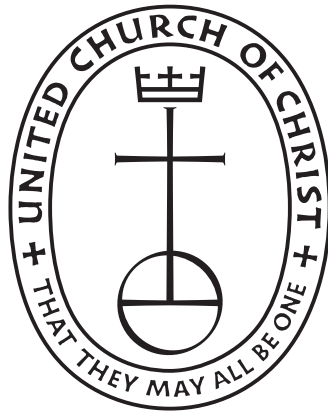


*“Never place a period  
where God has placed a comma”*

*- Gracie Allen*



**God is still speaking,**



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**Northwest Chicago  
Historical Society**  
*Your Neighborhood Historical Society*

Newsletter July 2014

Number XX

**The Great Memorial Day Race of 1897 • The Palm Sunday Tornado of 1920**

This year, we continue our messaging on the importance of preserving neighborhood photos and historic mementos. Every year, hundreds of old pictures are disposed, lost, or otherwise destroyed. Keep these treasures safe by digitizing photos and keeping other items in a cool, dry, safe location. Most importantly, share your items with family and friends who may be able to help you store or preserve them. Duplicate copies of photographs are necessary to ensure they are preserved for future generations. If you aren't certain how this is accomplished, reach out to others to understand how they can be placed on a digital device or in the "cloud."

Relatively frequently, we are contacted about specific historic information that may be difficult (if not impossible) to obtain. Often, people will inquire about photos of their parents' or grandparents' home or place of business. Sadly, we cannot help. We do wonder what happened to their family's photos and treasures: flood? tornado? landfill? When moving or spring cleaning, sometimes people throw out historic items as they think they have no monetary value. While this may be true, the loss of these items denies future generations of a piece of their history in Chicago and an understanding of their place in the world. Once they are gone, they are gone forever.

Are we not less enlightened if our historic neighborhood stories disappear? When one of us passes on, not only do we lose a neighbor and a friend, but we lose a tremendous wealth of historic local lore. All of us need to act upon this and record what we can, so as not to lose any more of our precious understanding of the past.

The Northwest Chicago Historical Society is a not-for-profit organization with a volunteer Board and staff. The leaders and members of our organization would be grateful if you would collect, preserve, and protect photos and stories. If you would like to volunteer some time, please contact us (see overleaf).

If you don't have the time to volunteer, understand that any donation you choose to make would be much appreciated. Our expenses include our website, printing of the newsletter, and other operational expenses. If you would like to be an official member of the Northwest Chicago Historical Society (\$15.00 a calendar year or \$10.00 for 65 years and older), this can be accomplished on our website or by mailing a check to our P. O. Box. No donation or assistance is ever too small.

We hope to hear from you or see you in the Fall! – Frank Suerth

**Mission Statement:**

As the Northwest Chicago Historical Society, our mission is to educate others about the history of the Northwest neighborhoods of Chicago. We will accomplish this through discussion at meetings, public tours and events, and dissemination of historical documents and photos through publications. Additionally, we desire to collaborate with others in the community to continue to maintain and preserve the history of our collective neighborhoods. By linking the past with the present and the future, we will provide awareness and create appreciation for our place in Chicago's and Illinois' history.

## The Northwest Chicago Historical Society

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**Membership:**

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Website: [nwchicagohistory.org](http://nwchicagohistory.org)

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# Letters

*Letters may have been edited for clarity and space*

My name is Natalie Gacek and I am the Director of the St. Charles Heritage Center, a small local history museum about an hour west of Chicago. Earlier today a long time member stopped by with a bag of vintage postcards from across the country. The cards had been discovered in her great-grandparents home many years ago. About 10+ years ago her mother (who has since passed away) tried to mail the postcards to museums in the communities where the cards were from but as she didn't have addresses (the envelopes were just addressed to Museum, Town, State, Zip) they were all returned. One of the postcards in the pile is of a scene of Humboldt Park in Chicago. There is no date or writing on the card but it shows two people in a row boat on a lagoon.

Would you be interested in receiving this card as a donation for your archive or collection?

My best,

Natalie Gacek, Director  
St. Charles Heritage Center  
215 E Main Street  
St. Charles, IL 60174

*Thank you for thinking of us. - NWCHS*



Chicago Jll.

Scene from Humboldt Park.

BERNH. SEBASTIAN, PUBLISHER, CHICAGO, JLL. MADE IN GERMANY NO 27.



