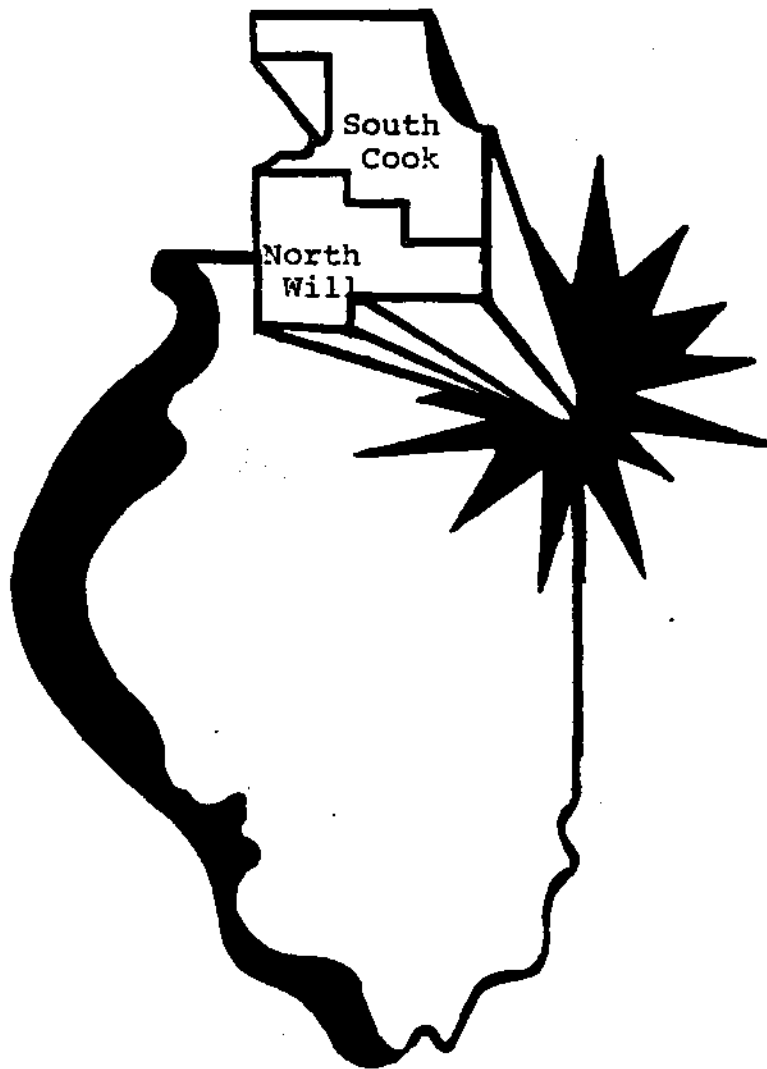


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Bremen Township

BREMEN TOWNSHIP FAMILIES

Cook County was created by an act of the Illinois legislature in 1831. When the township system was introduced in the constitution of 1848, the name Bremen was already in existence, being selected by the first German settlers in the area. Bremen, Germany, was their port of debarkation. The earliest record of Oak Forest is an 1893 Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway timetable, chartered at a distance of 21.71 miles from Chicago at the point where the train crosses Central Avenue. In early times this was a milk stop where farmers left their milk cans to be picked up by the trains. Much later this spot was called "Pigeon Hill." Because of Oak Forest's unusual boundary lines, the few people living in this area in the pre-1900 era might have called their home Cooper's Grove, then Bremen or New Bremen. Tinley Park was also called New Bremen until it became incorporated in 1892. As late as 1940's, some areas of Oak Forest still called themselves the Town of Bremen. The community of Goesselville, located at 147th and Oak Park Avenue, was a crossroads trading place and post office. The post office was a sub-station and mail was picked up twice a week from Bremen. The post office was established in 1884, and discontinued in 1903. Bachelor's Grove was a large wooded area, including forest preserve, north of 151st Street. It was occupied by a group of single men while perfecting their titles to tracts of land they purchased at \$1.25 an acre. Each man had a five-acre woodlot in the grove. Bachelor's Grove became a source of outdoor entertainment throughout the decades. Many visit the site of Bachelor's Grove Cemetery located at Midlothian Turnpike and 143rd which today has been hopelessly vandalized. The earliest readable tombstone is dated 1823, the latest 1965. Some findings there include a 1774 King George coin and an 1817 American Liberty coin. Midlothian was first called Rexford Crossing. This crossing was a train stop 18.8 miles from the Loop, where Pulaski Road (formerly Crawford Avenue) is today.

