



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 4, November 2025

HONORING THE LEGACY OF A POET AND FALLEN WARRIOR

by Alex Vagelatos

"If you are able, save for them a place inside of you, and save one backward glance when you are leaving for the places they can no longer go."

Shorewood High School graduate, U.S. Army helicopter pilot, poet and musician Michael O'Donnell wrote these lines shortly before he was killed while on a rescue mission in Cambodia on March 24, 1970.

In O'Donnell's memory, Shorewood High School added an annual scholarship in 2024, thanks largely to the efforts of Jon Reddin and fellow classmates from 1963.

O'Donnell wrote with great sensitivity and poetic force, and his best-known poem is among the most beloved of the war. In 1970, during an attempt to rescue fellow soldiers stranded under heavy fire, O'Donnell's helicopter was shot down in the jungles of Cambodia. He remained missing in action for almost three decades before his remains and those of fellow soldiers were recovered and buried at Arlington National Cemetery in 2001.

In July, Reddin and high school principal Tim Kenney joined Marcus Sullivan – a close friend and musical partner of O'Donnell's – to unveil two plaques in his honor. One is in the entrance of the high school. The second is just outside the Barbara Gensler Auditorium – a particularly appropriate place, Kenney said.

(Cont. on Page 3)



1963 Shorewood High School graduate Michael O'Donnell was a U.S. Army helicopter pilot in 1970.



Michael O'Donnell was a poet and musician.

WATCH FOR 2026 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Historical Society membership renewals for 2026 will be in your mailbox shortly. Please return ASAP. Your continuing support is very important to us.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Happy Birthday!

Several neighbors recently gathered on our driveway at 4412 N. Woodburn St. for an informal 100th Birthday celebration for our houses! Granite birthday markers on our block are dated 1924, 1925 (ours), 1926 and 1927, so it seemed like a great time to enjoy some cake and share some history.

A new neighbor found the name of the builder of her home and used that information to find more information in the Historical Society's digital files about her home and others on our block. I was able to add additional context through maps and other photos in the Historical Society Archives and to relate the neighborhood to the building of Lake Bluff School in 1924.

When we uncover stories and make connections between people and built environment, we build valuable community bonds – a theme repeated several times during the Annual Meeting of the National Trust For Historic Preservation held in Milwaukee in September. In Shorewood we are fortunate that we have such an interesting built environment and many tools available to uncover the stories over the decades. Whether we are lifelong residents or recent transplants, we can feel connected.

Our 125th Anniversary celebration led to many new connections with the people who attended our programs, participated in our guided walks and donated to our digital archives. Our historical resources have grown, and we look forward to sharing them with everyone who calls Shorewood home.

Kathy Kean

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Plan A Birthday Party

According to Village Assessor's records, 269 houses built in Shorewood in 1926 are still standing. If you are the owner of one of those homes, plan a birthday party next year. Connect with your neighbors and share your stories.

If you have questions about the history of your home or the development of your neighborhood, contact us to schedule an appointment at In-House Research, the Historical Society's house-history archive in the Village Center. Email us at shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

James McDonald

Maureen Ann McGrath

OUR 125TH (QUASQUICENTENNIAL) ANNIVERSARY CONCLUDES

In 2000, the Village celebrated its centennial with a fireworks display at Atwater Beach, the first fireworks show in Shorewood since the 1930s. Our 125th Anniversary celebration will not end with a colorful bang, but we are satisfied that our anniversary-inspired activities reached a variety of audiences, positively. They included:

- Programs that focused on life in Shorewood in 1900, neighborhood development and water resources (John Gurda)
- Walking tours co-sponsored by the Shorewood Senior Resource Center
- SCAN Day, which added numerous digital files to our archives
- Re-creation of the Milwaukee Country Club in 1900 on Shorewood's east side by the Gentlemen of Shorewood
- Library displays and articles in a number of print and electronic media

Thank you to everyone who helped us verbalize and illustrate Shorewood's colorful history.



("Honoring the Legacy" cont. from Page 1)

Honoring O'Donnell's deep interest in music and writing, the Michael D. O'Donnell Memorial Scholarship will provide financial assistance to a Shorewood High School graduate who has shown an interest in the fine arts, including poetry, literature, music, and the performing arts.

"Mike's message is as relevant and important today as it was in 1970 when he wrote it," said Reddin. What started as a one-man operation evolved into an effort by the entire SHS class of '63, with members contributing generously. "We were fortunate to receive a donation of the money left over from the 60th reunion."

