

Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING
MAGAZINE
SEPTEMBER 2014

A CONVERSATION WITH

SUBJECT **Freddie French**

MOVE-IN Dec. 7, 1941

FROM Evanston, IL

THEN *The country*

NOW Lake Forest

A QUEST • LONG GROVE'S LONGEST-TERM RESIDENT

The Commuters

An afternoon with Freddie French — who moved into her Long Grove house on December 7, 1941, watched her husband ship out to a war he'd return from in 1944, and stayed seventy-some years.

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



LONG GROVE · 2014 **Freddie French** in her Long Grove garden — photographed shortly before she downsized and relocated to Lake Forest. The home where we chatted has since been demolished; the lot sits vacant, awaiting one of those new settlers to make it their own.

A few years ago, I went on a quest to find Long Grove's longest-term resident — the person who had been in their Long Grove house the longest. That's how I found Freddie French, and spent an afternoon with her in her home, chatting about her early days in Long Grove.



A date everyone remembers — for two reasons.

Ask most senior citizens what happened on December 7, 1941, and they'll likely tell you about the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. Ask Freddie French, though, and you'll get an additional story.

“ December 7, 1941 was the day my husband Fred and I moved into our new house in Long Grove. We had been living in Evanston, and wanted to build a house in the country. The previous winter, when we saw the openness and lack of development in Long Grove — we knew we had found the land we were looking for.

FREDDIE FRENCH

Long Grove can be considered a bedroom community — the majority of residents who sleep here each night work outside of Long Grove. It wasn't always that way. The transition started in the late 1930's, when farms were subdivided into mini-estates and purchased by young couples such as Fred and Freddie looking for more open space than they could find on the North Shore. This wave of settlement is coming to a close, witnessed by the dwindling number of new home sites available. Over the last fifteen years, most of those early commuter settlers have passed away or downsized out of Long Grove. While it seems we're at a transition point to a new type of settlement, it's just too soon to characterize what.

A telegram, briefly.

Like many men of that day, Freddie's husband Fred joined the war effort and had to leave his pregnant wife behind when he was assigned overseas. Before he left, they had agreed to name the child Lynn — which would work either for a boy or a girl. In November of 1942, when their son Lynn was born, Freddie didn't know where Fred was, and sent several cablegrams to the military trying to get him the details. When days went by without a reply, she sent one telegram — and guessed she was getting a bit brief on the details after sending so many.

WESTERN UNION CABLEGRAM

SENT • NOVEMBER 1942

LYNN BORN NOVEMBER 21 •

Years later, when she met some of Fred's friends from the service, she learned that was the entire telegram he eventually received. Everyone thought it was quite funny when he passed out cigars without knowing if he had a son or daughter. It wouldn't be until December of 1944 that Fred would make it back home and see his then three-year-old son.

Badminton on Wednesdays, voting next to Adlai.

“ One of the things I used to do socially with other residents was badminton. The high school at that time was in Lake Zurich, and we'd meet there on Wednesday evenings to play. It was a nice informal way to get to know neighbors without having to be so proper. You didn't play against Mrs. Reed — it was Florence.

FREDDIE FRENCH

Speaking of high schools, Freddie remembers the namesake of our current high school — **Adlai E. Stevenson**. *"We used to vote at the Washburn Church, which was where Adlai voted also, and we saw him when we went to vote."*

The Kildeer Players & the Dairy Store.

The *Kildeer Players* were a local amateur theatrical group that put on performances at Kildeer School in downtown Long Grove. *"I attended the first show and had so much fun I had to join in,"* Freddie remembers. *"I was in the chorus for The Roaring Twenties production. Mibs Hill directed us, and Harold Turner and Charlie Parson provided the music."*

Mibs Hill's husband, **Bob Hill**, ran Ferry Hill Farms — a local dairy that Freddie and her friends frequented. *"We used to call it the Dairy Store,"* she says. *"It was in the area around Route 83 and Gilmer Road. We'd go there and buy milk, and they had a back room they would let us use to make our own cottage cheese. Another part of the Farms was a little restaurant at the southeast corner of 22 and 83 — where Long View Meadows is now. They had wonderful soup, and we used to go there for lunch. Years later, after the restaurant had closed, there was a player-piano store there."*

POSTSCRIPT / A VACANT LOT



In the years since our chat, Freddie has herself decided to downsize and has relocated to Lake Forest. Her home where we chatted has been demolished, and the lot sits vacant — awaiting one of those new settlers to make it their own.