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where God has placed a comma”*

- Gracie Allen



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Northwest Chicago Historical Society

Your Neighborhood Historical Society

Newsletter July 2015

Number XXII

The Wachowski - Ray House • Forest Glen Floral Company

As we go about our daily lives, each day we encounter buildings and sites of historic significance. Whether you have lived in your local neighborhood for a short time or your entire life, it is likely that you do not know the stories behind the all places you pass on the street. This lack of information may be the result of a myriad of factors. Perhaps you are unaware of the ages of certain buildings or they seem outwardly dull aesthetically. Maybe you can't see structures if they are obstructed by modern fixtures, overgrown greenery, or Frankenstein-like renovations. Sometimes, you may not "see" something at all if you have lived in your local area for a long time – the building is part of the fabric of the community, and your eyes don't gaze upon it critically.

In this NCHS newsletter issue, we wanted to unlock the secrets of the past of a home in a prominent place on the Northwest Side, even if you have not "seen" it. Undoubtedly, many of our readers pass this structure regularly, if not on a daily basis. This is 5374 West Lawrence Avenue (Northeast corner of Lawrence and Long), which we have dubbed the "Wachowski Ray House." This home is over 100 years old and was at this location before Jefferson Memorial Park was established and before Long Avenue was constructed. We discovered that this place and its owners and inhabitants had a key role on the Northwest Side and in Chicago in the first part of the last century. Hopefully, you'll give an admiring nod the next time you drive down Lawrence Avenue. While you may not have examined it critically before, it would be a noticeable loss if it ever ceased to exist.

Please also enjoy the chilling story of the murder at the Forest Glen Floral House, republished from the Chicago Tribune. With its twists and turns, it is an old-fashioned Northwest Side drama of enormous proportions.

If you have an interesting story from the past or any other historic information you'd like to share with NWCHS, please be sure to send us an email at nwchicagohistory@sbcglobal.net.

- Susanna Ernst

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:

\$15.00 per calendar year
\$10.00 for 65 years old and over
Website: nwchicagohistory.org

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Letters

Letters may have been edited for clarity and space

I live in Northwestern Ontario, Canada and was actually born in Chicago (Ravenwood Hospital).

I was wondering if anyone can help me, lead me in trying to find my maternal great grandparents.

I have been unsuccessful in my quest for finding my great grandparents in the 1870 and 1900 US Census. I do have them in the 1880 Census and pretty certain where they lived mostly all their life. Anything you may come up with should be helpful to me as I really don't know where to go from here.

Family lore says they had a farm, which they did farm, within the City limits of Chicago - this being what was Jefferson Township on the 1880. I know they immigrated on Oct 12 1865 (Dad, Mom and their 5 year old son). They were heading to Chicago when they arrived in NY from Bremen, Germany.

The address they give via death certificate (1906) and 1892 Voter Registration is consistent - 50th Ave and Belmont Ave. I know that they were in Jefferson Twp in 1880 (no address on Census) and that c. 1889 Jefferson Twp was amalgamated into Chicago.

Their names are:

Charles (Carl, Charley) Sauer (Sour, Saner) b. 1837 in Prussia

Gertrude (Gertrud) Sauer b. 1835 in Prussia

Christ (Christoph, Criste) Sauer b. c. 1859-1860 in Prussia

Louise Sauer b. Jun 1868 in Chicago (Jefferson) m. Wilhelm Bremer 6 Mar 1887 in Jefferson

Sophie Sauer b. 29 Dec 1871 in Jefferson m. William Jaaks 28 Nov 1897 in Jefferson

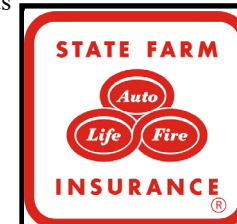
William Sauer b. 20 Aug 1875 in Jefferson d. 25 Mar 1911 in Morton Grove, IL - he was a farmhand

Theodore (Ted) Sauer b. 15 Feb 1880 in Jefferson

My quest is to find extra children as big time span between Christ and Louise and also to find Louise Sauer Bremer's children. She died in 1893 and left behind 3 little children, female, possibly named Mary Bremer b. 1889, Wilhelm Carl Bremer b. 1890 and Louisa Sophia Bremer b. 1892. My mother and her cousin both have said (separately) that my great grandparents raised their daughter's children on the farm. My thoughts are that they should appear on the 1900 census together. The father, relatives have said, is a never do well type of character and had nothing to do with the kids (just family rumor).

I have found Gertrude, living with daughter Sophie Sauer Jaaks, and Wilhelm Bremer (listed as a boarder) in the 1910 census. The address is 4857 W. Henderson Ave. which I also believe is in your coverage area. Many thanks in advance,

Judy Palliser Angus
Atikokan, ON Canada



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Letters

The addresses 4857 W. Henderson Ave and 50th Ave and Belmont Ave (Belmont & Lavergne) are near each other and could have been part of the same farmland.

In the Town of Jefferson 1886 directory, I found a Christ Sauer, Market gardener, lives at Milwaukee Avenue & southeast corner of Morrison Avenue. Morrison Avenue was changed to Kedzie Ave., which is in the Logan Square neighborhood.

You may also want to download one of our newsletters with the story about: Two Jaacks (but no Jill) on the Milwaukee Road. - NWCHS

http://www.nwchicagohistory.org/jphs_jan_2006.pdf

I do believe Sophia Sauer's husband was the Wilhelm Jaaks son of Hans and brother to Herman mentioned in your article! I never knew who William's parents were because there is no 1890 census to find him in a family situation and by 1897 they were married. I knew William and Sophie's daughter, Esther and she was a cousin of my Mom's and came up with her husband to Int'l Falls, MN where we lived. Small world!

