



❶ took home a two volume set of Tim Black's books, *Bridges of Memory*, donated by 57th Street Books and autographed by the author, and Lauren Moltz, who won a copy of Richard A. Courage's new book, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932-1950*, donated by the author.

This event will be long remembered. **FSV**



Jack Spicer with Vicky Ranney, recipient of a Marian and Leon Despres Preservation Award



Checking photos of the William Owen Goodman House, constructed in 1892 and restored by Pauline and James Montgomery



Guest speaker Lee Bey, Executive Director of the Chicago Central Area Committee, describing the hidden treasures of Hyde Park Township



Rita and Al Fry, stepping in for their friends, Pauline and James Montgomery, with the Despres Award the Montgomerys received for restoring their 1892 home.

PHOTOS BY MARC MONAGHAN

## Departures

### Carol Benade & Alta Blakely

**Carol Benade**, longtime member of the Hyde Park Historical Society, passed away January 2, 2012 at age 76 after several months of declining health. Carol grew up in a small farming community in eastern Michigan, where she played first chair French horn in the Port Huron high school band and orchestra. She attended Port Huron Community College and Michigan State University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in recreation. She moved to Chicago, settling in Hyde Park where she worked with the World Book Encyclopedia, the Midwest Library Association, and the National Opinion Research Center. Carol was a diligent collector of news items from the Hyde Park Herald, especially obituary notices.

A memorial service and celebration of her life is being planned for family and friends at the United Church of Hyde Park on Saturday, May 5, at 2:00 pm.

**Alta Blakely**, who passed away January 4, 2012, at age 92, was a superb English teacher at Hyde Park High School and Kenwood Academy until she retired in the 1980s. "While she dedicated herself unstintingly to teaching and inspired generations of her students, who did the same in her community and was the beloved matriarch of the Eckhoff-Farr-Blakely family, whose genealogical roots she so carefully recorded."\*

Alta organized the first quilt show at her church, the United Church of Hyde Park, served on the Board of the Hyde Park Historical Society for at least twenty years and was in charge of volunteers. She was a longtime member of the League of Women Voters, and after the death of her second husband, Robert J. Blakely, she undertook the enormous job of completing and publishing his important book, *Earl B. Dickerson: A Voice of Freedom and Equality*, published by Northwestern University Press. A memorial service for Alta Blakely was held Saturday, January 21, 2012, at the United Church of Hyde Park.

\*Notes from the obituary from the files of the United Church of Hyde Park

## Answer to Mystery Quiz

This track, in the 1400 block of East 56th Street, is all that is visible of tracks used by street cars from Cottage Grove Avenue that turned east on 55th Street, then looped around Harper Avenue, 56th Street, and north on Lake Park Avenue before heading west back to Cottage Grove Avenue. This street car service ended in 1947.

## New Society Members

The Society welcomes the following new members: **Donald and Linda Baskin, Aileen Chenkeli, David Lehman, Jane Ciacci, Allen Hubby, and Edward Small, and Elizabeth Topszewski and Andrew Cone.**

## Ongoing Exhibit

Steve Treffman's extraordinary exhibit, *Matchbooks and Menus* (see "Holiday Party," p.6), will continue at Society Headquarters through May, 2012. The Society's Headquarters are open every Saturday and Sunday from 2:00 pm until 4:00 pm. Steve is planning a major article about the exhibit for the summer edition of the HPHS newsletter.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

On **Saturday, March 17, 2012**, **Dr. Richard A. Courage**, professor of English at Westchester Community College SUNY, will describe his new book, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932- 1950*, at **HPHS headquarters** from **2-4 pm**. He will sign copies of the books, which will be available for purchase after his talk.

**Saturday, April 14, 2012**, will see **Simon Leverett**, stonemason and construction expert, describe his background and profession. Trained in England, Mr. Leverett will discuss examples of stonemasonry in Hyde Park and elsewhere. The program is scheduled for **2-4 pm**.

On **Saturday May 12, 2012**, from **2-4 pm**. **Greg Lane** will tell the tale of the wreck of the Silver Cloud, a ship that sank off 49th Street in 1914.

Stay tuned for announcements about the **Chicago Metro History Fair** program to be held in early or mid-June, an oral history program of the sort that is always popular, a possible **tour of the Del Prado Hotel**, now undergoing renovation, and a local **architectural tour for kids**.



