

Narrator: Arthur Loutsch
Interview Dates: June 6 and 9, 1986
Place of Interview: Narrator's home, located as
54 Park Lane, Golf
Interviewer: Priscilla Godemann
Recorded For: Morton Grove Historical Society
Transcribed For: Morton Grove Public Library
Tape Running Time: Part I, 27 minutes; Part II, 61 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Arthur Loutsch was a resident of Morton Grove for half a century, and during that time he attended school here, had a butcher business, was a public official, and active in many Morton Grove organizations. In 1930, as "historian," he compiled the first written history of the village.

In the first interview dated June 6, 1986, Art relates the story of his coming to Morton Grove as an infant from Niles Center (now Skokie). His father purchased the village's only meat market located at 6208 Lincoln Avenue. He recalls many interesting early memories about Morton Grove from schooling, sports and recreation as a teenager to the roadhouses and free lunch counters that every tavern used to have. Art's mother was a member of the Woman's War Working Circle--a wartime organization responsible for erecting the doughboy monument (now on the grounds of the Morton Grove Public Library). In 1949 Art was a member of the building committee for the American Legion Hall on Dempster Street.

In the second interview dated June 9, 1986, Art Loutsch demonstrates his fascination with the events of early Morton Grove history. He tells of the first settlers, their extraction and why they came to this area. This interview is an

overview of facts and developments in our early history, such as Miller's Mill and the railroad spurring on the growth of the settlement, development of local businesses, planned subdivisions, the volunteer fire department and the first post office, park district and early town organizations. Art also tells of the incorporation of Morton Grove as a village in 1895 and the history of the name.

AL: Art Loutsch

Q: Questions asked by interviewer, Priscilla Godemann

PART I

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: Art, describe for us your early life here in Morton Grove.

AL: Thank you, Mrs. Godemann, for the opportunity. I hope this interview will provide some information of interest and fact for the historical society's story of early Morton Grove. I suppose that I should begin with a few words about my ancestors, for (chuckles), after all, if it weren't for them, I wouldn't be here.

As to how far back my ancestors go in so far as being residents of this area, may I say that my grandfather, Peter Weiss, settled the farm at the northwest corner of Gold and Gross Point Roads in Skokie way back in the Civil War period. My mother was born on that farm in 1873. Mother lived to be 91 years old, having lived the last fifty-seven years of her life in Morton Grove. My father, Henry Loutsch, was an immigrant from Luxembourg, Europe, and came to America as a young man in the mid-1880s, over a century ago.

As to my parents' sharing of the family duties, Dad was always the provider of life's necessities. He handled the family finances and was always the final judge on major decisions. Mother, however, ran the household and was the disciplinarian of the young ones. There were four of us--and he made the decisions, and she made the decisions as to the children.

Now as to me, I came to Morton Grove as a three-month-old babe when our family moved here to Morton Grove from Niles Center, which is now Skokie, in

1907. My father had purchased from Mr. Peter Haupt the village's lone meat market situated at Lincoln and Fernald Avenue. That butcher shop--that was the term commonly used, butcher shop--building still stands.

In 1907 business was good here in Morton Grove, since the village was growing due to the big expansion of the Poehlmann Brothers Greenhouses and to a protective and a prosperous farm area surrounding the town. So, a few years later, Dad built his own business building with an apartment above at 6208 Lincoln Avenue, which building also still stands. At that address the business operated for some fifty years.

Q: That's very interesting, Art. Now tell me about your attending school in the old public school which later was remodeled and is now used as our village hall. The early school and its facilities must have been quite primitive in those early days.

AL: Yes, the school was very primitive when I started first grade there in 1913. It was a two-room building. A third room was installed in the basement the following year. The faculty was two teachers, four grades for each teacher, one of the teachers acting as the principal of the school. When one grade was reciting aloud English, the other grades were supposed to be quietly studying arithmetic.

There was no sewer or water improvements in that part of town then, so outdoor toilets were the facility, and, of course, you can imagine, they weren't very pleasant facilities in mid winter. There was no city water in that part of town, also, so an outside pump with a tin cup provided the drinking water.

There was no paved streets then, no sidewalks. But there was plenty of playground. In fact, the area all around was ground to play. It was a plain,

unimproved prairie. The only buildings within a block of the school were the Carl Weight residence to the south and the Patman residence to the north.

Q: That sounds really primitive, something like the old frontier of pioneer's days. But tell about the school studies, the teachers, and about the materials available for study.

AL: Yes (chuckles). I should say it was a far cry from the opportunity to learn that is offered to young people today. My teacher for most of my grade school years was Miss Catherine Mulvey. She lived in Ravenswood in Chicago, but in those days, there was only one way of transportation to get to Morton Grove--the railway. And that was by train from Grayland station. Miss Mulvey had to get up every morning at 5:00 a.m., take the streetcar west to Mayfair station, then take the seven o'clock train north to Morton Grove. There she walked a half mile to school. And the same tedious, round-about schedule at night. I'd say she earned her money.

Now as to the study materials and equipment, very little was offered of that. Oh, to be sure, yes, we had a globe, we had a map of the world that hung on the wall, and one dictionary for the four grades. And one had to purchase his own books. There was no such thing as a subsidy then. Nevertheless, we had a dedicated teacher. Discipline was strict and we made it.

I graduated in 1920 with a class of fourteen. That was a large number, because the previous classes all ran smaller in numbers. The commencement was held in the old Wayside Inn pavilion on Dempster Street, which is now the forest preserve. Now that pavilion was an unscreened dance hall used in conjunction

with the Wayside Inn restaurant or roadhouse, as those establishments were called then.

Q: What was the opportunity for high school?

AL: Well, (chuckles) high school. In 1920, there was no high school in Niles Township. That didn't come until sixteen years later. Only about half of the graduates went to high school anyway. The other half went directly to work. I went to Carl Schurz High School in Chicago, using the train daily to Grayland station. A few others went to old Land Tech on Division Street in Chicago. I graduated from Schurz in 1924 and later attended DePaul University.

Q: What about the sports, the activities, and the amusements of those early years?

