



# MARKTOWN UPDATE

A publication of the Marktown Preservation Society

March 2004

## "South of Chicago: Suburbs, Steel Mills, Shoreline"

### Marktown Included in New WTTW Channel 11 Historical Program

In the October issue of Marktown Update we told you of an upcoming program produced by WTTW Channel 11 in Chicago. This is part of an outstanding series of programs produced by Channel 11 and hosted by none other than Geoffrey Baer, a noted architectural and social historian. The programs are heralded across all of the United States as being not only most informative and technically correct, but most importantly, family entertainment that educates and inspires the viewer.

Past programs have included **Chicago By Boat, Chicago's Lakefront, Chicago By L,** and most recently **Chicago's North Shore.** Added to this most impressive list is their newest program **South of Chicago: Suburbs, Steel Mills, Shoreline** which airs in early March. What's this great new program about? It's about the greater Calumet Region and that includes us. This is what WTTW has to say about their striking new program.

*"In the region south of Chicago, everything seems bigger than life -- the heroes and the villains, the bridges, boats and buildings, and even people's dreams. In the newest of his Chicagoland tour programs, host and writer Geoffrey Baer takes you on a journey through the vast region one historian described as America on a grand scale.*

*"This TV tour starts in Gary, with a look inside the largest steel mill in the western hemisphere. You'll also see amazing architectural landmarks, and learn about the city's struggle to recover from industrial downsizing. Then you'll travel north and west along the Lake Michigan shoreline to Chicago's Calumet Harbor. You'll see pristine wetlands and other natural wonders, sandwiched in between huge industrial developments. At Calumet Harbor, you'll board a tugboat and cruise the Calumet River to Blue Island. You'll get a rare view of the enormous Chicago Skyway from 12 stories below, and learn how*

*waterways have been reversed and rearranged again and again over a century of industrial expansion.*

*"In Blue Island you'll see beautiful preserved historic homes. Next you'll visit Robbins, the first town in the North founded and run by African Americans. Then you'll hop in a Model A Ford and head south on the historic Dixie Highway through the beautiful communities of Homewood, Flossmoor and Olympia Field and many more. You'll take a side trip to Thorton Quarry, where you'll descend 40 stories into a manmade canyon, and you'll visit Henry Ford's airport in Lansing and see it's landmark hanger. You'll also learn about the devout Dutch farmers who made South Holland the onion capital of the world.*

*"You'll continue South through the "crossroads of the nation" in Chicago Heights where the Lincoln Highway, America's first coast to coast auto route, is intersected by the Dixie Highway. You'll continue south through Steger to the historic town of Crete, and then double back, ending your tour in America's prototype post WWII planned*



*community, Park Forest."*

Somewhere in all of this will be a segment about the Marktown Historic District; Howard Shaw's visionary concept of a utopian community built during the Great War. But you'll have to tune in if you want to find out just what they had to say about our neighborhood. It should be noted that the Marktown Preservation Society was asked to provide technical information and photographs of Marktown for this program but that we had absolutely no input as to what was included or said about Marktown.

#### SCHEDULED VIEWING TIMES

**Wednesday, March 10th** at 7:30 PM (debut) and again at 9:30 PM

**Saturday, March 13th** at 10:30 AM & 4:00 PM

**Thursday, March 18th** at 9:00 PM

visit us on line at [www.marktown.org](http://www.marktown.org)

