



*Hawthorne Place*  
*Neighborhood Association*  
September 1, 2012

## Life in Historic Hawthorne



A visit to 1421 Lowell.

## You Can Go Home Again

Mary and Gene Smith, seated in this photo, acquired 1421 Lowell last year. Their intent has been to work on the property, update features, and prepare it for sale. On a Sunday afternoon (July 22), they invited past residents back to the home for a visit. Standing are: Julie Hammers, Phyllis Nichols, Arvid Hammers, Alex Hammers, Ted Hammers and Margot Hammers. More information about 1421 can be found on pages 4 through 7.



**Theresa (Jones) Vann  
(1928-2012)**

Anyone who had the good fortune to meet Theresa Vann will remember a woman who appreciated and nurtured every opportunity in life: her family, her friendships, her faith, and her profession. Theresa graduated from St. John's School of Nursing in 1949. She began work at St. John's as a maternity nurse and retired from St. John's in 2002 as Assistant Professor of Parent Child Nursing. She died on June 25, 2012, in hospice care on the eleventh floor of St. John's, the same floor where she began as a maternity nurse 63 years earlier.

In 1928, Leslie and Mary Jones moved to 1520 Whittier with two daughters, Mary and Theresa. That was the year that Theresa was born. The Blessed Sacrament School and Church, so important through her life, had recently been constructed. The home at 1520 would be Theresa's home for the next 28 years.

When she married Bill Vann in 1950, they moved into the upstairs of her parent's home

at 1520. The first three of their six children were born while they lived in Hawthorne Place.

In the photo to the left, Theresa is seen at the age of seven in her backyard on Whittier. The year is 1936. She is seated in a bentwood chair that had been acquired from a man who sold them door-to-door for 25 cents. Theresa is holding her pet cat, Georgie.



Neighbors helping neighbors.

## Ward 6 Fund

Iles Park was among the eight neighborhoods which received a Ward 6 grant of \$1000. Iles Park requested new signs to demarcate their neighborhood, a neighborhood which was established in 1893. There was a shortage of volunteers when the signs were installed so Alderman Cory Jobe rounded up some assistance from nearby neighborhoods. In the photo above are Alderman Jobe, Polly Poskin of Harvard Park, Connie Preston of Iles Park, and Jean Winn of the Historic West Side. While these volunteers raked, weeded and painted, Bill Taft, Bill Holland and Pat Ross took down the old signs and put up the new replacements.

## HPNA Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 12 – 7:00 PM

There will be a neighborhood association board meeting at the home of Mike & Beth Trojahn at 7 PM on September 12. Hawthorne neighbors are welcome. The Trojahns live at 1314 Lowell.



Mike Trojahn and the water meter.

## Community

There was a large expanse of weeds and brush, long neglected, in the 1600 block of Lowell boulevard. The HPNA board elected to apply for a Ward 6 grant to address the problem. The application identified the company that would weed and re-seed the area as well as three residents in the 1600s who had agreed to water. (One criteria of the grant was the level of volunteer participation from the neighborhood.) The HPNA was awarded the \$1000 grant on May 6. Work commenced on May. 8.

As things turned out, the watering was done by Mike Trojahn (who lives two blocks away.) Watering was done almost daily for several weeks from May to July. One of the Ward 6 signs was taken. Someone dumped tree branches and limbs on the emerging grass. Then, in July, a complaint was made about the possible illegal use of city water. The complaint filtered through the offices of two city council members, Public Works, and the Fire Chief.

The photo above of Mike and the water meter was taken in late May. The meter came from the Water Department. It was the only way to connect a garden hose with the hydrant. The meter was rented from the city. The meter registered the amount of water used. And the water bill was paid by the Hawthorne Place Neighborhood Association.

All in all, the project was a revealing microcosm of – community.



The daylily walk in late spring.

## Daylilies

Edward Russo was one of the most tireless advocates for Hawthorne Place. It was his vision and leadership that brought about the installation of the Hawthorne signs, the organization of the home and garden tours, and the planting of public garden beds. Among these efforts is the daylily walk along Laurel. Edward wanted Hawthorne to be recognized as an historic area of the city, the first planned subdivision in Springfield. And he hoped that neighbors would take pride in all beautification projects.

## National Night Out



Hawthorne neighbor Linda Mizeur and NPO Andy Zander on the Chen-Riebling porch.

About sixty neighbors attended the National Night Out event in Hawthorne Place on Tuesday, August 7. Mayor Houston, Police Chief Williams, Alderman Jobe and many other city officials visited with neighbors. Kids especially enjoyed the fire truck and firemen. Once again, Tony Chen and Linda Riebling hosted this event at their home (1500 Whittier). The intent is to bring neighborhoods and law enforcement closer together in fighting crime. Many thanks to Neighborhood Police Officer Andy Zander who stayed for the entire evening.