AL: Well, in our early teens, we had to create our own sports and amusements. There was no park district, there were no playing fields, no swimming pools, no skating rink, no library. Instead, there was skating on the river, tobogganing at Hobo Island, and swimming stark naked in the gravel pit at Austin and Main Street. And another pastime that amused us young, little teenagers then was visiting Charlie Peshke's blacksmith shop on Ferris Avenue. There we would see the horses being shod, the odor of the burning hooves always thrilled us, and we were amused at the antics of the blacksmith as he shod the horses.

We prepared our own baseball field on Railroad Avenue across from the depot. I played on the early town baseball teams, and in the early 1930s, I was a member of the town basketball team after a small gymnasium had been built at the public school. Our basketball team won the championship for two successive years in the

then Northwest Suburban Basketball League. The team consisted of Harry Eisner and Werner Finke, Luke Meier, Earl Kreitz, Roger Yehl, the Faulkner brothers, Gil Juern, George Wallis, and myself. I think but four of those are still alive today.

Q: What about social life in the 1920s and the 1930s?

AL: Well, the churches--the Lutheran and the Catholic--staged home-talent plays held in the church basements. And when we reached dance-hall age, there were regular dances at Dilg's Hall, Mueller's Hall, St. Paul Park Pavilion in the summertime, and for smaller groups, at the old Ferris Inn. Then, too, the neighboring towns offered regular dances. There was Alf's Hall in Niles Center, there was John Dilg's Hall in Glenview, and Leo Bree's Hall in Tessville, which is now Lincolnwood. But those neighboring town dances were rough. You see, the home-town boys resented foreigners coming in and dancing with their local girls. Result (laughs), usually a dance-hall fight and a few black eyes.

Q: Art, you must have some outstanding memories that have stayed with you to this day. Memories of tragedies or joys.

AL: Yes, I have a good memory and I can't forget many memorable events of the early days. Well, to start with memory number one, I remember the spring of 1917 when my two brothers, Harry and George, left for World War I. Both served in Europe fighting the Kaiser. I was just a ten-year-old, but that departure is individually inscribed in my memory. Little did I realize then as a ten-year-old that in twenty-five years, I, too, would repeat the same performance and become

Pvt. Art Loutsch, World War II, and repeat my brothers' trip to Europe, fighting Hitler this time instead of the Kaiser. Forty-three Morton Grove men served in Armed Forces in World War I, and one of their number, Edward Baumhardt, was killed in action at Argonne Forest in France.

Then, of course, another memory. I was too young to patronize them and partake of their goodies. I was old enough, nevertheless, to remember them. I refer to the free lunch counters that were part of the hospitality of every tavern. Of course then they were called saloons of the early years. Yes siree, you helped yourself to a variety of cold cuts, and usually in winter, a hot stew or in the hunting season, hasenpfeffer, which is wild rabbit stew in a sour gravy.

The tavern owners evidently felt that a well-salted stew or that pickled pig's-feet or salt herring would ultimately result in more beer sales. And the going price for draft beer -- and that's for a large glass -- was five cents a glass or six for a quarter, and, if it was in a pinch, seven for a quarter. Of course, food was cheap then. Customers were always hungry, and their capacity for beer was great. But that free lunch all ended forever when in 1917 World War I came with its scarcities and its meatless days. The deal was too good to last, but it was pleasant to remember.

I remember well July 31, 1921--and that's sixty-five years ago--when the doughboy monument on the present library grounds was dedicated. It was Morton Grove's largest crowd to that date. My mother was a member of the Women's War Working Circle, a group of local women who acted as a home front organization to Morton Grove boys in World War I. This group of ladies raised the money to erect the monument, and my father was one of a group active in raising the money for the purchase of the property which is now the side of the monument and the

library. There aren't any villagers still around who were present at that dedication. After all, that's sixty-five years ago--a lifetime. I still have the printed program of the day. A street dance on the newly paved Lincoln Avenue was part of the day's activities.

And now, another memory. In the second and third decades of the century, several famous supper clubs--they were then known as roadhouses--operated on Dempster Street in Morton Grove. They were the Wayside Inn, the Lincoln Tavern, and the Dells. The automobile, both the electrics and the gasoline-driven ones, had just come into vogue. And the crowds would patronize the mentioned roadhouses with their nationally famous orchestras and radio broadcasts. But I remember primarily about these three places was that they were all destroyed by fire, and I was present at all three fires.

Another memory was when I was a member of the local volunteer fire department for almost twenty years. But the one memory that stands out in my mind--and it's a tragic one--was the loss of six lives when fire destroyed the Club Rendezvous on Dempster Street in 1935. As a fireman, I helped to remove the burned bodies of six young people -- one of whom was a girl from Niles Center, now Skokie. It is a memory now over fifty years old, but a tragic one.

Then, too, speaking of memories, another one. This one, unlike the Club Rendezvous memory, is a pleasant one. That was the welcome home party in 1945 at the end of World War II, given by the Pals, a home-front organization.

The affair was held in Deckert's Hall on Lincoln Avenue, which is now the Villa Toscana. Morton Grove's returning veterans of the war were the honored guests that night, and most of the 357 men and women who served in the war were present. Highlights of the evening were the official reception by the officials and also the happy reunions of townsfolk and veterans and reunions of veterans with

veterans after a long separation. Official Morton Grove paid them tribute.

Gratitude was in every villager's words, thankfulness for support given them was in every veteran's tongue.

Now tragically, nine of the total who left didn't make it to the party.

They are our own honored dead of World War II. I have long memorized their names, and they are Glenn Brock, Raymond Noesen, Alling Norman, George Stejskall, Clarence Sesterhenn. Leonard Voss, Warren Kawell and Wayne Mattson. I knew every one of those gold-star heroes, and Gretchen and I in our travels about the world, have visited the graves of five of them. Gretchen taught three of them -- that was Glenn Brock and Warren Kawell and Clarence Lindemann as her students at Morton Grove School.

Then another memory, since we're on memory's trail here, in the late fall of 1945, the village of Morton Grove celebrated its golden anniversary, its fiftieth year as an incorporated village. An anniversary dinner, accompanied with a local-talent dramatic presentation of the early village meetings, was staged at the school auditorium. Some 350 villagers were in attendance. The last member still alive of that original board of 1895--still alive in 1945 -- Mr. August Poehlmann was in attendance, as were the widow of the first mayor George Harrer and the widow of the original board member David Fielweber. They were appropriately honored as being the real pioneers of our village government. I have always felt pleased that I had the opportunity to be the chairman of that golden anniversary observance.

