



Beverly Millard Receives Jack Benny Arts & Humanities Award

see page 5

Spring 2019

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

Calendar of Events

For more information and to register for Guided Walking Tours, visit waukeganparks.org

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May

May 19

Annual Meeting and special program “The Legacy of the Six Simpson Brothers”

June

June 1

Ray Bradbury’s *Dandelion Wine* Arts & Music Festival in Bowen Park

June 15

Juneteenth Festival in Bowen Park

June 29

Guided Walking Tour “Waukegan Harbor”

July

July 12

Guided Walking Tour “Waukegan’s Historic Parking Lots”

August

August 22

Guided Walking Tour “Ray Bradbury’s Green Town”

August 24

Guided Walking Tour “Historic Homes of Sheridan Road”

September

September 14

Oakwood Cemetery Walk

October

October 6

Tour of Homes

President’s Letter

Josh Bill

Ray Bradbury Park is Now a Literary Landmark

The Waukegan Historical Society was honored to be part of the dedication of Ray Bradbury Park as a National Literary Landmark, a designation from the American Library Association. All of us have spent time overlooking the ravine and pondering if the “Lonely One” would make an appearance. Waukegan is now proud to be home to the eighth Literary Landmark in Illinois and the very first within the boundaries of Lake County.

The dedication ceremony was held at 4:51p.m. on March 16th while more than one hundred spectators braved the cold to hear speakers from across the state and around the country. Congressman Brad Schneider and Dr. John Eller addressed the crowd. Dr. Eller is the Director of the Center for Bradbury studies and is a nationally-renowned Bradbury scholar. The event was capped off by a performance of “The Whole Town was Sleeping” by Waukegan High School students as well as the unveiling of a new plaque that acknowledges that the park now has a national designation.

It was a fitting end to a wonderful day. The Historical Society was one of many groups that helped to organize the “Illinois Reads!” Book Festival that was held at Waukegan High School’s Brookside Campus during the day. We hope that the National Literary Landmark Designation will spark interest in Waukegan’s history, our beautiful parks, and the stories of Ray Bradbury. After spending the day basking in his legacy, one could not help but think that Bradbury was smiling down on all of us.

Literary Landmark Plaque Revealed at Ray Bradbury Park



Annual Meeting and Program

The Legacy of the Six Simpson Brothers

Sunday, May 19

2:00 pm

Jack Benny Center Theatre

39 Jack Benny Drive, Waukegan, Illinois, in Bowen Park

Free

Chandra Sefton

When I moved to Waukegan, in 1947, I was 8 years old. I moved into a home over 100 years old with a rich past and found out that I had seven family members that fought in the Civil War. Five of those boys were from the Simpson family. My great-grandfather, David Simpson, was the youngest of six boys and when all 5 of his brothers left for the war, he was only 10 years old. Little did he know that he would also make a lasting mark in his home town of Waukegan.

Please join me on Sunday, May 19 where I will have photos, letters, documents and items on display. There will be a slide presentation with a lot of information that I have collected over many years.

I will talk about how fate played a role in my life. David Simpson, my great grandfather, wrote a diary every day from the age of 15 in 1867, until he died at the age of 77 in 1929. Sixty-two years of records of early life in Waukegan where he worked as a carpenter for Porter Brothers Builders. He helped to build many of the beautiful Victorian homes along Sheridan Road and Genesee Street in the 1870s. He even took part in building the addition on the Haines Home for John Haines, which is now the Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park.

One hundred years later, I came upon his writings and to research and document the nomination of the Near North Historic District in Waukegan, placed

on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, which then lead to the publishing of “Waukegan’s Landmarks Our Legacy.”

These valuable diaries have been donated to the Waukegan Historical Society by the Simpson family.

Beverly Millard Receives Jack Benny Arts & Humanities Award

On February 28th, Beverly Millard, the research librarian for the Waukegan Historical Society, was recognized by the Waukegan Park District staff and commissioners for her over 30,000 hours volunteering at the John Raymond Research Library. She was presented with the Jack Benny Arts & Humanities Award. She has been the research librarian since 1989. Thank you to Beverly for all the work she does helping people research and study Waukegan history! Congratulations!

New Walking Tours this Summer

This summer we will be hosting four walking tours highlighting Waukegan history. Two of them, Historic Homes of Sheridan Road, and Ray Bradbury’s Green Town, are returning in August. Our two new walking tours, Waukegan Harbor Tour, and the Parking Lot Tour, will both be new this summer. The harbor tour will cover various aspects of the Waukegan harbor and discuss the change of the harbor landscape over time. The parking lot tour will guide participants around downtown Waukegan, where we will learn about buildings that are no longer standing. Both of these new tours will offer a unique way to look at the past.

