

HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAKING HISTORY EVERYDAY

Spring 2013

Volume 9, Issue 2

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WE WANT YOU! RENEW AND JOIN

It's that time of year again when everything is fresh and new. Highwood comes alive, all green and glorious. We too at the Historical Society hope to grow and blossom, but we need your help.

- Do you love local history?
- Do you ever wonder who lived in your home before you?
- Are you interested in preserving the past for future generations?
- Do you enjoy reminiscing about the past with family and friends?
- Do you have pride in your community and enjoy giving back to it?

If you answered yes to any or all of the above questions, the Highwood Historical Society invites you to take the next step and be a part of our great organization. Members bring in dues, provide volunteers and carry out our mission:

To promote the sharing of information about the history of Highwood with its residents and other community members. To research and collect items that reflect the history of Highwood and preserve these items for display. To cooperate with officials to insure the preservation and accessibility of the records and archives of the city of Highwood. And to strive to educate and present information on the people, places, and events that make the city of Highwood unique.

Our job is to document the continually evolving story of our community. We have a collection. We have a location. Now we need YOU. Join today! Our membership form is on the back of this issue. Please take the time to fill it out and return to us today.

YOU ARE INVITED

Join us at our Annual Meeting on Wednesday, May 15th at the Highwood Bocce Courts for a Special Program on the Early Years of Fort Sheridan and its influence on Highwood, by Julia Johnas, Highland Park Library and author of Highland Park: Settlement to the 1920's. Join us as we celebrate Fort Sheridan's 125th Anniversary! Please see the enclosed insert for additional details.

The Highwood Historical Society will also hold its annual election of officers and board members: The slate includes: Amy Strege, Vice President; Barbara Sherony Marianetti, Secretary; and Board Members: Leonora Cervac, Aldo Croveti, Angela Croveti, Sheila Dean, Shirley Fitzgerald, Adrienne Inman, Tom Scopelliti, and Carol Ugolini.

They will join President, Teta Minuzzo, Treasurer, Jack Johnson, Past President, Lisa Cervac and Board Members: Josephine Campagni and Diane "Cookie" LoPresti.

HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY,
APRIL 28TH
2:00-5:00PM

122 NORTH
AVENUE
REFRESHMENTS
SERVED

ALL ARE
WELCOME

News From the Chicago Tribune, May 11, 1901:

Twenty Fail to Answer "Taps"

The Rev. M.M. Parkhurst and the fellow members of his Committee failed to appear in Highwood yesterday. It was soldier's payday at Fort Sheridan. The promised personal investigation by the committee of ministers selected by the Chicago Churches to ascertain the conditions arising from the abolition of the army canteen was not in evidence at the town in which Uncle Sam's soldiers spent an estimated \$3000.00 between the hours of 12 noon and midnight.

Remembering "The Cabin"

by Don Cowgill

Enzo Magrin lives at 2740 Western Avenue. In the early 60's there was a 10 x 12 one room building, we called "The Cabin." It bordered the south side of Maggi's farm at the east end of Magrin's field. Over a period of years (for me it was from age 9 to 11), the cabin was the center of activity for our neighbors. It was a place to hangout, play Army, have BB gun fights, dig foxholes, and spend endless summer days just being kids.

The cabin was also headquarters during our rock wars with the Ronzani/Koopman/Cantagallo boys. During one of our "battles," we captured David Cantagallo and tied him to a cross. Enzo was the leader of this group. Cliff Canovi, Kevin Fraulini, Dave and John Sirotti, Eddie Babini, John Garrity, Bruce DeSanto and the Lattanzios spent many summer months there.

The cabin was originally located in the corner of Jocelyn and Western Avenue. Biaggi was living in it at the time (early 50's). When the lot was sold to build the Canovi residence, Mr. Magrin allowed Biaggi to move the cabin to his field.

