



My Ravinia

A History of Jens Jensen Park: The Early Years

By Elliott Miller

In the beginning there were woods – Ravinia was described as a wild place in a deep Eastern Woodland forest. This suited the original developers of Ravinia, who envisioned a place to dwell in the midst of “God’s nature,” as a rustic summer respite from the hot, gritty streets of Chicago. Ravinia was supposed to be a back to nature retreat; so, by design, the land was allowed to remain heavily wooded with oak and hickory trees, crab apples and hawthorns. When Ravinia was planned in 1873, parks were not provided for. Perhaps they thought the general wooded nature of Ravinia was sufficient open land for a part-time retreat for Chicago residents. After all, who needs a park when you live in a forest?

In time, as Ravinia’s population increased, needs of the community changed. In a painfully slow process, most of the necessary Ravinia infrastructure improvements had been made by 1920. Ravinia became a rapidly growing suburb of full-time residents, and modern amenities were absolutely necessary. But compared to the need for running water and functioning sewers, paved streets and cement sidewalks, parks were the last thing on the minds of early residents. The only improvements that were totally lacking by the 1920s were parks and public beaches in Ravinia. A rapidly growing Ravinia had attracted enough full-time residents to realize that a gathering place was needed for seasonal festivals, concerts, etc., which would help build community spirit.

In the 1920s, well before highways were envisioned, the majority of people traveling from Chicago arrived in Ravinia by train. The area surrounding the Ravinia train station was sacred land to some residents, especially to those who worked in Chicago and commuted by train. The location was considered “Ravinia’s doorstep,” for tired businessmen returning from Chicago, and clients and guests arriving for a visit. So the

stretch of Roger Williams Avenue, immediately east and west of the Chicago & North Western Ravinia station, was called the “entrance” or “doorstep” to Ravinia. In the minutes of the Ravinia Commission, importance was attached to making the streetscape of these blocks as beautiful and tidy as possible. The Ravinia Commission paid a clean-up man to patrol Roger Williams Avenue. Efforts were made, with varying degrees of success, to acquire these properties, which ultimately resulted in Jensen and Brown parks.



Jens Jensen, noted native landscape architect was asked to landscape the park, which was later in his honor (Photo Courtesy, the Chicago Park District)

The noted landscape architect Jens Jensen was asked to “beautify the new park.” Jensen has been called a “nature poet” and a “landscape artist.” He was the Superintendent of Chicago’s West Park system at the beginning of the 20th Century and designed many parks, large and small, in Chicago. From his summer home and studio, located on Dean Avenue, Jensen also

landscaped many private estates and public areas in Highland Park and throughout the North Shore. When the Ravinia Commission asked Jensen to landscape the grounds of Ravinia School and the new park, he gladly consented. In 1924 Jensen drew up the first of his plans for the park. In his sketch there were native trees and shrubs that

(Continued on page 8)

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Volunteerism is an essential piece in keeping the Ravinia Neighbors Association healthy and strong.

Consider getting involved.

Attend a meeting, visit the RNA event booth or watch the website and newsletter for ways your involvement can strengthen RNA and your neighborhood.

Construction to Start Early Next Year of a New Ravinia Fire Station on the Same Site

By Jeffrey Stern

After 92 years of housing fire apparatus serving the Ravinia community, the familiar Tudor-style fire station on Burton Avenue has maintained its quaint outward appearance, but like other things that have survived that long, it can no longer meet the needs of 21st Century firefighters to perform efficiently.

At the time of its construction, fire engines were of such modest size that the station could be built with two apparatus doors separated by a brick-enclosed pillar. There was also enough space on the floor around the apparatus to accommodate boots and other gear firemen would need to jump into as they were heading out on a call.

You don't have to use your imagination to visualize what a fire engine looked like in those days. The pumper that was assigned to the Ravinia fire station when it opened in 1929 has been kept in working condition by the Fire Department over the years, and often appears in the city's Fourth of July Parade, and on other special occasions.

The operational durability of the fire station itself, however, is another story. Even after structural work that allowed removal of the supporting pillar to create a single apparatus door, the width of the bay that must be shared by the current engine and ambulance remains only 23½ feet, and the width of the apparatus door is 14 inches less.

The space issue is at a point where a side mirror on today's Ambulance 32 has to be kept turned inward while parked to prevent it from striking part of Engine 32, standing little more than two feet away, as one responds to a call just ahead of the other.

After some debate over where a new fire station should be located to reach the farthest most point of a service area that extends beyond the expressway to the west, it was determined that

the current site, albeit small, was still best suited to reach homes and businesses on both sides of the tracks from Roger Williams Avenue just to the north.

