

CTPA Quarterly Meeting

October 12, 2011

Meeting Minutes & Presentation Summary

The short **business meeting** was called to order at 5:40pm by Donna Primas.

New business was presented:

- ◆ There will be no increase in dues in 2012.
- ◆ Currently being discussed by the CTPA Board: If (in 2012) the people who are part of the Green Team MAY be given a discount for using email and being paperless when compared to other (non-Green Team) members.
- ◆ Donna mentioned the idea of a CTPA field trip at the beginning of November to Lisle and Naperville. Donna lives on Old Tavern Road named for the site where the Beaubien family retreated to after leaving Chicago), Lisle is also home of the Morton (family) Arboretum, Nearby is Naperville which has a small replica of Ft. Dearborn at the Naper settlement. Those present were asked to vote on possible dates for consideration. More information to come soon.
- ◆ **October 19** is the date for the Federal Reserve Money Museum visit. RSVP directly to the Federal Reserve, contact Donna if you did not receive the email invite.
- ◆ **November 8** we have a date at the Field Museum to see the Chocolate exhibit currently running. The same day is also the study session for the slides with November 14 being the slide test.
- ◆ The holiday luncheon will take place during the **first week of December** with the menu still to be determined and whether the event will be in the downstairs dining room or upstairs where we usually meet.
- ◆ Donna will be traveling from late November to late December and the *News You Can Use* will be on hold until her return. Items of interest will be collected until her mailbox is full.
- ◆ Thirty six of the thirty eight members of the National Federation have liability insurance, there is a new agent that will be handling the policy. Get in touch with Holly Jensen for further information.
- ◆ The current play at the Lookingglass Theatre, the Great Chicago Fire has been seen by and recommended by several members. There is information on the Lookingglass web site (www.lookingglasstheatre.org) with historically accurate maps and quotes from those who survived the fire.
- ◆ Second City will be extending an invitation to members when they open their new Chicago History Review. A few CTPA members were able to see the dress rehearsal at the Chicago History Museum and laughed a lot!
- ◆ Lawry's will be hosting CTPA meetings again in 2012. They generously donate food and beverage for the meetings, there is no room rental charge. We provide a gratuity from the CTPA treasury for the server who assists at our meetings. The board and Lawry's are looking for dates for our quarterly meetings for 2012, to be held in January, March, June and October.
- ◆ We have some very exciting possibilities for speakers at the 2012 programs. An author of a book about Chicago lighthouses, the gentleman who manages the city's underground tunnels that once delivered coal and mail. If you have any suggestions for topics or speakers, please contact Sharon Sylvester, Al Walavich or Donna Primas.
- ◆ CTPA dues invoices will be sent in **NOVEMBER**. Please ensure you carefully check the information on the invoice as it will show your current CTPA directory details—address, phone, profile/bio, etc. Make any updates on the form and return it by December deadline to take advantage of the discounted "Early Bird" dues.

- ◆ Gina Driskell is taking pledges for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Those who are interesting in pledging please contact Gina or visit the website at (<https://www.joinmda.org/lincolnpark2011/marychances>).
- ◆ Acknowledgment of Associate Members at the meeting: Drew Sexton from Accenting Chicago, Courtney Ashley and two associates from About Tours, Leah Axelrod from My Kind of Town Tours & Events and Daniel Ecklund from Host Chicago, Antoinette Gonzales of Aries Charter and (visitor) Nicholas Gyllin from True North Travel Solutions.

Program: Jewish Merchant Princes of State Street

Donna introduced **Herb Eiseman CTG** who presented the *Jewish Merchant Princes of State Street (that Great Street)*.

Herb's introduction to the topic was done over an image of State Street from 1930's.

It was urbanization that gave birth to the department store. Many of the merchants began as peddlers then on to dry goods and then upgraded to men and ladies ready to wear.

There were 8 to 10 stores within a seven block area along on State Street. There were a number of Jewish owners throughout the country including Filene, May, Abraham & Strauss, etc.

