

The NOW 'n' THEN

The official newsletter of the Romeoville Area Historical Society



April, 2021

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The Society held a successful Halloween event on Saturday Oct. 31. We advertised it as pre-Trick or Treat since we open at 1:00 and the Village Trick or Treat hours began at 3:00. Debbie Hassert and I, both in costumes, welcomed the costumed families and gave them tours and candy. Each tour was geared to the age of the children and included information on Halloween activities in the past. We included things such as nasty tricks, school parties, and bobbing for apples. I had stripped an ear of field corn and threw a handful into a metal tub to demonstrate throwing corn at windows in the 1950s. The event was so successful that we plan to repeat it in 2021.

In early November, Illinois returned to COVID's Phase 3, which shut down the museum again. When this happened, the officers decided to remain closed through the winter and reopen in March, rather than to open when the ban would be lifted, then close again. We continued to work in the building and were open by appointment for individuals who wished tours or to do research. The officers have replaced the monthly membership meetings with officers' meetings by telephone to keep the organization going.

I had several interesting visitors during the fall. One man from Indiana phoned to request information about a fire that occurred on the north side of the Village. I searched the files and found several that could answer his question. However, when he came and gave more details, I realized that none fitted the specifics. The fire was at night in the 1970s. All those in the files were during the day.

Another man wanted to learn about Romeoville. He had gotten a brochure at Isle a la Cache. As he was not from the area, his tour included more history of the area than we normally give. I talked about: the small town of Romeo east of the river and farming on the west side, the Hastert White Fence Farm and Hassert tree farm and the political connections of both families, Neil Murphy's Tavern and his 40 years as Mayor which included the start of Hampton Park. His tour lasted 2 hours, and he took notes throughout. He has been around the world visiting museums and told me about some of them. His next stop was Bolingbrook the same afternoon.

The Village expanded their Christmas decorations this year with a lighted display that filled the area in front of Village Hall. Families could stroll through or drive around it to see the different seasonal figures.

We had several requests from students wanting to do volunteer work for school requirements. The Bolingbrook Historical Commission asked us for copies of the records for schools in their area. Two girls have started working with me on the trunkful of forms from the 1-room schools. We were surprised to find ballots from School Board elections; they were small scraps of lined paper with a single name on each. These accompanied election report forms that often showed only 3-5 voters, including the 3 election judges.

Nancy Hackett, President

WE ARE CURRENTLY RE-OPENED!!

Safety protocols will be in place...

- **Requirements for Visitors:**

- o Masks must be worn at all times
- o Limited Touching – Use provided gloves if touching books/items
- o Maximum of 11-12 guests
- o 6' social distancing
- o Wait outside if there are more than 11 or 12 guests in the museum
- o Guest Book – sign using your own pen, or if using ours it must be sanitized immediately

HOURS:

Every Saturday 1:00pm - 4:00pm

2nd & 4th Sunday 12:00pm - 3:00pm

Hope you are able to come out and visit us soon!!

2020 Founders Day Parade

The parade was held on Sunday, September 20, 2020 at 2:00pm. The theme for the parade was “Romeoville: Stronger Together” to celebrate our wonderful community and everything we’ve been through so far in 2020, we truly were Stronger Together.

Congratulations to our Historical Society member Theresa Capone for winning Best Overall Float!!



Halloween 2020

Pre-Trick or Treat at the Historical Society!



Nancy Hackett-President



Debbie Hassert

Drdak Way

As you travel along portions of Spangler Avenue, you may notice a blue street sign that reads Drdak Way. This honor was bestowed upon a longtime family of the community that has spent countless hours volunteering, establishing organizations, and being active in Romeoville. The signs were presented to the family at the Village Board Meeting on August 19th, 2020

"Paul, Lillian, Robert, and Mildred Drdak, without a doubt, deserve this honor for all they have done and meant to our community," stated Mayor John Noak.

Paul was a coach, mentor, member of the Romeoville Jaycees, member and President of the Romeoville Golden Age Club, founding member of the Hampton Park Social Athletic Club and Romeoville Historical Society, and served as the Romeoville Village Clerk from May 1973 – October 1976.

Lillian volunteered in the schools, was a member and president of the Romeoville Golden Age Club, and a founding member of the Romeoville Historical Society.

Robert was a founding member and president of the Hampton Park Social Athletic Club, a member and president of the Romeoville Jaycees and Holy Name Society (now known as the Knights of Columbus), a founding member of the Romeoville Historical Society, and a coach for numerous sports teams. He volunteered for many committees, volunteered for the Founder's Day parade for years and helped with three census campaigns.