## Clayton Mark & Company Artifact Finds a New Home in Marktown

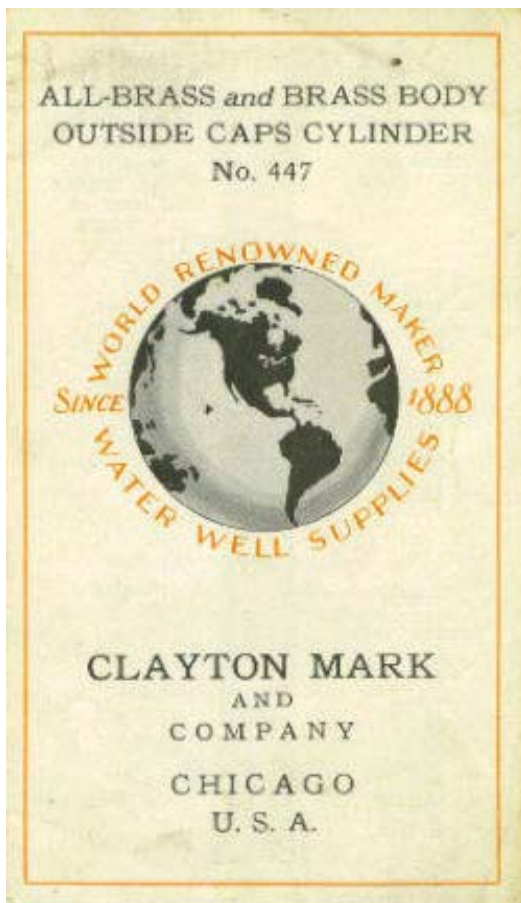
It was one of those days that just happens. I returned home late on February 9th to find a message on my machine from a fire fighter in Lansing, Illinois. His name was Dan Szklarski and he collects antique fire fighting equipment. Apparently in his endless search he came upon a pair of brass and bronze nozzles manufactured by none other than Clayton Mark and Company. He had found my telephone through the Marktown web site and was interested in finding out more about Clayton Mark and his business enterprises. We made arrangements to meet at my home in Marktown the next day and at about 10:00 AM he arrived with his darling five year old daughter.

I pulled out the two early 1900's Mark Manufacturing Co. catalogues that I keep in the living room book case just for questions like this.

While looking through the catalogues he explained that he had found two such nozzles somewhere in Texas. As they had been described as fire nozzles and were relatively affordable but in need of restoration, so he went ahead and purchased them.

Upon examining the items he realized that they were not nozzles, but strainers used by fire fighters to draw water out of ponds, ditches or lakes. It took him some time and effort to restore the items, but when he was done they were as good as new. Mr. Szklarski was kind enough to make one available to the Marktown Preservation Society at a most reasonable price. We are pleased to add it to our collection and to share this piece of Marktown history with our readers.

**Paul A. Myers, Resident Historian**



*An original sales brochure from Clayton Mark and Company dating from before the establishment of Indiana Harbor Works. (From the Marktown Preservation Society collection)*



*An early 1900's brass water strainer manufactured by Clayton Mark & Co. part number 2-5340. It too is now a part of the Marktown Preservation Society collection.*

**Need to e-mail us? You can contact Paul at [pmyers@eastchicago.com](mailto:pmyers@eastchicago.com)**

## ***Not Just a Marktown Neighbor... But Someone You Should Know!***

What she lacks in formal education she makes up for in devotion and dedication to children with special needs. Her name is Lourdes Munoz-Hicks; a mother of six and the wife of David Hicks, one of Judy and Babe Hicks' son's. Her and David are married and currently live on the 400 block of Grove Street with their assorted lot of children. Just to make things perfectly clear, she's not running for office and this is not a political advertisement.

Exactly when Lourdes became concerned and more importantly involved with special needs children is a day she will never forget. Her then 13 year old son Manuel was struck by one of his teachers at school. She was outraged. Her immediate questions was *"What gives you the right to strike my child? If I did that I would be in jail."* The teacher's response was *"Your child has problems lady, what do you expect me to do, council him?"* It didn't take her long to contact the Indiana Department of Education in Indianapolis and from there her learning experience and assistance to her son and other children in Lake County with special needs began to expand greatly.

The Department of Education referred her to a group called InSource which trains and certifies primarily parents in reference to State Statutes and Federal Laws in dealing with the rights of children with special needs and specifically to their right to equal access to the educational process.

