

CELEBRATING 130 YEARS

230 N. CUYLER



3000 OAK PARK, IL 60302

1879 - 2009

In 1879...

- Colorado had become a state in 1876 but the U.S. still only had 38 states.
- The Civil War had been over for 14 years.
- Rutherford B. Hayes was president.
- Thomas Edison tested the first practical electric light bulb. It lasted 13 ½ hours before burning out.
- Albert Einstein was born.
- The first artificial ice rink in North America opened at New York City's Madison Square Garden.
- The president signed a bill allowing female attorneys to argue cases before the Supreme Court of the United States but women weren't given the right to vote for another 41 years.
- Laura Ingalls Wilder was 12 years old. At the end of the year, her father landed a homestead in DeSmet, South Dakota. Three years later, she became a school teacher at the age of 15.
- Frank Woolworth opened the first of many 5 and 10-cent Woolworth stores in Utica, New York.

In the late 1800's, Oak Park was much different than it is now

- In 1870, the population was probably about 200.
- Oak Park grew dramatically after the Chicago Fire of 1871 and changed from an obscure country town to a thriving suburb. In 1883, Oak Park had 2,500 residents. That number grew to 10,000 by 1900 and 40,000 by 1920.
- Oak Park's streets were not paved; they were dirt roads topped with gravel
- Between 1869 and 1885, Oak Park acquired drainage ditches and sewers, a police and fire department, sidewalks, and other street improvements
- But it's school system was it's first improvement

The beginnings of our school

- 130 years ago, our neighborhood was called “Ridgeland”
- The only school in the area was located on Lake Street and Forest Avenue, near what is now Downtown Oak Park. It was called Central School. Families sent their older children to this school, but they wanted a school closer to home for the younger students.
- In 1872 a primary school was opened in the back room of F. Dorn's General Store. At that time the store was located at 132 N. Ridgeland. This is the present site of Oak Park Bath and Kitchens, just north of Lake Street.
- By 1877, more than 30 children were enrolled in the school which took up two rooms in the rear of the store



F. Dorn's General Store was relocated to 115 S. Ridgeland in 1902. It is now a home.

Ridgeland School in 1879

- In 1879, a school was built at Cuyler Avenue and Cedar (now Ontario Street). The school had four rooms and a large bell tower. It cost \$8,000.00 to build. This amount of money is worth approximately \$178,000.00 now.



In 1896

- In 1895, William Beye urged the school board to build a more modern replacement to the school built in 1879.
- The original Ridgeland School was torn down and an eight-room school was built for \$26,448.00. This would be approximately \$670,000.00 today.
- Construction was not completed in time for the start of school, so classes were held in rooms rented from local stores.

