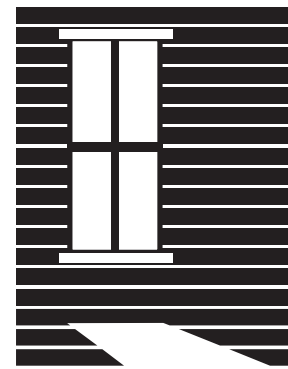


GAZETTE



Winnetka
Historical
Society

Spring/Summer 2021 Volume 28 No. 1

<http://www.winnetkahistory.org>

Newsboy: Winnetkan Remembers Delivering Tribune

Author Gary D. Cole became the Chicago Tribune paperboy for his Winnetka neighborhood in 1968. His extended family lived far away, and his customers – especially the elderly residents of the Chimney Apartments – became another set of near relations to Cole. He felt it was his duty in delivering the news to his customers' doors to keep up with the events reported in the paper. Cole's memoir, *Newsboy*, is both an intimate portrayal of his route and a chronicle of the news he tries to make sense of during this turbulent period. *Newsboy* will be published this fall.

Mom still loved the Browns, but we lived in Chicago so the Bears were her team now. She had been gathering us to watch the Bears' games on Sunday since before I'd understood the rules of football. I still found it hard to sort out the players careening across the field in a mass of colored helmets, mud-stained jerseys, and flying spikes.

continues on page 6



The Chimney apartments. Photo courtesy of Gary Cole.

WHS Gala 2021: Famous House on Lincoln Avenue Still Draws Crowds After 30 Years

by Holly Marihugh

Lincoln Avenue sits in the heart of Winnetka and includes residential houses, restaurants and shops, and even the stalwart Winnetka Community House. But there's a beloved tourist attraction on the street as well: a brick Georgian built in 1920 by Architect William Aitken. Even after 30 years since it gained notoriety, the house still draws onlookers like a magnet. Have you guessed yet?

It's the "Home Alone" house, the scene for the uber-popular movie starring Macaulay Culkin as 8-year-old Kevin McCallister. Accidentally left at home while his family vacationed, young Kevin staved off robbers from entering his house through hilarious capers: dropping a pet tarantula on the nose of one robber (actor Daniel Stern) and tricking another (Joe Pesci)

continues on page 2



Fans still gawk and pose for photos at 671 Lincoln. Photo by Holly Marihugh.

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Explore Winnetka Stories

Architects & Architecture



Paulson house (1928), 902 Greenwood.

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Upcoming Event

WHS Annual Gala

"Home Alone Together"

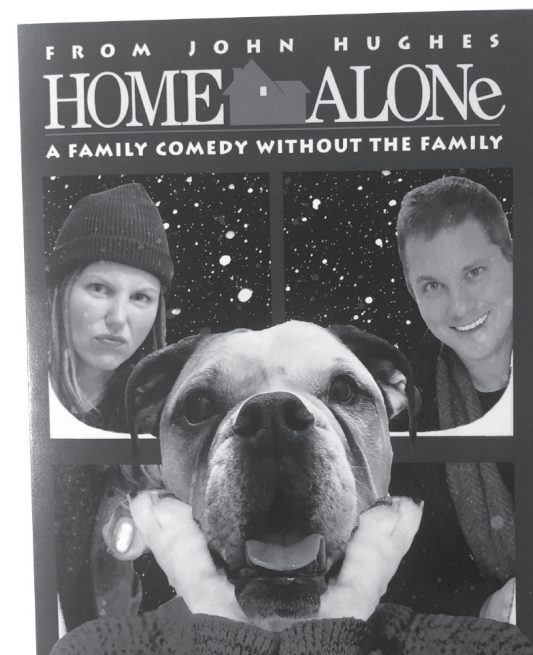
**Thursday, June 10,
7:00 pm**

**WHS Welcomes
Winnetkan
Jim Herrmann
to our
Board of Directors!**

"Home Alone Together," Our 2021 WHS Virtual Gala Recalls Hollywood Coming to Town



Film crew showering the yard with potato flakes to simulate snow. Photo by John Abendshien.



Recent holiday card shows the staying power of the movie. Photo courtesy of Meagan McChesney.



