

Membership Time!

If you forgot to send in the membership form included in the January Civic Association Newsletter, you can still become a member by sending in the form at the end of this newsletter.

Recent Donations to the OBHS

We have had several recent additions to our collections. Cathy Christensen, friend of Dorothy Dean Cavanaugh, donated a CD of Dorothy discussing early Oak Brook history. This was produced by WYCC in 1998.

Bill Watson, long time resident, donated the book *Memories of Oak Brook* by William R. Watson, Jr. and Beverley. A review of this book appears below. He also donated an annexation zoning map for the Village of Oak Brook, illustrating the location of the Butler headquarters and buildings on the present McDonald's property.

Mitty Bredy, daughter of the late Village Trustee, Ed O'Brien, donated many of his photos and documents.

Robert Waite, OBHS member and resident for many years, donated Fullersburg Area Association reports from the 1960's – 1990's and many important village documents, from his connection with the village and Fullersburg Association.

Donations relating to Oak Brook's history are always welcome and appreciated.

“Beverley's Memories* of Oak Brook”

The memories of Beverley Beutler Watson

1932-1994 *as recorded in 1991 by William R. Watson, Jr.



*Front view of the Beutler home on Oak Brook Hills Rd
Taken by son, Rob, April, 1995*

Bill Watson is an “encyclopedia of Oak Brook's history”. He was President of the Historical Society and over the years has interviewed on tape about 50 of Oak Brook's “pioneers”. He continued an oral history project for the OBHS started by Mary Imrie in 1989. These tapes are an important resource for anyone interested in the history of our area, or doing research for a school project or genealogy.

Probably the most interesting of Bill's interviews were done of his first wife, Beverley, who died suddenly in 1994 at age 61. About 1999 or 2000 Bill decided to preserve Beverley's memories on paper for his children and

grandchildren, and while doing this, he decided to edit her comments into a document for the Historical Society. In 2002 he started the editing project to organize their interviews into a “story” that would be of interest to many people. In the book he included pictures and old assessment plats where Beverley lived almost 52 years, from the time she reluctantly moved here as a 9 year old.

Imagine a child who lived in Oak Park in a beautiful 10 room house suddenly being uprooted and moving to a small rundown house on a farm located in a remote area. No wonder she felt isolated and lonely, with widely separated houses and a long bus ride to school. Originally hating the farm, she grew to love it and in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s did extensive research, resulting in a “genealogy” of the 80 acres.

She learned that Ben Fuller who had built a house on York Rd. in 1840, acquired 40 acres through a Federal Land Grant in 1845 and later acquired another 40 acres adjacent to the first. This 80 acre parcel was to become the Beutler Farm, which was bounded by 31st on the south, what is now Ginger Creek on the north, Butterfield Country Club on the east and Oak Brook Drive on the west. Ben Fuller sold this property in 1848 for \$120 to Reynolds Kenyon, who built a crude 25 ft. X 30 ft. (768 square feet) farmhouse in 1856. Following his death (he was murdered with an axe in the farmhouse!) the land was owned by a succession of buyers until Wesley W. Beutler, Beverley’s father, bought it in 1939.

The family lived at Butterfield Country Club for a while until the house could be fixed up. A gravel road had to be put in to replace the cinder path leading from 31st Street. A well had to be dug and electric power and telephone were brought in. They installed an oil furnace and took out a wood burning stove and hand pump that pumped water from the cistern. A hog house was turned into a big room where her parents entertained guests.

Instead of roller skating and having friends to play with, Beverley had to take care of the chickens and milk the cows. Before and after school, she had to help her grandfather with the chores. She had to break the ice in the winter to get water for the chickens. And she was bored!

Eventually she met some girls from school who lived at York Rd. and Canterbury Lane. But she either had to be driven to play with friends or walk two miles.



Farmhouse in 1939 before renovation



Farmhouse after renovation in 1942

Beverley remembered the Franciscans “hayed” the front 20 acres. Of the back (north) 40 acres, about 20 acres were swampy. The remaining land was used it for cows, sheep and horses, with some left for farmland. Her grandparents moved to California in 1945 so they needed help with the farm. The pig house was converted to make a residence with living room, kitchen, bedroom and bath, where a family who operated the farm lived for a year or so. After that the pig house became an office for her father.

On the east side of Midwest Rd., north of the Thurston cemetery where graves were uncovered in 2001 during widening of the road, there was a big farmhouse. The cemetery was in use at that time. South of the current Walgreen’s store (which was then Andy’s Steak House), was a pig farm owned by Hank Traedow (now the tollroad). On the east side of Meyers Rd. from 35th to 39th St. was the Sweeney sheep farm, and the Beutlers got sheep from them.

Walter Retzel lived on Lincoln, and his brother Art lived on York Rd. Art’s wife, Dorothy, a real pioneer of Oak Brook, still lives there (Bill recorded her memories of Oak Brook). Next to the Retzels lived the Boeger family. Ardelle, (now Jerrols), a life member of the OBHS, lived there as a child.



Beverley on “Queenie”, 1940-41. Queenie ran away with her mother, who never rode another horse.

Many houses Beverley remembered were torn down as Paul Butler bought up land. There was a family by the name of Kiefer (one married a Traedow), and the Hanson family living on the north side of 31st St. near the new library, where an old airstrip was located. Houses on the east side of York Rd., north of 31st St. were owned by Willard Carlson and Margaret Davis, just north of the “new” Butler Jr. High. Beverley helped the Butler “hay gang” where the golf course is now located, on the west side of York Road, during World War II, driving the tractor and pulling the hay wagon.

The Base Farm, now Brook Forest and Briarwood Lakes, was owned by the Butler family, where Black Angus cattle were raised. The farm included the area from Midwest Road on the west, to Jorie Blvd. on the east, to 22nd St. on the north, and 31st St. on the south. The Butlers installed an underpass under Rt. 83, originally for horses, now part of a bike path connecting Brook Forest to the Park District.

(This story will be continued in the next newsletter.)

Membership Year
January 1, 2006 – January 1, 2007

___ *Family - \$25/year* ___ *Individual - \$15/year* ___ *Donation (any amount)*___

___ *Individual*
___ *Lifetime - \$150* ___ *Family Lifetime - \$300*

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Name _____ **Phone Number** _____
(please print) (optional)

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Please mail to, and make checks payable to: **Oak Brook Historical Society, PO Box 3821, Oak Brook, IL 60522**