

Horticultural Society of Lake Forest

In this month's installment of the Alphabet Series, we would like to trace the history of the Horticultural Society of Lake Forest. The Horticultural Society of Lake Forest, also later known as the North Shore Horticultural Society, was established on July 19, 1905.

The name was officially changed to the North Shore Horticultural Society in 1912 when a number of new members were received from other parts of the North Shore area. Horticultural Societies are an organization that facilitate and sustain the development of horticulture in a given area. As elaborated in Edward Arpee's book, Lake Forest Illinois: History and Reminiscences 1861-1961, the North Shore Horticultural Society's purpose was "to encourage and promote the study and practice of horticulture, floriculture and arboriculture and general gardening." The society was established by the residents of Lake Forest with a view to improving the appearance of the north shore.

The Horticultural Society of Lake Forest was a seed of hope implanted by a few residents of Lake Forest, which later blossomed into a greater success. Emil Bollinger, George Blanbard, and George Koppenhoefer are recognized as the founders of the society. They carried a vision of a group that would carry on a systematic study of gardening in all its branches and spread awareness through exhibitions. Reflecting back on its history, we can see how their vision transcended into reality.

The Horticultural Society of Lake Forest began with thirteen charter members in 1905. Forty years later, the membership was expanded to 221 with residents ranging from the Chicago to Kenosha region. As the Society grew, so did their capabilities. The Horticultural Society began sponsoring trips to various gardens and greenhouses. Some notable contributions include Farwell Field of Lake Forest College, West Park, and the Deer Path Golf Club. The Society was truly dedicated to the cultivation and preservation of memorable sites in our community.

Furthermore, the Horticultural Society organized numerous scenic exhibits of flowers, vegetables, fruits, shrubs, trees and other products of the soil at seasonable times and places. Not only did the society provide a picturesque resplendence of nature in the North Shore community, but also assured the sustenance of the crops by "supplying its members with reliable information pertaining to gardening and kindred subjects."

The Horticultural Society promoted the development and interest of horticulture in the community by instigating a healthy sense of competition among gardeners through exhibitions. As reported in the Chicago Tribune, the Lake Forest Horticultural society was always making extensive preparations for its annual exhibitions. As one article reads, "Although the membership is made up of gardeners of Lake Forest, the summer colony is deeply interested, as much rivalry exists between the residents over the products of their gardens. They have almost as keen an interest in the cultivation of prize-winning vegetables as they do in having blue ribbon winners in their stables."

Our board member and local historian, Shirley Paddock recalls the legacy of the Lake Forest Horticultural Society as the daughter of one of the successful gardeners—Mr. Sylvester MacDonald. Sylvester MacDonald won numerous awards at the horticultural exhibitions, including the Lake Forest Country Fair Award. Among other things, Shirley Paddock reflects on how the Lake Forest Horticultural Society contributed to a heightened sense of appreciation for flowers through their extravagant display of horticulture in exhibitions. Such grand exhibitions were truly a big deal.

Although the Horticultural Society of Lake Forest no longer exists, its lasting impact continues to awe residents and visitors of the North Shore. As Historian Edward Arpee concludes, “Lake Forest owes a debt of gratitude to the organization which has had such a great share in the beautifying of the city. The interest it has generated may be even more valuable than the hard work and the scientific knowledge promoted by the Society.”

It is truly heart-warming to see how the notable contributions of the Horticultural Society continue to persevere to this day. As Shirley Paddock reveals, she still plants the very same Dahlia bulbs that her father used to plant. By instilling a sense of care and pride in every gardener, the Horticultural Society has guaranteed the sustenance and flourishing of gardens in Lake Forest—one of the most notable features of our community.

[Side Bar-List of gardeners]

Following is a partial list of gardner/members compiled from Arpee’s history of Lake Forest and the *Lake Forester*:

| Gardener | Families for which they worked |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Alexander Allen | Laflin |
| John Anderson | Woods |
| Otto Anderson | E.L. Ryerson |
| Emil Bollinger | Byron L. Smith |
| Eric Benson | McBirney |
| Alex Binnie | Viles |
| John Brown | Gwethlyn Jones |
| Ralph Clauson | Brewster |
| Thomas Dobbin | Norris |
| Andrew Eide | Sample |
| Ernest Gernenz | Laurence Armour |
| Karl Geppert | Chatfield-Taylor |
| Nels Hanson | Clow |
| Chris Jensen | McLaughlin |
| Robert E. Kuehne | A. Watson Armour, A.B. Dick |
| George Kuppenhoefer | Swift |
| Kay Lindemman | Coleman |

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Knut Lofen | Barnes |
| Carl Lundeen | Barnes |
| Harry Lynch | Cowles |
| Andrew Martenson | McElwee |
| John Newbore | McElwee |
| Axel Nielsen | Cudahy |
| William Oke | Warner |
| Elbert Parshall | Ryerson |
| Hjalmar E. Peterson | Hamill |
| Albert Rippon | Mrs. Stanley Keith |
| Gottlieb Schaefer | Clayton Mark |
| Frank Schreiber | Calvin Durand |
| Walter E. Steinhaus | J.O. Armour |
| Marc Twinney | J.O. Armour |
| Andrew Zavaodka | J.O. Armour |
| John Tiplady | Dick |
| Camiel J. Bennet | F.P. Smith |
| Robert Vipond | C.B. Farwell |
| Henry Wallace | Hamill |
| Fritz Zarte | Runnells |