



# THE SPIRIT

Preserving the life of America's unique community

A publication of  
the  
Park Forest  
Historical  
Society

Vol. 9, No. 3

February 2014

## Our 1950s Museum Needs a New Home

Once again, the Park Forest Historical Society Board is looking for a new home for the 15-year-old 1950s Park Forest House Museum. Our landlord, Andrew Brown, co-owner of Central Park Apartments let us know two years ago that, if we stayed in the 141 Forest Blvd unit past May 31, 2014, we would have to pay the full rent, which is now well over \$1000. We simply cannot pay that amount. In fact, Mr. Brown and his partner would prefer we would not stay. We had hoped to find a space in one of the co-operatives. Unfortunately all of the co-operatives have covenants which prevent anyone but an individual or family entering into a co-operative agreement.

The Board had counted too heavily on this solution and now finds itself with no place to move the museum when the lease ends on May 31, 2014. As one of my local history friends asks,

"In such a historic community, why is it so hard to preserve its history?" In truth it has been an uphill battle to preserve Park Forest history, and now we are asking for help. We are a small board with limited time to research options.

We are asking members of the community to help us. Do you own an empty house in good condition in the village, or know someone who does? The Society is not in a financial position to pay much rent. We hope there is someone with an empty house who would donate the building to our use for the house museum. We are also considering finding a building where we could simply have a Park Forest museum.

Museum Director, Jane Nicoll says, "If we can not be in an original rental unit, we must sacrifice our goal of preserving a unit in almost original condition. This is a big disappointment to us, and an architectural loss in this historic village. We will still preserve original architectural elements, in hopes that someday we will be able to return to a rental unit and preserve it." If we are unable to find anyplace, we will face the decision to liquidate the museum, or to put it into storage again. If there is no museum open, we will lose the remainder of the \$22,700 in funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant, which was awarded in September 2013, because it is a museum-based grant.

The Board is open to suggestions and seeking volunteers willing to help us with relocation options. Society President, Michael Gans says, "It will take a Village to save and move the museum this time. The Board has worked over the past seven years to save the Archival Collection, finding a place to house it in January 2012. In 2007, we saved two units of the museum, found the new home for it at 141 Forest Blvd, and financed it alone. This time it will take the help of others who care about Park Forest history to find a new location and make the move possible. We hope concerned citizens will step up to the challenge."

Please contact Michael Gans, President at 708-305-3308, or Jane Nicoll, Museum Director at 708-481-4252 if you have suggestions, and/or are willing to volunteer to help with relocation efforts.

### FEBRUARY PROGRAM



Cynthia Ogorek

**Take a trip on the South Shore Railroad with author and historian Cynthia Ogorek in a special program at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, February 23 in Village Hall. See Page 2 for more details**

## Take a Trip on the South Shore via Our February Program

Be sure to join us for a very special program, Sunday, February 23, 2:30 p.m. at Village Hall. Cynthia Ogorek will give a program on her latest book, [Along the Chicago South Shore & South Bend Rail Line](#).

Cynthia Ogorek is a public historian and author based in Calumet City, IL. Specializing in Calumet Region history, she has produced a series of three books on the region's transportation history. Her other books are [Along the Calumet River](#) (Arcadia 2004) and [The Lincoln Highway Around Chicago](#) (Arcadia 2008).

Starting in 1901 as a three-mile-long trolley line in East Chicago, Indiana, the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad expanded in 1908 to connect South Bend, Indiana, with Chicago, Illinois. Once a treasure in the Sam Insull utilities empire, today it is the only functioning electric interurban in the United States.

Cynthia says the "secret" subtitle for the book is "The non-railfan's guide to the South Shore—a history of the railroad for 'the rest of us.'" During her presentation on the South Shore railroad, Cynthia will give an overview of the history of the company plus notes on how an electric interurban works and the historic sites you can see from the windows of the "South Shore" as it travels the ninety miles between downtown Chicago and the South Bend airport. Images of rolling stock, passenger depots, excursion destinations, and historic sites along the way combine to reveal the century-long story of the railroad and its 90-mile corridor.

Shortly after its publication, the book won awards from the Illinois State Historical Society, the Illinois Women's Press Association and the National Federation of Press Women.

From a world-class city through rolling agricultural acres, from steel mills through a national lakeshore, some 200 vintage photographs illustrate the unique view of the Calumet region that South Shore passengers have traditionally enjoyed.