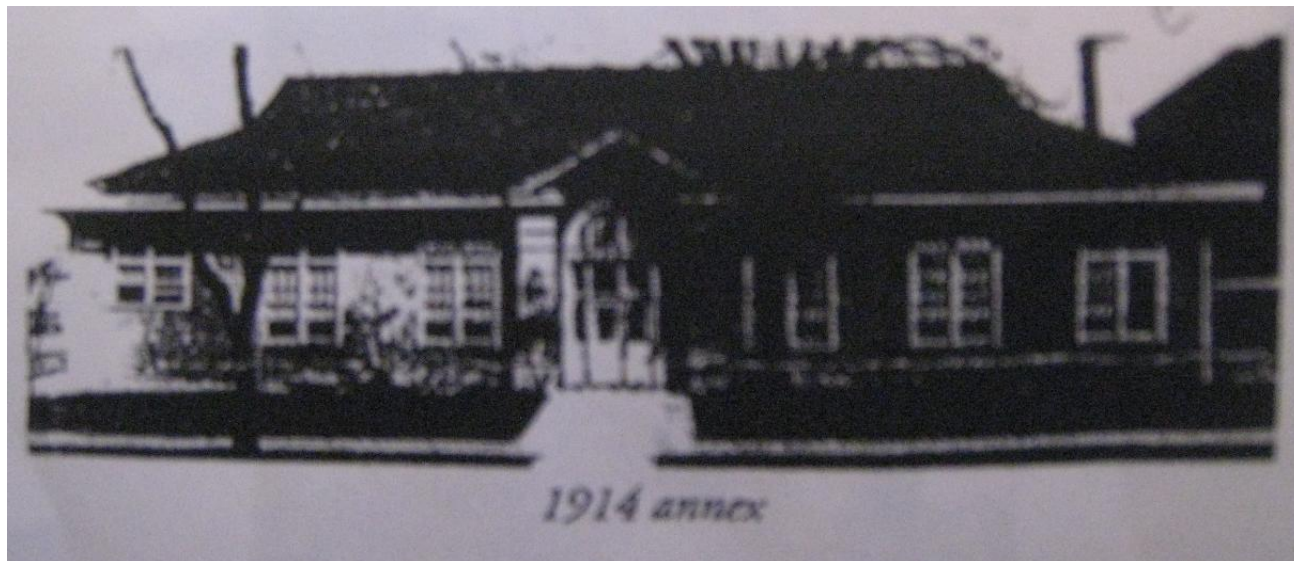


Who was William Beye?

- William Beye, born in 1842, was a German who immigrated to the United States to avoid military service. He went on to fight in the Civil War.
- He worked in the wholesale grocery business and served as a school board member for 7 years.
- He made sure that music and art were included in the curriculum in the elementary schools. In those days most schools focused on the "3 R's", reading, writing, and arithmetic.
- When he died in 1897 of the flu, the Ridgeland School was renamed William Beye School in his honor.

In 1914

- An eight-room, Prairie style, frame and stucco addition was built on the north side of Beye School. It faced west on Cuyler Avenue. A library and gymnasium were included.
- By 1917, 30 years after it first opened at this site, Beye had 420 students taught by 12 teachers – about 35 kids per class.



In 1922

- An 11-room annex was built that connected the old and new parts of the school. This is now the oldest part of the school.



In 1930

- In May 1930, a fire destroyed the 1896 building. According to the Oak Leaves, “Being of wood construction and 30 years old, the building burned like a furnace.” The cause of the fire was unknown.
- The 5th through 8th grades finished the year at Hawthorne School, while the lower grades were dismissed for the year.
- The south part of Beye School, facing Ontario, was rebuilt for \$130,000.00. This would be approximately \$1,676,000.00 today.



In 1953

- The gym and library addition were torn down and the north part of the school was built. This includes our present gym and art room.



In 1979

- A remodeling project costing \$1,000,000.00 was completed. That would be approximately \$2,965,000.00 today. The media center was built on top of the art room.



Our most recent building project was completed in 2000

- The Susan Cruttenden Gibson Commons area was added to the north side of the school. The music room and office areas were remodeled at that time.