Macaulay Culkin runs towards Hubbard Woods Park in "Home Alone," 1990. Credit: 20th Century Fox.



Famous house is all dressed up for the holidays during filming. Photo by John Abendshien.

Famous House cont. from page 1

into grabbing a red-hot, sizzling door knob with his bare hand. Kevin also roamed around the Lincoln Avenue neighborhood and appeared in other familiar North Shore settings like the Hubbard Woods Park ice skating rink and Trinity United Methodist Church in Wilmette.

As you know too well, we've been cooped up in our houses for what seems like forever. So, the WHS Gala Team decided to tie in the story of the movie with our own personal plight by creating our annual fundraising event this year with the theme, "Home Alone Together." We've all been at home, so let's celebrate at the Virtual Gala by remembering the adventures of a young boy who got left all by himself at a now famous local house.

The WHS Gala on June 10 will headline a presentation by filmmaker John Newcombe, creator of the "Winnetka Story" documentary, who grew up in town and now lives in California. In it, you'll watch new interviews with John and Lauren Abendshien, the father-daughter duo who lived in the house during the making of the movie. You'll also hear from movie extras who appeared in familiar local settings.

Last December, there was a rash of 30th anniversary stories about "Home Alone," and Lauren Abendshien, now a Chicago attorney, talked about her memories to the hosts of "This Morning" show in London.

"I remember the scene where the robbers are trying to go from the third floor of the house to the tree house along a rope and then Kevin cuts it," Lauren said in the interview. "They all go swinging down and hit the brick wall of the house. I watched them film that, which looked very treacherous, but of course they have stunt doubles who know very well what they're doing."

Herb and Joanie White still live across the street from the "Home Alone" house. In a WGN television interview, the couple said that they think the enduring appeal of the movie has to do with its emphasis on forgiveness, healthy reunions, and the importance of family.

We're looking forward to seeing you at our "Home Alone Together" Virtual Gala 2021 on Thursday, June 10, 7 – 8 pm. ■

Sources: *This Morning*: "Home Alone 30 Years on: Woman Who Grew Up in McCallister House Shares Memories," 12/7/20, www.itv.com/thismorning.

WGN News: "Neighbors of 'Home Alone' house share behind-the-scenes video of iconic movie 30 years after its release," 12/13/19, www.wgntv.com

Moving Forward

by Mary Trieschmann,
WHS Executive Director



As we look forward to a healthier and more stable 2021, the Winnetka Historical Society plans to bring you exciting programs, events, and

exhibits both virtually and in person. We are developing engaging exhibits for the Schmidt-Burnham Log House, creating virtual trolley tours and bringing our history into schools through a new “Traveling Trunk” program. In addition, look for enriching virtual experiences on our website, Facebook page, and other social media platforms that will bring Winnetka history into your home or classroom. Please enjoy the insightful articles, written by Winnetka history lovers, in this edition of the Gazette.

Whether you live in Winnetka today and/or grew up in this unique, progressive village, we are hopeful that you will join us in our

mission to honor and preserve the Village’s heritage, gather and share the artifacts and stories of its past, and foster meaningful connections among Winnetkans and the broader community. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Feel free to email our curator, Meagan McChesney, PhD, if you have any items you’d like to donate (curator@winnetkahistory.org).

As we continue to socially distance and work to adapt to our ever-changing realities it seems the ideal time to reflect on some of the many reasons our amazing community can still “Come together and see the good.” In this issue we are reminded how Winnetkans pulled

together in 2020 and throughout history.

We will continue to provide engaging content virtually and are truly looking forward to sharing Winnetka’s history with the community in person in 2021. ■

The Gazette is funded through generous donations from individuals like you. Please consider making a contribution to the Winnetka Historical Society this year.

Thank you!

