Hyde Parkers reflect on the role of parks in their lives.

Green jewels—what would we do without them? Heartfelt sentiments about park experiences were the rule of the day when approximately 75 people filled the meeting room at Montgomery Place on Sunday, August 17, sharing joy, amusement, and discovery as they described how local parks had changed their lives.

Here are some of the stories:

In the 1940s, Cordelia Benedict and her brother played on the polished stone slab on the east end of Midway Plaisance where the statue of Czech statesman Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, first president of the new country of Czechoslavakia, would be placed after World War II. Metal was not available during war years to mold this commemorative figure; it was not put in place until 1949.

Timika Hoffman-Zoller, president of the Elm Park Advisory Council, described the history of this small park, located immediately north of the 53rd Street Shopping Center on Woodlawn Avenue. The community worked together to convert the park from a hangout for drug dealers and other undesirables into a place of relaxation and refreshment complete with a productive community garden.

Margaret Huyck mused about how East End Park, now Harold Washington Park, was a “savior” for her when she was doing graduate work at the University of Chicago. She had two little girls at the time, and she could read and study at the park while her girls played and made friends with other children. She is pleased that one daughter regularly volunteers at Bobolink Meadow in Jackson Park.

Melissa Cook told of her efforts to preserve Lorado Taft’s Fountain of Time in Washington Park. When
Welcome to Michal Safar, the Society’s new President

Michal Safar has a Bachelor’s Degree in English and History from Butler University in Indianapolis. She received a Master of Arts in Library and Information Science from Dominican University in Forest Park, IL. Throughout her professional career, Michal has served as the assistant librarian for East-West University, Chicago IL, and the Director of the Manufacturing Technology Information Analysis Center for the Department of Defense. She has wide experience with both digital and hard copy collections. She currently works with the Defense Logistics Agency in the management and documentation of their research and development projects. Michal joined the Hyde Park Historical Society in 2004 and became Archivist in 2007. She has been working since that time to acquire additional materials for the collection and to make the collection more accessible to the local community, students, researchers and HPHS members. Additionally she has chaired the Strategic Planning Committee and is Chairman of the Jean F. Block Award Committee.

Michal, a Hyde Park resident since 1984, and her husband Mazin, a U of C alum and Hyde Park resident since 1976, live in the historic Promontory Apartments building, and are enthusiastic members of the Hyde Park Community Garden at 62nd and Dorchester.

Message from the President

From its earliest days the Hyde Park Historical Society has been committed to the documentation, preservation and dissemination of Hyde Park history. We have a strong tradition of presenting programs, nurturing budding high school historians, preserving the natural and build environment, and generally promoting all things Hyde Park. We face serious challenges in the coming year. Our historic cable car building is in need of substantial repair and maintenance, and our membership is not as diverse as we would like to see it.

I look forward to working with the HPHS Board, our membership, and the community at large to meet these challenges and continue our mission of documentation, preservation and dissemination to the widest possible audience.

Michal Safar

New Members

The Society welcomes Mr. and Mrs. George Tolley.

Answer to Mystery Quiz:

Hyde Park was founded by Paul Cornell in 1853, and became incorporated into the City of Chicago in 1889.
Society Invites Nominations for Paul Cornell Awards

The Hyde Park Historical Society is seeking nominations for 2015 Paul Cornell Awards. Cornell Awards, named after Hyde Park’s founder Paul Cornell, recognize individuals and organizations whose work exemplifies the values, objectives, and heritage of the Society. This includes education, preserving Hyde Park artifacts and documents, and recording and promoting public interest in Hyde Park history. Awards will be given at the Society’s Annual Dinner at the Quadrangle Club on Saturday, February 28, 2015.

Nominations must contain the following information:

- Name and title (if applicable) of candidate
- Role in community
- Why this candidate deserves the Paul Cornell Award
- Contact information for candidate
- Your name and how we can contact you

We request that confidentiality be maintained. Please do not notify candidates that they are being considered. Winners will be notified by December 15, 2014.

For more information contact: Frances S. Vandervoort, Cornell Award Committee Chairman 5471 South Ellis Avenue Chicago, IL 60615 Tel: (773) 752-8374 e-mail: vandersand@sbcglobal.net

All nominations must be received by November 1, 2014.

