



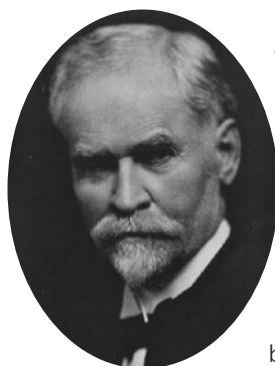
# VAUGHAN'S SEED STORE: OVER 100 YEARS OF COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

*JC Vaughan, the owner of Vaughan's Seed Store, was one of the largest employers and original landowners in Western Springs.*

Vaughan first began selling nursery and garden supplies in 1870. He opened his first seed store in Chicago in 1876, and would eventually have two retail storefronts. Even though his stores were in the city, Vaughan placed his greenhouses in Western Springs to be near the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad tracks.

By 1889, Vaughan had 7,500 square feet of glasshouses in his Western Springs nursery. That footprint would expand to 35,000 square feet by 1926. His nursery of plants occupied the land that is now the Western Springs Service Club Pool, along with the nearby streets. He later expanded his acreage in the area where Garden Market Shopping and Lyons Township South Campus is currently located.

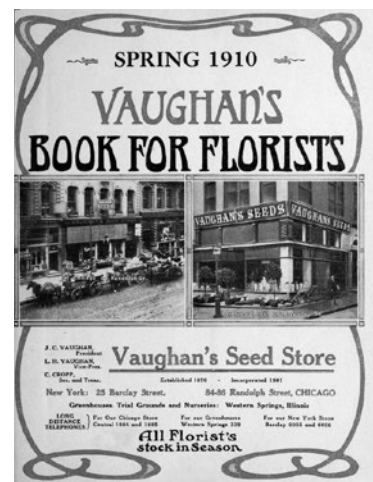
In addition to providing commercial plant sales, Vaughan used his landscaping talents to beautify the village, planting extensively along the train tracks and in the downtown area. His spectacular greenhouses led to elaborate landscaping displays and trial gardens that really put Western Springs



and Vaughan's on the map. When the Columbian Exposition occurred in 1893, Vaughan took home 28 metals.

Vaughan was an innovative businessman for the times, using "modern" trucks to haul goods from his Western Springs greenhouses to his Chicago store fronts. He published his first catalog in 1886; he sent out 50,000 of them twice a year. 1880-1890 was a booming decade in the seed business, and Vaughan distinguished himself by commissioning illustrators to create the images in his catalogs, making them works of art in themselves.

His talents as a gardener and businessman also helped him evolve his business as times changed. In the 1900's, he opened a storefront at the corner of Willow Springs Road and 47th street, and by 1930, he not only sold plants to the public, but he added gift items and home decorating. As the Western Springs population expanded, he eventually closed his greenhouses and sold the land to housing developers. However, Vaughan always maintained his retail store. He finally sold his business to Western Springs resident Scott Grosse in 1992, and the store remained one of the anchor businesses in town well into the early 2000's, when competition from big box stores eventually led to its closing.



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

# Community Spirit

The Western Springs Historical Society has a long tradition of preserving our Village's events. One of the ways we do this is through our Museum, located at the Water Tower. Through thoughtful displays, we try to express what life was like in the past. Learning about daily routines reminds us how much easier we think we have it now. Photos of special events showing smiling faces — though dressed differently — look so familiar. The basic sense of community has been there from the start of our Village. It remains strong today.

This past spring, the Historical Society hosted our biennial MayFest. It was a truly special day on the Tower Green and the weather cooperated nicely. People of all ages came to share

an afternoon of vintage carnival games, old-fashioned treats and live music by Field Park resident Greg Cone. We were glad to see old friends, as well as make many new ones.

As the WSHS board heads into another year, we are always looking for new people and ideas! Whatever your skill set, interests or time available, we have a volunteer opportunity available for you!

Best wishes,

*Susan Wyckoff*  
President, WSHS

## PRESERVING TRADITIONS

Thanks to all who submitted entries to our biennial Historic Preservation Award! The awards, which the Historical Society has been giving since 1996, recognize owners for restoring or preserving their residences while maintaining the architectural and historic integrity of the structure. Houses must be at least 50 years old for the Preservation and Compatible Addition categories, and only the building's exterior is considered. The Good Neighbor category is for a new structure, either residential or commercial, that fits the scale and historic style of Western Springs.

The Historical Society appreciates the efforts by all homeowners to maintain their homes. A resident's commitment to preserving their home or adding to it in a period appropriate manner contributes greatly to the charm and historic character of our village.

This year's award winners were announced at the MayFest and received a plaque to display. The Preservation Award went to 4069 Woodland Avenue; the Compatible Addition Awards went to 4050 Woodland Avenue and 4359 Woodland Avenue; and the Good Neighbor Award went to 5802 Woodland Drive.



