

Carondelet Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Perpetuating the Heritage of Carondelet

Vol. 42, No. 1

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Winter 2015

Doris Wolff: “A Girl of Pleasant Dignity”

A quiet, unassuming, retired school teacher, the late Doris Wolff, has prepared the way for Carondelet Historical Society's future. She left a generous bequest to the Society, which was received during the summer of 2014. The bequest was a surprise to the Society's board members, as it was to the boards of a dozen other non-profits who received equally large gifts.

A modest woman, Doris' home from childhood until she needed nursing care was a second floor flat on Minnesota Avenue in the Dutchtown neighborhood. Like many South St. Louisans of her day, her grandparents lived on the first floor and Doris grew up with her parents on the second floor.

Doris' mother (Vera Brockmeyer Wolff) was a native St. Louisan, of German and French ancestry. Her father had a wholesale cigar, cigarette and candy business located on Broadway in the Soulard neighborhood. The Brockmeyers lived on Russell Boulevard near Soulard, then in Dutchtown, in the Arts & Crafts style two family flat at 4114 Minnesota Avenue.

Doris' father (Kurt Wolff) had emigrated from Germany at age 18. Passenger lists record that he had been a resident of Berlin. He traveled on the Hansa of the Hamburg-Amerika line, departing Hamburg on April 26 and arrived in New York on May 6, 1923. Early City Directories describe him as a diemaker. The 1930 census records that he and his wife Vera were newlyweds, both married just a year earlier at age 24. The 1930 census also listed him as a machinist, working on sewing machines. Vera Brockmeyer Wolff and Kurt Wolff appear to be renting from her parents in 1930, paying \$35.00 per month for their second floor flat on Minnesota Avenue.

At the beginning of the Great Depression, Doris Wolff was born into this extended German-American

family on Minnesota Avenue. Probably due to the lack of work during the Depression, her father went to work for his father-in-law's cigar business. In 1940 when many skilled craftsman were in long lines hoping to get a job with the WPA (Works Progress Administration), Kurt Wolff was lucky to be earning \$1,560 annually working in the family's cigar business. To earn that, he was averaging 63 hours per week and working 52 weeks of the year.

Doris' grandparents were supporters of Trinity United Church of Christ, located in the Gothic Revival Church built by the congregation at 4700 Grand Boulevard in 1931. (The historic building was converted into a mosque after the congregation moved to a more manageable building at 5200 Hilda Avenue.) Like her family, Doris became a member of Trinity United Church of Christ.

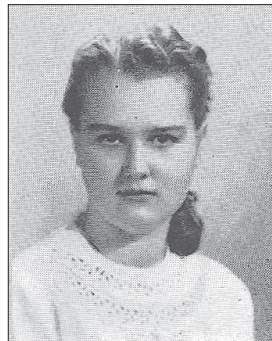
At Cleveland High School, Doris played the flute with both the concert band and the orchestra. The

Cleveland year book for her graduation year, the 1948 Beacon, documents that while she achieved academic success, she also enjoyed roller skating. Next to her senior year photo, she was described as “a girl of pleasant dignity.”

After high school, Doris attended and graduated from St. Louis University with a Master's in Advanced Math. Math professor Emeritus and Society Board Member Dr. Norm Woldow remarks on her academic accomplishments, “Even today, after a generation of efforts to open the fields of math and science to women, it is still

an uphill climb. At her time, her academic achievement is impressive.” After her own schooling, Doris taught in the St. Louis Public School system, where she spent

See Wolff, page 6



Doris Wolff's senior year photo as it appeared in the Cleveland High School Beacon of 1948.



Doris Wolff was a faculty member teaching math at Cleveland High School when this portrait was published in the 1966 Beacon.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Perpetuating the
Heritage of
Carondelet*

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Carondelet Historical Society
6303 Michigan Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63111
314-481-6303

Upcoming Events

Sunday, March 15

1:30 p.m.

Speaker: Julius Hunter
Priscilla and Babe

Sunday, April 26

1:30 p.m.

General Meeting
Speaker: Esley Hamilton
*Historic Buildings of the Carondelet
Commons South of the River Des Peres*

Sunday, June 7

1:30 p.m.