Marshall Field convinced Potter Palmer in 1865 that State Street (not Lake Street) become the primary commercial street of the central shopping area. The time line represents the men, and one woman, shops and stores from the time of the fire until 1980. From south at Van Buren to north at Washington there were Sears, two different Rothchilds, Goldblatts and Molly Alpiner who ran the Boston Store after her husband's death.

Julius Rosenwald was the chairman at Sears until his death in 1932. He was originally from Springfield, Illinois. Sears was established in Minnesota and Rosenwald bought half interest in 1895. Mr. Sears retired in 1910 and Rosenwald continued to own and operate as Sears. Mr. Rosenwald believed in treating people fairly and honestly, that was his creed. The mail order business continued to serve rural and middle America until after World War I when things started to decline. In 1925 Sear's first retail store on Homan and Arthington on the west side opened and in 1932 the flagship store opened on State Street. The building was designed by William Le Baron Jenney. The building is now home to Robert Morris College. Max Adler, who was a major contributor to the Planetarium was on the board at Sears.

Mr. Rosenwald was a great philanthropist being one of the founders of the Jewish Charities, the forerunner to The Jewish Federation of Metro Chicago. As well in 1930 Mr. Rosenwald gave six million to the University of Chicago, he assisted the African American universities in the south—Howard, Fisk and Dillard. Between 46th and 47th streets, from Michigan to Wabash there is a housing development that bears his name and is said to be the precursor to public housing. The Rosenwald building complex was completed in 1929. Mr. Rosenwald was instrumental in restoring and converting the Palace of Fine Arts from the 1893 World's Fair into the Museum of Science and Industry. Mr. Rosenwald contributed his success to luck and his co-workers, that is how he addressed his employees, as co workers.

As the lecture continued down State Street, next was **A.M. Rothchild** on the east side of State at Van Buren and Jackson. Abraham M. Rothchild opened the department store in 1895 which still to this day has the initial R on the building. Mr. Rothchild was one of the directors of the 1893 World's Fair, director of the St. Louis Stockyard and was important in other areas of business. He

retired from management of the store in 1902, took a six week vacation and committed suicide once back from vacation.

The **Goldblatt Brothers** from 1936 to 1982 occupied the same building that was home to A.M. Rothchild. It was said the Goldblatt brothers had lots of chutzpa for their time. Nathan and Maurice came to Chicago in 1904 and the family settled on Chicago and Ashland. In 1914 Nathan and Maurice opened their first store at 1617 W. Chicago that catered to the poor immigrant population. After being open for eight years they made five hundred thousand dollars.

They opened a second store during the crash that had little effect on them because of the customers they served. In 1934 they had sales of twenty eight million and in 1936 they arrived on State Street. In the 1930s, the store slogan was "America's fastest growing department store chain." They had 47 stores and \$250 million in profits in 1970's at their height. The sons lived at the Drake, some family members lived in the suburbs, most of the family members were well off. Everything was done on a family consensus and when their mother Hanna passed away in 1941 things began to change. Nathan passed away in 1944 of cancer and things changed further. The surviving brothers donated generously to the cancer research. In 1981 the store filed bankruptcy and was taken over by Jupiter Industries who attempted to restructure. In 1984 at the age of 92, Maurice passed away of a heart attack. The building is now home to DePaul University.

Maurice Rothchild, who is not related to A.M. Rothchild but comes from the same town in Germany came to Chicago in 1878 and began with a wagon and followed railway workers. In 1904 he opened on the 300 block of State Street and expanded to a 13 story store at the south west corner of Jackson. Maurice Rothchild died in 1941, and his sons ran the store until it closed in 1973.

Henry C Levy changed his name to **Lytton**, was born in New York City. Once he witnessed a P.T. Barnum pitch in advertising and it remained with him. He covered barns with red painted signs the same way Barnum pitched ads. "**The Hub**," the original name of Lytton's store was located on the northwest corner of Jackson and in 1912 they moved to the north east corner of Jackson and into an 18 story building. Lytton was known for attention getting promotions. Henry Lytton retired at age 70 and turned the business over to his son George. When George passed away, Henry returned and remained at the helm, going to the office each day to the age of 103. In 1946 on his 100th birthday, they renamed the store Lytton's. Lytton was very generous, in winter donating 500 tons of coal to poor families. Lytton's closed in 1985 and was the last Prince on State Street.