Curator's Corner: William Aitken, the “Home Alone” House Architect

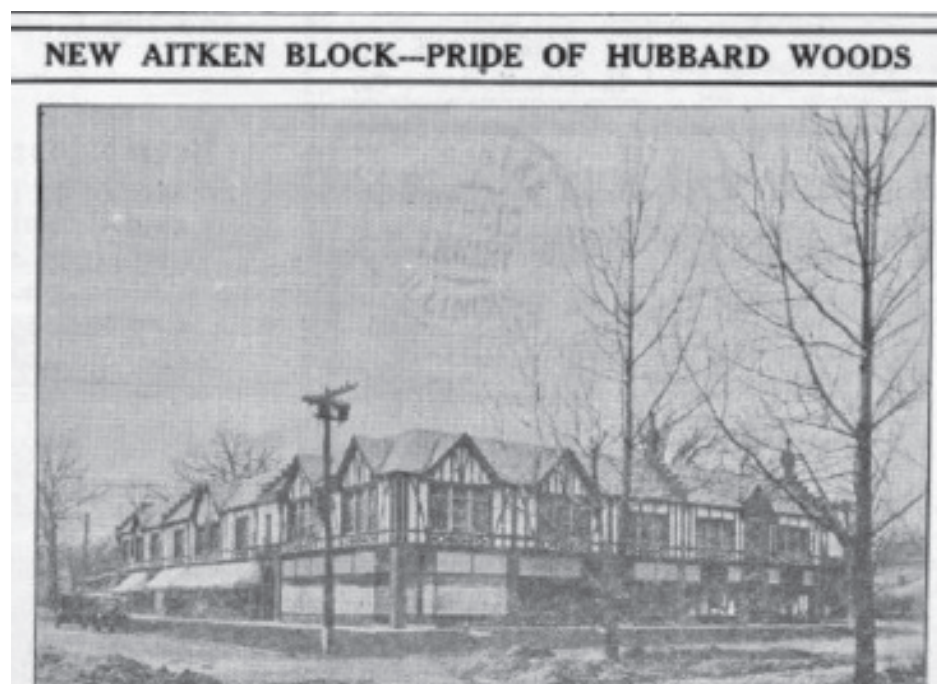


by Meagan McChesney, PhD
WHS Curator

This past year, millions of people across the country watched and re-watched the iconic film “Home Alone” in celebration of the 30th anniversary of its release. At the Winnetka Historical Society, we saw an influx of research requests about the filming locations around the Village, particularly the famous house at 671 Lincoln. This led us on a successful search through the archives for the property’s building permit, which confirmed previous researchers’ assertions that the house was designed by local architect William Aitken in 1920. Coincidentally, our research about 671 Lincoln coincided with a separate research project on another historic Aitken-designed home. This research, combined with that of architectural historian Susan Benjamin, revealed that William Aitken designed more local homes and buildings than we had previously thought. And, it turns out, he had a pretty interesting life.

William Aitken was born in Scotland in 1878 and emigrated with his family to the Chicagoland area in 1903, where he remained for most of his career. He moved to Winnetka in 1910, first living on Cherry Street before later moving to Euclid Avenue. He opened an office at 1065 Gage Street (where the historic Hubbard Woods Metra Station is located now), out of which he designed and built at least 15 single-family homes in Winnetka.

In addition to the notable houses at 671 Lincoln and 500 Maple (a Winnetka Designated Landmark), Aitken is also responsible for the mixed commercial and residential Tudor-style Aitken Block buildings on Green Bay Road just north of Gage Street. Remarkably, while there has been much turnover in the Aitken Block buildings since they were completed in the early 1920s, a barbershop has occupied the space at 1083 Gage ever since. Shortly after the Aitken Block project was complete, he moved both his family and his business just northwest of Winnetka, where he founded the Village of Bannockburn. Over the next several decades, Bannockburn grew consistently, with Aitken designing several of the Village’s large, historic homes.



NW corner of Gage & Green Bay. Jan 27, 1923. Winnetka Talk image.



671 Lincoln Avenue circa 1940's. Photo from WHS archives.

continues on page 5

A Shining Star of Creative Expression: Children's Theatre of Winnetka

by Joan Evanich



"How do you solve a problem like Maria?" The cast of "Sound of Music" on stage in 2016. Photo by Lorraine Ryan.