Speaker: Red Menius
Susan E. Blow's Birthday

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Change of Address Requested:
If you have moved, please notify the Society of your new address. In that way you can save the Society volunteers hours and postage.

Dutchmen Scrubbing

Board member Kay Stanford has organized a volunteer crew of Cleveland High School alumni (the Dutchmen) who have been cleaning their way through the Society's second floor. With the layer of dust left from all the recent restoration work, this is a huge job.

Bequests

Society President John Remelius asks that friends and members who have planned a bequest to the Society let him know so that, "I can write you with our gratitude."

Book Fund

Tom Weil recently presented a large donation to the Carondelet Historical Society dedicated to purchasing books for the Society Library. This generous gift will be used for acquiring rare, out-of-print books as well as new publications on area history. This much-appreciated gift will greatly expand the Society's research collections.

Carondelet Historical Society

Membership Application

Name _____ Telephone # _____

Address _____ Zip _____

_____ Individual	\$15	_____ Victor Kunz Art Gallery Benefactor	\$50
_____ Family	\$25	_____ Fred Bouchein Library Benefactor	\$75
_____ Business	\$40	_____ James Eads Engineers	\$100
_____ Life	\$250	_____ Susan E. Blow Educators	\$125

Make checks payable to Carondelet Historical Society.
Mail to Carondelet Historical Society, Mary Ann Simon, 6303 Michigan Ave., St. Louis MO 63111

From the Book Shelves

This is the first in a series of reviews of long out-of-print books in the library of the Carondelet Historical Society.

Tucked between large volumes on a back shelf in the Historical Society's library is a small, worn book that ballyhoos St. Louis' leaders during the Roaring Twenties. The 117 pages of *Who's Who in St. Louis* are filled with biographical information on a thousand movers and shakers in local industry, medicine, banking and the law plus some leaders in social services and religious leaders.

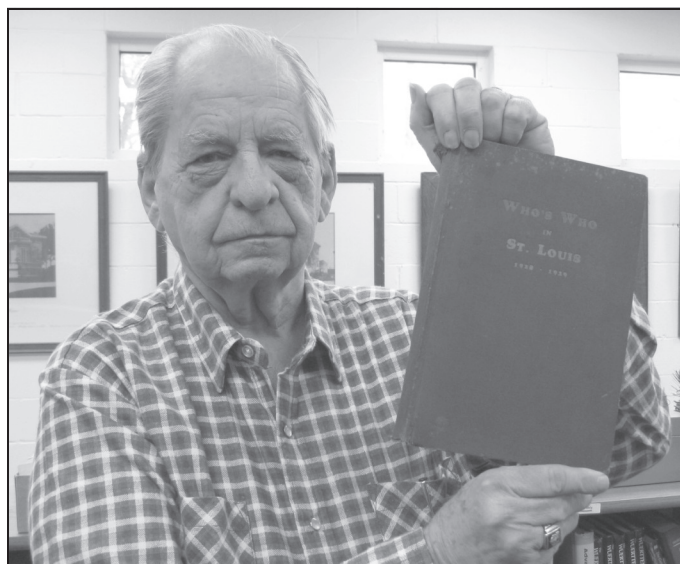
Though the book, published in 1928 by the Civic Union, overwhelmingly features residents of the City's affluent West End, it also includes a half dozen Carondelet residents. Their featured biographies attest to the city-wide influence of these Carondelet figures. The biographies also add depth and detail to the portraits of these leaders.

Who's Who recognized some local residents because of their significance in government agencies.

It lists Dr. Max C. Starkloff as a physician and health commissioner for the City of St. Louis. In addition to his office in City Hall, his neighborhood office address was 7201 South Broadway in Carondelet. His residence was the large, 2½ story brick home at 512 Dover (just west of Interstate 55). Starkloff's remarkable leadership saved thousands of lives during the influenza epidemic of 1918. He cajoled political, business, and religious figures into shutting down places and events where the deadly flu could spread. Popular movie houses temporarily closed. School was canceled. Catholics were given dispensation to keep them from attending Sunday mass. Protestant congregations even delayed Christmas pageants.

