



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 3, August 2025

WHEN SHOREWOOD STREETLIGHTS MEANT "A MORE GENERAL SPIRIT OF CHEERFULNESS."

by Alex Vagelatos

As Shorewood embarks on a 5-year plan to replace its streetlights, let's illuminate the past a bit.

Margaret Sankovitz wrote in the May 2023 Newsletter that early in village history, the few gas lamps that lit the streets of Shorewood were those mainly east of Oakland Avenue. The Village Board resolved to secure and erect at least 30 street lamps in 1904.

Exactly when the change to electric lights was made is a little murky, but an excerpt from the Nov. 2, 1923, edition of the *Shorewood Radio* may shed some light:

"Our streets have been pretty dark lately but when the new electric system is completely installed and in operation then the whole village will be adequately lighted. It means increased physical beauty for our village, better business, greater convenience and safety for all and a more general spirit of cheerfulness."

A Street Lighting System Replacement Plan was developed by Stand Associates, the Village's municipal engineering firm, in spring 2023. Acting upon the recommendations, the Village asked KL Engineering for a replacement design and implementation plan.

The reason?

According to the Village website, the majority of Shorewood's streetlight system was installed in the early 1970s and has reached the end of its useful life. Approximately 1,500 fixtures light the Village's roadways, parks and municipal parking lots. Multiple reoccurring outages in recent years have prompted planning for the replacement of the residential street-light system.

(Cont. on Page 3)



An example of the latest 100-watt LED light fixture on a new street light pole.

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEB SITE! Thanks to former Board member Laura Beldavs and to Jenny Publitz (Publitz Creative, web design) our web site has a completely new look. Check us out at shorewoodhistory.org.

The site is a work in progress. Let us know if there is missing information or if you have trouble navigating the site. Email contact: shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Society members gathered at our Annual Dinner Meeting on May 8, 2025, at the Hubbard Park Lodge to celebrate the founding of the village 125 years ago and hear our Annual Report. I was pleased to report that both the recent archives renovations and the website redesign projects are largely completed; our In-House Resource Room has assisted an increasing number of residents in researching their homes; and we continued to promote historic preservation.

Collaborating with the Shorewood Library and Senior Resource Center, we sponsored two lectures about building the Village and continued leading neighborhood walking tours. Financial reports indicate the Society continues to enjoy a sound financial footing thanks to generous donations by friends of the Society and judicious investment. Our newsletters continue to inform and educate our members.

Election of Board members was followed by an informative, and at times humorous, presentation of what life was like when the village was incorporated in 1900. The presentation will be repeated for the Village Board later this summer.

We marched in the Village's July 4th Parade, accompanied by the delightful "Gentlemen of Shorewood:"

Vincent Vogelsang, Mark Porreca, Andrew Hahn and Matt Caton.

As a 125th anniversary history project, the Gents mapped the 9-hole Milwaukee Country Club golf course that was located on Shorewood's east side in 1900. They hosted events on August 9 to encourage people to walk the course and learn more about its founders – while preferably wearing 1900 era golf costumes!

DPW update: the completed "test fit" report with five possible options was presented to the Village Board 7/16/2025 (see Board Minutes). Note: this is still only at the gathering information stage.

Kathy Kean

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jacqueline Boynton
Ciel Senior Living
Lawrence Fox
Peter Hickman
Amanda Kendall

Melissa Marschka
Theisen Family
Marilyn White
Ben Wong

SAVE THE DATE:

Walking Tour with Kathy Kean
Wednesday, September 3, 2025
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

"Atwater Park and the Northern
"Gold Coast"

Trace the development of Atwater Park and the nearby "Gold Coast" as a showcase for architectural styles. Meeting location will be given the day before the walk. Free. Pre-register with the Senior Resource Center: call 414-847-2727 or email src@shorewoodwi.gov.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

Andrina Roberts was awarded the Society's 2025 "Sonja Ivanovich Memorial Scholarship." The \$2,000 scholarship is given each year to a Shorewood senior who has demonstrated a high level of academic achievement and community involvement and who is interested in history or a related subject. Sonja Ivanovich was a political science teacher at SHS and past president of the Historical Society.

Andrina easily met the criteria. She was co-editor in chief of *Ripples*, president of the Model United Nations Club, and captain of the Mock Trial team. In addition, she is a National Merit Scholarship finalist.

Andrina will attend George Washington University where she plans to study history or political science on a pre-law track.





