



Madison County Historical Society

MCHS News

May 2015

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 3 No. 3

715 N Main Street
Edwardsville, IL
62025

Hours:

Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm
Group Tours Available

Free Admission

Museum Phone:
618-656-7562

Library Phone:
618-656-7569

Web Address:
madcohistory.org

E-mail:
info@madcohistory.org

About Us:

The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



MAY - JUNE CALENDAR

Program

LINCOLN PLACE HERITAGE

Sunday, May 17 - 2 p.m.

Speaker: Norma Asadorian
Madison County Archival Library



Program

JOHN M. OLIN

A HISTORY OF THE OLIN MANSION AND NILO FARMS

Sunday, June 28 - 2 p.m.

Speaker: Larry Reid
Madison County Archival Library



Special Saturday Hours

FAMILY HISTORY SATURDAY

May 2 and June 6

1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Madison County Archival Library



Continuing Exhibit

FIRST DO NO HARM

MEDICINE AND MEDICAL PRACTICES

BETWEEN 1830 AND 1955

Madison County Historical Museum

GRANITE CITY'S HISTORIC LINCOLN PLACE

A century ago, Lincoln Place, on the western edge of Granite City, was a neighborhood of immigrant families, all with their own languages and customs. Their shops and churches catered to the ethnic groups that populated the neighborhood, and at the Community Center, families learned English along with citizenship. Many of the guest authors of the Lincoln Place stories you'll read here are proud descendants of those immigrant families whose experiences as they adjusted to a new life in a new land are the story of America.

LINCOLN PLACE DEVELOPMENT

By Norma V. Asadorian

The development of Lincoln Place in Granite City was linked to the beginning of the Granite-ware factory and steel industry begun by the Niedringhaus Brothers in the late 1800s. When they purchased the land in Illinois which would give rise to Granite City, the Niedringhaus brothers envisioned selling home parcels to the workers who would provide the labor for their factories. Granite City's promise of thousands of unskilled-labor jobs and the hope of owning their own land and home was an irresistible pull drawing many immigrants to the area.

The late 1800s and early 1900s were a period of high immigration to the United States.

Photo above: Sunday school children in front of the Lincoln Place Community House circa 1940.

(Courtesy LPHA)

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ABOUT US

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VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the museum or the archival library. Please call if interested.

MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our web site, at the MCHS Museum or at the Archival Library.

PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

WEB SITE

madcohistory.org

ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

By Mary Westerhold, Archival Research Manager

This month I am combining my Archival Library report and my Research Tip. After receiving several questions about changes in fees at the County Clerk's office in Madison County, I did a bit of research in order to give everyone the correct information and the options that are available.

When talking about vital records, you can obtain either a certified copy of the record or a record stamped "For Genealogical Purposes Only." As you might guess, a certified copy is more expensive. So for those of us gathering genealogical information, we are going to want the less expensive option especially since we probably have MANY to obtain to verify information in our family histories.

Genealogical records are defined in Illinois as birth certificates older than 75 years; marriage certificates older than 20 years; and death certificates older than 20 years. This is important because if the record you are seeking is more recent than these definitions, there are different requirements to obtain a copy.

For example, for a death certificate older than 20 years, the current price at the Madison County Clerk's office is \$12 for the first copy and \$8 for each additional copy -- stamped "For Genealogical Purposes Only." For some years, there are indexes you can search before requesting a copy. HOWEVER, some of the early records do NOT have a typed index, but merely an index in the original record book, and for obvious reasons

(damage to old and fragile books), they are reluctant to allow access to those indexes. When I spoke with the County Clerk's office recently they assured me that if you pay \$12 for them to search for a record and they do NOT find a record, they will return your check. If they DO find a record, it is NOT an additional \$12 for the copy.

The State of Illinois Department of Public Health also offers death certificates, but only from 1916 to current. Illinois charges \$10 for the first copy, \$2 for each additional copy. It is unclear if a check is returned if no death certificate is found. **Important:** Death records prior to 1916 were recorded only by county clerks.

The Illinois Archives has the death certificates on microfilm from 1916-1947. You can search the indexes and use the microfilm yourself when you visit the Illinois State Archives in Springfield and print the records for a minimal fee.

Familysearch.org has a transcription of the death certificates from the Illinois State Archives (1916-1947) FREE on their website.

One final caution when looking for Illinois death certificates. As stated earlier, deaths were not recorded at the state level prior to 1916. At the county level prior to 1916, not ALL deaths were recorded and usually they were not on an official certificate, but rather a notation in a book. You may need to check church records, cemetery records, newspaper obituaries, etc., when looking for a death date prior to 1916. Happy Hunting!

MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn Walta, Curator

The disc mirror shown at right was used by Dr. Roy Smith Barnsback, an Edwardsville physician and surgeon from 1899 to 1957. The mirror was used to reflect light above the operating table. Barnsback was born in Edwardsville, Sep 12, 1874, and opened a practice in his hometown in April 1899, following graduation from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. He was a staff member at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Granite City for over forty years and one of the founders of the Madison County Tuberculosis Association. During the Word War I, the doctor achieved the rank of captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. He also worked for the local examining board during World War II. Barnsback died Dec 9, 1957, after practicing medicine in Edwardsville for over fifty years. This mirror and many other objects reflecting the history of medicine in Madison County from 1830-1955 in Madison County are currently on display at our museum.



This disc mirror can be seen in the museum's new exhibit, "First Do No Harm:." It was donated to the museum by Judith Barnsback Leo.

RECENT MCHS NEWS

AUTHORS OF LINCOLN PLACE

Six authors with connections to the Lincoln Place story contributed to this issue. Norma Asadorian, a member of the MCHS Board, is the founder and president of the Lincoln Place Heritage Association (LPHA) and a resident of Lincoln Place. A retired history teacher, she has several degrees in history and has worked tirelessly for the preservation of Lincoln Place's rich cultural heritage. The motto of LPHA is "Honor the Past - Imagine the Future," something that has been done in most homes of Lincoln Place for over a century.

