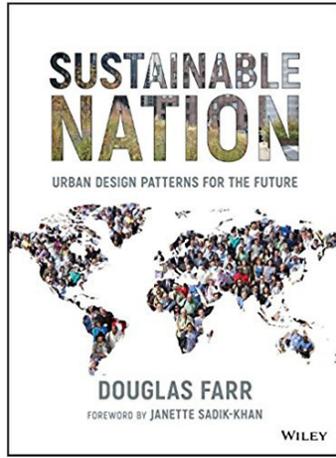


Credit: Thomas Melvin



Neighbors in the News

Architect **Doug Farr** (Leland Avenue) has written “Sustainable Nation: Urban Design Patterns for the Future,” which draws on lessons from our neighborhood, which he calls “his muse.” He will be giving a reading from the book at the Book Cellar, 4736 N. Lincoln Ave., at 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 5th. Copies will be available.Muralist **Thomas Melvin** (Leland Avenue) has a show of his watercolor paintings at Café Selmarie, 4729 N. Lincoln Ave., through April 1st.Longtime resident **Ruth Robbins** (California Avenue) turns 100 years old on March 22nd. Ruth was one of nine neighborhood residents who were interviewed in 2014 for the Ravenswood Manor Centennial Oral History Project.

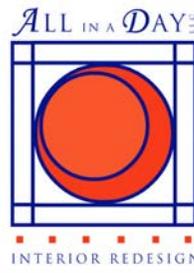



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Are you curious?

If you have a Manor-related question you'd like to see answered, please address it to the *Manor News* editor at peters.e.james@gmail.com.



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A neighborhood “Clean Up” parade in 1965 heads south on Manor Avenue, at Leland Avenue. Hollywood Kiddieland was an amusement park that operated from 1949 to 1974 at the southeast corner of Devon Avenue and McCormick Boulevard. (Credit: Copelin Photography)

Playing in the Manor

The most recent installment of “Manor Stories”—which looks at neighborhood play—was recently posted on the Ravenswood Manor web site (see www.ravenswoodmanor.com/manor-stories-play/).

The new web post features nine short recordings (each 1- to 2-minutes in length) of longtime Manor residents telling childhood stories of where and how they played back in the 1920s, ‘30s, ‘40s, ‘50s, and ‘60s. Among the locations discussed are alleys, parks, near (not in) the river, and vacant lots.

These brief sound snippets were edited from a series of 45-minute interviews of longtime residents conducted in 2014 by the RMIA Research Committee.

Our thanks to committee members Jackie Klein and Linda Montalbano for their painstaking editing work—and to Communications Committee members Thomas Applegate, Elisa Greco, and Victoria Wiedel for their web site work.

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Notable Neighbors

Oberlin Carter: Figure in Military Scandal

By Jim Peters



Capt. Oberlin Carter was sentenced to a five-year prison term for fraud in 1899, when these mug shots were taken. (Credit: From "First in His Class")

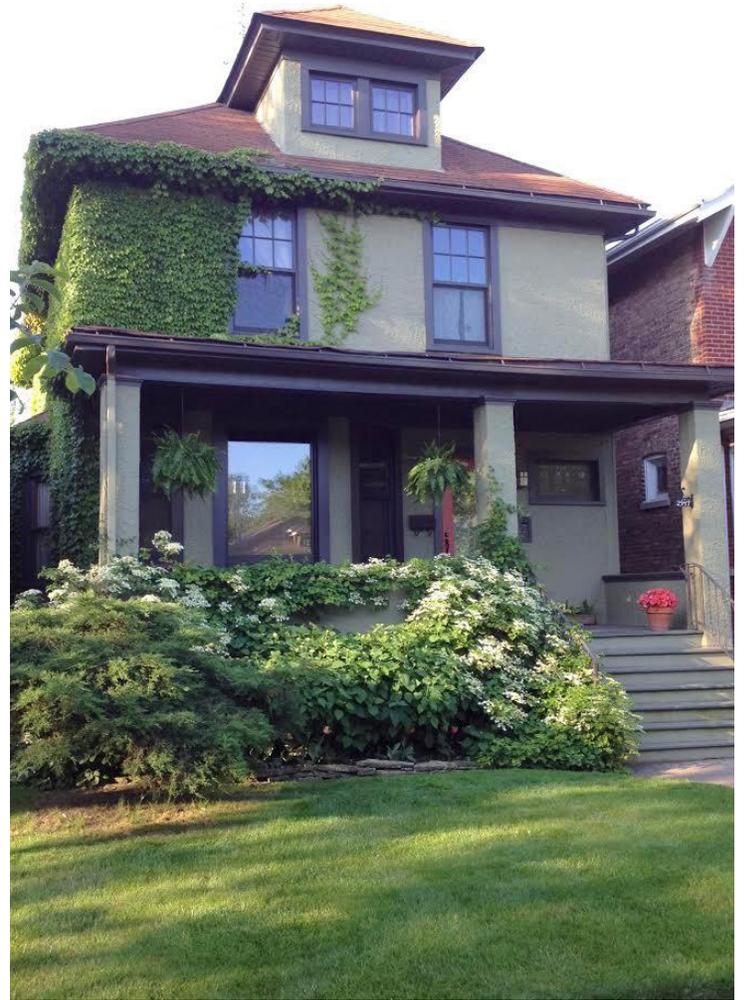
One of the Manor's most famous early neighborhood residents was Oberlin M. Carter (1856-1944). He had been the central character in a late-19th century scandal involving the U.S. Army, accused of defrauding the federal government of nearly \$60 million (in today's dollars). Following his release from prison, Carter spent the remainder of his life maintaining his innocence, attempting to clear his name, and becoming a well-known figure in Ravenswood Manor.