Biaggi lived in this location for a while, with a wood stove and no running water. Biaggi then left the cabin and moved to his store on Waukegan Avenue (Hart Schaffner Marx & Biaggi).

This story was told to me by Enzo and Mary Lou Magrin. If you remember the cabin and have any more stories, contact the Highwood Historical Society.

Cookie's Mystery Photo

For years Diane "Cookie" LoPresti has been wondering about who the men are in the picture below. Her father, John "Cackle" Castellari stands in the center and holds a trophy with _____ Nustra(?). The man on the left is a mystery. Do you know who he is? Please email highwoodhistory@gmail.com or call 847-682-9039. By the way, these three men are the proud winners of the 1965 Polar Bear Bocce Tournament.



Do you have a mystery photo of your own? Maybe we can help. Contact the Highwood Historical Society, 847-682-9039.

16 Webster Avenue

by Shirley Natalie Fitzgerald

My family lived at 16 Webster Avenue. My grandparents, Maria and Francesco Benassi came to Highwood in the spring of 1924 and resided on North Avenue. They built the family homestead on Webster Avenue in 1925 - a two-flat brick house with a garage apartment. They raised two children there, my uncle, Armido Benassi, and my mother, Anne (Benassi) Natalie.



My grandparents resided there until they passed away (Maria in 1966 and Francesco in 1979). My uncle married Verle (Breed) Benassi. My mother married John ("Didi") Natalie, who was an owner of the Silver Dollar tavern for 27 years prior to his retirement. Both families resided at 16 Webster -- my parents, like my grandparents, until they passed away. My cousins Richard and Mark lived there until my uncle built their home at the corner of St Johns and Walker in Highland Park. I lived there until I married in 1971 and again when I moved back to Illinois from Ohio. I now reside in Deerfield but still own the property on Webster.

Because there are three apartments, many people have rented there over the years. I know that Rena (Mattei) Baldwin and her brother, Leno were born there. Other tenants that I remember are Mary & Chris Adams, the Bruninis (Orietta, Silvio & Emma), Clara Milani's family, the Santoros (Lucy, Frank, Laura, Susie & Sonia), Diane and Michael Yeary, Angie Anzoline, Beppa Testoline (before she married Primo) with her daughters, Anna Connor (m) and Mary Guthrie (m), and many, many others that I wish I could remember.

Growing up the Nustras (Eve, George and Nick), Maria and Olindo Pasquali, and the Seghis lived down the street. Frank and Maria Lolli, the Tremonts, Beppa and Primo Testoline, Mary Guthrie, the Connors (Anna, Bill, Ramona & Ron), the Anzolines, Betty Hickey and Mary Sheridan(m) lived next door for a while, so did the Iacchs (Italo, Tina, George, Cindy, Emilio & Enrica) on the other side. Terri, Marisa and Lisa Terracina lived across the street.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT
FARMERS MARKET BEGINS
JUNE 5, 2013
EVERTS PARK

The Lady Elgin Graves Part III: The Gravesites are Found by Tom Scopelliti

(If you missed the first two fascinating chapters of this story,
please see our 2011 & 2012 newsletters on our website,
www.highwoodhistoricalsociety.com)

In our last article, we stated that Henry Mowers, a resident in the area and carpenter who built coffins for some of the victims of the Lady Elgin disaster, verified the presence of the gravesites to the newspaper reporter. According to the reporter, Mowers lived just to the south of the gravesites. However, an 1861 plat map (remember the disaster occurred in 1860) did not show any property belonging to Mowers in the area even though census records showed he was in the area. An 1873 plat map locates property owned by the Mowers family where Vine Avenue in Highland Park and the extended western border of Highwood would intersect. This location does not fit the description of the gravesites being just beyond a viaduct and a stone's throw from the railroad tracks as stated in the 1899 news article. Remember also that the lighthouse was said to be "due east as the crow flies" and about one half mile from the graves. That would put the gravesites somewhere near the viaduct at Bloom Street, an area that could hardly be described as a "remote corner" of Highwood.

