Landmark status for two historical Lake View East homes

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PETER VON BUOL

The Chicago City Council on March 28 passed two separate ordinances which recognized two historical properties in Lake View East as city landmarks.

The properties, both originally built as residences, provide tangible glimpses of city history. The Italianate-style Netterström House at 833 W. Aldine was built in 1872 by Charles Magnus Netterström, one of Lake View East’s first Swedish immigrants. The large building, which also includes elements of the Queen Anne-style, was constructed.

LANDMARK SEE P. 4

City of Chicago turns 180 years old!

BY PATRICK MCBRIARTY

Chicago is a relatively young city, particularly for a metropolis of its size. During the 19th Century, Chicago experienced the most rapid growth of any city in history. Yet, Chicago’s roots are much deeper. For thousands of years Native American tribes utilized the Chicago portage, paddled its waterways, and was occasionally the site of tribal camps and villages.

For the western world, Chicago’s recorded history traditionally begins in 1673 with the diaries of Marquette and Jolliet, however Nicollet may have actually passed through here. A decade later French explorer Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle passed through Chicago several times and established a fort at Starved Rock. By 1690, a French mission and trading post was established in or near Chicago.

However, non-Native Americans were driven from Chicago by the start of the Fox Indian Wars against the French between 1710 to 1740. By 1778, Frenchman Jean Baptiste Guillory is the first known trader to return and establish himself in Chicago on the North Branch’s west bank. Thereafter into the 1830s, the Chicago River’s North Branch was known as “the Guilory” (by various spellings).

The young United States of America first recognized Chicago in the Treaty of Green Ville of 1795, claiming a, “piece of land six miles square, at the mouth of Chikago riv-

GEM SEE P. 6

A Historic Gem

BY DAYLE MURPHY

Imagine you are out for a walk and you happen to find yourself at Broadway and Addison. Let your eyes wander to the northwest corner and you will see beauty and history all rolled into one, the Lake View Presbyterian Church. I have many fond memories of the church, as I spent years there attending services. I was also married in the beautiful sanctuary. The marriage didn’t last but the church has been standing in that same location since 1888.

In 1880, the neighborhood that is now Lake View was not part of Chicago. The population was small and roads were poor and unpredictable. During bad weather it was not possible for people to travel to church in either Evanston or Chicago. Thus, Lake View Presbyterian Church was estab-

CHICAGO SEE P. 6
Local man an expert on Chicago organized crime

BY PATRICK BUTLER

Despite what you may have thought you heard from watching gangster movies, you didn't need to be Italian to be a Chicago gangster.

Unlike the New York-based Mafia, Chicago criminality during the Roaring 20s was an equal-opportunity profession open to all, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity, Richard Lindberg – one of the best-known authorities on local organized crime – told a recent Ravenswood/Lakeview Historical Assoc. meeting at the Salzer Library.

And while the likes of Al Capone were focused mostly on the South Side, they didn't exactly ignore the North Side as well – the likes of George “Bugs” Moran, lived in the Lincoln Park neighborhood known as “Little Hell.”

Little Hell was bounded by La Salle St. on the east, Division St. on the north, Chicago Ave. on the south and the Chicago River to the west. Its name was derived from the large gas house that was located at Crosby and Hobbie streets whose night time flames lit the skies at night. The roaring thunder of its furnaces could be heard for blocks as coal was poured into the ovens and moistened from the Chicago River to create gas that was used for heating, cooking and lighting.

There was quite a bit of organized criminal activity that was centered on that area. In fact the intersection of Oak St. and Cleveland Ave. in 1909 was nick-named “Death Corner” and was the scene of over 100 unsolved murders. Many of the victims over the years were casualties of the Prohibition-era “alcohol rebellion” between the bootlegging gangs of Giuseppe “Joe” Aiello and the infamous “Scarface” Al Capone.

As notorious as Capone-Green would become in the 1980-90s, Little Hell may well have been worse. O’Banion, was also a product of this district.

Since most of the vice districts in Chicago were on the South and West sides of the city, this area was more or less ignored for many years in the city’s fight against crime. It is said that, in the first 51 days of 1906, the police made over 900 arrests. For two decades, Chicago police remained hampered at every turn by the silence of the “Italian colony” — a reference to the large Italian-American population in the neighborhood.

Another noted local mobster, George “Bugs” Moran, lived in the Lincoln Park Apartments on Clark St. at Armitage, while fellow North Side Peter (Goosney) Gusenberg – one of the St. Valentine’s Day gang – turned enough to tell a police officer “nobody shot me” as he lay dying in a nearby hospital.