While the design of the station has yet to be finalized, it will occupy the same general footprint as the old one but will extend eastward close to the sidewalk on Burton, filling in most of the landscaped area that is there now. Construction is expected to start before the end of March 2022, and to be completed within a year.

The City will be drafting an agreement with the Park District for temporary facilities to be set up

(Continued on page 12)

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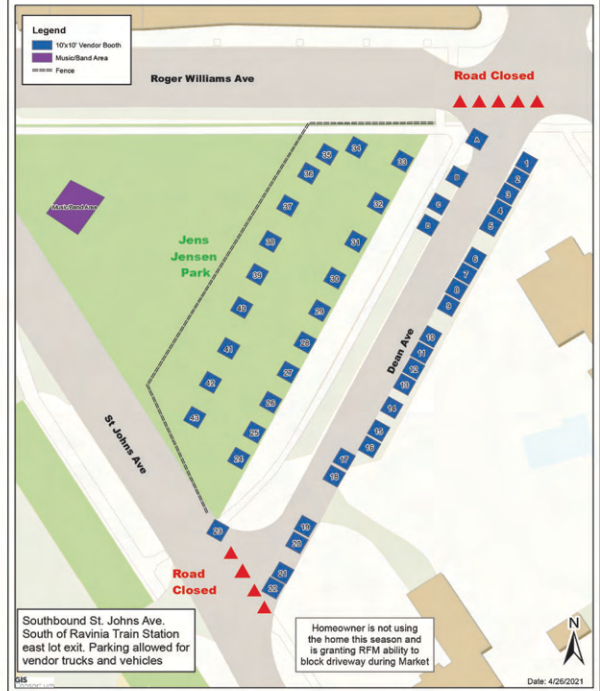
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2021 Ravinia Farmer's Market



Our Commitment To A (Safe) Market is a lifeline to the local farmers, ranchers and artisans who need a place to sell their products. For shoppers, it is a source for local, healthy fare that you can purchase in a Covid-19 managed space that meets the City Guidelines. Shopper Traffic Flow Signage and verbal instruction will be utilized to help facilitate good social distance.

Your Health Is Our First Priority.

By Executive Order #8, Governor Pritzker declares Farmers' Markets essential businesses; therefore, we have CDC guidelines in place for customer and vendor safety during this pandemic. We will make adjustments based on the current recommendations from the Governor.

Please Be Mindful For Yourself And Others

The RFM will look pretty much the same it did last year, because the City of HP and the RFM are interested in running a safe farmers market. Vendors have received instructions, explanations, background, and whatever else they require to redesign the way they set-up, present their product, alternative ordering and payment procedures, and most importantly, how to interact with their shoppers.

We Must Care For Each Other

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New Ravinia Fashion and Music Wellness Center Has International Roots

By Jeffrey Stern

Spending time in diverse parts of the world and absorbing the richness of other cultures can be among the most rewarding experiences in life, and Noah Plotkin and his creative wife Nana have the talent and enthusiasm to pass the value of those experiences on to others to enjoy.

Now he and Nana are bringing what they have drawn from their exposure to other cultures and their passion for the arts back to Ravinia, the community where Noah grew up and where members of his family have lived for several generations.

They are opening The Atelier, a shop at 455 Roger Williams, which will offer a variety of items reflective of Nana's expertise. Born and raised in Tokyo, Nana Okazaki Plotkin is a highly trained seamstress and pattern maker who designs one-of-a-kind outfits for her clients. Her background and awareness of current art movements impacting the fashion industry also influence her distinct style.

Nana will run the shop, which will feature custom dress and jacket designs for men, women and children, as well as accessories to go with every occasion. She will also provide alterations to vintage clothing, repurposing fabrics and family heirlooms. The Atelier will begin accepting clients in June, initially by virtual appointment.

At the back of the shop will be Noah's office, which will serve as the home of Life Rhythms Inc., a music wellness agency he created eight years ago to use the therapeutic effects of music to help seniors in assisted living facilities and others with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and dementia try to recover. He also works with special needs children who may benefit from the power of rhythm and music.

As Covid restrictions loosen, Noah plans to engage in programs providing musical entertainment that will allow participants to interact with friends and family to help them regain and share

a sense of the happier experiences of their earlier lives. While these programs are currently offered on Zoom or Face Time, Noah believes that as the weather warms up they can be held outside with proper distancing in Jens Jensen Park and other local venues, as well as in private sessions with families.

