

Lake Forest Preservation Foundation NEWSLETTER

Lake Forest, Illinois

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Summer 2011



East formal garden. May 22, 2011. Photograph by Cappy Johnston.

THE RUMSEY ESTATE GARDENS AND RAVINE

by Susan Reinfrank Dedo

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in May, members and guests of the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation enjoyed the *Rumsey Estate Gardens and Ravine Tour* at the historic Lake Forest property. The current owners, Roger and Sandy Deromedi, have embarked on an extensive restoration of the home and gardens while being respectful of the historical references of the estate and gardens. The Deromedis generously opened their property for us to tour the beautiful, English Picturesque gardens, interpreted Jens Jensen gardens and vistas of the Mayflower Ravine. Kettelkamp & Kettlekamp Landscape Architects was the firm that returned the

grounds to a Jensen design and planting character. A special Preview and Reception was offered to guests who gathered in the family room to listen to a presentation of the history of the Rumsey Estate. Our hosts, Roger and Sandy Deromedi, shared their extensive research on the history of the home.

The Rumsey estate was built in 1911-12 for Mr. and Mrs. Henry Rumsey on eight acres in the English Manor style. Henry Axtell Rumsey (1871-1941) was the son of Israel Rumsey and Mary Axtell, prominent members of Lake Forest society and grew up in the home at 404 East Deerpath, known as The Evergreens.

Henry Axtell Rumsey was a successful Chicago commodity trader. He served as Lake Forest Mayor (1919-1925) during which time the City bought the water company and started the Deerpath Golf Course. With changing fortunes brought on by the Depression in the late 1920s, the Rumseys left Lake Forest for Chicago.

Charles Coolidge of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, Boston, a renowned architect of the era, designed the house for Henry Rumsey. Coolidge also designed Stanford University (1891), the Chicago Public Library (1896) and the Art Institute of Chicago (1893). The house was modeled after Clifford Manor near

(continued on page 3)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Lake Forest Preservation Foundation is looking forward to continuing the successful launch of 150th celebrations in conjunction with the City's anniversary.

We thank our homeowners who so generously opened their homes and gardens to our two major events covered in this publication and our members and guests who joined us for these special afternoons: the Founders House Tour on April 17 and the Rumsey Estate Garden and Ravine Tour on May 22.

June 25th marks our third Family Fair in Market Square supported jointly with the Chamber of Commerce and designed to engage our future generation of preservationists.

We look forward to working with the many exceptional Lake Forest organizations and the City at various levels on projects which preserve our historic treasures for the future.

Suzanne G. Boren, President

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Family Fair in Market Square

Saturday, June 25, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Fun, Games & Treats for All Ages!

Come Celebrate the Founding of Market Square!

Architectural trolley tours!

Tunnel tours!

Kids building block event!

Scavenger hunts!

Croquet on the green!

Balloons!

Sno-cones & popcorn!

BBQ sandwiches & more!

Presented by LFPF and the LF/LB Chamber of Commerce
Sponsored by the First Midwest Bank of Lake Forest



Annual garden. May 22, 2011. Photograph by Cappy Johnston.

Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Mrs. Rumsey had seen a picture of Clifford Manor and sent Coolidge to England to study the estate. The Rumseys enjoyed their home until their move to Chicago in the late 1920s. The Rumsey manor house was considered to be a high point in estate architecture in the early twentieth century. After the Rumseys moved away, the house was rented and then remained empty until 1941 when it was used as naval officer's quarters during WWII. In the 1950s, the coach house, stable, gardener's cottage, kitchen, orchard and cutting gardens located across the ravine were sold for development. Subsequent owners have updated and modernized the home.

Jens Jensen, landscape architect, conservationist and Prairie Style founder, designed the Rumsey estate gardens in 1913. Mr. Rumsey originally intended to hire Frederick Olmsted to design the gardens but instead decided to use Jensen who was known for a natural and woodland style. The gardens he designed in 1913 for the Rumsey estate reflected this. Jens Jensen drew his inspiration for a natural environment from his childhood experiences in Denmark and from regional

materials and forms.

