



Hawthorne Place
Neighborhood Association
June 1, 2010

Life in Historic Hawthorne



There is one Hawthorne event that, you might assume, could have made the *Guinness Book of World Records* or even *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. Mary Schafer of 1520 Holmes is holding a photograph of her fourteen children. Among them are *four* sets of twins. When the fourth set arrived in 1966 the family received international media attention. This portrait was taken by Hawthorne's own Rich Saal for the *State Journal-Register* in 1989. Our story on the Schafer family begins on page 4.

Easter Egg Hunt

About forty children attended the neighborhood Easter egg hunt on Saturday morning, March 27. The event was organized by Beth Faulkner with Travis and Amanda Lobmaster. Eloise Baird, better known as "The Balloon Lady," was back to entertain our youngest residents. This program continues to be one of the most popular offered during the year. Many thanks to Beth, Travis and Amanda for making it possible.



Annual Meeting

Mark Mahoney enlisted the speakers for the annual meeting of the Hawthorne Place Neighborhood Association on March 24.

Representatives from Hanson Professional Services offered a power point presentation of their study of high speed rail traffic through Springfield. They discussed the history of rail traffic in the city, previous attempts to relocate the rail lines, and the procedures they are undertaking as they study the environmental impact of increased rail traffic through the center of downtown.

Ken Crutcher, Director of Budget, and Alderman Mark Mahoney discussed the possibilities of financing neighborhood improvements such as curb and sidewalk repair and the installation of period lighting. One option is the creation of a special assessment tax district. Representatives of CWLP presented displays of period lighting that have been installed in Springfield.

Marty Vandiver shared information about the formation of a multi-neighborhood council and plans for a multi-neighborhood picnic in September.

Chelsy Hopper moderated the meeting.

Neighborhood Clean Up

The photo below includes, left to right, Deb Yoder, Riitta Anderson, Marty Vandiver, Chris Oliver, and Mark Mahoney. They were joined by Stan Black, Beth Faulkner, Karmen Goodrich, Chelsy Hopper, Jim Huston, Travis Lobmaster and three volunteers from outside Hawthorne Place. They had donated a Saturday morning (April 10) to help clean up the neighborhood. They collected trash, piled branches, swept streets, trimmed bushes, prepared flower beds, and raked and packed leaves and sweet gum balls into about 80 yard waste bags. This event was scheduled to take advantage of the city's free yard waste pick-up in early April. Almost all of this effort was focused on the north end of Lowell and along the north side of west Cedar.

The HPNA spring clean up is an attempt to make the neighborhood look its best, particularly in time for the annual Hawthorne Place Garage Sale.

The question remains as to how to involve all Hawthorne residents in this worthy project.



The Garden Beds

The HPNA is once again participating in the city's Springfield in Bloom program. The sign is already up at Lowell and South Grand. Linda Riebling and Jim Huston planted 108 red geraniums in front of the two signs at each end of the boulevard. The effort this summer will be the maintenance of the public flower beds – large and small – throughout Hawthorne Place. It can only be done through volunteers. Please help.

The Hawthorne Place Garage Sale

After the forty mile winds on Thursday (April 29), there was a forecast of thunder showers for Saturday (May 1), the day of the garage sale. The day turned out to be perfect. A beautiful, cool morning welcomed visitors to Hawthorne Place. Unfortunately, too few residents volunteered for the Association's fundraiser on Cedar and the effort was abandoned. Only three people had signed up to help at the annual meeting. That sale – of food, drinks, and plants – has typically raised about forty percent of the Association's annual operating budget.

But there were efforts of good will and good cheer.

Sam Hufnagel gave away the cupcakes she made for the bake sale to those who came to her garage sale. Beth Trojahn charged just a dollar apiece for her two dozen potted plants and then donated the proceeds to the Association. Cindy Cain, Andy Lambert, and Jim Huston pooled their potted plants – about 200 of them – for a giveaway. Each person taking a free plant was encouraged not only to garden but to participate in Springfield in Bloom. The related literature was handed out to potential and dedicated gardeners. The visitors were delighted.

Perhaps the best example of altruism was by Vicki Schmidt. She used her driveway as a fundraiser for Mercy House which helps with housing for homeless and at-risk families.



Taylor Bartel chose a penstemon at the plant giveaway.

Three Remarkable Ladies



Agnes Ann Hembreiker, Mae Henn & Tiss Cullen

These ladies have much in common. They are long-time residents of Hawthorne Place. They are members of the Blessed Sacrament parish. And each of them is beyond ninety years young. Agnes Ann enjoyed her 90th birthday last December. Mae celebrated her 90th this past April. And Tiss will be 92 in June. These lovely women share a lively intelligence and a great spirit. We are lucky to be their neighbors.

