

MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

KEEPING HOMETOWN MEMORIES ALIVE

MUSEUM



JOURNAL

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GARAGES FOLLOW CARS TO MOUNT PROSPECT

BY JEAN MURPHY

Automobiles came to Mount Prospect before it was incorporated in 1917.

Cook County Commissioner William Busse was the first to get one. He bought a Buick from a Chicago dealership in 1908 and even contacted the manufacturer to see if he could become a dealer for the new machines. But the dealers in Chicago had a contract at the time which prohibited dealerships from being established outside of the city. So, he was foiled.

Then, in 1912 a stranger showed up in Mount Prospect, looking for Busse. The stranger explained that he was a Buick representative who had come to offer Busse a charter for a local agency. Busse jumped on the opportunity and Busse Buick was born in 1912, originally housed alongside Busse Hardware in a building at 2 W. Busse. Each day they would roll the cars out onto the street in the morning and then roll them back into the store at night.

Once that automobile dealership was in town, residents of Mount Prospect and

other nearby communities began to dream about owning one of the exciting, new-fangled machines. And once they got a vehicle, they realized that they wanted to protect it from the weather. So, they began repurposing the carriage houses which had originally housed their horses and buggies or, in other cases, they began building home garages.

The word “garage” was derived from the French word “garer” which means “to shelter” or “to park.” In 1908 Sears Roebuck & Co. had already ascertained the need for such a facility and began selling a portable garage that could be set up anywhere. But that solution didn’t last long and by the mid-1920s people began building permanent structures with overhead doors that slid up out of the way.

In June of 1925 an article headlined “Confessions of an Automobilist” in the Atlantic Monthly magazine reported that “real estate men testify that the first question asked by the prospective buyer is about the garage. The house without a garage is a slow seller.”

For many years that was probably truer in Eastern cities than in small Midwestern towns like Mount Prospect, but garages were also gaining in popularity here.

A search of Mount Prospect’s building ledger, which was begun in 1929, revealed that George Neitzke received Mount Prospect’s second official garage building permit for a



Roy E. Wilson, the second owner of 502 S. Wa-Pella, added this garage with a second-floor storage room in late 1939 or early 1940. The home had been built garage-less in 1930.

structure behind his brick Cape Cod home at 17 S. Maple Street. The cost of the brick garage was listed as \$400 and the permit cost him \$2.50. The Neitzke family says that George originally used the structure to store and then sell local farm produce to nearby residents. It became a garage later.

Scores of garages were permitted and built in the years that followed, despite the Great Depression and World War II.

For instance, in late 1939, Roy E. Wilson built one with a staircase to an overhead storage room for his brick English Cottage home at 502 S. Wa-Pella Ave., at a cost of \$998. So, prices were climbing and some garages were becoming more elaborate.



George and Selma Neitzke added this garage to the rear of their South Maple Street lot in 1929, six years after they built the home. They originally ran a produce market from it.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



Emily Dattilo

Summer at the Mount Prospect Historical Society means youth programs are in full swing!

The Historians-in-Training at the June session of History Camp had a blast learning

about local history on a visit to St. Paul Lutheran Cemetery, churning butter, and quilting their very own mug rug. There are many more fun activities planned for the July session.

This year History Camp filled up in record time, and there are twice as many Historians-in-Training registered for each session of camp as there were last year. It's wonderful to see so many kids excited about history!

Later in July, children will be back on the

museum campus for our half day programs: Prairie Kid I & II, Old Fashioned Game Day, and If You Lived During the Olympics. During each program, children will learn about the past through historic chores, games, and other activities.

One welcome change to this year's summer programming is a new youth program endowment. A generous donation from Frank and Nancy Corry now allows us to cover youth program fees for Mount Prospect children who might not otherwise attend our programs. We are working with the Village's Human Services Department to share this information with families and assist in registering their children. We look forward to sharing local history with new Historians-in-Training!

If you'd like to donate to this endowment, you may do so

by either sending a check or donating on our website. Please make a note on whatever payment method you use that the donation is for the youth program endowment fund.

Have a wonderful summer, readers!

You can find more information about all of our summer youth programs on our website: <https://www.mtphist.org/summer2024/>.



Historians-in-Training and Junior Camp Counselors visiting St. Paul Lutheran Cemetery in June

FROM THE COLLECTION

The Moehling Ice Cream Parlor opened in the Moehling family's general store building on the corner of Main Street and Northwest Highway in June 1931. Hungry customers flocked to the ice cream parlor to enjoy Arlington Club Beverage soda and ice cream in green dishes like this one in the Historical Society collection. In addition to these sweet treats, customers could find candy, lunches, and a variety of cigars and cigarettes for sale. By August 1933 Mount Prospect Tavern had replaced the ice cream parlor, approximately one month after Illinois ratified the 21st Amendment and repealed Prohibition.

The ice cream dish used in the Moehling Ice Cream Parlor is uranium glass, a popular style of glass during the 1930s. True to the name, this type of glass contains trace amounts of uranium, and as a result, the glass glows brightly under a black light.



Gertrude Moehling, a recent high school graduate, was in charge of the ice cream parlor's operations. This job turned out to be the first of many business and organizational endeavors. As an adult, she and her husband ran Francek Real Estate, and she was the founding treasurer of the Mount Prospect Business and Professional Women's Club. Nearly 40 years after the ice cream parlor opened, Gertrude co-founded the Mount Prospect Historical Society.



