery to see if we could get a Stollen bread and some cookies. We quickly learned that lines at the bakery were even longer than Wikstrom's, and we were



Photo of Wikstrom's on Clark street before it closed in 2007.

rarely successful with a walk-in plan.

Back at Wikstrom's, my brother and I would get a kick out of the reaction when we ordered lutefisk. At least half the Swedish women behind the counter would make a face when they pulled a couple of pearlescent white fillets out of a large vat and double bagged it for us.

Fast forward another 15 years, and my husband and I were looking to move from our small condo in Lincoln Park to a house with a yard. Frustrated with the options in

(Continued on page 3)



From the President

Best wishes for the New Year

Holidays, Anniversaries and Longevity for CA 77

Thanksgiving week welcomed Edgewater's Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Service, a decades long tradition sponsored by the Edgewater Community Religious Association (ECRA) held at the lovely, historic Church of the Atonement. This was the first "in person" post COVID gathering of this annual ecumenical event.

Formed over 60 years ago to confront Edgewater's urban ills and racial tensions, ECRA has been a force for good, bringing people of all faiths together in times of need. Each year's program celebrates diversity and supports donations to Care For Real, Edgewater's food and clothing pantry (itself celebrating over 50 years as a community anchor). While hunger still churns beneath the surface during these difficult times, you can help your community by supporting their mission with a year-end donation, made easier by online portals (<https://careforreal.org/>)

Our community benefits from a strong network of longstanding religious, neighborhood, educational, and business institutions with shared histories. The newly named Edgewater Environmental Coalition just celebrated 10 years as a free standing not-for-profit organization, blossoming and evolving from what started as the Edgewater Beautiful Committee decades ago in the 1980s. Their work and advocacy literally "cover the waterfront" from climate change to stewardship of natural planting areas on our beaches.

EHS will celebrate 35 years in 2023, can you believe that? And some of us are still here doing what

we love. We started in the first Edgewater Library. Now we enjoy a newer, bigger, and better branch that opened 8 years ago. That opening prompted the beginning of two more initiatives. Edgewater Reads, with its Little Free Libraries, organized by Alderman Osterman's office has been a resounding success, with over 100 gaily decorated boxes throughout the community. That same year we started the Chicago History Book Club in conjunction with the library; it continues full force today, with unending and fascinating histories; please join us.

Positive initiatives emerge all the time, very characteristic of who we are as Community Area 77 (CA 77), an official designation bestowed by the city 41 years ago, finally recognizing our distinct identity. Now that's an anniversary.

Native American Heritage Month

November marked National Native American Heritage Month, originally designated in 1990 and continued in essence every year since 1994. We were honored to mark the month with a new exhibit, Native Americans in the Edgewater/Chicago Area and an important presentation by Les Begay, past president of the Indian American Center in Chicago. Big thanks to Marjorie Fritz Birch who launched the exhibit and has been organizing programs on the topic. Also to Marsha Holland who has done her usual extensive research. The exhibit and programs will continue to next year.

Heretofore, EHS focused almost exclusively on the history of Edgewater since its settlement by European immigrants. We know, though, that these lands and this shoreline were very much part of the life of Native Americans who harvested wild rice in the swales off Lake Michigan, now covered over by Kenmore and Winthrop. They also had summer encampments near what is now the Mariano's at Sheridan and Foster, and used rocks from the shore to fashion arrow

heads.

Over the last 14,000 years the surface of what is now Lake Michigan gyrated as much as 250 feet below present levels (about 10,000 years ago), and 60 feet above present levels (about 12,000 years ago). Wherever the shore was, there were indigenous people. The oldest known artifacts were unearthed at West Ridge Nature Preserve. We must not forget that. This exhibit and the programs are the beginning of that effort. We are learning more and more about history that eluded us over the years, but was lying beneath the surface or intentionally kept out of our sight. This is a reckoning that confronts the entire country. We hope to honor our mission and to do this right.

Gut Punch

Last issue, I waxed optimistic that the McNitt Garage façade could be saved and that Howard Brown Health could have a real dialogue with the community about their options; after all, they had no immediate plans to build a clinic. You were all urged to join the cause. Well, a few days before its demolition, I got a call that it was going down -- a real gut punch to say the least. I felt we had let you down.

Many of you also expressed your displeasure and anger about the demolition. For now, I reserve my thoughts for a later issue, while urging us all to remain steadfast in our efforts to preserve important structures and to cherish our history. We have had some successes, and some losses. But we can't give up.

