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In This Issue:

- **The Henry Esdohr House – Revisited**
- **St. John’s Lutheran Church – First 130 Years**
- Oh, the Good Ole Days - as told by Edna Coca**

The Jefferson Park Historical Society is thrilled to announce that Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park is now listed on the *National Register of Historic Places*. Through the hard work of Julia Bachrach from the Chicago Park District and the dedication and assistance of JPHS Board members Frank Suerth and Del Norwood, the park was nominated and finally named to the Register. Jefferson Park was included specifically due to criteria A & C, “Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to our history & Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.” This nomination required a significant amount of research (see the story “The Henry Esdohr House – Revisited” on page 4). Also, this nomination had to be approved by both the Chicago Landmark Commission and the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council before being placed on the National Register. We would like to express our gratitude to the generous volunteers and the Chicago Park District, who all came together to make this happen.

To celebrate this exciting landmark accomplishment, JPHS would like you to join us for an “Old Time Picnic in the Park,” to be held Sunday, July 16th from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Rediscover our “Central Park” and bring something to eat, a place to sit, and your favorite neighbors. We’ll provide some softball games and some fun—just like the old days!

Due to the Register nomination, we are working with the Chicago Park District to reopen the historic Henry Esdohr home to the public. This building is located on the East side of the park on Long Avenue and has been closed for the last few years. The Park District is currently conducting analyses to determine the appropriate steps to make it accessible once again.

As we continue to grow and evolve we need your continued support. We are in need of dedicated volunteers and new members. For more information, please contact us (contact information on inside cover.) – *Susanna Ernst*

Mission Statement:

As the Jefferson Park Historical Society, our mission is to educate others about the history of Jefferson Park and the surrounding areas 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 We will accomplish this through discussion at meetings, public tours and events, and dissemination of historical documents and photos through publications.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 neighborhood. By linking the past with the present and the future, we will provide an awareness and create an appreciation for our place in Chicago's and Illinois' history.

The Jefferson Park Historical Society

President: Susanna Ernst
Vice-president: Janet Taylor
Treasurer: Gail Weber

Board Members:

Frank Suerth • Del Norwood
Robert Bank • Marilyn Ebenstein

Membership:

