

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?



Photo by Patrick Butler

See page 3 for the answer.

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS NOW UP AND RUNNING!

If you haven't already done so, it's time to check out our new RLVHA website, RavenswoodHistorical.com

The site includes a map of a self-guided nearly two-mile walking tour of Old Ravenswood starting at the Metra stop and including the early Abbott Labs and mansion, Carl Sandburg's home, Mayor Rahm Emanuel's house, and Helen Zatterberg Park, named for the founder of the Ravenswood Lake View Historical Association, and former Gov. Rod Blagojevich's political office.

"We'll be changing some aspects of the tour in the future. Sandburg's home is an example. The page will remain much the same, but will feature artworks and photos illustrating the changes in the building over time," said Patrick Boylan, an RLVHA board member, publisher of the Welles Park Bulldog, and designer of the association's website.

The RLVHA website was originally designed in 2008 by Dan O'Neill, founder of EveryBlock. Boylan explained that in updating the site, he wanted to introduce a "new, more friendly technology," preserving the feel of O'Neil's design.

Also on the website are details on the RLVHA's annual history contest, back copies of the association's newsletter, and posts about association news and upcoming events, Boylan promised.

"History starts now," said Boylan. "We are connected to this place. And so are all those who once called this neighborhood their home."

Magic is alive and well here

*But like everything else,
it's changed, author says*

Magic isn't dead here on the North Side, it just re-materialized in a different form, David Witter, author of *Chicago Magic: A History of Stagecraft and Spectacle*, explained recently.

Speaking at a joint Ravenswood/Lake View Historical Association/Edgewater Historical Society program at the Edgewater Library, Witter said that while it's true that magic castles like the Cairo Supper Club, the New York Lounge around Sheridan and Irving and the Edgewater Beach Hotel are long gone, it's not time yet to ring down the final curtain.

The legendary Al James is still doing his "tableside magic" on weekends at the old Schullien's (now O'Donovan's) at 2100 W. Irving, where Harry Blackstone Junior and Senior

once reigned, Witter said. And the "Magic Cabaret" happens the first Wednesday of every month in the 773 Building on the 1200 Block of West Belmont.

Neil Toban holds séances at Castle Chicago (the former Excalibur) on one Friday every month. And on October 31 – Halloween – which is also the date of Harry Houdini's birth and death. Tobin purportedly communicates with the great escape artist while captivating a whole new generation with sleight of hand and ghost stories.

Not far away at the Palmer House, Dennis Wakins performs at a Magic Parlor "where the tickets are \$80 and you still can't get in," Witter said.

MAGIC see p. 2

Check out the Sulzer Library history room



Photo by Patrick Butler

RLVHA board members Patrick Boylan and Jack Lydon look over some of the materials in our association's collection in the Sulzer Library Neighborhood History reading room. More than a century's worth of photos, news clippings, assorted documents and a variety of artifacts, including a drum used by a turn-of-the-century temperance group and once used by a member of the Ravenswood Rifles, a volunteer Infantry unit from the 1890s. The reading room is open from 2 to 5 p.m. Tuesdays and by appointment.

Did you know...

This statue, "Goethe, Mastermind of the German People," was vandalized soon after America's entry into World War I.



YOUNG HISTORIANS HONORED AT HISTORY FAIR



RLVHA President Patrick Butler presents our association's Ravenswood/Lake View History Prize to Marissa Oshana for her paper on the city of Lake View's 1889 annexation by Chicago. The award was presented at the Chicago Metro History Fair's June 1 awards at the Chicago History Museum. RLVHA board member Richard Simpson also presented this year's Ald. Leon Despres Prizes for Superior Legal and Political History.



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Edgewater resident Tom Dwyer does a card "routine" with an audience member at David Witter's book signing, jointly sponsored by the RLVHA and the Edgewater Historical Society.

While it's true that magic castles like the Cairo Supper Club, the New York Lounge around Sheridan and Irving and the Edgewater Beach Hotel are long gone, it's not time yet to ring down the final curtain.

MAGIC from p. 1

One of Watkins' signature pieces is a duplication of the "Chinese Water Tank" Houdini was trying to escape when he was stricken with a fatal appendicitis attack, Witter said.