A well-established percussionist and drummer, Noah learned to play drums at four, and perfected his art in a variety of musical groups while attending Ravinia, Edgewood and Highland Park High School. He graduated from Boston's Berklee College of Music in 2007. Although his interests have led Noah to participate in musically related enterprises in such varied locales as Tel Aviv, Sao Paulo, Amsterdam and Brooklyn, his ties to Ravinia have drawn him back to his roots to settle with Nana, while technology allows him to maintain connections with the artists he associates with worldwide.

Demonstrating their commitment to becoming part of the Ravinia community, Noah and Nana recently purchased a home on Burton Avenue, not far from the one on Pleasant Avenue where Noah was born. His parents, Jonathan and Robin, live on Woodland Road, having met 63 years ago as toddler neighbors on South Deere Park Drive.

Noah is proud of the legacy his family has established in their fields of interest and service to our country. Oscar Plotkin, a great-grandfather who moved to Highland Park in 1936, was president of the Oshkosh Trunk & Luggage Company, which was founded by his father-in-law Samuel Dresner.

Oscar's son Samuel, Noah's grandfather, was a real estate developer, and his son, Jonathan, is a nationally published editorial cartoonist and illustrator whose work also appears in store

(Continued on page 12)

2021 Ravinia Farmers Market Opens June 2nd at Jens Jensen Park

By Peggy Malecki

The Ravinia Farmers Market will open its 43rd season from 8 am to 1 pm on Wednesday, June 2nd, at Jens Jensen Park. Market Manager Ed Kugler invites everyone to stop by and help kick off the 2021 market season with a Customer Appreciation Day featuring giveaways and more.

This is the second year the Ravinia Neighbors Association will be the Permit Sponsor for the Market, which allows the weekly event to have non-profit status, according to Kugler, who has managed the market since 2017. This year's market will feature more than 20 local Midwest farmers, food producers and food artisans under tents along Dean Avenue and through Jens Jensen Park.



The 2021 market will continue the successful pre-order curbside pickup option, explains Kugler. New this year, he adds, will be a vendor co-op tent that will allow market shoppers to choose from an

even greater selection of locally grown and produced market items. Kugler is especially proud of the new website for the Ravinia Farmers Market (RaviniaFarmersMarket.com), which highlights weekly market information and vendors, and features links, videos, recipes and more. Customers can also look ahead to the season for expanded social media coverage, a newsletter, market job board and more.

The RFM is a member of the Illinois Farmers Market Association (ILFMA). This organization works with the governor's office to determine how all farmers markets in Illinois will follow the current COVID-19 protocols.

“These protocols remain at the forefront for the safety of customers, vendors and market staff,” Kugler says, “and COVID-19 state, ILFMA and City of Highland Park protocols on opening day will determine how the market is managed and presented to the public at that time.”

Market staff will continue to do its best to welcome and inform all those who enter the taped off, enclosed market space, that there is one way direction from entrance to exit; 6-foot distancing between customers, and appropriate distancing from each vendor. Contactless, alternative payment methods, as well as cash, will be accepted; sanitizer dispensers will be available, and no pets will be allowed.

This year's vendors will include: 3D Baking Company, Baked By Robin, Billy Doe Meats, Brightonwoods Orchard, Chopping It Up, Dilly Dally Provisions, Farmer Nick's LLC, Honey With Style, Hotcakes Bakery, K & K Farms, Klug Orchards, Magic Crepes, Middleton's Preserves, and Morning Glory Grains. Also participating will be Natural Environments, Newport Coffee House, Nourish, Old McHenry Farms, Organic Food Club, Richard Oosterhoff & Son, Riverside Café, Sunrise Topiaries, Sweetland Bakery, Tamales Express, The Cheese People and Umland Crunchy Cheese Bites.

As the Ravinia Farmers Market heads into its new season, Kugler reports with deep regret that Lydia Davis, the second market manager, passed away last Fall. “We would like to acknowledge Lydia's 10 years of integrity and due diligence to the Market, and also recognize her son Eddie for his dedication and support,” Kugler says.

For more information, visit RaviniaFarmersMarket.com; Ed Kugler 847.561.1302. ■

A History of Jens Jensen Park: The Early Years (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 1)



Jensen's sketch for the design of the Augusta Rosenwald Memorial— basically a council ring surrounding a pool and boulder. (Courtesy, Bentley Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.)



Augusta Rosenwald (Photo courtesy Peter Ascoli)

defined two meadows, along with one of Jensen's signature council rings, albeit modified as a fountain.

Jensen relied heavily on his foremen, such as Alfred Caldwell, to interpret and implement his ideas in the field. Caldwell was Jensen's Project foreman from 1924 to 1930. He was entrusted with the construction of the Rosenwald Memorial, which was his last project with Jensen. Jensen had no better foreman than Caldwell, who went on to become a noted landscape architect.