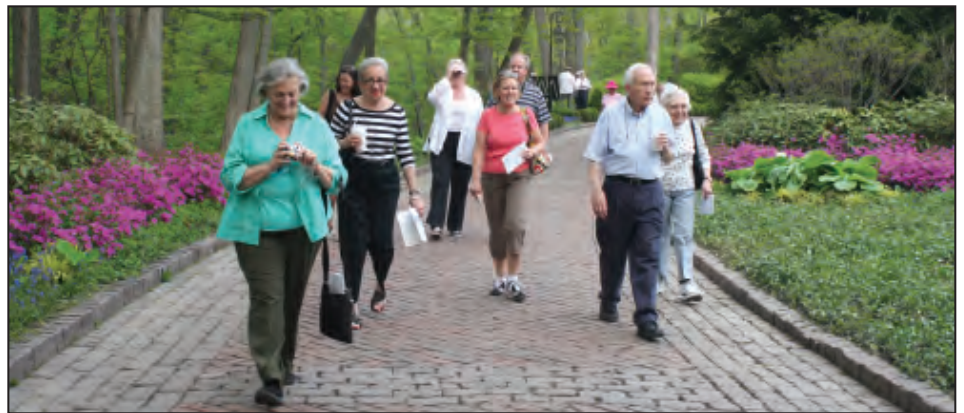
In 1888, Jensen transformed a small, formal garden in Chicago's Union Park by planting native prairie wildflowers to create the *American Garden*. The *American Garden* came to define Jens Jensen's vision of a natural, woodland style. Jensen advocated conservation and prairie style landscape in both public places and private estates. Many North Shore residents commissioned him to create his *American Garden* on their private estates. The Rumsey estate is revealed as you proceed through the woodlands to the manor house in the clearing. It shows many characteristics of Jensen design including meadows with natural plantings, winding garden paths through light and shade and most famously, the use of the indigenous limestone, stacked for his signature council rings.

The gardens and the ravine have been restored and reinterpreted to be respectful of the original Jensen design yet mindful of the changes to the property in the

intervening years. The area immediately adjacent to the house and the swimming pool are in the English Picturesque style, introduced in mid 18th Century England.

The Picturesque style seeks to evoke a natural landscape appearance of rougher terrain and dramatic asymmetric composition on the perimeter of the property with the formal gardens, tennis courts, and swimming pools situated adjacent to the house or linked to it by terraces and pergolas. The woodland periphery evokes the naturalistic design themes introduced by Jensen. The original Jens Jensen landscape architectural drawings for the Rumsey estate are in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan.

The Lake Forest Preservation Foundation is proud to recognize the significant contribution to preservation excellence and stewardship of Lake Forest's architectural heritage that the Rumsey estate represents. The Rumsey estate Gardens are a 2010 Lake Forest Preservation Foundation Preservation Award winner. As we celebrate the sesquicentennial of Lake Forest, let us honor the Deromedis for their dedication to the preservation of Lake Forest's designed heritage.



Guests enjoying tour. May 22, 2011. Photograph by Cappy Johnston.

WELCOME NEW BOARD DIRECTORS

The Lake Forest Preservation Foundation would like to welcome our newly-elected Directors Judy Boggess, Rosemary Troxel, Guia Trutter, Elizabeth Sperry and Bruce Southworth. They bring a variety of talents to the Board and we look forward to working with them.

We would also like to congratulate Shirley Paddock on joining our prestigious class of Honorary Directors. She has done much to preserve the heritage of Lake Forest through research, advocacy and protection. Many thanks to Patty Kreischer and Liz Moore as their terms as directors expire. We appreciate the time, dedication and expertise they have contributed to the Foundation. New and departing board members were recognized at our annual meeting and Founders Tour on April 22nd.

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF LAKE FOREST ARCHITECTURE
THE HOMES OF THE 2011 “FOUNDERS HOUSE TOUR” by Rommy Lopat



Harvey Thompson house. Early photo. Courtesy of the Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society.

In celebration of Lake Forest’s 150th birthday, the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation departed from its annual tradition of giving awards to newly-rehabilitated houses, landscapes and well-maintained original historic structures. Instead, the Foundation chose to honor four of the town’s earliest houses, three of which were built in 1860 and the fourth which is a “youngster”—built in 1876.

