

CORNERSTONE

Lemont Historical Society's Newsletter



JANUARY EVENTS

1/23 - 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom

FEBRUARY EVENTS

2/7 - 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm
Drinkin' with Lincoln 2020

2/14 - 6:30 pm
Love in the Old Stone Church
silent movie



Thank you
Athens Marble Club
for your support!

VILLAGE OF LEMONT
LEMONT TOWNSHIP
LEMONT PARK DISTRICT

WELCOME TO THE NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Susan Donahue <i>2 Year Term</i>	Vice President 1 Traci Sarpalius <i>2 Year Term</i>
Vice President 2 Carol Garibay <i>2 Year Term</i>	Treasurer Terry Blanz <i>2 Year Term</i>
Secretary Susan Roy <i>2 Year Term</i>	

ADDITIONAL BOARD SEATS

Patricia Camalliere <i>2 Year Term</i>	Timothy Collins <i>2 Year Term</i>
Andrea Kurt <i>2 Year Term</i>	Charmaine Drafke <i>2 Year Term</i>
Richard Homerding <i>2 Year Term</i>	Jacqueline Uznanski <i>2 Year Term</i>
Richard Lee <i>1 Year Term</i>	John Quinn <i>1 Year Term</i>



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

I would like to first thank those who felt that I would be worthy of the position of President of the LAHS Board. I will try to live up to the legacy that so many before me have achieved. I would like to thank Susan Roy for her past leadership and in moving our Society forward with new events while staying true to our respect and love of Lemont history.

Our parking area has been resurfaced. We wish to thank Rob Abbinante and contractor Sal Alfano for donating their time and workmanship in accomplishing this. Mr. Abbinante was presented a Life Membership as a thank you and Mr. Alfano is already a Life Member. Please thank them when you see them.

Please come to a very interesting program – Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom - by President Lincoln on January 23rd at the museum at 6:30pm. There will be a charge of \$10 and refreshments will be offered. He will discuss his experiences from IL to D.C. He also has agreed to come back into Lemont on **February 7th for the Drinkin' with Lincoln Pub Crawl** that he always enjoys.

We have some new Board Members that you will eventually become familiar with and I wish to publicly welcome them on board. They are: Tim Collins, Charmaine Drafke, Andrea Kurt (Earnest), and Jackie Uznanski.

Tim Collins has had some serious health issues lately and we want to wish him all the best and know in time he will create new projects that will enhance our museum. Charmaine Drafke has been our Newsletter Editor this past year, and also helps with our social media, website, and publicity and has done a fabulous job. Andrea Kurt (Earnest) is a name you probably have seen often as she is involved as editor in Lemont Patch. She will bring enthusiasm and is tech savvy. Jackie Uznanski has been part of our organization at many events like *Fright Nite* and in helping her late dad, our Handsome Photographer Bill, for quite a few years.

Now I send a fond goodbye to those no longer on the Board: Barb Buschman, Joy Homerding and Gary Roy. Barb didn't sing at the "Open Mic", but maybe the Talent Show will be more her style. The "Dancing Queen" still is a member. I expect to call on her for her input from time to time. Joy Homerding came to us with fresh ideas too like the *Painting Nite*. Several people still bring it up as they felt Van Gogh was present leading them on to greatness. Mine was Picasso influenced as people gathered around it were amused by the turkey vultures I captured flying over Lemont's historic churches, once they figured out what they were. Joy is always welcome here. Gary Roy is no longer our Treasurer and we thank him for his service and feel in a pinch he will help us too. He was instrumental in helping to remodel our outdated bathroom.

In closing my first LAHS President Letter I would ask that you please join me in helping to keep our beloved museum and organization alive and moving forward in our 50th Year!

Sincerely,
Susan Donahue

History of the Lemont Area Historical Society

by Richard Lee, past president

Lemont Area Historical Society was formed in 1970 when the new Methodist church was finished on Custer Street West of the downtown area and on the donated Brown family property. The future of the old stone church was undecided until a group proposed being responsible for the upkeep of the building and making it a museum.

The other proposal was to tear it down and make a new parking lot for local residents. Tom Ludwig agreed to be the first president and his family grew up in Lemont with some working at the quarries hauling stone. The term "Area" was added to include surrounding areas such as South to 135th street where Will County starts and Citgo Refinery (Pure Oil) and the steel mill is off New Avenue. North is Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve and Argonne National Lab where thousands of local people worked. The museum would be a repository for collections of books, obituaries, maps, photos, interviews, postcards, plates, and videos.

