

Our History is Tied to the Land...

Whether worked by gentleman farmers on their expansive estates, dotted with small dairy and grain operations, or blanketed with neighborhoods, Vernon Hills is only a generation or two away from its sparsely populated beginnings.

Chicago Families Move North to Lake County

In the late-1800s and early-1900s, Lake County was home to many wealthy Chicago business barons. Large country estates offered their families a healthy and safe place to raise their families, away from the bustle and pollution of the city. Notable country estates and area homes included those of Ansel Cook, David Adler, Gaylord Donnelly, Adlai Stevenson, the Florsheims and Samuel Insull.

Roots in Family Farms

The actual “footprint” of our Village covers the land of such early farmers as Theodore Mills and W.D. Coon, who worked large tracts around Butterfield Road and Route 83 during the mid-1800s. The Mills farmhouse originally stood on the corner of Butterfield and Route 45, which is now home to The Park Condominiums. The house was moved to Mundelein when The Park’s predecessor, Whitehall Manor, was built.

Other prominent landowners who paved the way for Vernon Hills include James Heinsohn, M.A. Woodin and W. H. Meyer.

The First Subdivision

In 1957, Mr. Heinsohn sold a portion of his land to a Mundelein firm known as L&H Builders, operated by Bernie Loeb and Quinn Hogan. L&H built the first subdivision in the area — approximately 20 homes south of Route 45 near the Vernon Hills Municipal Golf Course. (L&H had just finished building the town of Streamwood.) L&H Manager Matthew Teolis and his neighbors, many of whom also worked for L&H, soon circulated a petition to incorporate the development into a village.

Vernon Hills is Named

During a 2003 interview with the Village of Vernon Hills, Mr. Loeb noted that the first choice for the community's name was Forest Hills, which reflected the three streets in the subdivision — Forest Court, Forest Way and Oak Forest Lane. However, because many towns around the area included “forest” in the name, the petitioners were asked to come up with another moniker. Mr. Loeb explained how the existing name was created – “Vernon” for the township in which the original development was situated and “Hills” as a reference to the mound he and his partner constructed on the 7th hole of the then-named Tally Ho Golf Course.

With that, Vernon Hills was born on July 16, 1958, with Matt Teolis selected as the first Village President.

This 50th Anniversary Special Edition of the *Village Voice* includes a few stories from our community’s past. Thanks to all who assisted in this effort, including the Cook Memorial Library, Cuneo Museum, Mundelein-Libertyville Historical Society, Hewitt Associates, Hawthorn District 73, Faith Sage, John Byrne, Harry Swanson, Jim Heier, the families of Bernie Loeb and Matt Teolis, Village staff and many more.



Above: This early view along Milwaukee Road shows open spaces and the rooftops of some of the estates and working farms found in the area. Below: Bernie Loeb and Quinn Hogan of L&H Builders at the site of the first subdivision of homes built in what would become Vernon Hills. The homes are just visible in the background. (Courtesy Mark Loeb)



The photo at right shows the view from Sam Insull's home looking across the open prairie toward Libertyville. Notice the round barn on the horizon, which burned in the 1930s. (Photos this page courtesy Cuneo Museum)

Sam Insull Comes to Town

Our area was once home to numerous estate farms owned by some of Chicago's most prominent families. One of the few remaining manor homes, the Cuneo mansion, was built during the prosperity of 1914.

The spectacular home was designed by noted architect Benjamin Marshall, while the grounds were designed by Jens Jensen, who believed in using native plants and natural lines.

Located along Milwaukee Avenue, the home was originally built for Samuel Insull. Insull, who first came to the United States to work as Thomas Edison's clerk, was instrumental in Commonwealth Edison, General Electric, and even local railroad lines such as the North Shore and Chicago's "L" system.

