

*75th*  
*Anniversary*



Schorsch Village Improvement  
Association  
1931 - 2006



*Louis L. Schorsch*

# *History of Schorsch Village*



When the Albert J. Schorsch and Company acquired one hundred and twenty acres of land in a newly incorporated territory known as Belmont Heights, they re-named the area and since then it has been known as Schorsch Village. Their plans called for four hundred and fifty residences of Colonial, Georgian, Cape Cod and English architecture. Individuality in design was carried throughout the Village.

The first buyers of these homes in 1930, were primarily of German and Scandinavian descent. They were people that, even though they were in the midst of the depression years, were willing to sacrifice to have their families located in this suburban-like subdivision. They also knew the reputation of the builders and were confident that they were buying a quality home.

By becoming acquainted with their neighbors, they found they shared many attitudes in common. The Chicago "I Will" spirit was never more evident than the pride these residents showed in caring for their homes and surroundings.

Social gatherings at that time were very modest, neighbors would invite each other to their homes to spend the evening playing cards or to chat and have coffee and cake. As they continued to socialize, many lifetime friendships were formed.

There were three grammar schools in the district at that time, all having been in existence since 1927. They were St. Priscilla's Catholic School and two public schools, Locke and Bridge. The first high school in the area was the Steinmetz High School, built in 1934.

HISTORY  
OF  
SCHORSCH VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED  
DEDICATED  
TO

MESSRS. JAMES MURRAY, STANLEY DRAYUS AND RUDY SINKULER, FOUNDERS OF THIS ORGANIZATION AND ALL MEMBERS WHO OVER THE SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS THAT THIS ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE HAVE GIVEN OF THEIR TIME AND EFFORTS, ALSO TO LOUIS SCHORSCH WHO HAD BEEN OUR MAIN BENEFACITOR. THEIR INTEREST, ASSIST-ANCE, SUPPORT AND CONSTANT COOPERATION HAVE EARNED THEM THE GRATITUDE OF THIS ASSOCIATION.

# HISTORY OF SCHORSCH VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION CHAPTER I

## *The Seed is Sown*

"Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns Grow," an old adage that can well describe the origin of the Schorsch Village Improvement Association—changed to read—"Successful Improvement Association from Little Ideas Grew."

On a sunny day in June of 1931, three residents on Oak Park Avenue were busy working on their lawns; they stopped to chat a while and ended up on a porch to rest. As the afternoon drifted by, the lawn work was forgotten. During their conversation their thoughts turned to what could be done to gather the neighbors for a friendly and interesting event. Stanley Drayus suggested that seeing it was so close to the Fourth of July, that it would be fitting to have a Fireworks Display. James Murray, who was in the entertainment world thought it would be nice to have a little entertainment during the day. Rudy Sinkuler, the business man of the trio, suggested that they canvas the entire neighborhood to inform the residents of their plans and ask for donations to help finance the Fireworks Display.

A public address system was used, over which the audience heard a few speeches, some serious and others just a lot of fun. They also enjoyed the entertainment that followed. In the evening a very impressive, delightful and colorful array of fireworks were displayed—enjoyed by all—young and old alike.

From comments made and from the reaction of the residents which were favorable, this small committee of three men decided to call a mass meeting of all people owning homes in the Village. The Village at that time consisted of seventy homes on Oak Park Avenue and Rutherford Avenue. After a discussion by all present, it was decided that the name of the organization should be "Schorsch Village Improvement Association," it would be formed for the mutual benefit of the entire section.

At that time a slate of officers were elected to hold office until the Annual Meeting, which would be in October. The President appointed two committees, one to write a Constitution and By-Laws and the other to be in charge of Membership. So closed the first meeting of the Association on July 13, 1931.

The Annual Meeting was held October 25th, with only fourteen members in attendance. Their By-Laws called for six members to constitute a

Quoram, so the election was held. A slate of officers were elected to hold office for one year.

The officers became very discouraged, the sole thought in their minds—where did we go wrong—where is the enthusiasm that prevailed at the Fireworks Display? During November of 1931 to June of 1932, attendance was very low. The officers continued to meet with the few members that were interested in the Organization, to discuss what had to be done to improve conditions in the Village.

They conducted a Membership Drive, called on all residents, those that had not yet joined and those that had joined but were not attending meetings. The men on the committee explained the purpose of the Organization and told them the advantages of belonging to a neighborhood improvement club. They also asked members their reasons for not attending the meetings and obtained their views on things that should be taken into consideration for the benefit of the Improvement Association.

Slowly, more members became active, back fees and dues were collected. At that time there was a three dollar yearly fee and a monthly dues of twenty-five cents. Initiation fee to join the organization was one dollar per household, including anyone of legal age. This was a lifetime membership, as long as they resided in the Village. With these funds added to the treasury, things began to look a little brighter. But then the clouds appeared, West Irving Bank closed its doors. The bank affairs handled by the State Liquidation Corporation issued stock shares to all depositors. When the shares were redeemed much later, the Association received half the amount that had been on deposit.

Louis Schorsch, lawyer for the Schorsch Company and the main benefactor for the Schorsch Improvement Club, worked very hard to help residents with their tax bills, dating back to 1931. Great discrepancies existed in the valuation on some types of homes. The tax appeal handled through and by Louis Schorsch had been considered and assessed valuation on homes had been changed and taxes reduced thirty to fifty percent of what they were originally. The Association joined the Cook County Civic Council, which informed them of all tax raises and instructed them how to protest their taxes in a group.