## 1421 Lowell

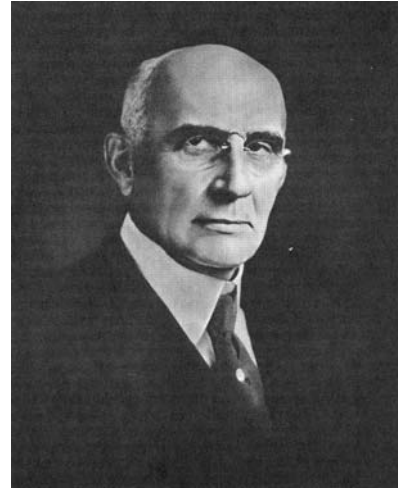


1421 Lowell (circa. 1909)

1421 is one of the earliest houses built in Hawthorne Place. In the 1905 city directory there are just ten listings for Lowell and 1421 is one of them. At the time, and for the next twenty years, the number was 1367. (Numbering would change in the mid-1920s.) We see the house above without its front porch but with a long front stairwell window once made of art glass.

Three different families are identified as living at the home in the first decade. Willis L. Desnoyers (1905-1909) was the president of the Desnoyers Shoe Company. James L. Greene (1910-1911) worked as an alienist (psychiatrist) with the Board of Administration. Alfred H. Leimbrook (only listed at 1421 for 1912) was an agent for International Harvester. Leimbrook also lived at two other houses on Lowell in that decade.

The name of George Stadden first appears at 1421 in the 1913 city directory. He was born in Springfield in 1861. At the age of fourteen he was a bundle boy at R. F. Herndon and Company. Within thirteen years he would be head bookkeeper at Herndon's. Then he took a job with Franklin Life Insurance. He would leave the company and return. Back at Franklin, he quickly rose in its ranks. In 1907, he was made a vice-president, and seven years later, he became president at Franklin. It was around this time that he made the move to 1421 Lowell and the company located to Sixth and Lawrence. When George Stadden died in 1923, it was the page one headline of the *Illinois State Journal*.



George Boynton Stadden (1861-1923)

Francis O'Brien, in his history of Franklin Life Insurance, mentions some of the major challenges the company faced during the Stadden presidency, including the loss of life in war and the influenza epidemic. "No finer comment on the success of his administration could be made than the statistics of growth," O'Brien wrote. In those ten years, the assets for Franklin had tripled.



George Benjamin Gillespie (1863-1944)

George Gillespie and his family lived next door to the Staddens. Gillespie is listed at

1365 Lowell (now 1419) as early as 1905. He had come to Springfield, with his wife and three sons, for an appointment as Assistant Attorney General for the state of Illinois. He had also started the Gillespie family law firm which would endure for nearly 100 years.

When George Stadden died in 1923, the Gillespie family moved to 1421 Lowell.



Louis F. Gillespie (1900-1972)

Louis Gillespie was raised at 1419 Lowell. It would also be the home where he started his own family with his parents next door at 1421. Louis moved to 1433 Holmes by 1930. However, when his father died in 1944, Louis moved his family (wife and three children) to 1421 Lowell. Louis was a member of his father's law firm. He was also a corporate counsel, one with a long association with Franklin Life. In 1953, he was elected chairman of the Board of Directors at Franklin Life. When Louis sold 1421 Lowell in 1956, three generations of his family had lived in three different homes in Hawthorne Place in a period of half a century.

The next resident of 1421 was the family of George Nichols. George Nichols was the third consecutive lawyer to live at that address. He had received his law degree from the University of Illinois in 1946. He and his wife, Mariam, brought five children with them to the grand house at Lowell and Cedar.



George A. Nichols (1918-1985)

With all the demands of work, home and family, George Nichols was devoted to community. Since the 1940s, George sought to improve race relations as he worked with the Springfield Council of Churches and the ACLU. His efforts were cited by the local NAACP, Frontiers International and the Springfield Urban League where he served on the executive committee. In addition, and for many years, George was a discussion leader for the Great Books program at Lincoln Library. He retired, in 1980, as the executive secretary of the Illinois Legislative Reference Bureau.



Gene Smith, Julie Hammers, Mary Smith

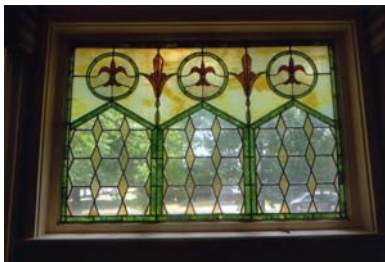
The family of Arvid & Julie Hammers was the most recent to live at 1421. It was their home for seventeen years. In the above photo, Gene and Mary Smith, the current owners, welcome Julie back for a tour of the house on July 22.

## A House Tour



1421 Lowell today

When you step through the front door you enter a central paneled foyer with a wood beam ceiling. The Tudor windows are eye-catching. To the right is the living room. The dining room is on the left. Phyllis Nichols remembers a piano in the foyer.



The dining room is large with windows opening to the porch and the south side. The art glass window (above) is in this room.



A hall pantry leads to the kitchen. It too is quite large. The Smiths have updated it with new appliances, counters, cabinets and a wood floor. The windows open to the back yard and a side porch.