\$10.00 per calendar year
\$7.00 for 62 years old and over

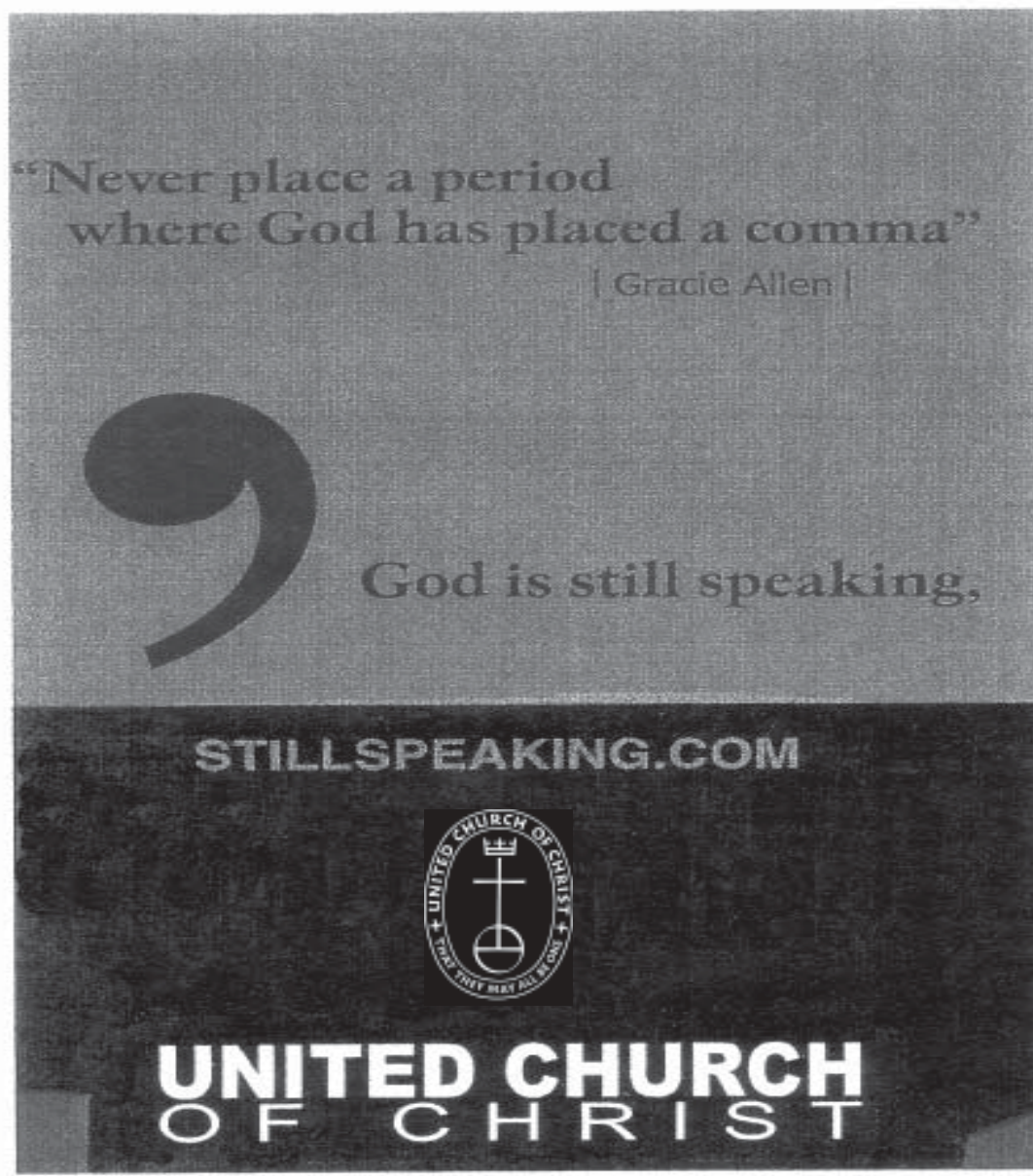
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The Henry Esdohr House – Revisited

We know a great deal about the Henry Esdohr house, which is located in Jefferson Park at 4820 N. Long Avenue. Up until a few years ago, it functioned as a craft shop. Before that, it was the first Jefferson Park branch library. (See *Jefferson Park Historical Society, January 2005 newsletter*) Originally, however, it was the home for Jefferson Park pioneer, Henry Esdohr, and it is probably the oldest surviving home in Jefferson Park. We also know the house was moved from 5425 Higgins Avenue to its present location on Long Avenue.

While we know many facts about the home, many pieces of information are missing. When was it built? When did Henry Esdohr purchase the property? How much of Henry's property was incorporated into the park? When was the house moved?

In the past year, the Jefferson Park Historical Society has been working with Julia Bachrach of the Chicago Park District to have the whole park (Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park) nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The Henry Esdohr house, which sits on park property, would be part of this nomination. The answer to these questions would be important elements on the nominating form. The JPHS has been able to answer some of these questions and has made educated guesses on others.



The Henry Esdohr house on the west side of Long Ave. in Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park.

Land records in the County Building reveal that Henry Esdohr first purchased the property at 5425 Higgins on December 19, 1874, from Judson Abbott and his wife Phebe of Hobart, Indiana. He paid them \$550. Unfortunately, the records only show the legal description of the land, rather than the buildings that are on the property. It is most likely that some kind of structure was on the property, as \$550 was a lot of money during that time for only a purchase of land. Of course, a brick building during this timeframe was very unlikely.

According to the 1880 census, Henry Esdohr and his family lived with a boarder at the Higgins address. This is certainly proof that a residence existed on the property, but is it the same house that was moved and now stands on Long Ave?

Another document indicates that a mortgage was taken out on the property. On August 4, 1884, Henry Esdohr and his wife Katie Esdohr took out a \$1000 mortgage on the property from Henry's brother, Herman Esdohr. We do not know how Henry spent the money, but it is certainly possible that he used it to build the brick home. And the brick style does match the timeframe, so our best guess on when the house was built would be 1884.



The shaded area on Higgins Ave. is the location of Henry Esdohr's property. Note, Long Ave. does not go thru north of Lawrence Ave.