It certainly looks like this is the area where my ancestors came from. Sophie's sister Mary is my great grandmother and she married Hermann Kastens and lived at 2119 N. Spaulding Avenue. He was a cabinet maker.

Judy

My Great Grandfather, Joseph Mitchell, was born in New York City. The 1860 census shows him being 35 years old and living in San Francisco. Other records show him arriving there in 1850 and married there 14 June 1864. By 1868 he and his wife were in Mexico. I believe he was a liquor salesman.

The family story goes that he was on a business trip and in Chicago at the time of the great fire of 1871. That was the last the family heard from him so they assumed that he died in the fire. The family did some research (don't know how much or what) but they could not find any trace of him there. They did find a number of Mitchells that were registered in the hotels there but there were no first names recorded.

I know that this is a LONG SHOT but are there any records showing who the people were that searched for their loved ones after the fire? I have been searching for Joseph's parents for 35 years with little to show for my research. Any info or ideas where I can look would be appreciated!!

John A. Mitchell - Bolton, CT

About 300 people died in the Chicago Fire; therefore chances are that he was not a victim. Those people who died and were not identified were buried in the Cemetery in Dunning on Chicago's northwest side. - NWCHS

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The Wachowski - Ray House

By Susanna Ernst

When exploring the Jefferson Park neighborhood, one can still find remnants of the past juxtaposed with modern facilities and public works of art. While many of these historic gems are tucked away on leafy side streets, several of them notably stand out on the main thoroughfares. One of the more stately examples is a prominent fixture across the street from Jefferson Park, the Wachowski-Ray house (currently the Bux family residence) at 5374 Lawrence Avenue.

The Wachowski-Ray house, erected in 1914, celebrates 101 years in the neighborhood this year. Valentine ('Val') Wachowski, a prominent Chicago merchant and grocer, commissioned the architect J.F. Knudsen to design the structure. Knudsen was quite prolific during that era, designing a wide variety of homes and small scale businesses on the North Side of Chicago. The cost to actually construct the home on Lawrence Avenue was \$8,000. Wachowski, his wife Sophia, and their five children moved from the second floor of a two-flat in Avondale to their newly appointed home in Jefferson Park. At that time, the park itself had not even been conceived; rows of homes lined Lawrence and Higgins Avenues. Additionally, the home did not sit on a corner lot, as Long Avenue did not exist north of Lawrence Avenue and would not be added for several more years.



Side and front view of how the house looks today. Dark red brick trimmed with copper gutters complete with curved glass windows in the front.

Photos Courtesy of Frank Suerth

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Valentine Wachowski

Walenty (Valentine) Wachowski was born in Poznan, Poland (Prussia at the time) in 1863. When he was 17, he immigrated to America with his family. They made their way to Chicago, where thousands of Polish immigrants were living and working. After a few years, Sophia Pawlak, also from Poznan, joined him in Chicago. They were married in St. Stanislaus Church in 1883, and they made their home in Polish Downtown, an area on the near northwest side that boasted the highest concentration of Polish people outside of Poland itself. Walenty and Sophia had five children, and they continued to live in the area around St. Stanislaus for more than 25 years. Sometime before 1910, they moved to the Avondale area and ‘americanized’ all their names. Walenty became Valentine, Sophia became Sophie, Wladyslawa became Lottie, Bronislaus became Bruno, and so on. In 1914, they arrived at their final and most extensive home on Lawrence Avenue in Jefferson Park.

Val and Sophie had remained devout members of the church, and they were eager to be part of a new church on the Northwest side, Our Lady of Victory (“OLV”). OLV had been established less than 8 years before their arrival, and its membership was growing rapidly. Valentine and his family bonded quickly with other members of the church, particularly with those of Polish heritage. Within a few short months, Valentine worked with other members of OLV to form a new club – the “Polonia Club,” consisting of devout Catholics of Polish background. From its inception, it was an organization of a social and cultural nature, a conduit for Polish tradition and attachment to homeland, God and Church. Val was a key member of this group, serving as president for a period of time.



Sophia Pawlak and Valentine Wachowski on their wedding day in 1883 *Photo Courtesy of Robert Vottero*

6.

While the Polonia Club was very active in the Church, many of its members felt that something was missing for them. Most of them had come from denser neighborhoods near the urban core, where churches served prominent local ethnic groups in the area. This meant that the churches’ customs were dictated by local ethnic groups in language, behavior, and interests. Until they came to Jefferson Park, Val, Sophie, and their friends had spent their entire lives attending Polish National churches. They decided it was time to meet the demands of a growing Polish population on the Northwest Side. At that time, 90 Polish families separated from OLV to form a new Catholic parish, focused on the needs of the Polish community. In July of 1916, the very first Mass was held in Val and Sophie’s home on Lawrence Avenue. This was the inception of St. Constance Parish (located today at Strong and Marmora), which eventually would serve Polish community members all over the Northwest side. Val and Sophie remained active members of St. Constance for the remainder of their lives.

Today, St. Constance remains an active, vibrant, church, open to all members of the faith – but still catering to a very large Polish community, with Polish Masses and Polish Clubs. The Polonia club is still in existence today and recently celebrated 100 years of activity.

During his final years, Val was an active member of the local business community, serving as the Treasurer for the Jefferson Park Building and Loan Association through the 1920’s. He passed away in late January, 1927. Funeral services were held at their Lawrence Avenue home as well as St. Constance Church. He is buried in St. Adalbert’s Cemetery on the Northwest Side. After Val passed away, his family moved to an apartment building on Leland Avenue.



Valentine & Sophie Wachowski *Photo Courtesy of Robert Vottero*

7.



