

Lake Forest Preservation Foundation NEWSLETTER

Lake Forest, Illinois

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Mayflower Place, Charles H. and Laura S. Scheppe Estate, 2012

A GRAND HOUSE FROM ANY ERA

by Rosemary Troxel

The lovely and historic Scheppe Mansion was the site for Lake Forest Preservation Foundation's Annual Holiday celebration on December 4th. Constructed of concrete and steel, this brick, Tudor-style Early English Renaissance country house was built on the former grounds of Lake Forest's "New Hotel" and the Walter C. Larned estate, "Blair Lodge." The community was given a unique opportunity to view this remarkable, currently vacant property. Although more than three hundred people attended, the spacious rooms did not feel crowded. Festive tables and decorated trees along with stunning Lake Michigan vistas made this grand house warm and inviting.

Preservation Foundation Board member and local historian, Art Miller, recounted some of this enchanted estate's history with our guests. Former neighbor Margaret Stuart Hart also shared her memories of dating the Scheppe's son and visiting the house in its heyday. The 27-room mansion was completed in 1915 as a wedding gift from John Graves Shedd, then Chairman of Marshall Field & Company, to his daughter, Laura Abbie Shedd, who married financier Charles Hodgdon Scheppe. Shedd hired Frederick Wainwright Perkins (1866-1928), the architect of Shedd's own Drexel Boulevard residence in Chicago, to design the lakefront compound.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This was an exciting year for our Foundation. As we look forward to 2012, our Board says “thank you” to those who continue to support us in many ways.

Our Board enthusiastically plans educational programs to include expert speakers, home tours, garden walks, historic estate openings, and wine strolls. In addition, we provide many volunteer hours as we work collaboratively on historic projects that impact the historic visual character of this treasured city. These issues remain complex and thought provoking.

A generous bequest was recently made by Henry P. Wheeler, Past & Sixth President of the Preservation Foundation. This is the first bequest of its kind. Mr. Wheeler served his country in World War II and later as a reserve commander. Throughout his life, he gave generously of his time to Lake Forest as an Alderman and years of service and leadership to the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation. The Foundation is deeply appreciative of his thoughtfulness and generosity.

Suzanne Boren, President

UPDATE ON RAILROAD STATION RENOVATION

Work is nearing completion on the exterior of the historic Market Square railroad station. The slate roofs on the two buildings and platform canopies are installed, and the historic dormers of the east building have been restored. Preservation architect Gunny Harboe [Harboe Architects, Chicago] is currently completing renderings and other bid documents for exterior stucco and masonry work and for restoration of wood elements such as windows, doors, and trim. Signs designed to replicate the station signage shown in historic photos have been designed by Harboe and have been reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. These will be created and installed in the final stage of exterior renovation.

This spring or summer, expect to see removal of the former bank drive-through building facing McKinley Road. There also will be an initiative to propose and review a new sheltered area designed to consolidate bicycle parking in a manner compatible with the historic station. Revised landscape plans for the Western Avenue side of the station property will be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission. The City is currently studying various options for tenancy in the east and west station buildings.



PIONEER LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN DESIGNERS FEATURED IN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION ENCYCLOPEDIA

*Articles by Barbara Geiger, Arthur
Miller, and Others Showcase Local
Designs and Their Creators*

by Arthur H. Miller

It is widely known that almost all of Lake Forest's landscape space including open space, parks, gardens, forecourts, terraces, and homes has been professionally designed by landscape gardeners, architects and designers. Several books of the last two decades have detailed this phenomenon.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation's Charles Birnbaum, who edited *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* in 2000, produced in 2009 a second volume of shorter biographical sketches of pioneer landscape designers, *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project*, ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Stephanie S. Foell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 446 pp. This is a second compendium of one hundred and sixty short biographies with bibliographies and locations of places to visit. The earlier book included biographical sketches on notables who created local gems, including Jens Jensen (about forty across the larger Lake Forest estate area), Warren Manning, Rose Standish Nichols, O. C. Simonds, Ellen Biddle Shipman, and Ferruccio Vitale. Fortunately, Birnbaum followed up with a second group of essays to continue the project of documenting these masters' works and careers.

Barbara Geiger, author of the 2011 biography of landscape gardener O. C. Simonds, contributed an essay on James Roy West, a Simonds partner who also designed the grounds of Lake Forest High School. A University of Washington scholar of women landscape architects, Thaisa Way, contributed an article on Annette Hoyt Flanders. After attending the 1916 LF Garden Club study program here under Ralph R. Root, Flanders went on not only to create several local gardens but to have a New York-based career with Ferruccio Vitale and to have her own notable design firm. This writer, too, contributed articles on Almerin Hotchkiss, creator of the 1857 town plan of Lake Forest; Frank Calvert, by 1860 designing most estates here; U. of Illinois professor and formalist Ralph R. Root; Louise Stone Hubbard; and Jensen's successor in his firm, Marshall Johnson. Other designers profiled who worked locally or had a marked influence include William C. Egan, Gertrude Kuh, Franz Lipp, and Charles Blair Macdonald (golf courses).

