

MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

KEEPING HOMETOWN MEMORIES ALIVE

MUSEUM



JOURNAL

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GROWING UP IN MOUNT PROSPECT THROUGH THE EYES OF BESSIE FRIEDRICHS AND ETHEL MUNDT

BY EMILY DATTILO

No matter the decade, many people who grew up in Mount Prospect have fond memories of that experience. Bessie Friedrichs and Ethel Mundt both grew up in Mount Prospect, went to Central School, and later attended Arlington High School, just like many local children throughout the early 20th century. Although Bessie and Ethel graduated from high school seven years apart (1929 and 1936, respectively), both girls wrote an autobiography during their senior year. Their autobiographies, which earned A's, offer insight into what it was like to grow up in Mount Prospect during the 1920s and 1930s.

Bessie Friedrichs grew up at 101 South Maple Street, now home of the Mount Prospect Historical Society, and lived there almost her entire life. She attended grade school at the one-room Central School and graduated with only six other students.



Ethel and her friends in the early 1930s

Back: Virginia Wallentin, Ethel Mundt

Front: Eunice Ivers, Virginia Deering, Helen Parke

Ethel Mundt, along with her parents and younger sister Dorothy, moved from the south side of Chicago to Mount Prospect when she was in sixth grade and finished the school year at Central School. Her first impression of her new home was not a favorable one. She wrote that "The first day that I saw our new home, I was terribly disappointed, for I had built up in my imagination, as children of that age often do, an entirely different picture." Seeing the house in the pouring rain and "surrounded by weeds and building material" certainly didn't help the situation.

Despite this rocky start, Ethel eventually made friends in Mount Prospect. Some of her closest friends are pictured below. In 1943 she married Owen Oliveson, her neighbor two doors down on Prospect Manor Avenue. Three years later Ethel was a bridesmaid in the wedding of childhood friend Virginia Deering.

Bessie also formed long-time friendships with Mount Prospect classmates. She kept in touch with neighbors Vanetta and Elvira Meyn, Gertrude Moehling, and Mildred Haas. In fact, one of Bessie's stories in the autobiography narrated how only two days earlier she and Mildred had made an embarrassing scene



Bessie and her neighborhood friends bundled up on the front steps in the 1910s. Bessie is seated second from the left.

when their bag broke in the grocery store.

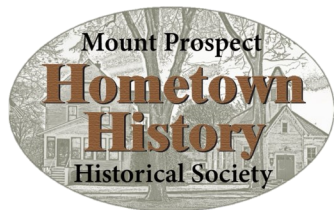
Bessie and Ethel both loved music. Bessie began piano lessons at six years old, and, much to the disappointment of the neighborhood, learned the saxophone in high school. Bessie wrote that she "took lessons on it, and now it is my favorite hobby. Sometimes people wish that it wasn't. I do not really blame them, but still it is not as bad as they say it is." Ethel, on the other hand, was determined to become a professional musician. For several years she played piano for the Arlington High School commencement

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



Did you know the Historical Society is on YouTube? In summer 2022 we launched a video series called Hometown History.

Each video highlights a historic site around Mount Prospect. So far videos have covered well-known historic sites, like the one-room Central School, as well as more hidden historic places, like the columns in the lake at Huntington Commons. I hope these videos connect our viewers with the pieces of local history all around town.

Although I'm the person on-camera in these videos, I have a talented team working behind the scenes.

The logo on the title screen of the videos

was designed by Neal Bradley, a talented graphic artist and one of the Historical Society's board members. He drew inspiration from the Historical Society's logo, so you'll see the Dietrich Friedrichs House and Central School in the background.

Volunteer tour guide Donna Latham writes each of the video scripts. Donna is a working playwright, and I am so grateful that she's willing to share her talents with us. Her scripts clearly and concisely summarize a site's importance, but are still easy to memorize.

The filming crew consists of two ladies and a cell phone. Volunteer and board member Dana Carr is the lady behind the camera, and she sets up the shots for me, the lady in front of the camera. We usually film once a week and sometimes in less than ideal weather. The South Church episode, for instance, was filmed during a spring snow

shower. You may notice white flecks shooting across the screen at some points—those are snowflakes!

The last, but certainly not least, person involved in creating Hometown History videos is Amanda Marcus, the office manager. She has helped with this project in so many different ways, including filming early episodes, researching sites, and providing plenty of feedback throughout the editing process.

Do you know of a historic site that should be included in this series? If so, send me your suggestion at edattilo@mtphistory.org.



Emily Dattilo

FROM THE COLLECTION



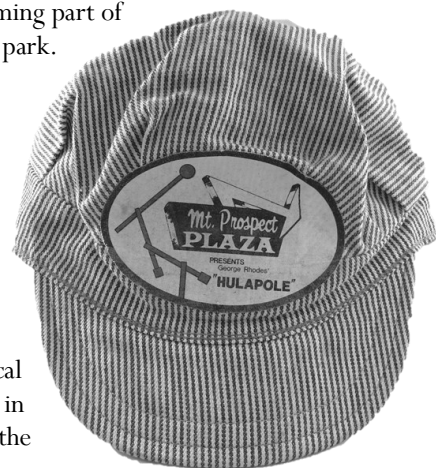
A fire broke out in the Mount Prospect Plaza Goldblatt's store on the morning of February 6, 1977, just as many employees were arriving at work. The blaze, which reportedly began in the furniture department, spread quickly throughout the two floors of the store. The Mount Prospect Fire Department, along with eight other suburban fire departments, extinguished the fire after several hours and prevented it from spreading throughout the shopping center. The Goldblatt's building was destroyed, leaving a gaping hole in Mount Prospect Plaza.

