

# Carondelet Historical Society NEWSLETTER

*Perpetuating the Heritage of Carondelet*

Vol. 41, No. 2

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Summer 2014

## Celebrating with Tour

The Society's Summer Open House, showcasing the restoration of the facade of the Historic Center, will be part of a Tour of Carondelet on Sunday, June 8 from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. This free tour is a Carondelet celebration of the 250th anniversary of the city's founding and will feature the historic Saint Louis Altheim with its magnificent views of the Mississippi, the Romanesque-style chapel of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the Carondelet Historic Center. (See p. 3 for details of tour.)

The Carondelet Historical Society has completed an effort spanning three decades to return the exterior of the Des Peres School, now the Historic Center, to its appearance in 1873. The restoration of the historic school is significant because the school building is a landmark in the history of American education, an important component of Carondelet's built landscape, and it gives insight into the architectural history of St. Louis.



**One of the 101 brackets that were installed at the eaves of the Des Peres School as the final step in restoring the façade. (Photo by Emma Prince.)**

Designed by German-American architect Frederick Raeder, Des Peres School originally consisted of four classrooms on two floors. In 1897, the school board built an addition onto the back of the school, without altering the facade or the north and south elevations of the 1873 building. After the school board sold Des Peres School in 1935, however, later owners radically altered it and destroyed its Victorian era character.

This spring, thanks to the generosity of the Society's members and friends, new Victorian style brackets were installed along the roof line of the Des Peres School. These brackets are similar to the ones that originally supported the eaves. The restoration of the brackets, combined with the

*See Tour, page 6*

## Rare School Houses

The Des Peres School, known as the Carondelet Historic Center, is one of only a handful of St. Louis Public School buildings that date to St. Louis' post-Civil War building boom. When they were built, they were called "school houses." Like the schools of today, these Victorian era school houses were utilitarian. But unlike the schools of today, they were also monuments to learning that inspired civic pride. The school houses were immediate landmarks because their large scale dominated their new neighborhoods, and because of their dignified and elegant design.

The remaining schools from that era include the original Lyon School, built on Pestalozzi St. in 1868. It has served as an Anheuser-Busch Companies administration building for decades. Architect of the Des Peres School, Frederick Raeder, also designed the Carondelet School at 8221 Minnesota Ave. and Irving Elementary School, at 3829 N. 25th St. in the Hyde Park neighborhood. Both those schools opened in 1871. Adams School at 1311 Tower Grove Avenue in the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood opened in 1878.

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Perpetuating the  
Heritage of  
Carondelet*

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

## Upcoming Events

**Sunday, June 8**  
1:00 to 3:30 p.m.  
Open House & Carondelet Tour

**Sunday September 14**  
1:00 p.m.  
General Membership Meeting

**Sunday December 14**  
1:00 to 4:00 p.m.  
Christmas Open House

## Cakeway to the West

Carondelet Historic Center has been recognized with one of the 250 birthday cakes placed in front of iconic St. Louis buildings, parks, institutions and sites in honor of the 250th anniversary of the founding of St. Louis. Each two-tiered, fiberglass cake stands four feet tall and was decorated by a local artist. The Cakeway to the West combines a scavenger hunt, history lessons and public art. Artist April Morrison decorated the cake on the lawn of the Historic Center. Other cakes were placed at the Old Cathedral, Bevo Mill, the Campbell House Museum, The Chase Park Plaza, Historic Trinity Lutheran Church and the Lemp Mansion.



## Summer Hours

Society President John Remelius has announced that the Carondelet Historic Center will continue to be open to visitors and researchers 15 hours each week throughout the summer. The hours are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and on Sundays from noon to 3:00 p.m.

## 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

# Tour of Carondelet

The Carondelet Historical Society, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, and the Saint Louis Altenheim are sponsoring a free tour of Carondelet on Sunday, June 8 from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. The Altenheim will sponsor free shuttle service between each of the sites, with the shuttle picking up at 20 minute intervals. Free parking will be available at each of the sites.

