



Shorewood celebrates its Quasiquicentennial in 2025. This year's newsletter series will highlight the stories of Village life experienced here in the pre- and early-1900s.

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Shorewood
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Preserving Our Past For Our Future

SHOREWOOD

from the river to the lake

News from the Shorewood Historical Society

Issue 2, April 2025

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE ANNUAL SOCIETY DINNER MEETING AND PRESENTATION

Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Village of Shorewood, Thursday, May 8, 2025, at Hubbard Park Lodge

by Karen de Hartog

There were probably more farm animals than people in the Village when it was incorporated in 1900. For at least the first decade, cows and chickens were allowed west of Oakland Avenue.

The people brave enough to move to the new Village found a noisy amusement park, no paved streets, water that could be captured only from springs or a deep well and a small school that had faded from red to pink!

The program at our Annual Dinner will focus on the earliest residents and try to create a picture of what their daily life was like in 1900, as well as how they encouraged decisions to be made that led to the Village we know today. You can read about some of these decisions in this issue of the newsletter.

Please join us on May 8. Dinner invitations will be mailed to all members by mid-April.



It's difficult to envision Shorewood when there were still farm fields 125 years ago. Charles Sheldon photographed his baby daughter Mary and a cow in a bucolic East Milwaukee pasture.

“... the territory known as Shorewood today was but a vast area of almost virgin soil. The land was very hilly, covered in spots with dense woods, while other portions were flooded with water. Although picturesque in the extreme it presented a tremendous task of expert engineering and foresightedness to convert this nature endowed land into an improved dwelling place for the future thousands of inhabitants.”

~ *Memoirs of Shorewood Beautiful, 25th Anniversary Souvenir Program, 1925*

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

DPW gets a "Test Fit"

Relocating part or all of the Department of Public Works and renovating the current DPW property are still on the Village Board's agenda. At the March 3 meeting, the Trustees authorized a "Test Fit" study of potential future uses for the current DPW property.

A Test Fit examines a site in conjunction with possible zoning code regulations to determine the height and density that a development can achieve and stay in compliance with local requirements. It is meant to be quick study, or "tests-of-what fits" and provoke high level discussion about the feasibility of a project before a design team is engaged.

Six firms applied to carry out the Test Fit study; Eppstein Uhen Architects (EAU) was selected. Initially the "test fit" was to assume the site is otherwise vacant/ all current buildings on the site are demolished for the maximum development potential. They were instructed to present options for residential housing including:

- low density,
- medium density, row buildings,
- high-density with general multi-unit residential buildings,

Two other options were added to include:

- a general multi-unit residential building, which includes maintaining the primary DPW office buildings on the site in whole or in part, and
- "architects test fit" with zoning parameters determined by the architect.

The Test Fit should include awareness of the neighborhood context, current zoning codes, connection to the Oak Leaf Trail and proximity to other assets such as Hubbard Park.

It is expected that the Test Fit materials will be prepared in a two-month timeframe after a current study of the deteriorating retaining wall and other informational documents are completed. In addition, the search for a suitable location to move the DPW continues, but those discussions are held in closed session by the Trustees. I encourage all residents who have an interest in the DPW buildings to keep an eye on the Village Board agenda and the Village web site for updates on this issue.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation invites us to celebrate Historic Preservation during the month of May. As we honor the founding of the village 125 years ago, we certainly have much to celebrate locally. We hope you will join us for the activities noted in this newsletter and for our Annual Meeting and Dinner in historic Hubbard Lodge on May 8!

Kathy Kean

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Tower detail of the DPW building. Designed by Henry C. Hengels, the first building was constructed in 1927. Additional buildings were added in 1936 with assistance from the federal government's Works Progress Administration (WPA). The property is designated for its historic and architectural significance. The building represents the community's ability to leverage DPW services during the Great Depression to provide work for unemployed residents. Landmark Designation: 2008 (Source: Milwaukee County Historical Society)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Elsa Lamelas

Robert Ferriday III

Kay & Bill Beck

Gerri Dietrich

Susan Armour Seidman

Marla Stephens

Lauren Smith

CONCRETE WAS THE REMEDY FOR OUR MUDDY STREETS

by Karen de Hartog

Muddy streets were high on the list of problems to be addressed by the leaders of the newly incorporated Village of East Milwaukee. It took a few years of very tight budgets to arrange for funding, but in 1910, the first concrete sidewalks replaced boardwalks.

In 1913 the village laid its first paving on Richland Court, the beginning of an extensive paving program. The four blocks of paved streets in 1913 stretched to 12 miles in 1917. East Milwaukee was one of the first communities in the Milwaukee County to use concrete paving entirely. It received wide recognition for building curbs as an integral part of the pavement. Using concrete and the integral curb meant a substantial savings for tax payers.

