



Northwest Chicago Historical Society

Your Neighborhood Historical Society

Newsletter July 2019

Number XXX

**A Chicago Bungalow • Joseph Schepis – Shoe Repairman
Growing up in Jefferson Park • John Burmeister – Truck Farmer
Chicago Fire Department Engine 69 • Mayfair Station**

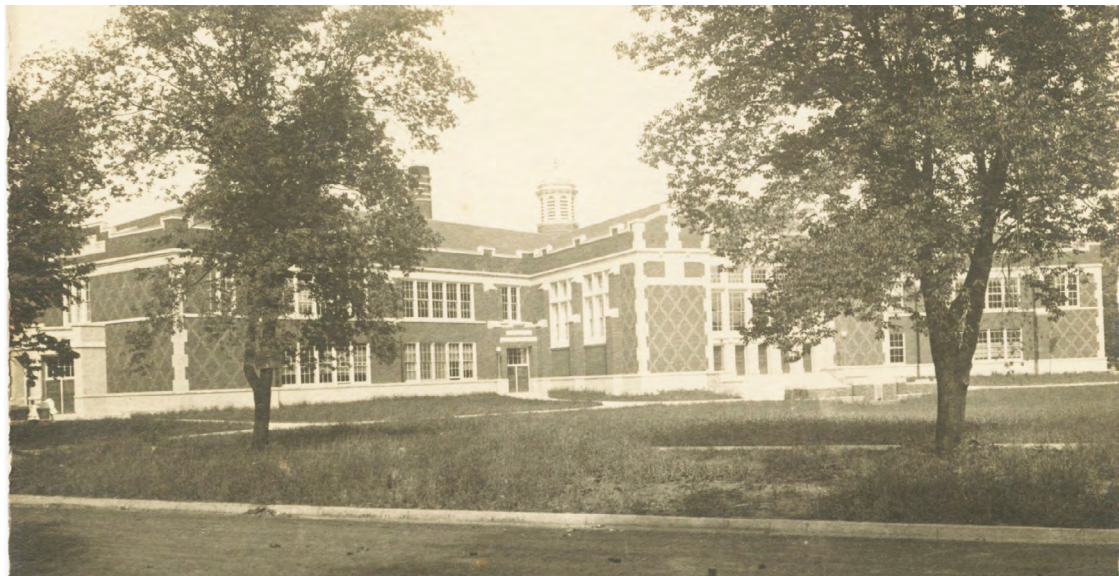
The Northwest Chicago Historical Society is proud to present our 30th newsletter. After printing stories about our local communities for over 15 years, we continue to uncover interesting stories about the past. Our articles are sourced from newspapers, old texts, and archival documents, including pamphlets and photos from the Chicago Public Libraries, local universities, and the Chicago History Museum. They are also sourced from local citizens who have documented information from relatives, friends, and neighbors who are long gone.

This issue showcases two immigrants who settled in Chicago: Joseph Schepis and John Burmeister. After they arrived from their home countries, they proceeded to open businesses and raise families on the Northwest Side. While the men came from different countries, they shared the same desire for a better life. They became a part of the Chicago melting pot and represent the histories of thousands of people who live in our city today.

If you have an interesting documented story or photos from the past of the Northwest side, please reach out to us. We would love to hear from you. Have a wonderful summer! - *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 We will accomplish this through discussion at meetings, public tours and events, and dissemination of historical documents and photos through publications.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.



Norwood Park School

Keep track of what is happening at the Northwest Chicago Historical Society

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NW Chicago Historical Society

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Membership:

\$15.00 per calendar year
\$10.00 for 65 years old and over

Phone: 773-736-4974

Letters

Letters may have been edited for clarity and space

I am looking for information regarding the history of the old building located at 6691 N Olmsted Ave. It says "Ridgewood" above the entrance however I have not been able to find anything about its history online. Let me know if there are any links to articles or anyone knows anything about it, -Thank you!