4069 Woodland Ave., The Harrington Family



4050 Woodland Ave., The Gray Family



4359 Woodland Ave., The Richards Family



5802 Woodland Ave., The Everett Family

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## WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we rely 100% on the generosity of our members. Your financial support through membership dues, donations, fundraising events and memorial bequests helps us to continue our mission of preserving and presenting Western Springs' history. Thank you for supporting the Western Springs Historical Society!



# OLD-SCHOOL DAYS

*As we look back at one of the original schools of Western Springs, we are reminded of just how much we've grown in the last 146 years. Did you ever wonder how it all started?*

In 1872, the residents contracted James Sullivan Company Builders of Chicago to build a school house for \$2,200. This original wood structure on Grand Avenue had a one-room school on the first floor while the second floor was used for public meetings and church services.

As the population grew, more classroom space was needed. In 1885 a larger stone school was built to replace the first building. (The original wooden structure was moved to Wolf Road, where it still stands as a single family residence.) Building the stone school was also an important statement for town officials to show that Western Springs was a permanent establishment. Later that year, the residents voted to incorporate as a village, which became effective in January 1886.

In the early days of the village, Grand Avenue, known as the "Schoolhouse" was the only school. By 1894, three teachers and a part-time drawing instructor taught children in grades 1-8. In 1909, the first kindergarteners were enrolled. As the population continued to grow, additional schools were built and, in 1924, the school's name officially became Grand Avenue School.

Between 1906 and 1977, Grand Avenue underwent many renovations including a second story addition, several interior renovations and a new gymnasium building where a former church once stood.



By 1981, declining enrollment forced the Village to close the school. There was talk of demolishing the building but a group of concerned residents saved it, and in the late 80s ownership was transferred to the Village. The former schoolhouse was subsequently repurposed as the Grand Avenue Community Center where it continues to provide a variety of services today, including preschool, day care, dance lessons, music instruction, gymnasium facilities, a senior center and a home for the Historical Society's archives.



*Pictured top to bottom:  
First and second graders,  
1897; Grand Avenue circa  
1906; Fifth graders, 1927.*



## A FOND FAREWELL

# Vicki Lezon Retires

After 9 years on the Western Springs Historical Society Board, Vicki Lezon is stepping down to devote more time to her family and other endeavors. During her four years as WSHS President, Vicki worked hard to improve the organization's financial health and spearheaded many of the updated exhibits in the Water Tower Museum. She was Chair of the House Walk for several years and was instrumental in creating the inaugural MayFest. She also presented many of the lectures



for our Adult Education Lecture Series as well as costumed many of the Museum and Ekdahl House's mannequins. Vicki's dedication and work ethic while part of WSHS was both inspiring and greatly appreciated. We thank her for all her roles in the WSHS and wish her all the best. She will be greatly missed!

# VINTAGE CHRISTMAS WISHES

By John Davona: The following are actual, unedited letters from 1928 that were written to Santa Claus by the third graders at Grand Avenue School. As the letters attest, the children were convinced that there was a Santa Claus. The only question in their minds was what to ask for.

"Dear S. Claus, North Pole. It is a whole year since I have written to you. It is time to let you know WHAT I want, as Christmas is near. (1) doll house, (2) wall black board, (3) auto, (4) roller skates, and (5) a desk. *Virginia, Western Springs*"

"Dear Santa Claus, I have been very good in school and I am good at home. Please send me a freight outfit for my electric train. Please send me \$10 to give to others. Will you send me a mother dog. I would like a pair of ice-skates and a new overcoat. *Dean*"

"Dear Santa, Please bring me a set of dishes. I would like a Bye lo doll and a big doll buggy. I want a big two wheel bike. *From your friend, Loretta.*"

"Dear Santa, I thought I would write you a letter. How are your reindeers. Are you very busy at your toy shop? I want a pool table and a be-be gun for Christmas. I am going to see you Saturday evening. My father is going to take me in the car. *Your friend, Kenneth*"

"Dear Santa: I thought I would write and tell you what I wanted. So I'll tell you. I want a saxophone and please may I have a lot of lumber and some tools. *With love, Whitman*"

"Dear Santa: I would like some bloks and train and send mother and daddy a auto. *Jean*"

"Dear Santa Claus: I thought I would write you a letter. Will you please give me a sled. There is a hill in front of our house, that is why I want a sled. I think I want one more thing, and that is a pair of ice skates, and that is all I think I will want. I live on Wolf road, Western Springs. I am in the third grade. *From, Lawrence.*"

"Dear Santa Claus, I thought it would be about time to write you a letter. I know you have lots of children to visit this year. Please may I have a dresser and a kitchen cabinet? I guess that is all I want this year. A Merry Christmas to you. *Josshine*"