Mildred was a founding member of the Romeoville Historical Society, a member and president of both the Romeoville Jaycees and Romeoville Counsel of Catholic Women, a Girl Scout Leader, ran the Miss Romeoville pageant for years, volunteered with the school district, started reading and arts & crafts programs while working at the library, and was named the governor's Woman of the Year. She was born in Romeoville in 1927, but her family (Startz) had settled the area in 1896.



The honorary designation is through the Village of Romeoville's Commemorative Program, a unique opportunity for residents to honor a current or former community member and to recognize individuals that have made a significant contribution or impact on the community. In addition to street signs, options include benches, trees, parks, pavilions, and more. To learn more about the Commemorative Program, contact the Village of Romeoville at: <https://www.romeoville.org/967/Commemorative-Program>

Letter to the EDITOR

Printed in the 10-03-2020 Herald News

Historical museum in Romeoville

To the Editor:

Everyone and everything needs a home. History hides in a closet until it is researched by our historical society in Romeoville.

Our first pioneers in Romeoville were original settlers. They came for open and clean air. They needed a home community, as we all do. They were our lighthouse, strength, inspiration and fortitude,

I was honored to work for two of our society's co-founders, Dorothy (Hassert) and Mabel (Hrpcha). They did write books about early Romeoville. They and many others saved artifacts for our museum. After years of searching for a home, we now are permanently on Belmont Drive in Romeoville.

As we all prepare for a very important election, there is one true quote by Abraham Lincoln in 1858 (to remember), "A house divided against itself cannot stand." His memory is shared in Romeoville – as he traveled Route 66A (now Route 53).

Our country needs Abe's words now more than any time in history. We must be an example for our children's future.

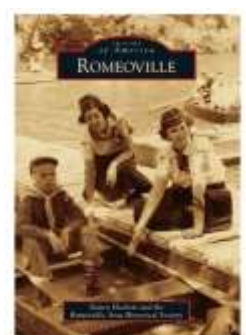
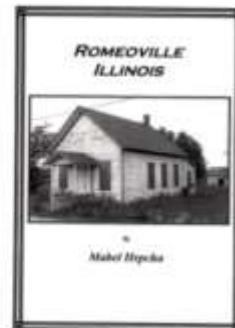
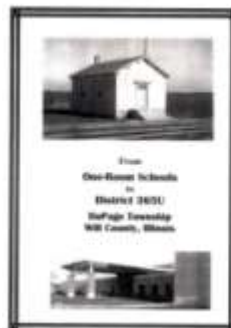
Growing up during the Great Depression, we truly believed and had respect for our country. The color of your skin, your religion, etc., did not matter. In school, we all put our hands on our hearts and said the Pledge of Allegiance.

As Abe Lincoln also said, UNITED WE STAND, ALL TOGETHER.

GOD BLESS AMERICA, now and forever.

--Shirlee Pergler
Romeoville

Publications available for purchase either at our museum located at: 14 Belmont, Romeoville, or from our website at: www.romeohistory.org



Christmas 2020 in Romeoville

The Romeoville Village Board held their first annual Romeoville Holiday Lights Festival. The grounds of village hall and the police department were decked out and twinkling along Grand Boulevard. "The area around village hall is perfect for a festival of this kind," explained Mayor John Noak. "After the challenges this year has brought, we thought the community would appreciate an uplifting holiday display."



Local Obituaries



Clifton Eugene Canaday

05-03-1938 / 08-18-2020

Clifton Eugene Canaday passed away peacefully on August 18, 2020, surrounded by his loving family at the age of 82. He was born on May 3, 1938 in Colorado to loving parents John and Mary Canaday.

He had 5 siblings, Norma Jean, Don, Marlene, John and Delmar. He is survived by his two brothers John and Don Canaday. Cliff married his sweetheart, Beverly, on October 10, 1959. Cliff will join his beautiful wife in heaven as she passed away June 22, 2020. Shortly after their wedding, they moved to Romeoville where they lived and actively participated in the community for 60 years. Many will remember Cliff for his devotion to young adults with special needs, the Cub Scouts, Special Recreation Association, opening Lovin' Oven Bakery with Beverly and establishing a Kiwani Club to further serve the children in the Valley View School District. Cliff has touched the lives of many and has left a legacy of service and compassion for all. He loved so many people.

