

Cedar Lake Historical Association – *High School Educator Introduction*

Blacksmith / Car Dealership Exhibit: Highlights the importance and evolution of blacksmith shops in Cedar Lake into car dealerships featuring Center Garage of Cook and the Hudson dealership in Brunswick.

At Cook, called Hanover Center in earlier years, local residents induced Jacob Weiss, who was at Merrillville in 1864, to come to Cedar Lake to work as their blacksmith. He was offered a home and shop in return for his services. He arrived in 1866 and served Cedar Lake for 10 years. John Schillo and his son, Michael, were the next known blacksmiths. About 1925, John A. Schutz purchased the shop from Schillo and eventually started Center Garage. Schutz began the business by offering repairs. During the early 1900s, blacksmiths could use their skills to repair and make parts for early automobiles. Schutz began selling Ford and Willy's-Overland cars by the 1930s. Later, the business went strictly to selling Plymouth, Chrysler and Dodge vehicles. Eventually, Jeep products were added. John N. Schutz, grandson of John A., began working at the garage in 1971. The business suffered a fire in 1989 but was re-built. Center Garage was sold to Bobb Auto Group about 2012. Center Garage was the longest-running business in Cedar Lake.

West of Cedar Lake, at the small village of Brunswick, blacksmiths named Valentine and Michael Einsele, Casper Bierieger, and Charles Schreiber served the area. In 1929, Charles Schreiber died and his son Albert started the Hudson dealership, which ran through the 1950s. Charles is well-known as the inventor of the Nabon sparkplug.

Military Room Exhibit: Dedicated to the men and women who have served in the armed forces and those on the home front.

There are two American Revolutionary veterans buried at Cedar Lake. Obadiah Taylor (1762-1839) is buried at the West Point Memorial Cemetery, across from the Boys' and Girls' Club on Fairbanks Avenue. William Van Gorder (1758-1840) is buried in the Meyer Manor Cemetery.

The military room displays uniforms and equipment from WW I, Civil War, and WW II. A showcase features patches, air-mail letters, V-mail, ration books, and red and blue point ration tokens. Also on display is a 48-star flag and reproductions of WW II posters.

Before we had E-mail, we had **V-MAIL** (Victory Mail). It was a valuable tool for the military during WW II. During the war, mail and morale were the one and the same. Letters from home were compared to a "five minute furlough." Americans in the home front were encouraged to use V-MAIL because that made it possible for a serviceman halfway across the world to hear the news from every week.

Cargo space and weight on ships was at a premium. Mail was often delayed in favor of supplies. V-MAIL was a way of getting massive amounts of mail delivered to or from troops overseas with the smallest amount of weight possible. V-MAIL ensured that thousands of tons of shipping space could be reserved for war materials. Thirty-seven mail bags were required to carry 150,000 letters that could be replaced by a single mail sack.

A system of microfilming letters was based on the use of special V-MAIL letter forms which were a combination of letter and envelope. These forms could be purchased at the dime store or the post office. The user wrote in the space provided, added the name and address of the recipient, folded the form, and mailed it. V-MAIL was then reduced to thumb nail size on microfilm. Facsimiles of the letters were reproduced and the 4 ½ by 5 inch single sheet was then delivered to the addressee. This system reduced the time it took a soldier to receive a letter from home. Letters by air using V-MAIL took 12 days compared to six weeks by ship.

Between June 15, 1942 and April 1, 1945, 556 million pieces of V-MAIL were sent from the U.S. to the military personnel abroad. In the military room of the museum, tucked safely in a showcase, sharing space with other memorabilia from the war such as ration books and tokens, are a few pieces of V-MAIL.

Wartime Kitchen (WW II): A late 1940's vignette room featuring items common to homes of the era:

- Clark-Jewel gas range and oven manufactured by the American Stove Company in the 1930's.
- General Electric "monitor top refrigerator" (CK-35-E16 two-door model) made in 1935. Its top-mounted condenser resembles the turret of a Monitor warship.
- All metal vintage table with a porcelain finish.
- Blue Ridge underglaze dishes made by Southern Potteries, Inc. in the 1940's. WW II brought Blue Ridge to its popularity. Each dish is unique because they were hand-painted.
- 1940's farmhouse sink with double drainboards. It is a drop sink, meaning it was set into the top of cupboards or a counter top. It has a porcelain finish.
- Philco Transitone radio from about 1948. The body is made from Bakelite, an early plastic.