Programs were arranged on a regular basis to inform and entertain members and visitors with one specialty that was Civil War history since our Township had over 200 men enlist, some at the old church. The old sanctuary with old wooden pews was left for hosting weddings, baptisms, and funerals with a fee to maintain the building. Tours were arranged of the downtown, canal, quarries, and Waterfall Glen that continue to host and charge a fee. New landscaping was added with the help of the local garden club, which also helps maintain it. The building has had extensive renovation in the last two years thanks to matching grants and fundraising.

We are celebrating our 50th anniversary this year with 50 events throughout the village to commemorate the fascinating history of Lemont and its people. Be sure to visit the Old Stone Church and follow our Facebook page for event information.

Let's Celebrate!

GENEALOGY CORNER

Genealogy: Highs and Lows of Research

By Barb Bannon



Requests for research have come to the Historical Society for many years but until now I have never before had this many highs and lows during one search. This one really pulled at the heart strings.

A story came to us about a little boy, Louis Kovas born May 28, 1924 died Aug 5, 1928, just four years of age. The family lives out of state and a friend of theirs stopped at the museum relaying a request that a search be done for the boy's burial location. The gentleman told the story to Susan

about the boy's sister, a nun soon to celebrate her 95th birthday and their wanting to find his burial location for her. He said Louis and his sister were orphans, raised in a Lemont orphanage; a document stated that it was "Hastings – Slovenian Brothers Center", that he died in an accident and was buried by Gerharz Funeral Home. Since the Franciscan nuns from Mt. Assisi were assigned to take care of the orphans, it was possible Louis was buried near their lots at St. Alphonsus Cemetery. A Record of Funeral presumably provided by Gerharz, indicated the "Funeral Services at Hastings" and "Certifying Physician Dr. Ludwig, Lemont".

Since there was detailed information to launch the search, I thought this one would be a walk in the park. I went directly to our cemetery readings to check at St. Alphonsus, no luck. None of the other local cemetery readings listed his name either. The Gerharz Funeral Home index cards did have his name but did not indicate the cemetery. OK, that didn't work so I thought I had better practice what I preach and started at the beginning.

The Lemont Optimist News article about the auto accident reads in part as follows; returning to "a picnic held in Hastings" which is what the area near Mt. Assisi, Slovenian Center & Franciscan Village was then called, the car in which Louis was riding, "struck a telephone pole throwing all of the occupants into a ditch, the car turning over onto one or two of the occupants". "Lewis Tratevjak, age 4 years old, was killed almost instantly and his twin sister Theresa suffered a bad cut on her knee". It was hard reading about the accident; a four year old, just enjoying a picnic and then his life cut short. I read on but it only mentioned that his body was taken to Gerharz.

Then it sunk in, the article reported his name as Tratevjak, that he had a twin sister Theresa, and the family lived in Hastings. I checked the 1920 census but found nothing, in 1930 I found William Tratevjak (hired man), wife Mary and Theresa Kovas (orphan age 6) living in the same building on Main St. as the Franciscan Sisters. A few entries above them for the same location I found a Mary Kovas (age 13) one of seventeen girls under the age of 15 listed as sisters. I confirmed with the family that Louis did have a twin sister and also another named Mary.

With new hope and this new surname, I again searched the cemetery records and found that William & Mary Tratevjak were buried in the nuns section at St. Alphonsus. Since the Tratevjak's worked for the sisters and Louis was an orphan, it's possible Louis was also buried there. I contacted St. Alphonsus Church and Catholic Cemeteries of Chicago to check records for Louis using multiple spellings of both names but neither had his record. Where to now? Confirm or disprove the cemetery.

I resorted to the Illinois State Death Index online and this record listed SS Cyril's as the burial cemetery. From personal family research, I remembered having received copies of a few pages of the 1920's burial records for SS Cyril's and checked there. Sure enough, handwritten but not very legible, was what looked like Louis Roxas (Kovas) with the same dates but without a plot location. With new hope and proof of the cemetery in hand, I retraced my steps only to get the same results. I was told by the church to check with Catholic Cemeteries and then by them to check with the church. Here we go again.

Getting bounced around doing research is not unusual; I've learned not to get discouraged and to be a persistent pain in the neck, so to speak. I decided to follow-up with a phone call to the records center and was put in touch with a gentleman that knew the process best. The call was a real eye opener. During our conversation he mentioned there are many older records that never had locations recorded. I inadvertently discovered that there could be many unmarked, unrecorded, used graves. I had just hit a new low in research.

After corresponding with the extended family members, and seeing a photo taken at the burial, attended by two priests, I realized I may be on the wrong track. There are many unanswered questions and signs that point to a possible burial in the vicinity of the St. Mary's Franciscan Monastery / Slovenian Brothers cemetery property.

First there are no identifiable landmarks or gravestones anywhere in the burial photo. St. Al's or SS Cyril's in 1928 should have tall older headstone visible. The photo also shows a barren surrounding area, not fitting the in town location of either cemetery.