Sometimes one finds information in unexpected places. Such is the case when an Oak Terrace Grade School student provided an interesting clue in a paper written about the history of the area. In this 1918 school report, the student mentions the Lady Elgin disaster and refers to information provided by a woman named "Mrs. Cox." This name is significant because, after some research, we found that Mrs. Cox was the married daughter of Owen Monaghan, the Port Clinton Lighthouse keeper and eyewitness. Mrs. Cox mentioned that a body from the Lady Elgin disaster was buried near the Sobey property. Where were the Sobeyes?

A 1929 Directory of the area put the Sobeyes on Bloom Street east of the viaduct, close to the train tracks and within a half mile of the lighthouse. Census records also indicated that members of the Mowers family lived in the area. Although this area fits the criteria, there are problems. First, there is no specific evidence of "Henry" Mowers living in the area, although he may have been living with family members nearby. Secondly, and more importantly, there is a problem with the timeline. Earlier directories from 1919 and 1921 place the Sobeyes on Green Bay Road in Highland Park. These dates are clearly closer to the 1918 date of the report from the Oak Terrace student. Information found on Mr. Sobey's

military draft registration form in 1915 gives definitive proof that the Sobeyes lived on Green Bay Road. This date along with the 1919 directory date clearly bracket the student's 1918 report date. The only problem is the address given would today be near Lincoln School, miles to the south of Highwood.

Since it is possible that address numbers changed over time, a more accurate approach would be to get the property description when the Sobeyes purchased the land. A trip to the Lake County Recorder of Deeds office showed that the Sobey property was located in the Daniel Pease subdivision of Highland Park on Green Bay Road, three properties north of Michigan Avenue.



Leonora Cervac, a past president of the Highwood Historical Society, provided another clue on the gravesites' location that she had received from Alice Conway, a member of the Curley family that dates back to Highwood's beginnings. A note said that a person named Wilma Cameron had found bones in her back yard and they were from one of the victims of the Lady Elgin. Another directory search found Wilhelmina and Joseph Cameron on Michigan Avenue in Highland Park but, as in the case of the Sobey residence, the address number did not coincide with a present day address. Another trip to the Recorder of Deeds showed that the Camerons lived in the same Daniel Pease subdivision on the very last property bordering Highwood's eastern border and on the north side of Michigan Avenue. An article written by Howard Mowers, Jr., the grandson of Henry Mowers, further substantiated this general location. Howard Mowers states that there was a cemetery west of the train tracks that was used by the early settlers in the area. (Most of the bodies were thought to have been moved to the cemetery in Half Day.) He also wrote that Joseph Cameron found a skeleton thought to be from the Lady Elgin while digging the basement to his house.

If this is the location, two discrepancies still need to be addressed concerning Henry Mowers living just to the south of the gravesites and the lighthouse being directly east of the sites. A third trip to the Recorder of Deeds found that Peter Mowers, the father of Henry Mowers, had purchased the

Thank You to Our 2012-2013 Members

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**It's a New Year.
 Now's the time to renew
 your membership.**

Memberships make great gifts!

Judge Dunn Remembers Early Practice as City Attorney

By Amy Lynn Strege

Judge Wallace "Wally" B. Dunn was born prior the beginning of WW II, in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. His father had been an attorney but gave up the practice of law to run a small chain of Department Stores (Dunn Brothers and Swanee). Young Wally Dunn went to Austin High School and then went on to U of I for Undergrad, and DePaul for Law School. Coming out of school without many connections in the legal community, he set up a solo shop doing credit and collection cases. When a friend from law school, Kvistad, had to take over his father's practice, they formed a new firm in Elmwood Park, Kvistad and Dunn. One of their clients was the Village of Elmwood Park and their firm began to take in other neighboring municipalities, eventually including Highwood.