"Dear Santa Claus: I thought I would write a letter to you and ask you if you were coming to Western Springs. If you are, will you leave me a walk and talking doll? Will you please fill my stocking. I would like to have a nice big sled and my brother Jack wants a nice big sled, too. *From Shirley*"

"Dear Santa: I thought I had better write you a letter because it is so near Christmas so I am writing you now. For Christmas I would like to have a baby doll and a doll bed. Remember that I live in Western Springs. I still remember you forever and ever. My mother got a little sweater for my cousin from you. Oh yes, I would like to have a set of Oz books. *With Love, Mary*"

"Dear Santa Claus: I would like to have a doll. Also, a small electric iron so I can help my mother. Please bring to the children who have not many things. *From, Jean Buckman*"

"Dear Santa Claus, I have been a very good boy. I have helped my mother and my father. I want a printing set. *With Love to Santa Claus, from Jack P.*"

"Dear Santa: I thought I would write you a letter. I am in third grade. I would like a doll with brown hair and a pink silk dress and a pink silk bonnet. Her name is going to be Rose Bud. I am going to get a wardrobe trunk with lots of clothes in it and I want a typewriter. *Your friend, Eleanor*"

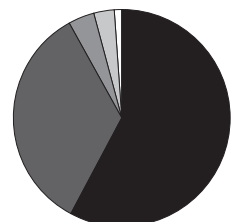
"Dear Santa Claus, I hope you come down our chimney Christmas eve for I want these things, a fox play with gun, a new sled and electric train., ice skates and roller skates. *Love, John A.*"



2016-2017

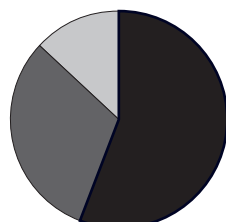
## Combined Financial Report

REVENUES = \$74,526



■ Fundraising (Net) 58%  
■ Membership 34%  
■ Donations 4%  
■ Sales 3%  
□ Other 1%

EXPENSES = \$34,436

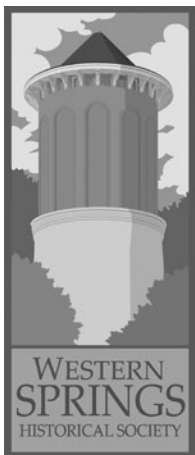


■ Rent & Office Expense 56%  
■ Community Outreach 31%  
■ Archives & Museum Exhibits 13%

The Western Springs Historical Society is an independent all-volunteer, non-profit organization that does not receive any federal, state or local government funding.

As such, it relies on the generous support of concerned residents like you, combined with careful management of its financial resources, to ensure that the Society remains a viable organization, able to plan and implement programs and services for the community.

The pie charts shown above summarize the revenue and expenses for the WSHS. Since the biennial House Walk represents a major source of income, some of which is carried over to cover expenses in the following year, these charts include data for both 2016 and 2017 (the most recent two year period for which complete data are available).



#### **WESTERN SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 139  
Western Springs  
708-246-9230  
[WesternSpringsHistory.org](http://WesternSpringsHistory.org)

#### **THE TOWER MUSEUM & CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**

are housed in the historic Water Tower

#### **MUSEUM HOURS**

Saturdays  
10 AM – Noon

#### **VOLUNTEERS & DOCENTS WELCOME**

Call 708-246-9230

#### **ARCHIVES & WORKSHOP**

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Community Center  
Second Floor

#### **ARCHIVES HOURS**

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#### **SAVE THE DATE!**

### **WESTERN SPRINGS HOUSEWALK SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2019**



### *MayFest Recap*

Thanks to all our volunteers and visitors who joined us for MayFest 2018. It was a sunny afternoon filled with vintage games, old-fashioned treats and live entertainment by resident Greg Cone. The 2018 Preservation Awards were also announced. Look for our next MayFest in 2020!



### *Make a Difference*

As we approach the end of 2018, please consider supporting the Western Springs Historical Society. Become a member, renew your membership, gift a membership and/or make a donation. Tax deductible

donations can be made via PayPal on our website. Visit [www.westernspringshistory.org](http://www.westernspringshistory.org) and click the yellow "Donate" button. Thank you!

### *Love History?*

Come join the docent team at the WSHS Tower Museum! It's a great way to learn more about the history of this wonderful community, meet your neighbors and make new friends!

The museum is open Saturday mornings from 10 am – 12 pm, so the time commitment is minimal, yet the rewards are many. Training is provided. It's easy, it's fun and you will be helping this worthwhile organization to thrive.

Interested? Please contact Susan Cardamone at [s.cardamone@att.net](mailto:s.cardamone@att.net).