Author Dan Manoyan does not have roots in Lincoln Place, but as a professional sports writer he was inspired to write a book about the 1940 Granite City basketball champions, *Men of Granite*. Hollywood soon discovered the book and a film about the "Boys of Lincoln Place" is scheduled to begin filming this year.

Marvin Moehle, the author of two articles, is also a history teacher. He collects immigrant oral histories, traditional European folk clothing, cultural artifacts, historical books, papers, and photographs concerning Macedonian and Bulgarian culture and history. He hopes one day to establish an ethnographic museum and archive where people can learn about their immigration stories.

Keith Veizer is the descendant of Hungarian immigrants who settled in the Lincoln Place neighborhood in the early 20th century. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois, the University of Virginia, and the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. He taught English for 40 years in public schools in New Orleans. Recently, he has written a book entitled *VeizerVizerWiezerWieser* about his family and his experiences growing up in Lincoln Place.

Tresa Ortiz is the daughter of Concepcion and Elena Ortiz who immigrated to Lincoln Place in the early 1900s. As part of a large Mexican-American family, she grew up in Lincoln Place where she continues to be an active part of the preservation of its cultural history as the Recording Secretary of the Lincoln Place Heritage Association and a member of the Mexican Honorary Commission.

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

March - Mid-April ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

Elijah Lovejoy \$500

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Robert Gusewelle

Charlotte Herren

Cheryl Eichar Jett

Family \$50

Charles Dietrich

John and Maxine Johnson

COMING PROGRAMS

LINCOLN PLACE HERITAGE

Norma Asadorian will present a program on the history of Lincoln Place at the Madison County Archival Library on Sunday, May 17 at 2 p.m. She is a knowledgeable, interesting speaker who brings with her a variety of photographs and artifacts illustrating early life in the Lincoln Place neighborhood of Granite City.

JOHN M. OLIN

A HISTORY OF THE OLIN MANSION AND NILO FARMS

Larry Reid will present a program at the Madison County Archival Library on Sunday, June 28 at 2 p.m. on the fascinating life of John M. Olin of Olin Industries. Reid has written numerous articles for sports magazines on Olin the sportsman and Nilo Farms (Olin spelled backwards), but there is much more to John Olin than his genius for business and his renowned sportsmanship. Reid will bring numerous articles that once belonged to Olin and provide an interesting glimpse into the life of this American success story.

TECHNOLOGY GRANT

MCHS received a \$3,000 technology grant earlier this year from the Greater Edwardsville Area Community Foundation to upgrade technology and digital content at the Archival Library. The grant, combined with matching funds from MCHS, will make it possible for the Archival Library, Museum and Collections Center to all be connected through wi-fi. Library patrons will also have access to wi-fi. Researchers will now be able to access their online family trees at the library while researching their Madison County families.

MADISON COUNTY PASSPORTS

A new Madison County Cultural Alliance Passport featuring 21 museums and historic sites around the county, including the Madison County Historical Museum and Archival Library, is now available at any of the sites listed in the passport.

The passports are a great resource for parents or grandparents looking for activities for school aged children during the summer. It's also helpful for adults that are looking for places that will help them learn more about Madison County. Pick up your free passport at the museum, then start exploring!

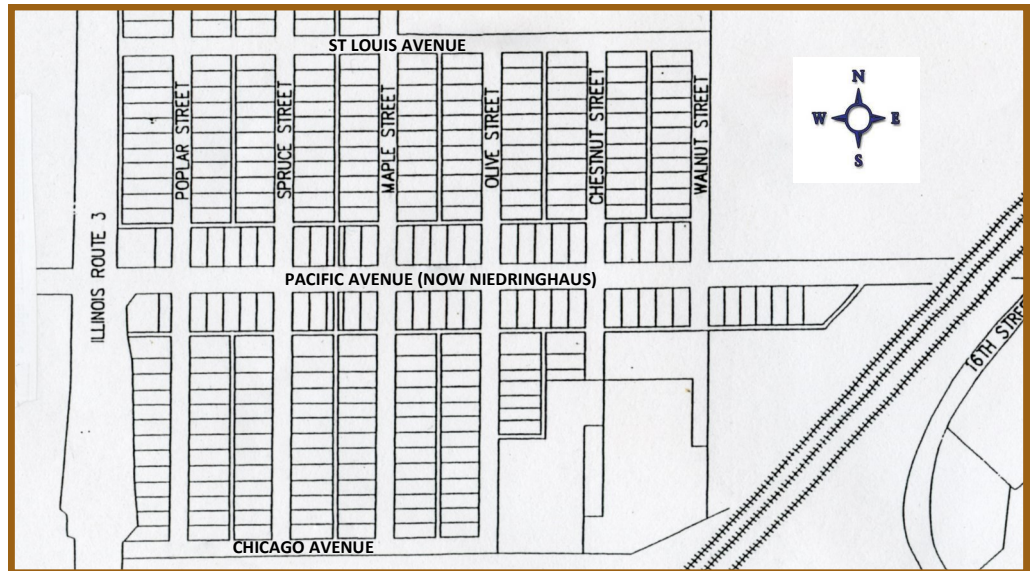
MCHS MEMBERSHIPS - THE PERFECT MOTHER'S DAY GIFT!