At the Carondelet Historic Center, 6303 Michigan, visitors will be able to see the Susan Blow Kindergarten classroom and the new World War I exhibit. The tour will also offer an opportunity to see the completed restoration of the facade of the Historic Center. Light refreshments will be served.

At the Sisters of St. Joseph, 6400 Minnesota Ave., the historic Chapel, which was completed in 1899, will be open for the tour. Its Italian marble altars are the work of St. Louis sculptors Schrader and Conradi. The extraordinary Chapel is home to a collection of relics sent to the Sisters from Rome between 1861 and 1878.

The Saint Louis Altenheim, at 5408 South Broadway, sits atop Chouteau's Bluff and offers expansive views of the Mississippi. The home was established in 1899, originally in the former Charles P. Chouteau Mansion. Marble mantels and furnishings from the mansion grace the elegant parlors. Visitors will enjoy river views from the



**The furnishings in the Altenheim's formal parlor date to its era as the Charles P. Chouteau Mansion.**

Altenheim's terraces. Refreshments will be served.

For more information about the tour call the Carondelet Historic Center at 481-6303 or call Theresa at the Saint Louis Altenheim at 314-353-7225.

## Collections Grow with Mementoes

On a Sunday afternoon last summer, Robert Westrich dropped by the Historic Center with a basket filled with yellowed letters and other memorabilia. Ten years after he had bought his home on Federer Place in 1951, he had found the mementoes in an attic reached only through a hatch in the ceiling of a closet. Though the stash of memorabilia was not related to his family or friends, he had saved it for more than fifty years, thinking someday the collection would be of historical interest. He recently donated the collection to the Historical Society.

The items reflect the life of a young South St. Louis woman, Bess Belzer, during the World War I era and the Roaring Twenties. As a young woman, Belzer lived in a Germanic neighborhood near Benton Park and later, as a single adult, with her parents on Federer Place. Some of the items make specific references to Carondelet sites.

Belzer used a small notebook as a "log" from 1921-1922. The brief entries describe the daily activities of the athletic young woman, enjoying the middle-class financial comfort of her parents' home. In her log, she noted her walks in city parks and hikes through then rural St. Louis County, recording distances of up to 29 miles in a single day. With her "gang," which often included Artie (Arthur) Eilers, she attended lots of basketball games involving both Washington University and the Muny (Municipal) League. Artie was listed as a member of the Century Rowing Club located on the bluff at 5500 South Broadway and her log frequently mentions this Carondelet institution. From there, the young friends would canoe

or row upriver as far as Eads Bridge or down river to Jefferson Barracks. They would row to sandbars, including the one opposite the Century Club, for picnics. The outings often included swims in the Mississippi. Several times Belzer even mentioned swimming at a little "beach" at the foot of Kraus Street. Belzer seldom made a descriptive note in the concise entries, except when noting the beautiful moonlight on the river.

The cache of memorabilia includes nine issues of "The Carnation," a magazine published three times each year by the students of McKinley High School. The issues were published between 1905 and 1913, prior to the opening of Cleveland when high school-bound Carondelet residents attended McKinley. Names of Carondelet residents, including members of the Bribach-Dates family, can be found in the magazines.

The mementoes include over 100 letters from Artie Eilers addressed to Bess at 2317 S. Jefferson. Eilers, wrote the letters mostly between 1918 and 1922 including letters posted in Augusta, Georgia, in San Antonio, and in Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The letters told of day to day life in the army. Some references show great affection between Artie and Bess.

Artie became an athletic coach at Washington University. He continued to live in his family home at 2023 Arsenal Street. Bess continued to live with her parents.

(These letters, journals, and other memorabilia will be available for study in the Society's archives.)



# Minutes Tell the Story

Susan E. Blow has become a monumental figure in American education. The groundbreaking kindergarten she directed in Carondelet's Des Peres School is considered epoch making.

The minutes of the monthly meetings and the annual reports of the St. Louis School Board of the early 1870s, however, recall when this impressive educator was known as "Susie Blow." The records are from the time that her kindergarten was simply a costly experiment that she and School Superintendent William Torrey Harris wholeheartedly supported. These documents, maintained by the St. Louis Public Library, provide a valuable contemporary view of the school system, the students, and of Blow.