And now, memory number eight. And that is the memory of riding my high-wheel bicycle for twenty years in the annual Morton Grove Days parade. It was always fun for me, and I'm told it was interesting for the spectators. Now, Morton Grove Days--the celebration and the parades that were such an interesting part of the

days -- have passed into history. They are no more, but they are pleasant memories. I still have the old bike, that old relic over a century old now. I hope it added something to the day's excitement. As for me, I got a lot of exercise and plenty of fresh air (laughs) way up in that high altitude.

And now, the last -- I have saved the best for the last, the last happy memory. In 1939, I took as my wife one Gretchen Stoute, then a teacher at our local public school. It was a marriage that has now lasted forty-seven years. Gretchen and I share many interests. We both enjoy United States history, both in reading it and traveling it. We both are interested in antiques. In fact, the first antique Gretchen collected was me, (laughs) and that was quite an antique. We both enjoy travel. In fact, we have been in seventy-four foreign countries, have been from the Cape of Good Hope in Africa on the south of our planet to the northern most part of our planet, North Cape, Norway, the land of the midnight sun. And we have made African big-game safaris in Africa as well as one continuous trip around the world. Gretchen has always been my staunchest supporter, but when deserving, she also has been my severest critic. I hope and pray that the Lord is good to us and spares us both for many more years of happy wedded life.

Q: Art, you have related many historic events in our town and your memory is remarkably clear on them. I suppose that down through the years, you were active in the various local organizations and their civic, social, and charity programs.

AL: Oh yes. Chamber of Commerce, Morton Grove Days Committee, American Legion, Lions Club, Morton Grove Pals--I was active in all of them. Our Lions Club was chartered in 1940 with a membership of forty-three members, and at this current

date now in 1986, I am the only charter member of the club still alive. I served as club president in 1946, and subsequently I served as district governor of the Northern Illinois Lions District in 1949.

Lions Club, having been organized just prior to America's entry in World War II, was very active during the war. We promoted the war bond drives, we promoted the home-front victory garden programs, we erected the village's honor roll bulletin board at Lincoln and Ferris Avenue on which 357 Morton Grove men and women had their names inscribed, we entertained Morton Grove servicemen while they were home on furlough. Yes. For 40 years now, the Lions Club has had a commendable record for supporting a wide range of charities. Its membership today numbers 104.

Q: Incidentally, Art, I am under the impression that you had some part in the erection of the beautiful American Legion Memorial Home on Dempster Street.

AL: Yes, Priscilla, I was chairman of the building committee in 1949 when we erected that Legion building, which I have always felt is one of the finest in the state, if not in the nation. Previously I served on the corporation Legion's board of directors when we acquired that choice piece of property in 1946. Mind you, at a cost of only \$8,500. It took a lot of work, however, to raise the money in 1946 and in the years immediately following in order to begin construction and then, within a few years, to pay off the mortgage on it. For twenty-five years, I served this post as the corporation treasurer. The property is now debt-free. I say thanks to our local American Legion Post for their dedication to our war dead as they honor their memory every Memorial Day. It seems to me that once the battle guns are silenced and the hurrahs die out, many of our citizens forget

the sacrifice our gold-star heroes made. I make it a practice to participate in every Memorial Day service.

Q: Art, you've had an interesting life, and it translates into an interesting story of early Morton Grove. Since we have in this interview covered just a brief part of the village's history, and since that part was concerned with your personal experiences, I think we should continue this interview at a later date. At that time, we can cover the historic events concerning the first settlers, the coming of the railroad, the organization of the settlement as a village, the significance of the name Morton, the early ordinances, and, finally, the expanding village down through the later years. That story, too, will be an interesting one and will constitute a library of historical facts for this and later generations to enjoy. We thank you, Art, and we appreciate your giving the time.

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

(END IF THE INTERVIEW, PART I)

PART II

June 9, 1986

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: The purpose of this interview is to put on tape for a permanent record, the facts, events, dates, and the people who played a part in the settlement and then the development of the Village of Morton Grove. Art is credited with writing the first history of the village over a half century ago. Having been a part of the

village his earlier years and having pursued his hobby with extensive research, he is a good candidate for this historical interview. And so, Art, tell us that interesting story known as the history of Morton Grove.

AL: Than you, Mrs. Godemann, for giving me the opportunity to record my experiences of life in early Morton Grove and also to put on record the results of my research on the subject that you are pursuing. I came to Morton Grove as a three-month-old baby in 1907 and spent the next half century growing up with the village. I was familiar with the townspeople and the events of that period, but I became equally fascinated with the research I did on the events and the three generations of pioneers and early settlers that preceded me here. And so, in 1930, after much research and interviews, I wrote the first history of Morton Grove.

Now the story of Morton Grove is typical of that of countless numbers of American communities. Out of nature's virgin forest, hard pioneers hewed out a clearing, broke the stubborn sod and then tilled the fertile soil. In the very early days, the product of their labors provided for them nothing more than a mere subsistence. But as Chicago population grew, its demand for foodstuffs grew likewise, and this area became a big provider of garden vegetables to the big city of Chicago.

Farmers of the fertile land in and around the village prospered through two generations and until the subdivision craze of the 1920s when the bean patches and the onion fields were abruptly converted into choice thirty-foot residential lots. (laughs) Now, the Depression of the 1930s slowed down the development process, but as the post World War II building boom got underway, new areas were subdivided and areas to the west were annexed to the village and major industries

were attracted. It seemed that Morton Grove's destiny would not be denied and the town began its steady growth even until this day.

Q: That certainly sounds like progress, Art, but tell us, who were the very first settlers here and where did they come from and why did they settle here?

AL: Well, we know that the first inhabitants of our area here were the Red Men, the Indians, members of the Miami and the Pottawatomie tribes. Now our forest preserve district has commemorated the Miamis by naming one of its large tracts in this area Miami Woods. Miami Woods has for three decades been the site of the village's annual Morton Grove Days celebration. But the Indians left in 1829 when our federal government persuaded them to move westward beyond the Mississippi River. And then, in 1831, the federal government began the sale of land in quarter-section parcels at a dollar and twenty-five cents per acre.