Gertrude in front of the Moehling General Store building sometime after it had been converted to a restaurant. c. mid-late 1930s

(Continued from page 1)

After World War II ended and former GIs began moving their young families to the suburbs, garages were built at a dizzying rate. In September 1952 alone, residents of Mount Prospect paid for 26 garage permits compared to 16 home permits and over the next two months they applied for and received 30 home permits and 29 garage permits.

These Mount Prospect residents had invested a lot of money in their new automobiles and they wanted to protect them from the elements. Some even chose to build garages directly next to their homes and connect the two structures with a breezeway which often doubled as an enclosed porch. Edward Cabalan, for example, did this at his ranch home at 503 W. Lonquist Blvd. in November 1950 at a cost of \$2,850, only a year after the house had been built.

From that time until the late 1950s, scores of garages – some brick and some frame, some detached and some connected via breezeway – were built on the lots of existing homes throughout Mount Prospect. By the 1960s, however, most builders had begun directly attaching garages to the homes they were building, so they did not need to be constructed later. And since the average family by that time could afford more than one car, most homes were being built with a two-car garage.

Today many people use their garages for much more than the storage of their vehicles. They have been transformed into workshops, man caves, artist studios, storage spaces, and much more, and 71 percent of respondents in a recent survey said that they also use their garage as the main family entry to their home.

It is also worth noting that today 17 percent of new single-family homes sold in the United States have a three-car garage or larger.

If you are a fan of old automobiles and auto-related items and stories, remember that the Mount Prospect Lions Club hosts its free Bluesmobile Cruise Night auto show from 3 to 9 p.m., every Saturday from May through September in the eastern Mount Prospect train station parking lot.

Thank you to all the volunteers who have been transcribing these building permit ledgers and making them more accessible! This article would have not been possible without their work.



Edward Cabalan attached a breezeway and one-car garage to his ranch home on Lonquist Boulevard in late 1950. The home, which had been built the previous year, has since been torn down.

MILWAUKEE BUS TRIP



Both history lovers and beer aficionados will find something to love during the day-long Society bus trip to Milwaukee on Saturday, September 14.

We will tour the historic Pabst brewery and taste some beer (or a soft drink), then have lunch at the On Tap restaurant in the former Pabst Brewing Company's Mill House building and finally tour the gorgeous old Pabst family mansion. **Participants will be responsible for choosing and paying for their own lunches.**

“Although Best Place at [the Historic Pabst Brewery] may no longer be brewing those iconic tall boys of delicious bubbly, it is still a very cool spot to visit when in Milwaukee,” one Yelp reviewer noted.

The Pabst Mansion tour in the afternoon will present a totally different experience. Captain Frederick and Maria Pabst had it built in 1892 and it remains the foremost example of a preserved 1890s Gilded Age Mansion in the Midwest or virtually anywhere else in the country.

As leading figures in Milwaukee society, the Pabsts became consummate art collectors, filling their mansion with priceless treasures. After the Pabst descendants sold the house in 1908, it became the Archbishop's residence and the center of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee for more than 67 years. Then it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and opened for tours in 1978.

We will leave Mount Prospect at 9 a.m. and return at 5 p.m. The cost for the day is \$95 per person (\$85 for MPHS members). Participants should be aware that the trip requires considerable walking and the ability to climb bus stairs, flights of stairs and stand for up to 60 minutes.

To reserve your space (which is limited), register and pay online at mtphist.org. Email info@mtphistory.org or phone 847-392-9006 with questions.



MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Second Sundays at the Society

11:30am — 1:30pm

Location: Central School (103 S. Maple St.) and the Dietrich Friedrichs House (101 S. Maple St.) will be open for tours.

Fee: Free!

July 14: Summer Crafts

August 11: Meet the Friedrichs

September 8: Apples

Bessie's Workbasket

10:00am — 12:00pm &
7:00pm — 9:00pm

Location: Central School
(103 S. Maple St.)

Fee: \$10 donation, registration required

All experience levels are welcome.

July 10: Dyeing Silk Scarves

*August 14: Chicken Scratch
Embroidery*

Evening Creations at MPHS

6:30pm—8:30pm

Location: Dolores Haugh Education
Center (behind 101 S. Maple St.)

Fee: \$60, registration required

September 23: Vintage Book Wreaths
Instructors: Linda Burns & Laurie
Roubitchek

MPHS Book Club

7:00pm—8:00pm

Location: Central School (103 S. Maple
St.)

Fee: \$5 suggested donation

*July 18: Read *Prairie Fires* by Caroline
Fraser and any "Little House" book, and
join us for a great conversation about
Laura Ingalls Wilder's place in frontier
history and how her stories shaped our
vision of what
being a
Midwesterner
means.*



Afternoon Tea

1:00pm—2:30pm

Location: Central School
(103 S. Maple St.)

Fee: \$25, registration required



November 9: Sacagawea Adventures
with Louis and Clark

Youth Programs

July 25: Old Fashioned Game Day

*July 25: If You Lived During the
Olympics*

Milwaukee Bus Trip

September 14

9:00am—5:00pm

Fee: \$95, \$85 for MPHS members

Join us for a bus trip to the historic Pabst
brewery and Pabst Mansion in Milwaukee!

For more information, visit our website at
www.mtphist.org or call us at (847) 392-
9006.