Morris B. Sachs was the last to arrive on State Street in 1957. He had stores in Englewood and on Milwaukee Avenue. He had extremely humble beginnings coming to Chicago at the age of 13 from Lithuania an orphan. No one would hire him in the factories or steel mills as he wasn't built for the work. He came from the west side to the Back of the Yard area on advice of his brother to do door to door sales. He went from a ten dollar line of credit to \$300 line of credit with his customers to whom he delivered. He started with a horse and wagon and then on to a truck. His first store at 66th and Halsted for low income families in the 1940's was expanded. In 1934 during the depression he opened a second store on Milwaukee and by that time he had 700 employees in the two stores. Morris B. Sachs had a radio show which was an amateur hour discovering the talents of Mel Torme and others including long time Sox organist Nancy Faust. In the 1950's the show switched over to TV. Mr. Sach's was elected city treasurer under the Mayor Richard J. Daley era. He took a dollar in salary and donated the rest to charity. Finally in 1957 the Morris B. Sach store arrived on State Street and six months later Mr. Sachs passed away. His son took over and remained on State Street until the 70's.

On State and Madison then known as the busiest corner, in what is now Sullivan Center, Leopold Schlessinger and David Mayer opened **Schelessinger & Mayer**. In 1872 they took advantage of the rebuilding of Chicago after the fire and founded the store. It actually began as a dry goods store on Canal. Louis Sullivan was hired as architect to do the building. Dankmar Adler's father was the Rabbi at KAM Temple, the same one Schlessinger belonged to and that's how the architects were found to do the now famous building. Schlessinger and Mayer was sold to H.G. Selfridge (who later started the famous department store in London) and from there it went out of business.

The **Mandel Brothers**, Solomon and Simon, opened their store on the northeast corner of State and Madison. Having immigrated from Germany with their mother after their father had passed away, the oldest brother formed a partnership with an uncle and opened their first store in 1855. Solomon died young and Simon went out on his own. After the other great fire in 1874 that destroyed both locations of their stores and it was then they (brothers Leon and Manuel) arrived on State Street. At the turn of the century it was a leading department store in Chicago. Leon who died in 1911 was a philanthropist who gave money to University of Chicago with the naming of Mandel Hall on 57th and University in his honor. Also Leon gave generous donations to Michael Reese Hospital resulting in two buildings (which have since closed).

The Boston Store once on the northwest corner of Madison was founded by D. Charles Netcher. In 1869 Netcher came from New York and, once in Chicago, partnered with Partridge Dry Goods. He named the store so people could associate it with a city of merchandising. Mr. Netcher slept on the counters at the Boston store so he could be there when the store opened. He passed away in 1904, his wife Molly Alpiner Netcher inherited the Boston store and in 1905 took it over. Molly was born in Chicago and began as a buyer of knit under wear at the Boston store. Sales soared under Molly's management. In 1922 the store did thirty two and half million in sales. It was still a cash only business while Field's and the other stores were extending credit. The Boston store had slipped to 7th in ranking by the late 1930's. In 1946 Molly sold the store and by 1948 the Boston Store closed. Molly went on to remarry Saul Neuberger, changed the name to Newberry and they lived at Edgewater. Saul passed away in 1950 and Molly passed away in 1954. Since 2001 Sears occupies the space that was once the Boston store.

Today there aren't any department stores that are family owned, most are owned by out of town conglomerates. After World War II there was the flight to suburbia and then the malls came, demographics changed and the Magnificent Mile was introduced. Opportunities were not as restricted for Jews and they were able to pursue other careers after the turn of the century. That was a golden era for State Street.

There were questions, as to where to get more information on Julius Rosenwald. Peter M. Ascoli is the author of "Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South" (Indiana University Press; \$35). The Spertus Museum of Judaica also has extensive information on Rosenwald.

There was thanks to Herb for an informative presentation and the meetings as adjourned.

Minutes taken and respectfully submitted by,

Gina V Driskell
CTPA Co-Secretary