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## Northwest Chicago Historical Society

*Your Neighborhood Historical Society*

Newsletter July 2022

Number XXXVI

### Trading Stamps • The Bormans • Ella LaBagh

This summer's edition of the Northwest Chicago Historical Society's newsletter includes a short history and pictorial of something that many of us can recall: trading stamps. As early as the 1890s, retailers began distributing trading stamps as way to build loyalty to their brands, and the practice continued well past the middle of the twentieth century. Chicagoans and other Midwesterners fondly remember both the "green stamps" and the "plaid stamps" that were attached to booklets to exchange for household goods.

In other business news of the past, the Northwest Side proudly housed the longest running family owned shoe business in one location in the city of Chicago. The Borman family sold shoes from their business at 4806 N. Milwaukee for over one hundred years. Coming to the area before it was part of Chicago, they became pillars in the business community and helped bring commercial prosperity to Milwaukee Avenue.

Finally, we meet Ella Labagh, a strong leader and environmentalist who helped lead the campaign to preserve natural districts near rivers on the Northwest Side. This campaign eventually led to the establishment of the Cook County Forest Preserves in 1915. Locals will recognize her, as she is the namesake of the popular and bucolic La-bagh Woods.

We hope you are having an amazing summer. Thank you for reading the NWCHS newsletter. - *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 We will accomplish this through discussion at meetings, public tours and events, and dissemination of historical documents and photos through publications.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.



Visit our website: <http://nwchicagohistory.org>

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

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# Letters

*Letters may have been edited for clarity and space*

Good Evening, I was wondering if you knew which families settled/owned the land that was considered Orchard Place before it was designated to become a military plane production area.

Kelsey Henneberg

*No, but you can read one of our old newsletters about Orchard Place. The main part of town was outside of the airport foot print. - NWCHS*

<https://nwchicagohistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/NWCHS-July-2016.pdf>

Do you have pics of Montclare/Galewood?

Martin Tong - Chicago

*Yes we do have some like the one below. - NWCHS*



Sabath's Department Store was located at 7167 W. Grand Avenue. It was a family business that was open from the 1930s to the 1980s in the Grand and Harlem shopping district. Photo from a Sabath's Department Store promotional postcard.





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# Letters

*Letters may have been edited for clarity and space*

Thanks so much for all you do. I always look forward to every issue as I enjoy reading each and every one.

Patrica (Dunn) Hall - Huntley IL  
NWCHS Member

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Thank you for the January 2022 NWCHS newsletter. The article on stables brought back memories of when I and my friend would pay to ride horses on trails along the DesPlaines River. We had such a great love of the horses. Do not remember name of the horse I asked to ride. He was so easy to ride.

Charlotte Robledo - Bayport, MN  
NWCHS Member

---

Good Day, My early years were spent growing up on the Northwest side in the Forest Glen area. This would have been the late 50's - early 60's. The home address was 5505 N. Forest Glen at the corner of Latham.

I have been going through my parents old photographs and slides and digitally recording them and would be happy to share them with the NCHS if you are interested.

Kind Regards,  
Chuck Eichhorst - Michigan

*We are always looking for old photos to share with everyone. - NWCHS*

---

I have been donating items to local historical societies in the Chicagoland area. When I was a youngster my mom and grandmother did much of their shopping in the Jefferson Park area. I have retail stamp books that many merchants honored.

Such as Annies (which was a department store on Milwaukee Av) Gold Bell, Plaid Stamp Saver Book, Top Value, Tiny Bonds. Have coupons from Abrams, Kean, Top tv value, Bulko, Martin, Carl Werner, Gronau Pharmacy, King Korn, W&K cash discount.

Thanking you, please let me know either way, if interested. If not, could you give me a referral who might be interested.

Thanks again,  
Joyce Bracke - Norwood Park

*Thank you Joyce! All donations can be sent to: NWCHS, P. O. Box 30067, Chicago, IL 60630. We will share some of these stamp images on the following pages. - NWCHS*