Looking back in history as to the transportation that was available to the area—the street cars on Belmont Avenue only came to Central Avenue. Riders had to walk a half block to board a bus that would take them to Harlem Avenue. Later the line was extended to Pacific Avenue, but the bus service was very poorly scheduled.

During the early thirties, the Association turned its attention to removal of garbage, gas standards—left from gas street lights—a system of snow removal and filling the potholes in the alleys. The Villagers were able to fulfill some of the community's needs themselves. They had trees

trimmed and in winter snow was removed, not by the city, but paid for by the Schorsch Village Improvement Association. The men and boys of the Village would get together, pretend they were having fun and fill the potholes when cinders were delivered from the nearby schools. The men in the Village also patrolled the streets after dark, to protect the residents and be alert to any wrongdoings. Police protection was not sufficient for the welfare of the area.

Various city agencies had to be called to help with unmet needs of the neighborhood. Through Alderman P. J. Cullerton help was given in such areas as draining the marshy sites for mosquito abatement and weeds cut on undeveloped land. Requests were made for sidewalks on the 3200 block of Rutherford Avenue, as there were no homes at that time on this block, people had to walk in the street, which was not safe. Stop and Go Lights were also requested at Oak Park Avenue and Belmont Avenue, but to no avail. A number of petitions were signed and with the help of the alderman, were advised that the bus service would not be established on Oak Park Avenue to connect with the Lake Street elevated line.

The square block of land at Normandy, Natoma, School and Roscoe, was a good selling point for the people buying homes in the area. When the Board of Education did not use it for the purpose of a grammar school, requests were made to have a tennis court built and later a park. The adjacent property owners rejected these proposals. Builders offered to buy the property to build homes, but it was not for sale.

The first big social event of the Association, was a Dance held at the West Irving Bank Building. There was a deficit and the Schorsch Brothers sent a check to cover the loss. As they said, "We had such a good time that we deem it a pleasure to pick up the tab."

Membership increased due to more homes being built in the Village. The Association was advised to become an incorporated body. The President was voted immediate authorization to have the papers drawn through Louis Schorsch, who also was in favor of the change. The Organization received its Charter in May of 1939 and from this date on the Club was known as the Schorsch Village Improvement Association, Incorporated. A new Constitution and By-Laws were written at this time. There were two hundred and twenty-three Charter Members. In 1981 there is still twenty-four of these members residing in the Village. A list will follow at the end of this Chapter.

Louis Schorsch donated fifty dollars to be used for Lawn Prizes in 1939, with the promise that it would be a yearly donation, as long as he lived. The committees that judged the lawns really had their work cut out for them. All the lawns in the area were so well taken care of that it was a show place during the summer months.



During the late thirties, there were many social events besides the dances. There were Annual Picnics, some of them held at summer homes of residents. During the holidays Christmas Parties were held for children and New Year Parties for adults.

As more homes were built the attendance at the meetings increased and the basements in homes were a bit crowded. The Club was informed by Louis Schorsch that they could hold their meetings in a store on Belmont Avenue. Some of the members cleaned and decorated the store to make it suitable for the members. It was just like moving up in society—"Our Own Meeting Hall." Meetings were held in November and December of 1939, at this location. The builders had the opportunity to rent the store, so it was back to the crowded basements once again.

So ends the good old days of the "Thirties." In that short span of time the Association had accomplished many outstanding feats. As beginners do, mistakes were made but all members of the Organization can give credit to those who had taken an interest in the "Unity Endeavors," for which the Association stands.

### **OUR MOTTO**

*"In Unity There is Strength"*





## **MOTTO**

IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH



## **COLORS**

LIGHT BLUE AND SILVER



## **SONG**

*S.V.I.A. We are here to stay  
We hold our meetings once a month  
We greet our neighbors in a bunch  
Come out and have your say  
In a fit and proper way  
We have the best community  
In the good old U.S.A.*

(Sung to the tune of Sioux City Sue)  
(Olive Brewster)



## **WILLING WORKER'S TOAST**

*To all you "Willing Workers,"  
As you lift your glasses high,  
May you enjoy life to it's fulness,  
And never question why.*

*May you always have Health, Wealth  
and Love and time to enjoy them.*

*As the members applaud to  
Thank you in part,  
Remember this toast comes straight  
From our hearts.*

(M. Losey)

## CHAPTER 2

### *Progressing Into the Forties*

At this time there were adequate stores and businesses of different types of services to fill the needs of the neighborhood. The business owners were invited to join the Organization, which they did very willingly. Two of the Pioneer Establishments are still in existence. Johnson's Shoe Store at the original address for forty-seven years and the Village Bakery that has been in business for forty years. Both stores are now in the hands of sons of the original owners.

A Teenage Club was organized in 1940, sponsored by the Schorsch Village Improvement Association. They chose the name "Theta Kappa." They were an active group until the boys entered the Armed Forces. The girls continued to meet and would write to the boys and send gifts at Christmas time. By the time the boys returned from serving their country, this group had outgrown a Teenage Club.

The Directories of the Village were printed some years in connection with the Picnic Programs. Then the Directory became a project in it's own right. It was a lot of work for the committees to gather all materials to be delivered to the printer. There were ads to be contracted for, phone numbers and addresses of all residents checked to make sure there were no changes in the information given in previous years. This project was always a successful and financial help to the Club.

