



THE SPIRIT

Preserving the life of America's unique community

A publication
of the
Park Forest
Historical
Society

Vol. 7, No. 2

February 2012

A JOURNEY INTO ONE FAMILY'S HISTORY

Viola Baecher Traces Her Family's Story At Historical Society Program Sunday, Feb. 26, 2012



"A Journey into One African American Family History From 1783-2011," will be the program shared with us Sunday February 26 at 2:30 p.m. by Viola Baecher.

She hopes she can encourage more people to

discover and share their own stories. "It's especially important for African-Americans," said Baecher. "We just don't have enough of these incredibly positive stories for people to see and to appreciate their own stories."

Viola's journey began with wanting to know more about the grandmother she had never met. It ended with trips across the country, and presentations on the families she discovered. She will share not only her story, but methods she used to find it. She will talk about using newspaper reports, census records, and county records, libraries and more.

Park Forest Historical Society programs are free and open to the general public.

Programs are held in Park Forest Village Hall Board meeting room.

Please join us for this presentation and get inspired to look for your own family history



Viola Baecher displays a photograph (seen at far left) of her family.
[Photograph taken by David Levin]

WE CONTINUE TO "SAVE OUR HISTORY"

So much has, and is still happening at the Park Forest Historical Society. "Saving our History" for 27 years, continues.

In December, the Museum had 129 visitors. Jane Nicoll and friends did a great job cleaning, re-

President's Message

arranging and getting ready for the February exhibit, so, be sure to come see it! The Historical Society still has bricks! After selling nearly 500 bricks from the old Marshall Field's store, with 110 mailed to 17 states, we received another donation of bricks from Environmental Cleansing Corp. of Markham. The proceeds from the sale of bricks helps keep the Museum open. We thank Village Manager Tom Mick and ECC for their help.

(Continued on Page 3)

After five very long years, the archives, museum storage, the Digital Lab equipment and Historical Society office are out of remote storage! The Society board has worked hard to arrive at this point. Jerry Shnay and I sent letters to churches and spoke to several churches, looked at others including one in Chicago Heights. After Mike Gans became President we put out some inquiries with some churches again, and he began negotiations with St. Irenaeus and the Chicago Archdiocese over using space in the basement of their education wing. When the cost of a wall to protect the collection became prohibitive, we began to look among the other empty rooms in Park Forest.

Cynthia Pizzimenti suggested we look at St. Mary's former School the same day that I was driving around it, sizing it up as a possibility. Serendipity!

In My Own Little Corner

By Jane Nicoll, Museum Director

Mike began negotiating with Father Tri and the Joliet Diocese for a room at St. Mary's. St. Mary's was eager and welcoming. Within a month, we were planning the move! The classroom we are renting is on the ground floor, not down a steep flight of stairs, and the collection can be made accessible to the public, as well as to our volunteers.

Meanwhile for either move to be possible, we entered into negotiations with the Park Forest Public Library to continue financial support of the archival collection, which is still the property of the Library. Both parties realize a substantial savings by getting out of PODS storage. Tom Mick, Manager of the Village of Park Forest, encouraged us to seek a grant from the Village to help cover the expenses of preserving Park Forest's history. We received a grant of \$750 from the Village for 2011-2012.

After several phone calls among PODS, the Library staff, Mike and myself, we arranged for delivery of the first POD on Friday January 6, and for the other two on



Unpacking

January 7.

On January 7, Mike Stover and Jordan Lynum and I moved everything but a desk out of the first Library POD. The two men began to figure out the shelving while I sorted it by color and type and the younger men helped wipe it down. The boys and I kept moving things out of the other PODS, and getting them placed out of the way of the professional movers and furniture to come later. We all worked



Jim Silvia and Carl Stover plan the shelf units

January 7 and January 8, with the men working on the shelving, and the younger men and I getting things out of the PODS and settled in. The more we moved ourselves, the less we had to pay the movers at \$200 per hour.

I packed the dolls and pulled things out of a seeming "*Fibber McGee's Closet*" that needed to go to the archives. Vivian Purnell, Sarah Slack and Myrtle Martin packed up the kitchen things, then the contents of the old china cabinet. When that was done, they helped take down Christmas ornaments and lights.

Everything in the mover's way had to be moved. I had to decide what would stay and what would go to St. Mary's, and what in the PODS would come

to the museum.

The day of the move, we arrived at 8 a.m. The movers were delayed until 10:30. Mike Gans and Ross Lassandro moved in several loads of cartons between 8 and 10:30, saving us even more money. Jim came by to figure out more shelving. Mike and Carl Stover helped, then went to the museum to move boxes on the second floor of the museum. Most they brought over, but some they left on the first floor for the movers to get. That saved us the possible building of a ramp and paying the movers to load and unload those boxes.

Vivian Purnell and Sally Wallach wiped soot off furniture and cartons. We knew everything would be covered with a light soot, apparently from the heater at the PODS facility in Crete, so we were ready for that. Everyone took turns wiping down filing cabinets and cartons so we could handle them.