The Historian's Desk

Ty Rohrer, Manager of Cultural Arts

I want to thank the Museum Committee for their outstanding work in helping to make the “Waukegan’s Top 50 History Events” tournament and exhibit a success. This team consists of Josh Bill, Harry E. Came, Ann Darrow, Betsy Alleman, Bryan Escobar and myself. As a team, we were looking for a way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Waukegan Historical Society. As we brainstormed, we developed a tournament where people could vote on the local events from Waukegan’s past. The true difficult part of this idea was narrowing down the list of events to 50 to coincide with 50 years of the Historical Society. Each committee member first compiled his or her own list of possible events to consider. We then debated and consolidated the field. From there each member ranked each event and the resulting data helped narrow the field more. Cutting the last few events were the most difficult. Much debate was had and we were able to get our list to 50 while still being friends with one another. This exercise turned out to be a lot of fun and it just helped remind us of all of the great stories that we have to share in regards to Waukegan’s history.

Certificate from the Illinois State Historical Society



The tournament went for half a year with people on Facebook getting the opportunity to place their vote between two event matchups. In total there were, 5,030 total votes cast and people from around the world participated in the tournament. The tournament concluded on December 26, 2018. The champi-

onship matchup was “Little Fort Trading Post Established” versus “Cory Home and the Underground Railroad.” By popular vote, “Little Fort Trading Post Established” was declared Waukegan’s Top history event of all-time.

I had the privilege of representing the Waukegan Historical Society at the Illinois State Historical Society’s Best of Illinois Awards banquet on April 26, 2019. There, we received the Superior of Achievement Award from the Illinois State Historical Society in the Special Projects category.

Dan Monroe, President of the Illinois State Historical Society stated, “Finding new and original ways to engage audiences for exploring local history is a challenge for all historical societies and museums. The Waukegan Historical Society’s “Waukegan’s Top 50 History Events” was a brilliant and successful way of making local history part of the city’s daily conversation, and it gave the museum an opportunity to rank the events and people that established the city’s cultural identity. The goal was to get friends of the WHS around the world involved in local celebration (the 50th anniversary of the Society), and to create a tournament whereby the nominees could be ranked. Schools were engaged, social media was used, and an exhibit was created. Best of all, the project planners brought it all in under budget and engaged new audiences with Waukegan history. Bravo!”

A great team effort all around!



Ty Rohrer Accepting the Superior Achievement Award

See It Now: Unique Artifacts

Portrait of Elijah Haines, Waukegan Historian and So Much More

Josh Bill

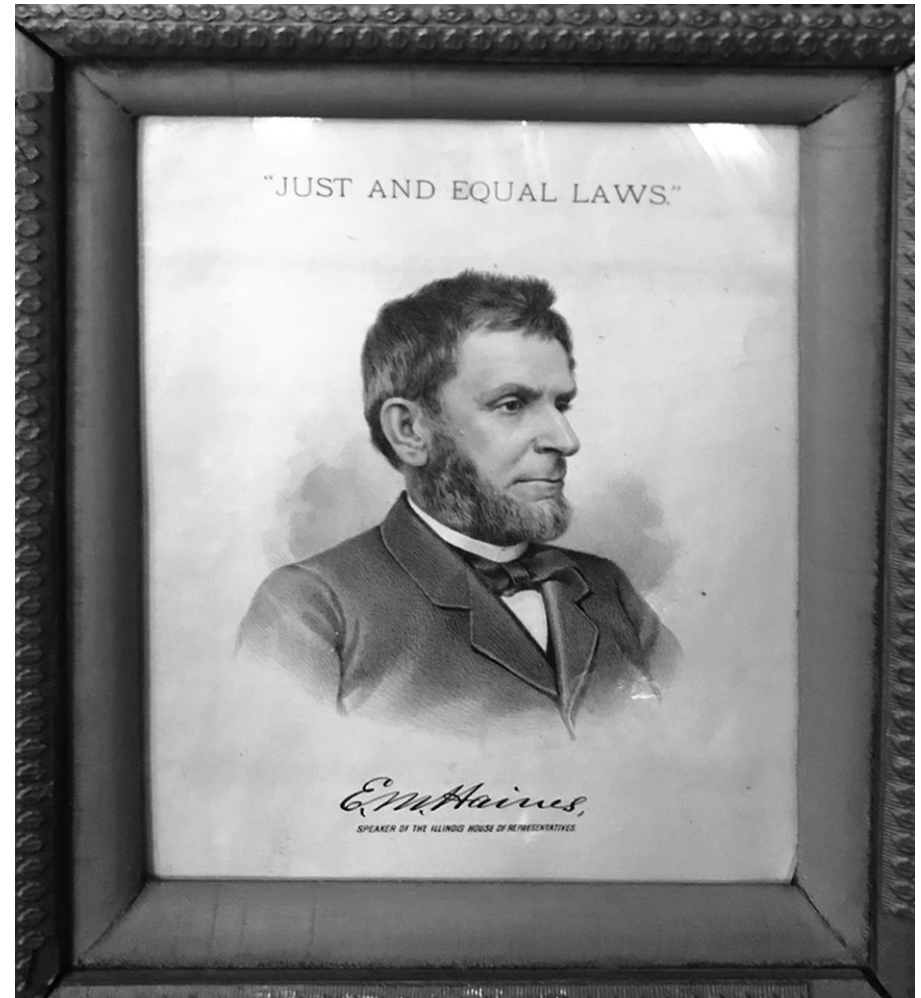
When you are touring the history museum, how often to you look closely to see the smaller details of artifacts not so prominently displayed? On the south wall of the library room in the museum, you will notice this humble portrait of Elijah Haines. Many of our members still call the museum the “Haines” house, for it once belonged to Elijah’s brother and former mayor of Chicago, John Haines.

