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Village of Harlem, Illinois

Oak Ridge → Noyesville → Harlem → Forest Park/ Oak Park

After Illinois entered the Union, most of the land west of Chicago was set aside for veterans of the war of 1812. The area was called Oak Ridge, Illinois (named because of the many native oaks), the village changed names and boundaries to Noyesville, then to Harlem, and finally to Oak Park.

By 1835, the area was known as Noyesville. Ashbel Steele, coroner and later sheriff of Cook County, arrived in 1835 becoming the first permanent resident of Noyesville. Other settlers soon followed Steele to Noyesville, attracted by its proximity to Chicago.

In 1839 a French-Indian trader, Leon Bourassa, received a land grant from President Martin Van Buren of 160 acres along the Des Plaines River north of what is now Roosevelt Road.

By this time, the Indians had been banished to west of the Mississippi River, but one Indian maiden remained to tend the graves of her ancestors. According to legend, she married Leon and they settled here on land which is now part of Forest Home Cemetery. The deed for the government land Bourassa purchased was personally signed by President Martin Van Buren.

Two prominent families arrived in the 1850s and became the first subdividers of the area. The Henry Quick family arrived in Noyesville from Harlem, New York. Quick soon became a prominent landholder and lent his original hometown's name to the eastern portion of Noyesville as well as to Harlem Avenue. The David Thatcher family settled to the west of Harlem Avenue and named their portion of the community Thatcher.

The railroad came in 1856 bringing with it a workforce who settled here thus claiming the date of the community's first settlement as 1856.

A German immigrant, Ferdinand Haase, purchased a 40-acre tract of land in 1851 which he eventually enlarged to 240 acres and turned into a popular park for residents and city dwellers, mostly from Bourassa. Haase built a home styled after the manors of



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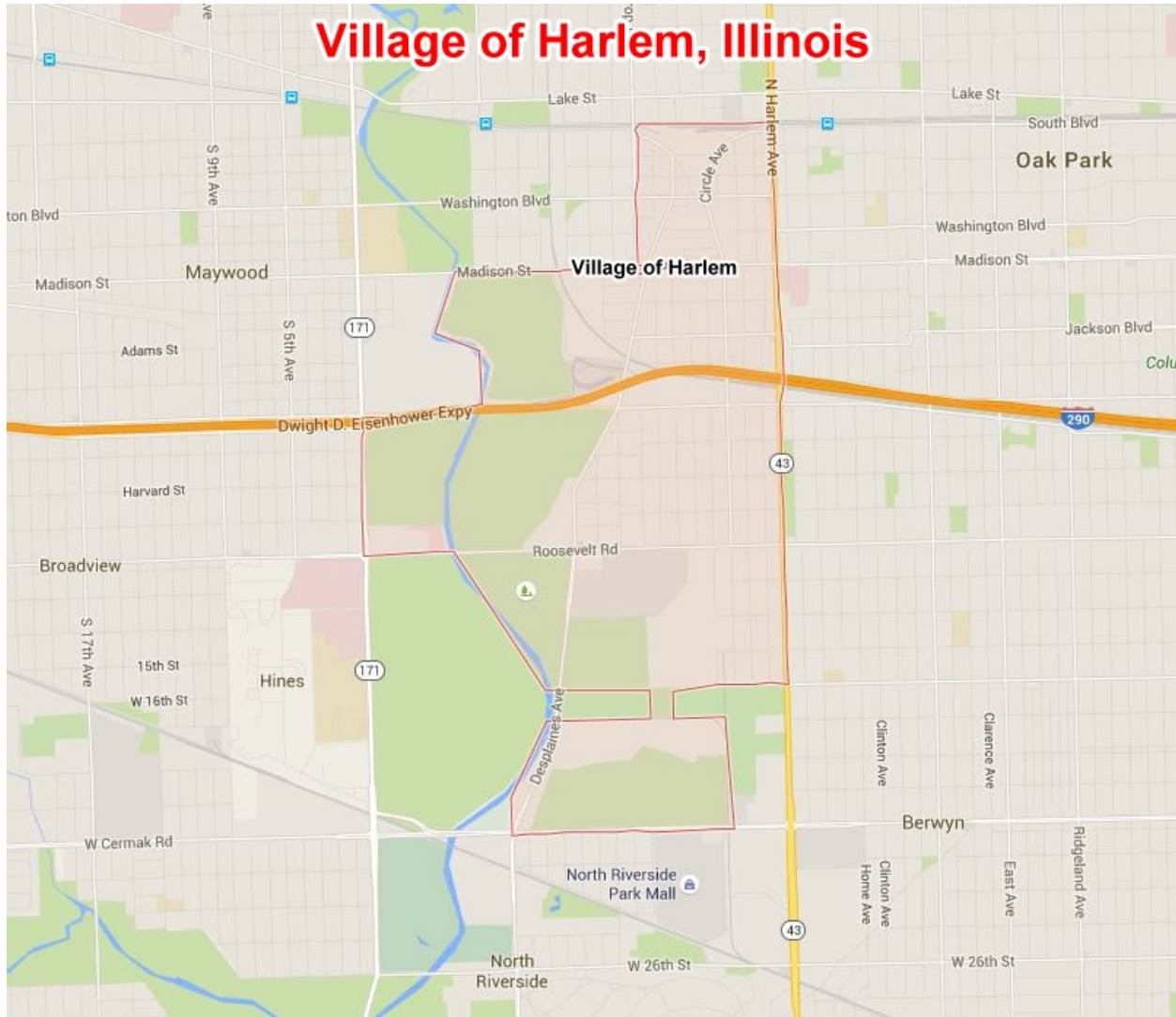
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New Orleans that he had seen. When he buried three members of his family near the homestead, they became the first white settlers to be interred here.



When the Chicago and Galena Union Railroad, (now the Northwestern) established a division where Des Plaines Avenue now approaches the track in 1856, it marked the beginning of public transportation in the area. Soon after the railroad arrived, a nearby landowner, John Henry Quick, purchased a farm on the site of what is now River Forest and built a two-story boarding house. At the same time, Mr. Israel Heller erected a store



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clever manner - namely Forest Park. At a village hall meeting August 12, 1907, a resolution was passed changing the name of the Village of Harlem to the Village of Forest Park.

In 1907 the [Forest Park Amusement Park](#) opened. It was one of the most spectacular of its day featuring a roller coaster superstructure. Fifteen years later it succumbed to a devastating fire from which it never recovered.