Children's Theatre of Winnetka's directors and some past CTW members have gone on to successful professional performing arts careers, including Beck Bennett ("SNL"), Mary Kate Schellhardt ("What's Eating Gilbert Grape," "Apollo 13"), Broadway performer

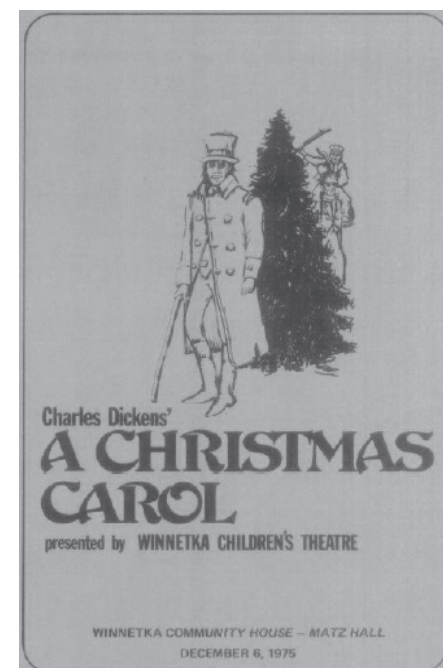
Betsy Morgan ("Little Mermaid," "High Fidelity") and many others who grace stage and screen. Even though only about one percent of alumni become professionals, CTW has been promoting self-confidence, teaching love of the arts, and helping children to grow for decades

with their rallying cry, "The show must go on!"

Children's Theatre of Winnetka has been a shining star on the North Shore for 46 years. It began in 1974 when Community House drama teacher Barbara Weldon approached Executive Director Tom Fritts about establishing a theater company with performances exclusively by children. Fritts enthusiastically agreed and Children's Theatre of Winnetka was born. CTW's first production, "A Christmas Carol," hit the boards in 1975.

A volunteer nonprofit board of directors created in 1976 established the parameters for CTW. They agreed to stage two productions a year and created a policy allowing fourth to eighth grade children to be involved in scenery design and lighting as well as performing. The earliest shows were primarily fairy tales, but gradually classic stories like "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "The Lion,

the Witch, and the Wardrobe" were produced. By the 1980s, Broadway-style productions including "Hello Dolly," "The Sound of



Children's Theatre program, 1975.

continues on page 6

Local Beaches Bring Winnetkans Together through Swimming, Boating, Sunbathing, Regattas, and Water Carnivals

by Helen Weaver

Winnetka's prime location on the Lake Michigan shore led to its promotion as a summer resort for Chicagoans during the Village's early days. In his 1889 handbill, real estate developer E. Percy Maynard, noted that "many prominent Chicagoans are now building summer cottages at Winnetka" and advertised Winnetka's "unusual attractions to both young and old in boating, bathing, and fishing." It wasn't long before Winnetka was established as a year-round commuter suburb, and the beaches provided summertime activities for all residents to enjoy.



Lifeguard Walter Etzbach on beach duty, 1920. Photo from WHS Archives.

The lake was accessible to the public by the power plant at Tower Road and an old lumber pier at Willow Road, but there were no formal public beaches until the Park District established Lake Front Park at the end of Maple Street by purchasing land in 1905 and constructing a pier and bathhouse in 1913. By 1915, the beach had become so popular that the Park District reported the facilities were "far from adequate to care for the crowds (up to 700 people per day) that gather on Saturdays and Sundays."

"To insure the morality of the people frequenting the park," the report also said, Park District staff had to install electric lights on the bluff. Beach staff consisted of two trained guards and a bathhouse matron.

By 1928, the District had opened a second beach at Elder Lane, and



Children frolic on the pier while grownups recline at Maple Street Beach, 1939. Photo from WHS Archives.

by 1941, a third debuted at Tower Road with lifeguards and "necessary facilities," but no buildings until 1948. Season tickets to cover the cost of upkeep on the facilities and the salaries of the staff cost \$2 per family (\$3 after July 1) from the 1920s through the 1940s. During World War II, young women and high-school-aged boys stepped in to serve as lifeguards because many of the regular lifeguards were serving in the military.

continues on page 7

Winnetka Couple Makes Scouting a Family Tradition

by Charles Shabica

As a 14-year-old Boy Scout, I signed up for an “Adventure Unlimited” trip run by noted wilderness author and photographer Leonard Lee Rue III. We learned some great survival skills on a 10-day canoe trip to Lac Landron in the Canadian wilderness. Lenny Rue broke us into teams with three scouts per canoe. On our second day out, the supply canoe overturned, and we “lost” most of our food.