Robert Remer



Wikstrom's
(Continued from page 1)

Lincoln Park, our realtor suggested we look in Lakewood Balmoral further north. Lakewood who? We had never heard of it, but took her advice and ended up falling in love with a house in the heart of the neighborhood.

At the end of our second tour of the home, the seller's realtor Marion Volini - yes former alderwoman, Edgewater community leader and longtime resident Marion Volini - suggested we walk over to the Clark Street business district to see all the independent and unique small businesses. My husband and I strolled west on Berwyn and when we got to Clark Street, turned left. I looked up, and there it was: the familiar sign reading Wikstrom's Delicatessen. I let out a happy gasp, and my husband said, "We're buying that house, aren't we?" "Oh yes," I said. "We are buying that house."

And so, for over a dozen years, our Wikstrom's Christmas pilgrimage continued, but now we only had to walk a couple of blocks to the shop. Every year, the pickled and smoked fish aromas that greeted me

at the door filled me with Christmas joy. Every year a couple of cold soft fillets of lutefisk would be in my shopping bags brimming with our holiday feast.



Margie Nelson Best and her brother John hard at work preparing Lutefisk for a Swedish Christmas dinner.

I was heartbroken when Wikstrom's closed in 2007. I still manage to pull together cheeses, herrings, some breads, and I make my mom's Swedish meatballs for Christmas Eve. But we haven't had lutefisk since Wikstrom's closed. I can't bring myself to order it online, although my brother assures me Olsen's up in Minneapolis ships some fine lute. Maybe this year I'll sit at my computer and order some. Maybe if I open a jar of pickled herring it will get me in the mood. We'll see.

Five most popular street names in America

Have you ever wondered what street name is used the most in America? You might expect it would be "Main Street" or "Broadway", but you'd be wrong. The most common street name in the U. S. is "Second Street."

And now you're wondering "Why Second? Shouldn't there be more First Streets than Seconds?" We can't be sure, but we assume a lot of streets that would be called First Street actually become Main Street or Front Street. So Second is first. And not surprisingly, in second place is Third Street. First Street does manage to come in third, and Fourth is indeed fourth.

So a narrative of the first four ends up sounding like the Abbott & Costello routine "Who's On First." Here goes: "First is Second. Second is Third. Third is First. And Fourth is Fourth."

In case you're wondering how we round out the Top 5, in fifth place is "Park Street."

Brian Treglown

POSTCARD



The McNitt garage 1911

Despite our requests to consider preserving the façade of this quaint little garage at Hollywood and Broadway as part of Edgewater's Motor Row the Howard Brown Foundation executed its demolition with no plan to build for years. We proposed some alternatives but nothing could make them care about our neighborhood history.

Kathy

We get letters

From time to time we receive letters about the museum and the newsletter. We love reading them and thought we would share a few.

From Lori Lynch (now residing in Florida)

Dear EHS,

When you started in the mid 80s I considered it a hair brained idea with little chance of success. How happy I am to be totally wrong. Instead you are a prototype for neighborhood historical societies throughout the country. You should be proud. I am of you

I will always treasure the marvelous memories I have from attending functions and the many friendships I was able to make. Signed, Lori Lynch

From Margot Marx

To all committee members

I just want to thank you for mentioning Gunther's (Marx) passing in the Edgewater Scrapbook Also for sending me a copy. He enjoyed being in business and very involved in Edgewater for so many years. With best wishes, Margot Marx

From Betty Larson (retired in California)

Dear Kathy,

Im so thankful for the Edgewater Scrapbook and I commend everyone for their dedication to preserving our historic buildings. My family lived in an apartment building on Balmoral Avenue and Paulina St. for five generations. Illinois is my native state. Best wishes to everyone, Betty Larson

From Diana Gardiner

I always appreciate the Edgewater Historical Society Newsletter. Would you please do me a special favor and thank Michael Volini for his wonderful and meaningful poem, "In my Edgewater Home." Thank you, Diana Gardiner

Teaser #52

In our last issue, we asked: What well-known architect grew up in Edgewater and where did he live?

Answer: No, it wasn't Frank Lloyd Wright. The architect was Stanley Tigerman (September 20, 1930-June 3, 2019). He was an only child and lived with his parents in his paternal grandparent's boarding house at 5962 N. Winthrop: This according to the 1940 census, which showed him as being 9 years of age. He later went to Senn High School where he graduated in June 1948. Presumably, he also went to Swift grammar school, since it was the closest to where he lived. The March 1947 telephone directory shows his grandmother at 6166 N. Winthrop, so presumably he and his parents lived there when he was 16.