The Augusta Rosenwald Memorial

A hallmark of a Jensen's landscape was his council ring - circular flagstone bench often with a fire pit in the middle, based largely on



Joe and Rena Menoni with the Rosenwald memorial rock that Al Caldwell found for the Rosenwald memorial and Joe hauled from southern Wisconsin, 1930, Courtesy Rena Menoni

(Continued on page 9)

A History of Jens Jensen Park: The Early Years (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 8)

the circular kivas of the Pueblo Indians. In Jensen's mind, his council rings were a symbol of democracy in which all people are equal. Jensen was known to adapt his council ring design to suit a particular purpose, in this case, a memorial pond.



Alfred Caldwell, Jensen's foreman for the Augusta Rosewald Memorial (Courtesy, Chicago Park District)

Much has been written about Julius Rosenwald, but what about his wife, Augusta (Gussie) Nussbaum Rosenwald (1868-1929)? She was a philanthropist, donating to Jane Addams' Hull House and the women's suffrage movement, in

When she died, the Northshore Garden Club asked Jensen to create a memorial for her. Jensen seized the opportunity to make a



The Augusta Rosenwald Memorial pond in 2019. The Rosenwald Memorial is a masterful combination of several Jensen elements, the council ring, pool, and boulder.

different sort of pool, with a huge boulder in the middle, to symbolize the Rosenwald memorial.

About the photo of Alfred Caldwell: In a 1991 interview with the author, Al Caldwell explained how he created the memorial:

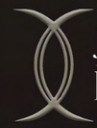
"I found the big rock in southern Wisconsin. It broke on the way down. We had to cement it back together. I liked the rock because of its striations. When we filled the pond, with those striations, it looked like the rock was growing out of the water.

"The flagstone for the council ring came from Menoni & Mocogni. I chinked the stones in and out and raked out the mortar six inches deep to

(Continued on page 12)

which she became heavily involved. She developed a keen interest in native landscaping and was one of the founding members, along with Jensen, of the Friends of Our Native Landscape, an organization dedicated to "discussing a conservation policy that protects tracts of Illinois landscape of historic and scenic value to the people of the state."

She and her husband, Julius Rosenwald (the chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Co.), hired Jensen to landscape their house in Chicago and then their summer estate on the shore of Lake Michigan at the end of Roger Williams Avenue (now Rosewood Park). She was also the most prominent supporter of the local Garden Clubs.



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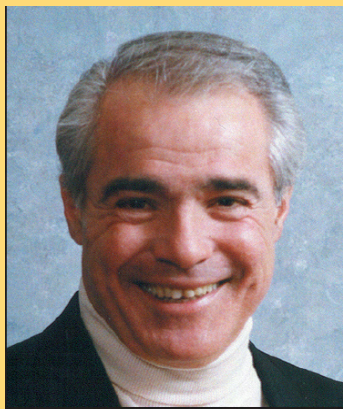
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3. Strain into a coupe glass
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BWB Rocks Making a Big Splash in a Small Space on Roger Williams

By Jeffrey Stern

When folks don't feel like they want to fix dinner at home, and aren't in the mood for a sit-down meal at a restaurant, but prefer something less traditional that isn't typically delivered to their door, there's a new place to satisfy their tastes right in the heart of the Ravinia Business District. It's called BWB Rocks.

Bowls, Wings & Burgers has its home in a tiny storefront formerly occupied by Hunan Pearl, at 586 Roger Williams, and has a wide variety of take-out offerings. With a brand-new kitchen, BWB serves double duty by providing dishes for customers at the Ravinia Brewing Company, two doors to the east, which is run by the same group.

Kris Walker, Paul Bumbaco and Jeff Hoobler are the principals behind the new enterprise. They had been renting a commercial kitchen in Northbrook for their meat preparation and other needs at Ravinia Brewing. When the Hunan Pearl facility became available, they jumped at the opportunity to acquire it and simplify their operations.

The bowls in the BWB name can be filled with servings of salads, rice and protein; the wings refer to chicken wings, though chicken sandwiches are also available, and the burgers are made of a blend of basic meats and "rock" sauce, which is concocted from a closely guarded, secret recipe.

Bumbaco said, "We felt we could create a space in BWB that could provide fast, fresh and local food that an independent establishment like ours is in the best position to do." Hoobler is clearly "excited about the reception we have had from the community, and the great reviews that have



brought customers from across the North Shore."

Walker called the menu "a balance of comfort food and healthy options," with all items priced under \$12, selections for kids being cheaper. Among other specialties is the E-I-E-I-O Burger, evoking images of products fresh from the farm, which includes fried egg and bacon, topped by a bourbon bacon jam.