A native of southern Ohio, Carter had graduated in 1880—first in his class—from the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. Four years later, as a Captain in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Carter was assigned to Savannah, Ga., to supervise massive improvements to that city's harbor. He remained in that position until 1897, when he was assigned as military attache to the U.S. Embassy in London.

Soon thereafter, however, a headline in the New York Times screamed: "Big Scandal in Army; Capt. Carter Accused." Millions of dollars of "fraud and irregularities" had been discovered, as related to Savannah Harbor construction contracts supervised by Carter between 1892 and 1896. The accusations included huge overcharges on low-standard work by contractors and the purchase of overpriced construction materials on property owned by Carter.

Carter's subsequent court martial trial gained national attention. His attorney was Frank Preston Blair III of Chicago and stories about the trial were prominently featured in the *Chicago Tribune*. In 1899, following his conviction and several appeals, Carter was dismissed from Army service and sentenced to five years at the U.S. Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kan.

During his imprisonment, Carter's uncle and his two brothers also were charged by the federal government with hiding money from Carter through their own purchases of property, stocks, and bonds. The final defraud tally, according to the government, was more than \$2.1 million (\$59 million in today's dollars), with Carter allegedly receiving about \$722,000 (\$19.7 million today).



After being released from prison, Carter moved to Chicago. In 1914, he moved into this house at 2945-47 W. Wilson Ave. (Credit: courtesy of the owner.)

After his release from prison in November 1903, Carter moved to Chicago, where he worked as a consulting engineer. Carter's investments at this time, according to a biographer, included a brick company near St. Louis and an orchard in Idaho. He initially resided in an apartment at 1018 N. State St. and, soon thereafter, married his landlady, Katherine Stemper (1867-1935).

In 1913, four years after Ravenswood Manor was subdivided, Carter purchased a vacant lot at 2945-47 W. Wilson Ave., where, in 1914, he built an American Four Square-style residence that still exists. He and his wife Kate resided here the rest of their lives, even as Carter attempted to clear his name through dozens of federal court cases, including four applications to the U.S. Supreme Court and several U.S. Senate Committee hearings. According to an October 11, 1935 *Chicago Tribune* article, "Old Army Man Makes Appeal for Vindication," Carter contended his conviction had been based on "political expediency, military jealousies, and a deliberate plot to ruin him."

Meanwhile, in the Manor, Carter became well known for giving patriotic poetry readings—on major holidays—on his front lawn. In 1940, he was elected president of the RMI, serving in this position until his death (of pneumonia at age 88) on July 18, 1944.



Oberlin Carter graduated in 1880 (left) from the U.S. Military Academy. Right: Carter at an appearance before a U.S. Senate Committee in 1935. (Credits: From “First in His Class” and Chicago Tribune archives)

His obituary in the Chicago Tribune was headlined: “Stormy Career of Officer Ends in Simple Rites.” Carter’s successor as RMIA President, George Fink, praised Carter at his graveside in Graceland Cemetery for “his work toward community betterment.” Carter’s final estate was valued at \$105,760 (\$1.4 million today), including his savings and a 160-acre farm. Among his bequests was \$18,000 (\$245,000 today) to his 30-year-old housekeeper, Madge Dillon.

Which leaves one final question: Was Carter actually guilty in the Savannah Harbor Scandal?

Philip W. Leon, a retired professor at The Citadel in Charleston, S.C., recently authored a book entitled “First in His Class: Captain Oberlin M. Carter and the Savannah Harbor Scandal” (Heritage Books, 2010). One of Leon’s reasons for writing the book, he said, was to help prove Carter’s innocence.