In addition, several area sites are listed at which the work of these designers can be observed. Hotchkiss's 1857 town plan survives, of course, and is mostly well-respected. Marshall Johnson's 1950s carefully informal subdivision of the very formal Villa Turicum managed to honor the original Charles A. Platt pool and terraced water course on one lot; and his rose garden in the Libertyville town square also still pleases visitors. A whole section at the end of the book details opportunities.

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Old Main, Barat College, October 2009. Photo courtesy of “bulls fan” on Flickr.

A FAREWELL TO OLD MAIN

by Pauline Mohr

*The day is done and darkness
Falls from the wings of night...*

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

For over 100 years *Old Main* stood upon a hill with a sweeping lawn spread before it, the iconic image that defined the south Sheridan Road entrance to Lake Forest. Here is where the Religious of the Sacred Heart came in 1904 to erect what Arthur Miller has described as an American Colonial Revival country place, a commanding edifice to house an academy for young women. Four years later Barat College was established and occupied the south wing of the building. In 1924, the Thabor Wing with its exquisite Chapel was added above the 1904 first floor and from that time until 2001, *Old Main* stood as the heart of an educational institution and a stately welcome to Lake Forest. This proud history will soon fall to the wrecking ball if things go as now planned.

Architecturally, *Old Main's* red brick façade, punctuated with white stone, exhibits the symmetry, proportions and massing of the Georgian style—a central section flanked by hyphens connecting wings on either side. The fenestration is refined and the dormers finely detailed. All in all it is an elegant building. So, how did such a substantial and well-designed structure come to its current state?

The sequence of events is well known to our community. The Barat campus was taken over by DePaul University of Chicago in 2001, but by 2003 DePaul came to a decision to close the Lake Forest campus and marketed the property for development. In 2006 Barat Woods, LLC, a development company, took ownership of the property and proposed a residential development, which was approved by the City. Rehabilitation of *Old Main* was included in the development plans.

Unfortunately, the plans never moved forward and in 2010 the property went into foreclosure. Deferred maintenance during the Barat College years coupled with neglect in the years following the collapse of the Barat Woods, LLC plans brought *Old Main* to its current shockingly derelict condition. Certainly, a lack of care and stewardship occurred in recent years, and it has been said that the building may be beyond the possibility of rehabilitation. Interestingly, a few short years ago Barat Woods, LLC planned to renovate and rehabilitate Old Main as luxury condominiums.

In August of 2011, Woodlands Academy announced that anonymous donors had plans to purchase the 23-acre Barat Campus and donate it to the Academy. The conditions the donors stipulated included the transfer of the property to their ownership by December 21, 2011 and the assurance

that they would be permitted to demolish *Old Main* and clear and grade the property. However, *Old Main* is situated in the Lake Forest Local Historic District, which protects it from demolition.

The Historic Preservation Commission, hearing Woodlands Academy request for delisting *Old Main* from the district, denied the petition as the Standards for Delisting were not met.

To eliminate this roadblock, the City crafted an ordinance removing the property from the local historic district. This ordinance passed First Reading and awaits the Woodlands Academy Master Plan for the property before the land can be cleared and title transferred from the donors to Woodlands Academy. Note that *Old Main*, while standing, retains its status as a contributing structure to the East Lake Forest National Register District and remains on the Secretary of Interior's Register of Historic Places. Such designation confers honor and distinction but does not preclude demolition. The loss of Old Main seems certain.

And so we say:

*Farewell a word that must be and hath been
A sound which makes us linger--- yet---
farewell.*

—Lord Byron

A Grand House From Any Era

continued from page 1.

When entering the house, guests find themselves in a reception room with its beautiful, paneled ceiling and limestone walls. From this vantage point, it can be noted the rooms are arranged in an L-shape, with the long section running east and west. The public rooms also include a great hall, dining room, dining porch/breakfast room, living room, library, and south-facing sun porch. Ornate plaster relief ceilings are found in many rooms. No moldings are the same as each was copied from a different architect. A silver safe, beveled mirrors on dining room walls and third floor ballroom are among other unique features.