As a result, the desirability of East Milwaukee (renamed Shorewood in 1917) as a residential district suddenly became apparent. The village had 190 homes in 1913, a population of 900, and an assessed valuation of \$2,970,255. By 1917 there were 470 homes, and 1,600 people. Assessed valuation had almost doubled.

The development of Portland cement (a much stronger product than natural cement) made the paving possible. A significant amount of the work was provided by Dean

Construction, a company started by John Patrick Dean and his son Joseph E. Dean in 1906. Many of their early jobs were in East Milwaukee/Shorewood. First they replaced boardwalks with sidewalks. In 1915 they began street paving. Water and sewer pipes were also provided. The company name and a list of their projects are listed frequently in early village annual reports.

Although Dean Construction was located on North Avenue (approximately at North and Humboldt avenues), Dean family members played a big role in community building beyond providing concrete. Joseph built a home at 4452 N. Farwell Ave. Another family member, Patrick, lived at 4429 N. Maryland Ave. He was a lawyer who provided legal services for the Village. Other family members lived on Stratford Court and Murray Avenue and their names appear on lists of village advisory committees.

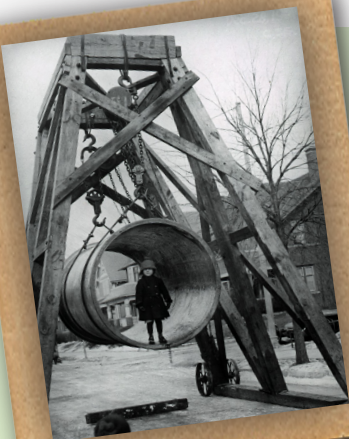
Dean Construction no longer exists, but the Dean family is still represented in the Village. Bob Dean has lived almost his entire life in the Village, growing up on Murray Avenue and currently living with his wife Karen on Ridgfield Court. A past president of the Historical Society, Bob put his family knowledge of concrete to good use chairing our very successful Birthday Marker project.

PAVING THE WAY

"The Dean Construction Company finished paving the last block on Kensington Boulevard on Monday. Most of the block was laid on Saturday, and because of the freezing temperatures Saturday night they were compelled to keep fires burning all along the north side of the freshly laid concrete to keep the wet surface from freezing and checking." (*Shorewood Radio* 10/26/1923)

"With 1300 inhabitants in 1916 it became necessary to lay streets, sidewalks, gas, water and sewer pipes more extensively and with a bond issue of \$35,000 this work was carried through in earnest. Concrete laying was something new and unheard of so the paving projects created an innovation and large crowds of city people were attracted, eager to watch the men at work."

(from *Shorewood's 25th Anniversary Souvenir Program*, 1925)



Charles Sheldon posed his daughter Mary in a sewer pipe in this early 1920s photo.

SHOREWOOD PARKS AND THEIR HISTORY

by Alex Vagelatos

Eagles and Otters and Deer, Oh My — Shorewood Made the Most of its Natural Settings

In 2015, authors of Shorewood's Comprehensive Outdoor Park Plan were blunt:

"While the configuration of roads and residential neighborhoods reflect logical and efficient design, the provision of adequate public open space and parks was largely overlooked by early Village founders."

By 1950, some 80 percent of the village's land was developed, leaving little area for parks and public spaces.

Fortunately the village's 13,859 residents – although squeezed into 1.5 square miles – are also bounded by Lake Michigan and the Milwaukee River, providing many opportunities for recreation, fresh air and wild-life viewing.

Although the early planners may not have specifically designated park areas, over the years we have made the most of available space along the river and the lake.

The village now boasts major and neighborhood parks, as well as a nature preserve. Outdoor spaces at Atwater and Lake Bluff schools can also be used by neighbors after school hours.

Estabrook Park

Named after Wisconsin lawyer and politician Charles Estabrook, this Milwaukee County Park clings to the east bank of the Milwaukee River up to the former Chicago and Northwestern Railway, now converted into part of the Oak Leaf Trail.

A portion of the park lies within the village and a recently created entry from Wilson Drive dramatically improved access.

The man-made pond which provides the background for many of Andrew Dressel's photographs (see sidebar columns highlighted in green) was dug out in the 1930s and left relatively untouched except for sporadic herbicide treatments last used in the 1990s. It is a bucolic home to many species of birds, fish and other aquatic animals.

Established in 1916, the park was home to the Milwaukee Cement Company from 1875 to 1911. Significant development took place in the early and mid-1930s, led in part by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In 1937, the county built a dam to raise water levels for recreational purposes. After controversies and lawsuits, that dam was removed in 2018, allowing the river to flow freely again.

(Cont. on Page 5)

Images of Estabrook

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Shorewood resident Andrew Dressel had extra time on his hands. Already an accomplished photographer and a nature buff, Dressel started making daily early-morning visits to Estabrook Park.