These magnificent homes—meticulously maintained by their owners—are clustered near the intersection of Deerpath and Sheridan Road, in the neighborhood framed by Lake Forest College (1857) and the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest (1887).

The owners of the four houses generously allowed members of the Foundation to tour their homes on Sunday, April 17, following the Foundation’s Annual Meeting, held at the Lily Reid Holt Memorial Chapel at Lake Forest College, which featured architectural historians Susan Benjamin and Arthur Miller discussing the genres and genealogies of the four award-winning residences.

After days of cold gray rainy weather, the skies cleared and the Foundation’s guests enjoyed a sunny afternoon, followed by a reception at the “Glen Rowan” house (1909, 500 North Sheridan Road), designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw for Alice Reid and Clifford Barnes.ⁱ

Over 200 guests attended the “Founders House Tour”—the kick-off of several 150th birthday events to be sponsored this year by the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation, founded in 1976 to protect and preserve Lake Forest’s historic visual character.

THE HOMESTEAD (1860)

570 North Sheridan Road

**Built for Ellen Hubbard and Devillo R. Holt
Current Owners: Herbert and Judith Krueger**

Intended to be a summer house for the Holt family who lived on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, the Holts changed course and settled in Lake Forest permanently because Mrs. Holt was “thrilled with Lake Forest Academy for her four sons and Dickinson School for her three daughters. “They were private and there was nothing to worry about.”ⁱⁱ

Holt (1823-1899) was born in New England but by the age of twenty was trading furs at Mackinac Island, Michigan; by 1847 he had started Holt Lumber Company in Chicago. His lumber was the first load carried on the new Illinois & Michigan Canal in 1848. In 1850, he married Ellen Hubbard. Holt was a charter member (1857) of Lake Forest University’s Board of Trustees.

The Holt house is a classic “Italianate,” a style built by carpenters and craftsmen from pattern books. The style was made popular in the United States by writers Andrew J. Downing and Alexander J. Davis in the 1840-1850s as an alternative to Gothic or Greek Revival design. (While the style is ubiquitous, Wikipedia reports that one of the largest collections of Italianate buildings in America can be found in Cincinnati, Ohio.ⁱⁱⁱ)

By the 1860s, Italian villas had become more widespread than Greek Revival as cast-iron and machine-pressed metal became avail-



The Homestead. Early photo. Courtesy of the Lake Forest College Special Collections.

able and useful in ornamenting these homes. The style was even adapted to lighthouses, chief among them being the Grosse Point Lighthouse in Evanston. However, by the 1870s Queen Anne “painted ladies” and French Second Empire became more stylish than the Italian.

The “four square” Holt residence is constructed of brick, covered by wood clapboards. The first floor includes a thin layer of concrete sandwiched between the wood floorboards. [Nine years later, the exterior of a neighboring residence, the 1869 John V. Farwell “baronial castle” at 880 East Deerpath, would be built entirely of concrete poured in situ (rather than concrete blocks), a method pioneered on England’s Isle of Wight in 1852.] Reinforced concrete was introduced in Paris in 1867.

The house boasts many visual elements that are key to the Italianate style. It has a low-pitched roof almost invisible from the ground, projecting eaves supported by corbels or brackets, arched windows, tall first floor windows, a belvedere (“widow’s walk” or “lantern”) on the roof, a loggia with balustrade, and an attic with a row of awning windows between the eave brackets.

660 NORTH SHERIDAN ROAD (1860-1861)

Built for Hannah and Harvey Thompson

Current Owner: Keith W. Jaffee

This house, prominently located just south of the ravine at the corner of Deerpath and Sheridan Road, is also an Italian villa featuring a low-pitched roof, arched windows, bracketed eaves under a projecting roof, and an octagonal bay window. However, “Thompson’s villa represents a stylistic departure from [the Holt house’s] regularity and balance toward the informal and picturesque...The main entrance was not centered on the roadway façade but inset within the northeast corner...The villa’s irregularity reached its climax in an assertive three-story octagonal tower with bracketed roof and pointed spire.”^{iv} The spire is topped with a long spindle. Some

of the windows are “blind” and do not open.

The landscaping of this estate “featured a network of wooden stairs, bridges and fences wending their way through [formal] Italian-derived...features...providing artificial transitions between abrupt changes in grade”^v down the steep slopes of the property’s ravine. A large greenhouse was located just to the rear of the main house.