DEVELOPMENT OF LINCOLN PLACE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Between 1880 and 1920, approximately 38 million immigrants entered the United States, especially through Ellis Island. Most of those immigrants had little to no education, many were farmers, craftsmen, or simple tradesmen, and they came from Asia Minor, Mexico, Southern Europe, and Eastern Europe. As previous waves of immigrants experienced before them, upon entering the United States, they faced prejudice and discrimination from those who had come before them. Consequently, while the late 1800s and early 1900s were a period of tremendous immigration, they were also a period of intense bigotry, which was enacted into federal legislation as the "Quota System" of immigration. Nevertheless, these immigrants were eager to come to the United States as it was seen as a land of opportunity. Through letters home, by word-of-mouth, and via family connections, immigrants heard of the factory work available in Granite City for those who were willing to work hard, even if it was for long hours at dangerous work for low wages.

From the late 1890s to around 1910, the first immigrants from Eastern Europe began to arrive in Granite City in large numbers. At first, they were primarily unmarried men from the country of Hungary. Coming to an area previously known as "Six Mile" which had been settled by German farmers and industrialists, these Eastern Europeans were not accepted into general society by the German immigrants who had already settled in the Granite City area. Like other immigrant waves before them, they were wanted as cheap labor, but not wel-

comed otherwise. As a result, they settled in an undeveloped area west of town on the other side of the railroad tracks near the Graniteware factory, and within walking distance from Commonwealth Steel Company, American Steel Company, and Granite City Steel



The Lincoln Place neighborhood in Granite City, IL, is shown in the above map.

Company. Other immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Europe, including Slovenians, Croatians, and Austrians, also migrated to Lincoln Place.

With the predominance of Hungarian immigrants settling in the area across the railroad tracks, the neighborhood which began to form was nicknamed "Hungary Hollow," and often derisively called "Hunky Hollow." In addition to the Hungarian immigrants, by the early 1900s, others also came from Armenia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Almost all the immigrants in this early period were bachelor men seeking work in the Granite City factories. Disembarking from trains at the little railway depot on the Granite City side of the tracks, immigrants faced to the west, and began walking downward along the slight geographic slope leading into "Hungary Hollow." When the neighborhood first developed, it had muddy streets, plank sidewalks laid across the mud, shacks, and a few businesses, such as barber shops for a shave and haircut, small ethnic diners, and taverns for food, drink, and socialization. In the boarding houses, several men often shared a room, one group sleeping while the other worked, and then the other group sleeping as the previous group worked a shift in the factories, especially at the Commonwealth Steel factory just outside of Lincoln Place. The industrialization of Granite City created an urban population boom as more and more immigrants poured into the area looking for work, freedom from oppression and war, and an opportunity for a better life than they had in the Old Country.

World War I intensified the immigration to Granite City as ethnic Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Armenians



*Early Lincoln Place immigrant families circa 1915.
(Courtesy of David Moehle)*

DEVELOPMENT OF LINCOLN PLACE

under the domination of the Ottoman Empire were persecuted with restrictive laws, terrorized by military ruthlessness, and targeted for genocide by the Muslim Turks who ruled the empire. Living as conquered people within the Ottoman Empire, these racially Caucasian, Orthodox Christians, were prosperous farmers, merchants, skilled craftsmen, artists, intellectuals, and academics, living in an empire ruled by the Turks, who were of Asian origin, primarily poor farmers, and religiously Muslim. The Turkish regime seized the excuse of war to begin an organized program of deportation, confiscation, and extermination against the Armenians in 1914. The Turks wiped out the intelligentsia and community leaders, and carried out a massive genocidal campaign against towns, villages, and rural areas throughout Turkey, eventually exterminating 1.5 million Christian Armenians by the time the genocide ended in 1924. This effort to exterminate the Armenians from the Ottoman Empire gave rise to the term genocide and has become known in history as the first genocide of the 20th century. These same tactics also were used by the Turks against other Christian ethnic groups in the Ottoman Empire, including the Macedonians, the Bulgarians, the Assyrians, and the Greeks, in order to acquire their land and economic resources. As a result of these brutal actions, immigration to Granite City and specifically Lincoln Place, from Armenia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria increased tremendously during this period.



Hamayak Matoesian enters his barber shop at 908 Niedringhaus Avenue. Hamayak, a Lincoln Place barber from 1923-1987, immigrated to the United States in 1921 after his parents were killed in the Armenian Genocide of 1915. (Courtesy of David Matoesian.)

In 1916, as the "Hungary Hollow" area had become a true neighborhood community, it was given a new name by the residents. The immigrants greatly admired Abraham Lincoln who had himself come from humble origins and had risen to greatness. The immigrants learned about President Lincoln in their citizenship classes. To them, he represented America as a "Land of Opportunity," so they renamed their neighborhood "Lincoln Place."



George Eftimoff at the wheel of his delivery truck shown with his wife, Aspacia, and daughters Verke and Queenie in 1919. His business was at 1744 Olive Street, Lincoln Place (Courtesy of LPHA)

In the 1920s, the United States instituted a federally sanctioned "guest worker" program, known as the "bracero program," which allowed temporary immigration from Mexico. Immigrants were allowed to enter the United States to work a specific job for a set period of time, usually in agricultural work. Due to the Mexican Civil War, regular immigration from Mexico also increased during this time, as well. Like many of the other immigrants to Lincoln Place, Mexican immigrants were drawn to Granite City because of the need for cheap labor in the industrial factories. Mexican settlement in the neighborhood centered primarily along Spruce Street, Poplar Street, and Cedar Street, where there were also Armenian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Italian, Sicilian, and Polish families.

By the 1920s, many of the earlier bachelor immigrants had married, purchased homes, and were beginning families. Near American Steel, the company built shotgun-style houses on Walnut Street, Chestnut Street, and Olive Street. Many Armenian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian families lived in those homes.

