



UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 26 -Easter Egg Hunt Cobb Park at 11am
- May 5 Annual Meeting
- June 19 Kilbride Classic

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Please visit our website and complete the resident survey to get on the mailing list!!

We want to hear from you !

www.riverviewhistoricdistrict.org

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Riverview Historic District Turns 30

The Prelude

In the late 1970s Kankakee experienced an exodus of major industry which would earn its berth in the Rust Belt. What would become of Kankakee residents who saw their jobs vanish to the sunbelt? What would become of this metropolitan area? Signs appeared around town stating "The last one to leave, turn the lights out." Many feared that the town would dry up. Spirits were low but one small group decided to turn negative thoughts into positive ones.

What IF?...what if we highlighted the beauty of our area? What if we looked into establishing an historic district? Thus, the research team of JoAnne Schwade, Rosalind Lind, Greg Neblock and Mary Benoit emerged. They began by contacting the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency which manages the National Register of Historic Places program in Illinois, a federal program of the National Park Service. Within a short time IHPA toured Kankakee for an initial assessment of the lower Riverview area. The founding team held a luncheon and sponsored a meeting with City officials at the Kankakee Public Library on South Indiana to learn the process of forming an historic district and its potential.

The energetic team, now including Mardene Hinton, (RHD resident 1979-1989) held a garage sale at 970 South Chicago Avenue to kick off the project and to set up a research process. In a recent interview with Hinton and Schwade, Schwade stated, "Oh, there was some controversy about a set of French china in that sale. John Panozzo generously donated a Limoges set. Later, his daughter would learn of the sale and realize that the family Limoges was gone. She sure wasn't happy." The small team knocked on doors to explain the project and to solicit information from current owners. Initially the parameters for the boundaries also included Evergreen Avenue. Eventually the IHPA board would determine the final historic area. "Some of the blocks that we researched had to be eliminated. Those owners were disappointed," Hinton mentioned.

Research would reveal if a structure was non-contributing or contributing. If the house was contributing was it architecturally, historically or both. According to RHD's application to the National Register of Historic Places Inventory, "Most of the architectural styles popular in Illinois from the 1890s to the mid-1930s are represented in the Riverview Historic District.

"The research process was all new to us, we had never applied to the National Register before and so we had to teach ourselves as we gathered info on each house. It was very time consuming, but I don't remember anyone ever growing weary of the task, we were very determined," Hinton reflected.

Research began on foot in the neighborhood, in the library, and in the museum. County records were searched. In a *Daily Journal* article Benoit stated, "We went to the (Kankakee County) assessor's office to find out when each house was built, when it was added onto, who owned it". "We actually drove up and down the streets and said 'Oh, that's a craftsman house; Look at that, that must be...Oh, no it isn't.' " City Directories were culled. Oral histories were sought. Documents were organized. Photos were discovered and taken. Microfiche revealed new discoveries. Volunteers gave sporadic support as they came and went. Undaunted by a sometimes disappointing response to the project, core members trudged on, knowing that their work would prove to be valuable. No one anticipated that it would take five years to complete the application. Jim Schwade took on the onerous task of typing the entire application on his Apple IIe. In recollecting the research process, Hinton sums it up by saying "The effort has led the way to an appreciation for not only the beautiful houses of the historic district, but also the wonderful architecture, throughout the City of Kankakee, left to us by our founding entrepreneurs." Finally, the team felt prepared to go to Springfield in April, 1986.

HOUSEWALK

The 28th Annual Holidays in Historic Riverview House Walk saw an attendance of 250 plus and grossed over \$5000 in ticket and raffle sales. Ticket sales were down this year.

A huge thank you to our docents, the bakers, the ticket sales and all those behind the scenes, too numerous to name. Once again, a huge thank you to our Homeowners for generously sharing their homes for this year's walk.

Volunteer Spotlight

While many hands have made light the work, Jan Homan has been a quiet but driving force in her commitment not only to this event but to the area. After two decades serving on the Board and a two-year term as president she retired to her current position as ticket sales and raffle chair. The Board honored Jan's

service this year with a gift.