Cliff is survived by his four children (Bob, Judy, Gary and Pam) and their loving families. Bob Canaday and Charlotte(Hill) and their children Rob, Tony, Jake, Warren, Catherine and 2 great grandchildren, Hadley and Myles. Pam (Canaday) Teeling and Roger Teeling and their children Abbie, Claire and Scott. Judy (Canaday) Dore and Matt Dore along with their 2 children Peter and Paige. Gary and Rose (Pinto) Canaday and their children Reagan, Mitchel, Tiffany, Lisa, and Katie. Cliff was so truly loved by his family.



Ronald Leo Breyne

11-01-1931 /08-14-2020

Mr. Ronald Leo Breyne of Carol Stream, IL passed away on Friday, August 14, 2020. He was 88 years old.

Born in Naperville, IL on November 1, 1931, Ron previously lived in Romeoville, Lemont, and Carol Stream, IL. He met his wife of 63 years while attending Wayne State College in Nebraska. Ron was an Army veteran of the Korean War and worked in Chemical Engineering at Argonne National Laboratory for 38 years. Ron was a member of the original volunteer fire department in Romeoville, IL. He and his wife Peg were part of the founding parishioners at St. Andrew the Apostle.

Ron was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather who enjoyed all sports, his Chicago Cubs, his Windsor Catholic Community and friends, music, and most dearly, his grandchildren. He loved spending as much time with his wife, children, and grandchildren as possible. Ron is survived by his 4 children, Matthew (Catherine), Patrick (Gena), Mary Carlos (Dennis), and Christopher (Janice). Ron is also survived by 6 grandchildren: Owen (Ella), Timothy, Taylor, Conor, Henry and Margaret. He is also survived by sisters Joyce Rife, Lois Breyne, Leah (Chuck) Steininger, and brother Leo (Patricia) Breyne. Also, numerous nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews.

Ron was preceded in death by his loving wife Peg, his eldest son Timothy "Timmer", his parents Leo and Henrietta Breyne, and brother in law Clint Rife.



John Joseph Himpler

November 2020

John Joseph Himpler, age 88. Veteran U.S. Navy. Beloved husband of Anne Marie Himpler; loving father of William M. (Mary Sue), James W., and Joseph B. Himpler; dear grandfather of Billy (Renata) Himpler, Maggie (Patrick) Wilburn, John Joseph and Ruth Himpler; cherished great-grandfather of William M. III, and June Marie; fond uncle and friend to many. John was a grade schoolteacher for 25 years in the Romeoville School District.



Anna Mae Lukancic

04-11-1937 / 10-07-2020

Age 83, of Crest Hill, passed away peacefully on October 7th, 2020, at Joliet Area Community Hospice Home with her beloved husband of 61 years, John, and loving daughter, Kathleen Carbone, with her at the time of her passing. Anna Mae was born on April 11th, 1937 in Joliet, IL, the daughter of the late Valentine and Lillian (Ziesemer) Longhini. She was a graduate of Lockport Township High School, where she discovered her love for singing, which inspired her to perform throughout her life.

Anna Mae's beautiful soprano voice was an inspiration to many as she was a cantor at Mass in St. Joseph Catholic Church in Joliet, St. Ambrose Church and St. Anne Catholic Church in Crest Hill, as well as at weddings and funerals in numerous other churches. Wherever she sang people knew that, "surely the presence of the Lord is in this place." She directed the Glory and Praise Choir at St. Joseph's for over 15 years and sang in the diocesan choir at the Cathedral of St. Raymond in Joliet. For 30 years, she sang at Crest Hill's Annual Memorial Day Observance, performing various patriotic songs.

Anna Mae had a remarkably close and loving relationship with her family. She had an especially close connection with her daughter, Kathleen Carbone, with whom she shared a special bond as best friends. She touched the lives of her grandchildren, sharing words of wisdom with them, and loved having a positive impact on their lives. She always put everyone else's needs above her own, making certain that the lives she touched left an everlasting imprint. She was a wonderful neighbor and a cherished friend to many.

Besides her husband and daughter, Anna Mae is survived by her son Tom (Tami) Lukancic of Seattle; grandchildren Angelina (Ricky) Cho, Gianna Carbone, Michael Carbone, John (Heather) Lukancic, Steven (Jamie) Lukancic, and Colleen Lukancic, along with six great-grandchildren. Also surviving are her in-laws, Margaret (late Richard) Longhini, Lillian (late Clarence) Murphy, Angela (Walter) Zaida, Maryann Lukancic, Dr. Kent (late Dr. Mildred) Monroe, and Dr. Louis (Barbara) Lukancic; numerous nieces and nephews also survive.

She is preceded in death by her parents; son, John, and daughter, Angela Lukancic in infancy; her brother Richard, who was Anna Mae's hero and best friend; and her in-laws, Louis (Paula) Lukancic, Emma (Robert) Bechler, Helen (Raymond) Valerugo, and James (Patricia) Collins Lukancic.



John J. Lukancic 11-20-1936 / 01-20-2021

John J. Lukancic, age 84, departed this life at his home in Crest Hill on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, in the loving, supportive company of his daughter Kathleen Carbone and his own personal "CNA", his loving grandson, Michael who stayed by his bedside until the Lord took him home. John was also blessed to have the care of Hospice Nurse, Laura, CNA, Nicole and Caregiver, Sophia.

John was born November 20, 1936 at the family home on North Broadway Street in Joliet to Slovenian immigrants Louis and Paula (Matko) Lukancic, the fifth of nine children. He was baptized at St. Joseph Catholic Church and remained a faithful, active member of the parish for all of his life.

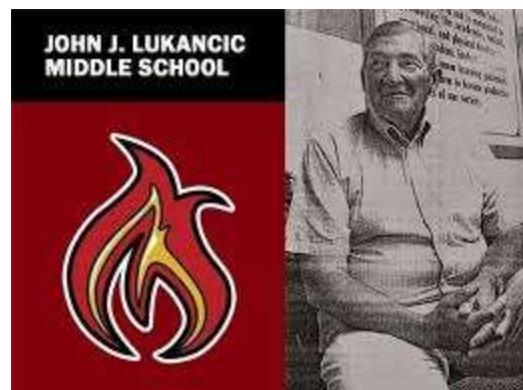
His many contributions to parish life will long be remembered, especially the parish museum which he and his siblings established in 2011. For 35 years, he hosted the Reunion Booth at the annual Homecoming Fair at St. Joseph Park. More recently he helped create the commemorative book for the parish's 125th anniversary in 2016.

The lessons he learned at home and at the church were the foundation for a lifetime of hard work, integrity and service to others. From the age of 13, John held a variety of jobs leading up to a 34-year career in education in the Valley View school district, retiring in 1994. In 2006 the John J. Lukancic Middle School was named in his honor. On the first day of school, John Lukancic, ever the educator, was in attendance. "I couldn't miss seeing the kids coming in to school on their first day and meeting the teachers." The official dedication of the John J. Lukancic Middle School took place on September 7, 2006. His knowledge and skill helped educate thousands of students in the Bolingbrook and Romeoville area.

He was educated at St. Joseph Grade School, Joliet Township High School, Joliet Junior College, Lewis University and Northern Illinois University. He served two years in the U.S. Army as a medic in Korea and in 1959 married Anna Mae Longhini at St. Joseph Church. Together they raised two children and centered their life around their family and church.

John is survived by his daughter, Kathleen Carbone of Crest Hill and his son, Tom (Tami) Lukancic of Seattle; grandchildren, John (Heather) Lukancic, Steven (Jaime) Lukancic and Colleen (Eric) Borchardt, Angelina (Rick) Cho, Gianna Carbone and Michael Carbone; six great grandchildren; siblings, Lillian (late Clarence) Murphy, Dr. Louis (Barbara) Lukancic and Angela (Walter) Zaida. Numerous nieces and nephews also survive.

Preceded in death by his beloved wife of 61 years, Anna Mae, in October 2020; son, John and daughter, Angela in infancy; his parents and parents-in-law; siblings, Helen (late Raymond) Valerugo, Emma (late Robert) Bechler, Dr. Mildred (Dr. Kent) Monroe, Maryann Lukancic, and James (late Patricia Collins) Lukancic; brother-in-law, Richard (Margaret) Longhini; niece, Nancy Bechler; and nephew, James Murphy.





Franklin Irving Sessoms 02-15-1938 / 02-03-2021

Franklin Irving Sessoms, 82, passed away peacefully on February 3, 2021, in Morris, Illinois. He was born on February 15, 1938, in Tampico, Tamaulipas, Mexico to Maria Martinez de Sessoms and Francisco J. Sessoms. Franklin and his family moved to Texas when he was 13 years old and he joined the Navy at age 17. He proudly served our country from 1955-1959 and often talked about his travels to beautiful places such as Japan, China and Hawaii. He enjoyed telling us stories of his time on the Navy ship and his first assignment in the boiler room. Franklin met his loving wife, Antonia, in Chicago, Illinois in 1959 and together they built a beautiful family. Franklin was a long-time resident of Romeoville, Illinois, moving his family into their new home in the early 1960's.

Franklin began his career working for Electro-Motive, a division of General Motors, in La Grange, Illinois in 1968. After 25 years of service as a proud union Pipe Fitter working on Locomotives, Franklin took an early retirement to enjoy life in the sunny waters of St. Augustine and Palm Coast, Florida.

Franklin, better known to his family as "Pops", enjoyed life and family to the fullest. He made sure his children had a yearly family vacation, road trip style, filled with fishing, camping, sightseeing, relaxation and fun. He continued this tradition with his grandchildren, topping it off with trips to Disneyworld as well. Franklin is survived by his wife of 62 years, Antonia, his children, Theresa Weber; Maria (Charles) Hicks; Franklin (Laura) Sessoms Jr.; George (Donna) Sessoms; Edward (Monica) Sessoms; Victor Sessoms and Angelica (Sedrick) Rush; 22 grandchildren; 24 great grandchildren; 1 sister Lillian (Enrique) Badillo and a host of nieces and nephews. Franklin is preceded in death and was received at the gates of Heaven by his parents and joins family and friends in his new resting place.



Carmen Rocha 04-09-1931 / 03-31-2021

Carmen Rocha, age 89 of Romeoville, IL., passed away peacefully Wednesday March 31, 2021.

Beloved wife of the late Ramon Rocha; loving mother of Mario (Maria) Rocha, Ramon (Tawnya) Rocha III and Manuel (Ofelia) Chavez; devoted grandmother of Zeke, Jon, Fonzie, Beth, Gabriel, Mark, Ariel and from Texas Manuel Jr., Alice, Veronica, Martin and Matthew and great-grandmother of many; fond sister of Jose (Elvira) Chavez and Luis (late Shirley) Chavez; many nieces and nephews.

Carmen and her family moved into Romeoville in the late 1950's, making them one of the first Hampton Park residents on Laurel Street. Carmen was always an ambassador to her beloved Romeville.

Carmen's husband Ramon was the first police officer in Romeoville. When he first started as a policeman, it was a volunteer position. Later on, he accepted a salary of .50 cents an hour, making him the first paid police officer in Romeville! He retired from the force as a Lieutenant.



www.romeohistory.org

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please use this form to become a member of the Romeoville Area Historical Society. We are in our new museum located at 14 Belmont Avenue, Romeoville, Illinois. It is named after the late James Sczepaniak, a long-time faculty member of Valley View School, Lockport West High School, and Romeoville High School. He was also a member and contributor to the Romeoville Area Historical Society.

The present cost of membership is \$20.00 for one year or \$35.00 for two years which includes free access to the museum and our published newsletters. **Please mail your check and membership form to Romeoville Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 7814, Romeoville, IL 60446. *Now accepting Venmo or Zelle payments*** - pay to: historicalromeoville@yahoo.com

Please print.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIPCODE: _____

PHONE: (_____) _____ E-Mail _____

DUES ENCLOSED: [] 1 year \$20 or [] 2 years \$35. DONATION (OPTIONAL)\$ _____

****TAX DEDUCTIBLE****

**** Since we are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, donations may be tax deductible. Please consult your tax advisor for more details.**

Sponsored by: _____

If you would like to add a brief reminiscence about your time while living in the Romeoville, Illinois, area please print legibly below or attach your typed statement. Your comments may be shared with others in future issues of *NOW 'n' THEN* or in future publications printed by the Romeoville Area Historical Society.

Romeoville Area Historical Society
14 Belmont Road
Romeoville, IL 60446



We are re-opened!!

Safety protocols will be in place...

- **Requirements for Visitors:**
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 - o Limited Touching – Use provided gloves if touching books/items
 - o Maximum of 5-6 guests
 - o 6' social distancing
 - o Wait outside if there are more than 5 or 6 guests in the museum
 - o Guest Book – sign using your own pen, or if using ours it must be sanitized immediately

Upcoming exhibits:

- o April – August – Early Settlers
- o September – October – School
- o November – January – Veterans, Christmas & Toys
- o February – March – Youth Groups

HOURS:

Every Saturday 1:00pm - 4:00pm

2nd & 4th Sunday 12:00pm - 3:00pm

Hope you are able to come out and visit us soon!!