Thanks to everyone who helped with the move! We couldn't have done it without you.



Boxes and more boxes



And more boxes

(Continued on Page 3)

After the 12:30 to 1 p.m. lunch break, I worked with the moving men alone, emptying the PODS, trying to settle the room as much as possible. Then we took furniture and boxes to the museum. There we traded china cabinets, and moved the top over to its own china cabinet base. The green Formica table moved to the basement, replaced by the wood table matching the buffet and cabinet from the Aprill Estate. Four usable dining room chairs were placed around the house, increasing seating for visitors and volunteers.

In My Own Little Corner

(Continued from page 2)

Things going from the museum to St. Mary's were moved back there and settled in, and the movers were gone by 4:15. I left, a little the worse for wear, at 4:30, after taking a triumphant photograph of three EMPTY PODS. For more about the move, check our website, where I hope to put up a full account.

Leona DeLue's graveside service was to be at 11 a.m. on our moving day of Wednesday, January 11. I was quite sad to miss it, but felt I honored her by seeing the historic record of Park Forest settled back at home on that day. We unpacked the bronze plaque commemorating the first residents of Park Forest, of which Leona was one. I think she was letting us know she understood.

At about 10:15 we all paused to note the time and the importance of the plaque and the work of those who settled this town the Society works to save the history of. May Leona and all who went before her be a blessed memory which inspires the Society to go on in the



fight to preserve this collection and find it a permanent home.

MOVING DAY SCENES

The PODS units (left) at the doors of the school building. Willing workers (right) included (from left), Mike Stover, Vivian Purnell, Carl Stover, Sally Wallach, Jim Silvia and Ross Lassandro.



A place for everything
— almost!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(Continued from Page 1)

Many thanks to those who have given to our Annual Fund. A special thanks to James Klutznick, for his special donation and to everyone who contributed to our campaign. Donations in any amount help us! This year, the Annual Fund will cover our new \$225 monthly rent for the room at St. Mary's.

Donations toward the Annual Fund are still accepted--see the form in this newsletter.

Thank you to all who renewed Membership or joined this past Fall. If you have not renewed or joined, yet, there is a form in this newsletter. We must build up our membership--Join Us!

We continue to be thankful for the support of our Partners -- the Village of Park Forest, Village Board, Mayor John A. Ostenburg, Tom Mick, the Park Forest Public Library and the Library Board, Andrew Brown and Central Park Apartments, Celebration Ministries, and St. Mary's. Each plays a significant part in assisting the Historical Society on our path to "Save our History".

This year we are also seeking corporate sponsorships. Please support the businesses supporting us--Tower Cleaners, Downtown Park Forest; Mike Jordan State Farm Insurance, Park Forest; and Hallett Movers, Summit, IL.

I must personally thank Archivist Jane Nicoll and Historical Society Treasurer Jim Silvia for their superb work on organizing and physically setting up the new Archive/Office in St. Mary's. You can read Jane's column for the names of the many others who helped in this huge task.

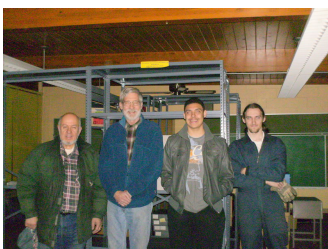
I hope to see you all at our next program on Sunday, February 26.

Warmest regards,

Michael Gans, President

Moving Day Scenes

Scenes from the move to St. Mary's Church (clockwise from top right) include Jim Silvia looking at the collection, move workers Siliva, Carl Stover, Jordan Lynum and Mike Stover; Jim Silvia and Carl Stover assembling shelf units; Mike and Jordan with some of the boxes they moved, and (below) the three EMPTY PODs units signify accessibility of the collection, at last!



PARK FOREST HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL FUND CAMPAIGN

YES! I am enclosing a check for \$ _____ as my contribution to help support the mission of the Park Forest Historical Society.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Business name (if Business Donation)

Thank you for investing in the future of the Park Forest Historical Society!

Contributions are tax-deductible under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.

Please consider the following:

____\$315 "Adopt a Month of Museum Rent"

____\$225 "Adopt a month of Archives Rent".

Gifts may also be made in honor of or in memory of an individual.

Make checks payable to the "Park Forest Historical Society"

400 Lakewood Blvd.

Park Forest, IL. 60466

****Please note this gift is separate from your annual membership****

Join The Park Forest Historical Society

As a Member you will receive the quarterly newsletter and program notices.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State _____

Zip _____ Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

☐ Please send newsletters and announcements via my email.

Membership Category

Individual \$ 20.00

Family \$ 40.00

Contributor \$ 75.00

Benefactor \$315.00

(One month Museum rent)

Corporate \$ 50.00

Our membership year begins in September.

Make checks payable to:

"Park Forest Historical Society"

Mail to: Park Forest Historical Society

400 Lakewood Blvd.

Park Forest, IL 60466-1619

☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Contributions are tax-deductible under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.