Part of the rebuilding process included transforming part of the vacant space into an outdoor art gallery and park.

Developer David Bermant was an avid art collector, and he wanted to bring that

appreciation for art to the public through his shopping centers.

The highlight of this new addition to Mount Prospect Plaza was the Hula Pole, a giant kinetic sculpture created by George Rhoads and installed in spring 1980. The sculpture was composed of bright yellow and orange bars that visitors could control with a panel of levers located near the piece. Maneuvering the sculpture in the exact right way brought the plastic ball at the top into contact with a thin steel wand near the sidewalk, setting off a gong sound. It was Rhoads' first completely interactive kinetic sculpture. While there are no photos of the Hula Pole in the Historical Society archives, we do have several hats promoting the sculpture. When the sculpture re-opened in 1984 after repairs, Mount Prospect Plaza offered these conductor hats to anyone who could ring the gong.



Do you have photos of the Hula Pole? If so, we'd love to see them! Please email your photos to us at info@mtphistory.org.

Thank you to Anne Shaughnessy, Mount Prospect Public Library Local History and Genealogy Librarian, for her research assistance!

(Continued from page 1)

ceremonies, and her goal after graduation was “to obtain the position of studio pianist or organist in a radio station,” or play in a musical group.

The “Influences” chapter in each autobiography highlight a few names still recognizable in local history. Bessie noted Arlington High School principal V.I. Brown as one of her influences. She remembered him as “kind and determined,” and was grateful that his determination convinced her father to let her pursue a four-year high school education instead of only a two-year course. Principal Brown passed away during Ethel’s junior year of high school. She included his obituary in her autobiography.

Ethel also wrote about the positive influence of the Camp Fire Girls. The organization taught her “how to appreciate and make the most of things around me.” Ethel appreciated how Bertha Ehard, the group’s guardian and instructor, discussed current events with the girls and encouraged them to speak intelligently. Ehard’s influence clearly made a lasting impact; newspaper articles show that Ethel herself became a Camp Fire guardian to an Arlington Heights group in the 1950s.

Mount Prospect looked very different when Bessie and Ethel wrote their autobiographies, and it has continued to change. Each generation has a unique experience in Mount Prospect, but some things remain the same. Children today still find the same sense of friendship and community in their neighborhoods and all around town.



Lena and Bessie Friedrichs on the front steps of their home in 1927 when Bessie was 16 years old.

35TH ANNUAL MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOUSEWALK

The Mount Prospect Historical Society will hold its annual Holiday Housewalk on the afternoon and evening of Friday, December 1 in the Triangle neighborhood east of Village Hall.

All of the homes will be exciting to tour in their own ways. One is a three-story townhouse in the complex across from the library; another is a farmhouse built in 1873; and still another belonged to the Village’s second mayor. This will be the Society’s 35th annual Housewalk and non-refundable tickets will be sold for \$30 each, beginning November 1 at local ticket outlets and online at www.mtphist.org. Historical Society members may purchase tickets for \$28 at the museum only by November 30.

Last-minute decision-makers may also purchase tickets on the day of the Walk, beginning at 3 p.m. at the Walk’s headquarters within St. Paul Lutheran Church, 100 S. School St., and the cost will be \$35 per person at that time.

The 2023 Housewalk is sponsored by Mrs. P & Me, Novak & Parker, Busse Automotive and Hearth & Home.

For more information, visit www.mtphist.org or phone 847-392-9006.



3B S. Emerson Street



21 S. Maple Street



17 S. Maple Street



221 S. Owen Street



114 S. School Street



201 S. Owen Street



MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Second Sundays at the Society

11:30am — 1:30pm

Location: Mount Prospect Historical
Society Central School (103 S. Maple St.)
The Dietrich Friedrichs House (101 S.
Maple St.) will also be open for tours.

Fee: Free!

November 12: Turkeys

December 10: "Gingerbread" Open House

January 14: Meet the Friedrichs Family

Needlecraft Nights—now Bessie's Workbasket

7:00pm — 9:00pm

Location: Mount Prospect Historical
Society Central School (103 S. Maple St.)
Fee: \$5—\$10 donation

Get out your needles and thread. All
experience levels are welcome. Advance
registration is recommended.

November 8: Project Linus

December 13: No-Sew Stars

January 10: Granny Squares

Afternoon Tea

1:00pm—2:30pm

Location: Mount Prospect Historical
Society Central School (103 S. Maple St.)
Fee: \$25, registration required

*February 17: Barbie: The History of
America's Most Famous Doll, presented
by Leslie Goddard*

Evening Creations at MPHS

6:30pm—8:30pm

Location: Mount Prospect Historical
Society Dolores Haugh Education Center
(behind 101 S. Maple St.)

*January 22: Vintage
Jewelry and Button
Picture Frames*

Fee: TBD

Holiday Housewalk

December 1

3:30pm-9:00pm

Location: Triangle
Neighborhood, east of
Village Hall

Fee: \$30 in advance, \$28 for members
when purchased at the museum;
\$35 on the day



Annual Meeting

January 18

6:00pm

Location: Mount Prospect Village Hall
Farley Community Room

Fee: Free!

Join us to celebrate another great year for
the Historical Society! Homemade soups,
chili, and dessert will be served.

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