Photo of Val & Sophie's daughter with grandchild in front of garage/chicken coop. Photo on right shows the garage still standing.



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Olaf E. Ray

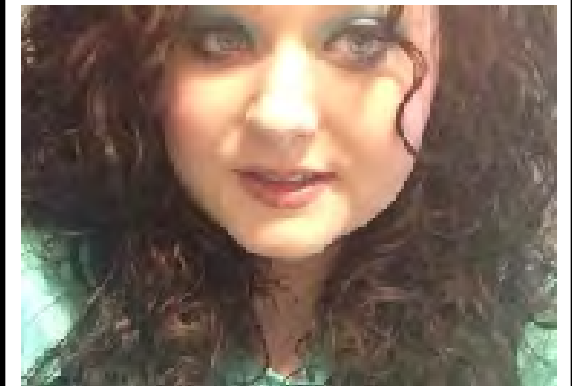
After the Wachowski family relocated, Olaf E. Ray and his family moved into the home at 5374 Lawrence. Olaf Ray was an attorney and a very prominent member of the political community. Not only was he renowned in Chicago and Illinois for his leadership, he had an international reputation as a scholar and promoter of the legacy of Norway.

Olaf Edward Olson Ray was born on a farm near Levanger, Norway, in 1856. His father, Olai Olson, was a teacher and famous editor, establishing publications in Levanger and other local communities. Olaf immigrated to Chicago in 1881, and his parents, Olai and Ragnhild Ray, along with some of his siblings, followed several years later. Norway underwent a large depression and suffered financial stagnation in the late part of the nineteenth century, which led Norwegians to participate in a substantial exodus to America.

When he arrived, Olaf had already had a career as a sailor, spending 12 years on ships and passing major nautical examinations in both Norway and England. However, Chicago was not the best place to continue to hone his nautical skills, so he would have to turn to other professional alternatives. Soon after his arrival, he passed the examination for evening school teacher and began teaching at Wells public school. Many members of his family found new interests and endeavors in America; his mother, Ragnhild, would go on to found and lead the Norwegian Home Industry Society in Chicago. She was honored publicly in Chicago for her dedication in 1907.

The Olson Ray family was known for participating in politics, and Olaf immersed himself in activity from the moment he arrived in Chicago. Growing up, Olaf had been exposed to parents with strong political opinions and values, his father a socialist newspaper publisher and his mother a vocal proponent of women's rights. Olaf became involved with a newspaper Den Nye Tid ("The New Age"), a voice for the Norwegians who were advocates of the Socialist Labor Party. In October of 1881, a schism within the Socialist ranks became apparent at a meeting of some of the revolutionary groups of Chicago. August Spies, future convicted Haymarket Riot conspirator and editor of the German language Arbeiter Zeitung (Workers' Times), urged the Socialist movement to embrace the democratic political process. However, Olaf Olson Ray, along with Peter Petersen, a popular Norwegian Socialist, rejected this democratic approach and advocated revolutionary methods. The Socialist party split, and Den Nye Tid became the mouthpiece for the anarchistic Revolutionary Socialist Party, and was now managed by Ray and Petersen. After several years, the anarchistic paper was struggling, and by 1884 the paper had to discontinue as bills were piling up. After the Haymarket riots in 1886, Olaf dropped "Olson" from his name, becoming Olaf E. (Edward) Ray. His engagements in the Socialist struggle became much more limited after that notable (and telling) event.

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Olaf E. Ray

Photo Courtesy of the Norwegian-American Historical Assoc., Northfield, MN


The 1890's brought about several major turning points in Olaf's new life in America, both professionally and personally. In 1890, he graduated from the Chicago College of Law and saw new opportunities arising. That same year, he met and married Ernestine LeDuc, a French Canadian, sixteen years his junior. Their first child, Anita, arrived less than a year after they were married. For a brief time, Olaf and Ernestine made their home in a relatively rural area south of Grayland, near Milwaukee and Pulaski, which had recently been annexed to Chicago. After their home was blown off the foundation in a major windstorm in 1896, they relocated to a place where they felt more at home: the very Norwegian neighborhood of Humboldt Park. They would end up living in this area for more than 20 years. By that time, Olaf's career was expanding and he was gaining more power and renown. He was one of the attorneys for the city of Chicago, and started to become more and more active in local politics.

In 1896, Olaf became the democratic nominee for Congress in the 7th Illinois district. He ran against George Edmund Foss, who ended up winning in the Republican stronghold. At that time, Olaf was a Jeffersonian Democrat, but soon after that election he switched political parties. While Ray insisted that he left the Democratic Party on principle, it was left to speculation. He told the press that Grover Cleveland was an autocrat who 'defied the people and the nation.' He went on to say that 'the Democrats did not support the issues at stake, such as free trade, the single tax, personal rights, and, last but not least, the People's party had its wings clipped because of the alliance with the Democrats.' He was to remain a Republican for the remainder of his life.

Olaf's professional career continued to shine; he continued to gain more acclaim, particularly as a leader in the Chicago community and as a voice for Norwegian Americans living in the city. The Norwegian newspaper, "Skandinaven," featured many of his writings. His recognition extended overseas, where he was known as one of the leaders bridging the gap between Norwegians living in Norway and Norwegians living in America. He made it his personal mission to educate Americans about the cultural and linguistic contributions of Norwegians. Working tirelessly, he researched, authored, and lectured all over the Midwest. In America, he was known as one of the preeminent promoters of Norwegian culture, language, and history in America during years after the turn of the century. In 1906, he was invited to travel to Norway to attend the coronation of King Haakon VII and Queen Maud. He was there as one of the chosen representatives from the Norwegian National League of Chicago.