From the railroad tracks which marked the boundary of Lincoln Place, the main roadway running east to west toward the Mississippi River was named Pacific Avenue. Along Pacific Avenue, Maple Street, Spruce Street, and Poplar Street, numerous large single family brick homes were built and purchased by immigrant employees of Commonwealth Steel Company. Interspersed among these brick homes were many smaller frame homes. As the immigrant men married and began families, the population of Lincoln Place began to grow and the neighborhood flourished.

Pacific Avenue was also the site of a large number of businesses in Lincoln Place. Many of them were specifically ethnic businesses, serving the people of the various ethnic groups which had settled in Lincoln Place. Since the immigrants were not welcomed in the uptown stores,

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MEXICAN CULTURE IN LINCOLN PLACE

By Tresa Ortiz

In the spring of 1917, a large group of Mexicans moved into Lincoln Place in Granite City to work in the steel foundries. During the era of the Pancho Villa uprising in Mexico, other Mexicans also fled and came to the Lincoln Place neighborhood. Another wave of immigration from Mexico came during the 1920s with the advent of the temporary worker program called the “bracero program” set up by the United States government to allow temporary agricultural workers from Mexico. With them, these immigrants brought their Mexican heritage and traditions, contributing to the vibrant melting-pot culture which developed in Lincoln Place.

While the men worked, most Mexican-American mothers stayed at home. Typical meals prepared by the mothers consisted of beans, rice, salsa, and tortillas. Specialty foods, such as tamales, chicken mole, and enchiladas were prepared and eaten on special occasions.

Growing up in Lincoln Place was almost idyllic. Although the children of Lincoln Place were from many different cultures, they played well together at the “Clubhouse,” which today is called the Lincoln Place Community Center. Located at the heart of the Lincoln Place neighborhood, the building and play area were built for them by the Commonwealth Fellowship, an institution made up of fathers who worked at the Commonwealth Steel plant in the Lincoln Place neighborhood. The

“Clubhouse” was a safe haven for the children to play, grow, and develop values and skills which would guide them as adults.

“The Mission” was another place where the children of Lincoln Place could grow socially and spiritually. The original building was built in 1914, with renovations and expansions later in the 1950s. At “The Mission,” the children sang and learned that “Jesus loves the little children, all

the children of the world,” a song which carried special meaning for the children of Lincoln Place whose parents had emigrated there from many countries.

In 1926, the Mexican-Americans who lived in Lincoln Place formed a club they called the Mexican Honorary Commission. The purpose of this organization was to help immigrants from Mexico adapt, become educated, and prosper while preserving their Mexican heritage and traditions. The first president of this

organization, “Mr. Guillermo” was a leading influence in helping the Mexican immigrants adapt to life in America while preserving their Mexican heritage.

Mexican-Americans still flourish in Lincoln Place. The Mexican Honorary Commission is active in the neighborhood. While the original immigrants from Mexico have passed on, many of their descendants, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren still live in the Lincoln Place neighborhood. They are American citizens, but they honor and preserve their Mexican heritage by passing on the traditions, customs, and history of their immigrant ancestors.



*Residents of Lincoln Place celebrating their Mexican heritage.
(Courtesy of Tresa Ortiz)*

THE HUNGARIAN COMMUNITY IN LINCOLN PLACE

By Keith Veizer, with Research Help from Ronald Petras

According to Juliana Puskas in her thorough history of Hungarian immigration to the United States, the population of Hungary grew from 13.6 million to 18.3 million between 1870 and 1910. In 1900, Hungary, the “Bread Basket of the Austro-Hungarian Empire,” remained the most feudal nation in Europe, with a handful of families and the Catholic Church owning 80 per cent of the land. There were protests and riots by the “small holders” and peasants, especially in northeast Hungary where the majority of Hungarians who immigrated to the Lincoln Place neighborhood were born. Most arrived in “Hungary Hollow” (renamed Lincoln Place in 1916) during the first decade of the 20th century, lured by the promise of work in Granite City’s new factories, especially NESCO (National Enameling and Stamping

Company), Granite City Steel, and the Commonwealth Steel foundry. The Lovasz brothers, who started several businesses in Lincoln Place, were among the first Hungarians to arrive, and they seem to have been responsible for encouraging many others to follow them to Granite City.

In 1915, 30 Lincoln Place Hungarians from the village of Kompolt raised money for Kompolt’s World War I widows and orphans. Ten years later, many of these men and women, and other Hungarians, were responsible for the construction of the 1925 Magyar Haz (Hungarian Home) which is located on Spruce Street in Lincoln Place. The “Hungarian Home” was used for celebrations, dances, and other activities by all the ethnic groups in Lincoln Place, and by the community as a whole on national holidays. In the early days, dramas in Hungarian and traditional folk dancing

HUNGARIAN COMMUNITY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

in colorful native costumes were frequently performed on the stage and spacious dance floor. There were also classes in Hungarian offered for the second generation. For many years, *St. Louis es Videke*, a Hungarian language newspaper, kept track of the goings-on in Lincoln Place and other local Hungarian-American communities. A partial list of the early Hungarian families in Lincoln Place would include the Lovasz, Hinterser, Doroghazi, Veres, Szeposi, Jakkel, Jager, St. Ivany, Krisztian, Juhasz, Suess, Szabo, Szeifer, Csepeli, Balszai, Fischer, Mayer, Maylath, Kovacs, Bodi, Takacs, Magyar, Petras, Vivod, and Vizer families.

In 1930, Count Mihaly Karolyi, the president of a short-lived Hungarian democracy in 1919, spoke to a large group of Hungarians in Granite City about conditions in their homeland and was honored with a banquet at the Magyar Haz. In 1937, the Hungarian-American John Veizer was elected as the first alderman from Lincoln Place who represented Lincoln Place. Three years later he had the honor of hosting the dinner at the Magyar Haz celebrating the 1940 State Championship basketball team, whose star, Andy Philip (Fulap originally), had his origins in Lincoln Place, with his ancestors coming from the same Hungarian village of

Kompolt as many of the other Hungarian immigrants who settled in Lincoln Place. John's brother, George, succeeded him as alderman and served on the City Council for eight years. George's son, Ronnie, was Granite City Chief of Police for over 20 years.