# Letters

Recently my wife and I and a good friend purchased the Al. Ringling Mansion in Baraboo, WI and discovered that in 1905-06 Al & Lou Ringling hired the Mandel Bros of Chicago to do the interior design and decorating for the Mansion. We were interested in finding out if the Mandel files wound up somewhere when the store closed in the 70's and could they be accessed to do research on the Mansion. We are hoping that there is a file on the mansion possibly containing interior photos when the house interior was completed in 1906. Any information you could pass along would be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance.

Best regards,  
Joe Colossa - Proprietor  
Al. Ringling Mansion  
Baraboo, WI

*How great it is that you, Carmen and Don are restoring this historic mansion to its former glory! The Northwest Chicago Historical Society applauds you for your efforts.*


*It is very unlikely that 100-year-old Mandel Bros. files were saved and stored in some warehouse. But if they were saved, they would be most likely housed at the Newberry Library in Chicago or the Chicago History Museum. Good Luck in your search and the restorations. - NWCHS*

I am a conservator part of a team currently working on the Horten 9 V3 (German WWII) aircraft that was once, as we suspect, restored at Orchard Place/Douglas Field before its transfer to the Smithsonian. I was wondering if, in your archives, you may have images of this aircraft or documents related to restoration (paints, metals used)?

Thank you!


Anna Weiss  
Conservation Fellow  
National Air and Space Museum  
Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center  
14390 Air and Space Museum Pkwy. MRC 326  
Chantilly, VA 20151

*Sorry but we do not have anything on this plane but maybe one of our O'hare Airport history buffs will come with something after reading your request. - NWCHS*



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# Letters

I grew up at Harlem and Higgins. My brother and I attended Oriole Park School.

Our neighborhood abutted the Harris Farm at Harlem and Higgins. We befriended the Harris children and the farm became our childhood playground. There was another farm directly across Higgins from the Harris place. When the Kennedy Expressway was built that farm was lost.

The Harris farm stayed intact until the late 60s at which time it was sold. The wonderful old house, barns and out buildings were torn down to make way for the construction of a rather nasty multi-structure condominium complex that remains on the site today.

At one point in time as a child the Harris boy took me into one of the out buildings on the sly to "show me a family secret" as he put it. Inside the smallish red building was an intact speakeasy complete with a bar, tables and chairs, a minuscule dance floor and stage and slot machines. There were glasses on the bar and tables and bottles of liquor still on the shelves behind the bar. It was like walking back in time.

After being shown the speakeasy I realized, even at my young age, that the farm was a very isolated place during prohibition. It must have taken hours to get to the speakeasy from downtown. It more than likely served the surrounding farm folks more so than city people.

To make my long story short, are there any historic photos of the Harris farm in your archives that you could share with me? I still have vivid memories of the place and how wonderful it was that I had total access to it as a child.

One day I came home for a visit from college and found that the farm was gone and realized that an important piece of my childhood went with it.

Andrew Loumbas  
San Francisco, CA

*Great story! Unfortunately we have no photos of this farm.*

*There was a John Harris purchasing some property in 1846 at the northwest corner of Harlem & Lawrence in Harwood Heights. His property would go from Lawrence Avenue north to Foster. Maybe some of his descendants later purchased property north of this farmland. We do have a 1938 Aerial photo and some 1940 Census information on the Harris clan that lived on Harlem and Higgins. The Phillips Farm was across the street on the northwest corner of Higgins and Harlem Avenues (7226 Higgins) and is now part of the Kennedy Expressway. - NWCHS*