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Olaf's professional career was in full swing after the turn of the century. He became a senior member of the law firm of Ray and Pease, located at 160 W. Washington. Additionally, he began to dabble in other financial interests, such as diamonds and precious metals. He founded and served on the Board of Directors for the Brazilian Diamond, Gold, and Developing Company (incidentally, in the same location as his law firm.) The organization held more than seventy miles of the Jequitinbonha River and several thousand acres of land in the Diamantina District, in the state of Minas Geraes, Brazil. In 1904, Olaf wrote a short book on his experiences there: "A trip to the diamond fields of Serro Frio, Brazil." The Company made its money by selling shares of the land.

Olaf Ray's list of credits and political involvement continued to grow. In 1912, Ray was a delegate to the Bull Moose Convention, and in that same year, he was the Progressive Republican candidate for County Commissioner. The Chicago Eagle newspaper noted Olaf multiple times. In 1913, they reported on an award winning memorial essay he delivered in 1911: "Some Phases of the Maritime Life of France and England Directly Traceable to the Vikings." He spoke at the Historical Congress held at Rouen, France, to commemorate the 1000 year anniversary of the conquest of Normandy by the Great Rollo. The National Organization of the Sons of Norway in the United States had chosen Ray as their delegate to commemorate the occasion. In 1915, the Eagle touted that that Olaf Ray would definitely have a "bright political future." He definitely was becoming a more prominent leader, as he was shortly thereafter named the Assistant City Attorney.

Although the Norwegian community in Humboldt Park continued to grow and thrive, by the mid 1910's Olaf and Ernestine and their daughters had moved northwest to Agatite Avenue in Portage Park. Like many fellow Norwegians, the family migrated further up farther up Milwaukee Avenue as newer immigrants came into Humboldt Park area. As always, Olaf was an outspoken and active community leader and advocate.



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In March of 1918, along with a state senator and local aldermen, he delivered an address at a mass meeting at the Jefferson Park Masonic Temple. Their goal was to encourage the masses to demand that the "L" be extended to Jefferson Park from Logan Square to increase business and growth in the area. While these leaders had an impressive idea, the community would not see their demand come to fruition for over 50 years.

Olaf's opinions were now respected locally and city-wide. The Chicago Tribune would often report on his election preferences. When they mentioned his support for Dever in the mayoral election (1923), the Tribune pointed out that Ray had been a "close personal friend" of Theodore Roosevelt. He clearly was getting more attention at the US national level, as he served as an elector for candidate La Follette in the presidential election of 1924.

During the 1920's, local planners already had established the boundaries of what was to become the park (Jefferson Park) between Lawrence, Higgins, Long, and Linder Avenues. The homes on the park property had either been moved or demolished, and landscaping was underway. The large and lovely home at 5374 Lawrence would become prime property – not only was it in a prominent position in the neighborhood, but now it was going to be sitting directly across the street from the local park. After the death of Val Wachowski in 1927, the home was put on the market. Olaf and Ernestine Ray jumped at the opportunity to own their dream home, and purchased the home from Sophia. They then moved in with their two daughters, Anita and Aimee.

Sadly, within a year after their arrival in their new home, Ernestine passed away. She was 55 years old at the time. The family had a small funeral gathering and Ernestine was cremated. Olaf and his daughters continued to reside in the home.

The local area of Jefferson Park was booming by the late 20's. Olaf continued to do well financially, so he purchased land at the southeast corner of Lawrence and Milwaukee (4777-81 N Milwaukee) for the purpose of leasing space in the growing 'downtown' of the local community. In 1929, he leased the property to the S.S. Kresge Company (the predecessor to Kmart.) Their plan at the time was to erect a new structure there in 1932.

By that time, the park was nearing completion. The 1930 Fieldhouse, designed by Clarence Hatzfeld, was the final, crowning jewel of the park. Olaf was pleased with the park as well as the new structure, and he desired to make a connection and a contribution to his new community. To share his love for his Norwegian homeland with his neighbors, he donated a special painting to the park and Fieldhouse. Entitled "Leif Ericson Year 1000," it still hangs in the Fieldhouse today, with a small brass plaque at the top, noting Olaf and the date of his contribution. While the ship it depicts bears a striking resemblance to the ship at the Norwegian Pavilion during the Century of Progress Exposition, its relationship has not been confirmed.



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Olaf Ray's gift painting to the Jefferson Memorial Park can still be seen in the Fieldhouse and is the only neighborhood remembrance that bears his name.
Photos Courtesy of Frank Suerth



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In 1943, Olaf Ray passed away after a short 4 day illness. He was 87 at the time. Just like Ernestine, he was cremated. Before he passed away, he donated all of his lifelong works and correspondence to the Norwegian American Historical Association, located in Northfield, Minnesota. Within the archives are included 42 bound volumes of his examination of Norwegian etymology, one of his major lifelong interests along with Leif Ericson. In May of 1945, both his and Ernestine's ashes were buried in two plots in Acacia Cemetery in Norridge. While Olaf celebrated many accomplishments over his lifetime, his tombstone reads only one descriptor, "FATHER." Clearly this is indicative of what his daughters felt was his most important accomplishment.

Olaf's daughters, Anita and Aimee, continued to live in the house until 1948, when they sold the home to Dr. Robert and Nana Merriam. The sisters subsequently moved to Santa Barbara, California, where they lived out the remainder of their lives. Upon their deaths, Aimee in 1968 and Anita in 1972, they were also cremated, returned to Illinois, and buried with their parents in the two plots in Acacia cemetery. Neither of them married or had children, so Olaf and Ernestine have no direct descendants alive today.

August 13, 1970 – Nana E. Merriman sells the house to Dr. Bux and it becomes the doctor's office and residence. The Bux family still own's the house today.