Carondelet social and business records include many references to E. R. Kinsey during the early 20th century. The biography in *Who's Who* documents that the Iowa-born civil engineer's work influenced the entire City. He had been the engineer of lagoons, roadways and grading for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. He served as President of the Board of Public Service for the City of St. Louis and was a member of the Memorial Plaza Commission, which helped develop the Plaza along Market Street with its Soldiers' Memorial, The Peabody (formerly Kiel Auditorium), the Civil Courts building, and sculptor Carl Milles' magnificent Meeting of the Waters fountain (in front of Union Station). A member of the Sons of the American Revolution, Kinsey was educated at the St. Louis Manual Training School and Washington University. The book also notes that Kinsey was a member of the Century Boat Club, the rowing club that sat atop Chouteau's Bluff at 5500 South Broadway, next to Bellerive Park.

Who's Who gave the home address for Oliver T. Remmers as "736 Kingshighway Park," later renamed



Society President John Remelius holding the copy of *Who's Who in St. Louis*.

Bellerive Boulevard. (Building permits in the basement of City Hall document that this sprawling bungalow was constructed in 1914). The native St. Louisan and attorney, another product of St. Louis Public Schools, was President of the Carondelet Improvement Association. His biography included that he was a member of the Board of Governors of the Automobile Club of Missouri and Chairman of the Citizens' Traffic Commission.

Miss Mattie Johnston of 601 Loughborough was described as "Liberal contributor to all civic enterprises, whose gift made possible the Carondelet Branch Y.M.C.A. Building" (the magnificent Flemish Renaissance style structure at 600 Loughborough).

Manufacturers featured in *Who's Who* included Harry Scullin and Thomas Mellow. Scullin, whose Romanesque castle stood at 5218 South Broadway, was the President of Scullin Steel Company. Mellow's biography stated that he "Rose from moulder in foundry to head of own organization which he started in 1906." Among the civic activities of the man, who lived at 6633 Vermont, was the Carondelet Improvement Association. While much information has been available about Mellow due to his involvement in the local Methodist Church, information in this book adds that he was a golf enthusiast.

According to the Preface of this book, a committee of the Civic Union chose the individuals included. It was made clear that no one could pay to be included. This was to be the first of a bi-annual publication and the editor hoped to do more outreach, increasing the numbers of St. Louisans listed. There is evidence of only one more edition, the 1930-31 edition, being published. (A copy of that edition is available at the Central Branch of the St. Louis Public Library.) This copy of *Who's Who in St. Louis 1928-1930* is part of the extensive collection of books, pamphlets and articles on St. Louis that Tom Weil donated to the Carondelet Historical Society in 2013.

New Collection Preserves B

Betty Tighe has given the Carondelet Historical Society dozens of cardboard boxes filled with ephemera collected by the Bevo Historical Society. The ephemera includes newspaper clippings, neighborhood newsletters, photos of neighborhood events, some historic photos, and transcripts of interviews conducted with long-time Bevo neighborhood residents.

The seeds of this collection go back to the late 1970's, when the Missouri Committee for the Humanities and the St. Louis Area Agency on Aging combined forces to provide a cultural journalism project. This project trained seniors with the Bevo Senior Center and several long time Bevo residents in how to record family history. Participants interviewed residents whose families were long rooted in the Bevo neighborhood. This was a critical point in the community to record and collect biographical and business histories because some families had been part of the Bevo area for three or four generations.

This cultural journalism project spurred interest in forming a neighborhood historical society in 1979. Virginia Konersmann Moser, Mary Osborn, Ruth Seifried,

Sister George Ann and Betty Tighe continued to conduct interviews. Between 1984 and 1989 the Bevo Society compiled and printed three booklets of the interviews with reproductions of old photos and news clippings.

Through the years, Bevo Society President Betty Tighe and other volunteers collected news clippings and photos pertinent to Bevo neighborhood history. Tighe maintained most of the Bevo Society's records in her home. She recently donated the materials to the Carondelet Historical Society to make sure that they would be preserved and maintained for future generations.

