



Floral Park Historical Society
The Docent's Digest



Twentieth Anniversary Year 2019

Winter Edition

20th Anniversary Project

**An Invitation to the Unveiling Ceremony of
Eight Floral Park Historic Markers**

Sunday, April 28, 2019

Unveiling Ceremony at 2 p.m.
Floral Park Recreation/Pool Building
Stewart Street, Floral Park

***Floral Park Historic Marker Sites:**

**1779
House**

**Covert
Homestead**

**Floral
Theatre**

**First
Floral Park
School**

**Oldest
Commercial
Building**

**American
Legion
Hall**

**First
Firehouse/Village
Hall**

**Masonic
Temple**

(*Historic markers will be installed in the ground in May.)

The Story of the FPHS 20th Anniversary Floral Park Historic Marker Project

The Floral Park Historical Society (FPHS) is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2019. In an effort to spark public curiosity about the history of the Village of Floral Park, the members embarked on an exciting but somewhat complex undertaking. FPHS sought to install eight markers at historically-significant sites within Floral Park for residents and others to visit and learn interesting facts about the locations and to grow in their appreciation of the history of the community. This is a special 20th anniversary project for the historical society.

FPHS was familiar with the process of securing and installing the blue and yellow cast iron historic markers that are seen throughout New York State. Prior to this project, FPHS was instrumental in having two markers installed—one on Tulip Ave., where the Childs Seedhouse was located, and one at Emerson Ave. and Jericho Turnpike marking the course of the 1st Vanderbilt Cup Race that went through Floral Park in 1904.



As a result of discussions in 2017, FPHS determined that eight historic locations in the village merited the historic markers. Many sites were discussed, and the door was left open to the idea of installing future markers. **The locations selected for this historic marker project are as follows:**

**TYSON BUILDING ✦ FLORAL PARK SCHOOL ✦ 1779 HOUSE ✦ COVERT HOMESTEAD
MASONIC TEMPLE ✦ AMERICAN LEGION ✦ FIREMAN'S HALL ✦ FLORAL THEATRE**

Once the locations were selected, Mayor Longobardi and the Board of Trustees of the Village of Floral Park were contacted. They were in favor of the project, so FPHS members proceeded to the next step.

After establishing a project budget, FPHS submitted an application for a Nassau County Legislative Grant for \$10,000 to fund the entire cost of casting and installing the eight historic markers. The application was approved and FPHS was notified that it would be awarded a \$10,000 grant for its 20th Anniversary - Floral Park Historic Marker Project. Nassau County Legislators Richard Nicoletto and Vincent Muscarella obtained the grant request for the FPHS.



The Floral Park Department of Public Works was notified that eight markers would need to be installed in 2019.

Superintendent Steve Siwinski assisted in determining the general location of each marker. Property owners were contacted for their approval of the placement of markers in appropriate spots at their locations. They were very cooperative. Verbiage on the markers was discussed.

Century-Old Portrait of President Stokely Found (Continued)

The breakthrough came less than two days after the research first began when Ray Stokely, the grandson of Floral Park's Ray Larimer Stokely, responded to a Wiki Genealogy website message board maintained by the Stokely family descendants.

Ray Stokely, the grandson of the Floral Park leader, who now lives in Maryland, promptly and graciously provided several pictures and portraits of his grandfather Ray Larimer Stokely, his grandmother Grace McDonald Stokely, their daughter Alice and their son Ray Paul Stokely, including one taken in front of their home at 24 Laurel Street, Floral Park, NY. The almost-century-long mystery first focused upon on a Tuesday evening in September 2018 was solved by the end of that work week.