While Lourdes initially took the classes to help her son Manuel, because she has been certified as a Child Advocate, she can now lend assistance to other children with similar challenges. Lourdes said *"My interest lies with the child and their needs. Not the school's or the parent's needs, but with the child's. In far too many cases I have found that many of the parents have some of the same disabilities as their child's. Unfortunately it is too late in their lives for me to be of assistance. But the child, that's different. When I first started meeting with school administrators, teachers and counselors I think they*

*thought I was either going to go away or that I was just another outraged parent. But I had the law on my side, and most importantly on the side of my child and others like him. Once you know your rights and the rights of the child they not only have to listen to you, but more importantly, they have to respond to your greivence and come into compliance."*

Lourdes went on to explain that the children with special needs have a number of rights. Included in them is the right of INCLUSION in the general education process. They also have the right to have an INDIVIDUAL Education Program (IEP) keyed specifically to their diagnosed and defined needs. She also noted that few if any of the parents of special needs children are aware of their child's rights. Most are initially willing to take what the various schools tell them as the law, when actually it is nothing more than the easy road to take for the school administration.

Now that she is certified to assist other children and their parents in understanding their rights, she shares her wealth of information with others throughout Lake Country by holding free seminars at least once a month. Many are at the Old Marktown Community Center, while others are at the East Chicago Public Library or various locations throughout the



county.

One of the concepts stressed by Lourdes is ***Freedom From Exclusion. Diversity enriches and strengthens Hoosier communities. Everyone benefits when people with disabilities are included in schools, in the workplace, in the community and in the voting booth. Inclusive communities happen when people with and without disabilities work together to achieve their goals and dreams. Now is the time to challenge the barriers that prevent full participation in society.***

For further information on the **Freedom from Exclusion** and the **Child Advocate** program please call Lourdes Munoz-Hicks at 392-4203.

***The printing of this newsletter was made possible through the generosity of Mr. Dan McArdle.***



# The Old Marktown Community Center: Fond Memories of a Great Old Building

by Paul A. Myers

With much being said about the proposed New Marktown Community Center I thought it would only be appropriate to discuss the history of the Old Marktown Community Center. To do so we have had to go back and do some research on the subject. Fortunately, records and photographs are still available.

As we mentioned in earlier editions of Marktown Update, only four of the proposed thirty sections of the Mark Town Site were completed. Had economic problems that plagued the Mark Manufacturing Co. following the Great War (WW I) not occurred and the community completed as planned, we would have not only had a formal High School about the size of the old Roosevelt High, but we would have also had our own Community Center the front elevation of which was featured in the December issue of Marktown Update.

In about 1920, Mark Manufacturing Company decided that there was a need to build at least one school building for the residents of the Mark Town Site. They decided to build a frame building with two rooms, a center hall, wash rooms and a coat room for the students. The first building was constructed in about 1920 and measures 31'X 67' or approximately 2,000 square feet. The popular means of fuel for heat at that time was coal and the building was equipped with not only a coal furnace but a coal fed hot water heater. Herb Southern who grew up in Marktown remembers having to go in early and stoke the furnace with coal so that the building would be

warm when the people arrived.

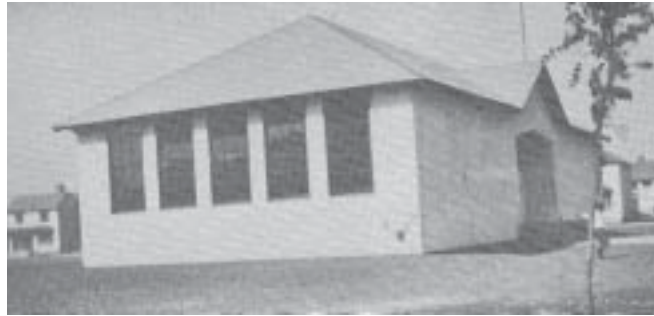
Not long after the first building was completed a second building was constructed between the center of the lot where the Community Center now stands and Park Street. For many of us that grew up in Marktown and are still around, we probably re-

member this now missing structure as our school building. I personally remember attending kindergarten, first and second grade in the old school building, however records and photos show that our current center was originally built and used as a school in the early years.