In recent months, Carondelet Historical Society volunteer Diane Hogan has been helping Ron Bolte sort the clippings, photos and papers. Then they insert each item in a plastic sleeve, which is then filed in a binder. The binders now number 40, and there are still several boxes of ephemera remaining to be sorted.

Binders are dedicated to neighborhood businesses that lined Gravois, Morganford and Delor, including the Winder plant nursery that covered north side of the 4000 block of Delor, the M&V Hardware Store which opened at 5236 Gravois in 1921, Brune's Market which opened at

4509 Gravois in 1910 and Trautwein Shoe Store, which was founded near Anheuser-Busch in 1899 and moved to 5227 Gravois in 1923. Several binders are dedicated to materials about the movie houses that were once part of the neighborhood landscape – the short lived, Arts & Crafts-styled Woodlawn Theatre, the Kingsland Show with its impressive marquee, and the Spanish Baroque-styled Granada.

Other binders contain clippings and copies of photos pertaining to historic churches and schools. St. John's Lutheran Church, founded in 1865, is located at Chippewa Street and Morganford. The former Christy Memorial Methodist Church, located at Morganford and Oleatha Street, which traced its roots to a Sunday School Class in



A bell attached to his cart rang as Anthony Gagliarducci, "the knife sharpener," pushed it through South St. Louis' brick streets. When housewives heard the bell, they would rush to their kitchens, then to the tool sheds, and be waiting at the curb with their dull knives and clippers when the sharpener reached their street.

Bevo Neighborhood History

1892. St. John the Baptist Parish, founded in 1913, is documented with the ephemera and with nine copies (from the 1950's and early 1960's) of the *Echo*, the yearbook of St. John the Baptist Parish High School. The early growth of the neighborhood and the parish are evidenced by the fact that they founded the parish high school in 1922.

The local public schools are also documented with photos and clippings. One binder is dedicated to obituaries, dating from 1995 to 2011, of Bevo residents.

Perhaps the most significant collection of clippings pertains to the Bosnians who began settling in the Bevo area in the mid-1990's. Scores of clippings from the old *South Side Journal* and from the *Post-Dispatch*, collected from 1998 to 2008, chronicle the migration of these refugees from the war in the former Yugoslavia. The articles document many events and challenges of the then infant Bosnian community – from opening coffee houses, Bos-

nians buying homes, a dispute over a mosque, disagreements over back yard smoke houses, creating a community center, and opening restaurants. As a whole, the articles reflect the stumbling blocks inevitable when new immigrants become part of American communities, an impressive entrepreneurial spirit, and an inspiring effort to adapt and thrive in the United States.

The binders are available to peruse at the Carondelet Historical Society. Copies of the Bevo Historical Society booklets featuring the family and business histories are for sale at the Carondelet Historical Society.



This photo is identified as Brune's Market at 4509 Gravois and dated 1910. Henry Brune also owned a neighborhood buffet and saloon before Prohibition.



A Swiss immigrant, Benedict Windler was employed at "Shaw's Garden" before opening his own floral business on Delor Street.



This South St. Louis street scene during World war II occurred at M&V Hardware at 5236 Gravois. The store was named for the initials of the owners' last names, Edwin Maichel and Morris Vuylsteke.

In Memoriam

Lifelong Carondelet resident Paul Rathgeber passed away June 8, 2014 at the age of 90. Paul was a charter board member of the Carondelet Historical Society. His late wife Bernadine (nee Lange) Rathgeber had also volunteered at the Historical Society. Together they lovingly maintained their historic Carondelet home, a landmark in neighborhood history, which dominates the block at 122 Davis Street.

Their large antebellum home, on a rise offering vistas of the river, was built in 1848. In 1883, Bavarian immigrant John Krauss bought the home. A blacksmith, Krauss had come here at age 17. After the Civil War, he bought his own blacksmith shop, then played a role in many businesses and accumulated great wealth. In the 1880's, he modernized the Davis Street house by adding the then fashionable mansard roof. The house has been home to five generations of the Krauss-Rathgeber family.

Wolff

from page 1

most of her career teaching math at the same school she had attended, Cleveland High School.