Elijah Haines was an early settler of Waukegan and one of its most prominent residents. Shortly after his arrival, Haines founded the Waukegan Academy and also wrote the first histories of the area. Those of you who attended last year’s cemetery walk will recall that Haines had an interesting career as a politician in Illinois. He served as Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives as both a Republican and Independent. (Also, just to show you how well-rounded he was, Haines also considered himself a Democrat in his early years). Considering that Haines was what we would now call a “flip-flopper,” he once sparked a fight on the floor of the House when he adjourned the session over the objection of certain members. Although Haines narrowly missed being struck in the head by a large law book, he was relentlessly harassed by members until, finally, order was restored.

A friend of Abraham Lincoln, Haines was one of many anti-slavery voices in Lake County. He also took a vested interest in the affairs of Native Americans. He was tireless in his pursuit of knowledge and wanted to pass that along. He was also

somewhat of an entrepreneur, for he took ownership of one of Waukegan’s Mineral Springs and began bottling and selling water there. He was truly a man ahead of his time, and if you’d like to know more, many of Haines’ writings and works can be found in our research library. So, the next time you are at the museum, look for this portrait, hidden in plain sight, and say hello to Elijah Haines.

Portrait of Elijah Haines
at the Waukegan History
Museum



Waukegan History Museum Update

Bryan Escobar, Arts and History Specialist

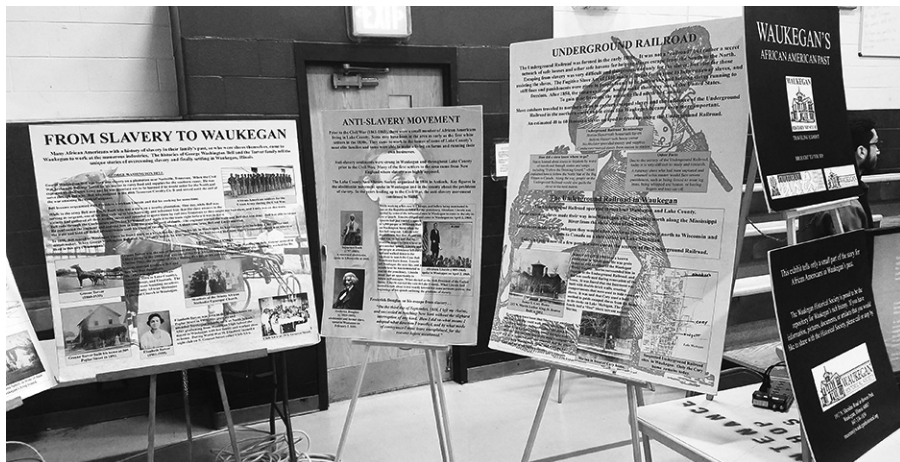
Summer Art Exhibit

Our next museum exhibit will be called “Uncovered.” We will be highlighting pieces of artwork from our collection and have them on display at the Waukegan History Museum from July 1st-August 31st. Following that, the exhibit will be on display at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts from September 2nd through December 31st. Many of these pieces of art showcase different aspects of Waukegan’s history.

