

Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING
MAGAZINE
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Evil Surprises

Two welcome — if uninvited — experts joined our Third Annual Ghost Walk planning session this fall. While they sized us up, I poked around the parlor and found something I was very much not expecting.

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



GHOST WALK PLANNING • 2015 Board members **Barbara English** and the author at our first planning meeting, joined by two welcome — if uninvited — experts in the field of haunting. Volunteers wanted: aaron@aunder.com.

The picture above was taken in the restored living room of the 1840's farmhouse we use for our archives and meetings. I rarely spend any time in that room, so I decided to poke around a bit. Most of the antique furnishings were donated by long-time Long Grove families when they departed the area — either above-ground or below-ground departures.

Spying a small bureau desk in the corner, I wondered if there were any curios tucked into its niches. Ah-ha — a stack of old postcards. *This could be interesting.*



A wave of emotion, then a second look.

I pulled a card out, and my mouth fell open. There was a large swastika on the front of it. I put the postcard right back. It's strange how a symbol can bring on such a wave of emotion — like some sort of warped Rorschach test, the evil of the 1930's and 1940's came flooding in.

The more I thought about it, though, the more something didn't add up. Long Grove's early population was mostly German immigrants, and while I've often wondered about pro-German political sentiment in the village's past, I have never once found any evidence of it. Usually it was just the opposite — those of German ancestry going out of their way to demonstrate their American patriotism.

And this postcard was *pink, with flowers*. Not the dark and foreboding imagery I associated with the symbol. I pulled it back out and tried to date it. Circa 1915 — well before the Nazi party association.

A symbol that took a dark turn.

Clearly the symbol must have meant something completely different in the early 1900's. So off I went to the internet to sort this out. Turns out it is a very ancient symbol, with lots of disparate meanings — archeological work in ancient Troy in the late 1800's established it as a lost religious symbol, and people began using it in a *religious* context to mean good luck and success. That is how it found its way onto a Long Grove postcard.



The postcard, redrawn from memory. The symbol I won't print here was where the question-mark sits.

HOW THE MEANING SHIFTED

- C. 1900** **GOOD LUCK · RELIGIOUS**
A revived ancient symbol after the Troy excavations. Printed on greeting cards, charm bracelets, and architectural ornament.

- C. 1915** **OUR LONG GROVE POSTCARD**
"Your Heart's Desires be with You." Pink, floral, two-cent stamp. Filed away in a bureau drawer and forgotten.

- C. 1920's** **THE DARK TURN**
The symbol's popularity and roots in Greek history led it to be adopted by those promoting the supposed superiority of the Aryan race. After that, it was lost as anything else.



THIRD ANNUAL GHOST WALK / FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

Volunteers wanted for guiding or skits — drop a note to AARON@AUNDER.COM. Reservation details on the website & Facebook page.