



WESTERN SPRINGS

# Historical Society

Summer 2023



## CURIOUS CITY: WESTERN SPRINGS

*McClure Junior High students' new elective course examines the rich history of our village.*

BY KEITH CHAPMAN

One morning on her commute to McClure Junior High, Lynn Rees was listening to a podcast, WBEZ's "Curious City." Having taught social studies for more than 14 years, Curious City is one of her favorites: the podcast is guided by hosts and listeners who ask and explore questions about Chicago, its landmarks and people, and of course, its history.

Rees, who works as an electives teacher at McClure, suddenly had an idea: what if she could apply the "Curious City" model that works so well for a podcast to a course for her own students?

Instead of focusing on Chicago, however, the class would examine some of Western Springs' rich and fascinating history, she thought. Having taught social studies for many years, Rees felt it was the perfect way to harness student's curiosity in a way that facilitates learning.

"Our students always have so many questions and are motivated to find answers and make their own sense of the world," said Rees. "So it seemed to me to be the optimal time to foster an interest in and passion for local history, issues, and government."

Last spring, Rees and her fellow McClure educator Shannon McGrath set out to see how a unique course like this might work. Rees and McGrath met with the Western Springs Historical Society to brainstorm ideas, and also visited the organization's archive to get inspirations and tools to design a curriculum that would be both engaging and educational.



“There's no way we could have created this elective out of thin air without the help of you, your research and volunteer teams, the Western Springs Historical Society, and the WSHS website...I just want to let the world know that our Bulldogs could never have the experiences they're having without all of you and the generous support of so many individual community members.”

— Lynn Rees

As they mapped out the syllabus, the educators decided that John Devona's book, "Western Springs Short Stories," should be a foundational part of the curriculum. Another important aspect of the class would be real-life experiences, as they planned numerous field experiences to points of interest in town, including the Tower Museum, the Ekdahl House, the police and fire departments, and even a trip downtown to visit the WBEZ studio at Navy Pier and meet with the actual Curious City journalists and production team.

The result of Rees' vision? The inaugural elective course, *Curious City: Western Springs Edition*, was offered to McClure students for the first time in the winter quarter. The interest was great enough that there were two classes offered for the spring quarter.

"We love the new elective course because it has provided such a great opportunity for our students," said Brian Barnhart, Superintendent of District 101. "Through research, synthesis and presentation, our kids have become curators of the history of Western Springs."

It's apparent that this role as curators is one the students relish.

"While I cannot be more proud of the students' hard work, insatiable curiosity, and active, meaningful engagement throughout the entire quarter, the most fun for me has been hearing the excitement and enthusiasm in their chatter, questions, and laughter during our walks back to McClure after each field experience," said Rees.

## A LETTER FROM THE BOARD

# Connecting to the Past

The first official meeting of the Western Springs Historical Society was held in the Village Hall on June 12, 1967. All citizens of Western Springs were invited to participate. Those present included residents, librarians, teachers and civic leaders. Executive Board positions were created and Howard Knowlton-President, Paul Drexler-Vice President, Frank Abbott-Treasurer, and Peggy Taylor-Secretary were all elected. Maude Erickson, Jan Heiner McDermid, Nancy Kolar, Newell Ford and Elden Link were all named Committee Chairs.

66 years later, our 2023 initiative is to reconnect with as many past WSHS alumni to improve the documentation of the WSHS' own history. As a start, we hosted a gathering of WSHS alumni at Plymouth Place earlier this year which included many of our organization's founding members. This inaugural gathering provided both alumni and the current board a wealth of information. Our plan is to host future events and create an

alumni newsletter to keep the dialog going. We welcome all past volunteers and trustees to share your memories with us by joining our alumni group. To join, please send an email to [info@westernspringshistory.org](mailto:info@westernspringshistory.org).

If you're not an alumni, this could be your chance to get involved! The WSHS relies on the support of volunteers. If you have time and talent you'd like to share, check out the Volunteer page on our website, [westernspringshistory.org](http://westernspringshistory.org).

We look forward to hearing from you!

### *The Board of the Western Springs Historical Society*

Mark Tobin, Mary Rintz, Jason Kilarski, Lori Mitchell, Pete Caris, Chris Cone, Brigid Garrity, Jim Havlat, Karla Hudson, Patrick McCarthy, Susan Morrow, Ken Nash, Michael Scodro, Patsy Shutack, Leslie Walters

## BIENNIAL PRESERVATION AWARDS

# HISTORIC CHARACTER COUNTS

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 recognizes a structure of any age, either residential or commercial, that fits the scale and historic style of Western Springs and enhances the character of its neighborhood. While the house at 4131 Johnson is not new, the judges felt that the work done to maintain and update the house qualified it as a Good Neighbor.

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 received their plaques during the Member Event on Saturday, June 24th. The Preservation Award went to 4101 Clausen Avenue; the Compatible Addition Award went to 4016 Grand Avenue; and the Good Neighbor Award went to 4131 Johnson Avenue.