During World War II, the rationing of various resources was important as a way to provide materials to the armed forces overseas. This included food. Victory Gardens were grown of cabbage, tomatoes, radishes, potatoes, and lettuce. Canning took place using glass jars. The garden served as supplemental sources of food to a family. Then, much of the surplus food was sent overseas to the soldiers. Metals of all kinds were scrapped, so tin cans were recycled. During the war, steel was of utmost importance for the production of ships, planes, tanks, and guns. Housewives took their fat to the butcher, which was given to the military for the production of ammunition. Women also provided their used nylon and silk stockings for the production of powder bags for the naval guns on ships.

Woody's Barbershop: A fully restored business circa the 1940s and 1950s.

Burdette Wood was born in Creston in 1907. He grew up locally with his grandmother. For a brief period he lived with family in Wisconsin. He attended Chicago's International Barber School when he was in his early 20s. He started his business in the Hein Hotel in Cook in 1930. The following year he built the 12' by 16' foot building we display today. The original site of the shop was on north Lake Shore Drive, on property belonging to Mrs. Ruth Ackerman. In 1932, the building was moved to what then was known as Stife's Corner. It remained there until 1949 when it made its last move to 13725 Morse Avenue, across the street from the Town Grounds complex.

During World War II, Woody served as a combat infantryman and received four bronze stars for his efforts in Normandy, northern France, the Rhineland, and Central Europe. He was known as the "Flying Barber" because

he learned to fly through the G.I. Bill at the Cedar Lake and Hammond Airports after his service in the war. He also highly enjoyed roller skating. Woody served as a barber until 2002 and passed away in 2007.

In 2012, Lillian Phillips, Woody's daughter, donated the building to the Cedar Lake Historical Association. In this same year, the building was moved from Morse Avenue and set adjacent to the museum. Brad Brown restored the old barbershop in order to complete his requirements for his Eagle Scout Badge.

Genealogy

Genealogy is the study of families and the tracing of their history. A variety of sources are used, including oral histories from family members, historical records, and even genetic analysis. Written records include census records, stories passed down, city directories, maps, land records, birth and death records, and old family Bibles. The results of genealogical research are shown in pedigree charts, family trees, and narratives. Reasons for tracing genealogy vary. The most obvious reason is to research, study, record, and preserve family history so that it can be continued by the next generation. Another reason for genealogical research is to place a family into the larger historical context and reveal their significance within the larger body of knowledge.

Archives/Archival Preservation

Archival preservation is the preservation of paper-based materials like books, maps, photographs, ephemera, and organizational records. Preservation is essential to preserve important historical information that is used for scholarly research. Visual records such as maps and photographs are essential to bring to life exhibits and displays. Archival materials are precisely cleaned with brushes, blowers, and special erasers. Documents are then placed into archival-acceptable containers like protective sheets, file folders, and storage cartons. In the process, staples, string, tape, and other harmful materials are removed.

With changes in technology, digitization has become important to the preservation of archival materials. Using digital images allows original artifacts to rest in storage long-term, thus further preserving them. Multiple copies of images can be reproduced without handling the original artifacts. It is the physical handling of artifacts that plays a major role in the deterioration of artifacts.

In an archive, the environment must be stable. Temperature, light, and humidity levels are important to the preservation of paper artifacts. For example, the temperature should be at a constant 72 degrees Fahrenheit without any fluctuation. The acceptable range for relative humidity (RH) is from 45% to 55%, without any fluctuation. When humidity changes, the paper absorbs water vapor and expands as the RH increases and contracts as the RH decreases. This causes a mechanical breakdown of paper-based artifacts. If left uncontrolled, the paper will eventually disintegrate. Also, if the RH climbs beyond 65%, mold and fungus grow, which also decomposes paper.

Unfortunately, many paper-based artifacts were made from low-quality paper. The lignin in the paper, which holds the cellulose fibers together in the wood pulp, becomes acidic when the paper begins to deteriorate. This phenomenon can be observed in pages of old newspapers, as they become brown and brittle. The process is

called acid hydrolysis. The acid that is in the paper can also migrate to the paper next to it. Have you ever placed a newspaper clipping in between two pages of a book? Through the years, the two pages that surround the paper may become stained through the process of acid migration.

Food, pests, and heat are other factors that lead to the deterioration of paper artifacts.

Cedar Lake Ecosystem Restoration Project

It was evident by 1960 that the lake was polluted and desperately needed to be cleaned up. Work began even before the town incorporation. In 1961, the Cedar Lake Improvement Association was formed by Bill Deinema, Dallas Grimm, and Ted Gross. Through the donations of many citizens and organizations, two wells were drilled to provide fresh water to the lake.

