

MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The station and towers at Rand and Central Roads.

LEGACY OF THE ZENITH RADIO STATION

Ask any Mount Prospect long-timer and one of the most universal local memories they have is of the pair of Zenith Radio towers that once stood at the corner of Central and Rand Roads. Constructed in 1925 by Zenith for its WJAZ radio station, they were a fixture in the community for almost 50 years.

WJAZ began broadcasting from the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago in 1923. One of its faithful listeners in those early years was Col. Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the Chicago Tribune. He heard the WJAZ broadcasts and became interested in

the power of radio. He even began to lease large time slots on WJAZ.

Simultaneously, McCormick reserved the call letters WGN, which stood for World's Greatest Newspaper, with plans to start his own station. Before long, McCormick bought the WJAZ studio and began broadcasting WGN programming from there. The Zenith Radio Corp. retained the call letters WJAZ.

Even before selling its studio, Zenith had expressed an interest in moving to a more isolated area because of interference with other radio stations in Chicago. First, the company

built a portable station inside of a truck so it could broadcast live at events across the country. It could be set up in the middle of a field and could operate on self-sustained power. That was how it became the first radio station to broadcast the MGM lion from Gay's Lion Farm in California.

While using the portable station, WJAZ visited approximately 50 communities in a 150-mile radius of Chicago, testing for interference levels. That is how they settled on Mount Prospect for a permanent location. Since it was still only farmland and boasted the highest point in

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SAVE THESE DATES...

- June 13, 2014:**
Central School fundraiser and Come Meet Our Executive Director at 8:30 p.m. at the BlackFinn in Randhurst.
 - June 18, 2014:**
Mount Prospect Stories: The Zenith Radio Towers at the Mount Prospect Public Library, 7 p.m.
 - June 19, 2014:**
Sports Trivia Night at Moretti's in Mount Prospect, 6:30 p.m.
 - July 10, 2014:**
Buffalo Wild Wings Fundraiser
 - August 7, 2014:**
Heat Pizza Fundraiser
 - Aug. 10, 2014:**
History Day Bake Sale at the Farmers' Market
 - Aug. 13, 2014:**
Silent Movie Night/Ice Cream Social on the Museum Campus, 101 S. Maple St., 7 p.m.
 - Sept. 28, 2014:**
History Day Bake Sale at the Farmers' Market
- For more information contact the Historical Society, 847/392-9006.*

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Known as a place where friendliness is a way of life, Mount Prospect has long provided its residents with employment, homes, education and leisure. Since its incorporation in 1917, the people of Mount Prospect have always managed to come together to make their town a better place to live. One example of



Lindsay Rice
Executive Director

a community effort was the establishment of the Mount Prospect Baseball Association in the 1930s.

Originally named the Mount Prospect Baseball Team, it was organized by residents who longed for cheap, if not free, entertainment during the dark years of the Great Depression. A difficult time in American history, the Great Depression not only negatively affected personal finances, but also emotional health. Baseball was a fairly inexpensive way for people to have fun and take their minds off the poor economy.

Teams of young adult men were organized, and soon the Mount Prospect Baseball Team was playing against teams from neighboring towns. After World War II,

the population of Mount Prospect grew, and the Mount Prospect Baseball Team changed its name to the Mount Prospect Baseball Association for Boys to reflect the number of participating children. The main goal of the Association was to teach children how to work together as a team and have fun playing baseball. As simple as this mission may seem, it played a part in shaping the friendly community that Mount Prospect is today.

In the 1970s, the name of the association changed yet again, omitting the words "For Boys" from the title, as girls began to express an interest in being a part of the league. The Mount Prospect Baseball Association now included boys and girls from ages 6 to

16. The league was divided into separate divisions for each age group. Today the league is a part of the Mt. Prospect Park District.

The Mount Prospect Baseball Association is an example of how Mount Prospect is, and has been, a community with not only an appreciation for leisure, but a strong sense of camaraderie. Through teamwork, the Mount Prospect Baseball Association was formed to provide people with a leisurely escape from the harsh realities of the economy. Because of that initial effort of teamwork, children all over Mount Prospect have the privilege of learning about baseball and the value of working together to overcome obstacles, big and small.

NEW TO THE COLLECTION

This bottle, found at an estate sale by Mount Prospect Historical Society Office Manager Cindy Bork, is from the Arlington Club Beverage Company which was located at 1326 W. Central Rd. in Mount Prospect from 1964 to 1991. The building is now the site of The Studio at Melas Park, a Mount Prospect Park District facility site.

The beverage company was one of the oldest businesses in the area when it closed in 1991. It began as Sass and Brother, manufacturers of soda water, in 1872 on South Dunton Avenue in Arlington Heights. By 1873, Frederick W. Muller bought out his half-brother, Louis H. Sass,

and soon began operating the business as F.W. Muller Carbonated Beverages. The company delivered soda pop by horse and wagon along the dirt roads of the northwest suburbs.