In his day, Mr. Insull was one of the most well-known and powerful businessmen in the nation. Brought low by the Great Depression, he became equally notorious for the collapse of his economic empire. At the time, he was blamed for much of our nation's economic disaster, though today's historians paint him with a more compassionate brush. In 1932, Mr. Insull lost his estate and his fortune, and left the country.

The Birth of the Cuneo Dynasty

In 1937, Mr. John Cuneo purchased the Insull property, stretching along Milwaukee Road. The reported cost for the Italianate mansion and ample acreage was \$752,000.

Like the other local gentleman farmers of the day, Mr. Cuneo was an extremely successful businessman. He founded the Cuneo Press, one of the nation's top printing companies. The estate was not only a place for the Cuneo family to live and entertain the likes of Marshall Field and William Randolph Hearst, it was also a state-of-the-art working farm. Mr. Cuneo's Hawthorn Melody Farms was soon one of Chicagoland's largest suppliers of milk. The farm was also a popular tourist attraction where children could learn about the dairy industry or visit Hawthorn Gulch Frontier Town, the closest thing our area had to Disneyland. The commercial dairy and park was sold and then closed in 1970.

The Cuneo property was actually part of Libertyville until Mr. John Cuneo Sr. annexed a portion of his holdings to Vernon Hills as part of an effort to build the Hawthorn Mall Shopping Center, which opened in 1973. Other parcels were annexed in the late 1980s, allowing for the eventual development of the Gregg's Landing neighborhoods.

Members of the Cuneo family lived in the mansion until the early 1990s, when the home and grounds were turned into a museum. When you visit, be sure to examine the beautiful murals created by noted artist John Mallin.



Samuel Insull



John Cuneo Sr.



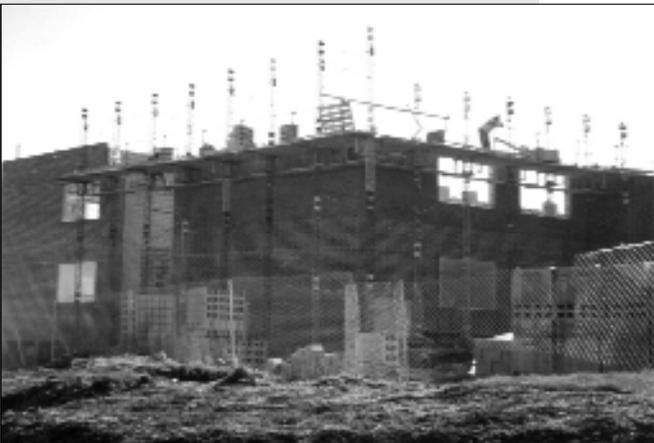
Today's Schools Depend on Yesterday's Foresight



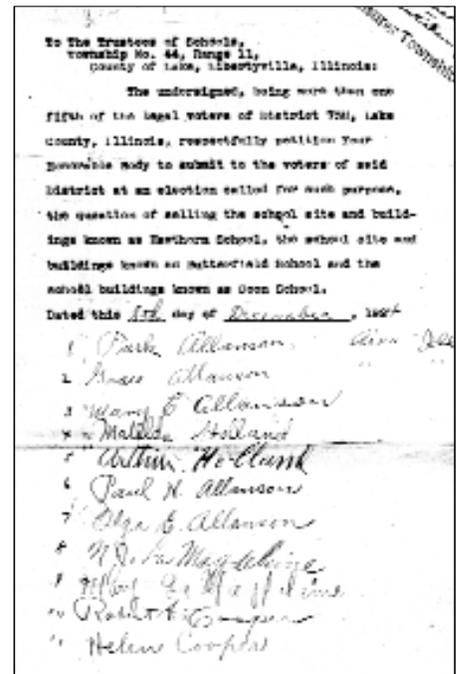
First Hawthorn School on Milwaukee Avenue. (Courtesy Cuneo Museum)