## Trading Stamps

Lick 'em, stick 'em, save 'em and trade 'em for quality merchandise

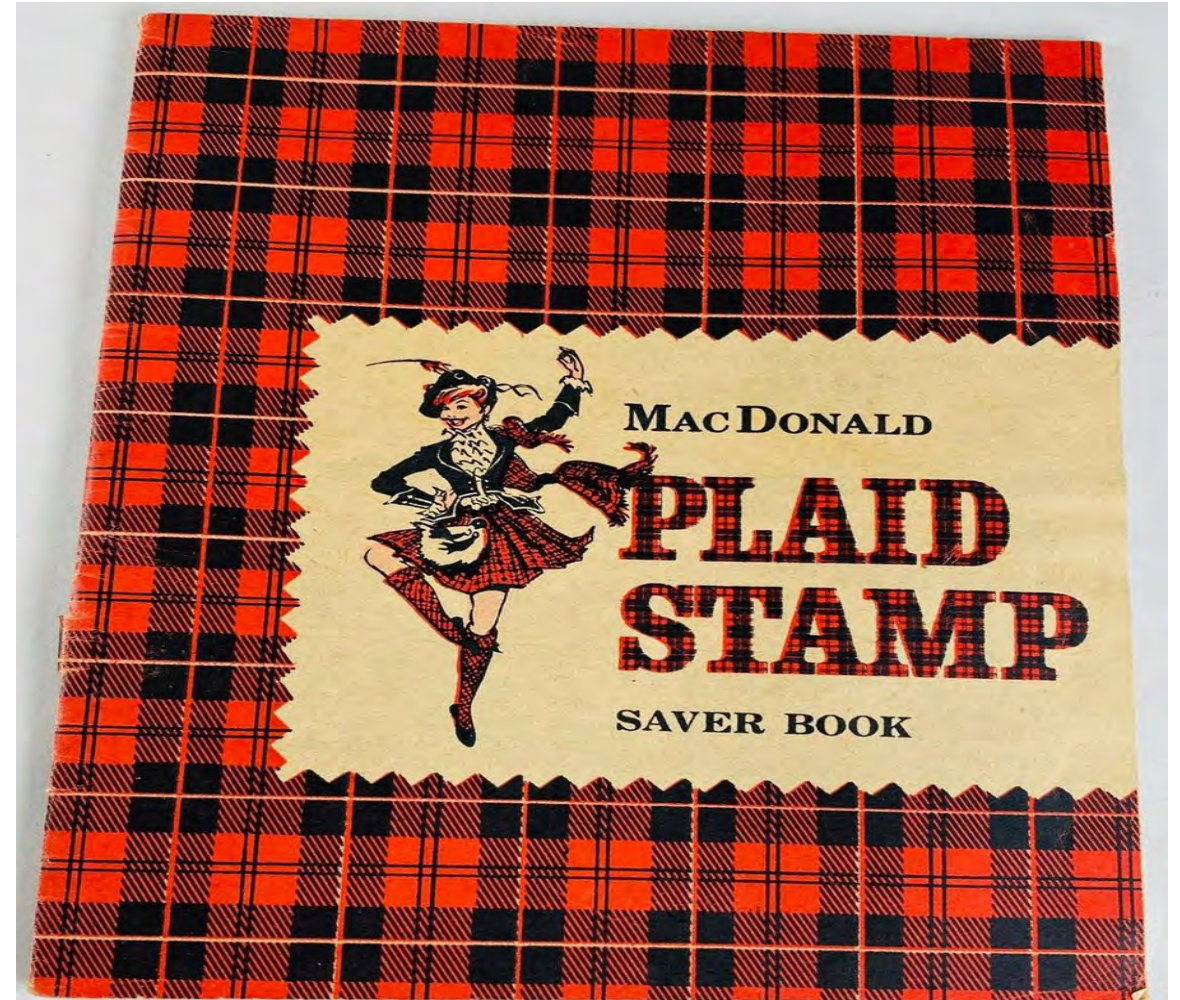
by Frank Suerth

Trading stamps were the original loyalty program for retail stores. Most retail stores and gas stations gave away stamps for purchases, and usually the stamps were valued at 10¢ per \$1.00 purchased. Stamps were then added to a stamp book by the customer and full books were redeemed at a redemption center for household goods. Some retailers printed their own stamps to be redeemed for a dollar amount for merchandise at their own store.



S & H Green Stamps, (called “green stamps” by most people), along with Plaid Stamps, were the most popular stamps in the midwest. Licked stamps were fastened into the stamp company’s books. Both had nicely printed redemption catalogs for consumer stamp collectors’ fill up books for picking out premiums.

6.



Plaid Stamp Book

It all started in 1891, when a Wisconsin department store started giving saving stamps. Soon other retailers followed and by 1896 the first national stamp company was established. It is estimated that by 1957 there were 200 trading stamp companies operating in the United States.

Not all merchants were fond of giving away stamps because they had to purchase the stamps from these national companies. Some tried to get local laws passed banning the practice, but most accepted the program because of their competitors were offering them.

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Outside cover of Annes Department Store stamp book. Not only does it advertise their department store, but they sold advertising space for a local bank to help pay for the printing of this book.