The two buildings together served this neighborhood as schools for over fifteen years. After the second building was constructed the first building was used for 3rd, 4th, 5th grade students from Marktown. As some point just before World War II the decision to bus part of the Marktown children to East Chicago was made. The second school building was retained for kindergarten, first and second grades and the other building was converted into a Community Center.

Just what was our Old Community Center used for in the early years? More things than you can possibly imagine. During the great depression, when it was still a school building, the women of Marktown cooked and served dinner in the building in order to make sure that the children of those families which were without employment would have at least one nourishing hot meal a day.

There were a number of groups that were



*Top: A very early photograph of the Marktown Community Center. Note the original recessed front entrance and the windows which flanked both ends of the building. Since the original school building and basketball courts are not present we can only assume that the original two school building were built at different times, but that this was constructed first (probably about 1920.)*

*Bottom: The Old Community Center as it stands today.*

**A new motto for Marktown: Try to leave things better than you found them!**

organized over the years. The first Boy Scout troop in Marktown began back in 1920. After that we had Girl Scout, Brownies and Cub Scouts all of which met at the Community Center.

Well before World War II began there was a Marktown Teenager Club who worked with adult volunteers on food drives and community block by block clean up programs. Sound familiar?

During the war a number of ladies volunteered at the community center with the American Red Cross. They prepared special packages to be sent to the servicemen serving in the war. Following the war many of the ladies stayed on to fold bandages for the American Cancer Society. Anyone who has lived here more than thirty years can remember a good number of the groups formed by residents to serve this community.

During World War II the Ford Motor Company lost a major U.S. Supreme Court decision and was ordered to sell off their "non automotive" investments and concerns. This heralded the call for all U.S. corporations to follow suit, and as we mentioned in a previous issue it was during this time that Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company sold off the properties in Marktown and transferred the school building lot to the East Chicago Public Schools. There were several covenants or restrictions placed on the property when it was transferred. One restricts the property from being used for any purpose other than education or recreation. The other strictly prohibits the property from ever being utilized or zoned for a business of any type. It should be noted that even though we have not used

the property as a school for more than a decade, the property is still owned by the East Chicago School City.

Beyond having the continued use of the Community Center by the various scouting and teenager groups and the American Red Cross, we also had several other civic organizations in our neighborhood over the past eighty-five years.

At one time we had the Marktown Civic Club which met on a monthly basis and at virtually any time of crisis in the community. A good example of their proactive and reactive approach to things was during the great Amoco conflagration of 1955. For those of you who were not here at that time it was quite a mess. Despite popular opinion in the neighborhood today, none of the Marktown homes were severely damaged as a result of the fire. In fact only a few windows were broken on the west side of the neighborhood.

The Marktown Civic Club stepped in and gave residents a hand in dealing with the problem. While Marktown was never officially evacuated during the several weeks of the fire, that was probably due to the efforts of the Civic Club who worked hand in hand with city officials and Marktown residents to see to it that all was safe.

At one time we also had a Men's Club and a separate Women's Club. The Women's Club of today is in a way fashioned after the prior organized groups that served our community. I suppose that the only difference is that in the past, virtually all of the organizations in this neighborhood attempted to stay out of neighborhood politics all together. Their only purpose was to serve the community and not



*The Old Marktown Community Center in 1923 when it was still being used as an elementary school.*



*The Old Marktown Community Center in 2004. What a difference eighty plus years makes! Nearly everything shown was donated by Marktown residents and friends!*

***Life begins when you begin to serve. Serve your neighborhood. Serve Marktown. Volunteer to help make Marktown a Better, Cleaner and Safer Place to Live and Raise a Family.***



*Girl Scouts and Brownies were among the several groups who traditionally utilized the Marktown Community Center. Mrs. Ruth Springsteen is shown here (upper left) with some of her Scouts.circa 1950*

the political ambitions of their members.