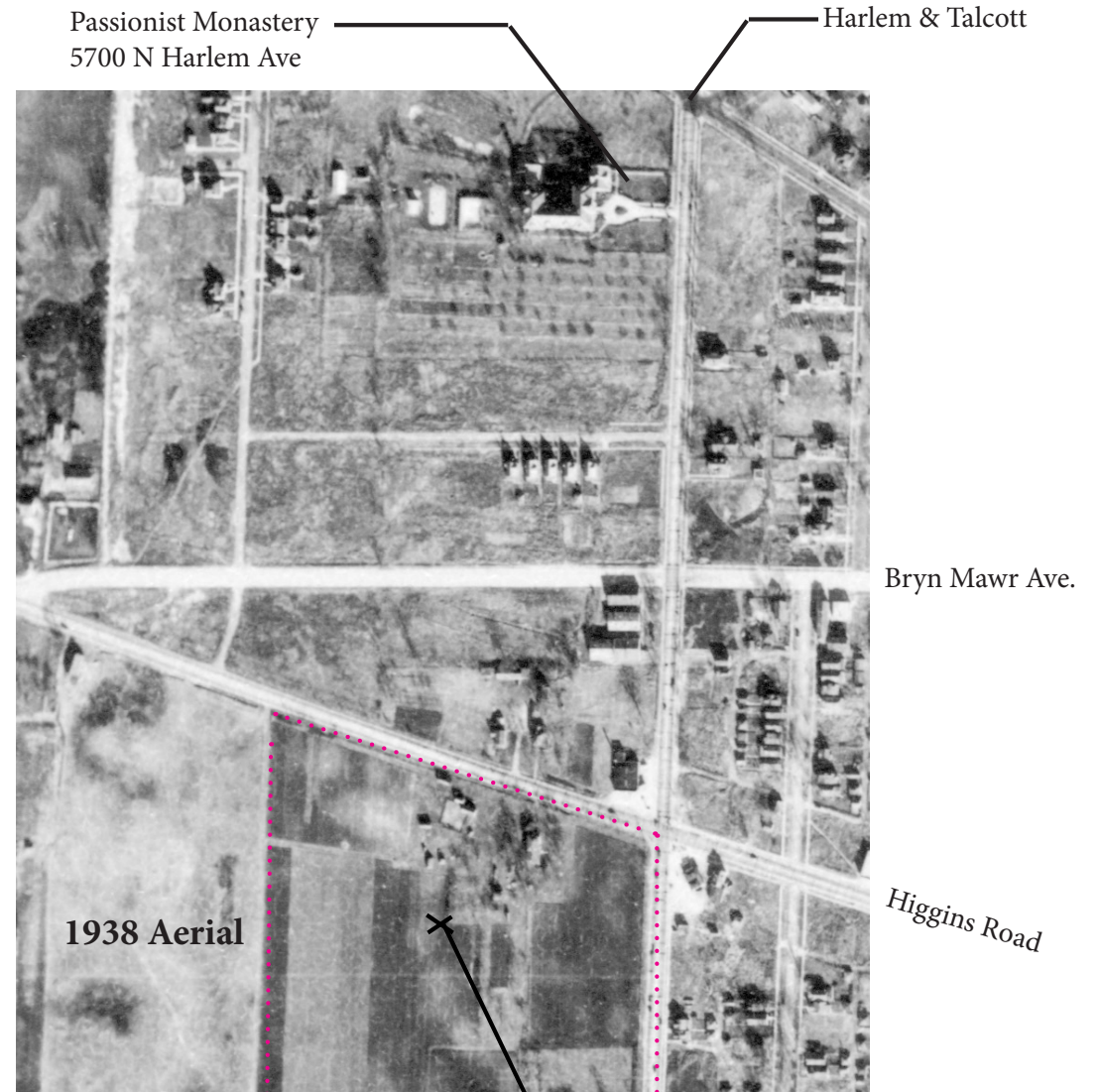
6.

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Harris Farm at Harlem and Higgins

## 1940 Census

### 7227 Higgins Rd.

William H. Harris – age 67 – Farmer  
Albert E. Harris – age 65 – Brother - Farmer

### 5400 Harlem Ave.

Edwin V. Harris – age 37 – House Painter  
Rudy F. Harris – age 30 – Wife  
Edwin Harris Jr. - age 8 – son

### 5308 Harlem Ave.

Harold S. Harris – age 33 – House Painter  
Jeannette Harris – age 30 – Wife  
Harold S. Harris Jr. – 4 - Son

7.



# Letters

I truly enjoyed your story on the Suerth Funeral Home in Edison Park. Keep up that fine research.

PS: I am searching for old photos from Little Italy and the Pilsen Neighborhood. If any readers have such material, please let me know at Education662@yahoo.com

Peter N. Pero  
Chicago Historian

---

I'm starting research on my house and when I went to the recorder of deeds and looked at the deed log books, the first name in there was Hy E. Greenebaum, 1872. There are a number of documents with his name or Moses Greenbaum or Rosine Greenebaum as grantor or grantee until 1886. Then, a number of documents for John C. Frank and wife, who appeared to have lived there until the 1920s when they moved to Oak Park. (I found a second grade textbook belonging to Elmer, their son, in my walls).