Katelyn - Edison Park

You may try this one:

https://localwiki.org/chicago/Northwest_Chicago_Historical_Society

Modern "Northwest Highway" (then Edison Park Avenue, a renamed piece of Rand Road) was completely residential, and there were a few stores along the Olmsted Avenue corridor between Oliphant and Olmsted. A hotel (now the Ridgewood Apartment building) was constructed east of Oliphant. Many outer subdivisions had hotels, where people shopping for land might stay, and the proprietors also promoted it as a place to stay (only two train rides away from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Hyde Park). It was later used as a health resort. - NWCHS

An early newspaper ad from before Edison Park was incorporated into Chicago.

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Oshkosh & Olmsted in 1914 in Edison Park. Looking west with the train tracks on the left.



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Letters

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Can you help me find out who manages the Dunning Cemetery? One of my Great Great Uncle's is buried there. I can't find out much about him ... if he was married and whatnot thru Ancestry. com. Hope you can help/
Thank you!

Lisa Martin – Dallas, Texas

No one manages that cemetery. There are about 30,000 people buried in multiple places on the old Dunning grounds. There are no markers on any grave. The cemetery was operated by Cook County and was mostly a Potter's Field. No records were kept. We cannot tell where the cemeteries stopped or started. In some cases, people were buried on top of each other because they forgot where they buried people earlier. There are people also buried under Oak Park Avenue. - NWCHS

The map on the right is compiled with old satellite images overlaid on top of each other. It shows one of the later Dunning Cemeteries, located north of Irving Park Road and south of Forest Preserve Drive under Oak Park Avenue. This cemetery filled up and it was soon necessary to bury people outside of its boundaries.

Map compiled by Matt Schademann & Frank Suerth





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A Chicago Bungalow Surrenders its Stories

Photos and text by Frank Suerth

Some interesting discoveries were made when remodeling a 1914 bungalow in the Jefferson Park Neighborhood.



The walls of the home were made of planks that are labeled with the lumberyard was used in the building of the house. Edward Hines Lumber Company's Irving Park Branch at 3849 Milwaukee Ave. was used as a source as well as Northside Lumber & Timber Co. at Lincoln Ave. and Grace St.

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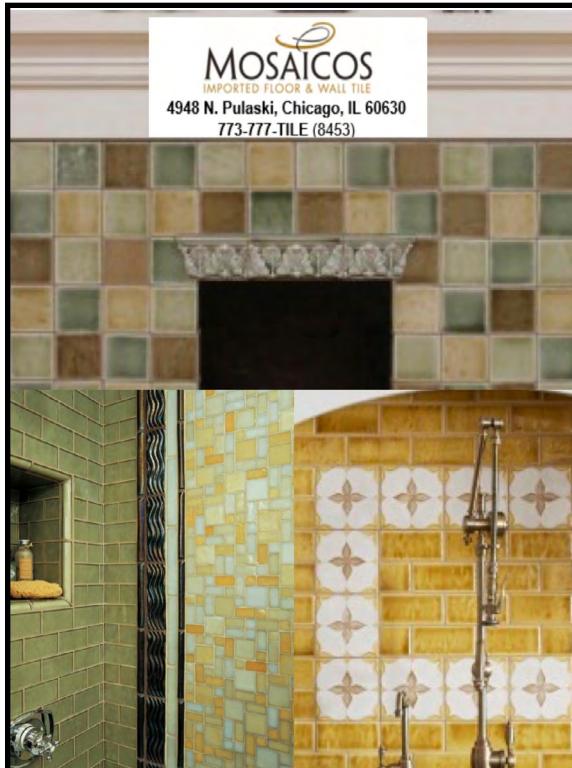
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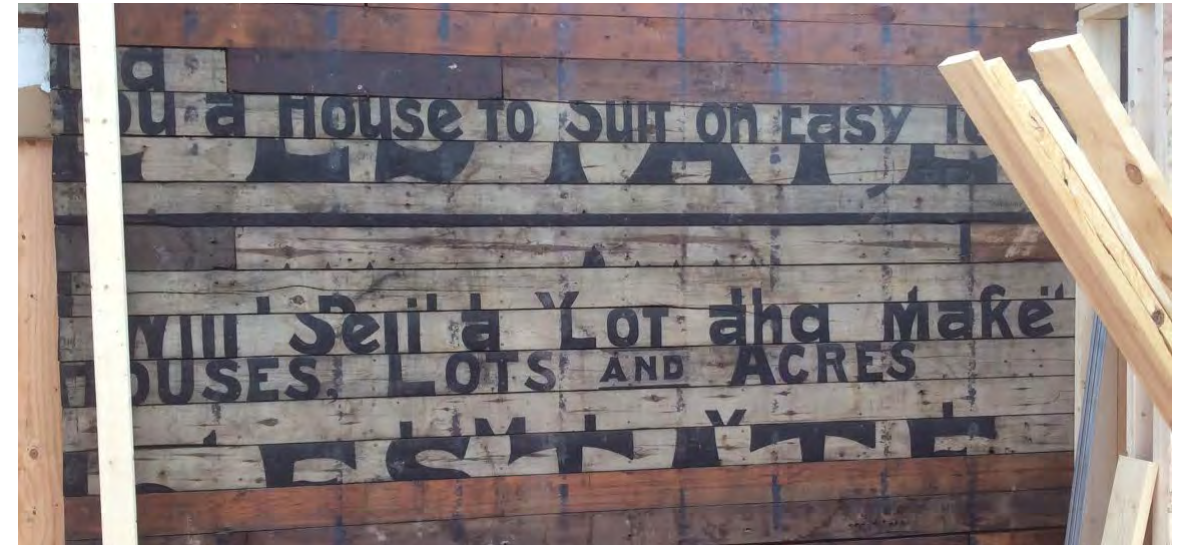
Anyone who remodels their house usually discovers old newspapers. This paper is dated August 14, 1915.



