

History in the Center

The Village of Round Lake Beach purchased a historical cabinet in 2004, which is located in the Cultural and Civic Center of Round Lake Beach. This cabinet was built in 1907 for a hardware store in Round Lake. Stop by the Center to view this beautiful piece. [Click here for more information.](#)

The History of Round Lake Beach

When Round Lake Beach became an incorporated village in 1937, another event of historical significance took place—probably completely unnoticed, That was the 100th anniversary of inhabitation of the general area known as Round Lake.

Elijah U. Haines, a man of fantastically diverse abilities who incorporated the village of Hainesville, noted in writing the first history of Lake County that the first claims of government lands were made in Avon Township in 1835, but it was not until the summer of 1837 that the first log cabin was built.

While present day residents of Round Lake Beach take great pride in their lake and the beautiful rolling, tree covered land of the community, Haines in his history observed "probably no other township in the county . . . possesses in equally good quality of land . . . and is as well and conveniently watered . . ." as Avon.

Well known Round Lake Beach and Round Lake area names of today date back to the early Avon settlers as recorded by Haines Delazan E. Haines, Harley H. Hendee, David Hendee, David Rich, Thomas Renehan, Leonard Gage, to mention a few, has descendents living in the community or nearby today.

The area's first house was built in the fall of 1839 in what is now Hainesville. It was converted to a tavern house in 1844. Mail at the new post office in Hainesville was received in February 1846, which fronted on the Lake and McHenry plank road, the forerunner of Belvidere Road or Route 120.

Hainesville at that time had a "large and commodious public house, two stores, and various mechanics such as are usually found in a country village." The early settlers, mostly of English and Irish descent, were farmers specializing in stock and fruit growing.

One of the early landmarks was the sawmill built in 1845 on Squaw Creek by Nahum White somewhere near the present western limits of Round Lake. One of White's sons, Horace, was a maker of reapers and farm implements, according to information compiled by R. W. Churchill in a History of Lake County prepared by Professor John J. Halsey of Lake Forest College in 1912.

History of the mid-1800 is sketchy, although it is known that the Round Lake area sent its share of men to fight in the Civil War. One native son, George E. Hendee, fought in such battles as Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge and lived to return home and operate a farm and summer resort on the north shore of Round Lake. Col. C. C. Morse, who lived on a farm south of town, served with several Illinois regiments and returned home to become a prominent Lake County attorney.

While McHenry County was split in 1839 so Lake County could be formed and when the county redistricted in 1860 to form the present township system, residents in and around Round Lake seemed content to tend their own business.

By the 1880's however, the brilliant Haines was rising in state politics and in 1885 he was elected speaker of the House of Representatives of Illinois, with both the Republicans and Democrats fighting to elect him.

Down through the years farming was the most important occupation for men of the community, although employment was provided by Armour & Company at its Round Lake model ice plant at which more than a hundred thousand tons of ice was put up each winter after the turn of 'the century. The company owned all the lake.

With America in the 20th century, farming still was the basis of the local economy, although Chicagoans in increasing numbers flocked to the famous lakes in the pre-World War I days for summer fun. The resort business thrived.

Use of the automobile in the pre-war era helped bring summer visitors from Chicago whom first became acquainted with the area when the Milwaukee Road extended trackage through Hainesville and Round Lake in 1900.

A farming area with a touch of resort atmosphere because of the excellent hunting and fishing continued to characterize The Round Lake area right into the 1920's. Community life—church, school, social, mercantile—centered in Round Lake, which became an incorporated village in 1908.

Thus the setting was laid for the arrival of a visionary man whose remaining years were to be entwined with what was to become Round Lake Beach—L. B. Harris, a Chicago real estate developer.

Depression days along with an all out promotional effort by L.B, Harris helped focus attention in 1934 on the year-round living possibilities offered In Round Lake Beach.

The Chicago publisher of a magazine called "New Deal," Dr. Curtis Howe Springer, selected Round Lake Beach as "the most-ideal residential resort community in the lake region close to Chicago."

Springer was looking for a spot to invite his readers for Sunday outings. The publisher conducted a contest in which a small home in Round Lake Beach was awarded as a prize.

Visitors on the "New Deal" outings and those attracted by Harris' offerings of inexpensive homes in a delightfully wooded lake area increased during those Chicago Century of Progress days and lot sales were brisk. Some, built summer homes and a few planned year around residences, Round Lake Beach got its first permanent residents in the days America was pulling out of the terrible economic slump that set in with the Crash of 1929.

By the mid-1930's the population was edging toward, the 200 mark. Building in summer months continued and the complexion of the community began to change from a scattering of summer resort cottages to that of one of the small villages springing up around Chicago.

Residents of Round Lake Beach in the middle of the Depression decade soon had to become used to "rugged" living or they returned to Chicago. In spring and fall roads turned to ribbons of mud. There was not any electricity. A standard joke about running water was that you could get it if you were willing to sprint from the well or one of the community wells to your house.