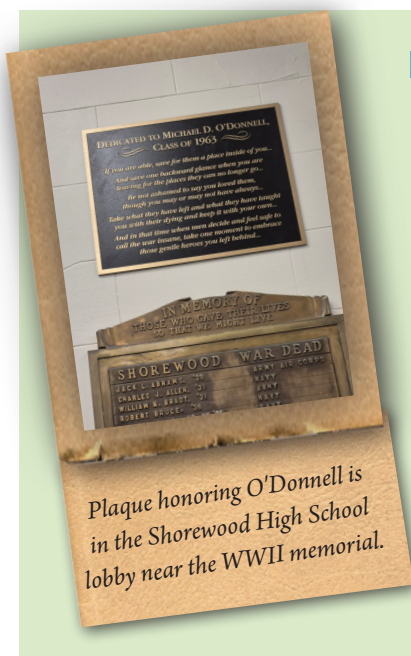
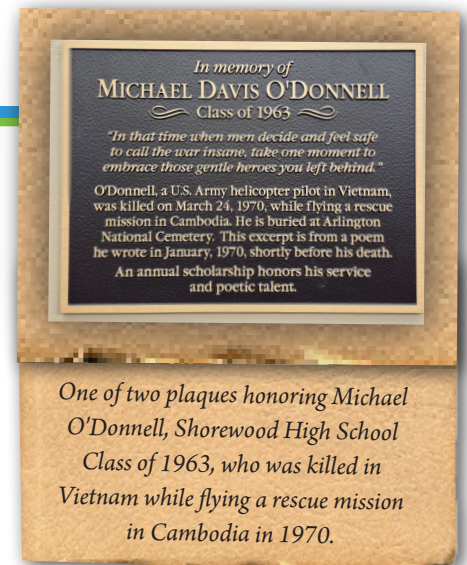
The Shorewood Men's Club also contributed to the memorial.

Also speaking at the July event was Daniel Weiss, author of a 2019 book, *In That Time – Michael O'Donnell and the Tragic Era of Vietnam*.

Weiss is Homewood Professor of the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University and President Emeritus of the Metropolitan Museum of Art where he served from 2015-2023. He credited Marcus Sullivan for his help with researching the book.

Sullivan told an interviewer on NPR: "At the time O'Donnell wrote that poem (*Letters From Pleiku*), in January 1 of 1970, he was really thinking about this issue of what loss really means. And this poem was embraced by veterans and soldiers and the public thereafter."

Written just two months before he was shot down in Cambodia, O'Donnell's poem has become an important artifact from the war and is featured on the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



LETTERS FROM PLEIKU

Here is the entire poem written by Michael O'Donnell in Vietnam in 1970.

*If you are able, save for them a place inside of you,
and save one backward glance when you are leaving
for the places they can no longer go.*

*Be not ashamed to say you loved them,
though you may, or may not have always.*

*Take what they have left, and what they have taught
you with their dying, and keep it as your own.*

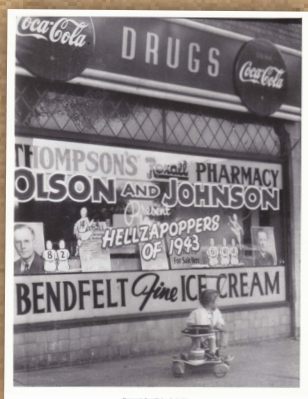
*And in that time that when men decide, and feel safe,
to call the war insane, take one moment, to embrace
these gentle heroes you left behind.*



*Northeast corner of Capitol Drive at
Oakland Avenue, mid-1940s.*



*Salvatore, Joseph and Ignatius
Balistreri in front of Sendiks on
Oakland Avenue, 1938.*



*Thompson's Drug Store window,
corner of Morris Boulevard and
Capitol Drive, 1943.*

WATCH OUR DIGITAL ARCHIVE GROW!

More than 300 items of the Society's extensive picture collection were scanned and added to our digital archive following our SCAN Day on Oct. 4.

A number of donations from Shorewood residents were also scanned or photographed and will join the collection shortly.

Visit our web site (shorewoodhistory.org) and select Digital Archive to browse the entire collection. All of the pictures include metadata (descriptions) so they are also word searchable. Do a simple search for a particular building or street and all related pictures, along with newspaper articles, should be available for you to view.

Volunteers, including Society members and two high school students, and the support of the Shorewood Library helped make SCAN Day a success.

We are particularly thankful for the help of John Sarnowski and the Res Carta Foundation for supplying five scanners and a camera and Res Carta tools to make all of our scanned material word searchable.

THE 2010 FLOOD: WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD PHOTOS

Important parts of Shorewood history are poorly represented or entirely missing from our archive. The gaps were noticeable as we sorted pictures in preparation for SCAN Day.

The Village flood of 2010 is a good example. We have only a half dozen pictures, all taken in the southeast corner of the Village of rising, rushing water. We would really like to add pictures to our collection from other parts of the Village of flowing water, damage and the messy clean-up.

Do you have pictures to donate? Either hard copy or digital files are welcome. We will scan any printed pictures and return them to the donor.

Note: personal stories about that horrific event are also welcome.

Contact us to donate:
shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com



*The 2010 Flood in Shorewood at
Edgewood and Oakland Avenues.*

WELCOME, LILLIAN PACHNER

Lillian Pachner, a recent UWM graduate with degrees in history and library and information systems, began working for the Historical Society in September as a part time archivist.

She is documenting, labeling and scanning objects in our archives to make them easier to find and to assure they are properly stored. She has already identified treasures we didn't even know we had!

Lillian has been extremely helpful in preparing all of the digital picture files from our SCAN Day for posting on the web.