In that year, 1831, came the first white settler, John Curtis, the forerunner of many English families who settled here in the 1830s. In that decade of the 1830s came Silvester Beckwith, William White, James Weldon, Samuel Ferris, and Tom Jefferson--not the Tom Jefferson of the Declaration of Independence fame, of course, but one with a similar name. As you may recognize, some of those names are commonly carried in the village's history and their names being everyday terms to this day. Beckwith left his name on Beckwith Road; Ferris left his name on Ferris Avenue.

Q: But, Art, those are all English names. Even as a young girl, I remember this town being heavily German in its ancestry. When did the Germans first get here?

AL: A decade later, in 1840, came the first of the German settlers, the farmers of a bygone generation now. It was they who played so active a part in the early development and whose descendants to this day form a substantial part of our citizenry. Earliest of these German settlers were the Gabel, Lochner, Meyer, Hoffman, Fink, Dilg, Schwartz and Budde families in the north part of the area. And the Huscher, Miller, Haupt, Yehl, Theobald, Ross, Guenther, Boemmel all are families in the south area. Following thereafter came Dilg and Ahrens and Schledt and Witte, Biesman and Kein and Suhr and Sietman, Elsner and Schultz, Weight and Schuetz; and others, too, whose names don't come to mind on the spur of the moment.

Q: This must have been a heavily wooded area when those pioneers first arrived, wasn't it? And all what is now this 36-square miles of Niles Township. Why did they come first to what is now Morton Grove?

AL: Yes, Priscilla, that is an appropriate question, and it is easily explainable. First of all, human life needs water, and the river provided that. The river also provided water for their livestock, their oxen, their sheep and later their horses. And also the river attracted wild game--deer, raccoons, wild ducks and geese, and fish -- for their food. You see, the first pioneers had a hefty appetite to satisfy, and the river attracted game for his food.

As to the forests, yes, the early reports of this area indicate that both sides of the river were bordered with heavy growth of about a mile or so and then the forest gave way to the prairie. In fact, the prairie to the east, just past Skokie, was referred to as the east prairie, a name still familiar to this day in East Prairie Road.

Q: With the increasing number of settlers coming in, there was an opportunity and a need for some businesses to start. Where did they or what were they and when did they begin?

AL: Yes, the first business in all of what is now Niles Township started here in what is now Morton Grove. A Mr. John Miller in 1840 erected a crude sawmill on the river, using the river current and a backed-up mule pond for power. Now this old-fashioned waterwheel that turned the saws was a godsend to the struggling pioneers as it eased the backbreaking labor of sawing logs. It was located just across the road from the present Studio Inn on Railroad Avenue.

Now, Miller's Mill, as it was known, operated for many years. In fact, until the coming of the railroad in 1872. The railroad then passed directly over its site. Gradually a settlement grew up in the vicinity of the old mill. First an inn, then a few settlers and later, a post office. Yes, Miller's Mill became an item of historic significance because it marked the transition from the log cabin to the sawed-board house.

And also of interest was the fact that for three-quarters of a century, the pioneers' oxen trail, which started as a logging road to the mill, was known as Miller's Mill Road. And early deeds and surveys so recorded it. In 1915, though, our village board passed an ordinance changing the name of Miller's Mill Road to Lincoln Avenue.

Q: And I suppose that when the use of oxen went out, then the railroad came in.

AL: Yes, then came the biggest event in Morton Grove history, for in 1872, the iron horse came passing through. The coming of the railway. The Milwaukee Road

constructed a single-track line and that determined the future location of the future village. Because of the railway, business and industry would develop here. In the 1880s came the Globe Pickle Company and also the Squire Dingee and then the Henning Pickle companies. The farm area around Morton Grove was very good for pickle growing. And then also in 1889, came the Poehlmann Brothers florists, whose operations with their Plants A, B, and C grew ultimately to employ over three hundred people. And in 1892, in anticipation of the World's Columbian Exposition to be held in Chicago, the Chicago World's Fair, and with rapidly increasing business, the railway's present double track was laid.

Q: The settlement had a railway. How did it get the name Morton Grove?

AL: The railroad determined the settlement's name. When the track was constructed in 1872, the flag stop designating the few cabins required a name. And the railway selected Morton Grove. The "Morton" was derived from the name of Levi Parsons Morton, a New York financier who was a noted figure in railroad financing in those years. And the word "Grove" was chosen because of the groves of trees in the central part of the settlement; hence, the significant and proud name, Morton Grove.

Now, Mr. Morton was a prominent national statesman of his day. He lived from 1834 to 1920. He was vice president of the United States from 1889 to 1893, under President Benjamin Harrison. He also served as governor of the State of New York, also was a congressman from New York. And Mr. Morton served as United States ambassador to France and while acting in that capacity in 1884, in Paris, France, he accepted the Statue of Liberty as the gift of the people of France to the

country of America. Now, I don't know if French wine had anything to do with it, but Mr. Morton lived to be a ripe old age. He died in 1920 at the age of ninety-six.

Now in our travels, Gretchen and I many years ago visited Mr. Morton's birthplace in Shoreham, Vermont. We researched his life's history at the Shoreham library and discussed his career with the Shoreham town clerk and viewed the stained glass windows in the village church, donated by Mr. Morton to the church. We left Vermont with the feeling that Morton Grove has a proud name, and we should feel proud about it.

Unlike many of the neighboring villages near us here, Morton Grove has never changed its name. Skokie was formerly known as Niles Center. Lincolnwood changed its name from Tessville. Glenview changed its name from Oak Glen. And Northbrook was formerly known as Shermerville. But Morton Grove started as Morton Grove and remained Morton Grove.

Now, of course, Morton is also a famous name in early American history. There were fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence -- fifty-six famous names. One of them was a John Morton from the State of Pennsylvania. And then, another famous Morton was Dr. William Morton of Massachusetts. He was a dentist who first used ether as an anesthesia. Now you can imagine having teeth pulled today, having operations without an anesthetic. So, there were some famous Mortons beside Levi. P. Morton who was Morton Grove's namesake.

