



Western Springs Historical Society

Fall / Winter, 1999

Remembering Charles Vickery

The death of world-renowned seascape artist Charles Vickery of Western Springs in September, 1998, brought to an end the life of a shy and generous man who shared his time and his talent willingly with everyone. The Western Springs Historical Society is very fortunate to own a seascape and a portrait painted by Vickery which are on display at the historic Water Tower. An impromptu palette on a shirt cardboard and a brush used to touch up an oil painting were recently given to the Society by Rae Wilkie Callaway, a longtime Vickery friend and collector. Callaway recalls that she was fascinated by his art while in high school and purchased her first painting soon after. Vickery delivered the oil to her home on his bicycle.

Born in Hinsdale, Vickery opened his first art studio in Western Springs at the age of 24. Early paintings were traded for a week at the Michigan shore or home-cooked meals. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the American Academy of Fine Arts, but found some of the mechanics useless so set out to figure out his subjects himself. Early in the 40's and 50's he did church murals in Iowa, but a Chicago art critic spotted the painting of Lake Michigan surf in a Chicago gallery, compared him to Winslow Horner, and his career in marine art followed.

In addition to the Historical Society and private collections, his work hangs locally at the Harris Bank of Western Springs, the Brigantine Gallery in LaGrange Park and the Clipper Ship Gallery in LaGrange, next to his former

studio. Other paintings may be seen at the Union League Club, the Norwegian Embassy in Washington, D.C. and galleries from Tuscon, AZ, to Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Historical Society also has paintings of birds done by Vickery's twin sister, Florence Guise, who preceded him in death in 1973.

New Grand Avenue Center Archives

Check out the redecorated Archives on the second floor of the Grand Avenue Community Center. Because of the success of the Western Springs House Walk, the Historical Society was able to replace the aged carpeting in the Archives and also, in conjunction with the Village, brighten up the walls with a new paint job.

Moving all of the files, cabinets and tables was a daunting task and would not have been possible without the cooperation of Ralph Soloman, Bill Nelson and a crew from Public Works. The Village installed a new sprinkler system throughout the building with new ceilings and also an elevator.

Museum Tours

The Tower Museum is available for special tours beyond the regularly scheduled hours. The tours are tailored to the interest and availability of each group. If you want to take advantage of this program, please contact the museum at 246-9230 or Henry Linabury at 630-769-6146.

Special Holiday Exhibits

◆ What are black, white and watched all over the world? The new baby giant pandas - Lun Lun and Yang Yang, at Zoo Atlanta!

Not many of us will have the opportunity to travel to Georgia during the holiday season to meet the new arrivals. But everyone can experience the next best thing by visiting the Historical Museum beginning Dec. 3rd. There, in the main display case, you will have the pleasure of viewing Sarah Ostrowski's panda collection.

Western Springs resident Sarah, granddaughter of Historical Society members James and Patricia Olmstead, has been collecting panda memorabilia since before she could walk. Sarah is now a freshman at Lyons Township High School, yet she still welcomes additions to her prized collection from family and friends.

◆ Also featured at the museum, in the center showcase, is a display of antique fire engines, cars and trucks on loan from the collection of Western Springs resident John Earhart and the Western Springs Historical Society.

◆ In front of the fireplace is a Christmas tree, adorned with antique ornaments, including an assortment from Mrs. Rodney Kimberling.

**Western Springs Historical
Society Museum Hours:**
SATURDAYS 11 A.M. - 1 P.M.

The Children's Museum will be closed January - March.

Historical Society Updates

Children's Museum Updates

While visiting the Historical Society, take a walk up to the Children's Museum on the third floor of the Tower. Many hands-on permanent exhibits are on display with a special emphasis on historic Western Springs. Special seasonal crafts workshops are also organized throughout the year.

Design Your Own Xmas Wreath

Ring in this holiday season, constructing a special Christmas handicraft. On December 18, from 11 to 1 P.M., your child is invited to the Children's Museum to design and construct a special Christmas wreath. All ages are welcome.

Request for Donations

The Children's Museum is looking for donated children's books of a historical nature for the children's library. In addition, if you have any dress-up clothes, jewelry, or other playhouse items, call Kim Butler at 246-0972. Thanks again to everyone who has contributed!

Children's Museum Great for Birthdays!

The Children's Museum is available for hosting birthday parties, in conjunction with Snackers Cafe. All Museum members may host a party. For more information, or if you are interested in volunteering, call Kim Butler at 246-0972.