The first religious meetings in Bremen were held in 1843 by the Methodists. In 1849 twelve families organized, and Reverend Wolfgang Simon Stubnatzy became the first pastor of the St. John's Lutheran Church congregation. The following year, forty acres of land on 183rd Street, between Crawford and Cicero Avenue, were purchased and a building housing church, school, and parsonage was erected. It is located in Country Club Hills; this section was formerly called Cooper's Grove, and this was the first church in the settlement. The Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church congregation was also founded by Reverend Stubnatzy. Reverend Herman Wunderlick became the first pastor of this congregation. The services here were in German, but in 1960, after 101 years, the German language services ceased. This Church, at 159th and Oak Park Avenue, is in Tinley Park.

On the following pages are sketches of some of the families prominent in the history of Bremen. These sketches were extracted from "The History of Oak Forest" published in 1972, the year of Incorporation as a City.

THE FULTONS

John (Sr.) and Jane (JOHNSON) FULTON, both born in Ireland in 1813, married there, emigrated to the United States in 1839, and to Bremen Township in 1844, by way of covered wagon. They purchased 80 acres for \$200, all woods. John died in 1883 and his widow in 1897; they are buried in Bachelor's Grove Cemetery. The Fulton's were the parents of fourteen children. To the Fulton descendants were left over one thousand acres of choice land. James FULTON, son of John, Jr. built a home at 162nd and Central in 1880; the Forest Preserve purchased the land and burned the house down in 1965. One grandson, Leonard FULTON, was on the Arbor Park School Board from 1921 to 1938, and also served as Postmaster for several years. Two granddaughters taught school at 167th and Central.

THE ABBES

Jo Hanna and Christ ABBE left Bei Darmstadt, Germany, in 1850. With their two children, they sailed thirteen weeks in a sailboat to New York, took the train to Blue Island, and walked to "Oak Forest." Their first land purchase was four acres. Prior to that, Christ earned twenty-five cents daily doing farm work and Jo Hanna twelve cents picking beans. They had nine children. Their farm became a stopping place for many people who came from Germany and stayed with the Abbe family for weeks or months. The original Abbe farm was on 152-155th Streets west of Cicero. William Abbe, son of Christ, had a farm east of Cicero at 155th.

THE SCHMAEDEKES

Two young men, Diederick and Wilhelm SCHMAEDEKE, left Hanover, Germany, and settled in DuPage County in 1840. In 1850 they settled in Bremen Township on 120 acres. Their farm was located north of 159th Street, between Crawford and Cicero Avenues. Diederick married Catherina MAGNUS, also from Hanover. They had eight children. Ernst, one of their children, continued to reside on the homestead after his marriage to Anna SEBRAGE, whose family were also pioneers of Bremen. They were the parents of five children. Ernst was a Stehl School trustee and was elected Highway Commissioner in 1895. Their land was purchased by the Forest Preserve District in 1924.

MR. COOPER

St. Mihiel, a Forest Preserve area in Oak Forest, was once called Cooper's Grove. This was an important landmark in early Bremen Township history. It was referred to often in county records and was named for a Mr. Cooper who settled here in the early 1830's and was said to have been the first resident of the township. In 1848 the name Cooper's Grove post office was changed to New Bremen.

GEORGE C. GOESEL

The little community of Goesselville, non-existent today, was located at the corner of 147th and Oak Park Avenue in the late 1800's and early 1900's, and received its name from the George GOESEL family, first settlers in the area. Goesselville post office was established in 1884, and discontinued in 1903.

WILLIAM KOEHLER

The blacksmith shop at Goesselville existed as early as the 1880's and continued to function until about 1908. Mr. William Koehler was the village blacksmith.

BENJAMIN AND FRANK COOL

The Stone House at 148th and Cicero was a famous landmark in Bremen Township history; it was the first courthouse. The house was built by Benjamin COOL, who was born in New York and who came to Illinois in the 1840's. He settled on a small farm which is now part of the Midlothian Country Club. In the early 1850's he built the Stone House. The outside walls were constructed of two-foot thick limestone hauled from Rexford Crossing (now Midlothian). The Cool farm then ran from 147th to 159th and from Cicero to almost the edge of the Country Club. Mr. Cool was Township Supervisor, Collector, and Justice of the Peace. The Stone House was later owned by Frank COOL, brother of Benjamin.

DANIEL O. ROBINSON

The first school in the Bremen settlement was taught by Daniel O. Robinson in 1852 on what was then the GILSON farm, three miles north of Bremen. In 1863 the first school-house was built in the village of Bremen. It stood until 1880 when it was replaced by the Stone School, located at 147th near Central.

UNGER / FRIESS FAMILIES

These families were originally from Boonesville, Missouri. Albert Unger sold property for Kaiser & Company, and this resulted in his family moving from Chicago to Oak Forest in 1915. Herman FRIESS, whose wife was an UNGER, was a printer and worked in Chicago. He arrived here at the same time. A few years later, brother Jake arrived. Jake FRIESS was a carpenter by trade, and built many of the first homes in Oak Forest. He built the first addition to the Arbor Park School in the late 1920's and became its first custodian. His son Sylvester was the first WWI casualty, and his great-granddaughter became the first "I am an American" queen. These families were one of the first non-farming residents of Oak Forest.

THOMAS HILL

Thomas Hill located on a farm near Cooper's Grove in 1841. He is said to have planted the first fruit orchard in the vicinity.

THE STAVRONS

Constantine Stavron was often referred to as "Oak Forest's first and favorite milkman." He arrived in Oak Forest on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918 and settled on his brother Alexander's property, "the Old Homestead Farm" on 162nd and Long. The Stavrons original home was Corinth, Greece. In the early 1930's, Constantine operated the first gas station on 159th Street between Dixie Highway and Oak Park Avenue, located near the railroad tracks. Constantine married Anna FLENSKA; they were the parents of five children, and have many descendants in Oak Forest.

THE BOBBITS

Evert BOBBIT moved to Oak Forest in the early 1920's and settled on a five acre tract in the original section of town. Evert served on the Arbor Park School board, was active in the Lutheran church, and served as Oak Forest's first building commissioner. Mrs. Bobbit, Hilda, was a charter member of the Redeemer Lutheran Church. Evert built a restaurant together with a service station and a small trailer park; this corner on 159th and LeClaire became known as "Bobbit's corner." The Bobbits had two sons, Richard and Irving. Richard became the third mayor of Oak Forest, having served previously as village clerk and president; his service to the village totaled 22 years. Irving Bobbit served on Civil Defense and also building commissioner.

THE KOHLMANS

Fred Kohlman was born in 1883 in Stein, Germany. Leaving the family farm as a youth, he went to Frankfurt and there became a blacksmith. He came to this country at about the age of 21, and attended night classes to learn the language and to become a U.S. citizen. He found employment as a blacksmith around the Union Stockyards. In 1911 he married Augusta REINHARDT, and they had three children. They moved to Oak Forest from Chicago in 1920 and operated a country store. Suffering severe loss during the depression, Mr. Kohlman bought a farm in Will County, but early in 1934 moved back to "the corner" at 159th and Cicero where he operated a restaurant-tavern. Mr. Kohlman was active in Oak Forest's development. He served as village trustee and worked actively for the incorporation of the village, the forming of the volunteer fire department, helped organize the first boy scout troop, was instrumental in getting the interceptor sewer into Oak Forest and Tinley Park and in bringing electrical power into town. He also worked actively for the formation of High School District #228.

THE TSCHULINS

Emil Tscheulin was Justice of the Peace between 1933 and 1953, and his first marriage united Samuel PITROWSKI and Sylvia BILY. He arrived in Oak Forest in 1919 from Chicago, was married to Mary SHEEHAN, and had two children. His profession was mens custom tailoring (clothing designer) in Chicago. He was the first school board president of Arbor Park School in 1921, and was also Oak Forest's first village treasurer. Early residents recall Tscheulin's Hall, located on LeClaire near 158th), a popular spot in the 1920's and 1930's, the scene of many parties, dances, and weddings. In the early 1940's this hall was moved to Midlothian and became a church.

THE BARRS

William Barr was born May 9, 1897. He moved to Oak Forest in 1927, married Amelia MARCELLIS, and had two children. He was employed by the New York Central Railroad, and retired in 1962. Mr. Barr was a veteran of WWI and served on the Ration Board during WWII. He was a member of the Forest Ridge School Board, had vast experience with labor organizations, and an honorary member of Boys Town. William Barr was presented with a plaque in 1969 from the citizens of Oak Forest in recognition of his dedicated public service to the village. On the plaque is listed: Mayor 1947-1953; Trustee 1953-1961; Fire & Police 1961-1969; Police Commissioner 1967-1969; Volunteer Fire Department 27 years.

EDWARD STEHL

The Stehl School began about 1880 on land donated by Edward Stehl, who came from Germany and who had a large farm. The school was located on the south side of 167th near Crawford.

THE DUNKERS

Albert Dunker was born in the early 1900's on a 60-acre farm on 164th and Crawford. At one time he was employed by the Cook County Poor Farm as farm foreman. He owned Dunker's Service Station on Cicero, and also once worked for the Cook County Highway Department. He was on the first board of directors of the Volunteer Fire Department. His garage was the first fire station, and he was appointed Oak Forest's second fire chief. His other community interests included being on the committee for the incorporation of the village, Arbor Park school board member, democratic precinct committeeman, and village trustee between 1952 and 1965. He died while serving in this office. In tribute to his devotion and popularity; the Oak Forest Reservoir, completed in 1967, was dedicated to his memory.

ELLEN CARLSON & MARTHA CARLSON RAMSEY

Ellen and Martha were the most well-known mother and daughter in Oak Forest. Ellen was called "the Ma of Oak Forest," and Martha was "the postmaster of Oak Forest." Mrs. Carlson was born in 1877 in Sweden, and came to America when she was 17. She moved from Chicago to Oak Forest in 1919 with her husband Charles and two children, to farm. She became a business woman, selling bread, having a lunchroom on her front porch, and eventually becoming the owner of the first Midwest Grocery Store. She was a charter member of both the Redeemer Lutheran Church and the Forest Ridge Woman's Club. "Ma" Carlson resided in Oak Forest for almost 50 years; she lived to be 91. Martha Carlson RAMSEY was Oak Forest's Postmaster for 22 years, between 1945 and 1967. She served as president of both the Forest Ridge Women's Club and the Arbor Park School Board, March of Dimes' Chairman for almost 15 years, an officer in the Oak Forest's Taxpayer's Association, and chairman for many local affairs. She also wrote articles for local papers. Martha had two sons.

THE JONES

Oak Forest's second mayor, Clarence (Casey) JONES, served between 1953 and 1961. Casey Jones was born in Shandoah, Iowa, in 1910. He moved to Moline, Illinois as a child, went to see the World's Fair in Chicago in 1933, and never moved back. He worked for Sears, did defense work during the war, and spent 25 years in the construction and lumber business which he owned. Much later he started a travel business, and became one of Oak Forest's most traveled residents, having crossed the Atlantic almost 20 times and completely around the world four times by 1972. Mr. Jones owned a large safari camp in the British Honduras. He and his wife Amelia had three children. "Casey" was Oak Forest's most philanthropic mayor; he financed the funds for a new firehouse, being repaid later; but for a new village hall, he purchased the land and personally built the building himself at no cost to the taxpayers. He also personally replaced all the wooden bridges in the village with concrete. He organized the first "I Am An American Day", served as Director of the South Suburban Hospital, director of the Interstate Bank of Oak Forest, charter member of the Lions Club, and served on the Oak Forest Volunteer Fire Department. When he took office as mayor, the village was in debt; eight years later it had \$100,000 in the bank. He had the cooperation of all his board members and donated his salary to the Boy Scouts. Upon retirement, Casey and his wife moved to California.