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When the exterior bricks were removed, they exposed recycled wood older than the house itself, no doubt from a sign advertising land for sale in the neighborhood. A Jewel "Take Home" ice cream insulated bag was found in the wall. This was from a time before home refrigeration when one purchase ice cream and quickly consumed it after arriving home.

Joseph Schepis – Shoe Repairman

By Frank Suerth



The photo (ca 1920) is the inside of a shoe repair shop at 4160 W. Irving Park Road. Shown in the photo, from left to right, Joseph's son Phil, an employee "Teddy" and Joseph Schepis. *Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*

Joseph Schepis was born on March 9, 1884 in Sicily and married his wife Anna in Italy. Around 1907, they immigrated to America and settled in Chicago. By 1918, they had four children, Mary, Tony, Phil and Anna, all living at 4160 W. Irving Park Road - living the American dream.

While the building at 4160 W Irving Park Road is long gone, most likely removed for the Kennedy Expressway, it housed the family and Joseph's business, a shoe repair shop. Joseph owned the building and the shop and repaired shoes at least until 1942 if not longer.

Joseph died in March of 1958 (about the same time the expressway came through the northwest side) and he is buried in St. Joseph Cemetery in River Grove, IL



Joseph Schepis' shoe repair shop at 4160 W. Irving Park Road. Shown in the photo from left to right, Joseph's son Tony – peeking over the pile of shoes, Joseph's wife Anna, Joseph Schepis and an unknown employee. *Photo Courtesy of Matthew Wolf*

The Northwest Chicago History Society




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Betty Juska - Growing up in Jefferson Park

The NWCHS met with Betty Juska a lifelong resident of Jefferson Park and a retired Chicago Public School teacher. She still lives in a house across the street from the Jewel Grocery store on the 4700 block of Luna that her grandmother purchased in 1925.

While walking around the neighborhood, Betty points out locations of long gone places. There were chicken coops between Central and Linder and a little north of Lawrence. But now the noise of airplanes flying overhead replaces the noise of the chickens and the squeal of the trolley cars. Where the Saint Robert Bellarmine Community Spirit Garden is located at Edmunds, Central and Higgins, was a gas station. The new Starbucks at the southwest corner of Lawrence & Central was the location of a grocery store. But most grocery shopping was done at the old Jewel (the building was recently torn down) on Lawrence across from the Gateway Theater (now the Copernicus Center). Other shopping was done at the business district of Milwaukee & Lawrence. Some people not living nearby would take buses to Jefferson Park to do their shopping.