PHOTO BY FRANCES VANDERVOORT

## Congratulations from the Philippines

Estrella Alamar, recently elected to the Board of the Hyde Park Historical Society, received congratulations from the Consulate General of the Philippines for her new role in the Society. Consul General Leo M. Herrera-Lim writes,

*The Consulate officers and staff join me in extending heartfelt felicitation to your appointment as Board of Director of the Hyde Park Historical Society, an organization situated in a prestigious neighborhood in Chicago that gained particular fame as the home of President Barack Obama... We are very proud of you. Congratulations and MUBUHAY!*

The Society congratulates Estrella as well!

Steve Treffman describes his exhibit, Matchbooks and Menu

## Holiday Party References Past Dining Establishments

Steve Treffman, archivist emeritus and collector extraordinaire, entertained more than 50 HPHS members and guests describing and demonstrating his remarkable assortment of matchbooks and menus from local business and eating establishments, some of which dated back nearly a century.

Examples of these colorful goods ranged from risqué to ridiculous, from informative to inane. Steve entranced the audience with descriptions of long-gone businesses, meals priced as low as fifty cents, and his interpretation of the dependencies that existed between local merchants and consumers.

On January 25 Steve gave an encore presentation of the program at a reception at HPHS headquarters for local business personages.

*Note: Steve Treffman's exhibit, **Matchbooks and Menus**, has been extended until the end of May at the Society's headquarters.*



IMAGE COURTESY OF CLAUDE WEIL

## The Musicians Building on Drexel Avenue

**Carol Bradford**

*A recent inquiry about the Musicians Building via the Historical Society website prompted me to interview James and Margaret Roseboro, my fellow members of the United Church of Hyde Park, who lived there for a number of years.*

James Roseboro was born in Farrell, Pennsylvania in 1924 where his parents had moved from Ridgeway, South Carolina some years earlier. He attended high school in Farrell, learned to play trumpet in the school band, and played for two years in the All-State Band. Soon after he graduated in 1942, he and many others were drafted into the military. When he went for his initial induction, he was offered the choice between the army and navy. He chose the navy, and was sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in North Chicago, Illinois. Someone there learned that he played trumpet, and when he auditioned he was invited to join the Great Lakes Center Navy Band. He jumped at the opportunity. "Those were some beautiful words to my ears," James told me.

He stayed on land for the next four years and never left North America. The band played for war bond drives, USO events, and various ceremonies. While stationed in San Diego their concerts were broadcast on local radio.

After his discharge from the Navy, he returned to Pennsylvania where his father wanted him to get a job in a local steel mill. But James didn't want to do that. Instead, he moved to Chicago where he had some relatives, and studied at the Chicago Conservatory of Music. He made many musical contacts and played as a side man for many of the jazz greats who came here to perform. One of the highlights of his musical career was playing for the touring stage production of Tennessee Williams' play, *A Street Car Named Desire*, starring Anthony Quinn and Uta Hagen. The play ran at the Harris Theatre on Dearborn Street, and went on tour for two years. The touring company traveled in a private rail coach. James experienced some Jim Crow policies when the company appeared in southern states.

Back in Chicago, Roseboro continued his musical career, playing with various Chicago bands and with touring bands that made appearances here.

Margaret Roseboro and was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, attended high school there,



Margaret and James Roseboro

PHOTO BY PRENTICE BRADFORD

and spent one year at Alabama A&M college near Huntsville. She played trumpet in her high school band. During her teen years, she would come to Chicago for the summer, staying with relatives and working to earn some money. One summer she decided to stay here. She went to audition for an African-American concert orchestra where she met James, already a member of the group. They eventually > 4

## Hyde Park Mystery Quiz

Where is this length of track and what does it represent?