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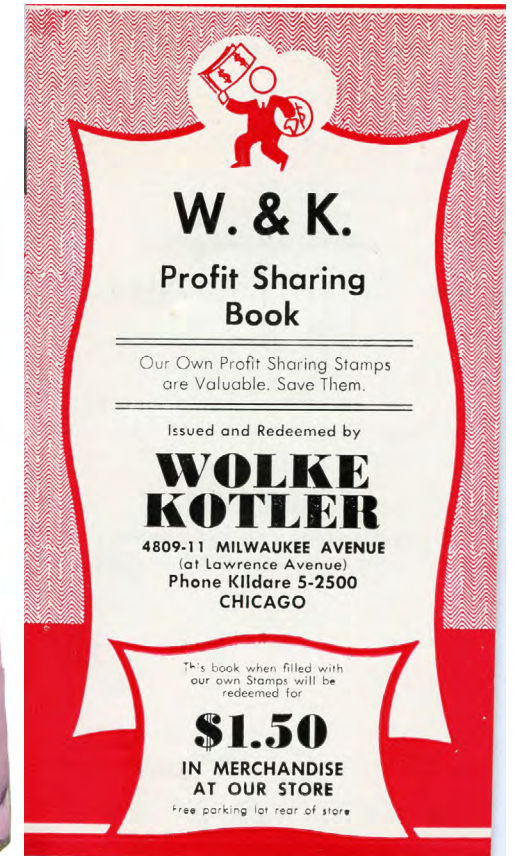


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Goldblatt's trading stamp book that could be used at all Chicagoland Goldblatt's Stores. Wolke & Kotler called their trading stamp book the "Profit Sharing Book," no doubt to make it different from Anne's books across the street on Milwaukee Avenue. Some other local stamp promoting businesses were: J & S – Higgin's Pharmacy at 7124 Higgins Road and Gronau Pharmacy at 4955 N. Milwaukee Avenue

As early as 1910, gas stations jumped on the trading stamp bandwagon followed, by grocery store chains in the 1920s.

Not unlike today's gift cards, many stamps went unredeemed because of lost or misplaced stamps and partially filled books. This benefited the large stamp companies because they had already sold them to the retail businesses. This is another reason some retail owners issued their own company stamps. In order to draw customers on slow days of the week, retailers would offer double stamp days as stamps were a superb marketing tool.

In the early 1970s, trading stamps started to decline and are now long gone. They were replaced by other loyalty programs, like bar code tags on your key chain.





A real picture postcard from 1935 was recently discovered. This photo was taken at 4413 N. Keystone, looking north. The postcard was written in German and addressed to Joseph Hitschmann of Claffin, Kansas. One of men shown in the photo is identified as Clinton Gibler and the other is Hermann, the sender of this postcard. Hermann lived around the corner at 4034 W. Montrose Avenue. *Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*

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**THEN AND NOW**

This photo was taken near the same place as the photo on the left. All the building, are still standing some 87 years later.

*Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*



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**This photo shows the west side of Milwaukee Avenue north of Lawrence Avenue. The August Borman Shoe store at 4806 N. Milwaukee Avenue is shown at the left with the barber shop next door owned by his son, Charles Borman. At the right of the photo, August Timmermann's saloon can be seen, on the northwest corner of Milwaukee Avenue and Higgins Avenue.**





**Photo of Charles Borman in his Milwaukee Avenue barbershop.**

*Photo Courtesy of Juanita Alm*

### **The Bormans**

*By Frank Suerth*

The year was 1887, and August Borman opened a shoe store northwest of the city of Chicago in the small but growing business district of Jefferson Park. Within two years, his store, along with all of Jefferson Township and some other townships, became part of the city of Chicago. This shoe store, at what is now 4806 N. Milwaukee Avenue, lasted at this location for over 100 years to become the longest family owned shoe store operating at the same location within Chicago. His business must have been good from the start, because in 1889, he took his family for a two month visit to his old home in Germany.

August was born in Germany in 1857 and he met and married his wife Teresa in 1880, migrating to America around 1883. They lived in the Jefferson Park neighborhood at 4749 N. Long Avenue. August died on April 1, 1924, and is buried in Union Ridge Cemetery.

August and Teresa has 3 sons. The first son, Charles Borman, was born in Germany on November 17, 1882. He opened a barbershop next door to his father's shoe store on Milwaukee Avenue and also had a bakery at some point in Jefferson Park. Charles' first wife was Emma Tietgen, whom he married on February 27, 1905.



**Photo of Charles Borman's first wife, Emma Tietgen Borman. They had one child, Lillian Borman, born January 18, 1907. Emma died on May 22, 1907 at the age of 21 and is buried at Union Ridge Cemetery.**

*Photo Courtesy of Juanita Alm*





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**Photo of Lillian Borman ca 1908. After her mother's death, Lillian went to live with her paternal grandparents, August and Theresa at the Long Avenue address.**

*Photo Courtesy of Juanita Alm*

On Charles' 1918 draft registration card, his home address was listed as 4808 Milwaukee Avenue. He died August 14, 1941 and is buried next to his second wife, Alma Schumacher in Ridgewood Cemetery in Des Plaines, Illinois.