Secondly the Funeral Record did say burial in Hastings not Lemont and a Catholic Church burial would have to be recorded and St Mary's Slovenian Catholic Mission Church, as a mission, could not officially record Baptisms, Marriages or Burials. The church closely associated with the Slovenian mission and most likely record keeper, would have been SS Cyril's.

Pieces of previously unknown information have been uncovered making the original documents more clearly understood, My hope is that this will help in finding a little boy lost.

VOLUME XIV.

FOUR YEAR OLD BOY KILLED IN ACCIDENT

Three women, two men and a child were injured and a 4-year old boy was killed last Sunday evening in Hastings about 7 p. m. as they were enroute to a picnic held in Hastings which they had attended during the afternoon. It seems that the door of the car, which was a Studebaker big 6, came open and the driver leaned sideways to close the door and skidded off the road; he succeeded in getting the car back on the road again but struck a telegraph pole throwing all of the occupants into the ditch, the car turning over on one or two of the occupants.

Mr. William Trstevjak, his wife and two children, who reside in Hastings, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Steve Ritlop and their son of Chicago and a lady friend were the occupants of the car. Lewis Trstevjak, aged 4 years, was killed almost instantly and his twin sister, Theresa suffered a bad cut on her knee. Two of the women were seriously cut about the body, legs, arms and face and the other lady was badly cut but not quite so seriously. Mr. Trstevjak suffered some bad cuts on both wrists while Mr. Ritlop and his son escaped injury. The entire party had attended the picnic held Sunday afternoon on the grounds of the Franciscan Fathers in Hastings. They went home for their supper and were on their way back to the picnic to spend the evening when the accident occurred. They were all removed to Lemont to the office of Dr. J. B. Ludwig by passing motorists and the aid of the street cars where they were given medical attention but later all were removed to the County hospital in Chicago. The body of the little boy was removed to Gerharz' undertaking parlors and the inquest held Monday afternoon of this week. The Trstevjak family reside in Hastings. The car was badly smashed and was taken to the D. & M. garage.

MORE FROM OUR WRITERS

Amazing Pastor Coats

By Richard H. Lee

The daughter of our former Pastor Coats in 1924-1932 came to Lemont to talk about our heritage of Native Americans. He was one quarter Native American and she is about half of that at age 99. While we had dinner together she told me a story that was quite amazing. In his work at our church he encountered an adversary, Al Capone, who decided to threaten him by sending a couple “goons” or enforcers. They came to his office at the church right where the Old Stone Church has its office now.

What they didn’t know was he was an expert persuader and debater, something he learned in college and seminary. Even though he had a gun in his open desk drawer, he managed to persuade them to leave and not bother him anymore. While he was in



Chautauqua Institution - Hall of Christ



college he worked summers for the Chautauqua Institution as an orator or speaker that traveled with programs and classes that were popular in the early 20th century before TV. To quote Wikipedia, it provided Christian instruction, preaching and worship funded by Methodists. It was part of the Moral Re-armament movement that drew crowds.

She said he was also an expert marksman and liked to compete in shooting matches with police teams. He always won the matches, even though he shot from the hip rather than extended arm firing. This he probably learned from his cowboy days before seminary. Mark Hugleman came to her talk and may invite her to return for a longer talk about Native Americans and their amazing history in America. This Al Capone story ranks second, I think, after the wild and dangerous “Smokey Row” days when our Reverend Clancy shut it down with the help of the Chicago Tribune and the Pinkertons.

STEPPING BACK IN TIME *by Susan Donahue*

We continue our journey moving forward as we acknowledge the rich history that is part of our organization and the people who made so many sacrifices of time and talent to make sure we would not only survive but thrive.

Feb 23, 1971 Lemont Area Historical Society Board Meeting

Seven members present. President Thomas Ludwig announced that he is endeavoring to get in touch with Mr. Barry Moss concerning the legal work necessary in order to obtain the "Not For Profit" status.



Mrs. Hamelen has been contacted concerning an exhibit of some artifacts at the Band Booster's fun fair.

Announcement was made that a group of members attended a demonstration in Chicago, for which the Society will receive \$40.

The question of obtaining postcards for sale was discussed. It was agreed that an airmail letter will be sent to the company, whose address was furnished by the Will County Historical Society, in an effort to obtain a firm quote. The members will be asked to furnish some additional pictures.

The Society will begin to prepare a letter to the Lemont businesses soliciting sustaining memberships. The Secretary also will write Mr. Simmer concerning the additional materials which are still located in the Wolter's Store, and which the present renter is not at liberty to release to us.