With the tacit approval of Superintendent William Torrey Harris, Blow and Mary Timberlake of Carondelet, who taught primary classes at Blow School, conducted a small preliminary kindergarten at the Blow family's Carondelet home. The announcement of the official public school kindergarten appeared in the Board minutes of August 26, 1873. The Teachers' Committee of the Board of Education recommended that, "room No. 4 of the Des Peres School be devoted for the present year to the purpose of ascertaining, by a faithful experiment, what valuable features the Kindergarten may have that can be utilized in our primary schools." The board placed the room under the control and supervision of "Miss Susie E. Blow, having proffered her services gratuitously."

The school board and staff that supported Blow's experiment was so disparate that it is remarkable it could function at all, let alone support Blow's revolutionary efforts. Only a decade earlier, members had opposed one another in the nation's devastating Civil War. The school board consisted of 24 members, two elected from each of the city's 12 wards. Representing the city's near north side was French St. Louisan Paul A. Fusz. Near the end of the Civil War, Fusz had been arrested as a Confederate spy, but pardoned by President Abraham Lincoln. Hungarian-born Roderick E. Rombauer, who had been active in the failed revolutions of 1848 in Central Europe, served as the board's legal advisor. During the Civil War, Rombauer rose to the rank of Captain First Regiment United States Reserve Corps, Missouri Volunteers. Superintendent William Torrey Harris, who would rise to serve as U.S. Commissioner of Education, was a transplanted, Yale-trained Yankee. He had come to the great metropolis of the American West to find his fortune, while pursuing his study of German philosophy.

The St. Louis Public School Board and staff of the 1870s faced great challenges due to the demands of a

growing school-aged population, numbers of impoverished students, and a level of diversity that is almost incomprehensible today.

Following the Civil War, the school system was charged with a new school population, African-American children. Many of them were the children of people who had been in bondage, and been denied the most minimal education.

The numbers of immigrant children created other demands on the system. Under the heading, "German-English Instruction," the annual report of 1874 explained the challenges both in numbers and social issues posed by St. Louis' large immigrant population. "In a city where 72 per cent. are from foreign parents, 54 percent being from German parents, it is obvious that the problems of removing class distinctions arising through difference in nationality is a serious one, and especially as regards that portion of the population using a foreign language."

The new Des Peres School offered 240 seats to Carondelet children living in the district bounded by Walsh street on the north, Kansas street (now Holly Hills) on the south, and that stretched from the Mississippi on the east to the then city limits on the west. According to the annual report of 1874, it had the smallest capacity of the schools for White children in the recently annexed Carondelet. Blow School at 500 Loughborough Ave. could accommodate 600 students and the Carondelet School at 8221 Minnesota, could accommodate 700 children. The capacity for Colored School Number 6 at 6138 Virginia Avenue was 120.

After only three months of operation, Superintendent William Torrey Harris sounded almost jubilant at the success of the system's first kindergarten. He stated in his December 9, 1873 report to the Board, "The experiment inaugurated by your action has proved remarkably successful. Under the energetic and sensible management of its director, Miss Susie E. Blow, it has already begun to show all of the benefits claimed for its peculiar method. It lays a deep basis in the mind of the child for two widely different activities--the mathematical and that of the productive, or inventive,



**A portrait of Sallie Shawk taken in 1904. Shawk was one of Blow's first apprentice teachers in the Des Peres School kindergarten.**

imagination. The highest class has already worked out for itself a surprising knowledge of numbers and form, even performing readily problems involving the manipulation of common fractions."

Despite Harris' vocal support of kindergarten, many criticisms and doubts persisted. It was felt that the Blow

school experiment was in an advantageous setting. The student body was from a more privileged background, especially compared to schools in crowded and impoverished immigrant neighborhoods surrounding factories. Another advantage Des Peres School offered was that the staff was rooted in the Carondelet community. It was felt that the students and their families knowing the teachers from their neighborhood life (Timberlake's father had helped found St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Carondelet) created a more receptive attitude among the students.