The second son of August and Teresa was Hugo. Hugo worked briefly in his father's shoe store before he went on to work as a clerk at Seiz, Schwab & Co., a shoe manufacturer and lived at 4749 N. Long Avenue with his wife Anna E. Keller, whom he married on July 28 1903. Hugo died in 1958 and is also buried in Ridgewood Cemetery.

The youngest son of August and Teresa's, blue-eyed like his brothers, but the only son not born in Germany, was Arthur. Arthur was born on January 28, 1897, in Chicago. The 1920 census lists 22-year-old Arthur as a widower living with his father August at the Long Avenue address and working at the shoe store. Later he lived at 4734 N. Lotus Avenue with his wife, Marie Golly, whom he married on April 2, 1923. He then lived at 5442 W. Wilson Avenue. Arthur ran the store after his father's death. Art was a Jefferson Park Chamber member and helped organize the Lyons Club in Jefferson Park in 1940. He died in 1971 and is buried in Union Ridge Cemetery. The Borman Shoe Store remained open until the early 1990s.





**Eighty-five year old Ella Labagh, seen at the left of the photo at the dedication of the marker and the renaming of the Forest Preserve at Foster and Cicero Avenues on November 7, 1940, in her honor. The tract of land was originally named Snell's Woods, after Amos J. Snell who owned this property along with a great amount of the land on the northwest side of Chicago. Snell would cut down the timber and sell it to the railroads. He also owned the much hated toll gates along Milwaukee and Elston Avenues. Another Labagh Woods located in southern Illinois and in Shawnee National Forest is also named after Ella Labagh.**

*Photo from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department*



**This photo is how the marker looks today, some 82 years later.**

*Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*

## **Ella Labagh – Environmentalist**

*by Frank Suerth*

The year was 1901, as the story has been told, and Ella Labagh saw men cutting down trees near the Chicago River and Irving Park Road. The wood would be used as fuel at the local brickyard kilns. Ella, a nature lover, thought that future generations could not enjoy these wooded areas if they were not protected.

She soon enlisted her husband, Reginald Labagh, to help with her idea for a protected park. Reginald would join her on bike rides along the river taking pictures of the breathtaking scenery. These images were then shared with fellow members at the Irving Park Women's Club. (These images, are now housed in the Chicago History Museum's collections). Ella thought it would be most desirable to preserve the wooded area along the North Branch of the Chicago and Des Plaines Rivers and the park should extend a quarter of a mile on either side of the rivers. The women's club and newspapers took up the campaign. By 1903, the Cook County Commissioners were convinced that it was a good idea to preserve some of the areas wooded tracts. It wasn't until 1915 that the Forest Preserve District of Cook County would be organized.

*(continued on page 25)*





**Ella Labagh's house at 4222 N. Kedvale Avenue as it looks today.**





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*Crudités and Dip - Yogurt Parfait - Cookie Tray - Pierogi Tray*



*Swiss Chard Tart*

*Poached Salmon Side*

*Cookie Tray - Quiche*

*Salmon En Croute*



Ella Labagh has always been generous and benevolent. In 1893, she was president of "Woman's Aid and Loan Association of Irving Park," a group devoted to helping others. The Irving Park Women's Club manifesto was "Mutual helpfulness in all affairs of life" and surely this was part of Ella's core values.

A lunchroom was opened in the then new Schurz High School by the Irving Park Women's Club in 1911 to help feed the students. This lunchroom was operated by the Irving Park Women's Club for many years. After they discontinued operating the lunchroom, the club opened a scholarship fund for the students in 1936. Club members also taught at a school they organized at Cook County Jail.

Ella Labagh died on December 15, 1945 in Whitehall, Michigan, where she lived for the last 20 years of her life. She gave birth to the idea of a forest preserve and now generations later, Cook County residents are able to enjoy nature. Ella Labagh is truly the mother of the Cook County Forest Preserves.



**Photo of the Ella Labagh's honorary street sign at the corner of Kedvale and Berteau Avenues.**

*Photo Courtesy of Frank Suerth*



**A view of the 4200 Block of Kedvale Avenue when Ella Labagh lived there.**





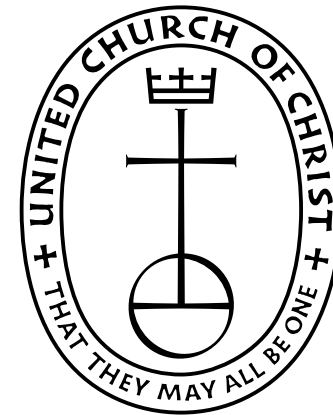
Two views of the 4200 Block of Kedvale Avenue when Ella Labagh lived there.

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where God has placed a comma”*

*- Gracie Allen*



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