Streetlamps on Stowell Avenue and Capitol Drive in Shorewood, c.1920s

("Shorewood Streetlights" cont. from Page 1)

Sankovitz wrote in 2023, "Residential, park and parking lots employ the concrete pole style that dates back to the 1920s. There have been additions to the system since the early days, including different styles lamps."

According to Stand Associates, "A significant amount of the system wiring is original to the 1970s, which is past the typical life expectancy of 30 to 40 years. Faults in the aging wiring are prevalent throughout the Village, leading to an unreliable lighting system, significant staff maintenance efforts, and safety issues. Additionally, the existing wiring is direct-buried (versus wire in conduit), which makes it

more prone to issues and difficult to access for troubleshooting and maintenance."

There have been periodic updates to the current system since its installation.

For example, in 2007, all existing lighting infrastructure was replaced along North Oakland Avenue, including light poles, light fixtures, wiring and conduit.

In 2016, segments of North Frederick Avenue and North Murray Avenue were upgraded with direct burial wiring replaced with wiring in conduits.

In 2018, North Wilson Drive saw the installation of 100-watt LED light fixtures on new light poles.

How important was street lighting in early Shorewood? Consider this rousing if truncated true crime tale, from the Aug. 28, 1925, *Shorewood Radio*:

"The need of streetlights from Larkin St. west toward the railroad tracks was particularly emphasized at 1 a.m. Sunday when two fugitives . . . escaped after . . . fired six shots at them. This section of trees, bushes and . . . sweet clover, coupled with darkness, offered an excellent avenue of escape from the Village."

Already begun on the Village's northwest side, streetlight installation is expected to be completed in 2029.

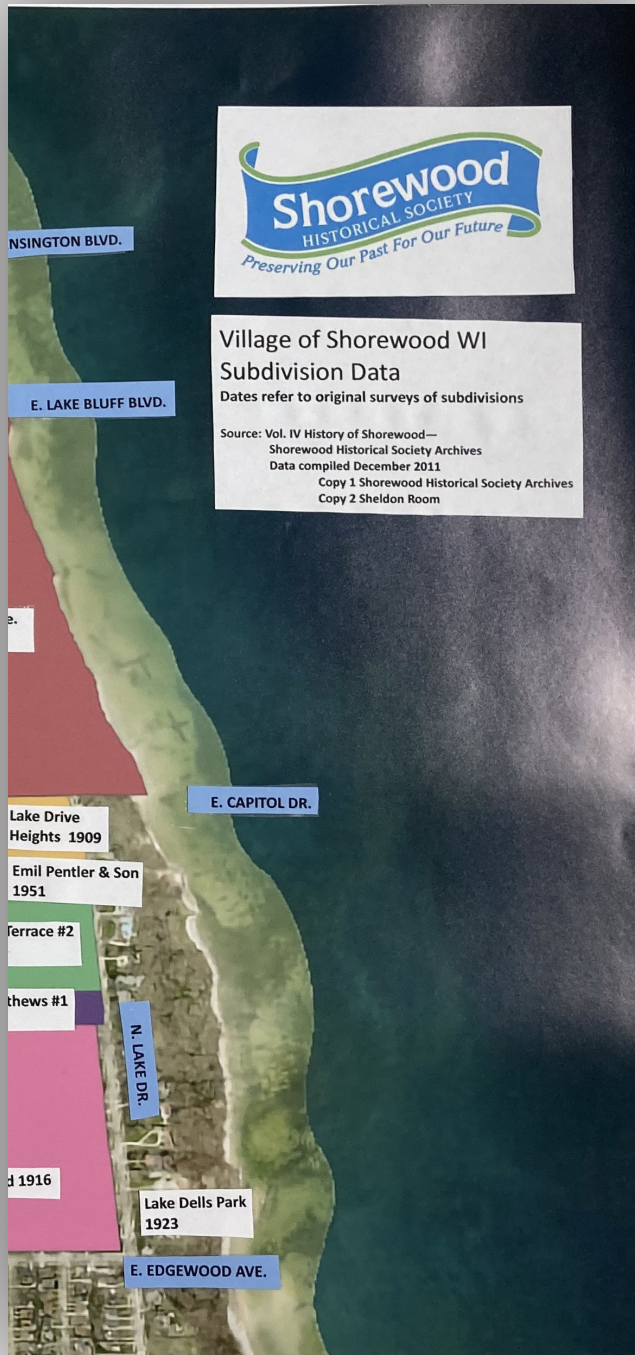
LIGHTING THE WAY

Margaret Sankovitz "enlightened" us with the story of Dick Porth, who grew up in the old farmhouse that stood until recently on the northwest corner of Capitol Drive and Stowell Avenue (since demolished along with the Sunseekers building to construct the Atwater Apartments.) He was an early lamplighter when the streetlights were still fueled by gas. She recalled, "When he was very young he got a job with the Milwaukee Gas Light Company lighting the lamps in what is now Shorewood. He rode his bicycle in the late afternoon lighting them and in the morning extinguishing them."