Above: Built in 1924, the Hawthorn District 73 School was considered the gold standard for school facilities. The building was well used for nearly 80 years. Below: In 2004, as the wrecking ball was poised to demolish the building, members of the Hawthorn Preservation Committee recalled the existence of a WPA mural in one of the classrooms. The 1937 mural, entitled "Children's Stories," was saved, restored and reinstalled in the new Townline School. (Photos courtesy District 73)



This 1998 construction photo shows the early stages of VHHS. (Courtesy District 128)



Ballot from the 1924 referendum creating Hawthorn District 73. (Courtesy District 73)

Hawthorn Takes Root

Our local schools owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Samuel Insull. As his wealth grew,

Mr. Insull purchased land along Milwaukee Road. When his holdings encompassed the property of John Locke, Libertyville's first Village President, he also took possession of a deteriorating Locke School. Mr. Insull took it upon himself to build the first Hawthorn School on land near the family's home. Some say the school's name came from Hawthorn trees he imported to remind him of home in England. Most of the first Hawthorn students were from families who worked the estate's fields. Mr. Insull sent a horse and wagon to collect the children who lived farthest from the school. Classes were taught in English and German. That school was torn down in the 1990s.

In 1924, local voters from three separate one-room schools (Coon, Butterfield and Hawthorn) decided to consolidate their resources into Hawthorn District 73, forming one of the oldest districts in the state. Mr. Insull also donated the land for this building, a state-of-the-art four-room brick building constructed along what is now Route 60. At that time, the school served about 30 students in grades 1 through 4. Today, Hawthorn serves approximately 3,700 students enrolled in Kindergarten through grade 8.

A New School in Town — Vernon Hills High School

A relative newcomer to our community is Vernon Hills High School, which opened in the fall of 1999 to its first class of freshmen. VHHS is a counterpart to Libertyville

High School in Community High School District 128. Long-time residents may remember when students attended what was then known as Fremont-Libertyville High School. When Vernon Hills High School was born, the entire community watched and weighed in on everything from the name of the school (suggestions included paying homage to the nearby Nike missile base with names such as Patriot High School) to the selection of a mascot (Cougar) and school colors (blue and silver). The VHHS Rustoleum Field was filled to the brim for its inaugural football game in October 2002. Residents continue to support the approximately 1200 students who attend this award-winning school.



Even in 1983, vast open areas surrounded Vernon Hills. This view, looking southeast, shows Hawthorn Mall at center left. The white triangle is the Navy landing strip at what is now the Vernon Hills Athletic Complex.

Vernon Hills by the Numbers

Size . . . 7.1 square miles

Number of Jobs . . . 17,091
2007 Standard Industry Codes

Population Growth

1960	123
1970	1,056
1980	9,827
1990	15,319
2000	20,120
2005*	23,353

**special census*

A Tradition of Celebration...

The residents of Vernon Hills have always loved community celebrations. As the population grew, so did our fun. Earlier times saw the Village gathering for Independence Day, Labor Day, Halloween, Christmas and the like. Today's Summer Celebration grew from a block-party-like children's picnic into today's extravaganza. Check out the list of Summer Celebration headliners.

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| 1992 | Marie Osmond, The Guess Who, Paul Revere & The Raiders | 2001 | America, Charlie Daniels Band, Little River Band |
| 1992 | Patty Loveless, America, The Buckingham | 2002 | Marshall Tucker Band, 38 Special, New Colony 6 |
| 1994 | Toby Keith, Chubby Checker, Mitch Ryder | 2003 | Loverboy, Survivor, Classic Rock Allstars |
| 1995 | Louise Mandrell, Kansas, The Association | 2004 | Night Ranger, Eddie Money, The Buckingham |
| 1996 | LeRoy Parnell, Starship, Eric Burdon | 2005 | Molly Hatchet, Grand Funk Railroad, Classic Rock Allstars |
| 1997 | Eddie Money, The Guess Who, Sha Na Na | 2006 | Soul Asylum, 10,000 Maniacs, Otis Day & The Knights |
| 1998 | War, Electric Light Orchestra, Jan & Dean | 2007 | Dickey Betts & Great Southern, Quiet Riot, Papa Doo Run Run |
| 1999 | Tommy James & The Shondells, The Grass Roots, The Buckingham | 2008 | Creedence Clearwater Revisited, Gin Blossoms, Fabulous Thunderbirds, Cherry Poppin' Daddies |
| 2000 | Rick Springfield, Berry Bogguss & Dean, KC & The Sunshine Band | | |

Did you know...

