

HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAKING HISTORY EVERYDAY

Summer 2013

Volume 9, Issue 3

113 ATTEND MAY 15TH ANNUAL MEETING

What a huge turnout of members and friends
of the Highwood Historical Society!

Participants heard a great program on the "Early Years of Fort Sheridan and It's Influence on Highwood" presented by Julia Johnas from Highland Park Library. They enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner catered by the Highwood Bocce Club and saw interesting exhibits depicting the early days in Highwood and Fort Sheridan. Society Member Steve Draska shared his collection of Fort memorabilia including cannon balls, horseshoes, and yellow bricks he has retrieved while deep-diving off the shore of Lake Michigan.

The following individuals were elected for two year terms to the HHS Board of Directors: Amy Strege, Vice President; Barbara Sherony Marianetti, Secretary; Board Members: Leonora Cervac, Aldo Crovetti, Angela Crovetti, Sheila Dean, Shirley Fitzgerald, Adrienne Inman, Tom Scopelliti, and Carol Ugolini.

Our organization now has its complete 15 member board and is working actively to promote the collection of historical materials and develop fundraising activities to support its mission.

Partnering with HP Nursing and Rehab Public Invited to Help Share Their Stories

Highwood is a unique, family-oriented community. Help us by preserving the memories of your family, your organizations, and the events that make Highwood so special.

The Highwood Historical Society is cooperating with the City of Highwood and the Highland Park Rehab Center to promote the collection of information from our growing and knowledgeable senior population. Interviews will be conducted with individuals, families or groups to share their stories. These interviews will be held on Thursdays between 1 and 4 p.m. if possible, or special arrangements can be made upon request.

This is an excellent opportunity to reminisce and help the Highwood Historical Society chronicle Highwood's history and help us identify unknown photos that are in our collection of materials. Contact the HHS office at 847-682-9039 or HP Rehab Center – 847-432-9142 to set up an appointment. Help us learn more about you and your memories of growing up in Highwood.

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2013 New Board Members

Sheila Dean

Shirley Fitzgerald

Adrienne Inman

Thank You
for
Renewing Your
Membership!

6th Annual Terrific Tomato Contest

\$100 First Prize—Sponsored by Charles J. Fiore, Fiore Nursery & Landscape Supply

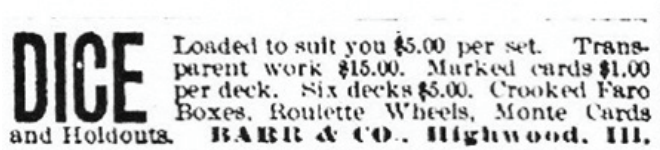


The summer season is underway and we are thrilled to hold our 6th Annual Terrific Tomato Contest on **Wednesday, August 14th**, at the Farmer's Market during GarlicFest. The contest is open to ALL RESIDENTS of Highwood and ALL MEMBERS of the Historical Society. Rules are the same. Simply leave your tomato on the vine and we will visit you on Tuesday, August 13th to collect it. You remove it and we bag it. It's that easy. Think your tomato is too small? . . . we have a category for that. Think it's too green? No problem, you might win that one too.

The purpose of the Terrific Tomato Contest is to celebrate the art of gardening in Highwood and to add information to the ongoing Highwood Homes Project. We do hope you will share a history of your garden, your home, and yourself! Sign-up in person at the Farmer's Market, via email, highwoodhistory@gmail.com, or call 847-682-9039.

Way Back When . . .

We recently received an inquiry requesting information about an early Highwood business. Barr & Co. was located in Highwood in 1902-1903 and appeared to have moved to Chicago by July of 1903. Barr & Co.'s specialty was the manufacturing of loaded dice & marked cards.



What? Gambling in Highwood's saloons may have been rigged? Impossible. If you have any information about Barr & Co. please give us a call, 847-682-9039.

FYI: The cost of a liquor license in 1903 was \$750.00, and trustees enforced a law that forbade the sale of liquor to "lunatics, idiots, insane persons, minors, and habitual drunkards."* Today's license is \$10,000.00 for the first year, and \$3160.00 each renewing year. Lunatics and idiots are optional.

**Marvyn Wittelle, 28 Miles North*

I'm a Highwood Girl by Lucia Lucente Hartman

My name is Lucia Hartman and I was Lucia Lucente. I lived at 28 Webster Avenue when I was born in 1924 and loved every minute of it. I lived at 226 Burchell from 1951 until 2009 and it was the most beautiful part of my life living there. My husband and my 5 children always had something going. It was a great family life. The people on my street (and all over Highwood) were the best. All were friends and everyone knew everyone.