Lillian will be with us for three to six months and will also help us document protocol for adding new items to the collection and maintaining all of our material appropriately into the future.

We are able to hire Lillian thanks to a gift from the estate of Virginia Palmer designated for archives development and maintenance.



Our archivist, Lillian Pachner and volunteer Clancy Carroll help donor Sue Kern prepare her blue print to be photographed at SCAN Day.



*Demolition of Pick 'n Save on
Oakland Avenue in Shorewood, 2016.*



Aerial of Village, 2009



*World War II Honor Roll for those who served,
on school grounds, Capitol Drive at
Oakland Avenue, 1943.*

SHOREWOOD VILLAGE BOARD: 125 YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

by Karen de Hartog

A small group of men met at Pete Mead's tavern in the spring of 1900 to begin the process of incorporation of the Village of East Milwaukee (which became Shorewood in 1917).

By fall, approval had been obtained from Milwaukee County and from residents. A village form or government, which included a village president and board of trustees, was established. Eligible voters met to fill 12 village positions including everything from Village president and trustees to inspector of the common school and an inspector of fences.

Since there were only 100 eligible voters who were able to fill the positions, the same names appear frequently on early lists of officials. They just switched jobs.

Providing village services and amenities like sidewalks, paved roads and sewer and water service was a huge challenge due to lack of funding. After approaching a number of banks, the Germania Bank provided a \$300 loan as long as all seven trustees co-signed the loan.



Harry Schmitt, our second
Village Manager

Luckily, community finances and services improved fairly rapidly over the first twenty years.

Employees were hired to handle public services and private contractors constructed streets, sidewalks, and sewer and water pipes. There was a rush to supply services to new subdivisions, which were preparing for the housing boom of the 1920s.

However, Village Board members were still overseeing the day-to-day work of the Village, hiring and supervising new workers, collecting taxes and paying bills, while also working full-time day jobs.

By 1928, the work load was overwhelming, and under the leadership of President William Hubbard, an ordinance establishing the position of Village Manager was approved in September of 1928.

According to the ordinance, the Village Manager was to be the chief executive officer and exercise all executive and general administrative powers, enforce ordinances, and appoint and oversee all subordinate officials necessary to enforce the law and administer Village business. This would allow the role of the Trustees to become primarily legislative.

The first Village Manager was C. M. Osborn from Racine. He lasted only two years and was replaced by Harry Schmitt in 1930.



The Village Trustees and officers in early 1940s.
The man seated in the middle is J. J. Cary, who was
president of the board from 1938-1951.
The man seated on the far right is William Hubbard
who was president from 1920-1931. He continued
as a trustee until 1946 and died a year later.
Hubbard Park was named in his honor.

Schmitt was the Village Engineer and apparently well regarded in the Village. Among other projects, he had orchestrated the removal of train tracks from the northwest side of the Village, which opened up a large area for new housing.

Schmitt was Village Manager for 20 years (except for a leave for military service during WWII). After surviving the war, he died of a heart attack at age 47 in 1950.

The basic role of Village government has not changed in 125 years. Providing and improving on basic services is still the top priority today. The biggest change is in the make-up of the Board and employees.

In 1900 women couldn't even vote for their village leaders. Today women fill many of the leadership positions.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Planning for the future is a vital part of the work of any non-profit board, especially in a time when our methods of communication and access to information are changing radically. Our mission – to preserve Shorewood history and educate the public – is not likely to change. How we fulfill that mission and make use of volunteer staff is bound to change.

With the challenges in mind, we have scanned and digitized large sections of our archival material to make some of our resources easily available to a wide audience. We also hired professional consultant and Shorewood resident Sue Kelley to help us understand what we need to do now to help us meet the challenges of the future.

First and foremost, we need new Board and committee members. We hope to have three new Board members in place by the time of our Annual Meeting in 2026.

We are seeking people with skills in:

- Marketing and Communication
- Education and Public Programming
- Non-Profit Management

and with a strong interest in local history and historic preservation.

We need a plan to preserve what we have accomplished and prepare for an uncertain, technology-driven future. Help us shape the Historical Society's future.

Contact us at shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com for more information or to schedule an interview, or contact a current Board member (see below) to express your interest.

Help us preserve
and celebrate
Shorewood's
unique identity.
Get involved.
Make an impact.
Interested?
Contact us by
email at:
shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com

JOIN THE SHOREWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD

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.



Ghost Sign Makes an Appearance

Thanks to Adam Levin, administrator of multiple social media accounts dedicated to found images of local history, for sharing this image of the former Lake Effect Surf Shop storefront located at 1926 E. Capitol Dr. The old Kream City Kringle sign was recently uncovered after the Lake Effect Surf Shop sign was removed. The shop closed in September after almost a decade in business and transitioned to on-line sales.

In the early 1980s, this storefront housed Kream City Kringle Company, a local bakery known for its kringles and community fundraisers.

For more fascinating finds, follow Adam's accounts on Facebook at: Old Milwaukee 414, Ghost Signs of Milwaukee, and Kodachrome Milwaukee, and on Instagram at: oldmilwaukee_414 and ghostsigns_mke.