In 1965, Vernon Hills formed a special police force to support the Village's patrolman. The special force consisted of Village President Gordon Olly, and Trustees Jerry Proctor, Thomas Reinhold and Lewis Bennett. The men patrolled the Village on their own dime and in their own cars.



Robert Ziegler served as police and fire marshall.

Village Clerk Joanne Korstanje Goes Extra Mile

Early on, Village Clerk **Joanne Korstanje** was instrumental in conducting the business of the Village. For 23 years, she took minutes, handed out vehicle stickers and opened her home for meetings. She also served as police dispatcher, turning on her porch light when the patrolman needed to come in for orders. Former Trustee **Jim Heier** recalls that she kept her door unlocked and coffee pot hot for anybody who needed a fill-up, regardless of the hour.

25 years ago, anniversary raffle prizes were very tempting, as explained in this 1983 *Village Voice* article...

Raffle Tickets Still a Hot Item

You can't expect to win the new car, color television set or super weekend for two if you don't buy a raffle ticket. This wisdom has not been lost on many of your neighbors and local friends, and you don't want to overlook it either. Something for almost nothing is always a bargain.



Tickets are being sold by members of the 25th Anniversary celebration and picnic committees, Lions Club and Jaycees. They are also available at Hawthorn Realty, Scornovacco's, Dear Franks, Henry the Sandwich Maker, Dalry Queen and R.O. Red Hots. For ticket and prize information, call Matt Roberts at 367-3700.



The Patterson Estate

The beautiful home shown above was designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw in 1905 for Joseph Medill Patterson and his wife, Alice Higgenbotham. Mr. Patterson was a journalist, publisher, writer and state representative, while Mrs. Patterson's father was an executive with the Marshall Field Company. Later this home went on to become one of the first offices for Edwin Shields Hewitt and Associates. The company now employs thousands from headquarters in Lincolnshire. What became of this gorgeous home, thought to be one of the most beautiful in the area? It fell into disrepair and was demolished, making room for Hawthorn Mall. (Photo courtesy of Hewitt Associates)



This early 1970s photo shows some of NCT's solar roof panels.

Did you know...

In the early days of Vernon Hills, our few streets were "plowed" out of the kindness of Mr. Ernie Vole's heart. He drove his big tow trucks back and forth to make a path for cars to pass. (Courtesy of James Heier)

New Century Town Ahead of Its Time

The steeply slanting roofs of New Century Town were way ahead of their time. When the homes in this development north of Route 60 were built in the early 1970s, the roofs held solar panels. In fact, the development was cited by the media and even science textbooks for its forward-thinking design. The solar collectors were removed several years later when repair costs began exceeding their energy benefits. This neighborhood, which includes more than 2000 homes, was built as a part of a master plan that included Hawthorn Center Mall.

“ The reason everybody moved out here in the beginning was that it was what we could afford. Back then, you could buy a home here for no down payment and \$100 closing costs. And they were good-size houses. It was a smart move financially. ”

– Mary Roycroft, early Vernon Hills resident and Village Trustee, quoted in the December 21, 1991 *Chicago Tribune*



Owners Barney Loeb (left) and Quinn Hogan shown in a 1959 photo. (Courtesy Mark Loeb)

Tally Ho!

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Vernon Hills had a red-hot night life. Legend has it that the fabled Vernon Hills Restaurant and Motel, and Tally Ho Country Club, played host to all sorts of rich and powerful characters looking to get away from the city. One story has Frank Sinatra singing for the grand opening in 1955 – though builder/owner Barnie Loeb denied that fact during an interview a few years back. (Though he didn't deny it strongly!)