In July 1940, the first issue of the *Schorsch Village Informer*, which consisted of two long sheets of paper, was delivered to every home and to business establishments that had placed ads in the publication.

The notices for the meetings that were delivered previous to the creation of the *Schorsch Village Informer*, were called the *Informer*. The gentleman that was responsible for sending the notices, was very pleased that the word informer was incorporated into the new name of the publication. His belief was that the word informer—did exactly what the word meant—informing the residents of all the important news of the Village. He was quite a clever man, he always added a little (E.N.) Editor's Note after every block reporter's news. There were very witty remarks, that always got a chuckle from the readers and no one took offense to his witticism.

Plans for the yearly picnics and dances were always decided upon early in the year. The picnics were usually self supporting, perhaps a little profit was made and Schorsch Builders donated to the picnic fund. The dances were financially successful and well attended.

Always looking for new ways to add to the beauty of the Village, the members decided to have a Christmas Lighting Display in 1940. All home owners that participated were congratulated on their originality and coop-

erative spirit, in making this event successful. Word soon spread and cars began to tour the streets in the Village during the holidays. Radio and television stations commented over the air about the beauty of the neighborhood. Prizes were awarded by the Association for the winning displays. Natoma Avenue was the first street to have a "Merry Christmas," a letter on each house on the block, which showed unity in effort.

In February of 1941, a Red Cross Chapter was formed in the Village. There were sixty-seven women who gave of their time to make surgical bandages, sewed and knitted clothing which would be donated to those in need. Later the knitting consisted of afghans for the wheelchair patients at Hines Hospital. These women earned their pins and bars for the hours they spent for this worthwhile cause.

Success—after many letters had been written—a fire box was installed at the corner of Oak Park and Belmont Avenues. By the way—this took place after a fire occurred in one of the houses on Oak Park Avenue—which helped to put more pressure on the request for a fire box.

Meetings were not well attended at this time, so to attract more members, different types of entertainment were offered after the business meetings. There were guest speakers, who spoke on subjects that would be of interest to home owners. Pinochle Tournaments and Card and Bunco Parties were held. Movies were shown on topics that were in good taste. Dancing after the meetings was enjoyed with music furnished by records on the juke box or live music in some form for dancing and singing. Slowly attendance increased—new members were joining the Club. Something had to be done to find bigger quarters for the meetings.

Through the courtesy of Schorsch Builders, the West Irving Bank Hall was offered for the meetings, rent free. The first meeting held there was the 1941 Annual Meeting. The custodian was paid a small fee for cleaning the hall and washing the dishes. This the ladies liked—no more dishwashing before they could go home. Parking was offered for members on a lot next to the Patio Theater.

In December 1941, the regular monthly meeting was called to order, the Flag was presented and the members sang "God Bless America." On this day—before Pearl Harbor was to throw the Country into World War II.

During the war years the Association donated to organizations connected with the war efforts, such as Civilian Defense and Red Cross activities. The Villagers did their part by adding to the above efforts and joined Red Cross Classes for First Aid and Home Nursing Courses. An ambulance was purchased by the Civilian Defense for the use of the entire area. The Club donated to this fund and several members from the Club received Ambulance Training Courses.

The Association would furnish the money and with donations of cakes and jell-o molds from the members, a committee of women and men

would serve about six hundred service women and men a buffet dinner at the United Servicemen's Organization.

An Honor Roll and flag pole was erected at the corner of Oak Park Avenue and Belmont Avenue. The Plot was dedicated and a booth was furnished at which War Bonds and Defense Stamps were sold. A parade for the children of the neighborhood was held. A War Bond was given to the winner of the most original float and defense stamps for the best costumes. Mothers of the daughters and sons listed on the Honor Roll were given corsages. Eventually the Honor Roll consisted of three women and one hundred and eleven men. These service people received gifts at Christmas time and the Informer was sent to them every month. There was also an Honor Roll Case in the club rooms.

It was ironic, that the first Gold Star was placed after the name of a Schorsch. Lt. Robert Schorsch, son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Schorsch, was killed in France in October of 1944. The Association had a Mass said in his honor at St. Priscilla's Church.

All excess money in the treasury was used to purchase War Bonds. These were later converted to cash and put in a building fund, that would one day help to erect a meeting hall in the Village for the members of the Schorsch Village Improvement Association.

At the San Francisco Exposition held in 1945, there was a replica of the City of Chicago. Schorsch Village was marked on the display and was cited as being the oldest organization of its kind.

During the war years of 1942 to 1945, Christmas Displays were discontinued at the request of the Government to conserve energy. The money that would have been used for the awards was donated to the U.S.O. In 1945, there were beautiful displays thru-out the Village. More blocks of homes had been completed and all joined in the event.

Continuing on to war efforts, Victory Gardens were planted in both home gardens and on the lots at Sayre and School Street. People were donating blood, when the Blood Bank Unit would come to Shabbona Park. Paper drives would be held and people were surviving on ration stamps.

In June of 1946, a meeting was designated to honor all service women and men, who had returned from serving their country. They were given a gift and drinks were on the house. "A little thank you for a job well done." The Civilian Defense used the money left in their treasury to buy gifts for the boys in hospitals.

