

MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

KEEPING HOMETOWN MEMORIES ALIVE

MUSEUM JOURNAL

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“WHO WANTS TO GO TO A WOMAN DOCTOR ANYWAY?”

Mount Prospect was one of the first Chicago area suburbs to obtain – and accept – the services of a female physician. That intrepid woman was Dr. Louise Koester, a native of Hanover, Germany who had immigrated to the United States in 1909 at the age of eight.

When she came of age, Koester, a devout Baptist, attended Wheaton College in order to become a missionary in Africa and while studying, decided to also attend medical school so that she could become a medical missionary. Koester completed medical school at Wheaton and then set about looking for a hospital to complete her residency.

Unfortunately, however, Koester faced gender discrimination. It was hard for any woman in the mid-1920s to find a hospital that would allow her to train as a physician since the majority only allowed women to train as nurses.

Koester eventually learned about Mary Thompson Hospital which was the first all-woman-staffed hospital in Chicago. Mary Thompson Hospital (later known as Women’s and Children’s Hospital) accepted Koester and she completed her training there.

Dreams of Africa seemed to have diminished during her residency, however.

So Dr. Koester ended up in Mount Prospect instead of Africa, thanks to her friend and colleague, Dr. John Renner of Palatine, who told her that the diminutive Village of only 450 residents needed a doctor. She weighed her choices and in 1926 decided that it was her calling to go to Mount Prospect and help the small community in need of a doctor (especially



since most of its residents – like her – were German). A 1927 newspaper notice indicates that she originally practiced her brand of “homeopathic medicine” in an office over a drug store in Mount Prospect several days a week and also in an office at 25 E. Washington St. in Chicago, one day a week, advertising herself as both a physician and a surgeon. “There were no paved streets, few houses, one church, one school. When I moved into my first office over Van Driel’s drug store, I wondered if people would come to me, a woman doctor,” she

said in the 1973 interview with the Northwest Suburban Topics newspaper. And male doctors mocked her intentions. In fact, one was reported to have said, “She won’t stay there very long, she’ll last only two weeks or maybe a few months. Who wants to go to a woman doctor anyway?”

But she proved him wrong and had scores of patients lining up to see her. In addition, soon after Dr. Koester opened shop, an open-minded male doctor, Dr. Alfred Wolfarth, also moved to Mount Prospect. Before long, the two physicians jointly opened up the first hospital – along Prospect Avenue south of the tracks -- to treat the rising number of automobile accident victims they were seeing as that mode of transportation became increasingly popular.

During those early years Dr. Koester roomed with Edward and Emma Busse at 103 Emerson St.

She even took

a lengthy trip to Europe in 1929 to attend medical lectures and clinics in order to further her knowledge.

In 1932 Dr. Koester moved to the old Pohlman farmhouse at

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



One of the main roles a museum plays in its community is the educating the public. Part of the Mount Prospect Historical Society's mission is to disseminate Mount Prospect's history to the public, and 2019 has shown that we are doing exactly that.

butter, berry and vinegar ink, homemade journals, family trees, and so much more! Registration for History Camp 2020 will open in January. Don't forget to register the kiddos in your family! They won't want to miss out!

In June and July, we debuted our first year of History Camp for children ages 6-12. Each camp session ran for one week in June and one week in July. Children had the option of registering for one or both sessions. During each day of camp, participants learned about Mount Prospect's history, but also about what it means to be a historian and what it's like to study history. The children who participated learned how to make

In addition to a brand new summer camp, the Historical Society opened its permanent blacksmith exhibit located on the museum campus. This unique exhibit provides the community with a chance to learn what blacksmithing was like 100 years ago, but to also meet John Meyn, the man who was Mount Prospect's first blacksmith. Not only does the Historical Society now have another asset to the museum campus for people to visit, but it will also put into motion new programming to go along with it. As of right now, visitors can view the exhibit and do a Blacksmith Scavenger Hunt throughout the Dietrich Friedrichs' house to locate various metal objects that a blacksmith would have made. Beyond that, we are hoping to schedule Justin Stech, blacksmith demonstrator, throughout 2020 and possibly 2021. Our goal is to use the exhibit as a basis for programming for children and adults alike. As always, stay tuned for more new and exciting things at the Historical Society!

JOHN MEYN BLACKSMITH EXHIBIT NOW OPEN!

The Historical Society was pleased to reveal its new permanent blacksmith exhibit in honor of Mount Prospect's first blacksmith, John Meyn, on Saturday, Oct. 6. The shop is intended to be a re-creation of John Meyn's turn-of-the-last-century shop. With the help of two interior photos of the original shop, two exterior photos and lots of family memories, staff was able to create a space that looks similar to John's shop.

The anvil that was purchased for the exhibit is a 1902 ACME Anvil, which was sold in the Sears & Roebuck Catalog. This was around the time when John Meyn got his start as Mount Prospect's blacksmith, so it is likely that he had a model similar to this one.



Justin Stech, blacksmith demonstrator.

The forge blower was also purchased with historical accuracy in mind. One of the interior photos we have of the original Meyn blacksmith shop shows Herman, John's oldest son, operating a forge blower. The seller of the anvil also sold us a blower that is almost identical to the one that Herman was using in the photo.



Also featured in the exhibit is a mock brick forge with a working (heatless) flame and extensive information about the story of John Meyn, as well as the process and techniques of blacksmithing. Visitors will also learn what a farrier is, the legend of the blacksmith, and what a blacksmith's rainbow is.