1908 ca map

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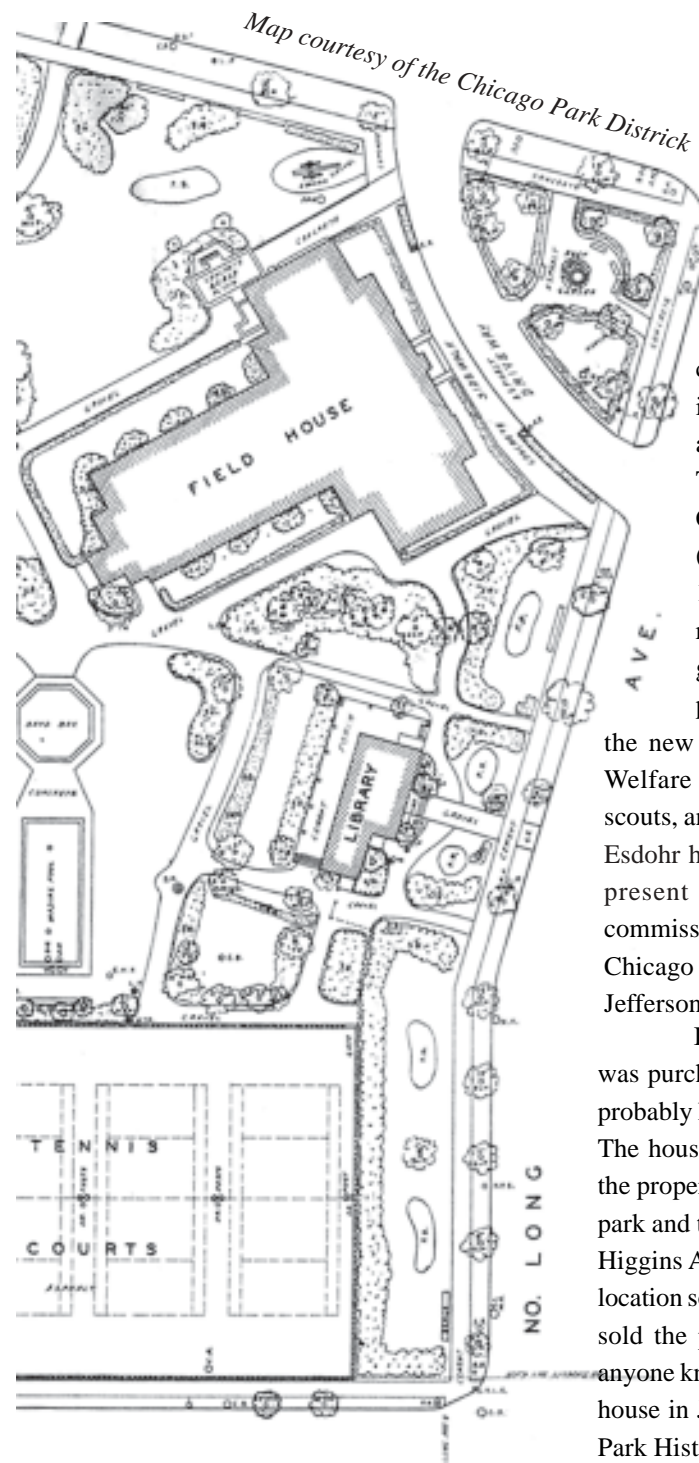
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The two dark lines are the location of where Long Avenue and the sidewalk will be built. Long Avenue will take away the eastern half of Henry Esdohr's property along with his barn, missing the house by only 6-1/2 inches. No doubt the location of the house to the new street was a deciding factor in relocating the structure.

Map courtesy of the Chicago Park District

When Henry Esdohr died on November 8, 1914, his wife Katherine Esdohr took over sole ownership of the Higgins property. According to park district documents, in March 1921, Katherine Esdohr agreed to sell her Higgins Ave. property with the house for \$8000. County records show the sale becoming final on May 2, 1921. The park commissioners had plans to move the house to its present location and reuse the house as the Jefferson Park Field House.



This 1936 map shows the new field house with the Esdohr house being used as a library. There is an octagon shaped sand box located west of the Esdohr house and a wading pool just south of the sand box.