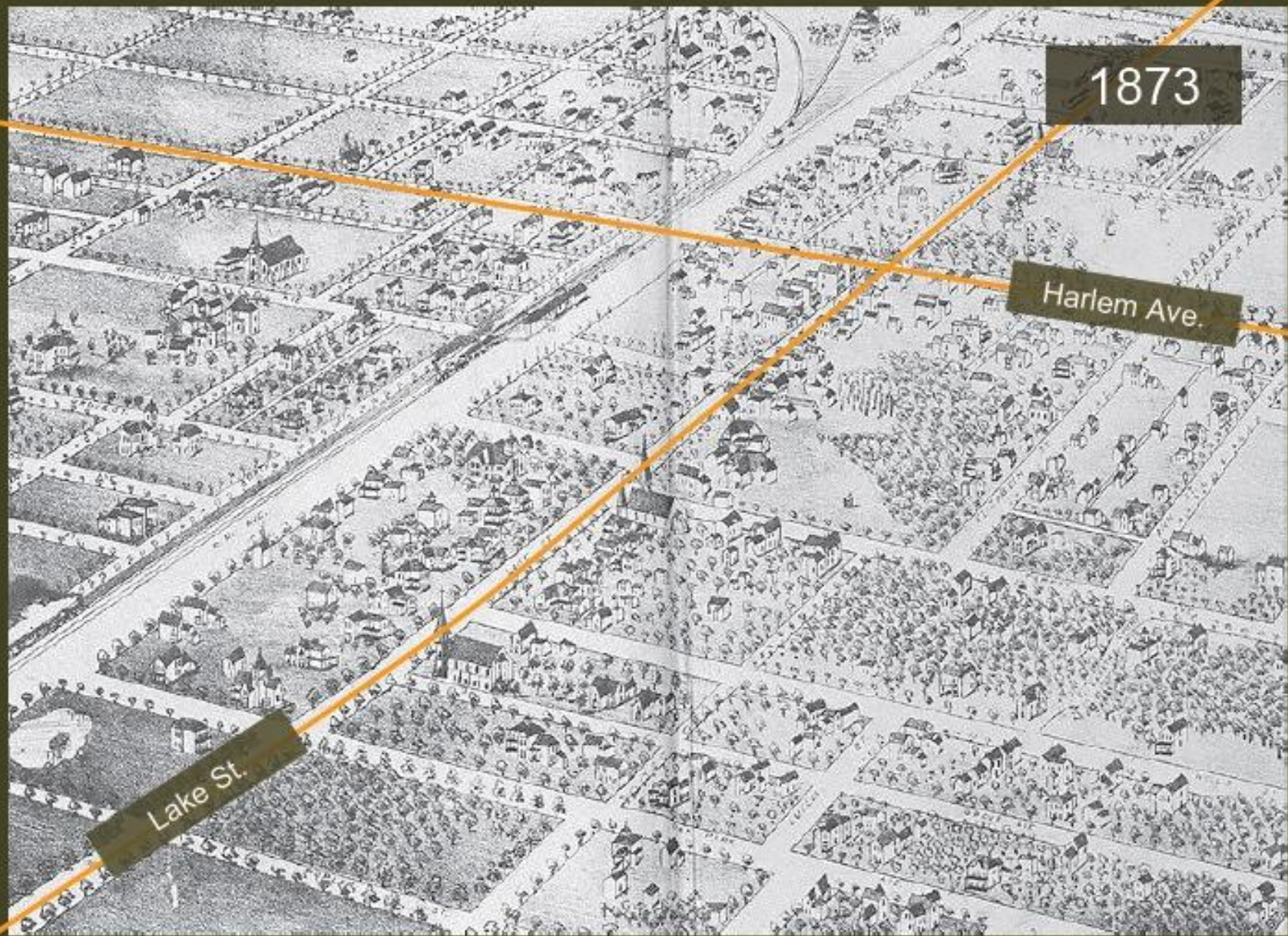


Beye School in 2009, 130 years after it first opened at this location!



Places From the Past

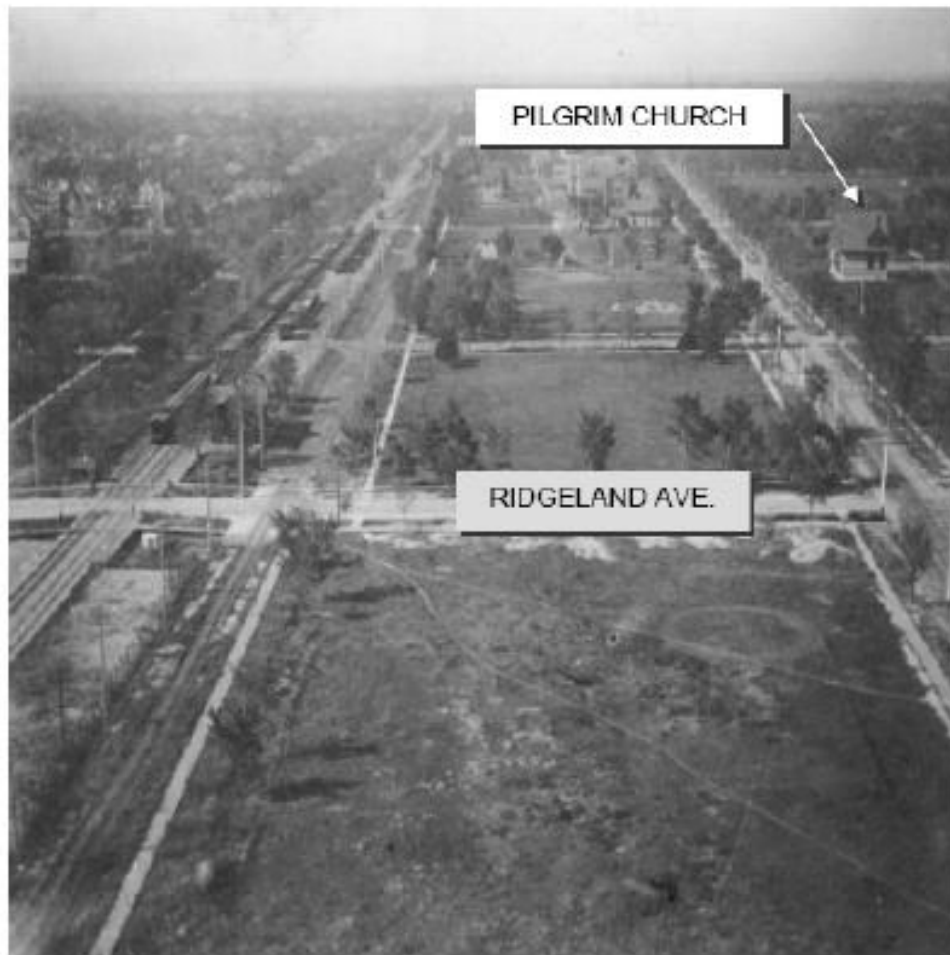
Our neighborhood has seen many changes in 130 years, but some of the buildings and landmarks from the past are still here!