Another legendary magician is Jay Marshall. The Magic Inc. store at 5082 N. Lincoln, opened by Marshall, is still being run by his son Sandy, who Witter described as "a prominent magician in his own right and a two-time Emmy-winning TV writer, filmmaker and playwright "who splits his time between the bright lights of Broadway and the waving wands of Magic Inc."

Witter blamed the demise of Chicago's Golden Age of Magic partly on the decline of nightlife in general, the suburban exodus, a growing addiction to TV, and the rise of the 1960s/1970 "counterculture."

"Magic had been getting a little stale. Magic changed."

Joining Witter for the book talk was North Sider Tom Dwyer, the last magician to perform at the Edgewater Beach Hotel and one of the handful ever invited to perform at Hollywood's Magic Castle.

Dwyer, an information technology specialist when he's not performing, has 50 magic "routines" the U.S. Patent Office says he can copyright any time he wants.

He advises anyone wanting to follow in his footsteps to remember "we are actors playing the part of magicians. We are not actually magicians. We wouldn't be here if we were real magicians."

"But at least keep it looking real," he told a reporter after Witter's book talk.

"If you're going to saw a lady in half, at least make the fake blood spur out," Dwyer said.

Retired banker, DePaul prof, and lots of helpers dig into Chicago's Civil War past



Working over the past few months, volunteers unearthed a variety of artifacts including two glass medicine bottles, a "Chicago City Police" button and some shards of pottery from the 1870s and 1880s, as well as a stone believed to have been part of the foundation of the notorious POW camp's administration building. In late May, Keller, Gregory and their associates dug a little deeper and found some "interesting" items from the Civil War period he'll discuss later - after they've been cleaned up and identified.

*Story and photos
by Patrick Butler*

Two local men – Old Town resident David Keller and DePaul University Professor Michael Gregory – have been spending the past few months literally digging into the history of Chicago's Camp Douglas – one of the Civil War's most notorious POW camps.

Keller, a retired banker, former Airborne Infantry officer and founder/managing director of the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation, has been leading an excavation around the Pershing School campus at Calumet and 33rd Street – once the site of a former Union Army recruit depot and prison camp for some 12,000 Confederates.

Aided by some 25 volunteers on almost any given day, Keller and Gregory uncovered some "items of interest" from the former "Hell's Forty Acres"

that were still being studied at press time.

Artifacts uncovered from the 1870s through 1890s as the volunteers dug their way down to the Civil War period included two glass medicine bottles, a "Chicago City Police" button, and some shards of pottery and clay pipes, as well as a stone believed to be part of the foundation of the camp's administration building.

Keller's ultimate goal is to create a Camp Douglas museum somewhere on the campsite. The building will be a replica of one of the camp's 64 barracks that could cost up to \$800,000 to complete.

"I'm thinking it would only have cost a few thousand dollars to build the original barracks back then. After all, the barracks weren't insulated. Heating came from stoves," Keller said.

The interior will have prisoners' bunks on one side and



exhibits on the other, Keller said, noting the bunks will be "a bit wider" than you'd find today because the 100 prisoners billeted in each barracks slept two to a bunk.

"Men sleeping together weren't that unusual back then. Lincoln used to sleep with the judges when he was a circuit-riding lawyer. Today you'd go to jail for that (attorneys sleeping with judges hearing their cases)," Keller laughed.

During its four years of operation, Camp Douglas was used to train "Colored Volunteers" and Chicago's two Irish Brigades, said Keller, adding the camp had all but disappeared a week after the war's end. While some insisted it was because "everyone" as anxious to forget the war, Keller thinks it was more likely because the government wanted to sell off the lumber to scrap dealers and because the property's owners wanted the "deadbeat" Army to leave because they had never paid the rent promised at the beginning of the war.

The remaining prisoners who agreed to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States were given three days rations and a train ticket home. Those who refused to sign were told to start walking and find their own way home, Keller said.

Keller said the archeological digs have been filled in and the recovered items will be cleaned and dated. To learn more about the project, visit campdouglas.org.

Answer to WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

This house at Wellington and Hoyne where St. Luke's Academy held its first class in the 1880s. The school, in fact, was operating before the church itself, which is now located at 1500 W. Belmont.

*Look for more fun facts
in future issues*



RLVHA *Review*

Quarterly Newsletter of the Ravenswood Lake View Historical Association

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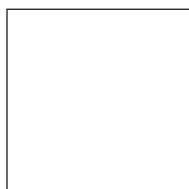
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