According to Julia Bachrach, construction of the original park took place in the fall of 1921, initially with the moving and the rehabilitating of the Esdohr house. The first meeting of the Board of Commissioners in the new Field House (Esdohr House) took place on January 13, 1922. The Jefferson Park District soon received many requests from community groups and organizations requesting permission to hold meetings and events in the new Field House. These included the Infant Welfare Society, the Golden Rule Club, the boy scouts, and neighborhood improvement groups. The Esdohr house operated as the Field House until the present one was built around 1930. The park commissioners then transferred the building to the Chicago Public Library to allow for its use as the Jefferson Park Library.

In closing, we now know the Esdohr property was purchased in 1874, although Henry Esdohr was probably living here in Jefferson Park before this date. The house was probably built in 1884. One half of the property is now part of the northeast corner of the park and the other half is now part of Long Avenue at Higgins Avenue. The house was moved to its present location sometime around 1921 after Katherine Esdohr sold the property to the Jefferson Park District. If anyone knows any more information about the Esdohr house in Jefferson Park, please contact the Jefferson Park Historical Society.



A family picnic in Jefferson Park. Shown from left to right: Lorraine Hinsch, Walter Hinsch, Marlene Hinsch, Ed Hinsch and friend Eileen Kania. Shown in the back ground on the north side of Higgins from left to right: Edler Moving Company, Kramer's Sinclair Gas Station and the tower from the Russian Hotel. Photo ca 1942. During WW II, this area of the park along Higgins Avenue was dug up and planted as a "Victory Gardens".
Photo Courtesy of Ed Hinsch

The Jefferson Park Historical Society

Presents

Old Time Family Picnic in the Park

Lets celebrate the park's National Register of Historic Places designation.

Swimming - Games

Jefferson Park on July 16, 2006 - 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Bring a blanket, lawn chairs and some food & drinks

For more information call 773-725-5774 or e-mail suerth@surfnetcorp.com

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church – The First 130 Years

During the period from 1868 to 1875 (the Civil War just having come to an end) a large number of emigrants from the northern part of Germany came to America and settled near Chicago in a section, which was known as Jefferson Township. Most of these people took up truck farming, finding a ready market in nearby Chicago for their products. Lutheran churches were few and far between, the nearest one being in Niles. Chicago's only church was first St. Paul's and shortly thereafter two more churches were organized, First St. John's and First St. Bethlehem.

As the number of Lutheran emigrants increased in Jefferson Township, the Rev. A. Detzer, Sr., from Des Plaines contacted these Lutherans in the year 1874 in order to serve them spiritually with God's Word and the Sacraments. The first divine services were held for these scattered Lutherans in the English speaking Congregational Church of Jefferson, now located at London Avenue and Giddings Street. But at the time, this church stood on the west side of Milwaukee Avenue just north of what is now Giddings Street.

In the spring of 1875 Pastor Detzer gathered a number of men in the home of Mr. N. Salamann. This meeting led to the organization of the Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Church of Town Jefferson, which was the original name for the Congregation and it was in the German language.



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St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church,
Class - 1928.

This photo shows the Confirmation class of 1928 inside the old church.

Photos Courtesy of St. John's Lutheran Church

A constitution was also drawn up in German and was adopted October 3, 1875. It was signed by the following voting members: John Lorenz, Karl Behning, Edward Kuester, Fred Mahler, Wm. Frick, Karl Meyer, Joachim Ganschow, Karl Sass, John Karnatz, Karl Willig, W. Suchow, Reimer Schmook, Fred Jacobs and John Hamann.

Within a few months plans were made for the erection of a church. In the spring of 1876 three lots were bought on Montrose and Lavergne Ave. A frame church, thirty by fifty feet, with steeple and brick basement was erected and dedicated on October 14, 1876. The basement was later used for school and parsonage.

The need for a resident pastor caused the congregation to call the Rev. Fr. Brunn, who was the assistant to Rev. Reinke in First Bethlehem Church. Pastor Brunn was installed in December 1876 at a monthly salary of \$33.33. He served until December 1881.