One of the most appealing features is the sun room with a magnolia outside by the west windows. Julie Hammers was told these are very early Pella windows. The Hammers used this space as a reading room and where guests might have coffee after dinner.



Upstairs, the master bedroom has windows on three sides. There are two closets and a master bathroom that is tiled.



The north doors of the master bedroom open to a sitting room with Tudor windows, featuring the same pattern in the foyer just below. The French doors open to a central hallway with a suite of smaller bedrooms on the north side of the house. Each of these bedrooms had running water and windows that filled each room with light.





The front staircase is a dramatic display of steps, railing and beautiful woodwork. It leads from the living room to the central hallway and a sitting room located on the second floor.



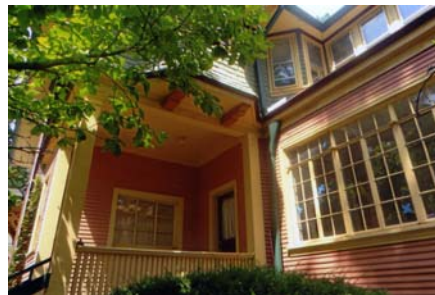
From the first landing on this staircase, there is a view of the front porch and the Lowell Avenue boulevard.



On this same landing, you can see the back servant's staircase. Across from those stairs is a main floor bathroom. The kitchen is located just beyond the stairs where you can see sunlight reflected on the kitchen floor.



There is no other library like this one in Hawthorne Place. It's big. You can enter it from the living room or from a north end porch in back of the house. It was a family room-TV room for the Hammers family. Phyllis Nichols remarked that in her time it was her father's domain.



One of two back porches at 1421 Lowell. The central window is one that belongs to the kitchen. The smaller windows to the right are for the sunroom.



The Hammers family (Julie, Arvid, Margot, Ted, Alex) and Phyllis Nichols pose on the staircase at the end of the tour. Now, the neighborhood needs great new residents – just like these – who will make 1421 a home again.

## The Good Earth's Bounty



There was a time, especially in the 1910s and the 1940s, when Americans were encouraged to plant backyard gardens. They were called Victory Gardens. Families not only grew produce, they also canned and froze it for winter consumption. Recently, homesteading had been back in vogue with a broad application in urban settings. Look around in Hawthorne. You may be surprised by the variety of these endeavors.



Here are three big containers of tart cherries from a tree right here in Hawthorne. Home grown tart cherries make the best, the very best cherry pies.



Heng Zhu of 1500 Lowell with his grandmother. The grandmother was visiting from China and she planted the small garden behind them. It's filled with vegetables. Heng is savoring the smell of mint added to the garden by Michael Douma.



Grapes growing along a downspout at the home of Tim & Donna Moore (1501 Holmes). Tim is endlessly resourceful and a committed homesteader.



Burnell Heinecke (1604 Lowell) is a very young 85. The peaches in this photo are not very clear but the tree is loaded with them. It was a good year for peaches. Burnell delights in giving sacks of them to his neighbors.



If you walk along the alleys in Hawthorne you may find berry bushes. You will also discover small plots for raising vegetables. This raised bed, filled with tomatoes, is next to a garage in an alley in the 1400 block of Whittier.





Grainne Mahoney prepared this garden space behind her garage. She and her son, Cian, planted almost everything from seed. It's one of the larger gardens in Hawthorne. (1520 Lowell)



Cian Mahoney holding a zucchini from his garden. Farming is in his blood and he could see, and feast on, the benefits of putting a seed in the ground and cultivating the plant.



David Machener (1613 Whittier) stands in the vegetable garden in his backyard. He has raised a variety of produce and enjoyed the bounty. But the most precious bounty is the one he is holding. David and his wife, Erin, recently became the parents of a daughter, their first child. Her name is Annabelle.



Guess who?



It's Tim Moore (1501 Holmes). In the photo at top he is wearing a hat and veil and holding a frame from his beehive. A true homesteader, Tim has been an advocate for urban beekeeping. The harvesting of honey is certainly a major appeal for the hobbyist. But bees are also the best pollinators of gardens. Backyard beekeeping has received renewed interest as the collapse of honey bee colonies has become a global phenomenon.

## Community Gardens


For those who need more space, consider the community garden at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Plots are 12'x12' and cost \$10 apiece. There are sections for both organic and conventional gardening. Gardeners are provided with seed samples, water, compost, mulch and hand tools. Many of these community gardeners participate in the local "Plant a Row for the Hungry" program. It's a good deal and a great opportunity. Check the internet: <http://www.agr.state.il.us/garden>.

"Let us cultivate our garden." - Voltaire,  
*Candide*

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(Dick's Shoe Repair is now closed.  
With thanks to Mark Yeates for many years  
of support to Hawthorne Place.)



## 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. Andy Zander, our Neighborhood Police Officer, can be reached at 741-0988. His email is [andrew.zander@cwlp.com](mailto:andrew.zander@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](mailto:cory@jobeward6.com)). His webpage is [www.jobeward6.com](http://www.jobeward6.com).

**Webpage** – [www.hawthorneplace.us](http://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  
(414-0783)  
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.