Probably Tigerman's best known - and certainly most visited - commission is the Holocaust museum in Skokie. Another well known commission is the addition to the Anti-Cruelty Society building in Chicago.

Sources: September/October 2017 issue of the Member Magazine of the Art Institute; Chicago Reader, November 20, 2013; 1940 Census; March 1947 city telephone directory



Teaser #53

Several current Edgewater streets had their names changed. Which ones are they and what were their former names?



The Last Rose

Throughout the summer our museum has maintained a garden behind the building, under the careful, hardworking eye of our chief gardener, Marjorie Fritz-Birch. It's a spot for the community to escape the rigors of hectic city life, if only for a few moments. One frequent visitor to the garden this summer was Josephine Chaparro. She wrote this to us:

"Behind the Edgewater Historical Museum there is a secret garden where you can write, read, and meditate. There are roses, Black-eyed Susans, wild prairie grasses, and wildflowers. There is a rose bush I watched all summer in my secret garden. To capture the last rose of summer I would visit every day, and this is it." And she sent us this poem:

Life. What is it?
The Poets and Writers
And what they write for us
It is light
It is the tree we hug
It is you
It is us
It is the last rose of summer
Whispering her goodbyes until
we meet once more.

We're glad you enjoyed it, Josephine. We hope to see you there next year.

Brian Treglown

Special thanks to Marjorie Fritz-Birch for the care she extended on the garden.

My semester at the Edgewater Beach Hotel

Here's a recollection of the year spent in the luxurious Edgewater Beach Hotel as a Loyola college dorm. Thanks to our guest columnist.

by Warren R. Phelps

My partner's grandmother always said, "make good memories for your old age." The seniors I worked with in nursing homes were living history books with stories to tell and they said, "enjoy life as it goes so fast." Of course, when you are young these messages often don't resonate or make sense—ah the joys of youth. However, both are very true.

I don't recall the exact wording of the letter (no email in 1968), but I know I did receive one telling me that Mertz Hall dormitory on the Loyola Lake Shore Campus would not be completed for the fall semester in 1968 and that we would be living at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. Not having lived in Chicago or knowing anyone who had stayed at the hotel it did not strike me as anything unusual. I was more anxious and eager to get out of the house and start my Junior year of college.

I was assigned to Room 401 with two roommates. We were housed in the original building (north). My room faced north towards the cabanas (the pool was closed). From hotel pictures the room looked like it originally was a lounge for the connecting room. Men and women were divided by floors and the majority of the students were freshman. According to Wikipedia there were 300 students in residence.

One of the dining rooms was converted to a student cafeteria. Not having stayed in that many hotels it felt old, but I enjoyed the many pictures in the halls and lobby showing the past glory of the building. It came as quite a shock to me to see that the lake actually was close to the building at one time.

Men in hats and women in large ornate hats that reminded me of some of my grandmother's photos. Clearly an era quite different from the 60s.

We had access to the original building and the connecting area to the south building. Efforts were made to get into the closed south building, but I was not aware of anyone actually getting into that building.

We commuted to the Lake Shore Campus via an Edgewater Beach coach style bus. It wasn't very big,



but we would have contests to see how many we could pack in the bus. Looked like a game of Twister, but with lots of yelling. It was not always convenient commuting so I rearranged to have a few later classes.

Life seemed pretty usual but there were those unusual moments. One evening we had a fire drill and we exited the building using the external fire escape stairs that were not that steady (but heck we were young and not thinking of safety). We were accompanied down the stairs to the music of the Doors and "Light my fire". Drew quite a laugh and cheers.

Another evening one of my roommates on dialysis shared what we would have to do should his shunt catheter become dislodged. Not quite the college experience I had planned, but nothing ever happened.

Life settled into a routine that felt quite normal, but clearly a contrast to life depicted in the pictures on the walls: dinners, entertainment, elaborate clothes and walks right along the lakefront. Friendships were made and lost as we were off campus with the same small group for meals and commuting. I met my future spouse at the Edgewater Beach Hotel.

We eventually received notice that we would be moving into Mertz Hall which opened in early 1969. We had a tour prior to moving and it

was rather spartan in comparison to the Edgewater Beach Hotel.

