

The Call to Remember

Newsletter - Vol. V, No. 6

EASTLAND DISASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Nov/Dec 2003

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Aristotle once said, "Deciding whom to give money to, how much to give, and for what purpose, is neither an easy matter or in every man's power. Such excellence is rare, praiseworthy, and noble."



We gratefully recognize the generous support of members and donors who made gifts of \$100 or more during 2003:

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EDHS PHOTO POLICY

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are courtesy of the *Eastland* Disaster Historical Society.

EASTLAND CORNER

Edward Henry Garner (b. 1878) was an accomplished amateur photographer who worked at Western Electric as a draftsman. His wife, Friederika (1884-1953), was pregnant with their first child. They lived on Chicago's west side on Lawndale Avenue.



(Photos: courtesy LeFavor family.)

Though they married late in life, especially for the time, they were very much in love. Edward was truly Friederika's one great love. Friederika was devastated when she received news of Edward's death on the *Eastland*. Stricken with grief, Friederika removed all pictures from her home and rarely, if ever, spoke of her husband. Several months after his death when their only child was born (February 5, 1916), Friederika named their daughter Edros Henrietta Garner after her one true love. Friederika never remarried.

BY THE NUMBERS

Five years ago, our Internet web site consisted of 1 page and included 1 photo. My goodness, how things have changed! Today our web site -- winner of the "Best Web Site" award from the **Illinois State Historical Society** in 2003 -- consists of 681 unique pages and over 2,200 photos/images!

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

We have several programs scheduled during the first quarter of 2004 (two each during January, February, and March). We opened 2004 with a program at the Justice Public Library (Ill.) on Thursday, January 15. We followed that with our second program at the First Congregational Church of Berwyn on Sunday, January 18. Our next public program will be:

- The Oswego Heritage Association, with the program to be held at the Little White School Museum located on the corner of Polk and Jackson Streets, Oswego, Illinois. Thursday, February 19, at 7:30 p.m. Call 630-554-2999 for more information.

Our *Eastland* Disaster program is a great opportunity to invite other members of your family, friends, and neighbors to learn about the story of the *Eastland* Disaster.

PREVIOUS PROGRAM FEEDBACK

"WOW! Your presentation was superb! Both the program and the exhibit here at the library were well presented, informative, and visually appealing. I am so pleased that we had such a great audience." Candice Biancalana, Cook Memorial Library, Libertyville, Ill.

AUTHOR SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT

Those who attended our 88th Anniversary Commemoration and Historical Marker Rededication luncheon in July were captivated by author Jay Bonansinga as he talked about and read from his upcoming book on the *Eastland* Disaster. In fact, many people commented to us afterward that they wished Jay would have continued.



(Jay Bonansinga working on book.)

If you missed hearing Jay speak in July or if you wish to hear him again, we have some great news to announce: Jay will be in Elgin, Illinois as the guest speaker at the dinner banquet for the 105th Annual Meeting of the **Illinois State Historical Society**. (The Society's 2004 Annual Meeting will feature the rich cultural, business, and educational history of the Fox River Valley.)

The arrangements for this speaking engagement were made possible as a result of the close collaboration between the *Eastland* Disaster Historical Society and the **Illinois State Historical Society**. The banquet will be held Friday evening, April 23, and will be in Elgin, Illinois.

For details and to order tickets, contact the **Illinois State Historical Society** (Springfield) at 217-525-2781. (When you call, make sure you ask about the other activities and events for the weekend!)

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE IROQUOIS THEATRE FIRE

On December 30, 1903, the Iroquois Theatre was jammed for a musical comedy called "Mr. Bluebeard," starring popular vaudeville comedian Eddie Foy. Because it was a matinee, more than half of the overflow crowd of over 1,900 was women and children. The blaze broke out midway through the second act as a backstage, carbon-arc spotlight, which could generate temperatures as high as 4,000 degrees, cracked and sparked a curtain. The **Chicago Historical Society** owns the now-bent and slightly rusted spotlight that started the fire.

On the 100th anniversary of the Iroquois Theatre disaster, a pair of markers were unveiled to remind people of what remains as the worst public assembly inferno in the nation's history. The **Fire Museum of Greater Chicago** helped to organize a memorial ceremony conducted on West Randolph Street in Chicago, the site of the former Iroquois Theatre.



("X" = Site of the former Iroquois Theatre, 24-28 W. Randolph in the Loop.)

A plain marker that once commemorated the fire at the site

(but has been in storage for years) was refurbished and will be reinstalled. A new marker that gives more details of the fire will also be added in the lobby of the building next to the Oriental Theatre.



(Original marker after being refurbished.)

A memorial to the victims of the fire (below) was erected in 1908 at the Montrose Cemetery in Chicago.



(Photo courtesy www.graveyards.com.)

The **Fire Museum of Greater Chicago** was incorporated in 1997 as a not-for-profit. Located at 4522 S. Wallace Street in Chicago, their library has thousands of books, photographs, journals, and periodicals as well as a collection of fire memorabilia on display. For more information call 773-777-4511.



(Chicago Fire Commissioner James Joyce being interviewed at ceremony.)