

Evanston Historical Society Timeline

1897

- April - Orrington Lunt died. Lunt was a founder of Northwestern University.
- May - In a letter to the editor of the *Evanston Index*, Evanston resident, Frank Grover, started the discussion about the need for a historical society. He shared his concern that the city's history was on the verge of being lost. He told of rescuing an 1850s record book that documented the earliest years of Ridgeville Township (the original name of Evanston township) from a "heap of rubbish."
- July - John Evans died. Evans was a founder of Northwestern University and Evanston was named for him.

1898

- February - Frances Willard died suddenly. Though most well known for her work running the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Willard also served as one of Evanston's first historians. Willard's history, *A Classic Town: The Story of Evanston*, was published in 1892.
- John Foster and Ozro Crain also died in 1898. They both had been residents of the township long before Northwestern and Evanston existed. The death of these "old settlers" and the loss of their recollections of early Evanston were a concern of EHS founders.
- On November 12, 1898 a group of Evanston residents met to form the Evanston Historical Society (EHS).
- On November 29th a community meeting was held at the Evanston Public Library and elected the organization's first directors: Harvey Hurd (president), John W. Thompson, J. Seymour Currey (secretary), Walter Lee Brown (treasurer), William A. Phillips (vice president), Frank R. Grover, and Emma Winner Rogers. They set membership dues at \$1 annually, or \$25 for life members.

1900

- May - The new organization held its first history talk about the route of Green Bay Road.
- EHS leaders also began to point out the need for safe storage for its growing artifact and record collection - and to promote the idea of a new library building that would provide this. Temporarily, the library space at City Hall was home to EHS.
- October - EHS held a talk about *Early Drainage* in Evanston

1901

- January 24 - the organization held its first annual meeting at City Hall, and shared news of its first year. The EHS collection had grown steadily, and its history talks had proven popular.
- January - EHS held a talk about *Public Schools and the High School*
- June - EHS held a talk about *Early Homes and Taverns*
- November - EHS held a talk called *Our Indian Predecessors: The First Evanstonians* by EHS Director Frank Grover, which was later published as a booklet.

1902

- The organization printed and sold a calendar with images of old sites and log cabins from the area.
- February - EHS held a talk about early doctors in the community
- November - EHS held a talk about the Blackhawk War

1906

- Founding president Harvey Hurd died and Secretary J. Seymour Currey became EHS President. As Secretary, Curry had also acted as curator of the EHS collection.

1908

- The new public library opened and EHS moved into 2nd floor rooms. Rent was \$1 per month. Lecture space in Library Hall was used for the history talks.
- EHS celebrated its 10th anniversary in November.

1912

- In 1912, the Illinois State Historical Society met in Evanston for its annual meeting. A reception was held at the home of Charles Gates Dawes, an early supporter of EHS. Publications and lectures continued, while the organization continued to add to its collection.

1917

- Frank Grover was elected president.

1918

- EHS celebrated its 20th anniversary and issued a call for the organization to have its own building. The organization was already outgrowing its rooms at the library.
- Stereopticon talks, or "illustrated lectures," were very popular in these years.

1920

- William Levere was elected president after the death of Frank Grover.

1921

- EHS annual dues were increased to \$2.

1928

- On EHS' 30th anniversary, the community celebrated with a banquet at the North Shore Hotel where Vice President Dawes spoke in favor of a new "community center" as EHS' permanent home.
- J. Seymour Currey died in 1928.

1930

- The first “custodian” was appointed - Mrs. Amy Anderson Macke. She was paid \$50 per month to serve as custodian or curator of the collection. Seven women would serve in this capacity at EHS through the 1950s.

1942

- The lighthouse was given to the City as a historic landmark.
- Charles Gates Dawes announced the gift of his house to Northwestern University, for use by EHS as a historical museum. He and his wife Caro retained the right to live in the house until their deaths.

1952

- Charles Gates Dawes died.

1954

- EHS moved from the public library to rooms on Railroad Avenue.

1957

- Caro Dawes died.

1960

- EHS moved to the Dawes House.
- The Dawes House opened as the new home of EHS in October.

1976

- The Charles Gates Dawes House is made a National Historic Landmark.

2007

- The name was changed to Evanston History Center.

2009

- Northwestern University deeds the Dawes House to the Evanston History Center.