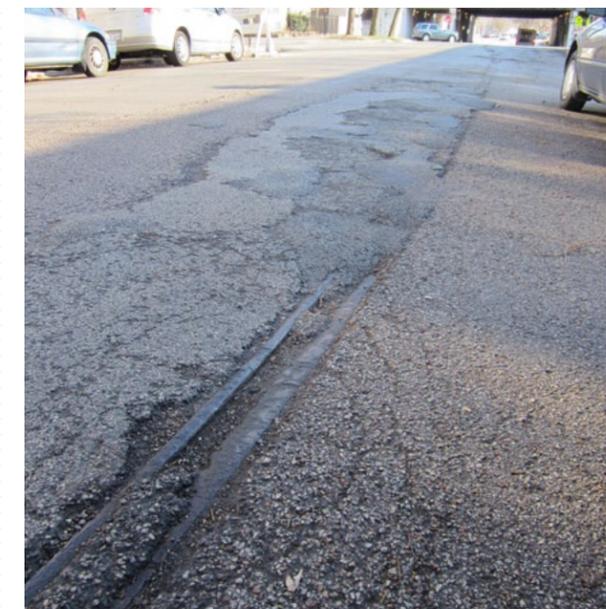


PHOTO BY FRANCES VANDERVOORT

married, had five children, and continued their lifelong careers as professional musicians.

James and Margaret were both members of the Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 208 which, at that time, was a segregated local. White musicians were members of Local 10. The Roseboros said that black musicians had a reputation for "smoking reefers and not paying their bills." Because of this, they often had difficulty finding a place to live. So, in the mid-1950s, Local 208 purchased the large court way building located at 5320-5326-1/2 S. Drexel Avenue. Harry Gray, president of Local 208, was primarily responsible for management of the building. James said that Mr. Gray carefully screened union members to make sure they worked enough to pay union dues and their rent. The Roseboros moved there in 1957, paying \$70.00 a month for a 1 bedroom apartment. Four of their children attended Kozminski Elementary School, and the older two graduated from the then- new Kenwood High School. In 1970, the family purchased a house on South Ada Avenue. At the time they left Drexel Avenue, they had been renting a 5-room apartment for \$102.50 monthly rent. Among other musicians who lived in the building were Lawrence Fulgham (whose granddaughter, Laura Nogueira, made the initial inquiry noted at the beginning of this article), David Green, Red Holloway and Paul Serrano.

Some time in the 1960s the two branches of the musicians' union merged, forming Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 10-208. Ownership of the building was transferred to the new Local 10-208 in 1966. A photograph with a short caption appeared in the *Hyde Park Herald* issue of February 3, 1988. It reported on tenants vacating the building after it was sold to local attorney, John McGarry, noting that the union "had rented its apartments out to musicians at low rates."

James and Margaret played with many local and nationally-known performers over the years: Odie Payne Concert and Marching Band, Thomas Gray Band, Combo Puerto Rico, Charles Elgar Concert Orchestra, Red Saunders' band, Captain Walter Dyett's band, "Moms" Mabley, and "Lady" Bird. In recent years, Margaret has been a member of the all-female KCR Band founded by her friends Kristina, Charlotte, and Rita. Together, their initials stand for Kindness, Caring, and Respect.

The Roseboro family joined the Hyde Park Methodist Church at 54th and Blackstone while they lived on Drexel Avenue. When the church merged with the United Church at 53rd and Blackstone, they continued there, and remain active and faithful members. Over the years, they have often played trumpet for special musical events. **HPHS**

## Early Days At Vista Homes

Elizabeth A Borst

*Reprinted from Hyde Park Historical Society Newsletter, Vol. 8., NO. 1, March, 1986.*

It was a fairly warm day for so early in the spring. A good day to walk around the construction site which was to be our new home – ours and about 118 other families. This was the spring of 1925. Vista Homes was a-building and we had been promised occupancy by early fall.

This was not our first visit. The visits had begun when there was only a large vacant lot and ground was yet to be broken for the building. Many of the apartments had been sold when there were only the architects' drawings to use in making a decision to buy or not to buy. Once our decision was made we carefully counted up nine floors in the drawing and marked the windows of apartment 9F where we judged them to be.

On this warm spring day the building towered above us. The stairs were not yet built and ladders provided the only access above the ground. Tired of looking at those markings for our windows, my father and I climbed the nine floors on ladders to see what the view would be from this perspective. Climbing up was very tiring, but climbing down was infinitely worse. It left my father incapacitated for two days, and I was not much better!

The first view of the empty lot was followed, as I recall, by many meetings of the prospective owners held in the loop offices of the developer, Albert W. Swayne. Many representations had been made as to the individuality of the apartments which were to be based on the tastes of the respective owners. Alas, few of these were met! The two most aggravating deficiencies were the date promised for a great move-in which actually occurred several months later and the Midway Athletic Club which never materialized at all!