Ann Corbett, the only woman in the 26 member portrait gallery of mayors, who was the mayor when the gallery was first established, is now heading the Floral Park Historical Society. Ann, with the help of Four Village Studio Manager Jimmy Green, sought to complete the gallery of framed portraits in early 2000 but a photo of Ray Stokely could not be found in the Floral Park Historical Society Archives or the Village Hall vault. The two had no idea the sleuth research was taking place. Ann expressed her great surprise and excitement that the last missing piece for the portrait gallery has now been found. A photo provided by the Stokely family was enhanced by Gray Studio. The frame with a mat with the name Ray L. Stokely in calligraphy that Ann and Jimmy displayed in the gallery years ago will now have a photo of Ray L. Stokely to replace the words: "NO PICTURE AVAILABLE."



Ray Stokely, daughter Alice & son Ray Paul Stokely in front of Laurel St. home

Ray L. Stokely, born in Roseville Ohio in 1880, went to Ohio State University at the turn of the century, obtaining both his undergraduate and master's degree in electrical engineering. After graduating from Ohio State in 1908, Stokely first worked for 3M in Minnesota, during which time he married Grace Irene McDonald, who also attended Ohio State with her future husband. Thereafter Stokely relocated to Chicago and finally New York City to work for Bell Laboratories, where he mastered the then state of the art technology for telephone transfer systems, with dozens of patent inventions awarded under his name. His namesake grandson now living in Maryland is also a BSEE and retired Systems/Software Engineer, who has studied many of his grandfather's patented designs.

A resident of Floral Park at 24 Laurel Street for 18 years until his death in 1936, Ray Stokely and his wife Grace were embraced by Floral Park and both quickly became community leaders. Ray Stokely was initially the head of the Board of Trade, a forerunner to the Chamber of Commerce. Ray Stokely was then nominated by the Citizens Party to be the Village President in 1921 for a one year term at \$300 per year and then reelected in 1922. During his terms as Floral Park's leader, the Village Board of Trustees was expanded from two trustees to four trustees, and many miles of roads were constructed under two separate \$100,000 voter approved bond issues. Grace Stokely, who was the president of the Literary Society at Ohio State, frequently taught in local schools and volunteered in many local organizations, including the Floral Park Woman's Club, as its president.

20th Anniversary Project Story (Continued)

Next, the wording on the markers was finalized and the order was placed for the casting and the ancillary items needed for installation. In June 2018, Catskills Casting Co. said the markers would be ready in 4-6 months, so FPHS expected delivery by October. However, the markers just arrived in February 2019.

After the order was placed, the FPHS Board discussed many ideas for the unveiling of the markers. Casting the markers would take several months, so the FPHS Board targeted April 2019 for the unveiling. They decided to unveil all markers at a single ceremony at the Recreation/Pool Building. The actual installation into the ground at each site will take place in May. All the residents/property owners involved would be invited to take part in the unveiling. Stands for each marker would be constructed for the unveiling ceremony.



It was decided that graphic artist Anthony Castoro, who grew up in Floral Park, would be contacted to create a Walking/Driving Tour Guide & Roadmap for people to use to find and visit the eleven (eight new and two previous) historic marker sites.

Local groups and residents are all invited to the unveiling on April 28 at 2 p.m. at the Recreation Pool building on Stewart Street. The ceremonial event will be very unique and hopefully will draw a good number of dignitaries as well as adults and children, both residents and non-residents.

Ann Corbett, President

Century-Old Portrait Found of Early Floral Park President Ray L. Stokely

The missing portrait of one of Floral Park's earliest leaders, Ray L. Stokely, has been secured. It was the last one needed to complete the permanent gallery in Village Hall. Locating the portrait also put to rest the mystery of the whereabouts of Stokely's family.

At the September 4, 2018 unveiling ceremony for the most recent leader joining the gallery, Mayor Thomas Tweedy, a discovery was made by one of the invited guests, Dennis McEnery, President of the Floral Park Conservation Society. Dennis noticed that the frame for Ray Stokely, the leader from 1921 to 1923, had the note "NO PICTURE AVAILABLE" instead of a picture like all the other 25 leaders of the village founded by John Lewis Childs in 1908. As a presenter for the Floral Park Historical Society, Dennis decided to do some research and attempt to find a photograph of one of Floral Park's early leaders, when they were called the President of the village instead of Mayor.