Mae and her late husband moved to Hawthorne Place over thirty years ago. Agnes Ann and Tiss share a knowledge of Hawthorne Place and its residents for a particularly long period. They both attended the opening of Blessed Sacrament school in 1925. That was 85 years ago. And that's a story for the next newsletter.

National Night Out

This annual national event in support of crime prevention is scheduled for Tuesday, August 3, from 6-8 PM, in the front yard of Tony Chen & Linda Riebling (1500 Whittier).

Multi-Neighborhood Picnic

Mark your calendars for a gathering of the older neighborhoods at Harvard Park Grade School on Saturday, September 11, from 3-7 PM. It's a potluck but fried chicken, hotdogs and drinks will be provided. There will also be live music, games for children and a bonfire in the evening.

Life in Historic Hawthorne



1520 Holmes

Vernon Schafer and Mary Kienzler were married in 1950. Their first home in married life was at 1501 Lowell where they rented an apartment. They were there briefly. But just thirteen years later they moved back into Hawthorne Place. They had started a family – a large family – and they needed a home to accommodate them. The house they chose was at 1520 Holmes. Three years later, the family and their home in Hawthorne would receive international attention.

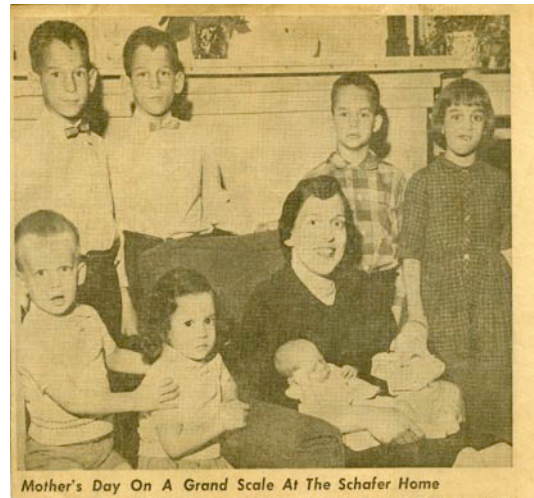
During the first five years of their marriage the Schafers were childless. Then they prayed to Saint Gerard, the patron saint of motherhood, and their prayers were answered. Their first child, Laurie, was born in 1956. And then – an abundance. By 1966, there would be twelve children living at 1520 Holmes and all under the age of ten. What brought all the media attention in 1966 was the arrival of a fourth set of twins. Newspapers covered the story from coast to coast. Letters were received from around the world. One letter was simply addressed to “Mr. and Mrs. Schafer/The couple with twelve children in ten years/Springfield, Illinois.”

Vernon Schafer was often quoted as saying that he “wouldn’t take a million dollars for any of them” and he “wouldn’t give a nickel for another.” But there would be two more children. Mary Schafer was 44 when she gave birth to the fourteenth child, Steve, in 1973.

It was not unusual in Hawthorne Place, and particularly on Holmes Avenue, to have large families. The Jennings, next door to the Schafers, had ten kids. There were eight children in the McHenry household. The Keldermans also included ten children. They all lived on the same block. The joke in the parish was that Mrs. Ozzie Langfelder (over on Whittier) and Mrs. Vernon Schafer (on Holmes) were in a competition. So frequent were their births. Midge Langfelder would become the mother of thirteen children.

Each child was a cause for celebration. The Schafers would recall how the neighborhood kids would go to South Grand to greet Vernon and Mary’s car as they returned with a new addition. They would follow the car down Holmes Avenue and then push the car up the driveway.

The Schafer children would remember a mother with the patience of Job. She rarely raised her voice. When asked how she handled such a large family, Mary Schafer said “organization was the key. Without it, everything would really be hectic.” There were, after all, 200 diapers a week. Discipline began early. When the kids were able to walk they were taught to pick up their toys and put them away when they were finished playing. As the children got older there would be a planned routine for each of them with scheduled responsibilities. Mrs. Schafer prepared a weekly rotating chore list. Chores were to be done before play.



1966: Mary Schafer with four sets of twins.

In 1966, Mrs. Schafer was followed through her daily routine to see how she managed her large family



at playtime,



during meals,



and preparation for bed.



Christmas is a special time for every child. Notice that there are twelve stockings hanging from the fireplace. There would be two more stockings in the coming years.

Mary Schafer shopped all year for the best deals to give as Christmas presents.

Christmas was one of the rare times of the year when Vernon Schafer would light the fireplace.

All of the children would have to wait upstairs until the parents had risen on Christmas day. Unfortunately for the kids, it was the one day when the parents were able to sleep late.