The school system's annual report of 1874 documents that the staff and students were neighbors. The school was under the leadership of Principal Ruth Tallman, who lived at, "3d b. *St. Louis & Taylor, S. St. L.*," today, Minnesota between Robert and Upton Streets. In addition to Susie E. Blow listed as Director of the Kindergarten, the staff included Laura P. Staple, who lived at Vermont and Holly Hills Avenues; Emma C. Lynch, who lived at Michigan and Loughborough Avenues; Sallie Shawk who lived on Alabama between Kraus St. and Loughborough Ave. Joseph Hoefflinger, who was described as the "1st German Assistant" at Des Peres School, lived at Broadway and Quincy St.

Near the close of the kindergarten's first school year, on April 14, 1874, Harris encouraged the board to open more kindergartens. These kindergartens would provide a further test of the educational system because they would serve populations and circumstances that differed from those at Des Peres School.

His remarks also mentioned the financial challenges resulting from the distressed economy of the early 1870s. In conjunction with this, he discussed the cost of kindergarten and how to make its expense per student comparable with that of primary class students. Kindergartens required costly custom furniture and supplies.



**This photo was passed down in the Timberlake family and identified as the first public school kindergarten. It was likely the preliminary kindergarten conducted at the Blow home, which served 12 children. Originally, children as young as age three were accepted in kindergarten.**

Harris wrote, "Hitherto the chief objection to such schools has been their cost. To meet this difficulty the following plan is suggested. Each room will accommodate fifty pupils at a time, comprising three classes, and requiring three teachers. One of these teachers should be thoroughly trained as such as would

command a salary of \$800. The other two may be learners, and might receive \$200 each, but at present, and for some time to come, we can obtain volunteers who will offer their services for the advantage of the training. Two sets of pupils can be taught, one set from 9 to 12 in the morning and the other from 1-4 in the afternoon. Thus 100 pupils receive a valuable education at a tuition of from \$8 to \$12 apiece -- a rate as cheap as our present primary instruction."

He concluded by addressing the need for kindergartens in overcrowded sections of the city. "The chief ground of this recommendation is the importance of providing a suitable education for children who, living in the parts of the city where there are no yards or suitable play room, are necessarily subjected to the evil influences of the street without a sufficient antidote."

In the school system's 1874 annual report, Blow stated her belief in the profound potential of kindergarten. "I feel that the strongest claim of the Kindergarten is the happiness it produces. If we can create in children love for work, we shall have no difficulty in making them persistently industrious,-- we can make children love intellectual effort, we shall prolong habits of study beyond school years, -- and if we can insure to children every day four hours of pleasurable activity without excitement, we lay a strong foundation for a calm, contented and cheerful disposition."

Questions and debate created stumbling blocks to expanding the kindergarten program, but the experiment at Des Peres School overcame its detractors. With Blow's guidance, the kindergarten program spread through the St. Louis Public Schools system and teachers trained in St. Louis carried the Kindergarten movement to school systems across the nation.

# Progress Report

## Renovation

Fourteen new, energy efficient windows have been installed in the second floor hallway and along the rear walls. These windows should decrease future heating and cooling costs.

During last winter's extreme cold, the cracks in the Historic Center's front steps grew and soon the steps were crumbling. They were torn out and rebuilt early this spring. The carpeting in the Meeting and Board Rooms has been cleaned. The shutoff valves in the basement were replaced.

Eight school house lights, similar to light fixtures used in Des Peres School during the early 20th century, were installed in the Kindergarten, and hall. They are equipped with LED light bulbs to reduce energy costs and maintenance. This lighting will enable us to show the Kindergarten to groups in evening hours.

All these renovation projects were funded by Lois Waninger's bequest. Discussing projects that Waninger's bequest made possible, Society President John Remelius stated, "If you would like to learn how you can do the same, call me at 314-481-6303."

## Investments

Dave Bouchein recently updated the board on the Society's investment fund. The initial investment of \$100,000 made last August, a little less than a year ago, is up over five percent. The Society has an additional \$52,000 in Certificates of Deposit.

## Volunteers

The Society's Board of Directors has appointed J. R. Remelius the assistant executive secretary. Mary Ann Simon will continue in her role as executive secretary, handling mailings, minutes of meetings and many ongoing tasks. During the last two years, J. R. has gradually assumed more of the responsibilities that require computer skills.