Using publicly available information, Ray Stokely became identified as Raymond Larimer Stokely, whose *Floral Park Gateway* obituary at his passing in 1936 disclosed that his burial took place in Roseville, Ohio, near Zanesville. That link to Ohio led to the discovery that the Stokely family has a storied history going back to the nation's very founding, and that their historical 1805 Stokely homestead still exists in Roseville, Ohio.



Ray L. Stokely & Grace Irene McDonald on their Honeymoon

Century-Old Portrait of President Stokely Found (Continued)

The current owners of the Stokely's property on Laurel Street include the Gunderson family, who purchased their house from the Stokely family in the early 1950's, as well as former Floral Park Mayor Phil Guarneri, whose house was built in the early 1960's on land formerly owned by his predecessor Ray Stokely.

The Stokely family in Roseville, Ohio, traces their family roots to the founding of our country with one ancestor identified as a Revolutionary War era privateer. Ray L. Stokely's father, Benino Prettyman Stokely, who died in 1934 at the age of 91, was the last surviving member of his Ohio Civil War company, who was even present when General Lee surrendered at Appomattox.



*Ray Stokely,
daughter
Alice &
son Ray Paul
Stokely*

The Village of Floral Park has reviewed the recently discovered information and pictures, and is pleased to be adding the portrait of Ray Stokely to its permanent gallery in Village Hall. The Floral Park Historical Society is therefore honored to announce this historical discovery. This now completes Floral Park's honoring all of its 26 leaders with a portrait in the Village Hall dedicated in 1935, the year before Ray Stokely suddenly died of pneumonia at the age of 55.

The Village of Floral Park plans to unveil the official portrait of Ray Stokely at its April 1, 2019 reorganization meeting, at which Ray Stokely's successors take their seats on the Village Board, which was expanded from two Trustees to four Trustees during his tenure as Floral Park's leader.

In 1927 the Floral Park Village Board enacted a law changing the title of "president" to "mayor."

Presidents of the Incorporated Village of Floral Park

John Lewis Childs (JLC) (1908–1912)

John F. Klein (1912–1914)

David W. Syme (1914–1917)

(Syme defeated JLC in the election)

George H. Downing (1917–1921)

Ray L. Stokely (1921–1923)

David Hill (1923–1925)

Clifford H. Oldaker (1925–1929)



Remembering Bernice Hayes

**Bernice Hayes, Chair of New Year Luncheon
January 19, 2016 – Her 87th Birthday**

Bernice “Bernie” Hayes, age 90, was one of the founders of the Floral Park Historical Society. Since 1999, she served on the FPHS Board of Directors and as Vice President. For several years, she chaired the annual “New Year Luncheon.”

In recognition of the years Bernice was active in the United Methodist Church of Floral Park, the FPHS will be repainting the historic marker that stands in front of the church on Verbena Avenue. It is an historic site marking the location of the first church in Floral Park: the Methodist Episcopal Church, dedicated in 1891.

In honor of Bernice Hayes and her volunteer contributions making the FPHS a viable and worthy community organization, the FPHS has initiated the Bernice Hayes Collection. In this archival collection is a vintage *Mayflower* Catalog dated September 1891 from an anonymous donor in her memory and a 100th Anniversary Journal - United Methodist Church.



The Resident Directory, 1940
A Window to Businesses of the Past
by Walter Gosden

With the internet at one's fingertips to click on a keyboard to locate information for stores, transportation, and services of all kinds, many reading this may or may not recall how one could also find that same information arranged alphabetically by subject in softbound booklets that were delivered yearly to your doorstep and were called "Directories."