According to *A Preservation Foundation Guide to National Register Properties*, the French-style gardens contained a fountain copied from the Villa d'Este in Italy. Exterior ornamental figures were carved on site by Italian artisans. The pool, perhaps the best known feature of the estate nationally, was designed by the landscape architect Fletcher Steele. Pray, Hubbard and Company, Boston, designed the entry court and terraces, east and west. The main entrance and fence were designed by James Rogvy Allen of Chicago in 1927 and manufactured by Samuel Yellin who also made the iron gates at the Lake Forest Cemetery.

Guests at the Preservation Foundation event could look onto the terrace and imagine the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden dancing at a party given in their honor in June, 1926, by the

Schweppes. More than 200 people attended. It is also said Edward, Duke of Windsor, slept in a second floor west-facing bedroom along with Wallis Simpson, for whom he abdicated the British throne in 1936.

Laura Schwappe was known for her generosity to the Art Institute of Chicago, Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium, Chicago Historical Society, and Lake Forest Library.

Vandals frequented the property during the nearly 50 years it sat vacant. Fortunately, two families undertook the stewardship of the house during this time.

In 1987, the Hoepfer family purchased the estate and oversaw an extensive renovation and restoration that resulted in returning the mansion to its former glory. Reportedly, this restoration employed more than 70 craftsmen and was completed in less than a year. Bavarian artists and Italian stone crafters repaired and restored the limestone moldings along with the marble fireplaces.

Imagine the stories this house could tell if only the walls could talk. Known as "Mayflower Place," many famous people have walked through its rooms including royalty and movie stars. Two Hollywood movies were filmed on site; the *Music Box* in 1989 and *With Honors* in 1994. Who knows what the future holds for this historically and architecturally-significant house?



Ash trees (shown here in October by Deerpath School) are endangered by the Emerald Ash Borer. Within the next ten years, most untreated ash trees will die, but treatment, required every two years, is available. Residents can read more on gazebonews.com. Photo by Rommy Lopat.

UPDATE ON FOREST PARK CONCEPT PLAN

by Rommy Lopat



Lake Forest residents may recall that in May 2010 the City Council “accepted a gift” of a Concept Plan for future work at historically significant Forest Park, a National Register contributing property. The Concept Plan had several unresolved issues, including whether the Ring Road should be closed to car traffic and parking and to what extent the aesthetics of the park’s original landscape designers, Almerin Hotchkiss and O.C. Simonds, should be considered.

The City Council, via Resolution 2010-06, created a Forest Park Project Board (FPPB) to further develop the Concept Plan, which was originally commissioned by the Lake Forest Garden Club. A Forest Park Project Board, chaired by former Parks and Recreation Board Chair Ralph Gesualdo, was formed. The city issued a call for volunteers and they were appointed by the FPPB to subcommittees intended to study major elements of a park plan project: Amenities and Memorials, Engineering and Technical, Landscape and Horticulture, Public Communications and Marketing, Historic Preservation, and Finance and Fundraising. The Chairs of the Sub-Committees became members of the Project Board.

Three of the sub-Committees presented Interim Reports in a community-wide meeting at Gorton on May 24, 2011, and then to a joint meeting of the Lake Forest Historic Preservation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Board on September 21, 2011. The Boards heard testimony from the Historic Preservation, Landscape and Horticulture, and Engineering and Technical Sub-Committees (see minutes at <http://www.cityoflakeforest.com/cg/min/hpcmin/2011/hpcMIN092111-revised.pdf>). The Forest Park Project Board continued to meet privately until January 9, 2012, when it posted a letter to residents on its website (www.forestparkproject.com). The Board recommended:

- Retaining the original Ring Road in a form and location that is respectful of the original O.C. Simonds design;
- Eliminating parking along the Ring Road, while providing space for short-term vehicle waiting and passenger drop-off;
- Repairing the current belvedere stairs and beach access ramp; and
- Recognizing the designation of Forest Park as a Cultural Landscape.

The letter also noted that landscape architect Stephen Stimson (Falmouth, Massachusetts) was re-hired “to begin incorporating a number of these changes to the original Forest Park conceptual plan. In addition to drafting new preliminary renderings, Stimson visited Forest Park January 5, 2012, to field test these design elements with chalk outlines on the landscape.” On the weekend of February 3-6, the Parks Department re-striped the park to allow City staff and members of the Historic Preservation Commission and Parks and Recreation Board to view Stimson’s proposed position of the road and a pedestrian path (a new component of the concept added at the request of the City).

As you will recall, the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation prepared a position paper in November 2010 (see http://www.lfpf.org/pdf/position_paper_forest_park.pdf). We have recently re-submitted this document to the City to reiterate the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties on which the Historic Preservation Commission section of the Lake Forest Code is based. It provides criteria for evaluating actions on or in National Register properties, including cultural and historic landscapes.