*4101 Clausen Ave., Preservation Award*



*4016 Grand Ave., Compatible Addition*



*4131 Johnson Ave., Good Neighbor*



# THE WSHS CAROL YOUNG SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

The WSHS Carol Young Scholarship honors Carol Young whose passion for history and education helped her develop the children's educational program. Each year, our scholarship is awarded to a student from Western Springs who has demonstrated an interest in history, especially the history of Western Springs, through volunteer activities and/or academic coursework.

We are honored to announce that LTHS 2023 graduate Audrey Schissler is this year's scholarship recipient. The award was presented to her at the LTHS Senior Award night on May 25, 2023.

Audrey grew up in Forest Hills and her love of history was fostered by her parents with trips to museums and historic sites. Her AP U.S. History class at LT helped inspire her further.

"While we learned about the big picture concepts of the country, we also learned about how students at LT experienced each time period...These unique bits of information really solidified images of the Western Springs area in the past, and



*WSHS Trustee Chris Cone (left) with scholarship winner Audrey Schissler at the LTHS Senior Award Night in May.*

motivated me to learn more about history wherever I could," said Audrey.

We wish Audrey much success as she heads off to college this fall!

*This year's scholarship was funded by local resident and past U.S. Congressman, Bill Lipinski, in honor of his late wife RoseMarie. Bill and RoseMarie always loved history so he felt that this was a good way to provide notoriety to his wife's legacy as well as give back to our community.*

## About RoseMarie Lipinski

RoseMarie passed away on July 11, 2021 at the age of 83. She is remembered for her community activism and support of her husband Bill's long political career. She served as a Delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1996 and 2004, and as a Judge in the Illinois Court of Claims.

RoseMarie and Bill met in 1960 while working for the Chicago Park District and married two years later. They moved to Western Springs in 2007 after Bill retired from being a Congressman. They were introduced to Western Springs 40 years prior while campaigning for Bill's first election. She fell in love with the quiet beauty and gardens of the town and quickly joined the Western Springs Garden Club upon moving in.

After raising their two children, Laura and Dan, RoseMarie returned to school earning a Bachelor's Degree from St. Xavier University and her Juris Doctorate from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. It was her passion for helping women pursue their dreams of higher education that led the Lipinskis to start the RoseMarie Lipinski Foundation which awards a \$10,000 scholarship annually to a mother who has at least two children in elementary and/or high school to help her start or return to college.



## Ready to Explore?

BY KEITH CHAPMAN

When the glaciers of the last Ice Age retreated north some 13,000 years ago, they left a few mementos in Western Springs. Namely, a couple of large boulders that lie about one hundred yards southeast of the town's historic Water Tower.

The stone used to create that tower, meanwhile, made a much shorter and more recent journey. That rock was loaded onto trains and made the trip east from Naperville to the Village Green, where workers finished the 112-foot-tall tower in 1893.

These are just a few nuggets that residents can learn from the WSHS Family Walking Tour.

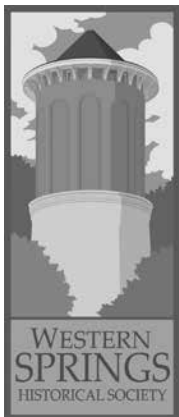
Every Saturday from 10 am to noon, residents can stop by the Tower Museum to pick up a map and legend for the self-guided tour. Participants will learn about some of the many historic buildings and landmarks around town. Children can earn a prize by filling out the quiz at the end and returning it to the Tower Museum.

The Family Walking Tour was created in 2021 by local resident (and soon to be college junior) Jasper Burns, in conjunction with the Western Springs Historical Society. Jasper undertook this tour as his Eagle Scout Project because he felt it was "the best way to help the community."

The WSHS would like to thank Jasper for the many hours of work he put into creating this activity for our youngest history buffs and their families. We hope our residents will enjoy this tour for years to come.



*Eagle Scout Jasper Burns in 2021*



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

P.O. Box 139  
Western Springs  
708-246-9230  
WesternSpringsHistory.org

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

are housed in the historic  
Water Tower

#### **MUSEUM HOURS**

Saturdays, 10am – Noon  
Closed on major holiday  
weekends

#### **EKDAHL HOUSE MUSEUM**

43rd St. & Wolf Rd.  
Outdoor exhibit open 24/7

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#### **NEWSLETTER GRAPHICS**

Mary Rintz

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

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### *New Exhibit Opens at the Tower*

Do you want to learn more  
about one of the Village's  
most famous residents?  
Then stop by the Tower  
Museum on Saturdays, 10am  
to noon, to see our newest  
exhibit on the life and legacy  
of Charles Vickery.

The exhibit opened Saturday,  
June 24th and showcases  
original oil paintings, framed  
prints and a recently acquired  
artbox of Vickery's paints and  
brushes.

### *The WSHS House Walk Returns!*

The pandemic threw quite a  
wrench in House Walk plans  
for the last several years, but  
we are pleased to announce  
that planning for the 2024  
House Walk is underway!

Mark your calendars for  
Sunday, May 19th, 2024 and  
keep an eye on our website  
for updates. If you are  
interested in volunteering  
for the House Walk  
please contact us at [info@  
westernspringshistory.org](mailto:info@westernspringshistory.org).