We were given the option to return home or continue as “Voyageurs” and live off the land. The decision to stay was unanimous. We had our cook kits and each group was given a small sack containing flour, sugar, salt, and pepper. Foraging wasn’t easy, but we survived on fresh-water clam chowder (yuck) and watery blueberry pie. Years later, I learned that the dumped canoe was planned, but I will be forever grateful to Lenny Rue for the lesson that given the opportunity, kids can be resourceful.

As a 16-year-old Girl Scout, my wife Susie traveled by train to Colorado Springs for the 1959 National Girl Scout Roundup with seven other scouts. In preparation for the trip, the girls built two wood boxes to carry all their gear (tents, sleeping bags, and cooking materials) in addition to their backpacks. Those Girl Scouts came prepared, discovered great life skills, and learned to look out for each other.

Years later living in Winnetka as young parents, Susie and I wanted to continue the scouting tradition with our sons, Jon and Andrew, and our daughter Dana. Jon joined Winnetka Troop 20 (established in 1927). Under the leadership of Scoutmaster Tom Fritts, Assistant Scoutmaster Tom Babcock, and volunteer Stan Grace, Jon participated in first-aid competitions, camped in all temperatures, and still talks about staying alive at the January freeze-out at Illinois Beach State Park.

Jon earned his Eagle Scout rank building outdoor storage for Harkness House for Children at the Winnetka Community House. Later on, as the scoutmaster of Northfield Troop 17, Jon helped young men and women find themselves through adventures such as rock climbing, winter survival, and cave exploration in the Taygetos Mountains of Greece.

Our son, Andrew, joined Winnetka Troop 18, worked on Skokie Lagoons cleanup projects, and also earned his Eagle Scout rank. His memories include: slogging through a beaver meadow on a canoe trip in Quetico Provincial Park in Canada and chasing a bear competing with the scouts for blueberries off an island in Colorado’s Lake Agnes. Andrew’s ingenuity and field experience with the scouts led to the development of a field water purifier that today is saving lives in rural Africa.

My wife Susie Shabica stepped up to lead Winnetka Girl Scouts Troop 212 from 1990-2005. She had been mentored by Jean (Susie) Schreiber, and along with other volunteers, including Carol Meynen, Diane Novak, and Marsha Shane, took scouts on plenty of adventures. They went hiking in the Great Smoky Mountains, rock climbing at Mississippi Palisades Park, and whitewater rafting in Colorado, Maine, North

Carolina, and Tennessee.

Every year, along with the Boy Scouts, Girl Scout Troop 212 marched in the Winnetka Fourth of July Parade under the direction of their leaders and Susie Schreiber, who led and mentored scouts for decades. Troop 212 also coordinated annual first-aid competitions for the Winnetka Park District.

Our daughter Dana received her Girl Scout Gold Award in 1995 and is currently teaching science at George Westinghouse College Preparatory High School in Chicago. As a teacher, Dana follows the often-quoted advice: “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.” ■



Winnetka Girl Scout Troop 212 whitewater rafting in the Great Smoky Mountains, c. 1991. Photo courtesy of Charles Shabica.



In 1995, Jon Shabica (Northfield Boy Scout Troop 17) teaches Winnetka Girl Scout Troop 212 technical climbing at Mississippi Palisades State Park in Illinois, a favorite for camping and rock climbing. Photo courtesy of Charles Shabica.



Girl Scouts on the Village Green in Winnetka's Memorial Day parade, c. 2003. Photo courtesy of Charles Shabica.

William Aitken cont. from page 3



500 Maple Street, designed by Aitken in 1916. Photo from WHS Archives.

While living in Bannockburn, Aitken experienced his first brush with death. He was on a Scottish ship off the coast of Ireland the day Great Britain declared war on Germany. The ship was torpedoed by a German U-Boat that same day. Aitken survived the attack and was one of several passengers rescued from the sinking ship. Unfortunately, he did not survive his second brush with death – he and his wife Florence were killed in a car accident in 1952.