It was suggested that the flag pole at Oak Park Avenue should be left standing and the flag flown until July 1946. The Honor Roll had been dismantled and stored.

In the ensuing years of the forties, the usual events took place. Dances, Picnics, Golf Tournaments, Mother and Daughter's Teas, Father and Son's Nights, Two Bowling Leagues, Children's Christmas Parties and New Year Parties were enjoyed by all that supported and attended these affairs.

Again, the efforts of the officers and members of the Association has paid off. Stop and go lights were installed at the corner of Oak Park and Belmont Avenue and at Addison and Oak Park Avenue.

In February of 1948, a new Teenage Club was formed. They held their meetings in the home of a resident of the Village until August. Another basement was offered for the use of the young people—but no adviser. In October, a mother and father of one of the members offered to be Advisors and Chaperones for the group. Starting in November of 1950, this couple offered their basement as permanent quarters for the club. There were between fifty and sixty active members during these years. This club remained in existence until March of 1955.

Almost all the street lights had been installed in the Village. On December 28, 1948, the blocks west of Oak Park Avenue had something to celebrate, they had street lights for the Holidays.

"Belmont Avenue Gets New Trolley Buses." Fifty-five buses were officially dedicated by Mayor Kennelly, which replaced the street cars. The new bus service ended a fourteen year constant endeavor of the Schorsch Village Improvement Association, to have thru bus service without changing at Central Avenue and to continue to the city limits, Cumberland Avenue.

The Forties has proven to be a very successful decade for the Association and its members. Many improvements had been made that beautified and bettered the neighborhood. Events that were undertaken to raise money to add to the Building Fund had increased the amount considerably.

Time has again closed the books on another Chapter of the history and activities of the Schorsch Village Improvement Association, for the 1940's now belongs to posterity. At some future date in retrospect, the members of the Organization will cherish with pride the years just passed.



# *Past Presidents 1931 - 1981*

## **TOP ROW, Left to Right**

J. MURRAY	W. WESTERBERG	A. ERICKSON	R. SINKULER
F. GRAHAM	J. GROSHANS	D. BREWSTER	G. BRELIE

## **SECOND ROW, Left to Right**

E. FISCHER	F. WESTERBERG	R. BRANDENBERGER	H. MILLER
A. SCHNESE	T. JENSEN	S. LERSCH	H. GAUDE

## **THIRD ROW, Left to Right**

B. CHALECKI	T. GADOMSKI	G. MORRISON	R. LOSEY
P. HARTMANN	V. MULLEN	L. SPALLITA	J. TRAGARZ

## **BOTTOM ROW, Left to Right**

L. NANNINI	F. ANGILERI	F. JAROSH	H. BEDNARCZYK
J. GRABEK	F. MARGIE	B. OWENS	







## *Past Presidents 1981 - 2006*

First Row: Left to Right

F. Huntzicker - E. Sterling - R. Anderson

Second Row: Left to Right

H. Esser - W. Marsh - P. Battaglia

Third Row: Left to Right

T. Cromley - P. Johnopolos - E. Gjertsen

Fourth Row: Left to Right

P. Jaworowski - E. Kampwirth



## CHAPTER 3

### *Conquest To Success*

Of major interest to all home owners in the Village were the zoning laws. The area was zoned for one-family dwellings.

#### *"A Quote from a Letter in the Informer"*

" . . . You must remember that no home is an island—every home depends on the community and its facilities. Your Improvement Association helps to collaborate and unify homes, individuals and the community into a solid, effective organization of purpose and action—which—protects you and your property investment."

True to these words, the Schorsch Village Improvement Association has guarded the zoning laws from becoming generally overlooked and disregarded. New additions to older homes or new construction were checked to see if zoning violations occurred. In many cases of violations, the owner of the house would be taken to court and the case was settled to the satisfaction of the Association and its members.

The neighborhood was zoned on Belmont Avenue for stores and light manufacturing. One owner of a shop had installed a stamping machine—the noise was disturbing the neighbors. When he was taken to court, he was given thirty days to either sell the machine or vacate the premises. A housing project was slated to be built on Belmont Avenue just east of Harlem Avenue. This was curtailed by the residents signing petitions and with the cooperation of city agencies.

There were boys from the Village entering the Armed Services, due to the Korean conflict. A page was designated in the Informer each month, listing their names and addresses. They were sent the Informer to keep them in touch with the neighborhood news.

There were so many homes being decorated during the Christmas holidays that the committee could not settle for just three awards. Ribbons were given for the different types of displays and block awards were given to each home owner on the 7000 block of School Street. They had a letter on each house to spell "A Merry Christmas," on one side of the street and "Happy New Year," on the other side.

In February 1955, a Building Committee was appointed. This committee was given full power to check points and all phases of the present information regarding the club house. They were to secure competitive bids and methods of financing the project.

#### *"IT CAN BE DONE"*

The property on which the club house would be erected was donated by Schorsch Brothers. When Louis Schorsch presented the papers for the lot, he said, "That any Improvement Association that could stand the test of time as this organization had and have the continued strong support from its members after all these years, should surely have a meeting hall of its own within the Village." He expressed his views in regard to the financing of the proposed building. The Chicago Title and Trust, as Trustee, would sign the mortgage placed on the building. The building when completed would be in trust in equal rights to Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children and St. Vincent's Orphanage, in the event that the organization would disband. The President assured the members that no individual would be liable for the mortgage, since the property was to be used for the corporate purposes of the Association.