Special Thanks To our 1999 Museum Volunteers:

Charmaine & Dick Blessman - Val Price
Sue Darlington - Joan Binder
Don Finkleston - Judy Gaylord
Marilyn Hanson - Lou Landbeck
Steven Mink - Henry Linabury
Jan & Bill McDermid - Kitty Meade
Pat & Jim Olmstead - Al Mungai
Marion & Lou Paptistella - Nancy Pegram
Alice Perkins - Harriett Potenza
Lynn Rowells - Adam Szymel
Kent Taylor - Norm Thompson
Dick Walker - Sandra Waunn
Mary Handler - Sue Ellen Flockercier

Museum Calling Card Display

While walking up the museum stairs to the 2nd. Floor, check out the hanging display of calling cards.

The custom of leaving calling cards is one that is three centuries old. However, those available to collectors these days date from the Victorian era to WW1. During this period, it was the duty of the woman in each household to make "calls" on the sick and calls of condolence or of congratulation. When making these calls, they left their husbands' cards as well as their own.

Small white handwritten cards were used for formal calls and were done by experts on the art of calligraphy. There were also hand-painted cards.

Cards having damaged corners had a special significance as there had developed a complicated "language of cards" requiring the bending of edges. Turning down the upper left corner indicated congratulations, whereas turning down the upper right corner indicated condolences or adieus. When the entire left end was turned down, this indicated a call on the whole family. This practice of bending the corners became popular shortly after the Civil War and continued into the 1890's.

Special Kudos

Can you imagine decorating the Historical Society Museum for Christmas with neither heat nor light in the building? It happened when the power line failed on November 22 and was not restored until December 3, right before the Festival of Trees. Never daunted, Pat and Jim Olmstead, assisted by Alice Perkins and Sarah Ostrowski, accomplished the impossible. Do not miss their Christmas displays of Sarah's panda collection and vintage toys from John Earhart and the Museum collection.

Scouts Brighten Tower Ironwork

Kevin Kysiak, an 8th grader at St. John of the Cross, and a crew of eleven fellow scouts and four adult leaders, restored the iron railings and the Historical Society signpost as a requirement for Kevin's Eagle Scout service project. Western Springs Public Works provided scaffolding for the sanding and painting challenge. Assisting Kevin were Dan Hamilton, Dave Monteagudo, Steve Sulak, Mike Yocius, Robby Richardson, Chris Grabacki, Zach Greer, Andy Giger, Peter Giger, David Westfall and Jason Nevins. All are members of Scout troop 3 which is sponsored by All Saint' Episcopal Church in Western Springs. Adult leaders assisting the Scouts were Dave Grabacki, Scoutmaster; Bruce Torgler, Greg Lietz and Bill Kysiak.

The Historical Society Board passed a resolution commending the Scouts for their assistance in brightening the entrance to the Tower Museum.

Western Springs Archives

The Archives of the Western Springs Historical society serves the community by documenting our Village history and furnishing extensive research material for its residents. The staff is comprised entirely of volunteers, and managed by Ann Vance, a long time Western Springs resident.

Information is obtained from various local publications and from within the community. This data is categorized, filed and microfiched. There are extensive files on Village history, including; Village administration, genealogy dating back to the 1800's, schools, businesses, churches, houses, along with a large collection of historical photographs. There is also a newly catalogued collection of over 2,000 historical slides that are available on loan.

The Archives is located on the second floor of Grand Avenue School (Grand Ave. entrance) and is open on Tuesday mornings from 9:00-12:00. For information Call 246-9230. Request forms are also available at the Tower Museum .

Western Springs Chronicles

Early Village Chronicles

The Village of Western Springs maintains its characteristic small town feel, while preserving its past through the efforts of the Western Springs Historical Society. The following excerpts from archived village records provide some historical and somewhat humorous insight into Village life of yesteryear.

1923 - Speeding Summons

"A young man of a neighboring city was on trial for running through the Village in a Ford sedan at the rate of 40 miles per hour. Chief Schiebe made the arrest. The offender pleaded not guilty, claiming that the Ford could not go over 30 MPH. The court ordered that they take the car up on Ogden Avenue for a tryout, with the understanding that if the car could not make 40 MPH, he was to be discharged. A speed of 43 MPH was recorded. The chief and his speedometer were vindicated and the defendant was satisfied that he had had his day in court."

1914-15 Village Budget

"A budget of \$16,335 took care of Western Springs' municipal financing back in 1914-15, according to a legal publication in the Western Springs Times (now Citizen)."

"The 1914-15 budget listed these items: Marshal-\$840; Clerk-\$300; Treasurer-\$340; Attorney-\$600; Repair streets and alleys-\$1,000; Contingent fund, police, fire, office supplies, election etc.-\$1,150."

Don't Disturb Bird Friends

"Recognizing the value of birds in keeping the insect population under control, the WS village board, in addition to being humanely concerned, approved in the 1880's an ordinance to protect the feathered creature from human marauders."