Betty has memories of ice skating at Jefferson Memorial Park and going to the Times Theater on Milwaukee at Higgins where she met her boy friend.

Where the Jewel property is now located, there were three baseball diamonds, one at the corner of Lawrence & Central, one just south on Central and one at the corner of Lawrence and Luna. On the south end of the Jewel property there were some trees and picnic tables where you could eat your lunch. In the winter, water would freeze at the south end, which provided iceskating. After Christmas, everyone in Jefferson Park would bring their Christmas trees to Luna and Giddings and the neighborhood kids would have bonfires in the empty lots. A gas station was later built on the southeast corner of Lawrence and Central replacing the baseball diamond. When Jewel purchased the property, all the neighbors signed petitions in an attempt to stop Jewel from building on their park.



The Times Theater on Milwaukee Avenue is where Betty Juska met her boy friend.



This 1939 photo is of the Bulldogs team, most likely this is the Schurz High School Bulldogs football team, taken at the southeast corner of Central and Lawrence. The Blocks Pharmacy on the northeast corner can be seen on the right in the photo. Betty Juska recalled going into the drug store for the soda fountain ice cream and sodas. Doctor offices were upstairs from the drug store.

Schurz High School had some temporary classrooms located on the northwest corner of this intersection. These portable classrooms were a group of tar papered shacks, ground in mud and connected by wooden sidewalks, heated by coal stoves. They were there for freshmen because there was no room at the main campus of Schurz.

Chicago Fire Department Engine 69

From letters written by Ken Little



Irving Park Engine 69 • 4017 N. Tripp Ave • Chicago, IL 60641

The horse-drawn equipment, while shown from the front, is quite revealing of Fire Dept. life at that time. In those days, pistoons consisted of 10 men, and all the men were on duty, except for one day off every 7 days. Firemen did not cook in the station in those days, but ate 1 or 2 at a time at a local restaurant, boardinghouse, or home if it was within an hour's mealtime, the time allotted for meals. Note the Captain (with 2 bugles on his cap) sitting on the right on the horse wagon – the position he took when responding to alarms of fire. The Lieutenant is sitting to the right on the “Steamer”. Note that four horses were used to pull the hose wagon and steamer, indicating heavy first-line equipment. Incidentally one of the arguments put forth to motorize the Fire Dept, was this: The four horses ate three times every day, whether they responded to alarms or not, while the motorized pumper “ate” gasoline only while the motor was running, responding to alarms or pumping at fires. The motor pumper could maintain a speed of 25 to 30 mph for many miles while the horse would tire out on long runs (over two miles). Then too – one motorized pumper replaced both horse-drawn vehicles, eliminating many old wagons, steamers and spare rigs required, allowing more space in the fire stations and eliminating the daily care of feeding, tending, and the odors (manure) associated with horses. Fire Stations were remodeled in the mid-twenties by removing the horse stables in the rear of the stations and utilizing this space for kitchens, so firemen could remain on duty in the station 24 hours a day to be more available to respond to fires, and not be away from the Fire Station at meal times.



Another view of the original Firehouse on Tripp

The area known as “Irving Park” is part of Jefferson Township, which was annexed to Chicago effective July 15, 1889. A volunteer Fire Dept. was already formed and continued operation under the control of the Chicago Fire Dept.

The Firehouse property on Selwyn Ave (Tripp), was purchased on October 11, 1890, the lot size was 50' x 155.93'. A Fire Station, a two-story wood frame was built soon after. On March 31, 1891, Hose Co. 8 was organized, “Selwyn Ave,” Irving Park. The Hose Co. operated a four-wheel wagon pulled by 1 horse carried 600' of 2-1/2" hose, connected to a hydrant, used hydrant pressure and roster of 4 men. On August 6, 1892, Hose Co. 8 was replaced by Engine 69, operating a horse-drawn stream fire engine plus the hose wagon requiring a roster of nine men.