African American History Events

Our pop-up exhibit on Waukegan’s African American history travelled to a few places this February. It was featured at Waukegan City Hall, Miguel Juarez Middle School, the Waukegan School District 60 Black History Experience event, and at the Jack Benny Center for the Evening of Monologues highlighting African American figures throughout history. At the Black History Experience event, we received positive feedback and suggestions

African-American Pop-Up Exhibit at Miguel Juarez Middle School



on how to further enhance this popular exhibit. On Saturday June 15th from 11am-5pm, the Juneteenth Festival will take place in Bowen Park. Lilac Cottage will house an exhibit curated by Sylvia England that touches on the African American experience.

Minor in History

Ali Bill

Every spring, my colleagues and I teach Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, a novel based loosely on the author’s experiences in the Vietnam War, and last year I decided to add a local connection by researching who the people were behind the names etched into stone at the Waukegan Veterans’ Memorial in Washington Park. I thought it would be relatively easy, as the Raymond Library has a binder of pictures and information, plus all of those year-books and a file on the war.

It turned out to not be easy at all, though it was both interesting and emotional. I learned that a few names are on the memorial because their parents lived in Waukegan, not because they had grown up here – I was initially being too literal with my public history interpretation and assumed that everyone listed was likely a Waukegan Township High School graduate, for example. I had to look at a lot of online resources, also, like the Wall of Faces, a website which is looking to display a picture for every name on the Vietnam Wall, and the searchable index of how soldiers died. I had to learn what search terms got results: at first I looked up “Vietnam” in the newspaper article database because that’s how I would write it, but then I realized that in the ‘60s it was written as “Viet Nam” or even abbreviated to just “Viet”, and database search terms are touchy, you have to get it right or you get the dreaded “0 results” in return.

The details of the soldiers' lives are what humanizes the names for my students, but the heartbreak is in the details as well. Terry Patterson, a 1962 WTHS graduate, was in JROTC back when it was mandatory for all male students, but he was also in the Crossed Sabres Club, which was just for kids who intended to be future military leaders. So I thought he might have enlisted, as is true of many of the Waukeganites who died early on in the war, and perhaps more likely because of our long-standing robust JROTC program, but that was not where life had taken him. He'd gotten married, and then been drafted. His wife told the Chicago Tribune that he'd died right before their seven-month anniversary, which made me think about how your first year of marriage, you celebrate all of those little milestones, and that he'd died near to that date was important enough to his wife that she mentioned it to a reporter who'd come to talk to her about the telegram announcing his death.

Eddie Lee Walker grew up in Mississippi, but moved to Waukegan right after high school with his big family, and when they took him to the airport, he refused to say goodbye. He would only wave, and he told his mom that if they were lucky, they'd see him again in a year. In his last letter home before he died, he'd said that he was still more for the war than against it, but he was homesick and it was pretty tough over there. His mom reflected that he had not been lucky after all.

Pete Canelakes wanted to be a Marine so badly that after he failed the initial physical, he worked for a year and a half at Great Lakes Naval Base to save up money for an operation so he could pass it. His tank was mined in what was described as a "Viet Cong sneak attack", and the most poignant detail of his story, for me, was that he was able to call his parents and reassure them that he was wounded, but okay, but then he died of his injuries a few days later. I pictured his parents looking in disbelief at the telegram, saying to each other, "But – we just talked

to him the other day..."

David Burkes had been home on leave just a month before he died, to visit his dad who had had a heart attack. His parents hoped that he'd be assigned somewhere safer and closer to home, but he felt he should go back to Vietnam, as his buddies were still there fighting and it would be wrong to leave them. He was excited to return home in March 1966, and asked his parents, in a letter they received right before the notice of his death, if they could have a friend pick up and mail some job applications for him. They'd been planning a joint birthday and homecoming celebration for him.

There's Lee Sage, who is officially listed as MIA, whose plane went down over Laos and was never recovered. There's Don Smrtnik, a standout high school athlete whose house is right down the block from the high school on Washington Street, and whose last letter to his mom thanked her for the Easter gifts and said he was okay. There's Walter Brown, who had moved to Waukegan with his wife and young son but decided to just do one more year in the military before settling down for good. So many names and faces and stories – and when the students see them, they can't get over the details. How this soldier ran cross-country too. How this one died on his 20th birthday. How this one's former fiancée still says he was the love of her life. They hold the cards with the details and pictures and through their interest and comments, the soldiers come briefly back to life.