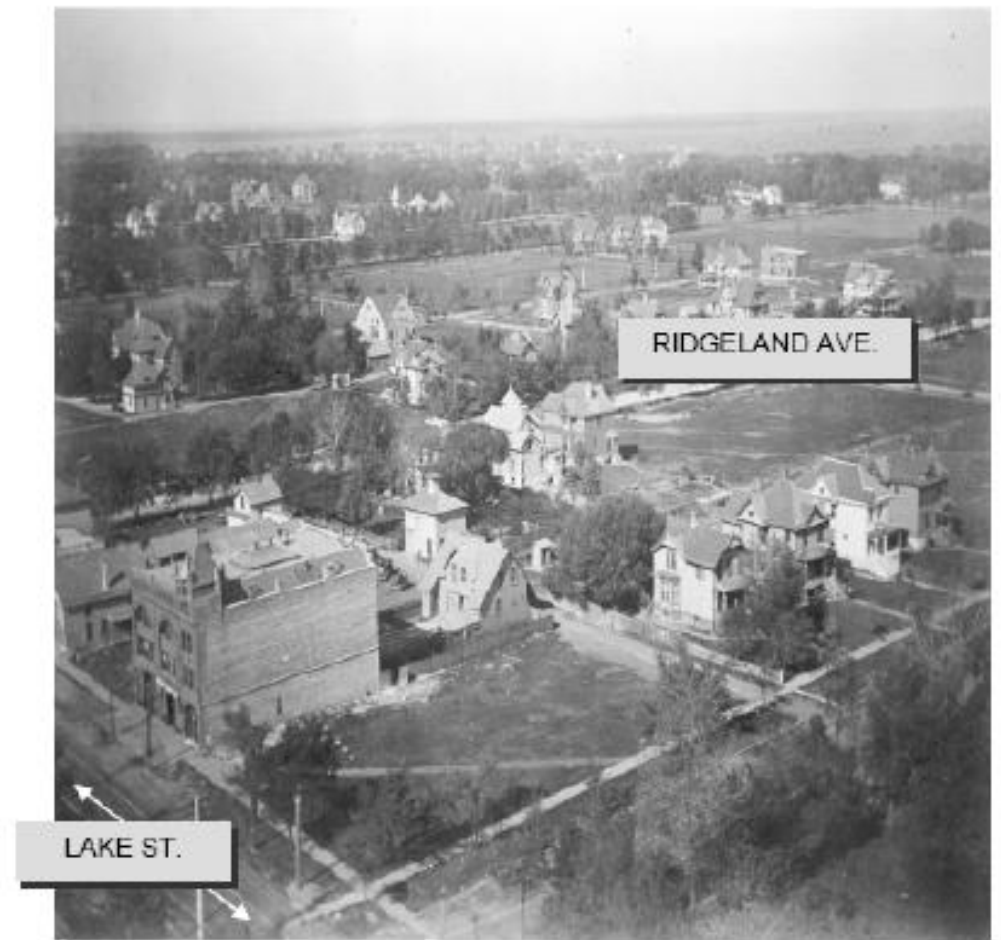
Bird's eye view of Oak Park, River Forest and Forest Park in 1873 drawn by itinerant German artist.