I flipped the pages and looked at the properties on either side, and Hy Greenebaum was the first name for those properties, too.

Reading that Henry Greenbaum both built and rented (and sold) land/buildings in the area during this period, but was also one of the officers on the Humbolt Park Residential Association (which is also an early grantor/grantee of my property) which sold land...is there any way to tell if my house was one of the ones he built?

Just curious.

Thanks,  
Marcy - Humbolt Park

*From our research it looks like Greenebaum & Sons were into Banking and Real Estate. You may want to check the building permits to see if his name appears on them. - NWCHS*

---

My co-worker Mike Vicari pointed me in your direction. I'm a producer for a Chicago Tonight segment in which Geoffrey Baer answers viewer questions about Chicago history, and this coming Wednesday we'll be doing a piece on Thunder Mountain, the short-lived ski resort at Diversey and Narragansett. I'm wondering if you happen to have any photos or memorabilia in your files from Thunder Mountain. If you do, and we could use it in our segment, would you please contact me?

Many thanks either way!

Erica Gunderson

WTTW/WFMT  
5400 N. St. Louis Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60625

*It was located in the old brickyard behind the Coca Cola bottling plant on Fullerton, but we do not have any photos. There were some photos taken by the Chicago Tribune. See Chicago Tribune December 29, 1967 - Chicago Gets 1st Resort in City Limits: Thunder Mountain to Open Next Friday. - NWCHS*

8.

My name is Max Groot from The Netherlands. I am an airport planner and airport historian.

I am currently developing a private, non-commercial website about the development history of the world's great airports called [www.airporthistory.org](http://www.airporthistory.org), to be launched later this year.

Of course O'Hare will be prominently featured on the site. The reason I wrote you is the following: I am looking for historic, mainly aerial images from the early days of Orchard Field until present day. Unlike other airport authorities, the Chicago Department of Aviation has not been very helpful.

I found your site when browsing the Internet and found some images of Orchard Field/O'Hare. Do you maybe have larger versions of these images available that I could use for the site?

And do you perhaps know any persons or organizations that could help me obtain more images?

In return for your assistance I would be very happy to promote your site on [www.airporthistory.org](http://www.airporthistory.org).

I am looking forward to your reply!

Best regards,

Max Groot - Netherlands

## Thank You

### Fischman Liquors and Tavern

For letting the Northwest Chicago Historical Society hold one of our meetings at the Fischman Tavern.

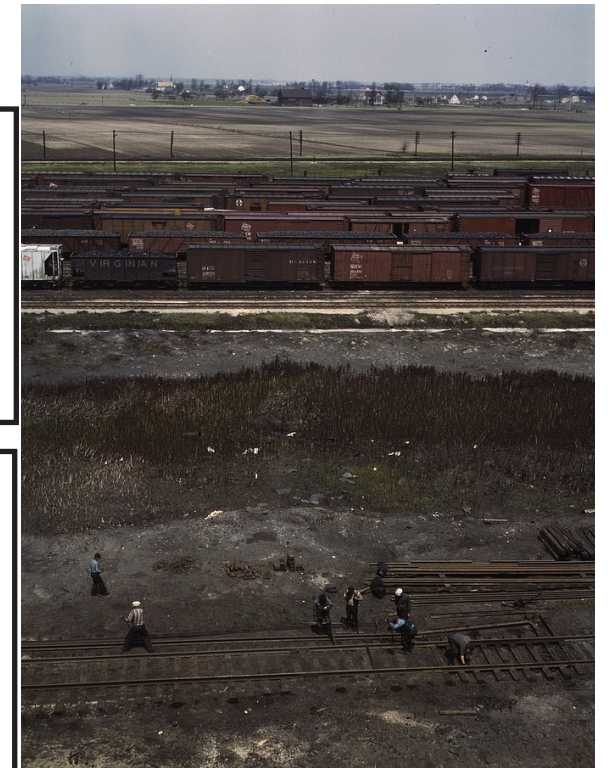


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**Looking north from Irving Park Road to what will become O'Hare Field**

9.

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# Letters

Going thru my grandparents' old photos, I came across one with a picture of Vice President Johnson giving a speech. My grandmother had written on the back: May 1963, Humboldt Park.

Can you tell me what speech he delivered? A newspaper clipping highlighting the event, anything?

I would be willing to send you a copy if you so desire. Thank you.

