



Hawthorne Place
Neighborhood Association
September 1, 2011

Life in Historic Hawthorne



Chris & Michelle Oliver are building a new porch for their home at 1401 Lowell.

The Welcoming Porch

One of the most appealing features of Hawthorne Place is that almost every home has a front porch. The subdivision was founded and it grew at a critical time in domestic architecture. The bungalows, the latter additions of Hawthorne, were among the last 20th century building types to regard the porch as essential. When the American foursquare of Chris & Michelle Oliver needed a new porch they decided to build one that complemented the size and scope of their property. And they are doing most of it themselves. That story begins on page 4.

National Night Out



Linda Riebling & Tony Chen

Linda Riebling and Tony Chen have generously hosted National Night Out in Hawthorne Place for many years. It was a very warm evening on Tuesday, August 2, but about 68 people came to the event at the Riebling-Chen home at 1500 Whittier. Many of the attendees were young families with children. The refreshments included drinks, ice cream and cookies. A city fire truck arrived and brought out more of the neighborhood children. Ward 6 Alderman Cory Jobe attended as did Gerry Castles, our new neighborhood police officer.

National Night Out is organized each year to bring neighborhoods and police officers together in their joint efforts to make our communities safer.



Fall Leaf Pickup

Check the newspaper or call Public Works (789-2255) next month for information about the city's free leaf pickup program. The city plans to have a free leaf pickup for the entire month of November.

Branch Pickup

The city announced new rules for branch pickup on August 11. Piles must be smaller than 3 feet in height, 4 feet in depth and 10 feet in length. They must be placed on the curb and not block the street or sidewalk. Residents must contact a private tree trimming service to remove larger piles.

There are now several ways to learn when city crews will be in the neighborhood: through the Sunday edition of the State Journal-Register, online at www.springfield.il.us, by phone at 789-2246, or via the municipal cable channel 18. Residents may also dispose of branches themselves at the City Street Department facility at 301 North 17th Street.

Improvement Fund for Ward 6

On July 21, Alderman Cory Jobe announced the creation of a special fund that will be used to help pay for improvements in the neighborhoods of Ward 6. Jobe had made a campaign promise for the endeavor when he ran for office earlier this year. He will put half of his aldermanic salary of \$15,000 a year into the fund. The goal is to raise \$12,000 a year with the remaining \$4,500 to come from business and residential donations.

A sixteen member advisory committee will oversee the fund and ensure that the projects awarded funding are completed. The fund will be committed to beautification and revitalization efforts within Ward 6. The first grants will be awarded in the spring of 2012.



Alderman Jobe announced plans for the Improvement Fund at Harvard Park.



Cory Jobe & Nathan Piper
at the July 21 press conference.

Youth Initiative

Alderman Jobe also announced the creation of a Youth Initiative Committee at the July 21 press conference. The intent of this project is to give a voice and an outlet to neighborhood youth. This initiative will help keep the city informed about the needs of its youngest residents while also offering young people a means to better understand how government works.

Cory Jobe introduced Nathan Piper, a 2011 graduate of Southeast High School. Piper who will be attending Lincoln Land Community College this fall, expressed his interest in changing peer attitudes about older neighborhoods in Springfield. At Southeast HS, he was much aware of the concentration of city resources on the west side of Springfield. He contacted Alderman Jobe about his interest in getting involved in local government.

Nathan Piper will serve as chairman of the Youth Initiative Committee. He can be contacted at 741-7218. For information on the Ward 6 fund visit www.jobeward6.com or contact Jan Dillman at 691-0592.

This I Believe

Virginia Moore's essay "More Moores" was featured on radio station WUIS. It was selected for the 2011 "This I Believe" Essay Contest and first aired in February. Virginia, of 1501 Holmes, shares her appreciation of growing up in a large family. The essay can be read online at www.wuis.org.



There is No Beautification Committee

When the Hawthorne Place Neighborhood Association was organized in 1994 there was a burst of activity and interest. Hawthorne was one of many older neighborhoods that hoped to bring attention to its history and attractions as a place to live. It was also important to let city government know of its needs. There was widespread involvement throughout its six blocks. But over the years that volunteer spirit has diminished. Much of the work once done by a variety of committees is now underperformed. There is no events committee, no finance committee, no history committee, no welcoming committee, no committee that attends city zoning and council meetings. There are no committees. And there certainly is no beautification committee.

There was a wonderful turnout for this year's annual spring cleanup. It helped make the boulevard look good – and useful – for the Easter egg hunt and the annual garage sale. There were more volunteers than had been seen in a long time. But after the cleanup there are months of maintenance. There have been two or three neighbors that have stepped forward to do the weeding, raking, deadheading, and trimming to help keep up appearances. It's not working.