With demands growing for municipal services and community pride running at strong ebb, a proposal for incorporation of the community was eagerly received in 1936. By Thanksgiving, time that year petitions calling for a vote on forming a village were in circulation. Attorney, Bernard Juron, who was destined to become the first village attorney of Round Lake Beach, provided legal assistance and 110 of 160 residents in the one and a quarter mile area of the subdivision signed petition requested Judge Perry L. Persons to set a day for an election. Dec. 5, 1936 was the date proposed.

The Round Lake Beach Community Club with John J. Lynch as president was instrumental in circulation of petitions. Judges for the election were Malcolm Nelson, Otto Kalben, Clerks Frank Gunnel, Anna Blaser and Hannah Lippigg.

At the time of the vote on incorporation, the permanent population was determined that fewer than 200 person in 10 block area, although there were more than 1,000 property owner's on the tax rolls.

The subdivision originally had its boundaries running from Cedar Lake Road to Round Lake Road and Rollins south to Clarendon. This is about the way it looked in 1928 when Mead's farm was acquired. It ran from Cedar Lake Road west to Sunset Drive. On this farm were the remains of log cabins used by early Avon Township settlers.

January 19, 1937 was finally the date established for the incorporation vote after red tape has been swept aside. Voting was at the Lynch residence at Ferndale Drive and Cedar Lake Road.

Parties were formed with Lynch, a traffic manager for a Chicago concern, heading the Community Party and Otto Kalben, a retired Chicago policeman, heading the Peoples Party.

Lynch's party swept into office by a two to one majority. The man who worked so hard for incorporation defeated Kalben 74 to 30. Original Board of trustees was composed of Peter Crowley a comptroller for Parmelee Freight Co. Edward M. Lahey, proprietor of a laundry business; William Hingst of the state highway department; Frank Krakora, a tailor for Hart Schaffner and Marx; Hana Roeb, popular community leader, and Charles Rogers, a tool and die maker.

John C Ness, assistant sales manager for a chemical company and a former professional baseball player with the Chicago White Sox as a first baseman and Detroit during the days of Ty Cobb, was the victorious candidate for village clerk.

Unsuccessful candidates for the board were George J. Cobb, Ted Orban, Frank Delafonte, Herman Bragulla, Siguard Olsen and Jack Malone. David Stillman lost out in the face with Ness.

Lynch served until the first regular election in April of 1937 when Roeh was elected village president. Roeh served two years and Theodore Fisher filled the remainder of his term until the next election. Fisher and Henry Rostad ran for the presidency with Rostad winning. Charles Schwartz, Eugene Williams and the present Mayor John Glen followed him in office.

Out of 248 voters who went to the polls 62 years ago to cast votes in the first Round Lake Beach Village election 10 still live in the community and eight others nearby. Round Lake Beach had the distinction of being the only village in Illinois without a name for months after its birth. However, it was not the fault of the village.

Attorney Bernard J. Juron, who had settled in old Shorewood years before the village, prepared the necessary legal papers to provide that the village is named Round Lake Beach and sent them to the secretary of state. Days went by and he got no reply. Perplexed, Juron wrote the secretary of state to inquire about the delay.

By return mail the secretary of state advised Juron to select another name because they could not have a name with Round Lake in it, as there already was a Round Lake, Illinois.

Consulting his legal tomes Juron discovered he was right and the secretary was wrong. Juron wrote to the Secretary of state to point out that such conflict in names was immaterial under the law as there was a Chicago and Ft North Chicago, a St. Louis and East St. Louis, and Miami and Miami Beach. More weeks went by with no answer.

Incensed, Juron wrote to advise the secretary of state that if he did not issue the name of Round Lake Beach forthwith he would sue him and force him to certify the name. The secretary, consulting his legal staff, found he was wrong and the long nameless village finally got its name.

The Depression made its mark on the village by changing it from a summer resort to a permanent residential community as unemployment mounted in the city forcing people to vacate apartments and move to their summer homes. Back yard gardens sprang up everywhere, surplus produce was preserved in neighborhood canning parties under the auspices of the Illinois Emergency Relief Corps.

Harris saved many a home and heartache during this period. Money not being available for payment by great many purchasers, Harris gladly took one dollar per week and sometimes less and gave a hearty pat on the back to those folks overburdened even meet any payment with a wish for good luck and better times ahead.

The winter of 1838-39 brought a severe snowstorm during the day while children were in school. They were kept there over night and the next day until they were dug out by the townspeople. The drifts near the school reached a height of 14 ft. in some places.

In 1939, a group of people seeking pleasure as well as the betterment of the Village organized the Progressive Club. This Club provided many benefits to the village such as gravel for impassible roads. and shelters for school children waiting for school buses. At Christmas time, it held large parties for village youngsters and folks in need of food and clothing for themselves and children. The Club also held weekly Barn dances to raise necessary funds on Rollins Rd. that is now John's Farm Inn. The Progressive Club was a helping hand to many in time of need.

Amy Lade at North Channel and Cedar Lake Roads owned the first store in the Village. March, 1937 was and memorable date for the Beach. Kerosene lamps were doomed as electricity entered the quiet little village. June 80, 1938 brought the memorable Flood to the Village. Water ran four feet deep on Cedar Lake Road. Boating for transportation and sightseeing being the popular thing for several days.

The first Village Hall was at North Channel and Clarendon Dr., Originally it was a W.P.A tool shed. It was used as a Sunday school and at present is the Progressive clubhouse. The present village hall was the Shorewood Country clubhouse, it was moved from the club grounds to its present location.

Malcolm Nelson was the first police chief. Other chiefs were Clarence Yeager, Frank Kelly, Harry Clayburn, the present chief Carl Schmidt and Clarence Folgers. The Men's Club of the Village was formed in 1946, followed by the founding of the Women's Club in 1948. Both clubs being civic betterment organizations as well as social clubs.

The first Sunday school in the village was started in the home of Mrs. Frank Kelly for her own children. Soon neighbor children came and in time, more room was needed. The Sunday school then moved into the W.P.A. building, the enrollment increased and teachers were needed. Mrs. Violet Walsh, Mrs. Ann Altman and Mrs. Elsie Fuss offered their services and taught for a number of years. Later It moved into the basement of the H&H store and then into the Progressive clubhouse. This Sunday School led to a church group which later affiliated with the Baptist Church.

Men of the community left their homes in 1941 and 1942 to shoulder arms with Americans around the globe during World War II. Women and children at home got along the best they could with food and gas rationing and contributed to the war effort by working on such things as Red Cross and Civil Defense of which Round Lake Beach was the hub. An aircraft observation tower was built.

When Round Lake Beach men returned home after the war they were joined by hundreds of other young men who were bringing their families to new homes where there was an opportunity to grow and play in sunshine. GI financing made a comfortable home within the means of every former serviceman in 1946.

The housing boom that resulted thrust Round Lake Beach into the suburban scale of living. It also thrust on the community the entire problem and headaches of growing pains. Village fathers again grappled with such problems as roads, zoning, police protection, drainage, building codes, annexation—and the most vexing of them all, sanitation.

Neighboring areas were in the same boat as far as modern sanitation was concerned so the Round Lake Sanitary District was formed in 1947. Only Round Lake Beach did not have the bonding power to install laterals and mains. Thus began the grind that included passage of a referendum in 1968 to finance construction of a system of mains and laterals that was nearing completion on the 26th anniversary.

Round Lake Beach was the largest community in population in west Lake County with 6,011 population, as of the 1962 census, and the largest community in land area as the result of aggressive annexation policy of that administration. With the commercial growth of Rollins Road and North Cedar Lake Road, the village was coming into its own as a business community. And has been growing ever since.

Mayors of Village of Round Lake Beach

- 1937 - J.R. Lynch
- 1937 - 1939 Hans Roeh
- 1939 - 1940 Trustee William Hingst (Pro Tern)
- 1940 - 1941 Theodore Fisher
- 1941 - 1949 H.H. Rostad
- 1949 - 1957 Charles Schwartz
- 1957 - 1960 Eugene Williams
- 1960 - 1969 John Glen
- 1969 - 1981 Carl Schrimpf
- 1981 - 1985 Rodney Brenner
- 1985 - 1993 Carl Schrimpf
- 1993 - 2001 Ralph E. Davis
- 2001 - Present Rich Hill

Clerks of Village of Round Lake Beach

- 1937 - J.C. Ness
- 1937 - 1941 F. Krakora
- 1941 - 1942 Alma Yeager
- 1942 - 1945 Nettie Harvey
- 1945 - 1950 Harvy Royale
- 1950 - 1951 Ed Blaeser
- 1951 - 1952 Harvy Royale
- 1955- Hazel Kelly and John Bailey (Act Clerks)
- 1955 - 1960 Alice Czuczor
- 1960 - 1964 Ruth Palm
- 1964 - Amelia Plahatnik

- 1964 - Joan Donahue and Margery Glen (Act Clerks)
- 1965 - 1977 Eva Stuvrock
- 1977 - 1981 Linda Swiezyn (Act Clerk)
- 1981 -1984 Carmen Reyes
- 1984 - 1985 Sue Nikulin
- 1985 - 1988 Becky Fox
- 1988 - 1992 Donna Langle
- 1992 - 1997 Sharon Fyfe
- 1997- 2001 Jennifer M. Oliver
- 2001- 2008 Sylvia Valadez
- 2009 - Present Margie Cleveland