J. R. Remelius first volunteered at the Historic Center in 2006 doing special projects in the library. During the last two years he has taken charge of the Society's website, e-mails, helped update mailing lists, prepared flyers and assisted with any tasks needed. He recently guided

the effort to update the Society's by-laws to be consistent with Robert's Rules of Order.

J. R. is currently studying at University of Missouri-St. Louis for his Masters Degree in English Literature.

## "Bracketing History" Gets Immediate Response

"The immediate response of members and friends to the Society's campaign 'Bracketing History' has been gratifying," Society President John Remelius stated. Within days of the announcement of this campaign to pay for the installation of the replica brackets, twenty members and friends had made donations. Members who donate \$50 or more will be recognized on a plaque displayed in the Historic Center. Anyone wishing to donate to this effort should note "Bracketing History" with their check made out to the Carondelet Historical Society. The names of all the donors to the Bracketing History campaign will be listed in the next newsletter.

## Donations

Gail Ahrens, Robert Ballard, Charles Buescher, Constance Frank, Ashton LeBourgeois, Myrtle LeBourgeois, Amy Parsons, and Bee Parsons have made donations for Historic Center's operating expenses.

Mary Ann Rodriguez made donations in memory of Frank Carney, Tillman Carney and Joseph Rodriguez.

NiNi Harris gave a copy of *A Most Unsettled State: First-Person Accounts of the Civil War in St. Louis* to the Center Library.

## Exhibits

Ron Bolte, Ken Bolte and Rich Fernandez are making preliminary plans for an exhibit in 2015 commemorating the 100th anniversary of the opening of Cleveland High School.

The restoration of the windows on the second floor has forced redesigning of the Carondelet Memory Room, with its neighborhood shop displays. Volunteers are re-assembling the butcher shop, the tool shop and Lois' toy shop incorporating the windows. The central display area, which has featured a train exhibit for years, will become space for rotating exhibits.

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## Tour *from page 1*

reopening of all the original windows and the installation of authentic wood windows has returned elegant, Italianate architectural character to Des Peres School.

**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.**



# Exhibit Focuses on World War I

Ron and Ken Bolte are developing an exhibit about World War I in the lower level theatre room. Along with old newspapers and articles about the war effort, the displays feature photos from two of the Society's collections -- the Eike Collection and the Bribach-Dates Collection.

At the beginning of the 20th century, A. Frank Eike, an amateur photographer, lived at 4124 Louisiana Ave. in the Dutchtown neighborhood. His collection includes about 80 snapshots depicting his camp life at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, c. 1917. They show troops drilling, soldiers gathered around a biplane, views of barracks, and soldiers setting up tents.

Carondelet native Carrie P. Bribach's photos show her and other uniformed participants in the First Aid Course of the National Service School during World War I. The Navy League operated the school at the Naval Great Lakes Training Station in Wisconsin.

Other photographs include gatherings of Red Cross volunteers posed on the steps of the Carondelet Library.

The effect of the World War on Carondelet is evidenced in the program from Carondelet Presbyterian Sunday School's "Rally Day," held on Sunday, October 6, 1918. The program lists the names of two young men from the congregation who were killed in the war, two who were honorably discharged, and 56 members who were then serving in the military and where they were stationed.

The exhibit will be available for viewing at the June 8 Open House.



**Snapshot of a uniformed A. Frank Eike in a south St. Louis backyard.**



**Uniformed volunteers with the Red Cross pose on the steps of Carondelet Library in 1917. The draft advisory board also met at the Carondelet Library during World War I.**





This group of German civic leaders established the Altenheim to provide a "hospitable haven" for elderly citizens regardless of religious or national background. In their native German tongue, "alten" means aged persons and "heim" means home. The Altenheim will be featured on the Tour of Carondelet sponsored by the Carondelet Historical Society on Sunday, June 8. (Photo courtesy of St. Louis Altenheim.)

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

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**Summer 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 p.m.  
 Visit any time we are open. To schedule a special tour, call (314) 481-6303.

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