Q: So I gather the settlement had a name before it was chartered as a village. Is that true?

AL: Yes, yes. The first subdivision in 1892, four years before the village was incorporated, carried the name Bingham and Fernald's Morton Grove Subdivision. In

1891, a Mr. Fred Koehler, a pioneer who had cleared and farmed the twenty-acre tract now bounded by Lincoln Avenue, Georgiana, Capulina, and Ferris Avenues, sold his plot to George Fernald and Frank Bingham for \$225 an acre. Koehler had paid \$25 an acre for it way back in 1864.

Subdividing then was no easy task. Streets were roughly graded through Koehler's former farmland, wooden-board sidewalks were laid so that one could pass over the soft, muddy soil. There was no public sewer or water facility, no street lighting. Maple sapling trees were planted to border the streets and lots were offered at \$150 each. When the Depression followed the 1893 World's Fair, some scattered lots were purchased for as low as one hundred dollars.

Now, it's interesting where some of our street names came from due to Bingham and Fernald. Fernald Avenue was named after Mr. George Fernald, one of the subdividers. Callie Avenue was named after Miss Callie Hacker, a stenographer for the subdividers Bingham and Fernald in 1891. And Georgiana Avenue was named after Georgianne Bingham, wife of the subdivider Frank Bingham. And so in the story of the town, Fernald's subdivision became one its historic chapters. It marked the end of the farm; it marked the beginning of residential development. It determined the heart of the early town.

Q: Now there was a railroad, subdivision lots, businesses and residences. When did it become a legally chartered village?

AL: Well, a few years later, the little settlement, with an estimated population of some three hundred hearty souls, felt the need of some sort of regulation and authority in the community. It needed some policing of radicals. It needed some

policing of dogs running at large, of saloon regulations, of scraping the dirt streets and so forth.

And so, these hearty souls gathered to organize a village government under state law. Now, the organizational meeting was held in October of 1895 in John Gruber's printing shop, which stood directly in the back of what is now 6207 Lincoln Avenue, the Villa Toscana Tavern. Mr. George Harrer, a leader in the movement to incorporate the village and in whose honor the village's Harrer Park is named, was chosen the first president or mayor as we refer to the village president today. And Mr. Harrer served as such for the first fourteen years of the village's existence. Now the other officials, trustees as they are known, of that historic first term were August Poehlmann, the florist; Jacob Hoffman, the railway station agent of the Milwaukee Road; Charles Guenther, a farmer; Dave Fielweber, a local blacksmith, Fred Dilg, a general store operator; and William Mueller. Medard Lochner, a Civil War veteran, was chosen treasurer. Adolf Poehlmann, brother of August, the other florist partner, was chosen police magistrate. John Koller, Sr., as marshall; August Henning was village clerk, but served in that capacity for only six months. Mr. Henning was succeeded by Michael J. Lochner, who then served as our village clerk for our town for over forty years.

Q: That sounded like a very primitive setting for the village's birth. What did they do for a meeting place?

AL: Well, for a while they met in Gruber's print shop. After all, it was a convenient place to meet. Gruber did all the printing for the village -- the notices, publications, and the village ordinances, a copy of which book I have

here before us. You will notice that the printer's caption on the first ordinance book reads, "Printed 1896."

Later the meetings were held in Fernald's subdivision office and then the following spring, Morton Grove's first village hall was erected at 8527 Callie Avenue. It wasn't much, but it was a beginning. It was a one-story, one-room brick structure with three concrete jail cells, outdoor toilets being the sanitary facility.

However, progress was in the offing, because eight years later in 1904, a second story was put on the building. The village fathers moved upstairs for their meetings, and the newly organized volunteer fire department took over the lower floor. You see, progress was slow, but it was steady and it was evident everywhere. Now this historic building served the village hall for 35 years -- two generations. Fathers and then their sons served as village officials in those humble circumstances.

But then as time passed, in 1939 at the tale-end of the Depression and with the aid of a federal W.P.A. funding, the second village hall was erected immediately south of the Pioneer Hall. Now that structure served until the present modern municipal building was remodeled out of what was our first public school at Capulina and School Streets. Now both the 1896 and the 1939 village hall buildings have been leveled, and Station Number One of the fire department occupies their sites.

Oh, looking back in retrospection, I'm sure that the wildest dreams of those founding fathers meeting in John Gruber's backwoods print shop in 1895 never anticipated such progress.

Q: Art, you have mentioned the first book of ordinances, 1896, which you are holding. There must have been some eye openers in there.

AL: (chuckles) Yes, indeed. I'll just read briefly a few of them to you. Here's Ordinance Number Eight, concerning dogs, passed November 12, 1895, passed, printed in the ordinance book of 1896: "The village marshall," it reads, "shall as soon as said list be approved of dogs in the village, proceed and collect before the first day of July of its owner of the dog or keeper, one dollar for each dog." And here's the interesting part, "providing, however, that each family shall be entitled to one dog free of tax." (chuckles) I thought that was amusing that there was a license on all dogs, but every family had the right to have one without paying license.

Then Section Five of the ordinance is interesting. Too. It reads, "The following fees shall be allowed for services rendered under the provisions of this ordinance out of the treasury, to wit, to the village marshall, fifteen percent of dog tax collected. Also twenty-five cents for each dog killed and buried." So the village marshall got fifteen percent of the dog tax and he got twenty-five cents extra for every dog that was killed and buried. Now, that sounds funny in our day now, but at the time it was serious business. Dogs were quite a matter, running dogs at large.

Now here's another one that aroused interest: "A person guilty of permitting his cow to graze on the public streets was liable to a one dollar fine." And other ordinances regulated howling dogs, slingshots used for the killing of birds were legislated against, and the word calaboose was used in the ordinance regarding vagabonds whose fines could be paid by hard labor for the village at a rate of \$1.50 per day. In other words, the prisoner for the day

if he cared to work for the village, his fine could be paid off at a dollar and a half per day of hard labor.