We were informed that the hotel would be torn down. I recall walking around and looking at the old photos one last time. Before leaving I removed the room number, 401, from my door since I figured it probably would end up in rubble. To the best of my knowledge we were the last ones to occupy the hotel before it was torn down starting in the fall of 1969.

I visited a resident of the Breakers at Edgewater Beach, which is now sited where the former Edgewater Beach Hotel was once located. Looking out the windows I saw some of the same sights I had from my room at the hotel. Staying there was a unique experience and a "good memory" in a unique hotel that was a part of Chicago's history. And indeed, life and time did go fast.

Indigenous People of the Edgewater area exhibit

It just the beginning of a larger exhibit set up to honor Indigenous Peoples Month. Curator Marjorie Fritz Birch and researcher Marsha Holland have been trying to put together the story of the native peoples settlements near Edgewater. Then WBEZ offered a program on Curious City which seemed to tell the general story of what happened to the native people in the Chicago area. With their permission we have featured what their research found..

Along with the story they told we have found more info through maps of the area near Edgewater. Specifically the settlements that were near the north Branch of the Chicago River around what we know as Bowmanville which is just west of Edgewater. Remember Edgewater was named in 1885 so all this information predates that era.

If you want to get an idea of what the area looked like before the European settlements make a visit to the park on the northwest corner of the Rosehill cemetery land. The entrance is at 5801 Western Avenue and the park is called West Ridge Nature Park. Before the land was purchased to be a cemetery it may have been part of the transitory settlements of the Potawatami and other smaller tribes who moved around for hunting and trading. It was not a part of the burial ground.

In 2015, the Chicago Park District and City of Chicago dedicated Park #568 which is now known as West Ridge Nature Park. The 21-acre site lies at the northwest corner of Rosehill Cemetery, one of Chicago's oldest burial grounds, dedicated in 1859. Through the cemetery's history, the area at the northwest corner included a pond. Until its recent conversion to parkland, however, the site remained an undeveloped part of the cemetery that had never been used for burials. That heavily wooded corner had

been used as a dumping ground for excess dirt and debris. After acquiring the site in 2011, the Chicago Park District hired Hitchcock Design Group to create a plan that combines ecological restoration goals with park enhancements. The improvements include a multi-purpose trail that loops throughout the park, boardwalks that cross over environmentally sensitive areas, removal of invasive plants, the addition of more than 500 native trees and shrubs, overlooks and fishing access points. The multi-million dollar project was funded through a combination of federal grants, TIF funds, and Chicago Park District funding. So stop by the museum to see a review of the story of the indigenous people of the Chicago area and then plan a visit to the new West Ridge Nature Park.

Kathy Gemperle

Interested in learning more?

Les Begay a member of the Dine Nation, and past President of the American Indian Center, which is now located in Albany Park, will lecture on the little known story of "The U.S. history of removal and relocation of Native People." Begay is the co-founder of Indigenous Peoples Day Coalition of Illinois and has vast research on Native History. He has worked with the Newberry Library and the Field Museum.

The presentation was live at the Edgewater Historical Society Museum on Saturday, November 20, at 10 a.m. To watch a recording on YouTube, go to bit.ly/ehsc2.



Watch for these upcoming programs:

Children's book reading

Monica Rickert-Bolter is a Chicago-based visual artist and journalist of Potawatomi, Black, and German descent. Monica is also a co-founder of the newly established arts nonprofit, Center for Native Futures. There, she will use her decade's worth of nonprofit experience to create a more inclusive and equitable arts community throughout the city.

Her featured children's book for this presentation is "Journey of the Freckled Indian" for which she did the illustrations. She will be reading at the museum on Dec. 11 at 11 a.m.

Family workshop with the guidance of Kathy Gemperle

Make a miniature wigwam, or canoe at the museum on a Jan 9 at 11 a.m. Free. Masks required.

Special presentation by

Andrea Carlson, artist who did the riverfront installation. "We are on Potawatomi Land." Schedule to be announced.

Andrea Carlson (Ojibwe, b. 1979) is a visual artist who currently lives in Potawatomi Land (Zhigaagong/Chicago). Through painting and drawing, Carlson entangles cultural narratives while questioning institutional authority over objects based on the merit of possession. Current research activities include Indigenous Futurism and cultural assimilation metaphors in film. Her work has been acquired by institutions such as the British Museum, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and the National Gallery of Canada. Carlson was a 2008 McKnight Fellow and a 2017 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors grant recipient.