It can be done. Hawthorne Place has won awards from Springfield Green as recently as last year. It was suggested in last year's newsletter that each block take care of its own. If you can help, contact your block captain. If each resident on Lowell would take care of that part of the boulevard that fronts their property – i.e., weeding, picking up trash, trimming bushes, and not piling branches there – the parkway could look much better. These efforts can only help in the appearance of Hawthorne Place. In a troubling real estate market, they can only add to the appeal of our Hawthorne to potential home buyers.



1401 Lowell earlier this year when work on the new porch was begun

The Olivers of 1401 Lowell and Their New Porch

Michelle Merkley wanted an older home with an attic, a basement, and character which would be located on a quiet street with a boulevard. She found it at 1401 Lowell. That year she and Chris Oliver also found one another. Michelle closed on the house on February 14, 2000, and Chris moved in later in the year. For the past eleven years they have transformed the property. Their latest project has been the construction of a wraparound porch. It's a work in progress and the whole neighborhood has been watching.

In 2000, the backyard was filled with gravel and it was surrounded by three different types of fencing. The Olivers removed the gravel, landscaped the backyard and installed French Gothic cedar fencing.

The house had been split up into four apartments. It had been a multi-unit dwelling for decades. The Oliver's house is unusually large for an American foursquare. There are seven rooms and a bath on the main floor and four bedrooms, two baths and an extra room on the second floor. The conversion back to a single family home has been a long gradual process. Michelle remarked that it is necessary to work on fourteen things at once to get one thing done.

The intent of their restoration work has always been to respect the original features of the house while also making it as energy efficient as possible. They have re-sided the house, replaced forty-five windows and four

exterior doors. The largest window on the front has yet to be replaced but they have already acquired it. Also, they have been buying wood to make their own moldings, replicating the original moldings of the house.



Here is evidence that Chris and Michelle have done most of the work themselves. It was mid-August and they were preparing the foundation for the new front steps to their porch.

The porch has been the major project for 2011. There had been a small porch on the south side and the front porch was debilitated. Chris and Michelle felt that connecting the two made perfect sense. And what a porch it is. There are very few wraparound porches in Hawthorne Place. The front is ten feet wide and thirty feet long. The side is eight feet wide and forty feet long. They have just had the porch steps poured and they are placed in front where the original steps were located. These are wide steps bracketed on both sides by brickwork that will have concrete capstones. They saved the decorative frieze from the old porch and it will be reset in the peak above the steps. They also intend to replace the front door and reposition it central to the porch steps. It's where the door had been when the house was built. White

tapered columns will be installed above the boxes now in place on the porch.


Once the porch is finished Chris will have time for yet another project. He acquired the Paris Cleaners building at 2000 Lowell in 2010. He is remodeling it for an extra business venture. From the vanity plates on his vehicles, neighbors may have gathered that Chris makes musical instruments. It's work that he does in addition to his day job. The business will be called Infinity Luthiers. The staff will be engaged in building, repairing and restoring mandolins, guitars and other stringed instruments.

There is an anecdote to share. It's one that ties in perfectly with a house that was once purchased on Valentine's Day. Five years ago, a lady came by 1401 Lowell. Chris was at home. She explained that she had known the house as a child and would like to see it once again. She visited the house and remembered roller skating in the attic. She also told Chris that she had been given her first kiss on the front porch of 1401 Lowell. It turned out that she was in town for a Springfield High School reunion. She met the beau of her youth there – the one who gave her the first kiss. They reconnected. They were then in their sixties. And, as Chris learned, they married and are now living in Florida. If only these old houses could talk, the stories they would tell.



Michelle & Chris Oliver sitting
on their new porch steps at 1401 Lowell.
It was Sunday, August 21.

Thank-you, Michelle & Chris, for all your good work. Your efforts enrich Hawthorne Place.



**THIS PROPERTY GOING
AT AUCTION**
WEDNESDAY, Sept. 12, 2 p. m.
At 1401 Lowell Ave.

A commodious two-story home with living room, two dining rooms and a kitchen, two pantries, laundry room and reception hall on first floor. Five bedrooms, sewing room, sleeping porch and two baths on second floor, all connected by hallways which connects through sewing room with separate access to every room and the two baths. Living room is 14x26 with oak floors and fireplace. All the other rooms are of good size with built-in features. The bedrooms are equipped with one or two closets each. Basement has modern arrangement. House heated by American Ideal Boiler. Laundry room and garage are attached to a nodal outlay. The lot is about 60x12, east front, shrubbery and a block from South Grand Avenue in Lowell.