Interestingly, although he is listed as the architect of dozens of North Shore buildings and homes, Aitken was never registered as an architect in Illinois. In his advertisements in the Winnetka Talk, Aitken describes himself as a “builder of modern homes.” Similarly, in his obituary in the Chicago Tribune, Aitken is described as a “builder and real estate operator.” While he may have had professional training in Scotland, he never did so in the United States. Regardless, his talent for architectural design is obvious. One need only watch the 1990s classic film “Home Alone” to witness his exemplary work and lasting legacy. ■

Research Inquiries

see our website

www.winnetkahistory.org

or call us

847-446-0001

Newsboy: Gary Cole cont. from page 1



Eight-year-old Gary Cole as a newsboy.
Photo courtesy of Gary Cole.

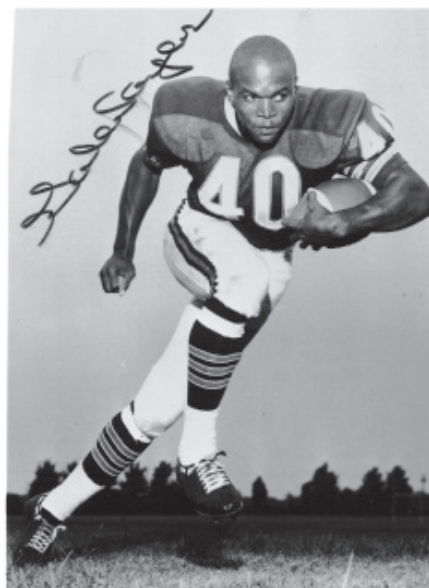
But Gale Sayers, the Bears' star halfback, brought clarity to the game. His quicksilver cutbacks would lance the blob of padded bodies surging across the field, leaving it in streaming rivulets. With the lightning plant of a bare ankle, he would freeze defenders in

grasping contortions and leave them to flail at his passing shadow.

The Bears were famous for bruising, old school football. That was the style of their crusty old coach, George Halas, who had been the face of the team until he retired before the 1968 season. They played in the "Black and Blue" division famous for crushing hits by the likes of Dick Butkus of the Bears or Ray Nitzchke of our bitter rivals, the Green Bay Packers.

But it wasn't vicious collisions that drew me to the game. I was a runner, and it was speed and movement that I prized above all else. Gale Sayers was a celebration of the joy of moving. His ability to make a momentary feint, then a blinding burst into the clear, awed me even more than our Olympic athletes because he ran in the midst of such danger. His grace on foot defied the brutal violence all around him.

Gale Sayers was my hero. I did



HB GALE SAYERS CHICAGO BEARS
A boy's treasured promotional photo of Chicago Bears' Halfback Gale Sayers.

not seek him out. He just came out of the television those Sunday afternoons, a figure of wonder working his weekly escape act. Sometimes he would return kickoffs, on top of being a running back. A Sayers return always held the possibility of

perfection, an end zone to end zone masterpiece that we would talk about for weeks.

I returned kicks too. Dad didn't throw the baseball or shoot baskets with us much, but he didn't need much of an excuse to punt the football. He'd been too busy swimming to kick in high school or college, but he could boom towering punts. He would take me over to the playing field at North Shore Country Day to shag balls for him. At first it was frightening duty, facing spiraling brown bombs dropping from the sky, but I soon got the knack. I would flex my knees, my left foot a half-step in front of my right, and crook my arms in front of me, palms cupped upward, as if I were cradling my new baby sister Nancy. I sucked in my breath and tensed as the ball reached the top of its arc and began its descent. Then it was on me, in my arms, and I was ready to fly down the open field like Gale Sayers. ■

Children's Theatre cont. from page 4



"You Can Fly!" Peter Pan in a 2018 CTW production. Photo by Lorraine Ryan.

Music," and "Oliver" were added to the repertoire. More recently big Disney musicals like "Beauty and the Beast," "The Little Mermaid," and "The Lion King" have become popular.

Toby Nicholson joined the board of CTW in 2000 shortly after his retirement from New Trier High School where he taught drama and

dance for 30 years. During his tenure at CTW, he has acted as co-director, choreographer, and set designer. Nicholson has seen a few changes over the years and explained that some of the shows that were produced in the past are no longer acceptable to today's audiences.

"So many shows now come

under scrutiny due to outdated themes and mores," said Nicholson. He went on to explain how set design has also changed from conventionally constructed backdrops to the use of animated digital projections and smaller 3D sets. Nicholson said, "It is certainly a lot less work and the projections really help to set the mood."