The horse drawn fire equipment was replaced in 1922 by a 1919 “Bulldog” Mack that carried a hose and pumped 650 gpm. The frame Fire Station was abandoned on January 20, 1936 and torn down soon thereafter. Engine Co. 69 was located in temporary quarters while the present station was constructed in 1936 with funds of FDR's New Deal program. Engine Co. 69 moved back to the new house on October 31, 1936 and has remained ever since.



Photo taken in 1956

All three of these photos were taken by Ken Little

A couple of interesting sidelights, the first local Fire Chief was organized at Engine 69's old house on January 15, 1913 when Michael J. Corrigan organized the 22nd Fire Battalion. The Chief was the first due at all fire alarms in the area north of Diversey, west of the Chicago River to the City Limits north and west. Quite a large district! Chief Corrigan became Fire Commissioner in 1937 (after serving in downtown fire districts) and kept his official fire car in 69's house as he lived in "The Villa" first, and then moved on Keystone Ave. north of Irving Park Rd. some time in the 1940's – Exact date unknown.



Photo taken in 1961



Photo taken in 1973



The Firehouse looks. Notice the arched doorway has been enlarged most likely to accept newer and larger equipment.

Photo was taken by Frank Suerth

The listing of the former addresses for Engine 69's Firehouse – the same building at the same spot – over the years:

1. Selwyn Ave. Irving Park
2. 2458 N. 42nd Ct.
3. 4017 N. 42nd Ct.
4. 4017 N. Kenosha Ave.
5. 4017 N. Tripp Ave.

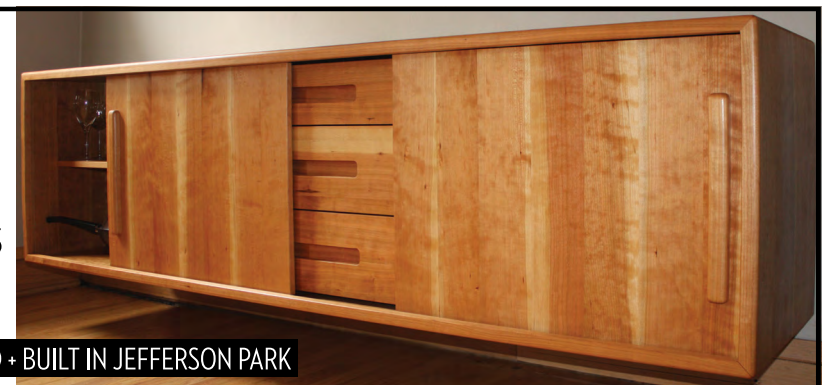
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John Burmeister – Truck Farmer

By Frank Suerth

John Burmeister was born in Holstein, Germany in August of 1883. At the age of one year old, he came with his parents, Joachim (Joseph) & Caroline, to Chicago to start a new life. Joachim was a farmer and also raised his son John as one. They were tenant farmers and rented an 80-acre farm at Belmont & Harlem from James McGawn of the Montclare neighborhood of Chicago.

On February 17, 1911, 27-year-old John Burmeister married 17-year-old Annie Simmerman and took over his father's business. Working the land was hard work but selling his produce was equally as hard.

About four times a week, John would start at midnight driving his team of horses and wagon filled with produce south to Grand Avenue then east to Randolph Street, arriving shortly before 4 am. He would sell his produce until his wagon was empty, usually between 9 am and noon then would start on his four hour trip back to the farm.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, there were 1,300 members of the Cook County Trunk Gardeners' Association in 1911. With farms ranging from 10 to 100 acres, all were competing with John Burmeister in some way or another.



John Burmeister, seated at the reins of his "Truck." This photo was most likely taken at his farm near Belmont and Harlem, possibly sometime in the Fall. The trees shown on the right in the background could be fruit trees.



John Burmeister sitting on the back of his wagon.

Census records show, John and Anna had three children: Ella born about 1912, John born about 1914 and Clara born about 1917. Sometime in the early 1930's, John Burmeister purchased his own farm on Mannheim Road in Leyden Township. In the 1940 Census, Ella is shown married to William Piske with three children, all living with her parents, John and Anna, and no doubt helping out on the farm. John Burmeister died in 1953 and is buried in Union Ridge Cemetery in Chicago

Historian Kenneth J. Knack, indicated that John Burmeister is credited with killing the last timber wolf in the area, near Osceola and Belmont Avenues.