BWB take-out orders can be made online, and there is also an outdoor eating option. ■

A History of Jens Jensen Park: The Early Years (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 9)

get the look of natural rock.”

The Rosenwald Memorial is a masterful combination of several Jensen elements; the council ring, pool, and boulder.

A personal note: During the last decade, the park, much to the joy of neighbors, has become a focal spot for community events including, an Earth Day celebration and a Thursday night music series, complete with food trucks.

Unfortunately, portions of Jensen Park have become neglected. The use of the park has brought maintenance issues with the turf, shrubs, trees and the Rosenwald pool. The Park District of Highland Park is actively meeting with neighbors to solicit views and outline their new (in development) planting and maintenance plans. The maintenance of the Rosenwald pool has proven to be the most problematic, with a combination of mechanical failure (the filtration pump) and vandalism (the light fixtures of the pool). ■

Construction to Start Early Next Year of a New Ravinia Fire Station on the Same Site(Cont'd)

(Continued from page 3)

in Brown Park across Burton from the old fire-house while it undergoes demolition and the new one is built. This will involve bringing in trailers for a sleeping area, bathroom and kitchen for the crew on duty, along with a radio room and utilities hook-up. Both the engine and ambulance will occupy a tent-like facility on the same site. ■

New Ravinia Fashion and Music Wellness Center Has International Roots (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 6)

front windows around our community. He is also a past Chairman of the city’s Cultural Arts Commission and Board President of the Art Center of Highland Park.

William P. Levine, Noah’s grandfather on his mother’s side, saw service in World War II that included landing at Utah Beach during the D-Day invasion of France, and he was one of the liberators of the German concentration camp at Dachau. He remained In the Army Reserves and reached the rank of Major General. ■



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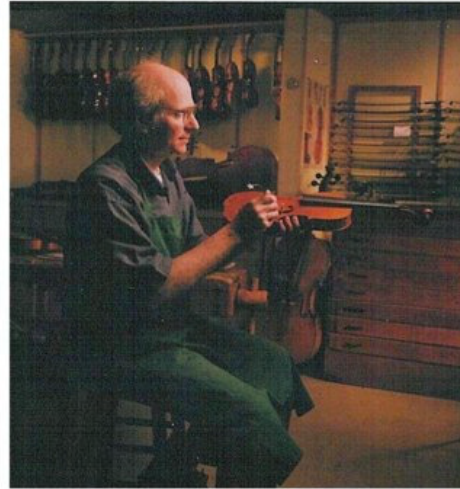
By Michael Stroz & Doug Purington

Last month the RNA Board Members, Doug Purington and Ed Kugler, and RNA member Chadd Berkum joined RNA President Mike Stroz in the awarding of 68 gift certificates to Director of Public Works, Ramesh Kanapareddy, to distribute to his organization. These \$65 gift certificates to the six Ravinia based restaurants, Abigail's American Bistro, BWB Rocks, Happy Sushi, Piero's Pizza, Ravinia Brewery Tasting Room, and Viaggio's were to show the community's appreciation to these workers for their extraordinary work under tough conditions when water and gas mains in our area broke during the cold snap in late February.



RNA Board Members

The RNA in conjunction with our corporate sponsors, Highland Park Bank & Trust and Albion Development Group and 73 of our fellow RNA members and residents donated \$4,420 to say "thanks." The RNA is a local community association of residents in the southeastern quadrant of Highland Park, dedicated to promoting our local community and businesses and has been in existence since 1998. The Association currently conducts a virtual monthly meeting the first Thursday of the month. More information is at www.ravinianeighbors.org. ■



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Ravinia Merchant Recognized by City of Highland Park

By Doug Purington

At the end of October, Jeff Cohen of Jeff Cohen Photography, 485 Roger Williams Avenue, Highland Park, wrapped up his 2020 BACKYARD PORTRAITS fund raiser after photographing 34 families all who supported his efforts to help first responders, health care workers, families in need and causes supporting Black Lives Matter all during this tumultuous year.

Beginning in late May, he photographed families in backyards and patios from as far north as Gurnee to the shores of Lake Michigan on an Evanston beach. And during his six-month adventure raised nearly \$5000 for a diverse group of very worthy causes. He thanks all those who participated for their support and generosity and he's sure each of the organizations receiving a donation thanks him even more. ■



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If you have questions, please contact Doug Purington: doug.purington@att.net.

Regular RNA meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of every month.
Meetings offer our members a chance to bring up new ideas and discuss issues you care about.

Our next meeting is to be virtual via conference call on Thursday, July 1st