The first church custodian, Henry Rohloff, received \$12.00 per year. The total cost for lots and church building was \$3,758. of which \$3,000. was borrowed. The collection at the corner stone laying amounted to \$48.93 on July 30, 1876 and at the church dedication service, October 14, 1876, \$93.00. The total plate collections from March to December, 1876, amounted to \$44.62, ranging from 29 cents per Sunday to \$8.93, the highest on Thanksgiving, November 26, 1876.



The first St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church on the corner of Montrose and Lavergne with the brick parsonage on the left. This church was built in 1874 and was replaced in 1930.



This sign in the photo reads St. John's School II Class. Ca 1898 Courtesy of St. John's



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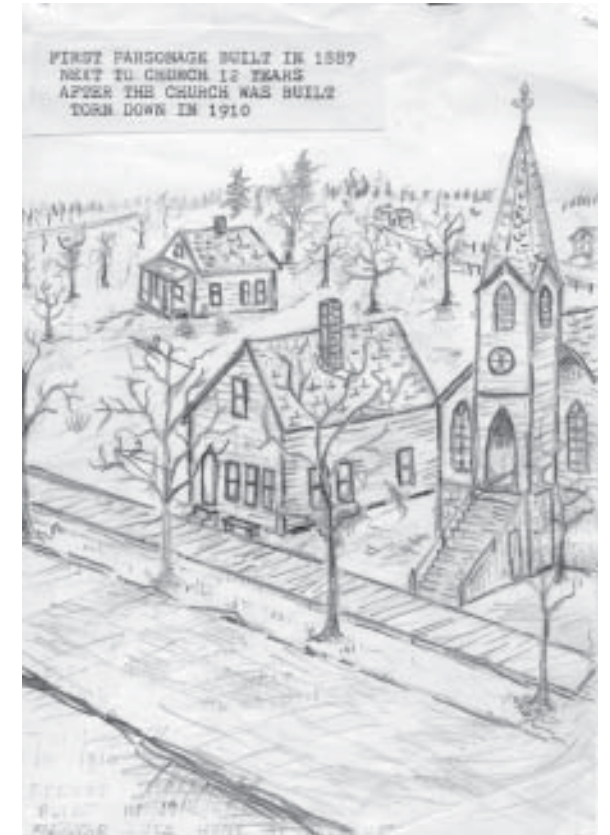
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The Rev. Paul Luecke was called in November, 1886 from Merrill, Wisconsin to serve as pastor at St. John's Church. He was privileged to serve here for fifty-one years in the active ministry and for six years as honorary pastor.

In 1890 the congregation had outgrown the old church and an addition, forty by sixty feet, increased the seating capacity to 800. The first pipe organ was also installed at that time. Two new schoolrooms were provided on the ground floor of the church. Dedication took place September 14, 1890.

In June, 1903, it was decided to grant a peaceful release to twenty-six families for the purpose of organizing their own congregation, now known as St. Paul's church located on Canfield Road. In 1908 the congregation enlarged its property by purchasing several lots situated between the church and the old parsonage. The wooden parsonage was erected in 1911, replacing one, which had served since 1887. The parish school, consisting of four classrooms, basement playroom and heating plant, was erected in 1915.

In November, 1919, it was decided to conduct one English service per month. Up to that time all services were conducted in the German language. In 1924 a second English service was added. At the present time there are still some services conducted in German.



A sketch of the first St. John's on Montrose Avenue with the wooden parsonage on the left. This parsonage was built in 1911. Notice the lack of houses in the background.

Sketch Courtesy of St. John's Lutheran Church

St. John's Timeline			
1875	Church Planned (Charter)	1930	Present Church -
1876	Church Completed -		Dedicated October 5, 1930
	Dedicated October 14, 1876	1948	Parking Lot Purchased
1887	First Parsonage	1957	Choir Room and Office Built
1890	Addition to the Church	1958	Present Parsonage
1911	Wooden Parsonage built	1963	Home for teachers
1915	School		



Confirmation Class of 1938

First row, L to R – Elfrida Veller, Helen Weiss, Doris Wade, Esther Steigerwald, Paster Blanke, Therese Joseph, Myrtle Rosenow, Anna Preisel, Irma Wiegand

Second row, L to R – William Heide, unknown girl, Lois Consoer, Lorraine Schmitt, unknown girl, Emilie Ott, Lillian Schneider, Gladys Colum, Irene Eilken, Betty Ahrens, Henry Arnold