Then another one here later in the book is the advent of the horseless carriage brought about in 1910 the passage of a strict speed law of eight miles per hour. Mind you, 1910--fastest speed through the village of a motor horseless carriage was eight miles per hour. I might comment that, goodness gracious, that one was later repealed and well that it was, because I would have violated that on my bicycle.

And so, as we thumb through the pages of the old first book of ordinances, we realize how much water has passed under the bridge. We have progressed and our ordinance book proves it. But yet, don't we often today hear some people refer to them as the good old days? I say, piffle. Progress cannot be discouraged. We should welcome it. Memories are fine, but progress means a better life and a more abundant life. No one would care to revert to the hardships or to the inconveniences of those so-called good old days.

Q: Art, you have covered the old village subject well. But tell me, what about the school?

AL: Yes. The school was very important and we have always had good schools here in town. In 1897, just two years after the organization of the village government, the public school, later known as the Grove School at Capulina and School Streets, was organized. Previous to 1897, the children attended the public school at Waukegan and Beckwith Roads, which is known as Golf School now, or to the parochial schools in Niles Center, which is now Skokie.

That first school board here in Morton Grove was Joseph Haupt, president, and again Mr. George Harrer and Jacob Hoffman as members. And it was a happy day, I would guess, for the children and a proud one for the community when the school opened and classes began. A group of about thirty comprised the eight grades under the lone teacher, a Mrs. Ordway. Only one room was used the first year while the other was left unfurnished and was used as a playroom in bad weather. The first graduating class in 1901 numbered a grand total of three. Three.

In 1923, and additional two rooms were built and in 1928, the entire building was remodeled and a combination gym and auditorium added. In 1952, the ultra-modern Parkview School was built, then the Hines School, the Borg School and others as the population grew and the village boundaries expanded.

Q: I understand that your wife, Gretchen, was a teacher at the old Grove School teaching under her maiden name, Miss Gretchen Stoute. Is that true?

AL: Yes. Gretchen taught there for fourteen years, 1933 through 1946. And in that time span, you will recognize that she caught the Depression years and then they were followed by the war years. You will realize, I'm sure, that neither series of years--the Depression years and through the war years--were pleasant or easy.

During the depth of the Depression as a teacher there, she earned one thousand dollars a year. And, mind you, that salary was paid in script, in tax warrants, which were nothing more than a promise to pay if the taxes were collected. And these were hard to cash in. Often, she cashed them in at only sixty to seventy percent of their face value, but such were the times of the mid-1930s. But Gretchen was always proud of her students. Now many of them are

grandfathers and grandmothers, and she is always glad to see them and recollect those early school years.

Q: We haven't heard your mention of the fire department yet. In those years, it must have started with some very primitive equipment.

AL: So true. As I mentioned earlier, the fire department was organized in 1904, nine years after the village was chartered. Its first officials were Mr. George Harrer, again as president, Fred Dilg, vice president, Henry Theobald, secretary, August Poehlmann, treasurer. Little funds were available to purchase the necessary equipment, but by staging several social affairs and picnics and dances and with what little aid the village board could offer, the first piece of apparatus was purchased -- a horse-drawn, hand pumper. With this long-armed contraption, six or eight muscled men could succeed in raising a stream of water if and when water was available.

And the shortage of water was the big handicap of those days. There being no central water system, the only source of water was a meager supply obtained from wells or ponds or ditches or the river. It was 1912 before the first water hydrant was installed in the village.. But as time progressed, so did the fire department.

In 1913, the hand pumper gave way to a new Howe gasoline pumper, but it was still necessary to hire or commandeer a team of horses or mules. Now the Poehlmann florist plant maintained many teams of mules, and since the animal barn was situated near the fire station, mules were often commandeered to draw the apparatus. But with the advent of the motor age came the first fire truck in

1915, a motorized Studebaker. Later, they procured a Reo. And then down through the years, constantly newer and more modern equipment was added.

It was interesting that for almost twenty-five years after the department was organized in 1904, the fire call was the familiar short blast of the Poehlmann Brothers' plant whistle. But that, too, like the quaint old engines, became outmoded, and in 1927 a rooftop siren was installed. And to be sure that the siren was in working order, every day except Sunday a village hall employee sprung it for one short blast. Yes, it was in working order then. But the siren, too, gave way to progress. Its use was discontinued when the department went professional.

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

Q: Well, Art, you had spoken a lot about the village services. What about the federal service, the post office?

AL: Well, the postal service to the earliest pioneers of this vicinity was a very irregular and infrequent event. For the earliest settlers, it meant a long trek by foot or horseback to what is now the village of Niles, for that was a station stop on the stagecoaches carrying mail on the old Northwestern plank road, which is now Milwaukee Avenue.

With the building of the railway in 1872, however, came the establishment of a post office in Morton Grove and Medard Lochner, a Civil War veteran, was appointed the first postmaster. The first post office conducted its business in

the general provisions and hardware store and tavern, which was then known as saloon, you know, across from Miller's Mill on Railroad Avenue. And that site is now the site of the Parfait Restaurant. Later, the post office was moved to different locations on Lincoln Avenue, and lastly to a new modern post office building on Waukegan Road.

Q: And our churches, Art. They must have been the subject of interesting stories. Certainly the early days must have been rough.

AL: Yes, Priscilla. It seemed that salvation of one soul called for quite a sacrifice. (chuckles) The earliest settlers of Catholic faith walked--no roads then-- or horsebacked to Grosse Point, which is now Wilmette, where a parish had been established as early as 1843.

And, incidentally, the village Wilmette acquired its name from Anton Ouilmette, a Frenchman married the daughter of a Pottawatomie Indian chief, and as a legacy received half of what is now the city of Wilmette. And as a topping for the marriage cake, he got his name attached to the area as city of Wilmette. Now, I don't know what the Indian princess looked like. Maybe the dowry as I recited it still wasn't worth that Indian Princess. (chuckles)

But back to the early church goes. Regular Catholic services were later held in 1866 in a small frame building across from the present Shane's Fireside Restaurant on Waukegan Road. But this was discontinued two years later when St. Peter's in Skokie, which was then Niles Center, was organized. And for half a century, St. Peter's in Niles Center was the church the locals had to attend. Until the year 1919.