Old Country celebrations like the Easter "sprinkling" were kept alive in Lincoln Place for many years. On the Monday after Easter, young men sprayed or poured perfumed water on their "flowers" (girls they liked) and read the girls poems they had composed. In late fall, the "pig killing" was an all-day ritual in which everyone in the family had a role. The men "stuck" the pig after it had been hoisted up by its hind legs. They caught the blood in a washtub for blood sausage, and then burned off its bristles. The women ground up the rest of the pig and added spices to make sausage. The children were enlisted to stomp and dance on the salted and shredded cabbage, helping it to become sauerkraut. It was a party with a purpose in a neighborhood with a purpose: one that showed Americans how people from widely diverse backgrounds—Armenian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Mexican, and Hungarian—could work, play, and live together.

MACEDONIAN IMMIGRATION TO LINCOLN PLACE

By Marvin Moehle

The number of Macedonian immigrants who came to Lincoln Place increased dramatically after the brutal Ottoman suppression of the Ilinden uprising by the Slavic population in 1903. According to an article, "Satellite Cities," published in February 1, 1913, in *The Survey*, approximately 8,000 Macedonians and Bulgarians lived in Granite City and the surrounding areas at that time. Many of them lived in Hungary Hollow as it was called in 1903 because of the large number of Hungarians who had initially settled there. Nearly all of the Macedonians in the area at that time were men who had left behind their families in Europe or were bachelor men who were not married. They came to Granite City because there were jobs readily available in the local factories. Most of them had not intended to settle permanently in the United States, but instead, only planned to work, save some money, and then return to their families in Europe.

One of the most successful businessmen in the area was Nikola Alabach (originally Alabakov), an immigrant from the village of Brusnik, Bitolsko, Macedonia. As of 1905, his businesses included a hotel, a grocery store, a saloon, and a travel agency which also offered money transfer services back and forth to Europe. He is mentioned in several newspaper

articles for his great philanthropy and assistance to his fellow countrymen. He was instrumental in the organization of the first Macedono-Bulgarian Orthodox church in the Americas (pictured below), and also in the building of the Lincoln Place Community Center. He was involved with the founding of the "Macedono-Bulgarian Orient Band." He also

kept the new immigrants aware of what was going on in the old country through his Bulgarian language newspaper, *Macedonia*.

The Macedonian workers in Granite City kept strong ties to their families and their homeland, as political tensions grew in Europe before World War I. In 1912, 500 men from Granite City and the surrounding areas returned to Europe to fight in the First Balkan War on the side of Bulgaria, against the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. Their passage to Europe was financed by donations from the local community.

Though most of the Macedonians in Granite City had originally intended to return to Europe, their plans changed as a result of developments following the Balkan Wars and World

War I. When the Macedonian region was assigned to Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria at the end of World War I, rather than to Europe, many decided that their best option was to bring their families and settle permanently in the United States.



Macedono-Bulgarian Orthodox Church.
(Courtesy LPHA)

THE MEN OF GRANITE

By Dan Manoyan

Sports can be a powerful agent for change. But one would be hard-pressed to find a team which changed the very soul of the city it represented the way the 1940 Granite City High School Warriors changed Granite City.

Granite City was much like any other city in the early 20th century. However, it did have a problem, and the problem was the railroad tracks, and how it divided Granite City, not just symbolically, but literally divided the city into two halves. On one side of the tracks, the so-called "right" side, were all the factories, institutions and houses that made Granite City the bustling, thriving steel town that it was. Uptown included the Granite City Steel mill, City Hall, police station, fire station, Granite City High School, the YMCA, numerous churches, taverns, local shops, the Washington Theater, soda fountains at the drug stores, grocery stores, a local Woolworth's five and dime store, a hospital, working class houses, and "silk stocking row" Victorian mansions. That side of Granite City was populated by the people who were mostly of Western European stock, German immigrants who were the "movers and shakers" of the city.

On the other side of the railroad tracks, the so-called "wrong side of the tracks," lived the folks who made Granite City's smoke-belching industry hum with activity. On the west side of the tracks, in the little neighborhood called Lincoln Place, were the people who performed the difficult, dirty, grueling, backbreaking labor in the many factories and mills in Granite City. They were the newcomers, not only to Granite City, but to the United States. They were from far-off places like Hungary, Armenia, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Mexico. Except for their well-worn clothing, they did not look all that different from their across-the-tracks counterparts. But a closer look told a different story. Many of these immigrants did not speak English or spoke broken English. They were poor, ate foods unfamiliar to most Americans, and they had traditions and customs which seemed foreign. Because of these differences, within their own city, the entire group was treated as second-class citizens, tolerated only because their physical labor was necessary to keep the teeming factories and mills in town operating at peak performance.

Many of the amenities of mainstream Granite City were off limits to the new immigrants. They were left alone as long as they knew their place on their side of the tracks in Lincoln Place. They felt unwelcome in the businesses across the tracks. Lincoln Place even had its own

Community Center or "Community House," as it was called then. Built by the people who lived in the Lincoln Place neighborhood, with steel and bricks donated by the Commonwealth Steel Company, the Lincoln Place "Community House" opened its doors in 1923. It had a gymnasium, a stage for shows, indoor restrooms and showers, and a classroom where Granite City's first kindergarten was taught, and where courses in English and citizenship were offered for the adults.