Harvey Thompson (born 1820, New York) was the first mayor of Lake Forest (1861-65; 1867-1868). He was also an original Trustee of the Lake Forest Association and a member of the first Board of Trustees of Lake Forest University. The 1870 Census lists him as a “retired grocer,” but a roster of Lake Forest Association members says he is “of the Brevoort Hotel.” The Brevoort, located at 143 West Madison (now 188) was “one of Chicago’s oldest inns—the first with an elevator. It was rebuilt after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and offered guests a luxury—a bath. There were fifty rooms in the basement, well-ventilated, provided with folding couches and the finest artesian water.”^{vi} “Bathhouse” John Coughlin was the proprietor. He was the “colorful” Alderman of Chicago’s powerful downtown 1st Ward for 46 years.

FOREST LAWN (1860)

644 East Deerpath

Built for Mary A. and David J. Lake

Current Owners: Wesley and Deborah Clark

This house originally had informal Italianate characteristics similar to the Harvey Thompson residence. According to Kim Coventry and her co-authors in 2003, it was “an irregular wood-framed villa designed by pioneer Chicago architect Rufus Rose in the mode of Andrew Jackson Downing, distinguished by an interplay between a large gabled hexagonal bay on the west side and a hexagonal campanile on the east. Elements of the Lake house recalled several stylish Newport, Rhode Island houses of the previous decades including that of Chicago Judge Hugh T. Dickey...On its west façade, the Lake mansion featured the ample verandah typical of mid-nineteenth century American houses. Raised above ground level, tall windows drew light and air into high-ceilinged rooms and emphasized the relationship between exterior and interior.”^{vii}

David J. Lake (born 1823, Mt. Morris, New York) was a realtor and, according to the 1880 Census, a “commission merchant.” He was secretary of the Lake Forest Association, one of the founders of the City, and the third Mayor of Lake Forest, from 1866-1867. He



Forest Lawn. Early photo. Courtesy of the Lake Forest-Lake Forest Historical Society.



Aldrich house. February 2011. Photograph by John Litchfield.

and his wife, Mary, had seven children: Wells C., Edgar J., Mary, Ruth, Julia, Fanny, and Daisey.

In 1927, the original tower was removed and the exterior was modernized with a coat of stucco. Other alterations include the change in projection toward a new front, new surrounds on the doors and windows, and the addition of a small porch next to the two-story polygonal projection. In 1976, the coach house was converted to a residence.

725 NORTH SHERIDAN ROAD
Moved and remodelled in the mid-1890s
for the Aldrich Family
Current Owners: Robert and Eileen Keller

This house may originally have been a farmhouse built circa 1874 for the Whitney family. According to a realtor's brochure,^{viii} the house was moved to Deerpath in the mid-1890s by Gertrude and

Fredrick C. Aldrich (born about 1863). Aldrich was a grain trader at the Chicago Board of Trade. The Aldriches had two daughters: Helen, who married A.B. Dick, Jr., and Anita (1893-1959), who married Lawrence Dunlap Smith.

The local architectural firm of (Charles) Frost and (Alfred) Granger was hired to enlarge and enhance the then small farmhouse. It is now considered a "restrained Queen Anne" with extensive interior and exterior carved wood. There is a decorated pediment situated on the roof above the front porch entry and a matching pediment is repeated and tucked into the roof gable.

A wide porch wraps itself around the front and western side of the house. The home is entered through a wide Dutch door; the floors in the foyer are original quarter-sawn oak. Intricate spindles adorn the staircase. The ceilings throughout the first floor are 10' tall.

In 1996, the detached garage (originally a two-story barn) was moved and connected to the house to accommodate a new kitchen and back bedroom. Historic preservation guidelines were carefully followed in making this change.

ⁱ Barnes was the first male social worker at Chicago's Hull House, president of Illinois College, founder of the Sunday Evening Club, and the first chairman of the Chicago Community Trust.

ⁱⁱ Edward Arpee, *Lake Forest, Illinois, History and Reminiscences 1861-1961*. Lake Forest, Illinois: Lake Forest Historical Society, 1991, p. 56.

ⁱⁱⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italianate_architecture. Accessed 5/8/2011.

^{iv} Kim Coventry, Daniel Meyer, Arthur Miller, *Classic Country Estates of Lake Forest*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003, p. 46.

^v *Ibid.*, p. 46.

^{vi} chicagocrimescenes.blogspot.com, *Alderman John Coughlin's Basement Bathhouse*. February 24, 2009. Accessed May 9, 2011.

^{vii} Coventry, pp. 53-55.

^{viii} Ned Skae and Suzanne Myers, Coldwell Banker Real Estate, Lake Forest, Illinois, 2011. Original source unknown. Historical background is unverifiable.

ALWAYS HAPPY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE...

by Rommy Lopat

As I entered the Lily Reid Holt Chapel to attend the Foundation's Annual Meeting, a volunteer usher looked very relieved that I had arrived. I felt so flattered that my entrance created such a stir, only to hear her say that an elderly couple was very anxious to speak with me. I couldn't imagine why, but was excited to find out...

As the usher led me to the couple, the gentleman was already out of his seat. He

held in his hand a ziplock plastic bag containing a neatly folded piece of stationery, several snapshots of a house, and a black and white postcard of "Gertrude and Edward Humrich." It turns out that my new friends, Gloria and Milan Maliarik, read an article I helped edit last Fall in which we implored residents to come forward with additional examples of post-WWII modernist architecture. Humrich was one of the architects we profiled.

A retired engineer, Mr. Maliarik's notes about their house, which they built in 1955, are—not surprisingly—meticulous. He writes:

- It was built on two acres of open, oak-hickory wooded upland. The foundation was hand-dug to avoid root damage to the giant oaks.



Humrich house

- It is located just west of Lake Forest in Libertyville Township, as is Lake Forest Academy. It is part of the former Armour estate.
- It possesses typical Humrich characteristics except for being the only one, I believe, designed with a pitched roof.
- We are the only "original owners" of a Humrich house, I now feel certain.

- The house is on file at the Chicago Historical Society and was the subject of a Chicago Architectural Foundation tour in 1992, following a memorial service for Humrich, who died in 1991.

Thank you, Mr. & Mrs. Maliarik, for bringing your treasure to our attention. We love your enthusiasm for well-designed architecture!

Note: Edward Robert Humrich (1902-1991) designed ten houses and several house additions in Lake Forest between 1950 and 1966. The Maliarik House is located in unincorporated Libertyville Township. A thesis on Humrich, with a list of his projects, is in the Lake Forest College Special Collections. The Foundation would love to learn more about other Humrich homes.



RAGDALE

by Alice Moulton-Ely



“May all who come to Ragdale continue to be inspired by the beauty and magic of this place.” These words, along with others, were written on the walls of the Ragdale House at the groundbreaking ceremony on March 20 that kick-started the first-ever restoration of this beloved Lake Forest architectural treasure.

Built in 1898¹ by architect Howard Van Doren Shaw as a summer retreat for his family, “Ragdale became an Arts and Crafts utopia, where three generations of family members gathered to escape city summers and enjoy what Shaw called



The ground breaking begins! March 20, 2011. Photograph by Allison Derr.

‘plain living and high thinking.’ Days were spent pursuing creative expression—painting in the meadow, writing in a studio on the prairie or simply reading in a hammock on one of the many porches. In the evenings, family and friends gathered to enjoy fruits of the garden, before listening to the latest play or poem...²

“Ragdale is Shaw’s most personal creation [and listed on the National Register of Historic Places]...The interior features window seats, an inglenook, and clear leaded glass in the top half of the wall that separates the dining room and hall. In an early example of what would become a Shaw trademark, the entrance hall ceiling has a shallow barrel vault. The living room was the heart of the home, where Shaw would work at his desk in the alcove while listening to his wife Frances read aloud to the whole family.”³

In 1976, grand-daughter Alice Ryerson Hayes founded the Ragdale Foundation and created an artist retreat on the property. In 1986, she donated the Ragdale house, out-buildings and five acres to the City of Lake Forest. “Now, 35 years later, Ragdale is the 4th largest artist community in the country and a respected leader in the art world. Each year, Ragdale offers the gifts of time and space to 200 artists and touches the lives of another 7,000 community members through public programs.”⁴