As we noted earlier, there were always a number of organizations that met at the Marktown Community Center. Before and after WWII we had an active Marktown Teenager Club which did a number of things from cleaning up the neighborhood to holding movie nights at the Center on Friday evenings. Popcorn was made and the members ran the movie projectors. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were always popular. We even had a Cub Scout Troop when I grew up. Back in the 50's and 60's we also had a Marktown Men's club which sort of paralleled the Women's Club. While the women had bake sales, the men had smokers. What is really amazing is that everyone belonged to everything for the most part. There wasn't any of this bickering as to which organization represented Marktown. They all did, and all any of them wanted to do was make this a better place to live and raise a family. No politics, just a lot of fun.

### ***BACK TO THE BUILDING***

At sometime around the 50th Anniversary of Marktown (1967) Democratic Precinct Committeeman William (Bill) Hess worked out a plan to have Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company do some extensive repairs to the Community Center. Bill was a carpenter at the No. 1 Tin Mill of YS&T and not only were all of the materials but all of the labor was donated for the project.

Bill Hess was one of those remarkable people that you only have once every few years. There wasn't anything he wouldn't do for you and yet would never ask for anything in return. But we will save the story of Bill for a later edition of Update.

In 1980, right after Marktown was placed on

the National Register of Historic Places, Mayor Pastrick with the assistance of Mary Kaczka and John Artist, established what was known as the Coastal Redevelopment Plan which served to revitalize our 13 acres of park in Marktown. The original blue prints still exist and shows that the original plan called for a 2,000 square foot addition to be added to the rear of our current community center. Along with this there was to be a fountain between the new wing and Grove Street. The area for the fountain is still there and by coincidence is the exact location for the fountain that was laid out in the plans for the New Marktown Community Center. Unfortunately funds ran short and the expansion of the Community Center along with the fountain were eliminated. As a part of the overall project we did get new tennis courts, the pavilion on Pine Avenue, the berm at the edge of the park, all of those great trees and a sprinkler system that after a few years the Park Department quit maintaining until it no longer functioned at all.

Another unique aspect of the park plan was the additional fifty parking spaces on Park and Grove Streets. You see, when they decided to spend 1.5 million dollars in the renovation of the Marktown Park the argument was made that if we are going to spend all of that money here, residents from the rest of the city will want to come out and use the park. To do so we needed more parking. Despite the narrow minded opinion of some, the parking adjacent to the park is public parking developed primarily for those using the park as opposed to private parking for the adjacent residents.

In 1984 the East Chicago School Board de-



*A young John Urbelis (center) joins Sparky Burrell (right) in a scouting program at the Old Marktown Community Center. John Urbelis was the only resident of Marktown to die in Viet Nam*

***Unless History Lives In The Present It Has No Future***



cided to close the small two room school building in Marktown due to a lack of enrollment. When they closed the building they also discontinued the maintenance and in the fall of 1987 the building was razed (torn down). It should be noted here that the large concrete and steel trellis between the Marktown Community Center and Grove Street was added to remove a very noisy basketball court and to architecturally balance the end of the block with three structures as opposed to just two. When the Marktown School was raised, this part of the plan just didn't make any sense.

What is amazing is that the 2,000 square foot building was not built by East Chicago but by Mark Manufacturing Company. It was refurbished by Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company and later rebuilt with Federal dollars under the Coastal Redevelopment Plan. Even at that, the additional wing and other items planned were removed because the city just didn't have the funds to do the job right.

Until the current Park Administration took over, the Marktown Community Center was just that --- a community center. Due to the new direction taken by the Parks and Recreation Department, only children in the recreation programs, park employees and registered volunteers are permitted in the Community Center during their hours of operation.

I still haven't figured out how this works when our center is listed as a *warming center* in the winter months and a *cooling center* in the summer months. Today, we may have more children in Marktown than in relatively any other period in this communities history. When we have the Breakfast with Santa program more than 150 children from Marktown participate. While they are not always at the center, one of



*We're not quite sure if this is the American Red Cross group during WWII or the American Cancer Society bandage rollers of the post war era. What we do know is that all of the ladies pitched in and helped!*



*Mrs. Constant of Liberty Street is shown here in a Post WWII meeting working with the Marktown teenagers on a community cleanup program.*

the reasons is probably due to the fact that it is but a one room building in which it is difficult if not impossible to do more than one thing at a time. Let's face it --- you can't tutor children at the back of the center and have kids watching TV or playing pool at the other end of the building. It just doesn't work.