A lamplighter making his rounds by bicycle, c.1920 (photographer unknown, reproduced courtesy Moreland City Libraries).

US UNDERSTAND HOW THE VILLAGE DEVELOPED



“... Some subdivisions were named for the owner/developer. ... Others were obviously chosen to look attractive on an advertisement:
Palo Alto, Grandview Gardens, Greenwood Terrace.”

The U. S. government purchased land along Lake Michigan from the Menominee Indians in 1832. The tree-covered area we know as Shorewood was

quickly surveyed, sectioned and then purchased by speculators and a few farmers. By the end of the 19th century, speculators were selling to developers who subdivided their property to prepare for sale of individual lots and home construction.

The colorful Shorewood subdivision map (at left) was created by Board member Mary Jorgensen, who helps residents research the history of their home. “The map helps our home owners understand how the Village developed,” she said. Note that at least 15 subdivisions were platted and approved before 1900, probably by Milwaukee County, though few homes were built.

What is a subdivision?

It is a large tract of land that has been divided into smaller parcels (lots) for development or sale, typically for residential use. These parcels are often sold individually, with the understanding that buyers will build homes or other structures on them. The subdivision owner may dictate the style and size of homes that will be constructed.

How are subdivisions named?

Some were named for the owner/developer. *Carl Miller #1 and #3* were owned and developed by the Carl Miller Lumber Company located on Hampton Avenue (on the site of the current CVS). Others were obviously chosen to look attractive on an advertisement: *Palo Alto, Grandview Gardens, Greenwood Terrace*. The subdivision name is listed on property tax bills as part of the legal description of the property.

What assistance did the Village provide to subdivisions?

The Village Board approved subdivisions formed after incorporation in 1900. As plots began to sell, sewer, water, sidewalks and paved roads were added as quickly as possible, particularly from about 1910 to 1930.

("Shorewood Building Blocks — Early Subdivisions Help Us Understand How the Village Developed" cont. from Pages 4 & 5)

SUBDIVISION SAMPLING

Oldest Subdivision:

Merrill and Dupre's (1887) is between Oakland and Maryland Avenues and extending 1/2 block north and south of current Beverly Road. **Oakland Avenue Heights (1887)** is between Oakland and Maryland Avenues, extending from Wood Place to 1/2 block north of Marion Street. 2109 E. Marion St. is the only house standing that was built in Oakland Avenue Heights before 1900.

Youngest Subdivision:

Emil Pentler and Son (1951) is a narrow strip of land from Lake Drive west to Harcourt Place. It includes eight single-story homes on the cul-de-sac at the south end of Harcourt Place.

Smallest Subdivision:

Henry Blink (1927) is at the southwest corner of Oakland and Lake Bluff Avenues, and was formed after some negotiating between the village and surrounding developers in order to complete Marion Street. The Shorewood Theater, an ornate Mediterranean-style building that housed a movie theater, bowling alley, skating rink, offices and a bar, was the sole occupant of the subdivision until it was torn down in 1967, a victim of the television era.

Largest Subdivision:

Palo Alto (1929). The tracks of the Lake Shore Division of the Northwestern Railroad ran in a northerly direction from Capitol Drive toward Sheboygan and were a deterrence to Village development. In 1925, Shorewood and Whitefish Bay jointly petitioned that the tracks be removed and a new cut-over be constructed north of Whitefish Bay.