Mayor Fidel Ghini told Dunn to give up his fast-paced "Chicago" law firm and set up shop right here in Highwood. And that was exactly what he did, first in the old Viti building on the corner of Walker and Sheridan Avenue, and later on the corner of Green Bay Road and Highwood Avenue, the site of Diambri & Caravello. Diambri, Caravello and a few other well-known and respected attorneys were once part of Dunn's firm before he became a Judge.

Wally Dunn was the fearless main City Attorney through the late 1960's-1980's and saw some of the most formative years of Highwood's modern existence. One of the first "incidents" Dunn had to deal with as City Attorney was the riot that was not. This was back in 1967-68 or so. The Chief of Police called up Dunn for advice. Dunn told the Chief to keep the Sheriff's Deputies out of town, but nearby at 41 and Half Day Road. He told the Chief, "They are just looking for something to be angry at." Dunn and the Chief rode around in a squad car to monitor the situation, but never reacted, and, after about an hour and a half, everything sort of fizzled and the crowd started to disperse, because there was nobody to fight. So Dunn's psychological trick worked and saved Highwood from a riot.

The other problem Highwood always had was their relationship with Highland Park. For instance, when he was City Attorney they first started to negotiate for the repaving of Western Avenue, which was accomplished just this last year. That's over forty years of negotiation for the pavement of a single stretch of road.

Dunn admires Ghini still to this day. As he puts it, "He had a gift - wisdom or whatever you want to call it. But Fidel, when he saw an idea wasn't working, would pitch that idea and move on to the next one." Ghini's pro-business stance and knowing that Highwood was landlocked, led him to a vision of Highwood as the restaurant capitol of the North Shore. Since historically it had been the only wet spot between Evanston

and Waukegan, there was already a loyal client base. Ghini capitalized on that by requiring that if you were going to get a liquor license, you had to sell a certain amount of food. That, coupled with the lower property tax base than neighboring communities, fostered the perfect environment for restaurant operation. He wanted to change the reputation from Whiskey Junction to a destination spot for dinner with your family, and before long it worked. Nite-N-Gale moved and expanded. Froggy's came in, and slowly over time, we have the Highwood of today: a veritable Epcot Center of dining selections.

The major battle that will go down in Highwood history was the fight over of the X-rated theater. It was located where Isaac and Moishe's Deli is now and run by the same man who ran the movie theater in Highland Park. This was approximately 1975. Ghini hardly wanted Highwood to be known for X-rated movies. He wanted families to come and eat, because when they ate, they paid sales taxes. He reasoned, you didn't have to charge property taxes to your residents if you have high enough sales taxes coming in from the out-of-towners. So Ghini walks into Dunn's office and says, "I don't care what your views are, I want you to shut the theater down."

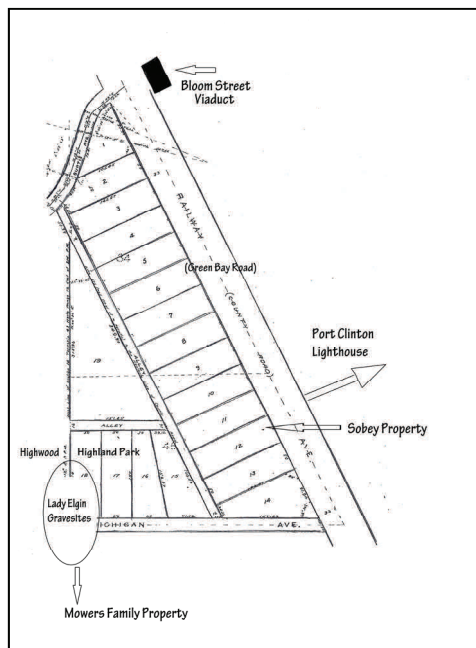
First, Dunn attacked it straight on, trying to get it to be called obscene material, which is a very high standard because it runs counter to the First Amendment. Then the City tried passing a local ordinance that was called the Highwood Censorship Ordinance, and even tried putting police officers in front to deter people, but neither of those things worked because of the same First Amendment concerns. So finally Dunn got the idea to try a public nuisance-based civil lawsuit. After the Judge saw the particular movie in question, he had no problem ruling it to be a public nuisance. The only problem was that it was an injunction only on the playing of that particular movie. Therefore the City was going to have to repeat this process time and time again in order to really prevent the ongoing operation of the theater. Finally, the owner of the theater voluntarily stopped playing the movies altogether because he was simply sick of fighting, and paying his attorneys, the Collins brothers, over and over again.