Third row, L to R – John Gorr, Dorothy Strieter, Betty Lorenz, Lillian Oehlert, unknown girl, Frieda Hoppe, Dorothea Altergott, unknown girl, unknown girl, unknown girl, Matthew Schilz

Forth row, L to R – Fred Schneider, Ernest Greinke, Rohen Blanke, Rohr Eichelkraut, George MacArthur, Raymond Linke, Carl Wiegand, Henry Lutzow,

Top row, L to R – Rohr Llewellen, Harvey Wickholdt, John Groh, Henry Kraus, Martin Kozeloh, Richard Basner, Edgar Haellen, Siegfried Rein, Armin Grams, Wilbert Sawusch, William Wegner,

The six unknown girls would be: Dorothy Groh, Anna Groh, Myrtle Gullickson, Lillian Halt, Eleanore Hoppe and Joyce Schultz



This four-lane bowling alley is still in operation in St. John's basement.

After some years of planning the erection of our beautiful and striking church edifice was begun during 1929 and completed in 1930. Built of colored Indiana limestone and its beauty has increased during the past years. The graceful tower, with a testifying cross on top, and its artistic stone tracery, completes the harmonious design. The interior is light and cheerful, with beautiful art windows, decorated trusses and paneled ceiling, deep alter niche with canopied, and altar reredos, pulpit and lectern are all artistically carved. The old bell, which for fifty-four years served in the tower of the old church, was installed and continues to extend its pleading invitation to a metropolitan neighborhood.

Strong faith with a beautiful church, the congregation of St. John's Lutheran church has been an anchor in the Jefferson Park community for the last 130 years. Surely they will remain so for many years to come.

**Join The Jefferson Park Historical Society on October 8, 2006 – 2:00 PM
At St. John's Lutheran Church – Montrose and Lavergne.
A short oral history of St. John's will be given followed by a tour
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Oh, the Good Ole Days

As told by Edna Coca, to Judy Knueppel in 2001

Edna Coca, whose maiden name was Wodrich, was born February 11, 1906 in the house that still stands at 4844 Montrose. She was baptized at St. John's Lutheran Church and a life long member. She always lived in the neighborhood until she moved to the Lutheran Home in Arlington Heights, IL in 2000. Edna has many fond memories of her earlier days and shares some of them with us.

My mother was very active at St. John's and so was my father. I was always perplexed why my mother had to bring so many casseroles and baked items to church functions and still have to buy a ticket to eat. I never understood that.

Across the street from the church and parsonage lived a family named of THAKE. He was a carpenter and built the house that is now next to the playground. He put a cross on the roof because it was so close to the church. What is now the parking lot was just prairie and I was so afraid to go through the prairie lot because of snakes. I can't tolerate snakes! On the north side of Montrose just east of LaPorte was the MULCHERN's apple orchard.

I still remember the old frame church. When it was torn down to start building the new church, we all went to the Wilson Park Field House for worship services.

The church and school picnic was always a fun outing. It was held at Kolze Grove on Irving Park Road. It would always be a July 4th picnic and the school children would ride in wagons pulled by horses. The wagons would have red, white and blue buntings on them and the children would all have a little American flags to wave. This was important because we were German and they wanted us to show patriotism. Oh, how exciting and how important we all felt riding down the street waving flags.

Note: Edna Coca died on April 1, 2004

Wanted:

Concerned Residents of Jefferson Park
at the JPNA meetings 7:00 PM
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**Jefferson Park History on Sale on the Internet
This \$20 bill was found on eBay and sold for \$650.00!**



The Jefferson Park National Bank was the first bank in Jefferson Park. The bank obtained a national charter as opposed to a state charter. The standards were higher for a national charter, which enabled the bank to actually issue currency in accordance with the U. S. Treasury regulations.

The bank was chartered on October 5, 1911 and their charter number 10108 appears on the left and right side of this bill. Their name, The Jefferson Park National Bank of Chicago Illinois is also shown. On the lower right side of the bill you can see the signature of the bank president Fred Esdohr. The Jefferson Park National Bank was located at the southwest corner of Milwaukee & Lawrence and closed its doors for the last time on June 28, 1932.



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