Juli Brace - Covington, KY



Above is the photo sent to NWCHS by Juli Brice. On May 5, 1963, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered a speech in Humboldt Park, near the Kosciuszko monument (the monument has since been moved to Northerly Island.) The Vice President, along with the Second Lady, Lady Bird, stopped in Chicago to celebrate the anniversary of Polish constitution of 1791. Over 100,000 people listened to speeches by Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Governor Otto Kerner, and Charles Rozmarek, president of the Polish Alliance. After the Vice President placed a wreath at the foot of the Kosciuszko monument, he called for more trade with Poland. Additionally, he encouraged the expansion of democracy and an continued pressure on the Communists. His speech was well received by the crowd of Polish Americans.



# The Great Memorial Day Race of 1897

By Frank Suerth

Long before the Indianapolis 500-Mile Race, there was a long bicycle race that was held on Memorial Day. This was an annual race first started in 1886 and was held for many years afterwards. The race started in Wheeling, Illinois and ended in Chicago by way of Milwaukee Avenue.

Milwaukee Avenue is not the Milwaukee Avenue that one knows of today but a dirt road with ruts and other obstacles. Just 1/2 mile from the start of the race, riders had to "narrow down" for the bridge over the creek flowing into the Des Plaines River. Riders unable to "narrow down" due to the crowded participants on the bridge made a wet detour.

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A special train to Wheeling transported most of the contestants with their bicycles. Many riders had a breakfast of eggs and beefsteak at the start of the race in Wheeling and beefsteak sandwiches were sold for 10¢ for the riders to take on their trip.

As the years passed, the riders and spectators that lined the roads grew, therefore in 1897 handicaps were given, age and ability were taken into account. That year also saw two bicycle organizations hold two races the same day both starting from Wheeling, Illinois. The higher the handicap the earlier the starting time, thus staggering the starting times for both races.

These two clubs, the Associated Cycling Clubs and the newly formed Cook County Cyclist Association were made up of many small bike clubs throughout the area. The smaller clubs joined one of these organizations so their members could compete in these large races. The Associated Cycling Clubs only allowed membership of clubs with members over 100, whereas the newly formed Cook County Cyclist saw the need to let in smaller clubs and single riders into their events.

Starting at 11:00 AM, the course for the road race for the Associated Cycling Clubs would start at the Wisconsin Central Station, one mile west of the Wheeling Town Hall, east to Milwaukee Avenue, then south down Milwaukee through Niles, Jefferson Park and Logan Square, south from there to Palmer Square, east to Humboldt Park, through the park, south and west on Central Park west, to Garfield Park, through the park to Madison Avenue and finishing at Jackson Blvd in Garfield Park, a distance of almost 25 miles.

Starting at 10:00 AM, the course for the road race of the Cook County Cyclists Association started at the same point and followed the same course until the intersection of Milwaukee and Elston Avenues, Elston Avenue south to Henderson, east to the fence of Electric Park, where the race finished, a distance of nearly 18 miles. Over 600 bicyclists had been entered in both races with a piano as first prize in both races.

All riders and bikes displayed numbers, with spotters placed along the course to insure no one had the opportunity to join the procession along the road. And since the course is almost straightaway there is no chance cut and no incentive to leave or deviate in any way from the route laid down by the rules. The Western Union had a bulletin service to report the progress of the race to keep spectators informed.

Many cyclists had a difficult time near Jefferson Park because portions of the road had been repaired with coarse gravel and in one place a mile north, there was a path only two feet wide fit for cycling. Cyclists needed to travel single file through this section. Many racers displayed torn numbers and tattered clothing with bruised noses; these were the ones that did not drop out of the race because of their injuries.

Newly elected mayor of Chicago, Carter Harrison Jr. donning a bicycle suit, was first refused admission to the entrance of the grand stand by a policeman who at first did not recognize him.

The first cyclist to past the finish line in Garfield Park was 51-year-old, 150 pound, W. D. Smedley of the Calumet Club # 497. He had a 15-minute handicap at the start of the race and never gave it up throughout the course. However, he was exhausted when he crossed the tape and showed the effects of his hard ride.