Karen and Kevin's 13th birthday – September 1971. Two other twins, Sue and Sally, are in the right background.

Mrs. Schafer tried to make each child's birthday something special. She would bake them an individual cake of their choice. This tradition continued after they had grown and left home.

Hawthorne Place was a neighborhood where play was always an inviting adventure. There was such an abundance of other children. They played jacks, hopscotch, kick-the-can, and hide-and-seek. They rode bikes, jumped rope, and roller-skated. There were always enough kids to field a baseball team or a football team with just members of the Jennings and Schafer families.

Halloween was a favorite holiday with neighborhood kids. Mrs. Schafer would always make popcorn balls that were a hit with trick-or-treaters.

It was a tightly-knit community. All the neighbors knew one another and parents felt secure in their sense of safety and the whereabouts of their children. As their children got older and came home later, Mrs. Schafer adapted a strategy. The side door was left unlocked. All the kids who were out had their names written on a chalkboard. Each would check their name off when they returned home. The last one in would lock the side door.

With so many family members in one house, everything was a shared experience. There were originally four bedrooms at 1520 Holmes. A fifth bedroom was added in the attic. The youngest children would line up for a bath and then they would line up to be helped with their pajamas. When one got sick, many got sick. Colds and the flu were common. One winter nine of the children had mumps at the same time.

Meals were taken in the kitchen. Dinner was at 5:30. The preparation of meals and the clean-up were always a major effort of the day. Once a week Vernon would treat the family to a fast food meal and spare his wife the trouble of cooking for a family of sixteen. He would also take an order from each child and go to the supermarket for tv dinners. When Mary was scheduled for a maternity visit, she would freeze many prepared meals that would be ready for family consumption. That was also the time when Vernon would schedule his vacations to be home and to care for the kids. It was at these times that each child's attention to duties and chores helped make the family best function in their mother's absence.



1969: Twelve Schafer children line up from youngest to oldest. The parents took a series of photos of their children in this ascending order as the family aged and expanded. They were always positioned in front of the living room windows at 1520 Holmes.



2007: All fourteen of the Schafer children are in this photo. It was fifteen years after the family home had been sold at 1520 Holmes. The sad occasion was the funeral of their father, Vernon Schafer.



1990: The year was the fortieth wedding anniversary of Vernon and Mary Schafer. Their kids asked them to pose in the dining where you can see some of the beautiful cherry wood interior.

The dining room at 1520 Holmes became an office, a tv room, and a sewing room. Hand me downs are a part of family life. But that sewing machine was an integral part of the family economy. The daughters proudly remember their summer pillowcase dresses that Mary had made for them. When Laurie, the eldest, was married, her mother made all the bridesmaids' dresses, the flower girl's gown, and the ring bearer's tuxedo.

It was always important to appreciate the value of the dollar. Vernon had been a carrier pilot with the US Navy from 1943 until 1947. After he left the service, he was continually employed for an additional forty-four years. Mary eventually went back to part-time employment. Each of their children was taught to be independent and to work for what they wanted.

The Schafers' Catholic faith was also important in their upbringing. All the children were born at St. John's Hospital. (That was where Mary was named "Mother of the Year" in 1966.) The entire family went

to Sunday Mass together at Blessed Sacrament Church. Vernon was a lay minister at Blessed Sacrament. And all the kids attended parochial schools. Mrs. Schafer remarked, "You need something to lean on. I think faith is a big help."

Mary Schafer died in 1990 after a brief bout with cancer. Two years later, after the kids were raised, Vernon sold the family home at 1520 Holmes. The children would sometimes drive down Holmes just to look at the house once again. It had been their home for twenty-nine years. Vernon passed away in 2007. It was, for both Vernon and Mary, a life dedicated to the blessings of family. In a 1989 interview, Mary told the reporter: "I never aspired to be wealthy. And I would do it all over again, even now."



2010: back row- Laurie, Jane & Beth
front row - Karen & Sue

Many thanks to the five Schafer sisters, pictured above, who shared their family photos and family memories for this story. And thanks to their siblings: Kurt, Kris, Kevin, Dan, Jack, Tom, Sally, David & Steve.

The house at 1520 Holmes was sold to Kevin and Mary Johnson in 1992. The current owners are Larry and Theresa Creviston who have lived there since 1998.

Joe Schafer & Sons



Joe Schafer is standing in the center. He is in front of his first store at 205 E. Jefferson.

Mary Kienzler and Vernon Schafer met while working at Vernon's family business. That business reflected the diverse agricultural enterprises of Springfield in the early years of the twentieth century.

Joseph Schafer Flour Feed & Poultry, which you see on the storefront above, was established in 1904. Joe Schafer was Vernon's grandfather. He had been a farmer before starting a business in downtown Springfield. It was a time when "flour and feed" companies played an essential role in providing area farmers with feed for their livestock and flour for their families. They also sold seed and fertilizer. Even city residents would make use of these supplies at a time when horses provided basic transportation and livestock might be housed in the backyard. When Joe Schafer began his trade there may have been as many as twenty "flour and feed" dealers in Springfield. His successful operation, however, continued to expand.

Joe Schafer eventually moved his business to 221 North First Street. The year was 1921. He also constructed a mill and elevator at 15th and Ridgely that same year. Soon his five sons – Ernest, John, Lubert, Frank and Carl – joined the business and the name was changed to Joe Schafer & Sons. In time they would add a

hatchery, a feed mill and even a trucking business to their operations.

In 1939, the *State Journal* highlighted the firm's thirty-fifth anniversary and identified its various facilities: a hatchery with a capacity for 100,000 eggs, a block-long warehouse and loading station, switching facilities for city railroads to handle the mill's capacity of 250 tons of feed a day, an elevator providing capacity for 100,000 bushels of grain and space for fifty cars of sacked feed. Joe Schafer, at 72, was still head of management.

That same year the *State Journal* identified Springfield's chicken hatcheries as one of the most important economic elements of the community. There were five hatcheries in the city. Those companies, along with smaller concerns in central Illinois, had set approximately eight million eggs in incubators to hatch about six million chicks in the first five months of that year. They were then shipped by parcel post to forty-six states.



The mill and elevator of Joe Schafer & Sons.

In 1952, the name of the business was changed to Gainer Mills, Inc. It was under the operation of three sons: John, Lubert and Carl Schafer. Gainer Feeds had been the signature brand of the company. In 1956, the sons entered into a long-term lease of their feed plant with Archer-Daniels-Midland Company. The Schafers continued the retail operation until the mid-1970s. The firm remained in business for seventy years.

Anyone living in an older home may be curious about the previous occupants. Fortunately, the first owner of 1520 Holmes wrote a memoir in the last year of his life. His name was Herbert O. Barnes (1867-1955).

He began his new career in 1888 when he was twenty-one. During the next several years he held teaching positions in many small Illinois communities including Berry, Pawnee, North Cotton Hill, Colean, New City and Pawnee. He married Pearl Sanders in 1893. A decade later, his reputation brought him an invitation for an interview at Springfield High School. Within a year he became the head of the mathematics department. He taught for the next thirty-five years at SHS where his colleagues included Susan Wilcox, Elizabeth Graham, Carl Lundgren and Carroll Hall.

In his memoir Mr. Barnes relates a story of the house and its beautiful wood interior. A few years before the construction of the house, Mr. Barnes had been offered five cherry trees free if he would remove them from the grounds of a church in Pawnee. He and his father-in-law cut the trees down and sawed them into board lumber of varying lengths and widths. The wood was then taken to the dry kiln at Vredenburg Company in Springfield. After the house was constructed this cherry wood was used to build a cabinet, doors and beams in the new home. In the words of Herbert Barnes, "It was a lovely home. We were so happy! We had a lovely fireplace – and she and I would sit on wintry evenings with hickory wood fires."

Herbert Barnes retired from Springfield High School in 1938. He was seventy-one and had given fifty years of his life to teaching. His heart would always be in education. But at that point in their lives, he and Pearl started a mimeograph business where they worked until their final years.

In his memoir, Herbert Barnes invites the reader to visit the grave where he and Pearl will rest at Oak Ridge Cemetery “and think about us who were just as real in life as you who live in later generations. Do come.”

A WORD OF THANKS

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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. Donald Bevins, our Neighborhood Police Officer, can be reached at 741-0988. If there is an emergency situation call 911.

Alderman – Hawthorne Place is in Ward 6. Our alderman is Mark Mahoney. He can be reached by phone (544-7944), email (mmahoney67@hotmail.com), or regular mail (1520 Lowell).

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 president of the Hawthorne Place Neighborhood Association is Travis Lobmaster – 1425 Whittier (753-3012)

The following is a list of the current block captains.

N. Holmes
Beth Faulkner – 1420 Holmes (744-0295)

S. Holmes
Chelsy Hopper – 1620 Holmes (528-7110)

N. Lowell
Beth & Mike Trojahn – 1314 Lowell
(744-7303)

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

S. Whittier
Linda Riebling – 1500 Whittier (523-1450)
Marty Vandiver – 1528 Whittier
(523-3544)

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

Volunteer. Get involved.
Your neighborhood needs you.