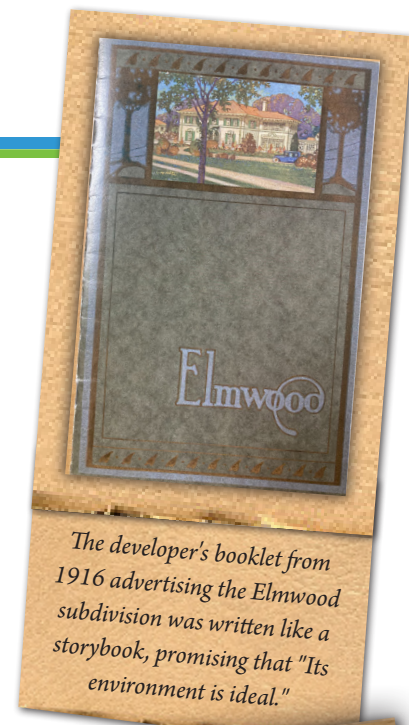
Shorewood paid the railroad \$46,000 for its portion of the right-of-way. By 1929 the tracks were removed, and Palo Alto was created. The acquired land was sold to adjacent land owners and to the Glenn Reality Co. for development.

A Late Development:

Trostel Tract (1932), on the southeast corner of Downer Avenue and Capitol Drive, was originally presented to the Village Board as "Alhambra Gardens." Plans included 18 fine homes and a winding drive. But in 1931, the Board pointed out that it was still not platted and was the only remaining land in the Village suitable for new residential development. The Trostel estate argued that the land was overvalued, but finally completed platting in 1932. After determining that Ridgefield Circle would not be used as a bus turn around, homes were built between 1934 and 1950 in the style visualized for Alhambra Gardens.

Newspaper Research:

Development of subdivisions after 1923 are the easiest to research because by then the Village had a newspaper, the *Shorewood Radio* that reported on Village Board meetings. For instance, in December 1924, the subdivision known as **High School (H.S.) Park** was accepted by the Village Board. It was owned by the Schroeder Lumber Company. Subdivision requirements stated that no single family homes of less than \$5,000 or duplexes less than \$9,000 could be constructed in the area. The lumber company said they had already sold 21 lots and expected the rest to sell quickly.



By January 1925, the Board approved the established grading plans with curved streets for the development and indicated that contracts should be let for underground work and sidewalks to be constructed during the summer of 1925. Street paving would take place in 1926.

Learn more about your Shorewood home, subdivision and village development on the Historical Society's web page: shorewoodhistory.org.

See the Digital Collection. Or send an email to request an appointment with Mary Jorgensen for help with your home research: shorewoodhistory@yahoo.com.

SHOREWOOD WELL REPRESENTED AT MILWAUKEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AWARDS DINNER

Shorewood's 125th Anniversary was highlighted at Milwaukee County Historical Society's dinner on May 22. The County awards Accolades to businesses, organizations and communities that have reached significant milestones. Accepting the Accolade in honor of Shorewood's 125th Anniversary was Village President **Ann McKaig**. Village Board members **Arthur Ircink**, **Wes Warren** and **Jim Arndorfer** also attended the dinner along with Shorewood Historical Society members.

Baumgartner Contributions are Significant

Another award winner at the county dinner was **Donald Baumgartner** who, along with his wife **Donna**, received the "Witness to History Award." The Baumgartners have been incredibly important to Milwaukee culture with their support of the Milwaukee Art Museum and Calatrava addition and also the Florentine Opera, the Milwaukee Symphony, Next Door Foundation and the County Historical Society.

Donald Baumgartner graduated from Shorewood High School in 1949.



Doris Heiser Honored

Doris Heiser who, along with her husband **Ed**, is a charter member of the Shorewood Historical Society, was honored by the Milwaukee County Historical Society at its annual dinner. She received the "Dan Emmer Award" in recognition of her significant contributions as a volunteer to the operation of the County Society.

Doris started as a docent shortly after moving to Shorewood in 1968. She has served two terms on the board and continues as a volunteer and assists in planning the annual dinner.

Doris's devotion to Milwaukee County history has benefited Shorewood as well as the County as a whole. We make good use of Milwaukee County's resources.



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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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.



SAVE THE DATE:

SCAN Day

Saturday, October 4, 2025

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Village Center, 3920 N. Murray Ave.
(lower level of the Shorewood Library)

Bring your Shorewood-related pictures and documents to the Village Center. We will scan your items free of charge and return them to you along with a thumb drive containing your digital files. All files will be added to the Society's digital collection and will be available to the public.

Bring your pictures of Shorewood homes and neighborhoods, community celebrations, businesses and parks that help tell the story of Village change over time. Pictures from mid-20th century to the present are particularly needed.

See shorewoodhistory.org for further details and directions.