The 1940 Illinois High School Championship Team from Granite City. Back Row: Business Manager Emil Mueller, John Markarian, Ed Hoff, Sam Mouradian, Everett Daniels, Ebbie Mueller, Manager Harold Brown; Front row: Coach Byron Bozarth, Evon Parsaghian, Andy Philip, Dan Eftimoff, Andy Hagopian, George Gages, Asst. Coach Leonard Davis.

(Courtesy of Conrad "Babe" Champion)

Most importantly, the "Clubhouse," as the people of Lincoln Place affectionately dubbed it, had Miss Sophie Prather. She was known as "The Little Mother of Lincoln Place." When the "Clubhouse" opened, she gave up her job as a teacher at Washington School, and was hired to fulfill what she deemed a higher calling: to serve as the director of the Lincoln Place "Community House." She adored the people of the neighborhood, especially the children. Her job was to teach the children and their parents how to become good American citizens. Miss Prather also taught the children the benefits of hard work and fair play. For the girls, there were activities like sewing, softball, and Girl Scouts. For the boys, there was basketball, baseball and a wood-working class. Most of all, there was basketball.

To play basketball in the gym, it was a requirement to have a pair of gym shoes, but most of the children were poor and could not afford to buy a pair. Nevertheless, Miss Prather set up a rewards system where the children helped out doing chores at the "Community House," sweeping the gym floor, cleaning the restrooms, helping in the classroom, and keeping the playground clean. In exchange, they earned points redeemable for a new pair of gym shoes.

THE 1940 STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS

Excited with the knowledge that getting a pair of gym shoes would allow them to play in the "Community House" gym, the children gladly worked hard to earn enough points to get that treasured pair of gym shoes. When the children earned their gym shoes, Miss Prather would walk uptown to a local shoe store to buy them out of her own meager salary, with those children who had earned their gym shoes eagerly trailing behind her like little ducks following the mama duck in single file.

The poor boys of Lincoln Place did not have much, but they did have basketball... and they played it incessantly. Summer or winter, spring or fall, the gym was packed with neighborhood boys playing basketball. For a group of boys growing up in the 1930s, basketball was the most important game they knew. The leader of the group was Andy Phillip, who was born Andrej Fulop to a family of Hungarian immigrants. His best friends were Armenians Andy "Huggy" Hagopian and Evon Parsaghian, Macedonian Danny Eftimoff, and Yugoslav George Gages. Phillip was such a great athlete that he signed a contract to play professional baseball with the St. Louis Cardinals at the age of fourteen. When he was a sophomore at Granite City High School, he led his team to a berth in the Sweet Sixteen of the Illinois High School Tournament. Phillip would later go on to star in basketball as one of the "Whiz Kids" at the University of Illinois and in the NBA with the Boston Celtics.

As a teenager growing up in Lincoln Place, he had high aspirations for his high school basketball team. He wanted a state championship, but he needed to convince his skeptical coach, Byron Bozarth, to put his Lincoln Place mates on the high school squad. Bozarth finally relented and it was the best athletic decision he ever made. Having played at the Lincoln Place "Clubhouse" together for years, the Lincoln Place boys functioned extraordinarily well as a team. They knew their strengths, their strategy, and their plays. They had perfected their moves, including a secret specialty shot through the gym rafters at the "Clubhouse." They even had learned each other's foreign language so they could communicate on the basketball court without their opponents knowing what they were saying.

What a powerhouse team they were! Led by Phillip and Parsaghian, "The Happy Warriors of Granite City" as the newspapers began to call them, fashioned a 29-5 record and won the Illinois State High School basketball championship title in 1940. Hagopian, Gages, and Eftimoff were the other three starters on the squad for that final championship game, with Sam Mouradian, John Markarian and

Arthur Bedian, also Armenian-Americans from Lincoln Place, on the squad.

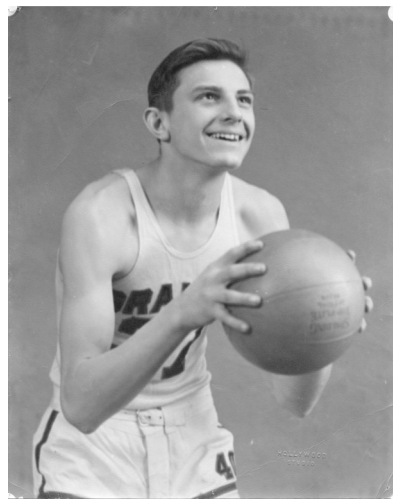
Of the ten players on the team, only three were not products of the Lincoln Place "Clubhouse." Their win changed how Lincoln Place was viewed after that time. The victory parade for the team started uptown at the Granite City High School, but it came all the way "over the tracks" into Lincoln Place where the whole neighborhood celebrated the tremendous win by "their boys." In a recent interview, Mary Mgrdichian Dugan recalls today how she was so enthralled as a young teenager when Andy Phillip handed her the state championship trophy as he climbed down from the float to the street in front of Sim's Pool Hall in Lincoln Place ("Blubby's" to the Lincoln Place boys). Queenie Eftimoff Elieff, the sister of Danny Eftimoff, who was a player on the team, was in her early teens at the time, but even today when she is in her nineties, she smiles with pleasure and her eyes light up as she speaks of the joy that everyone felt when the boys of Lincoln Place won that state basketball championship.



*Sophie Prather ((1869-1936)
(Courtesy of LPHA)*

It was a milestone for the neighborhood as a whole. In the following year, the City Council showed their pride in the accomplishments of the boys from Lincoln Place. The main street in town was Niedringhaus Avenue, named after the Niedringhaus brothers who founded Granite City.