Ms. Ogorek is a knowledgeable and engaging speaker. She will be selling and signing copies of all her books at the program. Price of this book is \$24 plus tax. Find out more about Cynthia at [www.centerofknownhistory.com](http://www.centerofknownhistory.com)

---

### February at the Museum

February is the month to "Step Back into a 1950s Valentines Day" at the 1950s Park Forest House Museum. The museum, at 141 Forest Blvd is decorated with vintage honeycomb hearts and Valentine's from the 1950s in every room. The classroom on the second floor is decorated for a 1950s Valentines Day party. This nostalgic exhibit and all that red make a real day brightener to chase away the winter blues. Be sure to stop by the museum for a visit in February, open Wednesday and Saturday 10:30 to 3:30, or by appointment. Admission is Adults \$5; 12 and under free. If you have joined this year, you are entitled to one free visit. If you think the weather looks really questionable, please call Jane Nicoll at 708-481-4252, or 708-638-4815 to be sure we have not made an emergency closing.

### HALL OF FAME

**Park Forest Hall of Fame will be Sunday, April 6, 2014, at 3 p.m. in Park Forest Freedom Hall, 410 Lakewood Blvd. The induction ceremony and reception are free and open to the general public.**

**Join us to help recognize Park Foresters who have made substantial, long term contributions to the Village.**

## **In My Own Little Corner**

### **By Jane Nicoll**

Since October 1, 2013, I have been directing volunteers and working at least 16 hours per week myself on the Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant. The Society has a new computer, and copier/fax/printer.

PastPerfect Museum Collection Database software is loaded on the computer and archive and museum collections are beginning to be entered. Collections are being accessioned and inventoried in preparation for being entered. We are still running behind on the matching volunteer hours we said we would provide as a cost share. If

you would like to help with data entry or with numbering collections by hand, and join with a very nice group of people already working on the project, please contact me at 708-481-4252.

Thank you to the volunteers who have been contributing hours: Noelle Canty, Tiffani Graham, Jane Nicoll, Vivian Purnell, Sarah Rodgers, Jim Silvia, John Snider, Renard Thomas, Rose Thomas, and Alice Wasney.

This project is made possible by funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Thank you as well to those who have helped transform the museum into Christmas and back out, and then into Valentines Day, Rose Maynard and Judy McGee. It has been a challenging January to get there to do this work--certainly one where we understand why we made the decision to be closed in January!

It takes many hours to decorate the museum. This year packing up Christmas has been made longer by my documenting the collection as it gets put away, so it can be entered into PastPerfect. I truly hope people will come to see it in February. This may be the last February we decorate a museum. Come enjoy it!



---

## **Have you joined and made a donation to the Annual Fund?**

Thank you to those who have joined or who have renewed their memberships already. If you have not done so, please join to help us meet the challenges we face. In early December, we sent out our 2013 Annual Fund Appeal. Thank you so much to those who have sent in donations. If you have not done so, please consider making a donation. Both memberships and Annual Fund Donations show your continuing support for our missions, and help us meet the challenges we face this year. We have been awarded a second \$5000 matching challenge grant from the Village of Park Forest. We are about half way to making the match.

Please join, donate to the Annual Fund, visit the museum or make purchases in our museum or online store. All help us meet the Matching Challenge!

**National Endowment for the Humanities  
Preservation Assistance Grant  
for Collection Preservation**

We have received another federal grant. The National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant has



**Humanities**

Grant has been awarded

to us in the amount of \$6000. This grant will enable us to hire a conservation consultant who will come for two days to evaluate the archival collection at the Archive Office at St. Mary's Catholic Church, 227 Monee Road. The consultant will produce a report evaluating the environment, collection condition and policies. After she makes her assessment, she is expected to advise on and approve the purchase of supplies to house the archival collection materials and further preserve them.

The assessments produced in this grant can be used as support to apply for further grants to preserve the collection.

If our weather allows, the consultant, Jennifer Hain Teper from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign will evaluate the collection on February 20-21. Archivist, Jane Nicoll hopes to have the supplies purchased soon after that, so collections can be re-housed in clean folders and boxes as the collections are processed for the IMLS grant.

The Saving the History of Park Forest, Illinois project is made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Exploring the human endeavor.

**Membership Benefits**

Your membership in the Park Forest Historical Society entitles you to one free tour of the House Museum and advance notice of all programs including the annual Park Forest Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Your membership supports Society efforts to preserve and interpret the history of Park Forest through the Local History Collection and Archive and the 1950s PF House Museum.

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP**

**Join Today**

**Yes! I want to be a member.** As a member I receive one free Museum tour and advance notices of all programs

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 1 (One month museum rent)  | \$545.00 |
| Benefactor 2 (One month Archive rent) | \$225.00 |
| Corporate                             | \$ 50.00 |

Our membership year begins in September

Enclosed is a check made payable to: "Park Forest Historical Society"

We also accept cash or PayPal online at [www.parkforesthistorical.org](http://www.parkforesthistorical.org).

Mail to: **Park Forest Historical Society  
400 Lakewood Blvd.  
Park Forest, IL 60466-1619**

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Park Forest Historical Society is an independent 501 (c) (3) corporation. Your donation is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

2014-02