On Memorial Day, or perhaps just on your next visit to Washington Park and the Veterans' Memorial, take a few minutes to read each of the names and think of the stories that made up the lives behind them – the stories that we lost when they were lost, and the stories that never were, that ended before they began, 8400 miles away, far from home.



Find Us on Facebook!

Like the "Waukegan History Museum" on Facebook!

Thank You!

New Members

Sylvia England
Daniel P. Drury
Nancy Bjerstedt

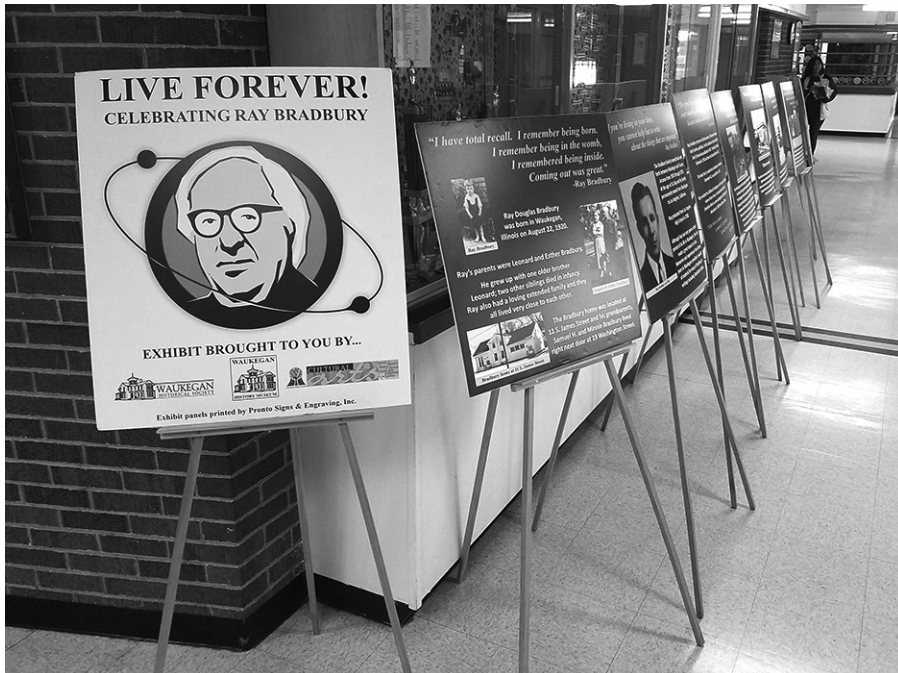
New Life Members

Zachary Sapienza

Building Fund Donors

Lake County Civil War Roundtable
Gregory M. Alloian
Helen M. Darsnek
Ethel Tsausis (in memory of Bessie Tsausis)
Jerry P. Larson

Ray Bradbury Pop-Up
Exhibit at Waukegan
High School



Join Us!

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

Senior (age 60+)	\$15.00
Student	\$5.00
Individual	\$20.00
Family	\$30.00
Patron, Organization	\$100.00
Life, Individual	\$150.00
Life, Couple	\$300.00
My additional gift	\$ _____

Make checks payable to
Waukegan Historical Society.

Volunteer

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Waukegan Historical Society

Founded in 1968, the Society collects, preserves, interprets, and exhibits significant materials about the history of the Waukegan area. The Society, in cooperation with the Waukegan Park District, operates the History Museum and Raymond Library and publishes this quarterly newsletter.

1917 N. Sheridan Road
Waukegan, IL 60087
847-336-1859
www.waukeganhistorical.org
info@waukeganhistorical.org

Visit our website for more information
about events, exhibits, and our
extensive library.

www.waukeganhistorical.org

Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park

1917 N. Sheridan Road
Manager of Cultural Arts: Ty Rohrer
847-360-4744
haines@waukeganparks.org

Arts & History Specialist: Bryan Escobar
847-360-4749
bescobar@waukeganparks.org
Tuesday, Thursday: 10am - 4pm
Saturday: 1pm-4pm

John L. Raymond Research Library

1911 N. Sheridan Road
Librarian: Beverly Millard
847-360-4772
library@waukeganhistorical.org
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
10am - 2:30pm



Annual Meeting and Program

**The Legacy of the
Six Simpson Brothers**

Sunday, May 19

2:00 pm