Niedringhaus Avenue extended from St. Elizabeth's Hospital right through the uptown area, past City Hall, but stopped at the railroad tracks at the entrance to Lincoln Place. The same street on the other side of the tracks was called Pacific Avenue, a clear demarcation between uptown and Lincoln Place. After that terrific state basketball championship title won by the boys of Lincoln Place, the City Fathers voted to extend the name of Niedringhaus Avenue all the way over the tracks into Lincoln Place, changing the name of Pacific Avenue to Niedringhaus Avenue, and embracing the Lincoln Place neighborhood in the welcoming arms of the rest of the city.



*Basketball standout Andy Phillip.
(Courtesy of Conrad "Babe" Champion)*

After high school, all five of the starters on that 1940 state high school basketball championship team served in their nation's armed forces in World War II. Their heroics on the basketball court and on the battlefields were a shining example for all who followed. As unlikely as it may have seemed possible, Granite City became a better place, a prouder city, and a more tolerant place because of this group of boys from Lincoln Place. Today, Granite City honors the 1940 high school state basketball championship team at the Granite City Sports Hall of Fame and at the Granite City High School.

LOUIE'S MARKET: A MACEDONIAN BUSINESS

By Marvin Moehle

Luka Lovachev (Louis "Louie" Lovacheff) arrived on the shores of Ellis Island, New York, in 1916, with his friend Yane Kirkov (Yane Kirchoff). Both were teenagers from Drenoveni, a small village in the Kostur region of Aegean Macedonia. After arriving in New York, they traveled to Granite City to join Luka's brother.

Both young men had been shepherds before coming to the United States. Although they had no special skills which qualified them for employment in Granite City, they worked hard at various jobs until, in the early 1920s, they decided to open a grocery store. The store, located at 824 Pacific Avenue, was called Kirchoff and Lovacheff. Later, the street name was changed by the city from Pacific Avenue to Niedringhaus Avenue.

After a few years, the partnership dissolved and Yane Kirchoff's cousin took over the partnership in the grocery store. By that time, Louie had married Vasilka Savova, and he soon had a family to support. He moved his family out of Granite City to try his hand at farming. However, he later brought them back to Granite City, to the immigrant community where he had begun his life in the United States. After some time, he decided to open his own grocery store.

The family moved to Maple Street in Lincoln Place close to the location of the new grocery store. In preparation for opening the business in the summer of 1948, Louis Lovacheff and his sixteen year-old daughter, Evelyn, built the shelving for the store. Though this was not traditionally women's work, Louie's son was in the army, his older daughter was working as a nurse in St. Louis, and his younger daughter was too young to help. As Evelyn later put it, "I was the only one available."

There were three other grocery stores within a few blocks of the new store. Louie's wife, Vasilka, was concerned whether the store would be successful. She decided to visit a psychic on the outskirts of the city to find out the future of the family business. Evelyn drove her there in the family car. Vasilka asked the psychic whether the Macedonian immigrants (her countrymen) would trade at the new store. The psychic told her that the store would be a success, but the early customers would be unknown Americans, not Macedonians. As predicted, the first customers to come to Louie's Market were Americans: Mabel Hundley and her first and second husbands. The three of them, who came together, became regular customers and

friends of the Lovacheff family. The business gradually grew, serving all types of people, including the local immigrants from Europe and elsewhere, and later their children and grandchildren.

Louie's Market catered to all of the local residents, and it was known for its specialty items. For the Armenians, the store had olives and halvah. For Hungarians, there were poppy seed spread and prune plums for making lekvar plum preserves. The Macedonians bought Bulgarian cheese, sour head cabbage, and peppers. For the Mexicans, Louie carried mole sauce, corn shucks, corn meal, and tacos. Every ethnic group had its special needs, and Louie's Market fulfilled them.

The store also adapted to meet the needs of the Americans who lived nearby. In 1963, two officers from the United States Army Depot came to the store and placed a large order for a big party at the Officers' Club. Along with other items, they wanted to order 150 pounds of potato salad. Evelyn had never heard of potato salad, but she agreed to fill the order. As soon as the officers left, Evelyn asked her mother if she knew how to make potato salad. Vasilka replied, "What is potato salad?"

Macedonians do not make salad from potatoes." They decided to ask their neighbor and friend Katie Stasoff. Katie was a Hungarian immigrant, but she had worked in several "American" restaurants and knew how to make all types of food. Thanks to Katie, the officers got their potato salad. It was an item they ordered often for parties and other events.

In the beginning the store was staffed by Louie and his daughter and son. More family members became involved as the business grew. Evelyn's husband quit his job at Granite City Steel to join the business, and later William's wife also left her job at Union Starch to work at the store. As soon as they were old enough, the children helped around the store when they were not in school.

For more than 30 years, Louie's Market was an important part of the immigrant community of Lincoln Place and the surrounding area. People came not only to buy groceries, but to see their neighbors, share news about their kids, their happy and sad times, and to meet new people. On cold winter mornings, students would gather in Louie's to stay warm while waiting for the school bus.

Louie's Market closed its doors in 1980. Now, only memories are left of this once successful Lincoln Place business.



Louis Lovacheff is pictured above behind the counter at Louie's Market. The author, Marvin Moehle, is the son of Evelyn Moehle, and the grandson of Louis Lovacheff. (Courtesy of Marvin Moehle)

DEVELOPMENT OF LINCOLN PLACE *(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)*

they developed their own, including boarding houses, numerous taverns which were also places for eating and socializing, a bowling alley, a silent film theater, a scribe business which wrote and read letters for those who could not read or write, several family-owned ethnic grocery stores, a dry cleaning business, a barber shop, a confectionary, a Hungarian social club, which later was sold and became an Armenian social club, a bakery, and several small ethnic diners.

In 1925, on Spruce Street, the Hungarians built an all-brick social club, the Magyar Haz or Hungarian Home, that today is home to the Mexican Honorary Commission.