Anecdote on Olaf Ray

In 1895, the city was experiencing difficulties pumping water up into the upper stories of larger buildings, particularly on the West Side. Water pressure was virtually non-existent above first floors, and citizens were expressing anger due to the fact that they were paying hefty water taxes. While many landlords were letting their tenants suffer without water, Olaf Ray was lugging water buckets up many flights of stairs to ensure they had what they needed. In that time, landlords did not have strict regulations as they do today. Evidently, Olaf was good hearted and a man who operated on a sense of principle and fairness.

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Forest Glen Floral Company

In 1884, Forest Glen Floral Company was a large commercial enterprise in the Forest Glen/Jefferson Park area. M. E. Page was the proprietor and at that time they had nine immense double greenhouses with 100 acres of land. It was the largest floral company west of New York City.

The critical factor was the location of these growing facilities, just a 5-minute walk south of the Forest Glen train station. This was a key location for shipping perishables to the City of Chicago. They were growers, importers and shippers of the finest cut flowers, plants and seeds. They also owned two retail stores in Chicago, at 173 Wabash and 250 W. Madison (921 W. Madison).

As the years have gone by the company added more greenhouses and continued to grow but not without problems. The following article from the Chicago Tribune dated Saturday, August 18, 1888, clearly records these facts.

Stabbed by His Rival

A Young Lover Brutally Assaulted by a Rejected Suitor

The Wounded Man's Face and Neck Covered with Ghastly Wounds – One Slash of the Assailant's Blade Carries Away the Victim's eyelid – The Sufferer Lovingly Nursed by Pretty Margaret Schneider. Whose Affianced Husband. He is – Arrest of the Perpetrator.

It was 11 o'clock Thursday night. There were black clouds over the face of the moon. The lights of the Town of Jefferson had one by one gone out. In the grounds of the Forest Glen Floral Company a rare star was mirrored in the glass roofs of the hothouses. Mr. M. E. Page, the florist, had retired for the night and was asleep when a scuffling was heard on the steps and the handle of the door was loudly rattled.

"Mr. Page," cried a voice outside.

Mr. Page awoke. He turned in the bed and listened. He fumbled for the pistol under his pillow. "Burglars," whispered his wife.

"Mr. Page." Cried the voice. "Let me in. I am a dying man."

"It is Book, the foreman," said Mrs. Page.

"Mr. Page," cried the voice, "I have been stabbed. My eye is cut out. For pity's sake let me in."

Before the last words were spoken Mr. Page in his nightgown, had thrown the door open. Book, the foreman, stood before him. From the socket of his right eye a cascade of blood was falling. Around his neck there was a great gash. His clothes were saturated with blood. With a gesture of appeal he held out his bloodstained hands and immediately fell forward upon the kitchen floor.

"He is dead," said Mr. Page.

"Dead!" echoed his wife, terrified by the ghastly spectacle.

There was now a pool of blood on the floor. The foreman's blonde mustache was bathed in it. There were blood clots on his forehead, reddening the roots of his curiously dark hair. From the socket of his eye the stream poured out unceasingly. The kitchen was filled with people. The florist's men ran in from the barn, where they were sleeping. The servants, awakened, ran down in light attire. The prostrate man was lifted, his wounds were stanchd, and orders were issued to ride for the nearest doctor – who lived a mile away.

"Who is the murderer?" demanded Mr. Page at length, the preliminary work of relief being completed.

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Then hobbled into the kitchen a one-legged man. His right foot had been frozen during the last winter and had been amputated. He was piffle as death and had the air of one who had survived a terrible fright.

"I saw it all," he said.

"Who did it?"

"Albert Mincko."

The men who had come from the barn looked significantly at each other. Then they glanced, not too amiably, at the bleeding foreman. They made no effort to assist him. They merely looked at each other when Albert Mincko's name was mentioned, and one of them turned to a corner where a pretty, dark-eyed girl stood shrinking and frightened.

"Margaret," said Mr. Page, "Do you know anything of this?"

"Nothing," whispered the girl, almost inaudible.

"Were you not engaged to Hugo Book?"

The girl came forward in an instant. She cast a hasty look upon the unconscious man. Then she threw herself upon her knees beside him; took in her soft white hands his passive fingers, still red from blood; put them to her lips, and said, with a cry of despair: "I was not engaged, but I loved him dearly."

When the foreman had been laid upon his bed, and the doctor, arriving in haste, had pronounced that his chances of recovery were not one in a thousand, all the people connected with the Forest Glen Floral establishment fell to talking about Hugo Book and pretty Maggie, his sweetheart. Sleep was impossible. The men sat in the barn among bales of hay; Mr. Page sat in the parlor with his wife and discussed the tragic ending of what promised to be an idyllic love story.

Hugo Book had left his native Westphalia four years ago. A handsome youth with his black hair and wavy blonde moustache, he had been loved by more than one fair Westphalia damsel. His father had been a man of means until a schemer tempted him to invest in a coal mine. The coal mine went up in smoke. Book, the older, gave himself up to the reading of poetry and the smoking of a long pipe. Book, the younger, deaf to the Westphalian sirens, came to America heart whole.

Mr. Page put him in charge of the establishment at Jefferson. Being temperate himself he resented intemperance in others. "And florists' men," explained Mrs. Page, "are all drinkers. I don't know why the perfume of the flowers should make men drink like fishes."

So Hugo Book was not popular. Fred and Frank, two young florists, led the grumblers against him. He had to face insubordination on all sides, and was at the point of resigning his place when Margaret Schneider arrived at Jefferson, having charge of Mrs. Page's three children.

Margaret was a real beauty. Her eyes were dark and poetical; her features delicate; her figure symmetrically round. No prettier girl had come from the mountains of the Tyrol than this little protégée of Mrs. Page, who treated her more as a pet than a servant.