The Midway Athletic Club was to be one of the advantages of Vista Homes. It was to be located on the corner of 59th Street and Stony Island Avenue and would provide swimming pools, exercise rooms – in fact every facility of a downtown club. Many apartment buyers signed up and paid for memberships in this club. My family's decision to purchase an apartment on the 9th floor was made on the basis of the fact that the Midway Athletic Club would be six stories high, and therefore would not restrict our view. The only concrete evidence any of us ever saw of the club were the folding chairs in the board room of Vista Homes, duly marked on the back of each, MAC.

There were also objections voiced about the use of the 17th floor considered by the owners to be the most desirable floor of all and designated by the architect and the developer for the laundries and storerooms. Enormous gas dryers were installed, one of which might easily have served four or five families. Mr. Swayne must have envisioned his residents as being most compulsively clean – and dry! The best view from the building was to be had on a small balcony located at the front of the building on the top floor of the south wing. (I understand this has since been enclosed.) The young people soon found a trap door access to the roof and forthwith established a very informal roof garden and views on all four directions.

The various shortcomings of the building, common I'm sure to many new structures, provided ready conversation for neighbors new to each other. We met and conversed most frequently in the freight elevators which seemed to be far more reliable than the swifter, cleaner passenger cars. We quickly learned that if nothing was operating vertically in your tier, it was better to take another tier's elevator to the 16th floor, walk up one flight and cross over to your own stairs and then walk down rather than up.

The homogeneity of those first owners is astonishing to me these many years later. We were mirror images of each other, in backgrounds, education, religion—even in size of family. Only our bank accounts differed, and although some had more, there were none with much less.

The medical profession constituted the largest single group. My father was a doctor and indeed his interest in buying an apartment was stimulated by three of his colleagues: Dr. Ernest E. Irons, Dr. Robert Black, Dr. W. G. Jeffries, and Dr. Lloyd Arnold were some of those early residents. The faculty of the University of Chicago was well represented as was the business world in the person of J. O. McKinsey who was later to become a University professor and then president of Marshall Field's. Perhaps this group represented the "yuppies" of that decade.

In spite of the homogeneity of the owners' group I don't recall particularly any community spirit. The only communal activities I remember are two: the young people's group and the Christmas carols.

The young people's group was made up of high school



Undated photograph of Vista Homes, 5844 South Stony Island Avenue

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age people united for two purposes: to outwit the chief engineer, Mr. Points, and to have fun. Mr. Points required perfect decorum in the matter of behavior in the lobby, staying off the roof, etc., and was seen as a common foe. The "fun" part consisted of weekly meetings in each other's homes with special pleasure found in the meetings in the Swayne apartment, the largest and most elaborate in the building, and once a month a more adventuresome outing – an evening of dancing at the Venetian Room of the Southmoor Hotel (on Cottage Grove Avenue near 66th Street). We went in a group and returned in a group, a practice in great favor with our parents.

The Christmas carols were initiated by Mr. Harris Vail, then a teacher of music at U-High. It

was he who organized them each year and encouraged attendance. Mr. Vail would move to the lobby a small cherry wood organ with foot pedals, which he attacked with vigor, singing lustily and encouraging everyone else to do the same. He was supported in this by my mother who had a splendid voice and particularly enjoyed this annual event. My family was of Welsh descent and, as my father said, readily admitted they sang well. Another resident who was Welsh was Mr. H. S. Richards, one of the South Park commissioners, and he lent his voice willingly.

Other random recollections of life in Vista Homes come to mind – in those days Stony Island was paved with wooden blocks which, when wet, were extremely slippery. On a rainy night one might sit in the south windows watching cars slip and slide as they tried to stop at the Midway stoplight. In the 1930s, Paul Darrow moved into the building. His father, Clarence Darrow, lived across the Midway\* and we would often see Mr. Darrow walking home from a visit to his son.

Our family greatly admired Mr. Darrow and we would comment on how tired and how burdened he appeared to be. Perhaps he was only thinking!

It would be interesting to hear from other survivors of those early years. Their recollections might not be as clouded by the intervening years as I am sure mine have been. I am indebted greatly to Knox Hill and Mrs. Gustavus Swift who have materially aided me with the archival pieces they made available. **HPHS**

*\*Clarence Darrow lived just west of the Plaisance Hotel in the Hotel's annex.*