The bottling works were relocated to 500 N. Vail Ave. in 1882. F.W. Muller erected a brick building on the site. The basement was used for a factory and the first floor for a home. An additional floor was added later for Muller's growing family. The building is now part of the Arlington Heights Historical Museum complex. In 1906, a new building, housing a bottling factory, offices, garage and apart-

ments for his sons, was built at 110 and 112 W. Fremont St., just behind the building on North Vail. This building is also part of the Arlington Heights Historical Society complex.

Mr. Muller retired in 1923 and his sons, William and Henry, took over the business and renamed it Arlington Club Beverages. They sold the business in 1945. In 1964, then-owners Harvey and Marion Lutz, moved the business to 1326 W. Central Rd., Mount Prospect, when Arlington Heights changed its zoning laws. The final owner, Richard Vandembark,



bought the business in 1986. At that time, it offered 33 flavors, and yearly sales were approximately \$550,000. He declared bankruptcy in 1991 and the business was closed.

ZENITH

(FROM PAGE 1)

Cook County, it proved to be the perfect location. In 1925, George Busse sold his land on the corner of Central and Rand Roads to Zenith, and it became the new home of WJAZ.

The studio was operated by Gilbert Gustafson from 1925 to 1935. The broadcasting station was located inside a two-story farmhouse that was situated between the two radio transmission towers. The station ran on 5,000 watts of power, and its transmitter was water-cooled. Each tower had an antenna and a 1,000-watt light bulb at its tip. The word "Zenith" was arranged down one of the radio towers and glowed red at night. These towers could be seen from miles away.

The transmitter was designed

by J. Elliot Jenkins, who was considered one of the finest radio engineers in the country.

Zenith's WJAZ not only developed new innovations for the industry, it also tested the legal boundaries of radio broadcasting and created quite a stir when it ignored the authority of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The DOC had forced WJAZ to share a wave length with another station, allowing it only two hours of air time per week, while the other station, KOA, was allotted 166 hours per week. Because of the uneven arrangement, WJAZ began using an unoccupied Canadian wave length. The government charged WJAZ with piracy of the free air but the courts were not able to find WJAZ guilty, due to the lack of legal authority. The Radio Act of 1912 was not enough to charge WJAZ with piracy or



Found in the archives of the Mount Prospect Historical Society are two photographs that show the radio operators at Zenith Broadcasting Station dressed up as pirates. It is unknown whether this was a photo taken of a live pirate show or if it was taken to mock the accusations against WJAZ as being "pirates of the air." Does anyone know?

any other violation.

Even though Zenith moved their WJAZ station to Summerdale, PA, in the 1930s, Zenith Radio Corp. continued to own the Mount Prospect property and had it looked after by a caretaker.

The towers and building were torn down in the 1970s to make room for commercial development. Although the towers are long gone, the memory of this landmark still beats in the heart of Mount Prospect.

MOUNT PROSPECT WOMEN'S FIRST VOTE AND DISTRICT 214

Women in parts of Wheeling, Elk Grove and Palatine Townships exercised their voting voices for the first time on March 28, 1914, when they voted in a referendum to establish Township High School District 214.



Before and after the vote, from 1913 to 1917, Mount Prospect residents established their own Mount Prospect Township High School in Wille's Hall on Busse Avenue.

The men and women of Arlington Heights' Elementary School District 25 felt that local boys and girls would benefit from a high school education, but they feared that building their own high school would be too expensive. So they sought to join with neighboring towns to establish a high school district.

The idea of a high school district was hotly contested by the townsmen and farmers of Mount Prospect. They felt that the funding of higher education was the responsibility of individual families, not taxpayers. The women of the community did not agree.

So, in March of 1914, 1,269 men and, for the first time, women went to the polls to vote on the issue. While the majority of men voted against the high school measure, the women's vote carried it by a margin of 16 votes.

Furious residents contested the vote in court, and it wasn't until 1921 that the Illinois Supreme Court validated the election and the creation of High School District 214.



MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SPORTS TRIVIA NIGHT

Did you know that it's been 80 years since the Blackhawks won their first Stanley Cup? Or that this year is the 100th anniversary of Wrigley Field? If you know your fun sports facts, stats and trivia, gather a team of 10 and come on out to Sports Trivia Night on Thursday, June 19, at Moretti's Ristorante and Pizzeria in Mount Prospect, 1799 S. Busse Rd.

Teams of 10 will compete in nine "innings" of trivia for a grand prize, not to mention bragging rights proving you know more about Chicago sports than anyone else in town. The night will also feature a silent auction to bid on tickets, fan gear and memorabilia from your favorite Chicagoland teams. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Trivia starts at 7:15 p.m.

So don your lucky jersey, gather some friends and register your team. Cost is \$275 per team (10 players per team) and includes an all you can eat salad and pizza buffet. A cash bar also will be available.

Don't miss out on this fun night! Register by June 13 to reserve your team's spot. For more information or to register, call the Mount Prospect Historical Society at 847/392-9006 or visit our website at <http://www.mtphist.org>.

All proceeds from this event will benefit the operating fund of the Mount Prospect Historical Society.