Some of his photographs are featured on these pages.

Explained Dressel: "I capture most of these images early in the morning. The two hotspots in Estabrook Park are the pond and the river, especially around the islands above the falls. I have found that keeping quiet and moving slowly can be helpful."



(Credit for photos in Estabrook Park: Andrew Dressel)

("Shorewood Parks and Their History" cont. from Page 4)



Benjamin Church House



Coyote



Monarch Butterfly



North American Otter

The Benjamin Church House, a Temple-style Greek Revival home, was built in 1843–1844. Thought to be Milwaukee's earliest surviving home, it was moved to Estabrook Park in 1938.

The 1,081-foot WITI-TV tower was erected in 1962. A portion of the park now set aside as a dog exercise area was formerly a dump for vegetative park waste.

Hubbard Park

Hubbard Park was named for William J. Hubbard, a former village board president who led its purchase in 1922. It occupies nearly five acres of terraced, wooded terrain on the east bank of the Milwaukee River.

It has been home to cow barns, fishing shanties and a distribution route for ice cut from the river.

Today, visitors enter the park through a pedestrian tunnel running under the Oak Leaf Trail, the former railroad right-of-way.

Within the woods at the north end of the park stands the rustic Hubbard Park Lodge, constructed as a WPA project by the FDR administration. It houses the Hubbard Park Lodge Restaurant. A marker for the old north/south trail used by the Sauk Indians is located in front.

Atwater Park and Beach

The crown jewel of the village is Atwater Park and beach, at the east end of Capitol Drive (formerly Atwater Road).

Although the tram and beach house are long gone, you can still spot the wreck of the 319-foot Appomattox, sunk on Nov. 2, 1905, in some 20 feet of water, 150 yards offshore.

Shorewood Nature Preserve

Located between Menlo Boulevard and Newton Avenue on the east side of Lake Drive, Shorewood Nature Preserve features eight acres of woodland along Lake Michigan. A step path offers glimpses of native flora and fauna; more than 200 bird species have been spotted there.

(Cont. on Page 7)



The Hubbard Park tunnel is the pedestrian entrance to Hubbard Park.



The Atwater Park Beach House, designed by Henry C. Hengels, was built in 1938 as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Deemed structurally unsound and too costly to repair, it was demolished in 1984.

(Credit for photos in Estabrook Park: Andrew Dressel)

IN THE BEGINNING: INCORPORATION OF A VILLAGE

by Karen de Hartog

March 4, 1900: Eight area residents, led by saloon owner Peter Mead, filed a petition in circuit court to incorporate. The Town of Milwaukee challenged the petition (they were going to lose tax revenue) claiming there were less than 300 people living in the area, the number necessary to incorporate.

May, 1900: After a new census counted 345 people, the petition to incorporate was approved by Milwaukee County.

Aug 11, 1900: Incorporation approved by area residents who voted 45 for and 23 against. Only about 100 people (men) were eligible to vote.

Sept. 15, 1900: First officers were elected.

• **President:** William McFarland

• **Trustees:** Joseph Gerber, George Gray, Fred Dens, John

Dietrich, John Schumacher and Michael Wimmer

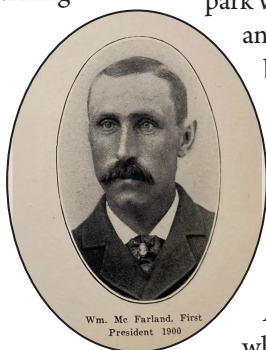
• **Treasurer:** Charles Domer

It soon became obvious the board was in dire need of funding to begin delivering services to the community.

Fees from the amusement park were less than anticipated. After being turned down by several lending institutions, they secured a loan for \$700 from the German-American Bank who demanded a joint note of all the village officers, each one being personally responsible to repay the loan in two years.

The trustees' early orders reflect their lack of funds:

- Building of plank walks
- Directing mid-wives and doctors to record all births and deaths
- Limiting the amount of dynamite that could be kept by any person to no more than two pounds



Wm. McFarland, First President 1900

- Directing every house-holder to report to a trustee any person suffering with a contagious disease
- Allocating \$25 for a library in 1903 (three shelves located in a store front)

Many of the appointed officers had offices in their own homes where they collected taxes and developed budgets. By careful budgeting, the \$300 loan was repaid on time and the note canceled.

Meanwhile, residents made known to the officials that they objected to the use of boats to leave their homes after each rain storm and that their basements continually flooded because springs and wells were the only available water supply. It was 1906 before steps were taken to alleviate the problem.

Application was made to the city of Milwaukee to obtain city water and to make connections with the intercepting sewers built on the east side of the Milwaukee River.

The "pink school" was located on the corner of Oakland Avenue and Lake Street (Capitol Drive). It functioned as the First School and Village Hall.