TERMS—5% down on day of sale, balance when complete abstract showing good and merchantable title is presented.

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An advertisement from the local paper.
The date of the paper was August 26, 1928.

Among the earliest residents of 1401 Lowell were Thomas Masters (1877-1930), his wife Gertrude, and their two sons, Thomas and Dexter. They resided there from 1911 to 1918, a time when Thomas's parents lived at 1501 Holmes. His brother, Edgar Lee Masters, published *Spoon River Anthology*, in 1915. His son, Thomas, would be a physician in Springfield with a 50-year career. And the other son, Dexter, would produce two important books on the dangers of atomic energy: an anthology, *Our World or None*, in 1946, and a novel, *The Accident*, in 1955.

From 1919-1928, the home was occupied by Willard Bunn, Jr. (1888-1959), his wife Ruth, and their children. The Bunn family has deep roots in our city. Willard Bunn was a descendent of Jacob Bunn (1814-1897), legendary banker, businessman and friend and political ally of Abraham Lincoln.



From the corner of Lowell and Cedar

The Porches of Hawthorne

Front porches still endure in Hawthorne Place. Last month neighbors enjoyed the front porch and front lawn at the Riebling-Chen home for National Night Out. The porches of Cheryl Jyawook and Randy Stieren & Kent DeLay were used for gatherings during last December's Winter Fest. Anyone strolling down Hawthorne streets will see people reading, visiting, and dining on their front porches.

Porches have a unique history in American life. "They were places for observing the world, for meeting friends, for talking, for knitting, for shelling peas, for courting, and for a hundred other human activities. The front porch was the physical expression of neighborliness and community." So wrote Kenneth Jackson as he lamented the demise of an American institution.

With the migration from city centers home owners would opt for cookie-cutter housing and retreat to the back yards and decks that typified suburban dwelling.

More recently, the "snout house" has prevailed in suburbia. That's a house where the garage is placed where the front door used to be. The owner can drive up to the garage, press a button, drive in and close the door. No interaction with "the neighborhood" is necessary. The desire to be cocooned in total privacy and isolation is satisfied.

How quickly times have changed when it is remembered that before the country became a social media society there was a front porch



1500 block of Holmes

society.

There is a long history to the concept of the porch, one that can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome. The heyday of the American porch was between the Civil War and World War II. In the days before air conditioning and television, and the prevalence of the automobile, homeowners appreciated the opportunity to go out and enjoy their porches. They could be close to nature. They could relax. They could be outside and yet protected from inclement weather and shielded from the direct sun.

They were proud too of how their porches introduced their home. These porches were built to unify the architecture of the main house. They shared similar elements of design and were often integrated with the roofline or an upper story. They were decorated with potted plants and trellises and casual furniture – wicker, rockers, and swings – that encouraged people to visit. Porches weren't just appreciated for their curb appeal. They represented a way of life.

So much of that way of life has vanished. There was a time when families would gather on the front porch in the evening and share their experiences of the day in conversation. It was time when it was normal to wave and say hello to people walking by and even invite them up to the porch. People waved to the passing auto traffic. Neighbors would go from porch to porch, just visiting. A baseball game might be played in the street and the cheers would come from the neighboring porches. In a time when "radio was king," people would put their radio in an open

window on the porch. It was possible “to walk an entire block and not miss a word of *Amos ‘n Andy* or *Jack Benny*.”

There are now communities and new housing developments that are bringing back the front porch. It’s often discussed as part of the new urbanism. Many home buyers and developers have come to realize that the porch is too good an idea to let slip away. Perhaps they realize that nothing facilitates turning a street of houses into a neighborhood *better* than front porches.



Porch to porch: Tricia Copeland and her son, Aaron, on their porch (1601 Lowell) converse with Erin Saal on her porch (1605 Lowell).



the 1400 block of Lowell

Here are some porches and details of porches in Hawthorne Place that are always worth a second look:



The house of Nyle Robinson (1433 Holmes) features paired columns supporting a double porch.



The front porch at 1409 Whittier had been enclosed when the house was acquired by Marcel & Debora Yoder. They opened it up again with square and circular columns and with a balustrade that they reproduced from the original.



One of the most unique house designs in Hawthorne and one with a side porch. John & Shelley Simpson reside at 1416 Holmes.



The porch swing is one of the beloved features of a porch. This porch has a balustrade with a star design. 1331 Holmes is the home of Jonathan & Laura Graves.