Then a committee of Morton Grove businessmen, namely Again George Harrer, Medard Lochner, the Civil War veteran, Nick Platz, Sr., a florist, and my father, Henry Loutsch, procured an audience with then Archbishop Mundelein, later Cardinal Mundelein, of the Chicago Archdiocese and requested that a parish be organized in Morton Grove. Consequently, St. Martha's was established here. For four years, the services were held in the store building at 6240 Lincoln Avenue with Reverend Martin Schmidt, the Glenview priest, presiding. In 1923, the present church and parsonage were erected, and Reverend Frederick Bergs became the first resident parish priest. In 1947, the first school was erected and in 1962, the present church was erected. Both church and school were erected while Reverend Raymond J. Wilhelmi was parish priest.

Q: But the Lutherans were a very early faith here, too, weren't they?

AL: Yes, to be sure that is true. The Lutherans erected the first church in town. But before that first church, regular Lutheran services began here in Morton Grove in 1897 when Rev. Detzer of Niles Center conducted services for the aged inmates of the Bethesda Home, now 6200 Lincoln Avenue and which building still stands and at which other villages, local villagers attended also.

A few years later in 1903 at a meeting held in the old village hall with nine persons in attendance, the present Evangelical Lutheran Jerusalem Church was organized. The nine organizers at that historic meeting were Julius Geweke, Fred Dilg, August Poehlmann, Adolph Poehlmann, Charles Blischke, Ludwig Freier, Henry Budde, John Hillman and H. Frederick. The following year, that is 1904, the first church structure was built. And in 1906, the first parsonage was built. The church burned in 1929 and immediately the present structure was planned and

erected. In 1906, Rev. Otto Heidtke became the pastor and remained here to observe his golden jubilee as the congregation's pastor in 1956.

Q: I understand that the public library had tough going in its early years. Is that true?

AL: Yes, to be sure. It was founded back in the mid-1930 Depression years. With the benefit of aid from the federal government, a library was established in 1938 in a rented store at 6100 Lincoln Avenue, Tad's Television Shop now. The venture was open on a part-time schedule and was under the direction of Miss Lillian Dilg as librarian. After several moves, first to the rented store building at 6240 Lincoln Avenue and then to the second floor of the old fire station on Callie Avenue, a small colonial structure was erected in 1952 in the Doughboy Park site. Finally, the library stood on village-owned property. The structure still stands, but it is surrounded by several later building additions to its present size. My wife, Gretchen, was on the library board during those early years. She was chairman of the building committee when the first structure was erected.

Q: Now back to the subject of churches. We now have many different faiths represented in town.

AL: Yes. The Morton Grove Community Church was organized in 1951. Services were conducted in the council chambers of the village hall. Two years later, in 1953, a parsonage was erected, and in 1955 the present church structure was erected at Austin and Lake Street. And in the later years, which makes it almost contemporary in the point of time now, came other faiths. St. Luke's United

Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Northwest Suburban Jewish Congregations were established and structures erected.

Q: By your recitation, Art, it is evident Morton Grove was making progress in all fields. But you haven't mentioned our park district yet.

AL: Oh, yes, we have a fine park district now. But it began from a very humble beginning. For twenty years, part of the proceeds from the annual Morton Grove Days was used for playground equipment at the several school sites. In 1947, the Days' Commission purchased the present park property on Dempster Street from the receiver of the bankrupt Poehlmann Brothers Florist. After an attempt to develop and operate this party by the Days' Committee proved to be unsatisfactory, the present park district was created in 1951 by a public referendum. The Days' Committee had no taxing power, and taxes and bond issues were needed to properly develop the property. This major site was named after the village's first mayor and one who was the driving force in organizing the village in 1895, the public school in 1897 and the fire department in 1904. This major site was officially named George Harrer Park. Several baby parks were added to the district in subsequent years. Mr. Thomas Monte served as the first president of the park district.

Q: It seems, Art, that you have just about covered everything of early Morton Grove history, except the annual celebration know as Morton Grove Days. They have passed into history now, but what were they like?

AL: Good old Morton Grove Days. I attended the first one and almost all of them that followed. Those who participated in the celebration had fun. Those who worked in the booths and the refreshment stands, those who conducted the athletic events and directed the parade experienced a long, tiring day.

The Days began in 1927 as a one-day affair. The third Wednesday of August it was. And as a sort of homecoming, a reunion of former residents, and as a fun day for locals and their neighboring village friends. There was a parade -- originally it included an auto tour through the neighboring towns in order to create interest. And then there was the athletic events, the tug-of-war, the fireman's water fights, dancing, raffles, games of chance and skill, food stands and a wide-open bar.

Starting as a one-day stand, it soon was expanded to a two-day affair, a Wednesday and a Thursday. And then it went to a three-day weekend, and finally a four-day weekend. Proceeds went to a multitude of charities -- playground equipment, fire department, and so forth. George Loutsch, my brother, was village mayor in 1927 when the plan for an annual celebration was first set up. Max Finke, who later served as mayor, acted as Morton Grove Days' chairman for the organization's first five years.

For over thirty years, the affair was held in the Linne Woods Forest Preserve. But pressure from the forest preserve district commissioners to enforce its forest preserve's no alcoholic beverages sales on forest preserve property finally forced the Days' committee to discontinue the Linne Woods site. In 1947, the Days' committee purchased the former Poehlmann Florist Plant B site on Dempster for \$52,000 and in 1951, when the present park district was created by public referendum, the Morton Grove Days' committee turned the site over to the newly-created park district. It is now the George Harrer Park.

Yes, I will remember the early Morton Grove Days. They were characterized by a genuine small-town atmosphere. No strangers at that affair. It was homecoming and reunion and merry making. When the Days were moved to the weekends, then the crowds grew larger, strangers predominated. The profits increased, but the fun diminished.

Q: Art, there are various civic organizations in town now. I suppose that down through the years, there were others that were organized, existed a while, and then passed into local history. Am I correct in that guess?

AL: Oh, yes. There have been a dozen or more that existed at one time or other in the early years. They all had noble motives for their organizing, namely social, service or fraternal motives, but for some reason or other, most of them lasted only a few years and then faded away. In the very early days, there was the Morton Grove Improvement Club, back in 1915. Then the Marquette Club here about 1920. And also the Progressive Club, the Civic Club and the Young Men's Club about 1935.

Also there were clubs organized in various subdivisions in town whose interests were primarily as to things that affected their subdivisions and whose memberships consisted of the particular subdivision residents. Now these subdivisions apply to the Golfview Gardens Association, East Side Property Owners Association and the like. They, too, passed into history.

However, several organizations of a half century ago still exist to this day. Included in that durable group is the Chamber of Commerce. Originally organized in the 1920's, it went inactive during the Depression years of the 1930s.

But in the 1940s, it was revived and today is very active and successful in its objectives. The big industrial expansion of the 1950s and the 1960s gave the chamber a shot in the arm as to membership, activity, and prestige.

Then there was the American Legion, Post 134. It was organized in 1925 and its auxiliary the same year. Peter Gebel was the post's first commander, while Mary Hoss of the auxiliary's first president. At the beginning, the post was named the Niles Township Post as it was the first post in the area and attracted members from Skokie, then Niles Center, Lincolnwood, then Tessville, and the Village of Niles. But, as those villages. Formed their own Legion posts locally, the out-of-town members transferred to those posts and ultimately after a few years, our Morton Grove post changed its name back to Morton Grove Post. Our post acquired the Dempster Street property in 1946 and erected its present building in 1949. The Legion Home with its choice site and beautiful architecture is indeed one of the finest in the state, if not the nation. Its membership is now over seven hundred.

Now, the Morton Grove Lions Club was chartered in 1940 with Herbert A. Dilg, then mayor of the village, as the first club president and with a beginning membership of forty-three. The club was very active in home-front projects during World War II, namely the War Bond drives, the victory garden promotions and the erection and maintenance of the village Roll of Honor. The club is now in its forty-sixth year and has a present membership of 104.

Morton Groves Woman's Club was organized in 1953 with Mrs. Betty Orphan as its first president. It has a large membership and has long been active in many charitable programs and cultural activities down through the years. Morton Grove Sportsman's Club was organized about 1940. It promoted many sportsman's activities and contests as well as participating in local civic projects. In recent years its

membership has become very modest and its activities are reduced. Now the Loyal Order of Moose, Lodge 376, it was organized in 1951 with 120 members and is still an active organization. Primarily a fraternal organization, it has participated in local government projects down through its years. The Moose owns and maintains its own club room building on Chestnut Street. Morton Grove had its own Rotary Club for several years, but it was merged with the club in Niles and is now named the Morton Grove-Niles Rotary Club. It promotes the many programs of Rotary International, and its affiliation with Rotary International gives it a strength and a prestige and one of community's fine organizations. Morton Grove Garden Club has existed for several decades and still promotes the interests of its garden-oriented members. Through the years the Garden Club erected and maintained several entrances to the village garden plots.

And there are many other organizations that existed and some still do exist of which I am not familiar with, such as the Elmore Civic Association, the Howard Community Association, Jewish War Veterans-Morton Grove Post 700, Mills Park Community Club and Property Owners Association, Newcomers Club, Park Vista Homeowners Association, and the Bnai Bith Lodge and others. Also in the past few years, a Morton Grove Historical Society was organized, which is very active now. Its big recent project was raising funds for a permanent Morton Grove historical building, which structure will be dedicated on June 22, 1986. In the past few years also, a Lioness Club was organized with Gwen Connelly as its first president, and there is a Granview Grandfather's Club and a Happy Grandmother's Club. All are doing well.

A big industrial expansion came to town after the Depression years were over. The first of the bigger companies to establish their plants here were the Bell and Gossett Company in 1941, and then the Baxter Laboratories in 1945. You

see, Morton Grove lay in the direct path of the big post-war expansion northward out of Chicago. As the building boom of the late 1940s and the 1950s developed and more area was needed, annexations to the west became a regularity. The westward village boundary was extended to Harlem Avenue and finally to Washington Street. The population grew from the 300 when the village was organized in 1895 to some 24,000 today. The facts and figures indeed constitute a story of progress.

And now, a finale. And I'll title it, "Lest We Forget." No attempt to record the history of Morton Grove could be complete without the mention of those who served their country in the great conflicts of our time, the Civil War, the Spanish-American, two world wars, Korea and Vietnam. And there is no brighter chapter in all our village's background than the one dedicated to the memory of its veterans. I recap here.

In 1861, the Civil War, Medard M. Lochner, John Lochner, Gus Fink and Henry Fink were in that war. John Lochner lost his life in the Battle of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee.

1898, the Spanish-American War. William Huscher, Rudolf Huscher, Lee Parker and Thomas Parker served.

1917, World War I. Forty-three Morton Grove men served, and one of them, Richard Baumhardt, made the supreme sacrifice at Argonne Forest in France.

1941, World War II. Three hundred and fifty-two men and five women served in the four years of that conflict. The honored heroes who lost their lives are Glenn Brock, Warren Kawell, Wayne Mattson, Raymond Noesen, Alling Norman, Clarence Sesterhenn, George Stejskall, Leonard Voss, and Clarence Lindemann.

In 1950, the Korean War. James J. Barrett was the village's lone fatality.

In 1965, Viet Nam War. Eight Morton Grove men gave their lives in this far-away conflict, half was around the world from home. They were William Noddin, James Novotny, Thomas Pilkington, Frank Walthers. Thomas Widerquist, Robert Foreman, Norman Miller and Douglas Perz.

And so, in solemn salute we say, "Tim will not dim the glory of their deeds. Morton Grove will forever pay them tribute."

And so, Madam Interviewer, thank you for giving me this chance to be heard. In the years to come, if ever and whenever another history of our town is written, may the writer find in Morton Grove's future another set of proud achievements and noteworthy events and noble sacrifices the like of which it has been my good fortune to record. As so, concluding, I hope I have made this interview interesting. After all, the Morton Grove story is an interesting story regardless of the quality of my presentation of it. May future generations enjoy it as much as I have. Thank you for the opportunity to relate it.

Q: Art, on behalf of the Historical Society, we thank you immensely. Your presentation here this afternoon will, with other interviews we hope to obtain, constitute a library of historical facts for this and later generations to enjoy. You have been very kind to have given so much of your time and so generously.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS