

PASTTIMES

BERWYN



A PUBLICATION FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE BERWYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Former Berwyn Resident, Veteran Honored

A veteran of World War II and former Berwyn resident, who was killed along with several others in a military plane crash in Nebraska in 1943, was among those honored when a Nebraska village dedicated a marker in their memory in August.

Sgt. William G. Williams was one of seventeen victims when two B-24 bombers collided in midair north of Milligan, Nebraska, on October 25, 1943, near Fairmont Army Air Field. Milligan is located about 45 miles southwest of Lincoln.

Sgt. Williams was the son of Richard and Edna Williams who lived on the 1400 block of Elmwood Avenue. His father was a junior vice commander of Cicero Post 92 of the American Legion. Williams was a graduate of Morton High School and, before he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, was employed by the American Can Company. Williams was 20 years old at the time of his death.

Only one man, Lt. Melvin Klein of Chicago, co-pilot of one of the bombers, survived the crash when he was thrown out of the plane and parachuted to earth.

In April 2010 David Olson, president of the Berwyn Historical Society, was contacted by a researcher in Milligan, Nebraska, who was seeking further information on Williams and other victims of the crash. Olson located the record of Williams' funeral and other infor-

mation at Svec Funeral Home, which handled the arrangements. Pastor Andrew Swasko from Berwyn United Lutheran Church, officiated. Sgt. Williams was buried in the Greenlawn section at Woodlawn Cemetery in Forest Park.

On August 14, 2010, the village of Milligan, Nebraska, (pop. 279), dedicated Nebraska State Historical Markers commemorating three World War II air crashes from Oct. 1943 to Sept. 1944 and honoring the thirty-two airmen who died. The event was featured on a Mike Leonard report on NBC's Today Show. A link to this spot may be found online at: <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26184891/vp/39095182#39095182>

In addition to the dedication ceremony, the event included the Milligan Czech Brass Band, a BBQ picnic, and a reception and dance.

As far as we know, no close relatives of Sgt. Williams have been located. Anyone who knows further details about Staff Sgt. William G. Williams or his family is asked to contact the Berwyn Historical Society at 484-0020, so a more complete story about him can be reconstructed.

Further information and photos can be found online at: <http://www.milliganne.org/WWIICrashes>.



Visit us at www.berwynhistoricalsociety.org
or email us at info@berwynhistoricalsociety.org



Berwyn World War I Memorial Restored

AREA WAR MEMORIALS AND GRAVESITES

Unfortunately, on reaching Berwyn's oldest memorial, located at the apex of Ogden Avenue/34th Street/Ridgeland Ave triangle, visitors have found the site not only solitarily unvisited but appearing neglected, nearly obscured by vegetation and with an American flag sadly in need of replacement.

The granite stone, placed on the site in 1918, and the brass plaque, donated the following year by the Berwyn Woman's Club, stand as a secure testimonial to eleven Berwyn men who gave their lives in World War I. But due to the passage of time, the creation of newer monuments and more recent wars, the annual flag ceremonies once held at this memorial by school students and veterans' organizations have shifted to other sites. The sacrifices recorded in stone and brass at this location appeared to have faded from people's memories.

In 1995, following a similar period of neglect, a combined effort by city officials, business leaders, veterans and community organizations led to a refurbishing of the site. The flagpole was repainted by volunteers and a new flag was flown. Trees were trimmed, the area was landscaped and 34th Street between Ogden and Gunderson Avenues was designated as "Veterans' Drive."

Now, in 2010, a similar restoration effort has been launched. The initial investigation was conducted by Lucile Evans, a Berwyn resident inspired by her late father's service in the U.S. Cavalry in 1917-18, and Donald Pechous, a current Stickney resident and former Berwyn City Clerk, who helped organize the 1995 renovation during the administration of former Mayor Thomas Shaughnessy. Throughout the summer Evans and Pechous have solicited community involvement to restore the monument to its place of importance in the community.

Work has taken place to trim bushes, remove weeds, and plant flowers to restore the garden setting. The flagpole is set to be repainted, and the flag to be lit once again at night.

Rededication ceremonies will take place on **Sat., Nov. 6 and on Veterans' Day, Thurs., Nov. 11**. Both events will take place at **11:00 a.m.** The names of the WW I veterans will be read, and wreaths will be placed at the monument. The public is invited to attend.

*The above article is based on a Letter to the Editor,
written by Lucile Evans on June 16, 2010.*

PAST-TIMES



BERWYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission is to preserve, protect and promote architectural and historic resources in Berwyn through advocacy and education.



The Berwyn Historical Society was formed in 1979 to save the Berwyn train station. Its purpose is to preserve the history of Berwyn.

The Society is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization whose membership is open to all individuals, families, community organizations and businesses. Our office is located in the North Berwyn Congregational Church, 1241 South Oak Park Avenue. Membership includes educational programs, special events and quarterly newsletters. To volunteer or for more information, contact the BHS office at (708) 484-0020 **or** write to: Berwyn Historical Society, PO Box 479, Berwyn, IL 60402.

BOARD MEMBERS

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We welcome replies to the information contained in this newsletter. Article contributions are also welcome. Please call or write us at the above address. The Past-Times newsletter is a membership benefit of the Berwyn Historical Society.

The Depot District

(CONTINUED)

the railroad refused, saying there were already stations at LaVergne and at Harlem Avenue. Undaunted, the two developers built a station themselves and the railroad agreed to stop there.

With a growing subdivision and railroad station to serve it on the way, Piper and Andrews needed a name. They sought out the CB&Q's passenger agent, P.S. Eustis, who gave them a set of railroad timetables. After poring through them, they came across Berwyn, a small town about 18 miles west of Philadelphia. Berwyn, Pennsylvania, was a beautiful and affluent village noted for its fine gardens and scenic setting. Since this was exactly the sort of community that the two developers hoped to replicate in Illinois, Piper and Andrews decided that Berwyn was the perfect name. On May 17, 1890, the Cicero Town Board gave its approval and Berwyn, Illinois was born.

Soon, a general store and office building costing about \$6,000 was constructed, followed by a small post office. Homes quickly followed and gradually, eight miles of streets were macadamized and sidewalks were laid. In those early years, Piper and Andrews were actively promoting their growing community, advertising extensively in Chicago newspapers.

Berwyn's growth was such that soon some form of local government was necessary and, in 1902, it was incorporated as a village. Six years later, on June 6, 1908, Berwyn became a city, receiving its official charter from the State of Illinois. The 1910 census recorded Berwyn's population as 5,841.

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw Berwyn develop in much the same way as other Chicago suburbs. It was a place in which, as "The WPA Guide to Illinois" states, "harried commuters relaxed in the evening, weeded gardens, set hens, and mowed their lawns."



COMMEMORATIVE POSTERS

FOR SALE



*Kristine Dillon, design
Fran Gregory, illustration*

Posters are available for \$5.00

**Find them at the
Berwyn Public Library**

THE BERWYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS NOW ONLINE

Please visit our new website at
www.berwynhistoricalsociety.org

Sign up for email notifications, browse previous Past Times, Galleries and Resources.

We are looking for feedback and welcome any interesting stories or photos you would like to share on the BHS website.

Thank you all for a successful 4th Bungalow Tour 2010

BUNGALOWS AND MORE

I am pleased to share that the 2010 bungalow tour was a success. The tour is the largest annual fundraiser for the Society, so it is always my hope that turnout of tour participants will be strong. We had roughly 300 people through the houses on Sunday, September 26, not a bad number when you consider we took a year off from holding the event and then changed the time of year it took place.

This year we had the chance to showcase some especially lovely houses which were not the traditional brick, Chicago-style bungalows synonymous with Berwyn. The organizing committee quickly agreed that it was an opportunity not to be passed up. David Olson, president of the BHS, suggested giving this year's tour a title which would encompass the additional housing styles added to the bungalow roster. He suggested we call the tour "Bungalows and More." We did just that and, liking the flexibility it allowed us, plan to use it for future tours.

Volunteer involvement is essential for the tour to take place. I have always made a point of touring each house the day of the event. I like to hear the presentations given by the house captains and docents, and I like to make sure everything is running smoothly. These volunteers did a fantastic job sharing the history and points of interest of the houses with the tour-goers. I felt very proud of them. Not only did they make the BHS look good, but they made the city of Berwyn shine. For one day, this tour brings a large and diverse group of Berwyn's citizens together who volunteer to work in such a positive manner, and they showcase all that is best about the city of Berwyn. While we have never set an age restriction for docents, we have never had a docent *this young* participate in the event. Shannon Donnelly, a preteen, was asked to volunteer as a docent when it was apparent how much she knew about the history of her family's house and how enthusiastic she was to share it.

The houses, the houses! We can't thank the home owners and St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church enough for generously opening their doors to the public. One of the docents shared with me that when asking a tour-goer which home was their favorite, the response given was, "that's like asking

me which one of my children is my favorite, they are all so different." The tour featured two lovely Chicago-style bungalows, each situated on a corner lot. Both houses were believed to be built in 1929 and share similar layouts as well as beautiful art glass windows. The Dunham House and the Chester Bragg House boast architectural pedigrees. The former was designed by the prestigious firm of Tallmadge and Watson and built in 1907. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The latter is a rare example of a Frank Lloyd Wright American System Built house and was constructed in 1916. The tour also featured a beautiful Queen Anne style house from the Victorian period. Built in 1890/91, the interior of the house features original open fretwork screens in the parlor and dining room, and an impressive floor to ceiling buffet/china cabinet. The exterior of the house features a turret topped by a roof finial and decorative stone insets near second story windows.

A charming arts and crafts style bungalow, built in 1920, featured displays of the many documents and photos pertaining to the house left by the original owners. The current owners positioned one of the chairs belonging to the original owners in the exact spot it appeared in a circa 1920 photo. An especially large, California-style bungalow completed the roster of the tour houses. Tour-goers took advantage of the pleasant fall afternoon, sitting in one of the many chairs lining the home's large front porch, one of the defining features of this style of bungalow. Believed to be built in 1908, the home gives a nod to its past with a lovely brick fireplace surround flanked by built-in bookcases and art glass windows. It also features a finished basement complete with built-in bar and a wine cellar as well as a Jacuzzi spa. All of the houses that were featured on the 2010 tour are located in the vicinity of the Depot District.

To the home owners, the volunteers, the organizing committee, and all those who attended this event, please accept a big heartfelt thank you from me as well as my fellow board members at the BHS.

Sincerely,
Kristine Dillon
Organizing Chairman