March 2, 1971 Lemont Area Historical Society Board Meeting

Discussed a meeting with the Cook County Genealogical Society. It was suggested that perhaps our society might wish to join theirs – this fee would be \$5.00.

President announced a meeting of the Executive Committee with Mr. Barry Moss, attorney for 11am on Saturday, March 6, for further discussion of the non- for – profit organization procedures.

Mrs. Savage suggested that someone be appointed to serve as historian, librarian and curator. It was decided that this will remain under advisement.

Subject of ordering postcards was postponed, awaiting further quotation from Mr. Tedens.

Treasurer reported a balance of \$1054. Meeting adjourned.

Mr. Michael Galati presented a most interesting program which detailed the Lemont Quarry strike of 1885. After questioning, Mr. Galati graciously extended permission for his materials to be copied for our files.

SOCIETY NEWS *by Susan Donahue*

The new year opens up with a clean slate and in no time at all it becomes a series of events that makes you wonder as last year where did all the time go.

It was fun to have “Open Mic” last year and possibly a “Talent Show” in 2020 .It is always good to be open to new adventures and we appreciated Mark Weinberg and Landon Florancic for introducing all of us to the talent right at our doorstep that we were not aware existed.

I have had calls at the end of the year asking about our “Pub Crawl” and “Ghost Bus Tour”. Would we have them and just make sure that you get publicity out quickly as they don’t want to miss any of these events. It’s nice to be popular, although as someone pointed out to me the theme is centered around our local saloons or involves “Spirits” of one kind or the other. True our adventures are not in the summer for a cold brew, but tradition is so much a part of who we are that we could not deny our infamous past as we herald our local history. “Give them what they want and they will come!”

Our Lemont history is rooted also in new beginnings as those who came before us saw a vision of a new town that would give everyone who worked hard the advantage of being not only part of it, but have a say in it’s progress. I like the fact that we stand up for what we believe in.



We understand from a reliable source that someone who is a Life Member is celebrating a very important birthday – Mrs. Marvin Ludwig will be 90 Years Young! The family has been fortunate enough to have her insight and presence for many years and we wish her a very “HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY!!!! and Many More Happy Years to come! I am sure many of you also remember her late husband, Marvin, who was a vital part of the Lemont scene.

We want to also keep in mind Elsie Peterson, who we understand is now in a nursing facility. She has been a mainstay of our community for many years always contributing a positive and friendly attitude in all of her dealings at Peterson’s Hardware or out and about.

We wish our new Life Member Jason Smith all the best and look forward to the contributions he will be making to our organization as we move forward ever mindful of those who came before us and contributed their share of expertise.

We want to take this opportunity to extend to Mr. & Mrs. Paul Cimino a sincere sympathy at the loss of Paul’s sister, Connie. She had in recent years suffered greatly from MS and is now in a better place where there is no suffering or pain.

Our deepest sympathy to the Tasharski Family on the recent passing of matriarch, Jessie. Mrs. Tasharski and her husband ran the Gerharz Furnishings Store in Lemont for many years and Jessie was a Navy Wave in WWII.

Calling All Members!

You can renew your membership or buy a new membership online!

Join By Mail

- Complete the membership application below
- Make out a check for the appropriate dues
- Mail both to the Historical Society's address on the form

Join Online!

www.lemonthistory.org/membership.html

*You will receive your membership card
in a few weeks*

Join In Person

HOURS OF OPERATION

Tuesday and Friday
10 AM to 2 PM
Saturday
10 AM to 1 PM
Sunday
1 to 4 PM

You will receive your membership card in a few weeks

Membership Benefits

- Voting privileges at General Membership Meeting
- Cornerstone Newsletter
- Free admission to regular museum exhibit area
- Free use of Society Library
- One Guest pass for free admission to regular museum exhibit area
- Discount on Archival Photos and other image media
- 10% Discount on items in Gift Shop, including selected books

Additional Benefits for Corporate Members

- One extra Guest pass for free admission to regular museum exhibit area (Total 2 passes)
- Your business card included in one issue of the Cornerstone Newsletter
- Membership Certificate suitable for framing

Additional Benefit for Life Members

- Name will be engraved on nameplate and displayed on plaque in museum.

Opportunities For LAHS Members: Our historical society has many kinds of activities that members can get involved in if they wish. New members who get involved will enable us to do more and do it more efficiently. Here are some possible opportunities:

Archiving Photos And Newspaper Articles | Tour Guides – At The Museum, Around Lemont, And New Trails
New Exhibits | New Archival Collections To Copy And Sell | Fund Raising Events | Newsletter Articles
Museum Care And Improvements | Tour Advertising | Special Programs And Reenactments
New Pages For The Website | Maintaining The Gardens