Back in the 1800's my Gram, Susan Nustra, came from Italy with her family to Pennsylvania, then to Highwood in the early 1900's. We were four generations in Highwood.

We were all St. James parishioners. My mom, me, and my daughters, Susan, Lucia, and Toni were all married there and all loved Highwood. My other two children never married—they were Kathy and Adam. I had all my children at St. James School and Catholic High Schools. Adam was an altar boy at St. James and went to Carmel High School.

My husband was from Wisconsin and was stationed at Ft. Sheridan. He left in 1941 on Dec. 9th and spent 3 1/2 years overseas. He came back in 1945 and never left Highwood. There is no way I could say I ever wanted to leave Highwood. As far as I am concerned it is the greatest place on earth to grow up in.



Volunteers needed! Have a little spare time? We need help sorting, identifying & cataloguing old photos & documents. Call 847-682-9039.

Norando (Tosco) Nannini's "Silly Game"

by Cookie LoPresti

On a cold February day in 1931 at the age of 15, Norando (Tosco) Nannini with his mother, Paulina and his brother and two sisters arrived in America from Italy on the ship *Roma*. His father Peter, who preceded his family five years earlier, became a U.S citizen and sent for his family. They moved into a new house on North Avenue in Highwood which is still owned by the family.

Tosco started to caddie when he was about 20 years old because there were no jobs available. He caddied at Exmoor Country Club and Lake Shore Country Club. His first impression of golf, "What a silly game, grown men hitting a little white ball with a stick then chasing the ball and doing it again".

A member gave him three golf clubs and told him he should play. Well, needless to say, once he started playing he loved the game. What a challenge! He played as often as possible. He started entering some amateur golf tournaments. Here are just a few of them:

- 1944 Second place in the Douglas Chicago Tournament.
- 1945 First place in the Douglas Chicago Tournament.
- 1948 First place in the Tribune 12th All-Star Public Links Tournament.
- 1949 First place in the Illinois State Amateur Tournament.
- 1949 First place Sunset Valley Golf Tournament.
- 1961 First place in the Miller High Life invitational Tournament at Glen Flora Country Club.
- 1962 First place Chick Evans Amateur Tourney.
- 1975 Firsts place Northern Illinois Amateur Autumn Golf Classic Winner of Scratch Division.

At 82 years young he entered the Illinois State Amateur Tournament. He received more press than the person in 1st place. Why? Because he was shooting lower than his age! Over his lifetime, he had 13 documented holes-in-one. His last was in Tucson, Arizona when he was in his 70's. He played golf until he was 91 until he started having problems with his balance. He's now passed, but I am sure up in heaven there is a golf course with Tosco swinging a golf club and smiling.

You can read more about caddy life in Edward Piacentini Bernardi's entertaining book, *Of Long Ago Caddies . . . And Exmoor Kings, Of Exmoor Places and Forgotten Things*, available for sale at the Highwood Historical Society, call 847-682-9039 for your copy today, \$15.00 each.

FYI: The PGA BMW Championship comes to Conway Farms Golf Club in Lake Forest, September 12-15th, 2013. Major players will be descending upon the area to play that "silly game" and compete for a share of the \$8 million dollar purse!

Spotlight: Opera in Highwood

by Cynthia Krol

There was a time in our little city when one could walk the streets and hear music. Emanating from open windows on lazy summer nights, soft notes floated in the air. People played the piano, the accordion, and the violin. People sang, and more importantly, people listened.

If you were fortunate, you had a radio. If you were more fortunate, your phonograph spun records. But the *most* fortunate were the private audiences of the rooming houses of Highwood. For these were the lucky ones who heard the opera greats in person, including Edward Johnson, Elisabeth Rethberg, Giovanni Martinelli, Giacomo Rimini, Claudia Muzio, Rosa Raisa and Tito Schipa.

This was the late 1920's. Summers at Ravinia Park were warm, melodic, and rocking. . . Ravinia was THE opera powerhouse. Although it was originally created as an amusement park, complete with ball field, casino, dining rooms and dance floors, by 1911 it reopened as a summer venue for classical music and in 1912, opera was added. Ravinia earned a reputation as "America's summer opera capital" and during its "Golden Age" (from 1919 to 1931), Ravinia audiences heard the greatest opera voices in the world. And so did the people of Highwood.