Her beloved mother died on June 8, 1988, and her dearest father died on November 11, 1994. In her father's obituary, Doris suggested that in lieu of flowers, contributions could be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

Doris Wolff was a private person who lived frugally. She accepted the wealth that she and her family had husbanded as a responsibility.

(William Brockmeyer's business is referred to in the article "Stage History" in the Society's Spring/Summer 2006 newsletter. The history of the Polish people of St. Louis, *Unyielding Spirit*, published in 2007, includes the story of William Brockmeyer giving a part time job to a Polish teenager who needed to help pay his mother's medical bills during the Great Depression.)

Our Members are Generous

Since the last newsletter, the following members and friends have made financial contributions to the Carondelet Historical Society:

Linda and Robert Ballard, Margaret Jean Barrow, David and Marla Bouchein, Ashton Le Bourgeois, John and Myrtle Le Bourgeois, Jaymes Dearing, Constance Frank, Shirley Hilbert, Laura Murra, Amy Parsons, Dorothy Krehbiel, Mary Lou Pleimann, Franklin Rassieur, Bob Sager, Chloe Sternola and Betty Tonneas.

Since the last newsletter, the following organizations and associations have made financial contributions to the Carondelet Historical Society:

The Carondelet Sunday Morning Athletic Club, CHSSAA, Cleveland Classes of 1964, Eugene Field Questers, Chapter 51, Golden Eagle River Museum and The Wednesday Club.

The following donations were made in Memory of:

Frank Carney

Tillman Carney

Joseph Rodriguez

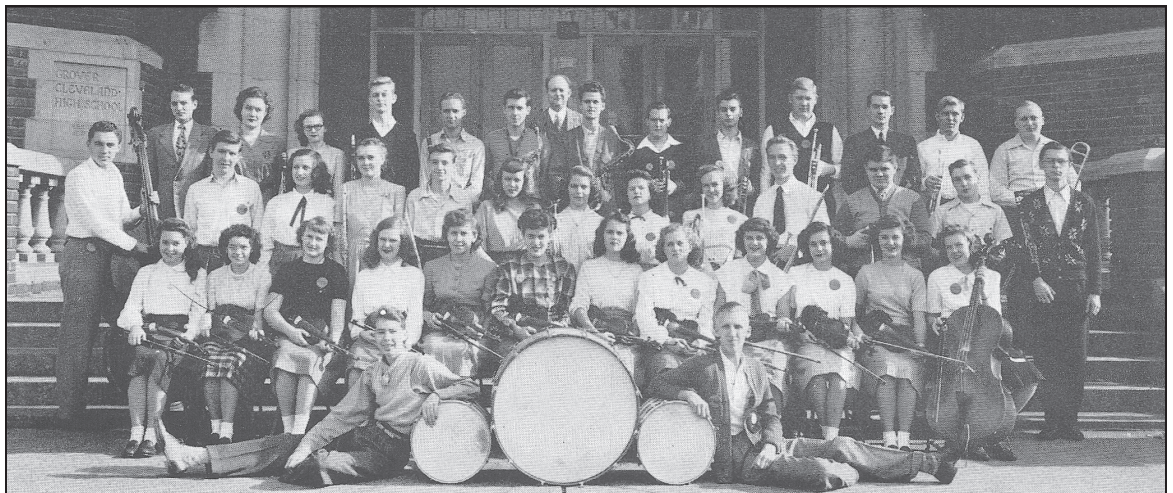
Danny Rodriguez

Paul Rathgeber

Nick J. Ludwig

*by Mary Ann Rodriguez
by Fitzpatrick Pharmacy
by Diane Ludwig*

The following individuals and organizations donated artifacts and memorabilia to the collections of the Carondelet Historical Society: Don Carr, Dolores Walsh, and Fred Diaz American Legion Post #514. Member and artist Ron Flier donated three of his paintings depicting subjects in the Carondelet area -- a corner of the Ivory Triangle, the interior of the violin shop, and the Carondelet Library.



The Cleveland High School Orchestra posed at the impressive entrance of "The Castle" for this photo in the spring of 1948. Carondelet Historical Society benefactor Doris Wolff stands in the second row, fourth from the left, with her flute in hand.

