



## **Illinois State Public Museum Grant Awarded for Carnegie Project**

see page 3

**Winter 2020**

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

## President's Letter

Josh Bill

On behalf of the Waukegan Historical Society, I wish you a very happy, and, hopefully, a very healthy holiday season. I know that many people I speak to are ready to put 2020 behind us. Indeed, this year has posed its share of challenges, but I believe that our city and historical society have persevered, working to move forward. I want to assure you that our dedicated volunteers have been hard at work to preserve the city's history. We also continue our preparation to move into the Carnegie building. Currently, we are planning our long-term exhibit space, as well as the organization of our library and archival storage. While we are still a few years away, we look forward to welcoming you to our new space at the Carnegie.

Hoping to build on the excitement within the community in regards to the Carnegie, the Historical Society and Park District have partnered to bring you inside the building, virtually. With the pandemic keeping all of us at home, we decided in lieu of our usual Tour of Homes fundraiser that we would instead take you inside the Carnegie. The film will include architectural details, history, stories from the library, and much more. Please see additional details within this newsletter.

During the pandemic, Ty Rohrer and Bryan Escobar continue to work to bring history to a community remaining at home. Whether it is lunch and learns, our "sit-com" saga with museum furniture, or other educational programming, we have shattered records reaching tens of thousands through our museum facebook page. We have more in store for 2021 as well, so stay tuned.

Thank you all for your continued support. I hope we are not far from a day where we can return to face-to-face programming and other normal activities of the society. Until then, I wish you a safe and relaxing winter.

### WHS Board

#### Officers

*President*

Josh Bill

*Vice President*

Chris Lanning

*Treasurer*

Patrick Cosgrove

*Secretary*

Vicki Mattson

#### Directors

Harry E. Came

Lori Nerheim

Sandra Pokett

Maryfran Troha

## Carnegie Project Update

We are excited to have recently received the news that the Waukegan Park District has been awarded a \$750,000 Public Museum Grant from the State of Illinois for the Carnegie project! The support and recognition for our project have been truly amazing!

Harboe Architects have started the schematic design phase of the restoration of the Carnegie building. We are starting to get a real feel for what our space will be like, and we can hardly contain our excitement. Recently, we have made our new representative in the Illinois State Senate, Adriane Johnson, aware of our plans and she is thrilled at the prospects. The schematic design phase will continue through the winter months.

The Historical Society is working with the Park District to pursue grants to help us fund state-of-the-art exhibits that will tell a more complete history of Waukegan than we ever have before. The Board of Directors continues its planning for that process. Still, we will need financial help from our members to bring these exhibits to fruition. One of the benefits of our limited space is that our exhibit design costs have been quite low. We vow to make our members and the greater Waukegan area proud with our planned displays of rarely-seen artifacts.



## In Memory

We have been saddened by the passing of two longtime friends and supporters of the Waukegan Historical Society.

Randy Bowcott, a past president of the society and an individual who gave considerable time to the restoration of our museum space at Haines House has passed away.

William “Billy” Klass has also passed away. Billy was a life member and frequently attended and supported society events with his sister Sara Griffin, a charter member of the society.

We very much keep them, and all members and friends we’ve lost, in our hearts. We send condolences to their family.

## Waukegan History Museum Report

**Bryan Escobar**

As we navigate through the pandemic, we have had to adapt to changing restrictions and guidelines. As of November 20<sup>th</sup>, the museum has been closed as Illinois works to recover. Once restrictions are scaled back, we will resume our opening, again using Eventbrite for tickets. In the meantime, we encourage everyone to follow the Waukegan History Museum on Facebook and visit the Waukegan History Companion App if interested in learning more about Waukegan history, including information on the museum building itself.

Included on the Companion App are videos from our new “History Plots” video series. With the cancellation of the annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk this year, a new video series was developed to highlight the history of various aspects of the cemetery. There is a range of topics that will be covered and discussed. At the moment, there are two videos:

one introducing the history of Oakwood Cemetery, and another released on Veteran’s Day..