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**Bicyclists race down Milwaukee Avenue just north of Lawrence during the Memorial Day Road Race of 1897. Spectators line the street while others gather at a viewing stand in front of the Borman Shoe store. (Borman Shoes at 4806 N. Milwaukee Avenue opened in 1887)**



# The Palm Sunday Tornado of 1920

By Frank Suerth

The Northwest side of Chicago has been mostly free from destructive tornados. On March 28, 1920, however, we were not so lucky. Several tornados formed in the Elgin area, traveled through Maywood, Melrose Park, Dunning, Edgebrook, and finally on to Wilmette, cutting through towns and neighborhoods with a force we have not seen since then.

Just after noon that day, a tornado funnel touched down in downtown Elgin, destroying six businesses and damaging many others. Three people died in the collapse of the Grand Theatre, and three brick church towers fell, killing three more. Eight in total died. As the funnel cloud traveled east, it downed trees, destroyed 25 homes, and damaged several hundred more. Over 100 people were hurt. Not ten minutes after



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the storm passed, looters entered the Moose Lodge and stole \$200. The town was then put under Martial Law and policed by the 10th Illinois National Guard.

Fifteen minutes later, the storm reached Maywood and Melrose Park, claiming 11 lives in Melrose alone. Melrose Park residents Mr. and Mrs. Steibel took shelter in the basement when the storm hit, only to find themselves in their basement with someone else's house above them when the storm past. The twister leveled a flourmill, depositing inches of flour onto village streets. Some houses were split in half, with their tenants buried in the basement. Charles Peterson spent the night in the hospital when his house and chicken coop where destroyed. He left the hospital early the next morning, saying he needed to look for his chickens.

**The two homes on the right, in the Dunning neighborhood, show damages from the Palm Sunday Twister.**

*Photos Courtesy of Frank Suerth*







**A Dunning neighborhood storefront slid off its foundation during the storm.**

*Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*

Fires burned out of control, as torn gas connections and burning gas stoves ignited the wreckage. The loss of electricity cut off the water supply, hampering the fire departments' efforts to control the blazes. Soldiers were summoned by the Village President, Charles Wiltz, and a 'shoot to kill' order was given against looters. Soldiers were also stationed around the Citizens State Bank of Melrose Park, which was standing without a roof and windows. The Chicago Daily News covered the Melrose Park destruction and took many photos of it. The 28 photos can be viewed online at:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/ichihtml/cdnhome.html>

[Search photos with key words. Melrose Tornado]

By one o'clock in the afternoon, the storm had reached Dunning. Palm Sunday services had just ended at St. Pascal Church on Irving Park Road. Mrs. McGuinness was babysitting her grandchild while her son was attending the services. While sitting in her rocking chair holding the child, a wooden beam came through the window, killing her but not harming the child. Others who died in the storm were Edward

Jameson of 3827 N. Nottingham Avenue, Mr. Alfred H. Hansen of 3842 N. Nottingham Avenue, sixteen-year-old Elizabeth Laufenberger and two-year-old Vincent Laufenberger of 5655 N. Menard Avenue in Jefferson Park.

The twister hit a two-story house in the Dunning neighborhood, taking out a full size piano through the front window and depositing it 1.5 blocks away. Days later, people would be seen sitting out in the field playing the piano. Sarah Nelson of 3740 N. Neva Avenue was only slightly injured when the storm blew off her loose fitting clothes.

Anna Hansen, 3842 N. Nottingham Avenue, was in her living room with her four children, waiting for her husband to come home from church. Pictures started banging against the wall and the wind began to roar, and suddenly the children were outside in the mud. The roof was gone, and only a few rooms of the Hansen home were left intact. Mrs. Hansen died from a gash in her neck.

Mrs. Peter Rossozski lost her baby in the storm, but the child was found unharmed three blocks away in the middle of Nora Avenue near Irving Park Road. Mrs. Agnes Augustine was in her house when a lightweight car came smashing through the side of the house. William Peterson was hiding in his cellar and had two kitchen stoves from nearby homes on the roof of his house.

The first injured people were taken to a garage at 3813 Nottingham next to Gideon Seybert's grocery store. Twenty-two people were taken to this garage and given temporary aid until the state hospital for the insane at Dunning opened its doors. The brick buildings of the hospital survived the high winds of the storm. More than 200 homes were destroyed in the Dunning neighborhood.