The supper club offered a luxurious setting and delicious food, including a jumbo shrimp cocktail for \$1 and a top sirloin steak dinner with salad, potato, rolls and coffee for \$2.50. The club included a Geisha Room compete with sushi – which was popular with GIs who had been introduced to the delicacy while overseas.

The Clubhouse, located on Evergreen Drive, eventually became the Village Hall, and is now the Park District's Laschen Community Center.

Did you know...

The Park District's Laschen Community Center is named for **Larry Laschen**, who started out in 1973 as Police Chief, then moved on to become Village Manager and go-to guy during the boom times that followed.

The Business of Being a Village

Let the Record Show...

A scan of our Village minutes shows some topics are a constant — budgets, street repairs, road salt. However, early board minutes do reflect a simpler time, when population was measured in hundreds (even dozens), rather than thousands.

In early days, discussion topics often included uncut weeds, upkeep for gravel roads, unsightly rubbish heaps, nuisance kids riding their go-carts and mini-bikes in the streets, loose dogs, and even a pregnant-and-abandoned pony (October 4, 1966).

The single patrol car tended to require repairs, particularly to its radar equipment. The board finally disposed of the aging squad in December 1966, garnering \$175 from an unknown purchaser. (Trustee Richard Buckau was given the job of “stripping the car of lights, siren, etc.”)

Another hot topic during our early years was water. Notes indicate that residents often complained that the water, which was pumped from wells and held in a water tower, smelled funny. Water pressure often dropped markedly, particularly at dinner time. The water tower pump was known to fail, leaving residents dry. (Trustees were on call to fix the pump.) That situation improved when Lake County took over water service in the late 1960s, eventually replacing the well-and-water tower system with a Lake Michigan water supply.

Board Meetings Moved Around

In the early days, board members gathered in the office of the local motel or in member’s homes to conduct their business. During the 1970s, meetings moved to a modular building on Oakwood Road. In 1980, the Village purchased the Tally Ho Clubhouse (which became Village Hall), golf course, tennis courts and swimming pool (later filled in) for \$450,000.

On August 25, 2002, we officially dedicated the current Village Hall on Route 45 and Evergreen Drive. Designed by Yas-Fischel Partnership, the materials were chosen to remind people of the farm buildings that dotted the earlier landscape. Windows dominate the boardroom, symbolizing the openness of the Village’s governmental processes.

The lower level of the Village Hall houses the Senior Center (the Seniors first convened in 1979) as well as Cook Memorial’s Evergreen Interim Library, which opened in 2003. The Village leased the site for \$1. Furnishings were created to be moved, in the hopes that the library district would eventually build a permanent facility in Vernon Hills. In spring 2008, Cook announced plans to build a library, on land provided by the Village on Aspen Drive.



This fine-looking group is one of Vernon Hill’s first Boards, which met without benefit of a Village Hall. The gentleman holding the gavel is our first Village President, Matt Teolis. (Courtesy Matt Teolis family)

Village Presidents

Matthew F. Teolis
1958-1961
Gordon E. Ollry
1961-1965
Jerry F. Proctor
1965-1967
Richard A. Buckau
1967-1968
Robert A. Shaw
Pro-Tem
1968-1969
John T. Sullivan
1969-1981
Phillip L. Ellis
1981-1989
Barbara J. Williams
1989-1993
Roger L. Byrne
1993-present

Village Clerks

(listed chronologically)
Barbara Carswell
Shirley Swenson
Pricilla Kinkaid
Joanne Korstanje
Kathleen A. Ryg
Jeanne M. Schwartz
Holly D. Udesky
Linda Pelletier