But the real drama for that family didn’t come until Gusenberg’s wake at the Braithwaite Funeral Home at 2221 N. Lincoln Ave. When “Good” two wives turned up at the same time, not knowing until that very moment they were both married to the same man at the same time.

“The great thing about Chicago history is you can’t make this stuff up,” Lindberg said, recalling how the old SMC Cartage building took on a life of its own years afterward.

Legend has it that the massacre site has been “cursed ever since the shootings, even after the building issue razed, due to the building’s owner getting tired of being hassled by tourists who wanted to see “the wall,” Lindberg said.

“The city itself wasn’t much help – especially between the mayor Daley, who loaned any publicity of Chicago’s gangsta past, no matter how many tourists turned up, Lindberg added. “Even today if a TV or movie producer shows up asking about organized crime, City Hall frequently send them to me.”

The bullet-riddled wall was eventually sold in the 1970s to a Vancouver entrepreneur who installed the macabre memorial in the men’s room of one of his restaurants.

“I understand the man who bought those bricks has a lot of bad luck since,” said Lindberg, noting that the restaurant failed in the 1970s and the bricks were eventually sold piecemeal.

No word on how any of the mostly anonymous purchasers have fared over the years, said Lindberg, whose latest book Gangland Chicago: Criminality and Lawlessness in the Windy City, focuses on the evolution of Chicago street gangs dating back to the pre-Civil War era.

Where did Lake View’s community newspaper come from?

BY SHEILIA SWANN

Inside Publications now owns and publishes what was once known as the Lerner Newspapers serving Chicago’s Lakeview Township. The Newspaper serving Lakeview Township was called the Lincoln-Belmont Boozer, and is now called the Inside-Boozer.

Inside Publications also owns the Skyline newspaper that serves North Township (Fullerton south to the main branch of the Chicago River) and the News Star, which serves Rogers Park Township [Devon Ave. north to the city limits].

The Inside-Boozer is part of what’s left from the first family-owned and operated neighborhood newspaper chain that served the North Side communities of Chicago.

Founded by the Lerner Family, these newspapers are now offered free to readers courtesy of their advertisers. “We have an open door policy to all inquiries big and small. We were ‘hyper-local’ before it was considered cool,” said publisher Ronald Roesnik. “We have an open door policy to all inquiries big and small. We were ‘hyper-local’ before it was considered cool.”

Today many of those suburban editions are part of the Pioneer Press chain that is now owned by Tribune [Publishers of The Chicago Tribune]. In 2009, the Boozer and News Star newspapers were purchased by Inside Publications and Roesnik (the Skyline) was purchased separately in 2012 who merged them with their own community newspapers that he had already bought and published. “We had competed against Lerner News for decades and we were ‘hyper-local’ during the ‘Great Recession’ of 2008 we were made an offer we couldn’t refuse, the chance to buy them for no money down,” says Roesnik. Prior to this sale, they were owned by Wednesdays Journal of Oak Park.

The newspapers had been sold in 1985 to Pulitzer Publishing Co. of St. Louis by then-owner Susan Lerner, reportedly for between $9-12 million. The future of the chain under the ownership of the Lerner family had come into question after the death at age 49 of Louis Lerner in Nov. 1984, who had been editor, publisher and sole owner. Susan Lerner had succeeded her husband in his positions and had been running the chain after his death. Journalists who got their start at Lerner include the late Mike Royko, gossip columnist Ann Gerber, Crime’s Chicago columnist Giri Hinz, one-time Sun-Times columnists Bill Zwecker and Robert Feder, the sportscaster Bruce Wolf, novelist Bill Brashler, author Pat Butler, syndicated columnists of politics and the law W. C. Kohler, and Ted Allen, host of Food Network’s “Chopped” and founder of the Soulard Star Academy.”

In 1993 Inside Publications produced its first Summer Activity Guide which is now published annually just prior to the Memorial Day weekend. The Inside lists all the festivals, art fairs, public activities and special events on Chicago’s North Side from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Today they are the only free, independent weekly newspapers serving the North Side neighborhoods - and in the truest sense of community journalism - perhaps the only outlet for many local residents and businesses to redress their concerns and problems when satisfaction cannot be obtained through more general channels.

As a free newspaper, their sole source of income are the businesses who buy advertising.

Gossip columnist Ann Gerber began her career with Lerner newspapers at the age of 16.