In response to why Jan would allow 400 strangers to walk through her home, she replies from her Board notes from 1995. "Those folks who ask just don't get it. They don't live in a neighborhood where people volunteer to help a neighbor get ready for the walk, or work a three hour shift at a home, or bake cookies or light luminaries because of the love of their neighborhood. It's not just Christmas time either. We help each other out throughout the year with many different events and ordinary tasks." In a recent interview, Jan shared her thoughts about the place she has called home since 1970. "People who want to live in a historic district want to be a part of a neighborhood." They plant trees and



flowers; they come to wine social bike races and the block party; they want to be involved in preservation."

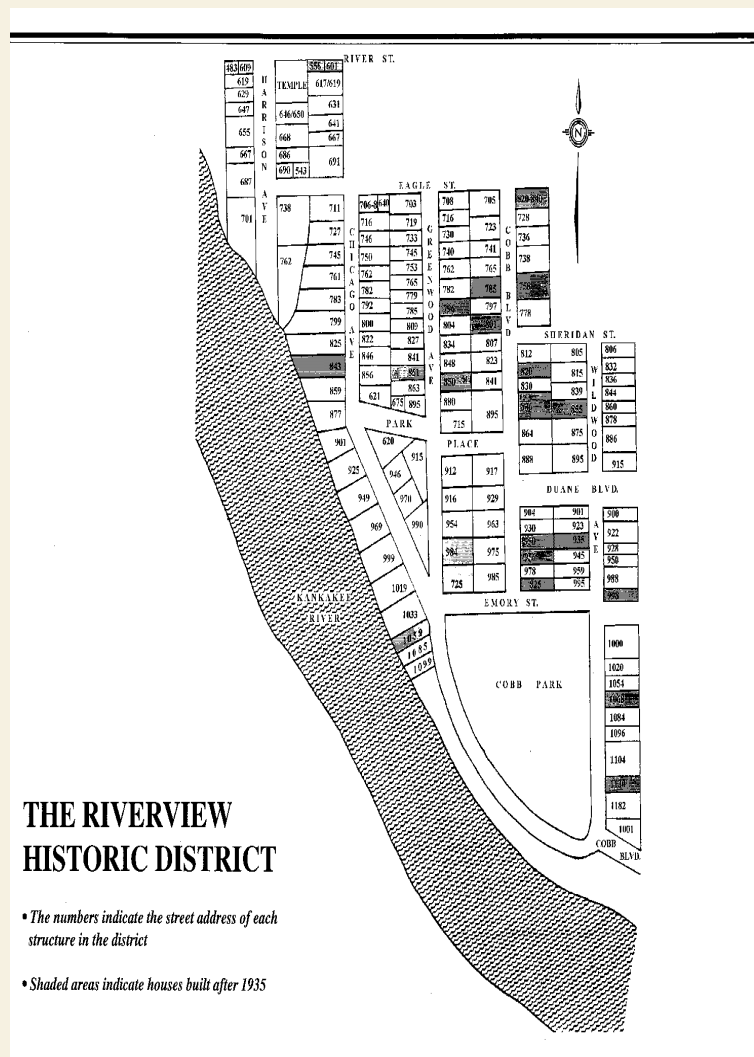
In 1995 Jan closed a meeting with, "It is our responsibility to lay the foundation for the preservation's role in our community a role which will be greater in the future."

Gone...but not forgotten. We pay tribute to these neighbors that we have lost: Nancy Kern, Lorraine Pagast, Ted Spaulding and Larry Williams

PLANTING THE PARKWAYS

This past year, seven trees were planted in our neighborhood. Thirty-three trees have been planted to date, reports the project director, Chip Rorem. The Riverview Historic District continues to offer to plant our parkways with trees. Riverview will purchase the tree and the City of Kankakee will plant it free of charge. The homeowner must agree to water the tree once a week during the growing season. Contact Chip at chiprorem@gmail.com and visit our website for more information.

"Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives. But neighbors give in return. We never put back into the tree what we took out of it: we had given nothing and it made me sad."
Harper Lee, *To Kill A Mockingbird*



THE RIVERVIEW HISTORIC DISTRICT

- The numbers indicate the street address of each structure in the district
- Shaded areas indicate houses built after 1935