Village Trustees

(listed alphabetically)
Ronald Ahlgrim
Ronald K. Alexander
Clarence Bachman
Frank Barrile Jr.
George Beckman
Raymond Bell
Lewis R. Bennett
Kenneth Benson
Bradley A. Berman
Peter Beslow
Cassie L. Black
Richard Buckau
Eric C. Burgess
Edwin Burnett
Roger L. Byrne
James Carswell
Richard F. Cashman
Richard Davis Jr.
Gladys Diemert
Marvin Diemert
Richard Duros
Phillip L. Ellis
Richard Emery
Richard Freese
Thomas Fritschie
William Goessele
Cynthia Hebda
James T. Heier
Stephen R. Henley
Rose M. Hogan
Donald L. Hook
Alvin Israel
Dale Johnson
Thomas Kehrl
James E. Kimble
Leonard Kitson
Phyllis Kitson
Thom Koch Jr.
Enid Lorenz
Michael Marquardt
Loy Mullins
Brad Neuman
Pamela O. Newton
William Nohr
William Palmer
Aaron Passman
Jerry F. Proctor
Kenneth Reed
Thomas Reinhold
Mary A. Roycroft
Joe L. Ruer
Kathleen A. Ryg
Frances Scheskie
James Schultz
Jeanne M. Schwartz
Charles Scott
Bernard Sesko
Robert A. Shaw
John Sullivan
Franklyn Sweeney
Arlene Teolis
Andy R. Toth
Charles Waugh
Stephanie Weil
Barbara J. Williams



*An aerial view of the Nike Site, estimated to have been taken in the mid 1970s.
(Courtesy Barbara Williams)*



Did you know...

Route 60/Townline Road used to be called Route 59A.

A Woman Named Geo



Adeline Geo-Karis was a true trail-blazer here in Lake County. When she passed away early this

year at the age of 89, she had amassed a long resume filled with community service. Her many “hats” included that of US Naval Reserves officer, attorney and long-time state senator. Geo, as she was known to all, served as Village Attorney from 1967 to 1972 and again from 1982 to 2003. She was a faithful advocate for Vernon Hills, working on such projects as the Clavey Development, Cuneo annexation and more. Her expertise, energy and plain-spoken style was invaluable to us all.

Did you know...

Lake Charles was mined for limestone and contains an old rail line.

From Nike Site to VHAC Gem

The Vernon Hills Athletic Complex (known as VHAC) is one of the premier community athletic facilities anywhere. Its history is just as remarkable.

As was typical for our community, the site started out as farmland, in this case owned by the Curtiss Candy Company. In 1945, the Navy acquired 184 acres to build the US Navy Libertyville Training Site. During World War II, the Navy trained pilots on the site’s concrete air strips and wooden platforms built to simulate the landing decks of aircraft carriers. An unverified rumor has it that former President George H.W. Bush trained here.

After World War II, the Army moved into the property. In 1954, the parcel became the first operational Nike Ajax Missile Site in the Chicago area. Underground concrete bunkers called silos housed Nike air defense missiles and launchers as part of ring of defense around Chicago. Other missile sites were located at the Skokie Lagoons, Ft. Sheridan, Chicago’s Lincoln Park Yacht Club, Jackson Park and elsewhere. All of the sites were decommissioned and missiles removed in the early 1960s.

In 1972, the property transferred back to the Navy. While the area saw some helicopter training and other intermittent activity, it went largely unused. In the early 1990s, the federal government declared it “surplus” and released it to the community. The Village worked closely with the Navy, the state and federal government, and three school districts – Districts 128, 125 and 103 – to design a series of coordinated athletic fields and passive recreational facilities.

On June 26, 2001, officials broke ground on what would become the Vernon Hills Athletic Complex. (Original plans to honor the site’s heritage by incorporating the work “Nike” were not considered favorably by attorneys for the Nike athletic company.) By October 2002, the Vernon Hills High School football team played its first home game in the new stadium.



Dignitaries attending the 2001 groundbreaking included (from left) elected leaders Terry Link, William Peterson, Adeline Geo-Karis and Village President Roger Byrne.