

History of the land and Church Building

The property at 5130 appeared to be part of an 80-acre estate in 1835, and sold to two men, a Stephen Campbell, and Daniel Duck. (Which to this day the owners swear they still see the two men fighting over the property)

By 1876 Stephen and Daniel had died and the 80-acre property somehow or another was under the ownership of John H.R. Duck. On April 26, 1876, a court order from a fierce battling divorce settlement, a quit claim appeared to Francis Duck. The amazing part about this settlement that women were not regarded well if they were divorced and rarely did, they own property.

It is told that Francis Duck could handle any man; she was as fierce and as mean as any a bulldog. She seems to walk the streets and still patrol her eighty acres. Occasionally you will hear stories of her kicking things around on here little journeys in the evening. Although no one has ever seen her, well except in pictures that is, she makes her presents known make no mistake about that.

By 1914 the eighty acres was in probate and long since had been divided up into lots. Builders had already begun to develop the properties. This did not make the Duck family happy, and actually caused a lot of fighting, it is reported that in the quite of the night, if you listen carefully, you can hear the family arguing over the fate of the eighty acres.

On July 24, 1915, the pleasure boat "The Eastland" was hired by the local company Western Electric for their annual outing inviting all employees and their families.

Within minutes the Eastland capsized leaving 844 people dead. 70% of the deceased were under 25 years of age. The people of course were all local within the village limits of Cicero and Berwyn and all were employed at Western Electric. The pains and crying of total families wiped out. The local funeral homes made lots of money on this tragedy.

As a result of this horrific event and the money from all the funerals, The Hrejsa Mortuary that was across the street at the time from the questionable property that landed in probate. Four lots of property were purchased by a Mrs. Libuse Hrejsa in 1915 and a sizable Mortuary for that time was built. Mrs. Hrejsa was the first licensed female mortician in the state of Illinois.

Mr. and Mrs. Hrejsa kept this funeral home going from 1915 to 1975. Now if anyone knows their history of Cicero, they know it is an old Mob town. Actually, Cicero is still influenced by the Italians, now I am not pointing any fingers here I am just saying...

The funerals of well-known mobsters have come and gone. You see around the rooms of the building, in a Smokey room smoking their cigarettes and gambling at the tables. You can hear them talking about Johnny and "The Boss" fighting amongst one another. The talk of the killings and the frightful battles of gunning one another down can be played out right before your eyes. The room used for dressing and embalming still has the stench of the old fluids used left in the walls.

On a more peaceful and quiet night you can walk into that old embalming room and see some of the clothing hanging up that the mortician had to dress the deceased in. Oh, those funerals were first class all the way; one out doing the other.

In 1975 a spiritualist minister bought the building and converted the Mortuary into a Church. (Interesting enough, the Hrejsa's had stain glass put into the chapel of their Mortuary knowing that one day it would be a church. Those windows are still in the chapel)

Well now...Spiritualists believe in the spirit and so it was a perfect match we are told. To this day the spirit roams around, make their presents known, and interact with many who flow through the doors of this church. After all, why would you even come to a Spiritualist Church if you did not believe in the Spirit?