source: Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest

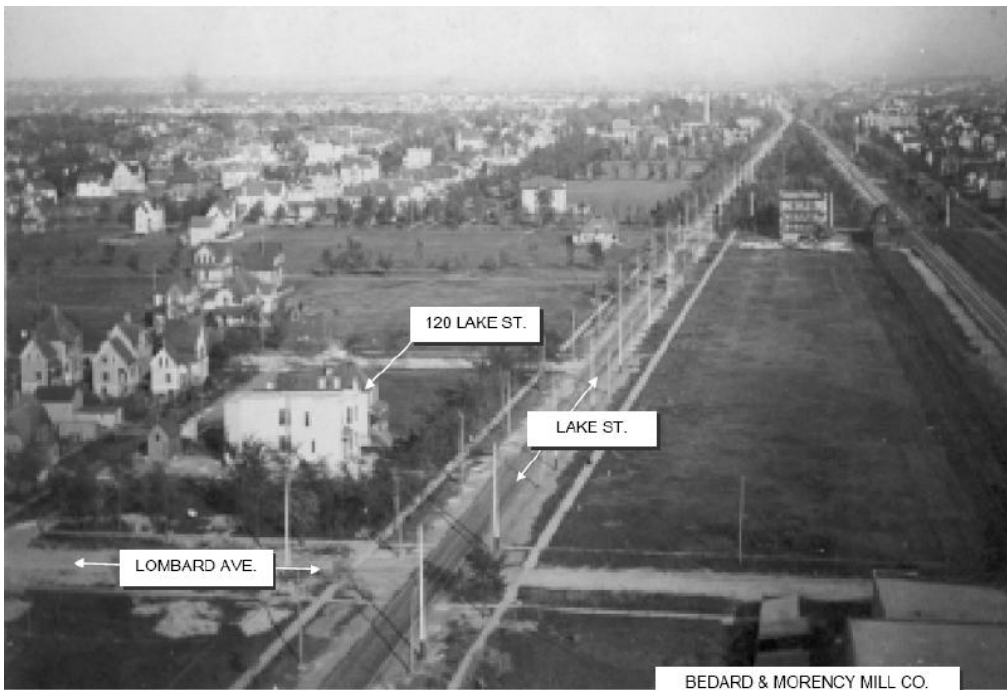
These pictures were taken from a chimney located where Dominicks is now



Looking West from chimney of Cicero & Proviso Ry. Co. Power House 1896



Looking NW from chimney of Cicero & Proviso Ry. Co. Power House 1895



Looking East from chimney of Cicero & Proviso Ry. Co. Power House

1896

This is the 100 Block of North Harvey. These houses still exist and some of our students live in them.