The revised Concept Plan is to be presented for the first time at the Historic Preservation Commission meeting March 21 and at the Parks and Recreation Board meeting on March 20. These are informational/question/comment reviews and will not include votes. The Forest Park Project Board and Stimson will take comments from these meetings into consideration in preparing a plan for final consideration in April. The HPC and the Board may or may not vote to recommend the proposal at their April meetings. Each has the option to ask for changes requiring an additional meeting before recommendation.

Representatives of the Preservation Foundation Board will attend these meetings, and our Board will study the Plan presented for its preservation of the park’s history. A primary concern will be to understand how the HPC will assess this Concept Plan. We highly encourage the public’s attendance and comments.



Please give us feedback on our newsletter
at 847-234-1230 or info@LFPF.org



Ragdale was originally built as Howard Van Doren Shaw's Lake Forest summer home in 1898. Today it houses one of the nation's most prominent artist residency programs, providing time and space for artists to create important new works. In March 2011, Ragdale kicked off a \$3 million restoration program dubbed "Operation Renovation," an innovative public/private partnership between the City of Lake Forest and the Ragdale Foundation. In little over a year, the house has been restored to its original splendor. The Lake Forest Preservation Foundation will be celebrating this accomplishment with Ragdale on Friday, May 18th from 5-7PM. Invitations will be sent to members in early April or check our website, www.lfpf.org for additional information on the event.

Painting by Howard Van Doren Shaw. It appeared in "The New COUNTRY LIFE" magazine in October, 1917.

A CALL FOR 2012 PRESERVATION NOMINATIONS

22nd ANNUAL
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

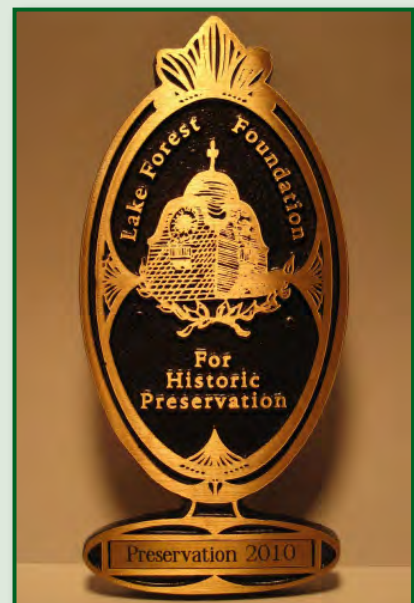
Each year, the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation honors families and organizations who have demonstrated a commitment to excellence in the preservation of Lake Forest's architectural heritage.

Any structure or landscape constructed over fifty years ago is eligible to be nominated. Nominations may be made by any interested person—the owner, a neighbor or friend, an admiring passer-by. The owner's approval will be obtained by the Foundation for nominations by one other than the owner.

Awards are presented at the Preservation Foundation's Annual Meeting. This year's meeting is on Sunday, April 29, at 1 p.m. in the Community Room of the Gorton Community Center. Following the meeting, everyone is invited to a reception at an historic Lake Forest property.

There are six categories of awards, the first four based on "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties." Judging is based upon the ten standards from "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation" and may be viewed at www.nps.gov/history/hps/TPS/tax/rhb/.

Nominations are now being accepted by printing the form found at www.lfpf.org or by requesting one from the office at 847-234-1230.





Lake Forest Preservation Foundation

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BECOME A MEMBER! • Join on line at www.LFPPF.org
Together we can ensure the preservation of the historic visual character of Lake Forest.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

LAKE FOREST PRESERVATION FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING AND HOUSE TOUR

Sunday, April 29

Join us for our Annual Meeting and presentation of 2012 Preservation Awards. Times and location to be posted on www.LFPPF.org.

WINE STROLL AT RAGDALE

Friday, May 18

Be one of the first to preview the finished \$3 million renovation of Howard Van Doren Shaw's beloved summer residence, Ragdale. Enjoy a leisurely stroll through the house, meet the team involved with this incredible renovation and enjoy wine and appetizers on the porch of this Lake Forest gem. Ragdale is a local landmark, listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a surviving example of the Arts & Crafts movement in the country.

FOURTH ANNUAL FAMILY FAIR IN MARKET SQUARE

Saturday, June 23

Fun for the whole family....play games, go on a scavenger hunts, explore the underground train tunnel, tour the City by trolley, play croquet and more.

Watch for details of these and more exciting programs for 2012 including:

Wine Strolls throughout the year • A Fall House Walk • Holiday Party – Sunday, December 2

Check the website for the upcoming dates and more information.

www.LFPPF.org