However, based on his comprehensive research of court records, witness testimony, and other documents, Leon found just the opposite. Carter definitely was guilty, Leon concludes, noting that his “50-year-long legal effort to erase the court martial verdict [simply] indicates that overweening pride was the primary impulse of his criminality.”

Do-It-Yourself Walking Tours
 Don’t forget that walking tours are available on the RMIA web site, along with a walking map.

Tours on the web site (ravenswoodmanor.com/walking-tours):

- Harmon’s Model Homes
- Heart of the Manor
- Gems of the Manor
- Tall Tales



Boundary of proposed pedestrian improvements between Ronan and Horner parks.

The Greenway Cometh

The much-anticipated pedestrian safety improvements for the Manor Avenue corridor are expected to begin construction this summer, after final bids were announced in late-February.

Known as the “Manor Greenway Project,” these improvements have been designed by the city’s Department of Transportation (CDOT) to help improve pedestrian and bicycling access to Horner and Ronan parks, including new street-crossing islands near the intersections of Montrose-Manor and Lawrence-Manor.

The project also will include raised pedestrian crossings of Manor Avenue at Lawrence and Montrose, which will serve as traffic-calming speed bumps at the north and south entrances into the neighborhood. Curb extensions at California-Windsor and Eastwood-Manor also will provide safer street crossings for pedestrians near Buffalo and Ravenswood Manor parks.

The Manor Greenway project was first reported in the Summer 2016 issue of *Manor News*. Community meetings in June 2016 and January 2017 help provide additional design input to CDOT. As a result of those meetings—as well as the infamous “traffic diverter” test in Fall 2016—no traffic changes will be made to Manor Avenue itself.

For more information, go to www.33rdward.org/our-community/manor-ave-greenway-projects.

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About RMIA

Manor News is published quarterly by the Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association.

Established in 1914, the RMIA is a neighborhood association run entirely by volunteers. We hold monthly board of directors meetings, stage various social events and special projects, and maintain communication channels through our web site, e-mail alerts, and newsletter. Your annual RMIA membership helps to support all of this work.

The RMIA Mission Statement is: "To promote the welfare of the community in respect to the maintenance and improvement of the physical appearance of the private and public property; the compliance with the laws as applicable to private and public property; the maintenance of facilities with respect to the safety, health, and welfare of its residents."

The RMIA officers are:

- Athene Carras – President
- Jim Peters – Vice President
- Kathy Monk – Secretary
- Suzy Thomas - Treasurer



Web site: ravenswoodmanor.com
 Facebook.com/[ravenswoodmanor](https://www.facebook.com/ravenswoodmanor)
 E-mail: board@ravenswoodmanor.com
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Manor News is delivered to residents and businesses by volunteer block captains. Past issues are available on our web site (see "Communications"). Editor: Jim Peters; Design and Layout: Steve Shanabruh; Advertising: Thomas Applegate.

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Manor Event Calendar

Easter Egg Hunt

Sat., March 31st, 10 a.m. (prompt),
Ravenswood Manor Park

Semi-Annual Meeting

Mon., April 2nd, 7 p.m.,
Horner Park Field House

RMIA Board Meeting

2nd Monday of the month, 7 p.m.,
Horner Park Field House

Horner Park Advisory Council Meeting

1st Monday of the month, 7 p.m.,
Horner Park Field House

Manor Garage Sale

Sun., May 20th, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Independence Bike Parade

Sat., June 30th, 10 a.m.



Numerous community events are on tap for this spring and summer, including the annual Easter Egg Hunt, Independence Bike Parade, and Manor Garage Sale.



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Craftsman Bungalow, 2800-block of Eastwood (1913; Anders Lund, architect).

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Business Profile: Le Ballet Petit

By Kathy Monk



*Kittie LaPointe (c.1940),
founder of the Le Ballet Petit
School of Dance*

Le Ballet Petit, at the corner of Eastwood and Francisco, is a nonprofit dance school that was started in 1954 – that's right, 1954! Melissa Bullock, in charge of marketing, says there are approximately 600 students, age 3-adult, taking classes six days a week. Despite its name, the school offers jazz, tap, hip hop, and lyrical, in addition to ballet and ballet pointe classes.

What makes Le Ballet Petit different, Bullock says, is it teaches solid technique. Students are able to perform on stage not once, but three times per year, and there is a competitive dance team. It is difficult to find a school that offers all of these things. One teacher has been with Le Ballet Petit for 40 years! Each year performances include *The Nutcracker*, a spring ballet, and a June recital and it is important to note there are roles for boys including pas de deux.

Le Ballet Petit communicates with students and families via a weekly newsletter and plans to implement online enrollment in the near future. The next full scale production is *Cinderella* on April 21 & 22. For more information, check the website at: <https://www.leballetpetit.org/> and visit them on Facebook and Instagram..

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