## Virtual Carnegie Library Tour Video

The short film *IT MUST AND WILL COME: The Story of the Waukegan Carnegie Library* is currently in the early production stages. This film will showcase the past, present and future of the historic Waukegan Carnegie Library. We know that so many of you are curious to see inside the building. We are of course a few years away from the public entering the building, so we hope that this film will suffice in the meantime while we go through the process of restoration and adaptive reuse of the Carnegie.

More information and announcements on viewing this film will come out soon on the Waukegan Historical Society’s website and the Waukegan History Museum Facebook page.

## Historic Marker at Whittier Elementary School

The Waukegan Historical Society is looking to partner with the Waukegan Public Schools and the Illinois State Historical Society to erect an historic marker at Whittier Elementary School that tells the story of the landmark desegregation case in Waukegan. We are currently working with the school board and community members to best tell this story on the marker. The Illinois State Historical Society is focusing right now on erecting historic markers around the state that focus on African American stories. We know that the Whittier School desegregation case is a story of significance at not only the local but state and national levels.

## A Minor in History

# The Woman's Land Syndicate—A Little South of Morality

Ali Schultz Bill

As a college student, I worked in a factory for a brief time. My job was to locate and inventory broken parts that had been shipped back to us, and then repackage and ship them out to be fixed. It was boring and repetitive, but I was being paid what seemed to me a small but glorious fortune. Two things stand out to me about my time in the factory: I really wanted to and was never allowed to drive the forklift, and my co-workers asked me almost every day if I would like to join them for a beer at the local bar. I had to decline, as I was 20, but that was my introduction to how people who worked at the same place might end up also consuming alcohol together afterwards.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union was on to this problem of factory/alcohol proximity in the 1890s, and in a town called South Waukegan, they thought they had hit upon a solution: create a community with no saloons or alcohol sales, insist upon "allegiance to duty and not to the bottle" as a condition for employment, and the newly-minted South Waukeganites would prosper and multiply. And, not exactly secondary to this lofty moral purpose, they thought they might enrich their members in the process.

When the first train to arrive in Waukegan via the just-finished EJ&E railroad line on the last day of 1889, it seems to have been greeted as much with wonder as with visions of fat bank accounts. The sleepy prairie farms south of town were converted to a starch works and the US Sugar Refinery within three months, and by the fall of 1890, J.P. Morgan himself was headlining a tour of the Midwest by industrialists and assorted millionaires, stopping in

Waukegan for a few hours to check out the site of the future Washburn and Moen factory and muse about the cheap land, access to the lake, and the low freight-weight prices charged by EJ&E. The World's Fair was coming to Chicago in a few years, and everyone had a scheme or six to relieve some suckers of their money—and the WCTU and its enigmatic Woman's Land Syndicate was about to recognize that opportunity.

It's unclear whose idea the Woman's Land Syndicate was—the husbands, investors providing the initial capital, or the wives, members of the WCTU who wanted to see South Waukegan become a "prohibition suburb" – but the husbands quietly bought mortgages from the farmers and the wives, much more noisily, began selling bonds only to women for lots surrounding the new factories. The pamphlets started going out, enticing women to invest in this planned community, this utopia that would divorce factory workers from their vice and bring harmony to the homes. Women were listed as the "managers" of the syndicate, and it was female voices who touted the safety of these new factories, the "healthful" air and natural landscape, the inclusion of the no-alcohol clause in every deed, the free life insurance and promise to forgive all mortgages, should one's factory-worker husband or father be unfortunately killed before he owned the deed to his lot, even though that was very unlikely given how modern and healthful everything in South Waukegan was. The male voices in the pro-pangandist articles of the South Waukegan News and pamphlets assured the reader of what a sound investment this was – each one tells us paternally that he knows the women personally and that he is as certain of a huge return on investment as he is of his own (very good) name. Why, we expect that 50,000 people will come to live in South Waukegan! The cash registers will ring so often and so loudly you'll get tired of it! While Waukegan is electing that brewer J. W. Besley as mayor up the road, we will

elect temperance men with morals!

The WCTU had an impressive mailing list, enhanced by the Syndicate's lead manager Mrs. R.A. Emmons, whose husband was a minister and who thus had access to several dozen additional Christian newsletters. They blanketed these publications with ads and filled the mailboxes with pamphlets, and by the end of 1892, almost two thousand women across the country had invested, some using all of their life's savings, in the moral experiment in South Waukegan. And the factory workers and their families did indeed begin moving in—but fewer people than expected wanted to sign away their rights to consume alcohol, and even fewer wanted to pay the exorbitant prices the Woman's Land Syndicate was demanding to get the promised return on their investment. The demand was safely in the hundreds, not the tens of thousands.

The first runs on the banks for what became the Panic of 1893 began in March. As the dollar crashed in value, the deed-holders began asking for their money out of the lots in South Waukegan – lots that were now worth \$25. A few women sued and got their money back, but before they could organize, the Syndicate began changing hands. The WCTU claimed that the whole thing had been manufactured by a few rogue members and their greedy husbands, and distanced themselves from the lawsuits and their members who were victims. The husbands feigned ignorance, saying they thought it was some nice thing important to their wives and they thought it was good to see them trying to further the great cause, temperance, while also learning about investing. The biggest lawsuit was finally settled in 1900, but by then the money was long gone, and no one could say to who—it had vanished as surely as the dream of another saloon-free paradise on the shores of Lake Michigan and the easy money that was sure to accompany it.

The residents of South Waukegan, embarrassed by the machinations of the Woman's Land Syndicate

and the corruption now associated with its name, voted to rename the factory town in 1895. The centerpiece was to be the Washburn and Moen complex, including the employee housing surrounding it, and a new stop on the railroad line to Chicago was planned. The owners of Washburn and Moen went to the Waukegan city council and effectively negotiated a tax deal wherein they'd become a part of Waukegan instead, but only if they could not be taxed. Furious, the South Waukegan council voted to rename their village in homage to a different city: they called it North Chicago.

With the knowledge that Prohibition was a failure, it seems a little quaint to me today how idealistic the WCTU was about changing other people's behavior. Though I find them interesting, I'm also glad they weren't successful, because after the "work" of writing their story, I just may choose to imbibe. Cheers!

### **Pioneering Families**

## **Waukegan Mayor Robert E. Coulson**

**Guest Author – William R. Coulson**

*This narrative was gleaned from hundreds of documents maintained by Robert Coulson during his Mayoralty, including extensive newspaper clippings from the time, correspondence, city reports, and photographs. And it has been flavored with the occasional personal recollection.*

### **Waukegan Mayor Robert E. Coulson**

**Term of Office May 2, 1949 to January 1, 1957**

This was a time of great expansion and infrastructure improvement in Waukegan. Numerous basic services that even today Waukeganites take largely for granted were first implemented during this tenure. World War II had ended in 1945, and returning veterans wanted jobs and housing. Waukegan,

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

like the nation, had lived through twenty years of the Great Depression and the World War. With the U.S. economy booming from war work, the City was ready to shed the past and get on with peacetime economic expansion.

Waukegan, population 38,000 souls in 1949, was a hard-working, wonderfully diverse community with a host of experienced manufacturing companies offering skilled jobs. Johnson Motors, Johns Manville, Abbott Labs, US Steel's wire mill, Fansteel, the tannery, and others provided thousands of skilled jobs. Mayor Coulson's background and prior experiences reflected these times and influenced his approach to the issues confronting Waukegan.

By the time Mayor Coulson left office in 1957, new forces were stirring in the land. The Rock-and-Roll era of rebellion was beginning. Waukegan, like other Midwestern manufacturing towns, would then face new challenges.

### **Mayor Coulson's Background**

Robert Coulson's parents were Hervey Clarke Coulson (born 1876), and Vida Maude Edwards (born 1880). The Edwards family were pioneers in Lake County, Illinois. The Coulsons were a prominent family who lived in Grafton, Wisconsin.

Maude and Hervey were married August 21, 1907 at the Edwards' family home in Avon Township north of Grayslake. Maude had been a teacher in North Chicago since 1900. She was a Grad of Wheaton College. Hervey was station agent for the Milwaukee Road railroad at Round Lake, and a Spanish-American war veteran. In 1896 he worked for the Northern Pacific Railroad and was in Montana. He graduated from Lawrence College and night law school at Chicago Kent. He joined the C&NW legal staff. In Sept. 1909 he opened a Waukegan law firm. He served 3 years as an Assistant State's Attorney and 16 as an elected Justice of the Peace. As JP in 1925 he performed the wedding of African-American heavyweight boxing

champ Jack Johnson to Waukegan girl Irene Pineau at his Grand Avenue Law Office. As the Chicago Sun Times reported in 2018 when President Trump pardoned Johnson, Hervey Coulson took some grief for this act the next day at the Courthouse. And in 1935 he married actress Dorothy Lamour to bandleader Herbie Kay. Hervey Coulson retired due to poor health later that year.

Maude's parents were Henry Churchill Edwards (Avon farmer born 1847) and Margaret Floretta Sherman (born 1855). Maude had one sister—Cosie Margaret—and five brothers—Claire Churchill, Royal Sherman, Harry, John, and Russell Henry. Hervey Coulson's parents were William Willett and Eliza Jane Coulson of Grafton, Wisconsin. Hervey had two sisters and four brothers- Jennie, Emmeline, Edgar, Howard, William, and Raymond. So Robert Coulson had a large supporting family in the area.

Robert LaFollett Coulson was born into this large family on May 10, 1912 at the Edwards farmhouse on Rte. 83 west of Avon Cemetery. His sister Ruth had been born there in 1908. His parents had moved the family to a large house they bought on Grand Avenue next to the Immaculate Conception Church in Waukegan. In 1953 this house was moved to 319 Edison Court, where it stands to the present day. Hervey and Maude then bought and moved their family into the house at 1332 N. Jackson in Waukegan. Robert dropped the middle name 'LaFollett' and went by Robert Edwards Coulson. thereafter.

In June 1929 Robert Coulson graduated from Waukegan Township High School. He was Class President, a member of the Debate team, and had worked as a paperboy for The Waukegan Daily Sun.

In June of 1933: Coulson graduated from Dartmouth College, in Hanover, New Hampshire. He was on the Dartmouth Debate team. Among his acquaintances there were future New York Governor and Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller, Walter Chrysler Jr. (who drove a Ford), future actor

Robert Ryan, and future television producer Harry Ackerman.

In 1936 he graduated from the University of Chicago Law School. He was admitted to the Illinois Bar as a lawyer on February 13, 1936, by Illinois Chief Justice Clyde Stone.

He worked at the J.A. Miller Law Firm at 4 South Genesee in Waukegan. Then from August 1937 to December 1940 he formed the law firm of Coulson & Daly at 7 North County Street in Waukegan. In February 1939 he ran unsuccessfully for Police Magistrate. In August of 1939 Coulson partnered with two other men to open The Varsity, an alcohol-free club at 111 West Washington Street near the High School. He sold his interest when he joined the State's Attorney's Office in December of 1940. The club later became 'The W Shop' and catered to generations of Waukegan High School students. Coulson was meeting people and becoming known in Waukegan.

On December 2, 1940, newly elected States Attorney Harry Hall hired Coulson as one of three Assistant State's Attorneys for Lake County. Coulson prosecuted the office's criminal cases and became something of an authority on juvenile delinquency, speaking across the country and authoring several articles on the subject. Coulson also acted in plays with local theater groups. Each morning in the County Courthouse Coulson watched a girl he had acted with—Rose Stone—walk past on her way to her work as a sales clerk downtown. Rose was a local Lithuanian girl from a large family who lived on Washington Park Avenue. "I'm going to marry that girl", said Coulson to a colleague.

Coulson and Rose Stone were scheduled to be wed in Waukegan the first week of November, 1941. But world events intervened. On October 20, 1941: Reserve 2d Lt. Robert Coulson was ordered to report Nov. 4 for one year's active duty to Camp Grant, Rockford. So instead they were married on October 29, 1941, at Christ Episcopal Church.