Although opportunities to perform are limited to fourth to eighth graders, alumni sometimes return in other capacities. One such alumnus is Stephen Schellhardt, former director of CTW, who acted in his first production as a sixth grader in "The Wiz." He said later, "I was hooked!"

In 2016, Schellhardt directed CTW's production of "Once On This Island." He said the experience, "brought back so many wonderful memories for me. I was happy to see that CTW still provided a safe, creative, and collaborative space for children to learn valuable skills that are not just used in the world of performing arts, but in the world at large."

Schellhardt left CTW last

year to teach musical theater at the university level. New Artistic Director Aaron Umsted was hired after a thorough search led by Business Manager Connie Yonan and members of the board. Umsted, who has worked as a professional actor and dancer for over a decade, discovered a new passion in educational theater. ■



"I Got the Sun in the Mornin' and the Moon at Night." Young actors singing and dancing their way through "Annie Get Your Gun" in 2015. Photo courtesy of Winnetka Children's Theatre.

Local Beaches cont. from page 4



Swimmers, sailors, and sunbathers at Lloyd Beach, 1975. Photo from WHS Archives.

Winnetkans' enthusiasm for Lake Michigan swimming waxed and waned throughout the decades. At first, beach attendance was very high, reaching a then record of over 110,000 in 1939. The beaches were less popular during the WWII years, with only around 55,000 visiting each summer, but picked up again during the 1950s. The busiest summer was 1959 with over 170,000 visitors recorded. Subsequent summers recorded fewer and fewer people with less than 40,000 swimmers during 1975 and lifeguards were posted only at Tower and Elder Beaches.

Corinne Krebs and her family were frequent beach users. She says: "I remember taking my kids to Elder Lane Beach during the 1960s, and it was a social gathering place for the moms in the afternoons. We would chat and let the lifeguards watch the kids. Fast forward 10 years and one of my kids worked at Elder Lane Beach as a lifeguard and would complain about parents not watching their kids when they were in the water, but were socializing instead. So what goes around, comes around, I guess."

While the number of swimmers has changed through the years, the one beach tradition that has stood the test of time is the Winnetka Water Carnival. The annual day of swim races and other beach activities was first held at Lake Front Park in 1922 and according to the Winnetka Talk, attended by 1,000 citizens. The 1923 carnival included 19 events for male and female swimmers of all ages, refereed by

Northwestern swim coach Tom Robinson. In some years, winners were awarded actual sterling silver medals. By 1974, most of the events were geared toward children, though the carnival that summer included the "North Shore Quarter-Mile" race and the 100-yard air-mattress race open to all.

Percy Maynard touted the prospects of boating in Winnetka in 1889, but sailing was uncommon until the 1960s. That changed in 1961 when the Park District bought ten acres of wooded land on 720 feet of lakefront south of the power plant and created Lloyd Park, officially opening the beach with the 1963 Water Carnival. Lloyd Beach offered small boat storage and launching for boats of all sizes in addition to swimming

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, in partnership with the Winnetka Yacht Club, the District offered sailing lessons and races culminating in the Supersail Regatta, a weekend-long event held every July. Winnetka Yacht Club leaders Jean and Don Bergman remember: "At its most popular, the event drew about 60 boats, including Sunfish, Enterprise, and Thistle sailboats. The Winnetka Police would provide security for boats overnight at the beach and, in return, Yacht Club representatives would be in charge of setting off the Fourth of July fireworks." Visiting sailors "would camp in tents above Lloyd Park Beach or stay with host families." The Bergmans recall that in addition to sailing, Supersail included a "great" Saturday night party with a jazz band and dancing held either under a tent at Maple Street or at the Community House.

Winnetka added Centennial Park to its collection of beaches in 1969 after a group of residents formed the "Winnetka Conservation Association" and petitioned the Park District to buy out Hemphill Homes, a developer who had purchased the property after the old North Shore Hospital closed in 1968. Dog owners convinced the District to set aside the beach at Centennial for dogs, allowing Winnetkans' pets to join in on the summer fun in 1995. ■



Maple Street Beach, 1949. Photo from WHS Archives.

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