Between 1960 and 1963, the algal growth in the lake caused a horrible stench, which prompted businessmen Gus Wahlberg, Al Shott, and Bill Kennedy to form the Cedar Lake Sewer Corporation. Despite the purchasing of bonds and collecting money to create a lagoon where the sewage was to be placed, this organization was told that it could not do anything without the community being a governmental entity. Meanwhile, Dr. Robert King was making house calls in Cedar Lake. As the story goes, as he stepped into someone's yard, he stepped into a pool of sewage seeping up from the septic tank. He was motivated to seek the incorporation of Cedar Lake as a town so that government funds could be received to start a municipal sewer system. Through the backing and help by Charles Kouder, Sr., Geraldine Kortokrax, Robert Howkinson, and others, Cedar Lake eventually became a town on October 30, 1967 and began constructing the much-needed sewer system. For his effort, Dr. King is considered the "Father of Cedar Lake."

Also during the 1960s, various studies to clean up the lake were undertaken with the Lake County Health Department, the Indiana State Pollution and Control Board, and the Indiana State Stream Pollution Control Board. The dredging of the lake was first seriously considered at that time. In 1972, a \$6.4 million sewer project began with the Loitz Brothers Construction Company of Grant Park, Illinois as the general contractor.

During the 1970s, the Cedar Lake Chamber of Commerce also became involved in the clean-up of Cedar Lake. Jack Le May spear-headed the efforts through meetings with politicians, the State of Indiana, and many of its boards, including the State Board of Health, Indiana University, the surveyor's office of Lake County, the Lake County Health Department and the U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers. Samples of the lake water and sediment of the lake bed were taken. Again, dredging was proposed as the most likely way to restore the lake, which was estimated at the time to cost several millions of dollars. The question of where to put the sediment once the lake was dredged was paramount. Fortunately, it was determined that the phosphorous and nitrogen in the lake sediment was not hazardous.

In the early 1980's, Robert Gross formed the Cedar Lake Enhancement Association (CLEA), another organization involved in the clean-up of the lake. Many of the creeks that feed Cedar Lake have been cleaned up through CLEA efforts, preventing further deposition of run-off sediment.

In 1989, State Senator Sue Landske was instrumental in obtaining funding from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to purchase the Cedar Lake Marsh. Located at the south end of the lake, the marsh purchase was a major component of the lake enhancement project started by the Cedar Lake Chamber of Commerce and the Lake County Water and Soil Conservation District. Also during that year, the Chamber contracted with the Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs to perform a study for Phase II EPA financial assistance to implement recommendations on lake clean-up. In the early 1990's, CLEA pulled a significant number of pilings leftover from the old piers out of the lake bed using an excavating machine.

Today, CLEA still continues to work with the Town of Cedar Lake, the Army Corps. of Engineers and others to accomplish a complete restoration of Cedar Lake. CLEA worked along with Harza Engineering in the acquisition of sediment samples from Cedar Lake to back-up a possible dredging of the lake. The samples were analyzed by the Lake County Health Department to determine the cause of the high counts of E. coli bacteria and any other unknown information. CLEA continued its erosion control around the lake. In many areas, rip rap and coconut fiber was applied to the shoreline. At the Town Grounds complex, a concrete boardwalk and lighting was installed. Erosion control blankets were applied, along with rip rap, at the mouth of Pickerel Creek at the south end of the lake.

While work continues on the lake clean-up, it is no longer seen as merely a "dredging project," but rather a comprehensive aquatic ecosystem restoration. This involves the efforts from all parties, including the Town of Cedar Lake, CLEA, the State of Indiana, and the Army Corps. of Engineers. The ultimate ecosystem restoration may include a partial dredging of selected areas of the lake bed, re-routing sources of fresh water to feed the lake, killing off and re-stocking the lake of natural species of fish, and the re-introduction of native aquatic plant species. This massive project could begin as soon as the summer of 2018 and run through 2020.

Town of Cedar Lake Incorporation

In 1914, 1933, and about 1950, there were attempts to incorporate Cedar Lake, but all three failed due to the issue of taxes. In the 1960s, work began which would finally result in Cedar Lake becoming an incorporated town.

Incorporation efforts began when Dr. Robert W. King stepped into a puddle of sewage as he was making a house call. He began researching the process of how to incorporate a small community into a town. Many, including Geraldine Kortokrax, Charles Kouder, Sr., and Robert Howkinson helped Dr. King with the process. Dr. King wrote a letter explaining that without taxes, services like a police department, roads, and a sewer system were not possible. King provided information about incorporation for citizens to view at the First National Bank of Cedar Lake, and he and his supporting group went out and had petitions signed for the incorporation. Unfortunately, when King and his group were informing citizens, they unintentionally failed to notify everyone, which rendered their attempts null and void.