"The ordinance reads: Every person who shall kill or wound or attempt to kill or wound by the use of fire-arms, bow and arrow, pelting with stones or otherwise any bird within the village

limits....or rob or destroy the nests of any bird or birds.....shall upon conviction be fined in the sum of \$5.00 for every such offense."

1919 - Kite Flying

"In 1919, kite flying was encouraged and not discouraged in Western Springs when there were wide open spaces. A kite flying contest conducted by the Western Springs Community Playground filled the skies with kites. Charles Chapman was awarded a first place for the best made kite. For flying his kite the highest, an award was made to Charles Leff."

1935 - Old WS Map Found

"An old map of WS, rescued this week from a dusty shelf at the village tower, bears a fancy picture of the Mineral Springs House in the present Spring Rock park, the health sanitarium of Dr. Justin Hayes on Lawn Avenue near 47th, and a two-story factory plant, the home of the American Roller Bearing company."

"Printed in 1889 by R.W. Sweet and L.G. Dana, realty promoters with offices in Chicago, the map tells to the whole country the tidings that Western Springs is the "queen suburb of Chicago". Only 31 minutes separate the metropolis of fresh air and life-sustaining water, and the Burlington's fare is proclaimed to be only 10 cents."

1967 - Microwave Comes To WS

"As to symbolize the modernization projects begun during the year, the Amana "Space Age Express" train pulled into Western Springs on the Burlington tracks to demonstrate the first countertop microwave oven that could operate on regular household current. The Amana "Radarange" was used to prepare food samples for interested spectators who were serenaded by a brass band during the 30-minute visit on November 28."

New Museum Acquisitions

The followed items were recently donated to the Historical Society. Special thanks to all of our contributors!

- Purple crepe short dress (c.1945); Red spike heeled shoes (c.1955); Red velvet cloche hat (c.1955) - Mrs. Arthur Stange.
- Beam platform scale used in the Village hardware store until the present time (c.1940) - Ed Johnson.

Archiving Historical Western Spring Homes

One of primary functions of the Western Springs Archives is to document the changing face of Western Springs for future generations. Over the years, numerous Western Springs historical homes have been razed. In many cases, no written history or image of these homes was ever assembled, only to be lost to history.

If you know of any house or business that is scheduled to be, or is in the process of being torn down, please contact us at 246-9320, so we can arrange to photograph and document the structure.

ANNUAL MEETING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Wednesday, March 8, 2000
7:30 P.M.

At the McDermeds, 4001 Central

Election of officers and new board members will be the main order of business together with the annual report. Frivolity will follow. Please contact co-chairmen Kim Butler (246-0972) or Kent Taylor (246-5727) if you are interested in serving on the Historical Society Board.





Western Springs Historical Society

Mailing Address: Box 139

Western Springs, IL 60558

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U.S. Postage
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OFFICERS

Jan McDermed, PRESIDENT
Pat Olmstead, VICE PRESIDENT
Marilyn Hanson, SECRETARY
Dick Walker, TREASURER

TRUSTEES

Charmaine Blessman
Mary Boland
Kim Butler
Carole Cosimano
Don Finkelston
Judy Gaylord
Dale Maher
Steven Mink
Kim Murphy
Jim Olmstead
Alice Perkins
Lynn Rowells
Kent Taylor

OTHER CHAIRPERSONS

Henry Linabury
Nancy Pegram
Norm Thompson
Ann Vance

NEWSLETTER

Steven Mink

Western Springs Historical Society

Archives and Workshop

Grand Avenue Community
Center - 2nd Floor
Open Tuesdays 9a.m. - Noon
246-9230

The Tower Museum & Children's Museum

916 Hillgrove Avenue
Western Springs

MUSEUM HOURS:

Saturdays 11 a.m. - 1p.m.
Children's Museum will be closed
January - March

Village Slide Programs

Free slide programs with "do-it-yourself" scripts or a Society narrator are available. It's a great way to gain insight into our town. The following programs are available:

- * *A history of Western Springs, the first One-Hundred years*
- * *Village Postcards of the Past*
- * *Early Western Springs Businesses*
- * *Low Down on our High Rise (Old Water Tower)*

Call Henry Linabury at 630-769-6146 for more information, or the Western Springs Archives at 246-9230.

WSHS: A Gift Resource

With the holidays around the corner, don't forget that the Tower Museum offers a great choice of WS memorabilia and stocking stuffers. These items make great gifts for friends and family.

- * *Framed tower/train station prints*
- * *Christmas cards, posters*
- * *Western Springs Centennial books*
- * *Children's Museum T-shirts*
- * *Watercolor note cards by Peggy Taylor of Village Scenes*