City of Milwaukee water supply was much cheaper than constructing and operating their own system. A \$3,000 bond issue and \$1,953.88 received as a license fee from the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company for running their cars over village streets was set aside as a water and sewer fund to be used for the laying of water mains and the construction of sewer pipes.

Paved roads and platting of subdivisions followed. With the growth in population, the character of the village changed. Early residents had sought small homes in the country. Now people saw a village where they could take advantages of the city with few drawbacks. It was time to change the name of east Milwaukee to Shorewood (May 1917).



SAVE THE DATE:

Shorewood History SCAN Day
Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Shorewood Village Center

Add your Shorewood-related pictures, documents and objects to the Historical Society's Digital archives.

We will scan or photograph your items on-site and return them to you.

Examples: Pictures of Shorewood homes, street scenes, businesses, block parties, parades, village, school and organizational activities, documents related to your home or village activities,

objects such as athletic uniforms, celebration or election buttons, small household items.

Keep SCAN Day in mind as you sort through family photos and saved documents.

Help us document Shorewood's story! Questions? Email shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com

Co-sponsored by the Shorewood Historical Society and the Shorewood Library

("Shorewood Parks and Their History" cont. from Page 5)

River Park

Along Oakland Avenue, River Park is the gateway to Spector Field, and the home to Shorewood's youth baseball and soccer programs. Close your eyes and you may hear the echoes of three sprawling and raucous amusement parks located there from 1900 to 1916. The nearby Oakland Car Station and Trainmen's building was in operation until the 1960s.



Humble Park is a tiny parklet on the corner of Oakland and Edgewood avenues.

Humble Park

The aptly named Humble Park is located at the northeast corner of Oakland and Edgewood avenues. More than 50 years ago the Shorewood Foundation helped turn an empty lot into this pleasant, landscaped respite.

(Credit for photos in Estabrook Park: Andrew Dressel)



Red-Tailed Hawk



White-Tailed Deer



Great Blue Heron

Support the Shorewood Historical Society by becoming a member. Join online at shorewoodhistory.org or contact us at shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com for more information.

SHOREWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2024-2025

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414-962-2450

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Shorewood WI 53211

www.shorewoodhistory.org

Email: shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com

The Sheldon Room/In-House Research is located in the Shorewood Village Center (lower level of library) at 3920 N. Murray Ave. and is open by appointment via contact by phone: 414-847-2726 or email: shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com

The Shorewood Historical Society is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization. Your donations and in-kind gifts are tax-deductible as allowed by law.



3930 North Murray Avenue
Shorewood, WI 53211

Please keep the
Shorewood Historical Society
in mind when cleaning out
your attic or basement.

We are in particular need of
pictures, abstracts and other
information about Shorewood
homes and neighborhoods.

CONTACT US AT:
SHOREWOODHISTORY@YAHOO.COM
OR 414-847-2726 WITH QUESTIONS
OR TO MAKE A DONATION.



Happy Quasquicentennial, Shorewood!



Calendar of 125th Anniversary Events

Walking Tours and Village Center Programs are co-sponsored by the Senior Resource Center and the Historical Society. To pre-register call 414-847-2727 or email src@shorewoodwi.gov.

Walking Tours

(Meeting location will be given the day before the walk.)

- **Wed., June 4, 10 a.m. "The Growth and Development of Northern Shorewood"**

Exploring details drawn from our Village architecture, Shorewood Historical Society President **Kathy Kean** will trace the evolution of the businesses and residential buildings originally serviced by the streetcar.

- **Wed., August 6, 10 a.m. "River and Hubbard Parks"**

When the Village of Shorewood was incorporated in 1900, a large amusement park had just opened in the southwest corner of the Village. Summer visitors from Milwaukee flocked to the park by streetcar and boat to enjoy the rides and music in the new park. **Karen de Hartog** will relate the story of this colorful corner of Shorewood history as we celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the Village.

Village Center Programs

- **Wed., April 30, 1:00-2:30 p.m., Village Center, "Building Our Village" Presentation and Short Film**

Trace the growth of the village as streets were planned and neighborhoods grew with well-designed duplexes, apartment buildings and homes. Sharpen your skills identifying architectural styles that have contributed to the historic character of our village. Presented by **Kathy Kean**. Pre-registration encouraged.

- **John Gurda Program, TBA**

- **4th of July Parade/Celebration**

Walk with the Historical Society in the parade! We will have a new banner. Wear a costume if you have one (big hats, long skirts, straw boaters and bow ties). Contact us at shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com with questions or 125th anniversary related ideas.

Save the Date

- **Shorewood History SCAN Day, Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Shorewood Village Center**

See details on Page 6.



In this issue: See more about Shorewood's beginnings on Pages 1, 3 and 6.