The first official election in Cedar Lake was held in 1965. By 1966 there was a Cedar Lake Town Council, which included trustee Barbara Fuchs Gutierrez. However, a group called the "Terrible 10," backed by attorney Straley Thorpe fought against those for incorporation. The fight cost the future town a large sum of money, which

included a HUD grant that amounted to over \$1,000,000. Later, in 1969, Thorpe said that if the majority of the citizens were for incorporation then he would back it.

On September 29, 1969, the Indiana State Supreme Court backed the decision of the Lake County Commissioners – finally creating the Town of Cedar Lake on October 30, 1967.

Cedar Lake Historical Association, Inc.

Beginning in 1976, many historical organizations were organized as a response to the United States Bicentennial and the realization of the importance of our nation's history. This included Cedar Lake, Indiana. On July 16, 1977, a group of about 20 concerned citizens organized the Cedar Lake Historical Association, Inc. (CLHA). They received non-profit status on September 22, 1977. It was the dream of Cedar Lake's first Town Historian and one of CLHA's founding members, Beatrice Horner-Castrogiovanni, that became a reality.

The most significant artifact in the CLHA collection is the museum building itself: a 16,000 square foot, 2-story, wood frame structure. The museum's back wing was formerly situated on the western shores of Cedar Lake and housed ice harvesters for the Armour Bros. and Company meatpackers of Chicago. In 1919, Chris Lassen, owner of a thriving dance pavilion and restaurant, purchased the building and moved it over the frozen lake to its present site on the east shore. He added the lakeside wing and the Lassen Resort hotel was formed. The unique building was in use until shortly after World War II. After a stint as the Lake Region Christian Assembly church camp, the Town of Cedar Lake purchased the 20-acre property. On March 21, 1979, CLHA signed a 50-year lease agreement with the Town of Cedar Lake for the use of the old 65-room Lassen Hotel as a museum to collect, preserve, and exhibit Cedar Lake history.

Restoration of the old hotel began slowly. Yet by 1980, the building was placed on the Indiana Registry of Historic Places, followed by the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. In October 1986, the building officially opened as the Lake of the Red Cedars Museum. In 1991, CLHA received the Albert B. Corey Award from the American Association for State and Local History for its efforts preserving local history.

CLHA maintains the museum with a 1920's feel in keeping with Cedar Lake's tradition as a resort destination for Chicago's society during the Prohibition era. Period rooms depict the lifestyle of the early century and include a dining room, kitchen, parlor, bedroom, and more. In 2012, the Association acquired Woody's Barber Shop and relocated it adjacent to the Museum. The 200 square foot building exhibits Burdette "Woody" Wood's 1940's-era barbershop with posters, calendars, ads, equipment and furnishings. Woody operated the shop from 1931 to 2002 as the oldest commercial business in Cedar Lake. Additionally, on a guided tour, visitors will learn how Dr. William Scholl started his famous shoe making business as an apprentice of his grandfather here in Cedar Lake, test their eyesight in our 1940's doctor's office and find out why the operating room walls were green, view the fashion collection from an 1870's mourning gown to a 1920's flapper dress, and read World War II era V-mail.

The museum is visited annually by many school and special interest groups. History comes alive when they enter the farm room to see the scythes, sickles, rakes and shovels used by the early pioneers and learn of the

difficulties that the farmers and their families had living in the area. Another room across the hall recreates the setting of a one-room schoolhouse. The ice room explains the ice farming industry of the late 1880s to the mid-1900s, how difficult the work was, and its hazards. Much of the ice was used by large Chicago meatpacking companies like Armour Bros. and Company and Swift, while other smaller companies provided ice to the restaurants, hotels, and taverns in Cedar Lake to cool the beverages they served to their guests. The exhibit also explains the social aspects and stigma encountered in Cedar Lake by workers since Armour Bros. and Company hired skid-row bums from Chicago to work on their ice teams.

Cedar Lake Historical Association brings together those interested in local history, traditions, and heritage by providing an Escape to the Past at our museum and through unique programs and events. CLHA is a volunteer-led organization, from its Board of Governors and Executive Director to its Historian-Curator and museum staff. Our vision is to become an indispensable educational entity granting visitors physical and intellectual access to museum exhibitions and research materials. Our museum will become a vital and energetic gathering place where residents and tourists of all generations create memories.

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