With Hugo it was a case of love at first sight. He met his fute in a hothouse among the roses, and all day long he lingered around her. He showed her how the roses were planted; he taught her the difference of species; he revealed all the mysteries of Horticulture; and when the lesson was done he humbly presented his pupil with a radiant American Beauty. Next morning, before breakfast, pretty Maggie appeared with the American Beauty at her bosom.



Margaret Schneider

From that day the people in the place left them to themselves. They were regarded as well matched; and though the grumblers had not ceased to grumble at Hugo's exercise of his authority they pronounced that in matters of love he was much more lucky that he deserved to be.

Albert Mincko came into the Page's service three months ago. He had lately arrived from Munich. He was a great boaster. He represented that he had once been enormously rich – a Bavarian Monte Cristo. He had been in every European country.

"Have you been in jail, too?" asked pretty Maggie, who distrusted him, and loved to tease him.

"O, yes often," he replied, quite smartly, "But I always committed offenses that were worth committing. No petty larceny or trifles like that. Nine indictments are now pending against me."

This singular vanity was the keynote of Mincko's character. He was always bragging of his offenses against the law. Seeing that Maggie disliked him, he determined to add her name to his list of feminine conquests. He would insist on sitting with her on the stoop of the house. He offered to take her to Chicago and show her the sights. He condescended to say that during the warm summer evenings he would swing her under the trees. He bought a book of Tyrolese love songs and expressed his passion for Margaret in an ecstatic yodel. He had a book of pictures representing the joys of married life. He never tired of showing it to Maggie, adding appropriate comments of his own.

But Maggie would have nothing to do with him. "I hate him like a rattlesnake," she said to Mrs. Page.

The campaign, which Albert began as more a test of his powers of gallantry – and he is the last man a girl would choose for her gallant, being short, stout, with straggling side whiskers and an ill kempt red mustache – now deepened into a bitter feud. The colossal conceit of the man was touched. He saw Hugo Book preferred to him. He saw Maggie and Hugo wandering together among the roses or sitting side by side under the butternut trees.

"Good evening, Mrs. Book," he would say, with withering sarcasm.

"Go away, you rattlesnake," replied Margaret, politely.

"I don't care a snap for her love," he said to his friends Frank and Fred, the grumblers. "If Book wants her he may take her."

But he began to fancy that Hugo Book was putting slights upon him. If he was sent to weed the garden he complained of the indignity. If he was placed at the wheelbarrow he maintained that it was done to humiliate him. If he was employed to the smilax-house he said Hugo wanted to send him where Margaret could never see him. Whatever his occupation he was sour and discontented. He saw insults everywhere.

One day he came to the stables and said to the stableman: "Here is an old pistol. I want to have it cleaned."

The stableman examined it. "You will have to clean it yourself," said he. "Antiquated concern like that will burst as soon as it is fired."

"Would it not kill a man?" asked Albert.

"Yes," said the stableman. "It would kill the man who fired it. Where did you get it?"

"I brought it from Bavaria. It is an heirloom in my family, which is noble, and which is exceedingly proud of its heirlooms."

"None of your heirlooms for me," said the stableman, walking abruptly away.

Mincko is discharged

Work was nearly done last Wednesday afternoon. Hugo was busy among the flowerbeds, when Albert approached him. "I refuse henceforth," he said, "to work in the smilax-house."

Then I have no work for you elsewhere," said Hugo.

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Albert, menacingly.

"That is all."

"Then hear me. You are a scoundrel. You have become between me and a girl whom I loved. You have poisoned her mind against me. You have taught her to hate me. So I say you are a scoundrel, and I will have your life."

"Get your wages and go," said Hugo Book, who did not lack courage.

Albert turned away. All day Thursday he hung around the place. He went to Frank, to Fred, to all the malcontents. He said: "Why don't you have something to say to that fellow Book?"

"What should we say?" they asked.

He pulled a knife from his pocket. It was a common pruning knife. Its blade was excessively sharp.

"This is the weapon that talks," said he.

Book and Mincko lived with Paul, the one-legged man, in a small frame house on the grounds of the floral establishment. Around it were barns, stables, stacks of straw, poultry yards. From the rear it was hidden in a thick grove of trees. When the night was dark the grove was black as Erebus.

Mincko slept with one-legged Paul in a small room on the ground floor. The walls were decorated with figures cut from police gazettes, with the nymphs who captor on cigarette covers, with gaudy prints of variety actresses. On the table was a copybook in which Book had been industriously indicting English texts; and a German Bible, which Book had brought with him from Germany, the gift of a loving mother in Westphalia.

Paul, the one-legged, was lying on his cot. Hugo Book was trimming his lamp before retiring to his room on the second floor.

"Paul," said he, "I didn't like the looks of the boys today. They were ugly."

"What do you suspect?" asked Paul.

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"I suspect them of sympathy with that villain Albert. I know they are all jealous of Margaret and me. Albert has been making them worse, and I believe they would kill me."

Hush! What sound was that on the grass? What shadow is yonder creeping among the trees? "Look-out, Paul," says Hugo. "Tell me what you see."

"I see nothing," replies Paul. "The moon is hidden. It is only your fancy. You are nervous tonight Hugo."

Hush! A low whistle is plainly heard. It is not the wind, for the night wind is blowing soft and light. The lamp in the barn is extinguished. But there is a rustling as of feet among the grass, and the whistle is unmistakable.

"Have you a pistol, Paul?" asks Hugo.

"Not I," says the cripple. "Who is going to attack a one-legged man like me?"

"Have you a knife, then?"

"Still less."