After years of being City Attorney, Dunn was appointed a Judge in May of 1986. He quickly learned that there was no true resource to guide a Judge in presiding over a trial, so he not only learned on the go, he also wrote a book about it. After many successful years in the judiciary, he has now retired and returned to his favorite stomping grounds-Highwood. Ironically, he is back in the same location he started all those years ago, but this time he's in the new Viti Building instead of the old one. He is doing mostly mediation and consulting, but if you have a legal problem and he's not willing or able to help you, he definitely will know somebody who can.

Amy Lynn Strege is Vice President of the Highwood Historical Society and an attorney with the firm of Finn & Finn, Ltd. in Waukegan. The unabridged article can be viewed on our website: www.highwoodhistoricalsociety.com.

The Lady Elgin Graves, cont.

William Steele property, which was directly to the south of the burial area, in 1859. This information may have been gathered too late to be included in the 1861 plat map. Was the lighthouse directly east of the burial site? If it were true, the lighthouse would be considerably south of its actual location. The reporter may have made the mistake that many of us make when orienting ourselves with Green Bay Road and the railroad tracks. Green Bay Road and the railroad tracks do not run south to north in Highwood but from southeast to northwest. If the reporter oriented himself incorrectly with the train tracks, thinking they run north and south, in his eyes the Port Clinton lighthouse would be directly east of the gravesites. The gravesites may have stretched into what would become Highwood, but an actual body was found in Highland Park on a property bordering Highwood.



Mystery solved! We were able to find information spanning more than 150 years from eyewitnesses, a grade school student's report, written documents, and anecdotes both old and more recent in our attempt to locate the sites. The above map should be helpful.

I hope you enjoyed the series of articles on the search for the Lady Elgin gravesites. If you like our newsletters and support the research and documentation of Highwood's history, we need your help. If you are not a member of the Highwood Historical Society, please join. If you are a member, please renew your membership today.

Highwood Key Chains For Sale

Be among the first to receive this unique key chain and help support Highwood Historical Society programs and exhibits.



(Inset)

Cost is \$5.00 each

Pick up in person at 122 North Avenue
or

please include an additional charge of
\$2.50 for shipping & handling.

Send in your order soon and make checks payable to:
Highwood Historical Society.
P.O. Box 132
Highwood, IL 60040

Get Planting!



Our **Annual Terrific Tomato Contest** is right around the corner. The competition will again be held during the City's GarlicFest on **August 14th**, at the Farmer's Market in Everts Park. Garlic, tomatoes, hmmm . . . bruschetta anyone?

The real purpose of our Tomato Contest is to learn more about the homes and gardens of our residents. Last year's reigning champ, Tony Vole, may have had a little divine intervention, as his home was once the residence of Rev. Ehrens. Your gardens have a story too, and we at the Historical Society would love to hear them.

If you haven't already watched our Great Gardens of Highwood video in the Events section of our website please check it out. You will be amazed by these secret treasures.

Participation in the Terrific Tomato Contest is EASY—Just email highwoodhistory@gmail.com with your name, address, and telephone number, or call 847-682-9039 to register.

HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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June 1, 2013–May 31, 2014

Name: _____

_____ New Member _____ Renewal

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Annual Membership Categories (please check one)

_____ Family \$15.00

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Questions?

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**Thank you for your
continued support!**