Jackson Park Advisory Council Sponsors Historical Tours

Ray Johnson, HPHS member and author of Chicago History, The Stranger Side, reviewed in the summer 2014 issue of Hyde Park Historical Society Newsletter, is now leading FREE walking tours of the former grounds of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park. The tours will last approximately 90 minutes and will start and end at the west end of the park lot south of the Museum of Science and Industry. The final tour of 2014 will take place Saturday, October 25.

The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition took place from May 1, 1893 through October 30, 1893 and consisted of over 200 buildings spread over 600 acres in Jackson Park and the Midway Plaisance. Chicago beat out other cities such as New York, Washington D.C., and St. Louis for the honor of hosting the World’s Fair. The entire Fair opened less than 20 years after Chicago had literally burned to the ground.

Some major products and concepts introduced at the Expo include:
- The Ferris Wheel
- The modern definition of a carnival midway
- The celebration of the bottle by Sanka
- Cracker Jack
- Aunt Jemima

Points of interest during the tour include:
- The Palace of Fine Arts (Now the Museum of Science and Industry)
- Chicago Improvement Association’s Home Rule Exhibit
- The Midway Plaisance
- Locations of the Women’s Building, the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building, the Grand Basin, the South Side of the Republic, and the Cold Storage Building and Fire Station 54.

A video of the history of Chicago and the Fair can be found at: [www.friendsofthewhitecity.org/programs/white-city-tours](http://www.friendsofthewhitecity.org/programs/white-city-tours)

Devereux Bowly, 1943-2014

Long-time Hyde Park Historical Society member and former President Devereux Bowly died on August 6 after a fall at the Lakeside Inn in Lakeside, Michigan. He had owned and operated the Inn for many years.

A founding member of the Hyde Park Historical Society, Dev was the person most responsible for bringing it to fruition during his long tenure as President. He actively supported historic preservation and restoration in Hyde Park and elsewhere. A trained guide for the Chicago Architectural Foundation and member of its board, he contributed greatly to its growth. It was Dev who oversaw the restoration of the beautiful little building that houses the Hyde Park Historical Society on Lake Park Avenue. The two inns that he owned in Michigan, the Gordon Beach Inn and the Lakeside Inn, became models of historic preservation under his direction.

Professionally, Dev was a lawyer who worked with the Legal Assistance Foundation for decades. His book, The Poorhouses: Subsidized Housing in Chicago, published in paperback and eBook in 2012, has become a standard source for students of public housing.

We are fortunate to have known him—he will be missed.

Inspiration for the entire program was provided by Julia Brach, Chicago historian. She opened the program with an overview of the history of Jackson Park, and included the sad tale of the time the FBI came looking for Japanese-American concessionaire, Shoji Osato, who managed the tea house at the Japanese Garden in the 1930s and early 1940s. The FBI took him away for incarceration at an internment camp for the duration of the war. Julia praised Washington Park for being the “most democratic” of Chicago’s parks. In past years, a speakers’ platform allowed individuals and groups representing a wide range of views to speak about present and past issues. She amused the audience by describing the sheep meadow of Washington Park.

There, a herd of English sheep was tended by an honest-to-goodness shepherd on the payroll of the Chicago Park District. Each evening, the shepherd would round up the sheep and herd them into a pen near the park grounds. The “sheep to meadow” is used for soccer, softball, football, even cricket. The democratic spirit has never left Washington Park.

Jensen’s Vision

The new park buildings, lighting fixtures, and park furniture were designed by the city’s best architects. In Humboldt Park, Jensen was able to carry out to the greatest extent his vision of the Midwest landscape in a park setting: a “prairie” river with its natural flora, a “natural” green with acres of native plants, masses of hawthorn and other native trees. Later, in 1918, he carried this vision even further in Columbus Park, the one park he planned from the beginning. All these parks are well worth a visit. All could use our attention and support.

Note: Jensen articles are available on the Hyde Park Historical Society’s website.
Hyde Park’s Secret Tunnels

William Vandervoort

One landmark familiar to many people in Hyde Park is the University of Chicago’s Steam Plant. Located at 6053 S. Blackstone Avenue, this plant was built to provide steam heat for the entire university campus. The plant was built in 1929, and its location next to the former Illinois Central Railroad allowed for convenient coal delivery. A switch track existed that connected with one of the commuter train tracks now owned by Metra. The plant burned coal until 1970, when it was modernized to burn natural gas and oil. The switch track was then removed.

