

Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING
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Red Oaks *Lives*

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society

Red Oaks is a name long associated with downtown Long Grove. It is quite literally like a Phoenix in its ability to continue on. Born in 1955 as the furniture store of Bob McNitt, it was located in the former Bollenbach family home on the crossroads. If you're trying to picture in your mind which building that is, don't bother, because it doesn't exist any longer – it burned in a ferocious fire in December, 1962. The furniture that could be saved was moved into the basement

of the Village Tavern, which temporarily became Red Oaks for the next year or so, while Bob looked for a new home. And I do mean “home”, as he acquired the former home of the Herschberger family when they moved out in 1963. That's the property you probably know as Red Oaks today – a former residence expanded and molded into a multi-building furniture store that went out of business a few years ago. The property was recently acquired by Lake Zurich native, and former Dancing With The Stars pro Jesse Desoto as the new home for his Fred Astaire Dance Studio. You may have noticed some construction occurring there – one of the outbuildings was razed to make way for a new grand ballroom which promises to be the scene of many a fun time in the years to come. Since the complex of buildings will also feature another business or two and perhaps a restaurant, Jesse decided to keep the Red Oaks name as the moniker for the cluster of businesses and shops.



JESSE DESOTO

Red Oaks's new owner, beside one of the pine trees that came over from Alsace.



Back in 1962 when the Herschberger residence sold, newspapers report that local folk worried about what would happen to those pine trees in front of the property. The papers didn't elaborate on why they worried. Some oral history a few years later offered a clue - "The tall pine trees standing in front of Red Oaks were brought from Alsace Germany and the trees were planted the day that house went up. Everyone came from miles around, bringing their own yellow pine lumber and their own square nails, so nothing matches." New owner Jesse is pictured on the previous page next to one of those old Pine trees.

1860 is a good guess as to its construction date, and the original occupant is assumed to be the Quentin family. More oral history says the townsfolks pitched in to build the home in an effort to attract or keep the Quentins in Long Grove as they were merchants and sorely needed at the time. Most of the Quentins eventually moved out of town to the area we now know as Quentin Corners and Quentin Road. One son stayed behind, George, and ran the Long Grove Creamery, the local baseball team, and eventually served as the Chairman of the Lake County Board.

Are there ghosts associated with Red Oaks?

Of course there are, and you can find out more by joining the Historical Society's Fourth Annual Long Grove Ghost Walk the evening of October 28th. See our website, LongGroveHistory.org for ticket info.