Home Away from Home

At that time, there were few restaurants in the area to attract the gourmet European demands of these artists. The stars traveled the globe and Highwood afforded them a little taste of home. They could speak their native language and eat familiar foods. They boarded in homes and ate at the tables of many Highwood families: Fabbri, Gibertini, Plgati, Scornavacco, and Turelli. The Ciro Gibertini home on Funston Avenue still stands and was a favorite of the Ravinia artists.



Giovanni Martinelli

Mrs. Pia Gibertini was interviewed in 1964 and described her hosting duties:



"Elisabeth Rethberg used to come at noon, and most of them would come about that time because they wouldn't sing until 8 o'clock. . . They could order in advance, but most of them liked everything, as long as it was home-made." Her mural-walled dining room served delicate antipasto, ravioli, tortellini, chicken cacciatore, zabaglione and pastries and she charged a dollar per person. "I didn't have the nerve to charge any more." After dinner, they gathered around the piano for casual nightly "open mic" sessions that lasted deep into the night. Eventually Pia and her husband would have to "shushhh" the performers and send them to their rooms. "O, I hated to break it up, they enjoyed it so much. But I was afraid we'd wake the neighbors."

By the late 1930's, grand opera at Ravinia was fading and the great artists never returned to Highwood houses. However Highwood's passion for opera lived on. In 1932, the Cuore Arte Club was founded. With its main focus on the arts, twenty-five original members organized the club when they performed an Italian play, directed by an opera chorister named Tomaso Nascimbene.

Gloria Linari Lind Takes the Stage

Gloria Linari fell in love with opera after visiting the Gibertini home as a young girl. She has a room in her home dedicated to her singing career complete with photo stills, costumes, and playbills that hang on the walls, detailing her rise to international opera fame. What a privilege it was to hear her fascinating story.

She began her training with the husband and wife team of Giacomo Rimini and Rosa Raisa. Rosa was born as Raisa Burchstein in Poland and later moved to Italy. In 1926, she originated the role of Turandot at La Scala in Milan and sang

in all of the major opera houses around the world. In 1938, Giacomo and Rosa retired and opened a voice/opera school in Chicago.

It was there that Gloria spent hours training her voice and honing her acting skills with her dear mentor, Rosa. Gloria was known for her dramatic acting skills as well as her vocal range. She credits this accomplishment to Giacomo and Raisa's teaching style. They would alternate weeks teaching, and Gloria would actually learn two separate dramatic interpretations for each aria she practiced.

Her dramatic skills helped her land a contract with Metro Studios in Hollywood at the age of nineteen. Gloria Linari then became "Gloria Lind". However, she was not happy with the studio practice of "dubbing" vocal performances and was quickly disappointed with the Hollywood scene. She did meet Mario Lanza and truly believed that he would have been very successful if he had pursued a career in opera. In 1949, she opened as the ingénue lead in the Broadway revival of Victor Herbert's "Sweethearts".

After a successful nine-month run, she returned home to Highwood and her father purchased a dress shop for her at the site of the old Post Office on Highwood Avenue. She happened to attend a performance of the New York Metropolitan Opera touring in Chicago with a travelling dress salesman and made the casual remark that she could sing better, offering a little "Un Bel Di" from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. Little did she know that this man's neighbor in New Jersey was actually the director of the New York City Center Light Opera Company. After testing more than 200 sopranos, they hired her on the spot.

Gloria spent the next three seasons in New York until Carole Fox lured her to the Lyric Opera. Carole was looking for American stars and Gloria was happy to return to Chicago. She spent the next three seasons with Lyric, the highlight of which was performing with the legendary Maria Callas in Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma* in 1954. Gloria matched the diva note for note, strike for strike. It is said in opera circles that that production of *Norma* was one of the greatest ever assembled. Busloads from Highwood attended and proudly agreed.

She then returned to New York, this time with the Metropolitan Opera House. There she amassed a repertoire of 25 major roles and approximately 200 minor roles. She was known for her amazing memory, being keenly aware of "all

phrasing for all parts." During her time at the Met, Gloria performed in Eastern Europe, behind the Iron Curtain in Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. After nine seasons, she returned to Chicago and performed with the Old Town Players, singing with her husband John, a talented baritone in his own right.