One of the larger more elaborate of these booklets I have is titled "Robeson's Floral Park, Redbook Resident Directory." It dates from July 1940, and also included stores and services in Stewart Manor and Bellerose. The 120+ page directory I personally find works much faster for me to look something up alphabetically rather than to go to a site on the computer, then type in what you seek, plus the specific location (village, town, etc.) and then click on a name to see what they offer. With the directory you go specifically to the letter of the alphabet you want for a name or the classified section in the back part and look up the subject/topic.

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It is interesting to view what services were important and necessary in 1940, everyday parts of the lives of the people of that era that today doesn't exist and may be viewed as archaic or things of the past. It is also neat to read the street address where they were located and if today the building is essentially unchanged, try to imagine what the signs looked like and the information they conveyed in 1940. Most signs were hand painted/lettered on boards or on glass and lit via spot lights, no neon or back lit plastic signs really existed.

Fuel to heat homes consisted not only of oil but assorted types and sizes of coal and coke. New car dealerships offered for sale De Soto, Plymouth, Packard, Studebaker Willys as well as Chevrolets and Fords!

There were numerous tailors and clothing stores locally; as it would be the post WWII era when shopping malls would come into existence (Roosevelt Field and Green Acres mall of today were airports pre WWII). Independent stores most often owned by local residents were prolific and that same idea also applied to food stores and butchers. There were "chain stores" and markets where you could shop locally like A&P and Bohack. These markets were not the mega stores we are used to and expect today. The A&P at one time had three locations in Floral Park: one at 20 Verbena Avenue, one at 45 Covert Avenue that moved to a larger building a block south that now houses the Raindeew store, and one diagonally opposite St. Hedwig's Church (that building is now their parish hall).

One stalwart that still exists in Floral Park is Best's hardware. They had several locations in Floral Park and relocated to New Hyde Park for a while, but as their ad in 1940 stated, they were there for your "better hardware, house ware" and in 1940 were at 145 Jericho Turnpike. Charley's Market at 55 Covert Avenue offered prime meats and seafood.

The Resident Directory, 1940 (Continued)

It was "F.K. for Chevrolet" at F.K. Motor Sales on the SW corner of Jericho Turnpike and Cherry Lane. That building has remained intact but very abandoned looking for decades. If you wanted a new Mercury 8, Ford or Lincoln Zephyr V-12 you went to George H. Kelly Inc. at 130 Jericho Turnpike, Gartell's Garage was at Jericho Turnpike and Barwick Street and sold De Soto, Plymouth and International Harvester trucks.

You bought your wine and liquors from Henry Haack at 143 Tulip Avenue. Mr. Haack lived on Larch Avenue just around the block from me between Hazel Place and Mayfair Avenue. He bought a big new Buick Roadmaster hardtop every two years, and it suited his personality as he was also the leader of the Republican Party in Floral Park for decades.

You bought your "apparel for men" at Redvanly's Custom tailor's & clothiers at 145 Tulip Avenue. (many years later Jack Dugan's restaurant). Later Redvanly's had a building erected to suit their needs (no pun intended) on an empty lot at the SE corner of Tulip and Iris Avenues.



My grandfather was the contractor that did all the foundation and masonry work for that structure. Today Lee's Drug Store (160 tulip Avenue) is located there. Lee's used to be located where Levine's stationary store now is.

So there you have a brief history of the people and the businesses they owned in our village over 75 years ago.

NYC Fire Museum Receives 1900 & 1901 Books

Gary Urbanowitz, Executive Director of the New York City Fire Museum, is shown accepting one of two NYFD log books for years 1900 and 1901. The books were found at the Floral Park Library and moved to the FPHS Archives. They contain handwritten, detailed records of the daily activities of the members of the 149 Engine Co. - 63 Truck Co. which is now the 249 Engine Co. "Occasionally we come across items in our archives that don't relate to Floral Park history but would be appropriate for another institution charged with preservation of historic materials. We were pleased to pass on these books to the NYC Fire Museum," said Ann Corbett, FPHS President.