The simplicity of this balustrade is most appealing, especially with the rounded columns and the rounded newel post cap. This porch is at 1609 Whittier, home to Ralph Sullivan & Elaine Jenkins.



This elaborate balustrade surrounds the porch and extends down two stairways. Stan Black & Keri Luly live at 1400 Lowell.



There are many unique features of 1314 Lowell where Mike & Beth Trojahn reside. Here is a balustrade without spindles and with a decorative design that surrounds the front porch.



Arvid & Julie Hammers' porch at 1421 Lowell features ionic columns, brackets under the eaves, a timbered porch ceiling, and multi-pane windows. They all contribute to a rich visual impact.



Square columns and a Chippendale design in the balustrade highlight the porch of David & Erin Machemer of 1613 Whittier.



Many homes in Hawthorne Place have sleeping porches. A few are open but most are surrounded by windows like this one at the home of Mary Maloy (1501 Whittier).



This is a lovely half-porch. But notice the baluster design under the front window which suggests a full front porch. 1601 Holmes is the home of Chris Young.



Back porches were often used for household chores. Jean McCoy (1322 Whittier) had one built to conform to the design of the house. It can also be used as a sitting porch above her beautiful garden.



Looking north each porch seems to form an arcade. So easy to communicate with neighbors. Khristina Nanmovski owns 1333 Holmes.



The south end of this front porch forms a semi-circle. Years ago young Hawthorne musicians performed on it for a neighborhood party. 1420 Lowell is the home of Shaun & Megan Moore.



Two rockers remind us of the pleasures of sitting on a porch and visiting with friends. This porch is home to Brian & Rachel Alexander of 1334 Whittier.


Our porches are worth preserving – and using.

A WORD OF THANKS

And a heart-felt thank-you to all our sponsors:

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HAWTHORNE PLACE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

What is it? – The Hawthorne Place Neighborhood Association is an organization for residents of Whittier, Lowell and Holmes between South Grand and Laurel – the boundaries of the 1902 Hawthorne Place subdivision. The organization advocates for the neighborhood, sponsors social activities, and is a forum for working on neighborhood issues.

History – The Hawthorne Place Neighborhood Association held its first meeting at Laurel Methodist Church on October 27, 1994. The organization grew out of the effort to get a stop sign installed at Holmes and Cedar. Neighbors discovered the benefits of a group effort and a group voice.

How to join – Membership is \$20 per family for a first time membership and \$10 per family for a renewing membership. To join, contact Membership chair Burnell Heinecke (522-3842). Also, let Burnell know if you do not want to be listed in the neighborhood directory.

Directories – Neighborhood directories are available to members. Contact your block captain if you need a directory.

Neighborhood Officer – Hawthorne Place is protected by the Springfield Police Department. Gerry Castles, our Neighborhood Police Officer, can be reached at 741-0988. His email is gerry.castles@cwlp.com. If there is an emergency situation call 911.

Alderman – Hawthorne Place is in Ward 6. Our alderman is Cory Jobe. He can be reached by phone (622-9630) or email (cory@jobeward6.com). His webpage is www.jobeward6.com.

Webpage – www.hawthorneplace.us
The webpage is maintained by Chris Oliver.

Newsletter – The neighborhood newsletter is published quarterly. And the newsletter is self-supporting – thanks to our advertisers. Three cheers to them! Rates are \$10 per issue for a business card space or \$40 per year. Interested? Call Marty Vandiver, the HPNA treasurer, at 523-3544.

Block Captains – The neighborhood is divided into six “blocks,” with block captains elected to represent each block on the association board. The blocks consist of the north or south section of a street, separated by Cedar Street. Three block captains are elected each year to a two-year term at the annual meeting in the spring.

The following is a list of the current block captains.

N. Holmes
Beth Faulkner – 1420 Holmes (744-0295)
Karmen Goodrich – 1324 Holmes
(816-9478)
Karmen is the secretary of the HPNA.

S. Holmes
Chelsy Hopper – 1620 Holmes (528-7110)
Chelsy is the vice-president of the HPNA.

N. Lowell
Beth & Mike Trojahn – 1314 Lowell
(744-7303)
Beth is the president of the HPNA.

S. Lowell
Mark Mahoney – 1520 Lowell (544-7944)

N. Whittier
Lindsey Trojahn – 1317 Whittier (789-1315)

S. Whittier
Linda Riebling – 1500 Whittier (523-1450)
Marty Vandiver – 1528 Whittier
(523-3544)
Marty is the treasurer of the HPNA.

Jim Huston – 1524 Lowell (528-5256)
(HPNA newsletter since 2006)

Volunteer. Get involved.
Your neighborhood needs you.