Shopping and Christmas

By Kathy Gemperle

Everyone seems to be shopping the internet these days, especially at Christmas. It used to be a kind of ritual to go to a department store and wander around comparing prices and materials and such. The stores still deck out their first floor with holiday decorations but there are fewer shoppers and none of the long lines to check out.

So now with the more humane atmosphere it is really a great time to go shopping for something you weren't searching for or find something that fits the bill without a lot of directions from those who will share Christmas morning with you. What you get instead is a friendly sales clerk who is not stressed out and willing to chat if you are interested.

This year (2017) I made my shopping trip to Macy's for a gift for my adult son. I wandered thru the men's area on the 8th floor of the Water Tower Place store (now closed). I made a discovery, this year almost all the sweaters were V neck. And none of them were cable knit. So much for my original idea. We can only buy what is in front of us. But I could make my choice based on the feel of the material and the shade of color. I chose the one I liked best and then in checking out I asked the sales clerk about V necks. He paused a minute and then said he had not seen anything but V necks, and wondered who had established that as the style that year.

My next stop was in the ladies lingerie department where I found what I was looking for in minutes. The sales clerk helpfully rang up my purchases with discounts and we began talking about winter clothing. She offered that she shops second hand stores, but her daughter does not. On one of her trips she found an elegant leather jacket that just needed to be dry cleaned. Wearing it one day while visiting her daughter,

her daughter asked about the jacket and even asked to try it on. Mother and daughter the same size - pretty unusual? Her daughter looked great in the jacket, so she gave it to her. She didn't say anything about its origins, but the next time she saw her in it she said "You know that jacket was a real find at the thrift store. I am so glad you like it." Maybe it was a lesson in keeping an open mind.

My next stop was really serendipitous, as I saw a set up for toys from FAO Schwartz right next to the escalator. I had never been shopping in an FAO Schwartz store, but here was a display in Macy's. What attracted me first was a piano on the floor which was for display only. It was an electric keyboard that you could put your feet on to play. A little girl and I played a few notes.

I began looking for something different for my 8 year old granddaughter and found a small ukulele that was set up with paints to decorate it. I thought it would be a hit even if the instrument didn't sound so good.

Then while browsing I found a Charade game - a box of cards. We often play charades with our grandchildren and their parents, but lately we have been running out of titles that are challenging. So this would be a fun gift for the family.

With these two items I went to the check out. There I met two young African American men who were about 10 years apart in age. The older one looked at the cards and remembered playing charades. The younger one did not play it, so we told him it was like improv. This started a conversation about favorite games - mine from my childhood was Chinese Checkers. Others that were mentioned were Trivial Pursuit, Sorry, Monopoly, Checkers and Clue. These games have been around a long time and the three of us could have gone on for a half hour just naming old games. It was enjoyable to have the time to have this conversation- no one was waiting in line. When I received my package and receipt we said good-

bye and wished each other a happy Christmas.

So don't give up on retail shopping even though it is more convenient to sit at your computer and pick out things. Every once in a while it's fun to browse in a store and happen upon something that was not on your list. By the way, all three of my gift items were a big hit.

Former EHS Board Member Evangeline Mistaras

Evangeline Mistaras died this past July at age 93. Evangeline was a member of EHS's first board, organized in 1988. She continued to serve until 2000, then took off for a few years, then came back in 2003 and last served in 2008: a total of at least 19 years. When we opened the museum she worked on learning how we could set up our archives and set up some visits to other museums including the Hellenic Museum.

She was very active in her church, St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church on Sheridan Road, and she was a founding member of Chicago's Hellenic Museum. A professional librarian she lived for many years as the Edgewater Beach Apartments until moving to the Admiral. While on the EHS Board her major contribution was in the area of collections.



*Our new little library.
Thanks to artist Jill Sirajullah*



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Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Public Notice

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**We Welcome Guest
Columnists At Any Time**



For the Family Tree

Thanks for your support and encouragement.

If you receive a renewal notice in the mail in January, we ask that you send in your dues as soon as possible. If you don't receive a renewal notice, no action is necessary on your part.

Now would be a good time to give a gift membership to someone for the holidays. You can just click "Membership" on the EHS website, or send a check to the museum (Attn. LeRoy) with the name, address and email of the person to whom you are sending this gift.

Visit our Website at:
www.EdgewaterHistory.org

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