They honeymooned briefly at Starved Rock State Park. On November 4<sup>th</sup> he reported to Camp Grant, Rockford. They rented a room at a house at 125 Guard Street in Rockford. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, they were driving to Waukegan when the radio announced the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. All personnel were ordered to return to their bases.

During World War II, Coulson served at Camp Grant until July of 1944 as legal officer and as Intelligence Officer. He also supervised German POWs at Camp Grant. He and Rose later moved to 986 Court Street in Rockford. Rose worked as a secretary at J.I. Case Co., which made aircraft parts. When President Roosevelt 'seized' the railroads in December of 1943, Coulson was assigned to go to Chicago and take over the C&EI Railroad. He also spent three months at Fort Benning, Georgia, taking an Advanced Officers' Course. On February 10, 1944, daughter Barbara was born at Rockford Hospital. In July of 1944 Coulson was transferred to Fort Lewis, Washington, again as a legal and intelligence officer. Then beginning in March of 1945 he signed up for the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA. After training on both coasts he was sent to China, where he was a counter-intelligence officer. While he was overseas, Rose lived in Waukegan with her inlaws and worked at Johnson Motors. He received commendations from the Marine Corps and from the Strategic Services Unit for a particularly hazardous mission behind the lines to rescue six downed Marine Corps flyers. Two lives were lost during a previous mission to rescue these men. He returned to Waukegan at the end of March, 1946, by then a Major.

Coulson and Rose bought the brick house at 1031 Pacific Avenue in Waukegan in June of 1946. He would live there the rest of his life; Rose lived there until 2010. Coulson returned to his job at the Lake County State's Attorney's office as a prosecutor ('ASA'). On October 5, 1947, son William was

born at Victory Memorial Hospital in Waukegan.

Waukegan Mayor Frank Wallin, a Democrat, had served two four-year terms. He decided to run for a third term in 1949. By that time Coulson had received much local media coverage as an ASA, and was active in many community organizations. His local roots, training and war experience made him mature for his tender age of 37 years. He decided to run for Mayor of Waukegan.

*to be continued...*

## Call for Memories and Recollections of the Carnegie Library

Please contact Ty (trohrer@waukeganparks.org) or Bryan (bescobar@waukeganparks.org).

As we move along with the Carnegie Library documentary project, we would like to put out a request to our membership to do oral interviews with anyone who has any recollections of their time in the Carnegie Library. Stories can cover any topic related to the Carnegie Library.

Interviews can be set up via Zoom or in-person (following proper COVID procedures).

We are also interested in collecting photographs of you, family, or staff outside and inside the Carnegie Library during any time period. Any images that can be scanned and shared please send to Bryan.

## Thank You!

### New Members

Jeanneane A. Vecchio  
Emma Styx  
Bill & Teddi Dunham  
John Rouse  
Elna Headberg

### General Donors

Gregory Alloian  
Emma Styx  
Partners in Parks  
Harry E. Came (in memory of Sammy Readdie)

### Building Fund Donors

Jane Ferry (in honor of Charlotte Callahan Wozniak's 60th Birthday)  
Gregory Alloian  
Jacob Vick (in honor of Eleanor Vick)  
Susan Styx  
Antoinette Minuzzo (in memory of Georgja "Dody" Dretske)  
Josh Bill & Ali Schultz

## 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](http://www.waukeganhistorical.org)

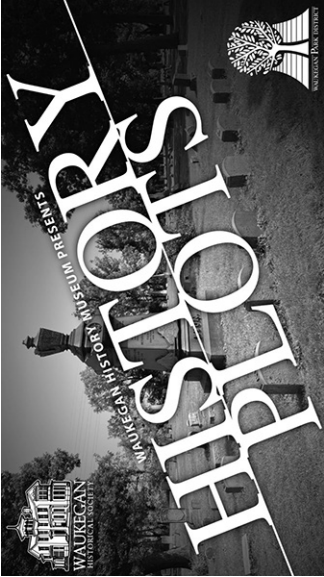
### Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park

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





See the Waukegan History Museum  
Report on page 4.