The Treasurer was authorized to convert the War Bonds owned by the organization into cash, in anticipation of using this money for the building. These bonds had been purchased over a period of years.

The Building Committee with the help of other members made a door to door canvas of the neighborhood. Donations were solicited to increase the amount in the building fund. People were very generous and cooperative to be of assistance to the organization. Four thousand dollars was accumulated, which resulted in a lower mortgage being placed on the Schorsch Village Hall.

The final architectural working plans and complete specifications were drawn up and the property was surveyed. The permit was issued on June 24th, 1955 and construction of the building was started. The contractors and those affiliated with them had entered into the spirit of the project and had given the lowest bids possible. Many planned on doing the work at cost, without profit to themselves.

The building was completed in October 1955, but it required another month to clean and paint the inside of the hall, which was done by members that had offered their services. All the equipment had to be moved from the Bank Building Hall to the new location. The kitchen was complete, furnished with the necessary appliances.

In November, a Grand Opening of the Club House was held. "The Organization had Reached Its Goal." At long last the dream of owning their own club house had been realized. The attendance at this meeting was two hundred and ninety-seven members and guests.

The Chairman of the Building Committee reported the completion of the functions of the building committee. He expressed his sincere thanks to the members that had served on this committee and who gave so freely of their time and assistance to make this undertaking a success. He announced, "We now have a \$40,000.00 corporation."

The guest speaker of the evening, the Honorable Mayor Richard Daley gave a non-political inspiring speech. He congratulated the members on their new building and the spirit, endeavor and cooperation which was evidenced in the community. Alderman P. J. Cullerton, another honored guest, praised the efforts of the Organization and offered continued help to the community. Late in the evening refreshments were served and an aura of self congratulations and good fellowship prevailed.

Two Bronze Plaques were permanently attached to the outside front walls of the Club House, one on each side of the entrance. One contained the names of the Building Committee and the 1955 Administration. The other plaque was a memorial to those that had served in the Armed Forces.

It was noted that after a few meetings in the new hall, the attendance increased fifty-five percent. Custodian of the building—an elected officer—was very pleased with the rentals that were booked for the year.

In February of 1956, the Women's Club and Men's Club were organized. Both clubs had very good attendance at their meetings. These two clubs had the opportunity to hold their meetings in a beautiful hall and showed their appreciation by being very helpful to the Parent Organization. They donated equipment for the hall and gave checks to be used for the upkeep of the building.

Four Scout Troops and a new Teenage Club, all sponsored by the Association, also have the privilege of using the hall for their meetings and social affairs.

Not fully satisfied with the apparent success of past and present fund raising efforts, the Association sought ways in which to decrease the mortgage on the property. All money-making projects, plus Family Dinners and the Fun Fair that had been held at the Hall, were still vehicles towards the end, but as a reflection of their high degree of sophistication in fund raising, they now planned to have a carnival.

The carnival took place in late spring of 1956. It featured rides, prize and refreshment booths—the latter handled by one hundred and fifty volunteers from the Association. The land the carnival stood on—Belmont Avenue between New Castle and New England was donated for the use of the carnival through the courtesy of Schorsch Builders. This event realized a profit of five thousand dollars, earned by a lot of hard work. This money was applied to the repayment of the mortgage.

The spectacular success of the first carnival encouraged the members to repeat its performance two years later. As a result the money earned from this carnival—almost as much as the first one—reduced the mortgage to nine hundred dollars. What was nine hundred dollars to a group like this? The answer—no problem.

*"THE GREAT MORTGAGE BURNING CEREMONY,"* took place in September of 1958, at 7:30 in the evening. It was attended by one hundred and fifty members. Much to the disappointment of the members, Louis Schorsch, who was ill, was unable to attend the ceremony. His son, Louis Schorsch, Jr., spoke on behalf of his father.

Improvements had been made to the Club House. A celotex ceiling was installed to soundproof the hall and a ventilating system for the comfort of the people who would be using the Club House. Crash bars were placed on the two back doors and a fireproof door placed on the furnace room. This was to comply with the Fire Department regulations.

Lawn Prizes this year were awarded by Louis Schorsch, with the addition of ribbons, donated by the Association for the Honorable Mention Winners. A plaque was presented to Louis Schorsch at this time for his outstanding civic achievements and his portrait would be permanently attached to an inside wall of the Club House.

The Association took part in Mayor Daley's Clean-up Parade, which included a clown float with Schorsch Village Banners on each side, along with clowns marching to entertain the bystanders. This brought Schorsch Village to the attention of the people of Chicago. The Shriner's Clown Unit gladly furnished this service each year, with a small donation from the Club.

This year saw the realization of the New Shabbona Park Field House Addition and Gymnasium. This new recreational facility was made possible by the combined efforts of many civic organizations, like the S.V.I.A., religious and educational associations. The new building included craft shops, locker and shower facilities and club rooms along with a large gymnasium. Quite an asset for the neighborhood. It was dedicated in April of 1959.

In 1959 the Christmas Lighting Display was a blaze of lights that will be remembered by people for years to come. The entire Village was beautiful. The traffic was heavier than ever before, which was due mostly to the publicity from newspapers, radio and television stations. Pictures of the Village appeared in newspapers in Chicago and other cities.