The striking mural on the exhibit's back wall depicts John Meyn in his historic shop with a horse. It was painted by local artist Donna Koda.

The exhibit can be viewed by appointment, so give us a call Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 3:30 p.m. at 847/392-9006.

(Continued from page 1)

221 S. Owen St. and opened an extensive office on the first floor of that home – waiting room, examining room, and doctor’s office. Patient rooms for the terminally ill and those recovering from surgery were in the basement; and Dr. Koester’s private living quarters were located on the second floor. She reportedly charged two dollars for office calls and three dollars for house calls. And she was very busy – seeing and treating up to 65 patients per day in her home office. When asked what it was like being a doctor at the time Dr. Koester commented, “It was very hard to be a doctor then for there were no antibiotics and the training included making all of the medicines we gave to patients. Many times it was hard to decide what to do for a patient so I did my best and prayed.” During the 1990s Mount Prospect resident Budd Wilder recalled being nursed back to health from double pneumonia by Dr. Koester when he was only six. He had



Dr. Koester in her office, c. 1950s.

ultraviolet treatments in the basement of her home which was the only short-term treatment center in the area back then. And Harold Busse told of being the first baby that Dr. Koester – a no-nonsense, efficient practitioner – delivered. Another former patient, Meta Bittner, summed Dr. Koester up very well when she was quoted in a 1973 newspaper article as saying, Dr. Koester “loved the people here, treating them with religion and psychology, always giving many times with sacrifice of her

own sleep and means, in an effort to do what she could.”

After twenty-six years of dedicated service, the Village of Mount Prospect acknowledged Dr. Koester’s work in a special proclamation in 1965 and was named the 1965 Woman of Achievement by the Mount Prospect Business and Professional Women’s Club. She also received honors from Wheaton College for her professional endeavors.

Dr. Koester continued to live in Mount Prospect at least through 1973 when she spoke to the Mount Prospect Historical Society but no records beyond that have been found, so we cannot report when she passed away.

It seems worth noting that Dr. Koester never gave up on her commitment to Africa. She took a six-month leave of absence from her Mount Prospect practice during 1954, so she could travel to Cameroon to visit relatives who were missionaries. She also contributed to African missionary efforts and even donated enough money to build a hospital on the continent.

DON'T MISS OUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

Second Sunday at the Society

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.:
November 10 - Turkey craft



Second Sunday at the Society

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.:
December 8 - Christmas at the Friedrichs

Second Sunday at the Society

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.:
January 12 - “Meet” the Friedrichs

The Power of the Purse Handbag Auction

Wednesday, November 13, 7 p.m.
Community Room
Mount Prospect Village Hall
50 S. Emerson St.



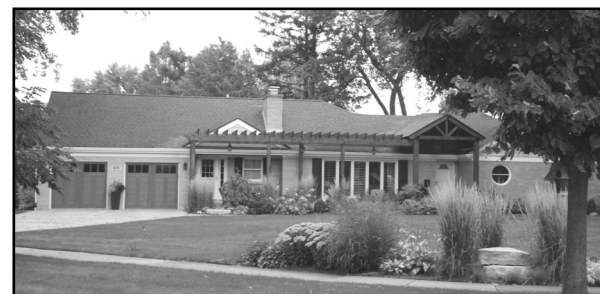
Mount Prospect Stories

Thursday, November 14, 7 - 8:30 p.m.
Meeting Room A
Mount Prospect Public Library
10 S. Emerson St.

32nd Annual Holiday Housewalk

Friday, December 6, 3 - 9 p.m.
Located in the neighborhood immediately east of the Mt. Prospect Country Club clubhouse along Can-Dota, Wa-Pella, Sha-Bonee and Na-Wa-Ta Avenues.
(see more details on back of newsletter)

Contact us for more information!
Mount Prospect Historical Society
847/392-9006
info@mtphistory.org
Tuesday - Thursday, 10:30 - 3:30 p.m.
101 S. Maple St.





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32ND ANNUAL HOLIDAY HOUSEWALK

This year's 32nd annual Holiday Housewalk, to be held from 3:30 to 9 p.m., Friday, Dec. 6, will highlight the neighborhood immediately east of the Mt. Prospect Country Club clubhouse along Can-Dota, Wa-Pella, Sha-Bonee and Na-Wa-Ta Avenues.

Tickets go on sale for \$28 each (\$26 for members at the museum only) on November 1. Tickets on the day of the event will be sold for \$30 each – only at the headquarters tent.

The interiors of six private homes, built between 1950 and 2016, will be featured and the history of one additional house will be discussed on a sign, posted outside.

The homes which will have their interiors featured this year are:

- 514 S. Wa-Pella Ave., owned by John and Jill Maher
- 609 S. Can-Dota Ave., owned by Damien and Sheila Kalck
- 606 S. Can-Dota Ave., owned by Eric and Pat Heimdahl
- 803 W. Sha-Bonee Trail, owned by Tony and Karisa Disano
- 500 S. Can-Dota, owned by Trent and Kara Coleman
- 415 S. Can-Dota, owned by Martin and Sara McDonagh



In addition, the exterior of 506 S. Na-Wa-Ta Ave., owned by John and Maura Reschke, will be featured on the outside only.

The tour will begin a tent situated on Council Trail at Wa-Pella Avenue, where tickets will be sold; refreshments will be offered; and watercolors of the featured houses displayed. Museum store items will also be sold there.