Upcoming Speakers

The Carondelet Historical Society has initiated an ongoing speakers' series to encourage appreciation of local history. This spring three noted historians will explore diverse subjects with their Sunday afternoon talks. These talks are free and open to the public.

March 15: Julius Hunter

Priscilla and Babe

Veteran broadcast journalist, author and historian Julius Hunter will speak about his latest book, *Priscilla and Babe*. This is the story of two African-American women who lived enslaved, after emancipation made their way to Victorian era St. Louis, and became the two wealthiest brothel boss ladies in St. Louis. A native St. Louisan, Hunter has authored books on broadcast news, St. Louis' great streets and homes, children's stories, and a recent autobiography.

April 26: Esley Hamilton

Historic Buildings of the Carondelet Commons South of the River Des Peres

St. Louis County's Preservation Historian, Esley Hamilton, will speak about the historic buildings located in the old Carondelet Commons South of the River Des Peres. (The Carondelet Commons fields dedicated to farming bordered the Village of Carondelet while additional Commons for grazing and gathering wood were located south of the River Des Peres.) The program is based on a survey of historic structures in South County that Hamilton conducted in the 1980's. Old farm houses, country houses and early stores are included in the program.

June 7: Red Menius

Susan E. Blow's Birthday

Author Red Menius and Carondelet Board Member J. R. Remelius will present a program on Carondelet educator Susan E. Blow in honor of her 172nd birthday. Blow was daughter of Congressman, diplomat, and Carondelet businessman Henry T. Blow. The Des Peres School, now home of the Carondelet Historical Society, was the site of Susan Blow's experimental kindergarten in 1873.



This 1920's photo from the Paule collection depicts a house on Dammert in the old Carondelet Commons south of the River Des Peres.

Progress Report

New Board Member

The Society's Board of Directors has appointed J. R. Remelius (John Remelius III) to fulfill the term of Paul Rathgeber on the Board of Directors.

A native of Affton, J. R. is studying at the University of Missouri St. Louis for his Masters in English Literature and plans to earn a MA in History. While an undergraduate earning his BA in French and BSED in secondary education, he volunteered with the Society. J. R. combed through the old neighborhood newspapers looking for biographical information about Carondelet residents. During the last two years, he has focused his energies on bringing the Society into the 21st century by developing and maintaining the Society's website, preparing all the Society's e-mail announcements, establishing WiFi service at the Historical Society, and maintaining all the mailing lists. Visitors and guests at recent open houses had an opportunity to meet J. R.'s fiancée, Kristina Snyder. Kristina, who has been helping serve refreshments at the Society, is a native of Nebraska and works at the Illinois Division of American Water.

Renovation

The first floor restroom has been entirely renovated. All new, handicapped accessible fixtures were installed. The floor has been ceramic tiled.

New exit lights have been installed, making more of the building useable for evening programs, as well as LED lamps installed throughout the building, making the building more efficient.

A handsome new sign for the Carondelet Historical Society has been installed on the corner of the Historical Society's front lawn. While easily readable by passing traffic, the new sign has enabled the removal of the deteriorating wood sign installed over the front door in 1981. That wood sign had covered the original engraved stone that once again reads "Des Peres School".

Four foot tall book shelves were built along the east wall of the Meeting Room to house additional items from the library.

Library and Archives News

The society contracted for the scanning and digitization of frail, faded, even crumbling local plat books and the Carondelet tax records for the year 1869-70. This will not only ensure preservation of the information, but the digitized record is more accessible and much more readable. The Society hopes to allocate more funds to digitize other fragile documents and records in the collections.



Shoppers eying the merchandise during a “One Cent Sale” at Gravois Drug Co., 4912 Gravois Avenue, which opened in 1924. In the 1930's, the drug store's soda fountain offered “luscious” ice cream sodas. A Bevo neighborhood institution for decades, the company hired neighborhood residents, taught them the pharmacy trade, and helped them through pharmacy college.

*Researched and written by NiNi Harris
Layout by Lynn Josse*

Hours
The Carondelet Historical Society will be open for visits or tours on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 3:00 p.m.
Visit any time we are open. To schedule a special tour, call (314) 481-6303.

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