

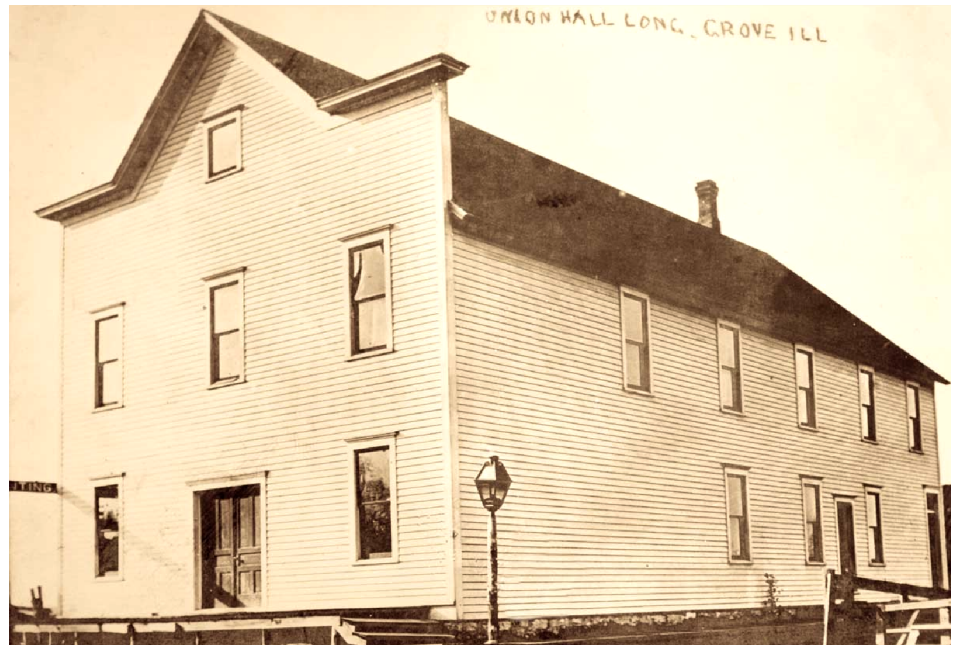
Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING
MAGAZINE
APRIL 2014

Drama in Long Grove

Before there were stages, there was the second floor of the wagon shop. What followed was a Town Hall, a turkey hatchery, a wooden-duck factory, and one rather spectacular fire.

By **Aaron Underwood** · Long Grove Historical Society



Union Hall, Long Grove. Built in 1900 by a venture of local entrepreneurs at the downtown crossroads — a 75 × 34 ft, two-story building with a lobby, bar, and coat check on the lower level, and dances, plays, and the occasional community meeting upstairs.

In the late 1800's, when the local population fancied a bit of dancing or theater, the only space suitable was the second floor of the wagon shop. The space was also used for the occasional community meeting. As the population increased, it grew too small.

In 1900, a few local entrepreneurs created a venture to build a new "town hall" near the downtown crossroads. Shares were sold at **\$10 each** to raise the construction cost of **\$2,500** — in today's dollars, roughly \$300 per share for a total of about \$75,000.



There were two floors, each 75 feet by 34 feet. The lower level functioned as lobby, bar, and coat check, while dances, plays, and the occasional community meeting were held upstairs. The plays were typically light comedies — titles like *"Fun in a Chinese Laundry"* and *"Everybody's Getting Married."*

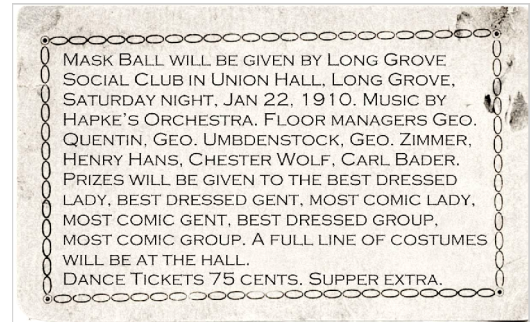
Ticket revenue was used to offset expenses, with any profits paid back to the shareholders as dividends. In a particularly good year, the annual dividend hit \$32 — more than triple the original share price. The building was christened *Union Hall*, and continued to function into the 1940's.

From dancehall to ducks.

At that point, it was sold and used as a turkey hatchery. Continuing its fowl-themed repurposing, the building was then acquired by a manufacturer and turned into a production facility that made decorative wooden ducks.

In December of 1951, the building met its demise in a spectacular fire — fueled by those (crispy) wooden ducks and associated chemicals. The building was a total loss, despite the fire department being located right next door at the time. Ironically, the volunteer firemen were out of town that night — attending a dance in another town.

If you want to find the location of the old Town Hall today, it's now a gravel parking lot, across the street from Weichert Realty.



ANNOUNCEMENT · 1910

Mask Ball at Union Hall — music by Hapke's Orchestra; floor managers Geo. Quentin, Geo. Umbdenstock, Geo. Zimmer, Henry Hans, Chester Wolf, Carl Bader. *Dance tickets 75 cents. Supper extra.*



SENTIMENTAL • 1962 The **Kildeer Players** on the Kildeer Countryside School stage — one of dozens of community plays organized by Mibs Hill in the 1950's and 1960's.

Filling the void: the Kildeer Players.

In 1948, to fill the "where can we stage a play" void in the community, a local family — the Ferrys — donated money so that a gym and stage could be constructed at **Kildeer Countryside School**.

A member of the Ferry family, **Mibs Hill**, who had studied drama at Northwestern, organized dozens of community plays in the 1950's and 1960's. The local acting troupe, known as the *Kildeer Players*, would change personnel from year to year, depending on how successful Mibs was in arm-twisting local residents to display their acting talent (or lack thereof).



READ ON / THE ARCHIVE

Stories, photos, and Society events at LONGGROVEHISTORY.ORG