Hugo looks around for a place of safety. He notes the staircase, an old tumbledown affair, worm-eaten and decayed. How if he barricaded himself at the top of the stairs? From this point of vantage he might make a show of resistance.

There was a knock at the outer door. It came from the rear of the house, the rear that was wrapped in impenetrable gloom.

"Who is there?" called Hugo.

"Albert Mincko," said a well known voice.

"What do you want?"

"Let me in. I have left my things. I mean you no harm."

"Who is with you?"

Nobody."

Hugo peeps out through a chink in the door. He can make out the form of Albert. He sees nobody else. So, reflecting that Paul and he should be a match for Albert alone, he threw open the door and Albert walked in.

"What, Hugo," laughs Albert, "were you afraid of me?"

"You carry a pistol," says Hugo, "and I don't."

Without answering Albert Mincko walked into the little room where Paul still lay upon his cot. "what is it you left?" asks Hugo.

"A picture," says Albert.

"Whose picture?"

"The picture of the girl I love."

He looks round at the walls where the nymphs of the cigarette cover smirk at him. He looks through the copying book and opens the cover of the Bible. Then he turns upon Hugo. In an instant his manner changes. "The picture I want," he cries, "is the picture you carry near your heart. It is the picture of Margaret Schneider."

Hugo Book had a lamp in his hand; with a furious rush Albert dashed the lamp to the ground. As it fell Hugo saw the flash of a knife and felt an excruciating pain.

"You have cut out my eye," he cried, falling backward over the sofa.

"Yes," said Albert savagely, "I have cut out your eye. I have spoiled your looks for life. Go back to Margaret Schneider. Show her your handsome face. We will see if she will have you now."

Hugo staggered to his feet, blinded with streams of blood. He groped his way to the staircase "Help," he cried faintly.

At that moment, as he stumbled along at the foot of the staircase, Albert struck him again with the knife. It was such a blow as a Chinese headsman might deliver to his victim. It cut a deep gash in Hugo's neck. Had the knife been sharper it would have decapitated him.

Then the assassin fled through the night and was arrested at 8 o'clock last evening in a saloon at Jefferson Park.

Hugo's House



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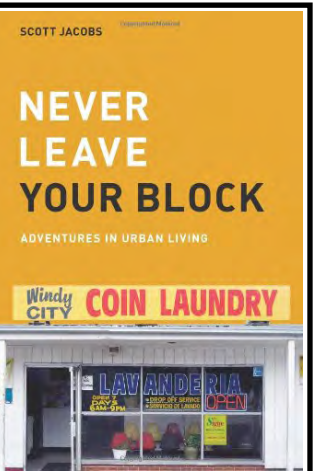
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Thank You!

Scott Jacobs for explaining what happens when gentrification comes to a modern city at one of our meetings. What institutions endure? Who survives? And how does a diverse community come together to keep the fabric of a city strong? Scott told his own experiences how urban Chicago communities are shaping the future of America's cities.

If you missed the meeting or want to learn more about "Adventures in Urban Living," you can purchase his book "Never Leave Your Block".



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The Wounded Man Tells of the Assault – Maggie Schneider

The wounded man, when seen by a Tribune reporter, was resting on a cot in a room immediately above the scene of the tragic occurrence. He was able to speak at intervals, and the substance of his disjointed story was to this effect:

He had done all in his power to Mincko, who, being a fellow countryman evidently in hard luck, seemed a deserving object of assistance. For some reason that he has never been able to understand the man had always repelled his attempts to make his lot pleasanter. Although purposely allotted to the easier jobs around the place he had invariably grumbled at the work being too hard for him.

"An hour or so before I was struck down," said Book, "I was talking with two of the men, named Fred and Frank, about their pay. Mincko was standing by, and although he had been discharged the day before, I felt sorry for him and told him I would give him a place to sleep for the night if he would have a little more decently. He looked ugly then, and I heard him calling after me when I went into the house. I had clean sheets for his bed, and was just about to lay them when he knocked at the door.

"Who's there," I cried.

"'Mr. Mincko,' I heard some one outside say; so I opened the door and let him in. I was reaching for the lamp when I was struck over the eye and knocked down. I fell on Paul's bed and put my hands to my eye, which was hanging out on my cheek. While I lay there I felt Albert seize me by the collar and stick the knife into my neck, and the next thing I remember was hearing Paul cry out. I got up and walked across the yard, and don't remember anything more until I found myself lying here this morning."

The poor fellow was unable to account for any motive for the assault. He smiled feebly when it was suggested that envy at his good fortune in respect to the girl Maggie was that probable cause, and reached over the bed-clothes for the hand of his pretty nurse as a glad smile came over his face as though proud to have suffered for such a cause.

The girl Maggie Schneider appeared to be in a pleasantly painful state of mind between her anxiety for the dying man and diffidence at the romantic position in which she found herself. Blushingly she admitted that Hugo, as she seemed pleased to call her wounded lover, was her affianced husband. For the wouldbe murderer she had none but indignant epithets. He was a loafer, a scoundrel, and everything that was ugly. He had pestered her with attentions and was forever disturbing her in the midst of her work, and telling her she would soon be "Mrs. Book."