In 1965, Gloria was on a mission to come full circle and bring her passion for opera back home to Highwood. She



started the "Little Opera House in Highwood" and modeled it after small opera houses she had visited in Italy & Eastern Europe. Seeing the civic pride these repertory houses instilled and the opportunities they offered young artists, Gloria tirelessly pursued donors and wrangled support for her new venture. The "Little Opera House in Highwood" eventually closed after seven seasons. It was located in the old movie theater on Waukegan Avenue, currently the site of Isaac & Moishe's Deli.

Over the years, Gloria has continued to give special performances and mentor students. She and her husband own Carefree Pool, Inc., a successful, high-end pool design business in Highland Park. They look forward to visits from their daughter MaryKay and their grandchildren who

reside in Ohio. Gloria feels that her finest role was *Madame Butterfly*, however her husband insists it was *Tosca*. Definitely an argument with two winners.

Pavarotti Visits Highwood

On November 30, 1980, the Modenese Society became the "toast of the North Shore" when it hosted a special evening for the international superstar, Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti. A native of Modena, Pavarotti was personally invited by his childhood friend, Cesarina Ballerini of Highland Park. The event was planned to coincide with Pavarotti's schedule at Chicago's Lyric Opera where he was performing in Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera". Touring America, he was constantly invited to local chapters of Italian-American Clubs for various dinners and galas. HOWEVER, this one was different. Once the singing began and the wine was poured, the festivities really kicked-off. Although he was forbidden to sing any opera classics due to contract restrictions, no one will ever forget how he rose for a few Modenese *canzone* and proudly sang with his compatriots. Rumor has it Pavarotti had such a good time that he was unable to perform the next night at the Lyric Opera, and thus began his reputation for last minute cancellations.

LIVE at the Del Rio

For the last forty years, in addition to its fine Modenese cuisine, Highwood's Del Rio Restaurant has offered popular Opera dinner performances for the weeks just prior to the Christmas Holidays. Owner Bill Pigati has a special love of opera, having worked for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for many years and briefly for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. When he first took over the restaurant from his parents and grandparents, he would bring in talented young singers on Friday nights, surprising and delighting his patrons. However word spread and its popularity overwhelmed the restaurant. Even before his grandmother Linda purchased the Del Rio, eighty plus years ago, she served Ravinia's stars in her very own rooming house on Highwood Avenue.

With its combination of great talent having performed worldwide in such venues as Broadway, The Met, La Scala and Paris plus younger voices on their way to high level careers, Del Rio's Opera has become a tradition for North Shore families. Grandparents now bring their grandchildren after having been brought by their grandparents when they were kids. This year, the eagerly anticipated Holiday performances begin on the 6th and run until the 23rd of December.

Highwood Today

Highwood now houses the Young Midwest Artists on Lyster Road. Founded in 1993, the MYA is considered the premiere music ensemble program in the nation, offering classes in orchestra, chamber music, jazz, wind symphony and choral ensembles. Not bad for our little city.

Excerpts from "Top Hat Tortellini, and Big Ideas", Robert Cross, *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, June 6, 1965.

Singing with "Il Maestro"

by Josephine Campagni

It was many years ago (1980) but I will remember the night Pavarotti came to Highwood and called me up to the stage to sing like it was yesterday. I remember telling him, that I too was born in Modena and I loved to sing. He handed me the microphone and I started singing "O Sole Mio" and then "Blue Spanish Eyes". When I finished he put his arm around me and told me I had a natural gift and to keep it up. And I



have. Believe me, it was quite an experience and I am so happy that my parents were there to share it with me. It was an honor to have met him and I will never forget that magical evening.

OPERA RAFFLE



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**Thank you for your
continued support!**

Donations have been pouring in . . .

- Stained Glass Window from the Ft. Sheridan Chapel and framed photo of Building No. 47- Mess Hall, donated by Steve Draska.
- FANTASTIC posters from past Highwood Days, donated by the Chamber of Commerce.
- Highwood Historian, Marvyn Wittelle's personal collection of photos and records used to write her book, 28 Miles North, donated by Lenny Innocenzi. See photo below, Waukegan Avenue looking East.
- Two toy Texaco Oil trucks from the Highwood Texaco Station on Highwood & Green Bay Road, c. 1959-60, donated by Jim & Susan Lencioni.



**HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL
SOCIETY HOURS**

TUES. & THURS.
10:00–2:00PM

WED. NIGHTS
6:00–9:00PM

SUNDAYS
12:00–4:00PM

OR BY APPOINTMENT
CALL 847-682-9039