The Macedonian and Bulgarian population of the neighborhood was significant enough that the Macedonians and Bulgarians built the first church in the neighborhood. There was also a thriving Macedonian-Bulgarian press and newspaper. Newspapers and journals written in Armenian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian were one way the immigrants learned of international news, national news, their ethnic religious news, and news from their ancestral homelands. Most were printed in both English and the ethnic languages.

The ethnic social clubs in Lincoln Place also were an important focus of daily life in Lincoln Place. For instance, the Armenian social club was where men would drop by every day to socialize, to play cards or backgammon, to smoke cigars, and to discuss political events. Each group had its own ethnic social club where they held folk dances, ethnic dinners, church picnics and religious feast day celebrations, wedding receptions, and ethnic music concerts. They were places of social gathering where youngsters learned the dances and songs of the Old Country from their elders, and where men and women danced together, celebrating holidays, weddings, and special events.

In 1921, as the neighborhood had grown in size and there were many families with children, Commonwealth Steel Company, where many of the immigrant men worked, turned its attention to the Americanization and education of the immigrants and their children. In a meeting with prominent businessmen from Granite City and leaders in the Lincoln Place community, Commonwealth Steel proposed to build a "Community House" which would become the fo-

cus of its efforts to Americanize the immigrants. It was agreed that Commonwealth Steel would provide the design and materials for the building and the men of the neighborhood would build it for the people of the neighborhood. Oral history interviews of Lincoln Place residents who lived at the time the "Community House" was built reported that the men would get off their work shifts at the factories and would come to work in building the "Clubhouse," as it came to be called. The women made big pots of food and ethnic baked goods, setting them out on planks the men had erected on sawhorses in the "Clubhouse" yard for all to eat. Men from all nationalities worked together, their children played together, and the women cooked, baked, and visited.

The "Community House," which is now called the Lincoln Place Community Center, was a focus of activities in the Lincoln Place neighborhood. According to the plan developed by Commonwealth Steel, the "Community House" offered many educational services for the men, women, and children of Lincoln Place with the goal of Americanization in mind. There were citizenship classes for both men and women where they were taught to read and write English, learned United States history and government, and prepared for their citizenship tests. Naturalization was a goal of each immigrant and was always a proud achievement. Even though the immigrants came from many countries, they were very patriotic, flying the American flag, earning their citizenship, and during World War II, sending their sons to serve in the military. They also were avid participants in the war effort, buying war bonds, recycling, rolling bandages for the Red Cross, and planting Victory gardens. Additional activities for adults at the Community House included hygiene and cooking classes as well as a Macedonian-Bulgarian Ladies Aid Society which was instituted and met there.

Children's activities at the "Community House" were supervised by Miss Sophie Prather, hired by Commonwealth Steel to run the children's programs. She established a kindergarten for the children in the neighborhood, the first kindergarten in Granite City. After kindergarten, the neighborhood children attended Washington School along West 20th Street. The older girls' activities included softball and basketball, folk dancing, Girl Scouts, learning to sew and





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DEVELOPMENT OF LINCOLN PLACE

embroider, and putting on skits and plays which everyone in the neighborhood attended. Miss Prather recruited some of the older girls, such as Alice Dineff (Sobeleski) and Josephine Reszly, to assist her, and Commonwealth Steel also hired an assistant, Mrs. Elbert Smith. Steve Basarich, assisted by Mr. Liggett from Central School in the summer, taught the boys vocational education including woodworking classes where they learned to make useful household items, such as bookcases, shoeshine kits, small tables, and lamps. The boys also learned how to play marbles, how to box, and how to play basketball.

The boxing achievements of the immigrant boys were remarkable and earned respect and pride for the Lincoln Place neighborhood. Several boys of Mexican and Armenian heritage achieved notoriety as boxers, attaining Golden Gloves status. Ruben Mendoza and his brother Hector who were immigrants from Mexico introduced soccer at the "Clubhouse" in Lincoln Place where it became popular and then was adopted by high schools throughout the area. At Granite City High School, Charlie Merzian, the son of Armenian immigrants, was the first to win two state wrestling championships back to back. In basketball, it was the state championship victory of the 1940 high school basketball team, composed primarily of the children of immigrants from Lincoln Place, that brought acceptance to the neighborhood. The little hollow across the tracks grew to become what it is today, the historic Lincoln Place neighborhood.

At its height in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, Lincoln Place included an estimated 1,500 immigrants, their children, and their grandchildren in a four-by-seven block area. Over the

years, there have been individuals from perhaps as many as 30 different ethnic nationalities living there, making Lincoln Place one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in southwestern Illinois. According to the more than 100 oral history interviews which have been coordinated by the Lincoln Place Heritage Association, each generation has had the same experience of Lincoln Place being a close-knit neighborhood, with ethnically diverse people interacting with and looking out for one another. Those who grew up there say that it was a wonderful, happy place to grow up, a place where people did not lock their doors, and neighbors looked out for all the children. People from different ethnic backgrounds learned their neighbor's languages, tried each other's foods, intermarried, and formed lifetime friendships across ethnic lines. The multiculturalism of Lincoln Place was like the United States in microcosm, with many different ethnic groups living side by side and getting along.

While the immigrants and their children adopted American culture, became educated, and prospered, they also are an example of cultural pluralism in that they have maintained aspects of their ethnic cultures, especially their foods and pastries, their ethnic folk music and dances, their languages, and their cultural history in Lincoln Place. The immigrants stressed hard work and education as the pathway to success in America, and they instilled that in their children and grandchildren. The amazing history and rich culture of these hardworking and brave immigrants made it possible for them and for their descendants to have access to unlimited opportunity in this nation. Their story in Lincoln Place is the story of the American dream.



*A 1938 citizenship class at the Lincoln Place Community House where the women learned English, as well as the history of their new country in preparation for the ultimate goal of becoming U.S. citizens.
(Courtesy of LPHA)*