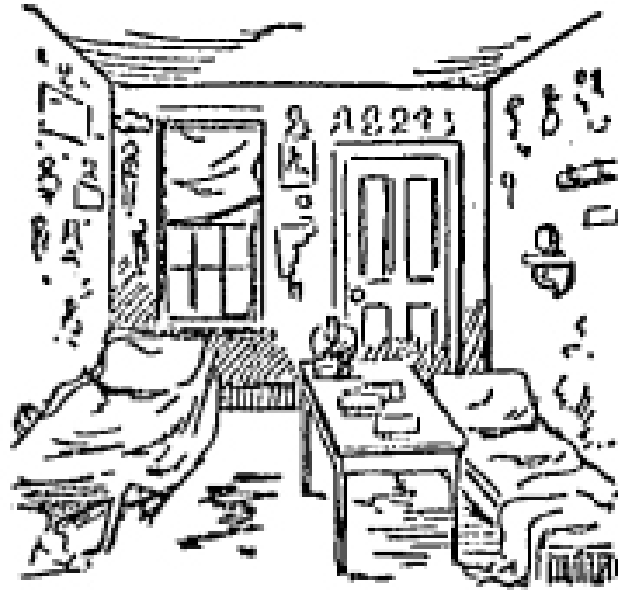
"O no, he never tried to kiss me," she said in reply to questions. "I would have slapped him in the face if he had attempted such a thing," and the little maiden drew herself up as though she would prove her power to fulfill the threat if necessary.

Trouble Had Been Feared

"I always thought it would end like this," said McGinnis, the bouquet gardener. "Both of them after the same girl and both of 'em watching the other like a cat watching a rat hole. Book, the boss always seemed to me to have the best of it, and many a time I have said to my wife as we have seen Albert looking in at the window where the two lovers could be seen sitting hand and hand. I have said 'There'll be trouble between them two German fellows yet; you'll see.' When I'd see him creepin' along like a snake to meet Maggie unawares – that is, where she'd have no notion of his turning up, I've thought to myself 'That man means mischief, or he wouldn't go skulkin' around like that.'

"I was in bed when the stabbing took place, but when I heard Book groaning in the next room I awakened my wife and said to her, 'That's Book and there's been trouble between him and Mincko.' When I came out and seen the blood rolling down the poor fellow's face, I says at once, 'Where's Mincko?' I didn't need to ask what was the trouble, I expected it right along.

Paul Kundt, who was lying in bed in the room where the murderous onslaught occurred, described the scene he witnessed in a dramatic fashion. "I was reading a paper on my bed when Hugo came in with the sheets for Albert's bed. He moved the lamp to get better light, when my paper was darkened and I looked up to ask him to give me some light. I saw Albert come in, and I noticed his eye shining bright as though he was drunk or crazy. He spoke to Hugo fiercely and Hugo answered him, telling him to go to bed. Hugo reached out for the lamp like this" – suiting the action to the word, "and the next minute I felt a great weight on my injured leg where Hugo had fallen. Albert then stooped, as I thought to lift Hugo from the bed, where he was crushing my injured leg, but instead of helping Hugo he only pressed him harder on the bed, and by the light of the lamp I could see a knife in Albert's hand the blade of which was covered with blood. Hugo cried out, 'I'm killed,' and before I could raise myself he had fainted and lay on my crushed foot like a dead man. I shouted as loud as I could, and my shouts aroused Hugo. He stood up and walked out of the room in the same direction which Albert had taken, and when I put my good leg out of bed I found the floor all wet with blood."



The Crime Scene

The men Fred and Frank, who spoke to Mincko immediately before the attempted murder, both corroborated the wounded man's statement as to Mincko's excited condition at the time. "I heard him say, 'Let him have the girl anyway; I don't want her,'" said Fred, "and I told him to keep quiet and go to bed peaceful like. I never wanted to be near him when he was mad, and I saw he was mad that night."

Description of the Wounds

The doctors who dressed the wounds say that it is little short of a miracle that the man was not instantly killed. The gash above the eye extends from the center of the forehead to the temple, completely severing the eyebrow, and the tissue of the jugular vein is cut. Should inflammation set in the last wound is pretty sure to be mortal.

The Forest Glen Floral Company is the largest concern of the kind west of New York. There are in the city under the control of the company four stores, three engaged in the retail trade and one in the wholesale. They are located at No. 86 State, No. 250 West Madison, No 557 West Madison, and No. 173 Wabash Avenue. The greenhouses at Forest Glen are built on an extensive scale, and number twenty-three in all, generally 200 feet in length. They cover considerable of the ground devoted to the culture of flowers, which contains in all about 154 acres. At Forest Glen are cultivated all the fine cut flowers that fill the retail houses mentioned. From twenty to twenty-five men are constantly employed at the garden, living in cottages erected by M. E. Page, the proprietor. The concern does a large share of the fine class of work and employs numerous decorators. From three to five men are employed at city stores as salesmen and decorators. The company conducted the decorating of Auditorium for the Republican National Convention. The beauty of the grounds at Forest Glen and the immense scale on which the flowers are cultivated have attracted many visitors. The Farm is supplied with its own waterworks, connecting with the river.

This Chicago Tribune article does a very good job at detailing life in 1888 in this future section of the northwest side of Chicago and clearly painting a graphic picture of this brutal assault. But one wonders what happened to the key people in this story. Did Hugo Book survive his attack and marry his sweetheart Margaret Schneider? Did Albert Mincko spend time in prison?

Most of these people faded away and were lost to history. The Forest Glen Floral Company, not proving profitable, soon closed its doors with owner Milton E. Page Sr. losing most of his fortune and never to be heard from again. One would guess that Margaret Schneider would get married and change her name. Albert Mincko disappeared completely and there are no records of any criminal trial found in the Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court archives. But it looks like Hugo Book survived the attack and raised a family

In the 1900 US Census there is a Hugo Book working as a florist living in Worcester, Massachusetts. Born in Germany in 1857 and immigrated in 1884 and marrying his wife Phlippinea in 1892. They had three children, two daughters, Mary and Emlia and one son Albert. While the dates and occupation seem to match up we cannot be certain this is the same Hugo Book and one would question why he would name his only son Albert.



Forest Glen Train Station in 1958

Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth