

Clarendon Hills Living Magazine
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Celebrating 100 Years!

By Marybeth Lewanski

As Clarendon Hills celebrates its centennial milestone, it stands at the intersection of history and progress, a testament to the enduring spirit of community that has shaped its identity over the past century. From the early debates on annexation to the bustling downtown festivities, Clarendon Hills has navigated through changes while retaining its historical charm and close-knit essence.

“The village is excited to celebrate 100 years with its residents,’ shares Village Manager Zach Creer. “In the true spirit of the ‘volunteer’ community, our volunteer Centennial Committee and community organization are planning a wide range of events that honor our community’s past and present and the Village is supporting their efforts. Every day, the Village interacts with the history of the town, whether it’s planning new road configurations, replacing the 100 year water main, or reviewing past zoning decisions. The actions we took in the past and the actions we take today shape the future of the community. I hope reaching the 100 year milestone helps people reflect on how their actions can ripple through time.”

In 1923, pivotal discussions arose regarding the town’s fate – whether to join Hinsdale or pursue separate incorporation. The ensuing debate highlighted Clarendon Hills’ commitment to self-governance, culminating in a decisive victory for autonomy in the 1924 election.

“One of the things that attracted us to Clarendon Hills as a home for our family was the open design of the town and the welcoming feel of the community residents,’ shares Suzanne Austin, Chairman of the Steering Committee. “We wanted a place where we could grow our family, be involved with our children and the future of our village. Growing a community such as Clarendon Hills has been through the dedication of our early leaders, having that vision that we could be a vibrant community on our own ... and look where we are now, 100 years later!”

The town’s early days were marked by aspiration for progress, with Henry C. Middaugh’s visionary mansion laying the foundation for anticipated growth in 1869. Despite setbacks during the Great Depression and World War II, Clarendon Hills experienced significant expansion in the 1950s, signaling the start of a transformative era. Since then the town’s population has continued to grow steadily.

“We continue to need leaders that keep us moving forward, with the creativity and dedication for us to thrive,” shares Austin. “Both my husband, Len, and I have held volunteer, appointed and elected office positions since moving here in 2001. Honestly, that is one of the greatest ways to give back. ‘It takes a village’ truly means that surrounding yourself with people who are engaged and have a sense of community benefits everyone. Be an example for future generations.”

Economic Shifts and Future Planning

From humble beginnings with a general store in 1892 to the strategic expansion by Edward Mochel in 1911, the business district has weathered economic fluctuations while preserving the historical significance. Despite challenges posed by the Depression, Clarendon Hills' downtown area thrived, adapting to changing times while honoring its past.

"If there is one thing our community does really well, it's adaptation," shares Mike McCurry of the Centennial Steering Committee. "Especially in the past few years, we've seen a great deal of growth in our community and downtown business district, even during a time of global crisis. As a local real estate broker, I've been fortunate to have a seat at the table when negotiating transactions that bring new business to town. I'm also very proud to facilitate many 'welcome home' moments for families who move here and help keep our businesses and community thriving."

Community Engagement and Centennial Celebrations

As the town celebrates its centennial, a dedicated group of volunteers is planning a year-long calendar of events where residents are invited to connect, learn, and celebrate. Suzanne Austin, Dena Arendt, Mike McCurry, and Angie Sartori make up the Centennial Steering Committee. They have worked diligently to plan a slate of celebrations throughout the year. The capstone event, the Centennial Concert, promises to be a fitting finale to a year of festivities.

Angie Sartori reflects on the town's enduring appeal, highlighting its small-town charm and tight-knit bonds among residents. "Clarendon Hills has always been a small, close-knit village where families watch out for each other and work together to keep it vibrant and safe," Sartori says. "It will continue this way as long as new and current residents invest some of their time to really get involved and help with Clarendon Hills' activities, events, and amenities!"

For Sandy Brugge, Clarendon Hills Historical Society Board Member, the centennial honors the volunteer spirit of Clarendon Hills. "For our Centennial Celebration, the Clarendon Hills Historical Society has strived to preserve the vibrant volunteer community spirit of the past 100 years with the Centennial Book, which will be available by Sept. 30th, and with a centennial documentary which will debut at Daisy Days," Shares Brugge. "Our goal for the next 100 years is for future generations to be inspired to continue this strong foundation of being a vibrant volunteer community that Clarendon Hills is built on!"

The Clarendon Hills Historical Society and its members serve as the bridge between the past and the present. "The Historical Society is the keeper of the Who, What, and How of the village of Clarendon Hills. It is our heartfelt birthday wish that the future of the village be as prosperous as it has been in the past 100 years," shares Janice Cummings, Vice President of the Clarendon Hills Historical Society.

As Clarendon Hills looks ahead to the next chapter of its journey, it does so with a sense of pride in its past and optimism for the future. The town's centennial celebrations serve as a poignant reminder of the values that have guided its growth – resilience, community spirit, and a

commitment to preserving its unique character. As residents come together to celebrate this milestone, they do so with gratitude for the past and excitement for what lies ahead in the the next century of Clarendon Hills' history.

"I was honored to be asked to serve on the Steering Committee and I have enjoyed getting to know the dedicated team of people that are planning Centennial year celebrations," reflects Dena Arendt. "We set out to create a year-long schedule of events that appealed to residents of all ages and interests. I think what we have planned does just that. In the end, I will consider it a success if people come out, meet their neighbors, make some new friends, have a great time and are inspired to become more involved in the community because of all the fun they had. To me, that's what small town living is all about."