As for the administrative policy to ban adults from the center, I personally don't understand it. OK, I understand if someone has verbally assaulted someone or has threatened or committed battery either in the community or even worse at the community center, but to ban all of the adults is just inappropriate. We never had these problems until two years ago and I think most of us realize the mistake that was made back then.

What is most unfortunate is that the Marktown Community Center has always been a place for residents of this most important neighborhood to meet, to talk and to share our lives with one another. It was a place where children learned to respect their elders. It was a place where Ruth Plesha could come for a cup of coffee and talk about her problems. It was a place where Nancy and Jim Fink could stop in on the way home from their evening walk to see what is going on in the neighborhood.

What else is amazing is that virtually everything in the building except the new TV set and stand, the pool table and the foose ball table were donated by Marktown residents. Two of the three computers (now without internet access) and virtually all of the tables, chairs and kitchen utensils all were donated by Marktown residents. Even the ping pong table was donated along with the books, video tapes, desks and what ever. People wonder why I speak out like this? Because someone has to! Someone has to be willing to tell the truth no matter what!

***Let's Work Together To Preserve Marktown's Unique History  
And Architecture For Future Generations***

# Valentine's Day Celebrated at Marktown Center

by Paul A. Myers

When the two Judy's realized that virtually none of the children and parents from Marktown signed up for the Mother/Son - Daddy/daughter valentine's Day Dance at Roxana Center, it didn't take them long to figure out what to do next. The solution was a Marktown Valentine's Day Celebration. Personally, my first thought was a Roaring Twenties theme including the traditional Valentine's Day Massacre, but they said no to that. The Roaring Twenties theme was dropped for the more traditional red hearts and Cupids.

Once again Kim Rodriguez stepped up to make yet another event for the children of Marktown a great success. Taking time out of her busy schedule, she came over and helped Judy Hicks decorate the Old Marktown Community Center for the party. As I found out,



nearly all of the decorations used throughout the year at the center were donated by the ladies and other Marktown residents. They are stored in the basement until the day they go up. Let's face it, there isn't a great deal of room at the center for storing things upstairs.

Once the center was decorated Kim headed home to bake the Valentine's Day cake for the party. Judy Grindey made cup cakes and Sloppy Joe's while Judy Hicks put on the hot dogs and got out the chips and crackers. With all in place, all that was left was the children of Marktown.

Friday, February 13th came and as the children got off of the bus they checked out the decorations, sat down with Mr. Paul (Myers) to get their homework done and then the party began. Thanks to all of the helpers a great time was had by all!



## New Marktown Community Center Construction Update

There is relatively nothing to tell you new about the status of the construction of the proposed New Marktown Community Center. If you have been following the newspapers you will know that apparently there are two problems with building the new center. The first is that somehow the project is totally over budget. As we mentioned in the very first issue of Marktown Update, the budget was initially set at 1.5 million dollars. Unfortunately when all was said and done with the bidding process the price came in at \$2.7 million dollars, nearly twice the amount budgeted.

One of the other problems is that during the initial planning stages (December 2002) the proposed plan should have been presented to the Technical

Review Panel of the Planning Department. This was not done and apparently there are two technical problems that were noted.

The first is in reference to access to the rear of the building for fire fighting purposes. While I understand that this problem may have been resolved, this has not been confirmed. The second problem noted was in relation to available parking for the new building. Despite the fact that there are currently fifty parking places at the lot on which the center was to be built, it has been reported to the city that all of these spaces are THOUGHT to be private parking for those on Park and Grove Street. We will keep you posted on the progress of the center on a monthly basis. Hopefully the problems will be resolved soon.

***Collecting information is the first step towards wisdom.  
Sharing information is the first step towards community.***