What at times has been one of Hyde Park’s great secrets is the network of tunnels that carry the steam pipes from the plant to the main campus. Some university officials preferred that the existence of the tunnels remain secret. Some adventurous university students and others knew of locations within certain university buildings where they could enter and explore the tunnels. Some explorers were eventually caught by university police. In more recent years, the university has taken measures to improve security with the tunnels. The access points are now more securely locked, and TV cameras have been installed.

Besides being illegal, “urban spelunking” is now highly discouraged due to the extreme heat and other dangers within the tunnels. In order to work within the tunnels, team plant employees are required to go through extensive safety training.

The existence of these tunnels has actually been a matter of public record in the proceedings of the Chicago City Council. An ordinance passed on May 1, 1928, allowed for the construction of the original tunnel, the dimensions of which would be 8 feet wide and 7 feet high. This tunnel would follow a path on the east side of Blackstone Avenue north from the plant to north of 60th Street. It would then turn west, following a path underneath the grassy area between the eastbound Midway Plaisance and 60th Street. East of Woodlawn Avenue the tunnel would turn north towards the main campus, paralleling the east side of Woodlawn Avenue to near 58th Street.

It is not difficult to find evidence of this original tunnel above the ground. At regular intervals along this area of the Midway, rectangular grates exist. Heat or various noises often come from the grates. At times some of these grates are surrounded by the possessions of homeless people who take advantage of heat coming from the grates.

Later city ordinances allowed for the construction of additional tunnels. An ordinance passed on May 15, 1929, allowed for another tunnel to extend west from Woodlawn Avenue to Ellis Avenue. This tunnel is described as “at a point 86 feet south of the south line of East 58th Street.” One prominent grate above that tunnel is located north of Pick Hall, the building at 5828 South University Avenue and is the most modern building on the main university quadrangle. A few more grates exist in a line extending straight west through the campus, including near the main Administration Building recently renamed Edward Levi Hall.

Over time, more tunnels were constructed throughout the university area that for various reasons may not be obvious. During winter, sometimes heat from the tunnels melts the snow above them, forming paths further revealing their locations. Any neighborhood is going to have manholes, storm drains, or connections with a traditional underground infrastructure of utilities. But Hyde Park, with its major university with a centralized heating plant, has this additional element of an underground infrastructure that includes a good amount of interesting evidence above the ground in public areas that can be legally and safely explored.

Hyde Park Travel Club Disbands

From the Hyde Park Historical Society Newsletter, Vol. 3 No. 3, August, 1981

By Ruth Grodzins

The Hyde Park Travel Club officially disbanded—at age 93—in April. It was the third oldest women’s organization in Chicago, only the Formightly and the Chicago Women’s Club preceded it.

Founded in 1888, the group had met weekly at the Windermere since 1927. A former president, Harriet Hatch, cited “changing life styles in today’s woman” as a reason for the Club’s demise. She also said, working women and busy mothers do not have time until retirement to devote to the Club.”

Founded by a Man

A man, Prof. Charles S. Farrar, organized the Club in November, 1888. Its original name was “Ladies’ Travel Class” and Farrar ran its program of lectures for 10 years, when he was succeeded by Agnes Ingersoll. In 1913 it was renamed the Hyde Park Travel Club, and by 1915 its original complement of 91 members had grown to 250.

Gifts to Our Society

The Travel Club’s last days were under the aegis of Frederica Marston. Minutes, documents, and archives have been presented to the Chicago Historical Society. The group’s remaining funds were distributed among various philanthropic organizations, including the Hyde Park Historical Society, whose share was $400.

Bert’s Words (Part 3)

Absolute Truth destroys absolutely.

Home is the place to do the things you want to.

It is only the intellectually lost who ever argue.

— Zelda Fitzgerald

— The Picture of Dorian Gray

— Lord Dalling, British Diplomat

The church says the earth is flat, but I know that it is round, for I have seen the shadow on the moon, and I have more faith in a shadow than in the church.

— Magellan

Disbands