This marks the conclusion of another successful decade of the Schorsch Village Association. It has been a phenomenal series of years of success in social functions, both from the entertainment and financial standpoint. Civic programs were dealt with a degree of success and it is hoped that the efforts extended will serve the members in the future.



## CHAPTER 4

### *"The Inspiring 60's"*

In January 1960, the Men's Club hosted the regular monthly meeting of the Parent Association. They decided to have something different in the line of entertainment. This was the start of something "BIG." They produced a show called the "S.V.I.A. DOLLIES." Dollies they were, six men dressed as women, that entertained the audience with several skits and a strip tease. Needless to say, it was hilarious. From then on during the early months of each year, the entertainment was in the capable hands of the Men's Club.

The Women's Club and the Men's Club celebrated their "4th Anniversary." They have both supplied equipment for the hall and donated checks to help defray the cost of keeping the Club House in good condition.

The Men's Club meets on the second Wednesday of the month except during July and August. Members are served a dinner before the business meeting. Then there is entertainment in the form of speakers, who give talks on subjects of interest to men or perhaps movies are shown on sporting events such as fishing, football and baseball. Some evenings are spent playing cards and chatting with their fellow members. Outings that the men really enjoyed were the bus trips to Milwaukee. Should it be mentioned that that is the beer town? Well, why not. They would tour the brewery—have samples—enjoy a delicious dinner and then attend the baseball games.

Interesting meetings are conducted on the third Wednesday of the month at the Women's Club. After the business meeting they have Card and Bunco Parties, Book Revues, White Elephant Sales, Auctions or demonstrations on various subjects. Coffee and cake is served later in the evening. Their outside events are Theater Parties and Tours of interesting places that appeal to the ladies. At their Annual Meeting a Pot Luck Dinner is served before the meeting.

The Schorsch Village Hall is now five years old. There have been many eventful and happy occasions enjoyed by the members, guests and people that have rented the hall. What a story those walls could tell—it would add a lot to this History.

The Club House is serving its purpose, many groups sponsored by the Parent Organization use the hall for their meetings. The Improvement Club has been very fortunate to have had very conscientious custodians, who by the way are officers donating their time and receive no salary. They have all done an excellent job of renting and overseeing the cleaning of the hall.



A Directory was printed in June of 1961, which has served the Villagers for a long time. There has not been a new one printed since then. This was a handy book to keep by the phone. All names, addresses and phone numbers were listed of all residents—unless an individual would ask not to have his or her name listed. Pictures of groups sponsored by the Club and the Constitution and By-Laws were included. Instead of looking in the Red Book, you could refer to this publication and find someone close-by in the neighborhood that would fill your needs. Besides the Committees that handled this project, the Advertisers were also responsible for the big profit made on the book.

There were zoning violations during the 60's, but they were quickly handled by the Association and its members. Some complaints of zoning or other problems would be brought to the attention of the officers by phone calls and unsigned letters, from people who would not identify themselves. The Executive Board had a notice printed in the Informer, stating that if people wanted the Association to investigate a complaint, it must be a signed written request before any action would be taken. Anyone having a justifiable complaint would not object to this stipulation.

Previous to this time, gifts would be presented to the outgoing officers. It was decided to award plaques to all officers who had served and no longer desired to be a candidate the following year. The Officers' years of service and each office they held would be engraved on the plaque.

The Women's Club offered to host the Christmas Meeting of the Parent Association. The decorations in the hall, plus a beautifully decorated tree added to the festivities. They purchased a Santa Claus suit to be used for the evening and all women received a gift from Santa. In return, Santa received many thanks and kisses. That Santa suit has been put to good use over the years; as the Women's Club did such a lovely job, they are now in charge of all Christmas Meetings.

The Association was in need of financial help at this time. The building was not wholly financed by just rentals. There were enormous amounts of bills to be paid each month—taxes and insurance were two of the biggest items on the books.

A member who had always been first in line to offer his services had come forward with a plan to have special parties that would be a financial help to the Club. There were four parties planned under the guiding hand of this Chairman and his committees. Tickets would be sold and each and every one of these affairs netted between four and five hundred dollars. On two occasions they had to stop selling tickets, as the hall would be overcrowded. These special parties were a Gay Nineties Party, a Roaring Twenties Party, New Orleans Night and Western Night.

It would be fitting to be able to mention the name of this chairman and his committees, but we cannot do that. It would not be fair to others that

have served on committees, but we can include all workers in this little note. Those people that read this History—YOU know who you are—at this time a silent “BIG THANK YOU” from all the members.

In 1962, Christmas Lighting Displays were so outstanding that a writeup appeared in the magazine—*Health*. It was a very impressive description of the different streets in the Village. It mentioned the 7000 block of School Street and the Fantasy Avenues—Candy Cane Lane, Vigil Lane and Reindeer Lane. Pictures of these displays were also printed in the book. Residents had added thousands of lights to their homes, unique door trims and yard decorations. The result had made this area one of the wonder spots of Chicago during the Christmas Season.

The U.S. Marines used the neighborhood for their “Toys for Tots Campaign,” placing barrels on six corners, staffed by six enlisted men and a Lieutenant Colonel. They acquired truck loads of toys. They asked permission to come back the next year.

Another big night of entertainment produced by the Men’s Club—“The Schorsch Village Beauty Contest.” These men went all out to put on this show. The stores that some of these men patronized must have had second thoughts about them, when they came in to be fitted for dresses, shoes, wigs and of course they had to have help in getting the proper size panty hose. There would have to be a separate book written to cover all the shows the Men’s Club has presented over the years.