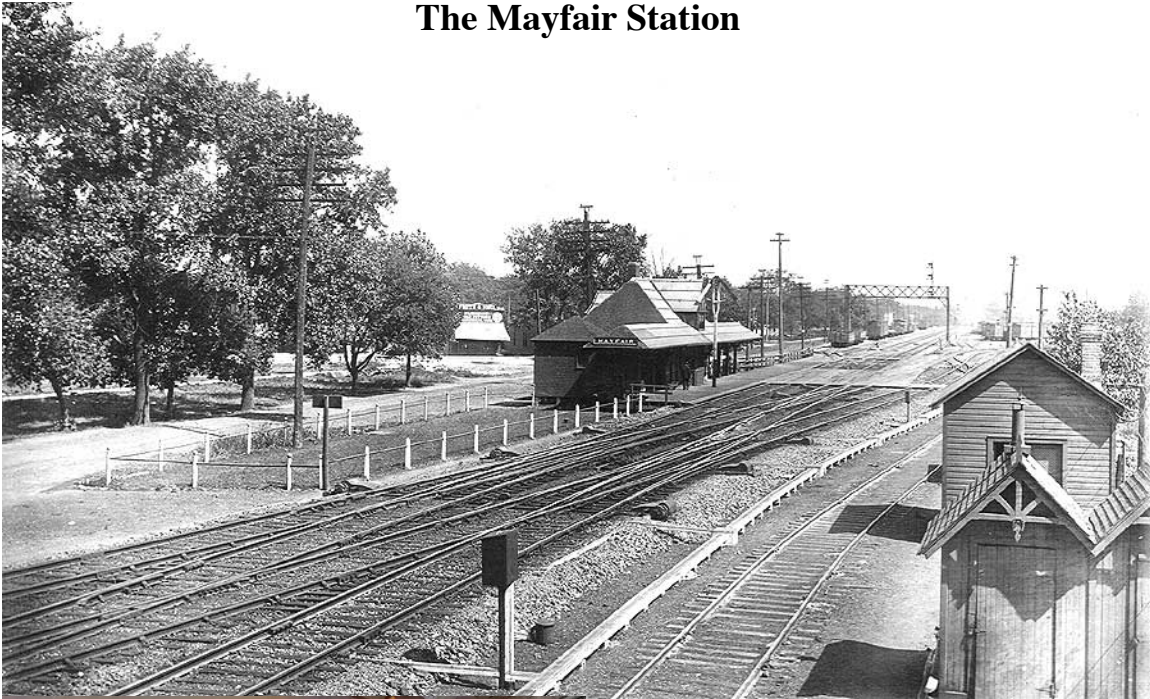
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The Mayfair Station



At present time, two train tracks run through Mayfair. The photo above of the Mayfair Station was taken before the tracks were elevated in 1927 to remove dangerous grade crossings.

Photo Courtesy of Joe Pierson - C&NWHS Archives

The photo at the left is all that remains of a closed Mayfair Station located at Montrose and the Kennedy entrance ramp. Union Pacific/Metra trains on this track, head towards Jefferson Park and follows Northwest Highway continuing Arlington Heights, Barrington and Harvard, (Northwest Line).

Photo was taken by Frank Suerth

24.



Aftermath of the 1977 fire at the Mayfair Station, west side (Kilpatrick side) viewed from the ground. The fire was started by kids.

Photos Courtesy of the Valentine Collection

25.



Photos of the aftermath of the fire of the red brick station platform. Outbound (North Line) Metra trains continue to Forest Glen all the way to Fox Lake. ca 1977

Photos Courtesy of the Valentine Collection

Photo on the right, the Station in 2019, looking outbound. The Mayfair Pumping Station chimney, at Wilson Avenue, can be seen in the center of the photo. The aesthetic red bricks have been covered with asphalt and the shelter is now a plexiglas structure similar to the corner CTA bus stop shelters.

Photo was taken by Frank Suerth





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