Over the years, new studio space and living quarters have been added on the property to accommodate a growing artists-in-residence program. “But now,” says Ragdale’s Executive Director Susan Tillett, “the main house is living on borrowed time.” Numerous improvements are needed, including updated electrical and mechanical systems, and “a new HVAC system, supplied in part by a geothermal well field, will provide cooling to the second floor...Primary historic spaces will be restored to their appearance circa 1926, the year of Shaw’s death. These include...the numerous screened porches that express the Arts and Craft’s ethos of indoor/outdoor living.”⁵

The house’s finishes and features were documented in a 2008 Historic Structure Report. Windows will be repaired rather than replaced and some historic wall papers, hidden under as many as four layers, will be reproduced. “The famous ‘Ragdale Blue’ will be used for all the wood trim [on the exterior]. Latex paint on the exterior stucco will be removed and replaced with a breathable skim coat and mineral finish in the original color. ‘We are very conscious of the patina,’ says Meg Kindelin of Johnson Lasky Architects, the preservation architecture firm heading the project. ‘It should look like we’ve never been there.’”⁶

The restoration “will make the Ragdale House safe and comfortable for future generations of writers and artists,” says Tillett. “This building, which

so many artists consider the home of their creative spirit, will be preserved... we trust the muse will still be happy to live here and visit the residents working on the great American novel, screenplay and poem!”⁷



Upstairs bedroom, Ragdale house. March 20, 2011. Photograph by Allison Derr.

Ragdale leases the property from the City under a long-term agreement and is privately funding the \$3 million project, called “Operation Renovation,” through public fund raising. For more information, please contact Susan Tillett at 847-234-1063 x202 and visit www.ragdale.org.



The Ragdale house in April 2011. Photograph by Allison Derr.

¹ The chronology in “The Annals of Ragdale: What I Remember” [by] Howard Van Doren Shaw, as told to Evelyn Shaw McCutcheon, 1922, pp. 1-2, makes it clear that the house was built in 1898. This is different from the date of 1897 provided in the 1990 *Ragdale Guidebook*, p.22. See The Ragdale Scrapbook in the Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections online.

² Ragdale Staff, “Ragdale House Project.”

³ Laurie Petersen, *ChicagoArchitect*, July/August, 2010, p. 9.

⁴ Ragdale Staff, “Ragdale House Project.”

⁵ Petersen, p. 9.

⁶ Petersen, p. 9.

⁷ Ragdale Press Release, March 2010.



The Lake Forest Preservation Foundation

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RECOMMENDED BOOK

A recent book, published in 2009, is our recommended reading. It is *Why Architecture Matters* by Paul Goldberger, columnist for *The New Yorker*. The stated purpose of *Why Architecture Matters* is to “come to grips with how things feel to us when we stand before them...to teach us how to understand the architecture that surrounds us every day.” Goldberger raises “our awareness of fundamental elements like proportion, scale, space, texture, shapes, and light.”

Regarding urban design, Goldberger states that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This is the single most important principle of urban architecture: the whole is more than the sum of its parts. That doesn’t mean that the parts need to be the same or that they need to be subjugated to the whole...But it does mean that for a city to work, architects need to feel as if they are designing a section of a much larger composition, a composition that began long before them and will continue long after them, and that however different their work may be from what adjoins it, they cannot design as if the other buildings were not there.”

—Sarah Wimmer

LAKE FOREST PRESERVATION FOUNDATION UPCOMING EVENTS

3RD ANNUAL FAMILY FAIR IN MARKET SQUARE

Saturday, June 25

Fun for the whole family and tours of the City
Co-sponsored by the LF/LB Chamber of Commerce

HISTORIC INTERIORS WITH FRANK PONTERIO

Sunday, October 23

Well-known Lake Forest interior designer Frank Ponterio, of Frank Ponterio Interiors, will present a program entitled Historic Interiors. A reception at an historic home will follow.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY FOR LFPF MEMBERS ONLY

Sunday, December 4

Check the website for the upcoming dates and more information.

www.LFPF.org



BECOME A MEMBER!

Together we can ensure the preservation of the historic visual character of Lake Forest.

Join on line at www.LFPF.org