The hall is beginning to show its age. Improvements and repairs were being taken care of to keep the hall in good condition. The roof had to be repaired and a heating cable installed to alleviate further leakage problems. The heating system was improved to save on gas bills. The Association was assessed for the alley which was paved in the rear of the building and when that was completed the Club had gravel spread over the property at the rear of the Club House.

A new project was started. The Snow Plow Fund was off to a good start in December of 1965. The fee was five dollars from each home owner the first year. There was a 90% response from the Villagers. There was plenty of money but no snow. Just one plowing was needed this first year. Money that was not used every year was accumulated so that the fee was lowered each year, but 100% cooperation was impossible. Typical comments from neighbors that approved of the project was, one plowing is worth the cost. This certainly was a small fee for the convenience of clear streets. It also would prevent accidents, save time and not to mention the possibility of broken transmissions.

NOW THERE WAS SNOW—BIG SNOW OF ‘67. Four inches was forecast, then increased to six and then to eight. But no one could foresee the historic 26 inches that finally accumulated during the night. Too heavy

to push with small snow plows—and no heavy duty tractors were available. Finally, the emergency lessened and heavy duty tractors were hired. Three tractors were shoveling snow at one time, still this method was slow.

Alley lights were installed throughout the area, which was a safety feature when residents drove into the alleys to put cars in the garages. When the storm sewer project was completed along Roscoe Street—was that a big sigh of relief that was heard throughout the Village? Hopes were high that this would be the solution to the problem—no more flooded basements. The residents were always appreciative of improvements to the Village.

The undeveloped land that belongs to the Board of Education, was being well taken care of through the efforts of a member that lived close-by. As he explained, it just takes a phone call to the proper authorities.

In September of 1968, Louis Schorsch passed away. His promise of donating the money for the Lawn Prizes had been continued since 1939. At that time, he promised that it would be a yearly donation for as long as he lived. The Association is now awarding the Lawn Prizes.

Interesting meetings were held during the months of 1969 and entertainment that was furnished was enjoyed by all members who attended the meetings. Some of the special events held during the year were the Dinner Dance and Picnic. The Mixed Bowling Teams had a good time bowling and enjoyed the party at the end of the season. A golf tournament sponsored by the Men's Club was held and they all got into the swing of it.

Awards that were given during the year were the Lawn Prizes and Christmas Lighting Display Awards. Service Plaques were presented to the outgoing officers.

Sponsored groups that hold their meetings in the Club House are the Women's Club, Men's Club and the Cadet Girl Scouts. Rentals had been exceptionally good this year which helped finance the upkeep of the hall.

Every media of communication took notice of the gaily bedecked homes at Christmas time. Television and Radio Stations praised the beauty of the Village over the air. Bus tours criss-crossed the community, further extolling our fame to out-of-towners.

The traditional decorating has made Schorsch Village famous. It is, however, more in keeping with the spirit of Christmas Season to remember that these lights and decorations reflect the individual's spirit of good will toward his friends and neighbors. In Schorsch Village, this spirit of good will is a way of life the year around.



## CHAPTER 5

### *Resting On Its Laurels*

As the Schorsch Village Association entered its thirty-ninth year of existence, it was in dire need for members to attend monthly meetings and participate in the activities of the Club. Cooperation was at its lowest—chairmen were needed to head the meetings, picnics, dances and New Year Parties. In 1970, due to the lack of interest, a dance was not planned. In the ensuing years dances were no longer a yearly event.

The Informer also had problems. A new printer was hired who changed the format to save money for the Association and as he delivered the books completely assembled, the Informer Staff that met once a month to assemble the books were no longer needed. There were a few disappointed people—they enjoyed these get-togethers each month.

There was a surprise at the regular monthly meeting of the Parent Organization in honor of this last Informer Staff. They were asked to serve on the committee with the Editor as chairman. They gladly accepted—not knowing about the surprise. They were called to the front of the hall to be introduced as the committee for the evening. They were presented a Gold Booklet—"Golden Award for Willing Workers." Inside was the Willing Worker's Toast and names of those who had served on the Informer Staff. Their names were etched on champagne glasses, which were filled with champagne for them to drink while the toast was made in their honor.

The Chicago Park District held a brief Ground Breaking Ceremony in December of 1970, dedicating a new indoor-outdoor swimming pool at Shabbona Park utilizing combination glass wall-doors, for year around use. The pool would be 75 feet in length, 42 feet or 6 lanes wide and 10 feet at its deep end. A balcony for spectators was included in the plans. The pool was completed in December of 1972. Another source of recreation for the Villagers and their families to enjoy.

There were articles printed in the newspapers about the Chicago Housing Association selecting sites for Public Housing Units. The Schorsch Improvement Association wrote a letter to the Alderman stating that they were opposed to said program on the basis that it is basically unsound sociologically, certainly not in the best interest of the Community. No sites were selected in our area. Residents were also concerned about two lots on Oak Park Avenue. They were in fear that substandard homes would be erected by the C.H.A.—their minds were put at ease when they learned that a private contractor was erecting homes on this site.