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The debris field in the Dunning neighborhood - a prairie strewn with wreckage, piano standing legs up in the midst of it, gas stoves and heaters, ice boxes, kitchen utensils, parlor furniture, a frying pan with a steak still on it; dishes, a baby buggy, a women's shoe; a busted water pipe spurting a tiny geyser; a flight of steps detached, and a dead horse are just a few things in the random wreckage. *Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*



**A Dunning boarding house that escaped damages.** *Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*

Seventeen-year-old Robert E. Shearin was driving down Milwaukee Avenue with a friend in Norwood Park when the storm hit. "First we were pelted with hail stones as big as pigeon eggs," said Shearin. "Then we saw a funnel shaped cloud coming toward us. Then we saw shingles flying off roofs. Chickens carried high up in the air. Telephone poles snapped off and went swirling off in a cloud of dust. Houses shook and collapsed. One of them seemed to fold right up. Another jumped up in the air and fell down all in pieces. We jumped out of the car before it turned over and we were both blown into a ditch."

The storm moved northeast to Wilmette, and finally into the lake where it dissipated. It is now part of the history and lore of the Northwest side of Chicago.



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## Thank You!

Ken Knack for sharing your knowledge on the history of Elmwood Park at one of the Northwest Chicago Historical Society's meetings. If you missed the meeting or want to learn more about Elmwood Park, you can purchase Ken's book *Images of America – Elmwood Park*

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Allows for student centered activities with teacher guidance through real work experiences in the classroom atmosphere. Students use critical thinking and hands-on learning using 21st century learning skills, aligned with standards.

#### *Innovation Lab*

Students will be going to the Innovation Lab weekly for Science Experiments as well as Science Enrichment. We have time built into our weekly schedules for students to use our new materials in the Innovation Lab. We also are updating our Science Curriculum to adhere more to the STEM guidelines and updated Standards.



## Our Lady of Victory School

4434 North Laramie

Chicago, IL 60630

(773) 283-2229

Ms. Hodge - Principal

<http://school.olvchicago.org/>



Two postcards of the Wilmette business district showing damages from the tornado.





The Edgebrook Country Club after the storm.

*Photo Courtesy of the Edgebrook Historical Society*



1918 Photo of the Knuth's Farm at Devon & Central before it was damaged by the 1920 tornado.  
*Photo Courtesy of the Edgebrook Historical Society*



**Best wishes to the  
Northwest  
Chicago  
Historical Society**

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Postcard photo of Wilmette homes damaged in the storm. *Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*



## The Henry Esdohr House

This house originally served as the home of Henry Esdohr and his family. Located initially at what is now Long Avenue and Higgins Avenue (5425 Higgins), it was purchased by park officials and moved to this location on May 2, 1921.

After the move, the house served as the Jefferson Park Field House. Subsequently, the house became a common venue for meetings and events hosted by various neighborhood organizations, including the Infant Welfare Society, the Golden Rule Club, the Altrui Club, and the Boy Scouts. It continued to operate as the Field House until the current structure (Higgins and Long) replaced it in 1930. After 1930, the Chicago Public Library utilized the house as a local branch, serving as the Jefferson Park Library. After the branch library outgrew this location, the house reverted back to the Park District and has had other uses throughout the years.



The Henry Esdohr House as it looked at  
5425 W. Higgins Avenue

Henry Esdohr (1852-1914) was born near Hanover, Germany. As a young teenager, he traveled to America in 1866 with his younger brother, Herman. The two of them found work on a farm located where O'Hare Airport stands today. In 1870, Henry arrived in Jefferson, which was then the small town located ten miles northwest of Chicago. Henry purchased the 5425 Higgins property in 1874 for \$550.00.

Most of Jefferson area residents obtained their water at an artesian well located on the property. This well was 2,200 feet deep with a flow rate of 200 gallons per minute. The well was in operation until 1895.

Henry was a leader in the community, holding positions such as Postmaster, Treasurer of the School Board for the township high school, and the Knight Templar for the Masons. Additionally, he was a business man, selling agricultural equipment and establishing the first retail liquor store. In 1881, he was elected City Clerk of the Town of Jefferson. Henry Esdohr is buried in the Acacia Park Mausoleum with his wife and children.



Henry Esdohr  
1852 to 1914

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**This past Spring, the Northwest Chicago Historical Society purchased this historic marker, and the Chicago Park District installed it in front of the Henry Esdohr House. We would like to thank the Chicago Park District, the Jefferson Memorial Park Advisory Council, and the Jefferson Memorial Park staff for making it happen. With the fresh coat of paint, new gutters, and newly installed planters, this historic house has become a treasured asset to the community.**



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