Inside Publications now owns and publishes what was once known as the Lerner Newspapers serving Chicago’s Lakeview Township.
LANDMARK FROM P. T

when Lake View East was still a Chicago suburb. Located at 441 W. Barry, the Daniel O. Hill House was built in 1902 for a wealthy silk-merchant. Designed by “society architect” Francis Perkins, the Hill House is an embodiment of an architectural style known as Four Square.

Perkins had established a reputation for customized, designed, and crafted single-family houses. His homes were built in an array of fashionable late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Chicago neighborhoods.

Ald. Tom Tunney (44th) has been among those who actively pushed for landmark status for both properties and added that not only are they architecturally significant, they also help preserve the local history of two immigrant groups. For the past few decades, the Hill House has served as the Serbian-American Museum St. Sava.

“Members of Chicago’s Serbian-American community gave their heartfelt accounts at that meeting about what the Hill House has meant to them. Coming all the way from across the ocean, they appreciated being able to come to this lovely building situated in a beautiful neighborhood, close to the lakefront. It really created a homelike setting for these immigrants. There were generations of them. It helped them to reconnect to their homeland. They did also talk about how they appreciated the architecture but for the Serbian-American community, it was more about its physical beauty,” Miller said.

According to Miller, from an architectural standpoint, the well-preserved house has an impressive architectural pedigree. He was proficient in a variety of styles that were popular in the early 20th Century. These styles included Romanesque Revival, Classical Revival, Mediterranean Revival and Georgian Revival. Homes designed by Perkins were finely-detailed and used traditional building materials such as brick, stone, and decorative metalwork.

“We, the architect, Francis Perkins, have an amazing biography. He designed many unique properties, not just in Chicago and Illinois, but also extending to states nearby, and even Mexico. Among his most important commissions was the new-demolished mansion of John G. Shedd (after whom the aquarium is named),” Miller added.

With the Hill House now recognized as a city landmark, Miller hopes it will now contribute to the creation of a new landmark district for its surrounding neighborhood.

“We are encouraging several larger houses of about the same geometry to be designated as landmarks and also, the creation on and Lake View East Landmark District, from Sheridan Road to Broadway, perhaps even west of there. The buildings east of Sheridan Road were once known as Meekerville, after the Chicago industrialist Arthur Meeker. He had moved there from Prairie Street and had been the first to build a mansion there,” Miller said.

The Netterström House also has a significant connection to a Chicago immigrant group. It was built by a prominent Swedish-American.

In a report compiled for the landmark commission, Netterström is described as having had a diverse career. He worked in the skilled-trades and also in construction. In addition, he was a civic leader and was active in Lake View East politics. His building expertise was crucial for adding sewers, paved roads and sidewalks to the area.

Originally a lath nailer, he later operated his own ornamental plastering business. Architectural historians believe his expertise and craftsmanship continue to be evident in the plastering on display in the Netterström House. Most likely, his masonry work continues to be on display.

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ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES: Mike Rotunno, Photographer to the Stars

BY CHRISTOPHER LYNCH

Before the jet age, Midway Airport, on Chicago south-west side, was the place to be for-up close encounters with the legendary stars of Hollywood.

In an age of piston engine aircraft (in the 1920s thru the 1950s), a flight from New York to L.A. meant a refueling stop in Chicago. And when the stars existed the aircraft, photographer Mike Rotunno would be waiting, camera in hand.

Paparazzi is an Italian word which made its debut in popular culture with the debut of the film “La Dolce Vita” (1960) directed by Federico Fellini. The only thing that Rotunno had in common with the world of paparazzi was that both were of Italian origin. A star of the 21st century steps out of their private jet and into a limousine on the restricted side of the airport. It is early morning. The Rotunno’s day, if a star like Jimmy Stewart stepped off the plane and saw Mike’s camera, he would greet Rotunno warmly, pose for a photo, and then go have a cup of coffee at Marshall Field’s famed Cloud Room restaurant.

Before the dominance of television, there were limited venues for promoting a star. There was no “Entertainment Tonight” or “Access Hollywood” programs. The primary mode of publicity besides radio was newspapers, and in Chicago, there were several papers, with morning and afternoon editions. Rotunno would photograph a star, like John Wayne, and then run to his dark room in his office at Metro News in Midway’s terminal, and develop the film. Then, the photo would be treated like a VIP.

To help others overcome the flying fear, Rotunno’s camera was put into action. And with every photo of a famous star, on a subconscious level, it was hoped, if John Wayne could fly, so could you. Rotunno always had a quick a relax a movie star arriving in Chicago, and such partner usually worked to get one to pose for his camera.