It was a depressing sight to see the elm trees being removed from parkways in the Village. They were at a stage of growth where they met in the middle of the streets. For those that took pictures from time to time look-

ing down the streets from the corners—they have a keepsake. It will be a long time, if ever, that the trees will once again meet in the middle of the streets. The type of trees that have been planted will not grow the same as the elm trees.

At the annual meeting in 1971, which was the “40th Anniversary of the Association, a letter was read commending the Club and a City Flag was sent by the Honorable Mayor Richard Daley, who also sent a telegram the night of the meeting to congratulate the members. More honors were to come when a State Flag was provided by Rep. Roman Kosinski and a letter of congratulations was read. An American Flag that had flown over the Capital Building in Washington on September 29, 1971, along with a certificate to verify that this Flag had been flown over the Capital, was sent by Congressman Roman Pucinski.

Christmas Awards were still being presented each year, but in 1973 there was an energy crisis so the members voted to honor this request for less elaborate lighting displays and awards were not presented. In 1974, this event was again in full swing. In the following years there was less interest shown and there was vandalism of lights being stolen and broken, which discouraged people to enter this event.

In 1977, it was decided that both Lawn Prizes and Christmas Awards would not be presented.

Much to the dismay and disappointment of the members, the Bronze Plaque that was affixed to the outside wall of the building, containing the names of the Building Committee was literally ripped off the wall and stolen. Up to this time names have not been used to designate chairmen and committees, but in this case where the Plaque no longer serves the purpose of honoring these men for their efforts, an exception will be made and their names listed.

BUILDING COMMITTEE

Thomas Shaughnessy—Chairman

Bruno Chalecki	George Morrison
Harry Gaude	Louis Munao
Peter Hartmann	William Zirzow

At the time the first plaque was stolen, an attempt was made to remove the Plaque honoring those in the Armed Forces. This Plaque is now attached to an inside wall in the Club House.

As mentioned before in the History, the Club House is in Trust with equal rights to Shriner’s Hospital for Crippled Children and St. Vincent’s Orphanage. It became necessary to remove the Orphanage name from

this Trust, as they are no longer in existence. St. Mary's of Providence School for Retarded Children is now on the Trust Agreement with Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children.

When the Historians were chosen to keep records of the Association intact, there were many *Informers* missing from the files. Through the kindness of two residents who had been saving the back issues, a complete set was gathered. There were also some Directories missing, a few have been added, but it is not a complete set. Without the *Informers* and the books of monthly minutes, this History could not have been written.

A new group sponsored by the Association, is the Golden Agers—Senior Citizens—who held their first meeting in December 1973. They hold their meetings on the second and fourth Thursday of the month, in the afternoon. They, like other sponsored Clubs have been very generous in donating checks to the Parent Association. They hosted a June meeting for the Parent Club and now have offered to host all June meetings.

During the 70's many changes and improvements had been made to the meeting hall. The hall was completely redecorated, a new lighted bar was installed, a bandstand erected at the back of the hall and new lights mounted on the side walls. The side walls of the exterior of the building were painted and the entire building was tuckpointed. This is an example of how well the building is being taken care of and the investment protected. Late in 1979, ceiling fans were purchased and installed and the outside sign on the building was refurbished.

In July 1976, the *Schorsch Village Informer* was put to rest, due to the escalating printing costs. Since July of 1940, until now—four hundred and thirty *Informers* were delivered to every home in the Village and to business establishments that had placed ads in the book. This was over a span of thirty-six years. There were two issues that were not printed, which in both cases was due to a change in printers. This was one of the money raising projects for the Association. In its place a single sheet flyer is distributed once a month to notify members of the meetings and important announcements.

Picnics are held every summer and the Men's Club sponsors a yearly Golf Tournament. In the fall a Mixed Bowling League is formed and a dinner is held at the end of the season.

Clubs that are sponsored by the Parent Association and hold their meetings in the hall—are the Women's Club, Men's Club and Golden Agers Club.

Snow Plowing Fund has been collected each year and continued until the winter of 1979. There was a very poor response from people in the Village, asking them for their share in making this worthwhile project a success. The officer in charge of the Snow Plow Fund reported that there



were three plowing jobs completed and that there would not be enough money for the fourth plowing, if needed.

An apology was extended from the Association to this officer and his wife, for the abuse they had taken from neighbors. Some people behaved very unkindly and even rude. This couple was disheartened and decided that they no longer would be members of the Association. They were asked to remain in the Club for the sake of themselves and members who appreciated their efforts. Because of this incident and the lack of cooperation from the entire Village, this service was discontinued.

The Women's Craft Club meets the third Monday of the month, at the Hall at 7:00 o'clock in the evening. Moms and Tots Club—children not attending school—meet the second Wednesday of each month. These are two new groups that have just been organized and are sponsored by the Association.

As this History comes to the end of the fifth decade of Activities of the Association, it is with sincere hope that the ensuing years will bring more cooperation from the members by attending the meetings and serving on committees. With just a little effort on the part of all concerned, we can again bring back some of the traditional events that made this Association so outstanding in former years.

New Members would be welcomed as they are needed to bring new ideas into focus for the betterment of the Association and the neighborhood.

Initiation fee to join the Organization is one dollar per household, including anyone of legal age. This is a lifetime membership, as long as you reside in the boundaries set forth in the Constitution.

Meetings are held the first Saturday of every month, except during the months of July and August. There is a business meeting followed by the social part of the evening.

Mildred M. Losey  
Historian  
1981