Looking NE from chimney of Cicero & Proviso Ry. Co. Power House

1896



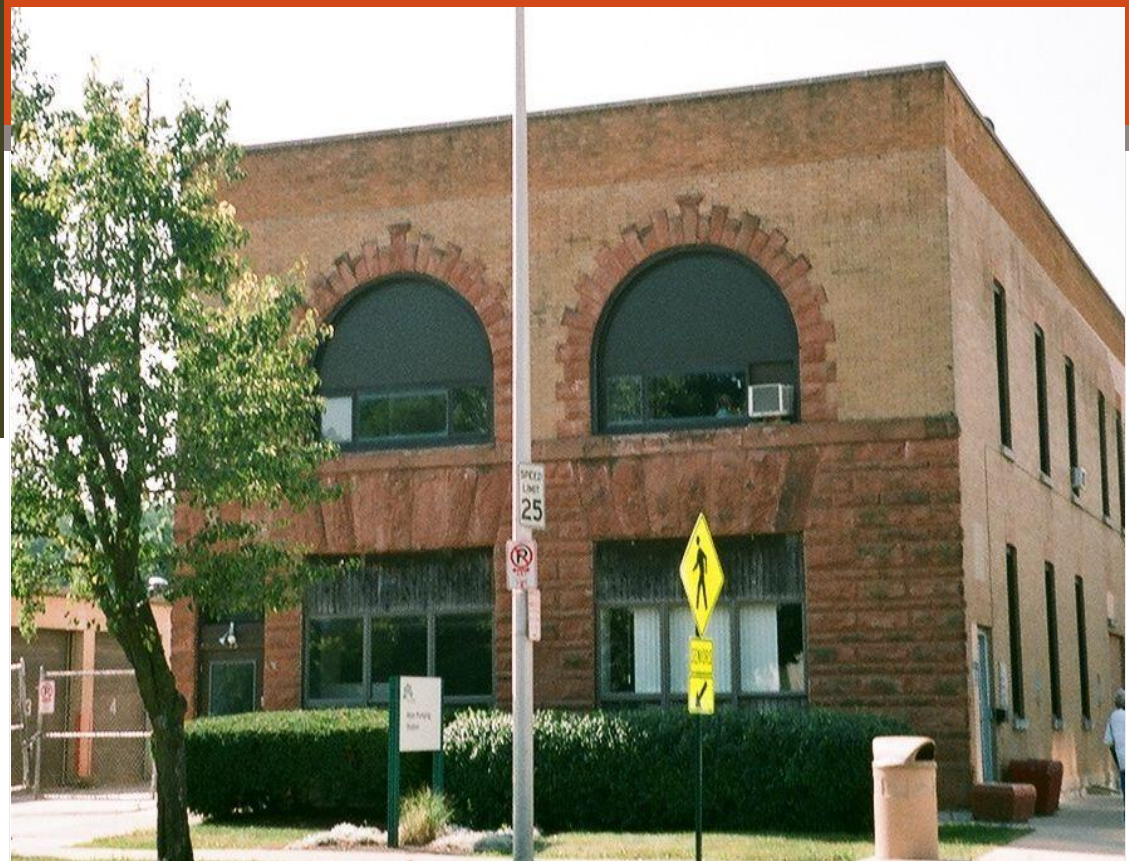
This building was called Ridgeland Hall. Community gatherings were held here, including meetings to plan the new school.



*Cicero Volunteer Engine House No. 2, SE corner of Lake St. & Lombard Ave. 1902
Currently Village of Oak Park Pumping Station*

image source: Historical Society of OPRF

Source: Mike Iversen



This was the second fire station. It was called Cicero Fire Company #2.



Train tracks were located in the same area they are now.
The tracks were elevated in the 1960's.



Ridgeland Common was a cricket field. The Cricket Club was founded in 1890. Games were played with nearby teams.

Questions?

More Places From the Past

We can walk around Beye School and see many places from the late 1800's. Some of the homes and buildings look almost the same as they did over 100 years ago.



E. A. Cummings had this building constructed. Frederick R. Schock was the architect.



Pilgrim Church was built in 1889.



This house belonged to George Butters. He kept a journal that gives us much of the information we have about our school and neighborhood 130 years ago. He lived at 179 N. Ridgeland. He was a member of the Cricket Club.



This house was built in 1870 on the corner of Oak Park Avenue and Superior. It was later moved to 305 N. Ridgeland.



This house is located at 309 N. Ridgeland. It was built in 1895.
The Newton Kenney family lived there.



This house has been here for over 130 years. It is located at 317 N. Ridgeland.



This is the John Carne house. It is located at 144 N. Cuyler.



This was the home of E. A. Cummings. It is located at 163 N. Lombard.
Mr. Cummings was a member of the Cricket Club.

Thank You

This slide show was researched, photographed, and assembled by Beye School teacher Gloria Engstrom. Thank you to Frank Lipo of The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest and Mike Iversen for providing documents with the history of our school and the vintage photos. Also thanks to the 130th Anniversary Committee: Louise Kieman, Lisa Kitzman, Deborah Poe, Steve Wood, and our principal Jonathan Ellwanger. Thank you to Susan Oxnevad for computer assistance.