Another trick was the use of his two daughters, Judy and Mimi, who were as cute as buttons. The number of photos of them posing with the greatest stars of the Golden Age of radio and Hollywood is amazing, and it wasn’t just at the airport. At their home in Berwyn, when the phone rang, one never quite knew who would be on the other line. When one of those first photos ran, Judy and Mimi might be the gravel voice of Jimmy Durante asking “Hey kid, is your Dad at home?” Or it might be Duncan Rea asking “Do you know the kid, is your Dad at home?”

Or it might be Jimmy Stewart, and Mrs. Nixon. Phillips was also a frequent guest. Rotunno was being honored by the Chicago Club for his 45 years of being a photographer at Chicago airports.

On the program, Phillips was nearly speechless as Rotunno opened a package with a return address of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., and handed Wally photos that he took with him at President and Mrs. Nixon’s home and Nixon was moved by the favor, repeating “Oh wow” several times as he studied the photographs, autographed to Wally personally. The former President then asked Rotunno how he got them autographed, Rotunno answered that he told Nixon that “he had to sign them!”

What comes across in this interview is the generosity of spirit of Mike Rotunno, who used his wit and humor to his full advantage throughout his decades of work. His charm worked on Katharine Hepburn, Charlie Chaplin, Jimmy Stewart, and Wally Phillips and many more.

Christopher Lynch is the author of “When Hollywood landed at Chicago Midway Airport: The History of a Midway Landmark.” It is available at Amazon.com.
In 2000, the sanctuary was renovated, adding new lighting and electrical, some glass restoration was done and 5 pews were removed. While the pipe organ was restored, it is unplayable. A new ventilation system was installed and interior wall colors changed at a cost of $35,000. Holabird and Root began the historic renovation of the outside of the church in 2005. They had to work from the original photo of the church because the original plans had been lost in a fire.

The first task was the removal of asbestos siding, which uncovered the design detail and color palette. Windows on the south and east sides and the large window on Broadway were restored. The old shingle siding was removed, then insulated and, before new cedar shake shingles were attached to the structure. All molding was either stabilized or replaced and the steeple was repaired.

The total cost of this restoration was $1.2 million. I would like to note that the floor in the sanctuary is the original floor from 1888. It is incredibly beautiful and well worth seeing. Currently, the church is in the process of fund raising for the addition of an elevator.

From 1972 to 2017, Lake View Academy was part of the church. This alternative high school was for teens at risk, which provided them an opportunity to finish their high school education. The Chicago Public Schools now have such a good program in place for these teens that the decision was made to close the school.

The current pastor is Rev. Douglas Sutro who oversees a growing membership.

Sue Cox is the parish nurse and provides help and information when needed to the entire congregation.

The church, in partnership with the City of Chicago, welcomes Golden Dinners Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. They also provide crafts, exercise, bingo, movies, celebrations, and visits from the Parish Nurse.

Playgroups are available for toddlers. Services are Sundays at 9:00 and 11:00. If you are a Lake View history buff pay a visit, you won’t be sorry.

In 1800, Point de Sable was incorporated as the City of Chicago. "His house was about where the Tribune Tower is now, and he was living and working there by December, 1782. His prosperous farm was the cornerstone of the production economy through the farming circuit which began to replace the old fur trade. He was probably born about 1740 at Caibok, [IL], the son of a slave and an unknown woman who was named Catherine who was freed along with her son, Jean, in 1746."

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CHICAGO FROM P. 1...

er, empyting into the south-west end of lake Michigan. In the 1800s and 70s, with the Civil Rights Movement and the revulsion of popular history, Jean Baptiste Point de Sable was widely recognized as the founder of Chicago. According to respected historian John F. Swenson, J.D., Chicago was incorporated on March 4th, 1837 and has now surpassed its 180th Birthday. 

Note: The proper French spelling is Point de Sable where the "de" is pronounced "du" often leading Americans to misspell his name.

Patrick McBriarty is a Chi-

CHICAGO FROM P. 6... 
residence. That summer via "a big cane on wings" U.S. Army Captain John Whis-

ters, his family and sixty-one soldiers from Detroit build the first Fort Dearborn on the south river bank. The fort was situated at what today is racket, Wacker Drive and Michigan Avenue, across the Chicago River from the Point de Sable estate.

Chicago gained national atention because of what was then known as the Fort Dear-
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