

MAYSLAKE RETREAT HOUSE GETS A FACELIFT Summer 2022

This summer will mark the beginning of major exterior renovations at historic Mayslake Hall in Oak Brook, IL, a former retreat house run by the Franciscans of Sacred Heart Province.

As a result of this extensive project, the hall will close on May 31 and not reopen until 2023.

The certified master plan project will repair structural deficiencies and other problems with the roof, masonry, wood, stucco, windows, doors, and foundation. It will also improve drainage and accessibility.

The work is needed to protect the interior of the mansion, which has undergone its own renovations over the past few years. The Tudor Revival-style building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the last remaining examples of the country estates that dotted Dupage County between 1880 and 1924.

A \$750,000 capital grant from the Public Museum Capital Grants Program, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois State Museum will help pay for the renovations.

Although the 100-year-old mansion will temporarily close starting May 31, the surrounding forest preserve will remain open. First Folio Theatre will have a 2022-2023 season at the estate but one built around the construction schedule. The surrounding forest-preserve will remain open.

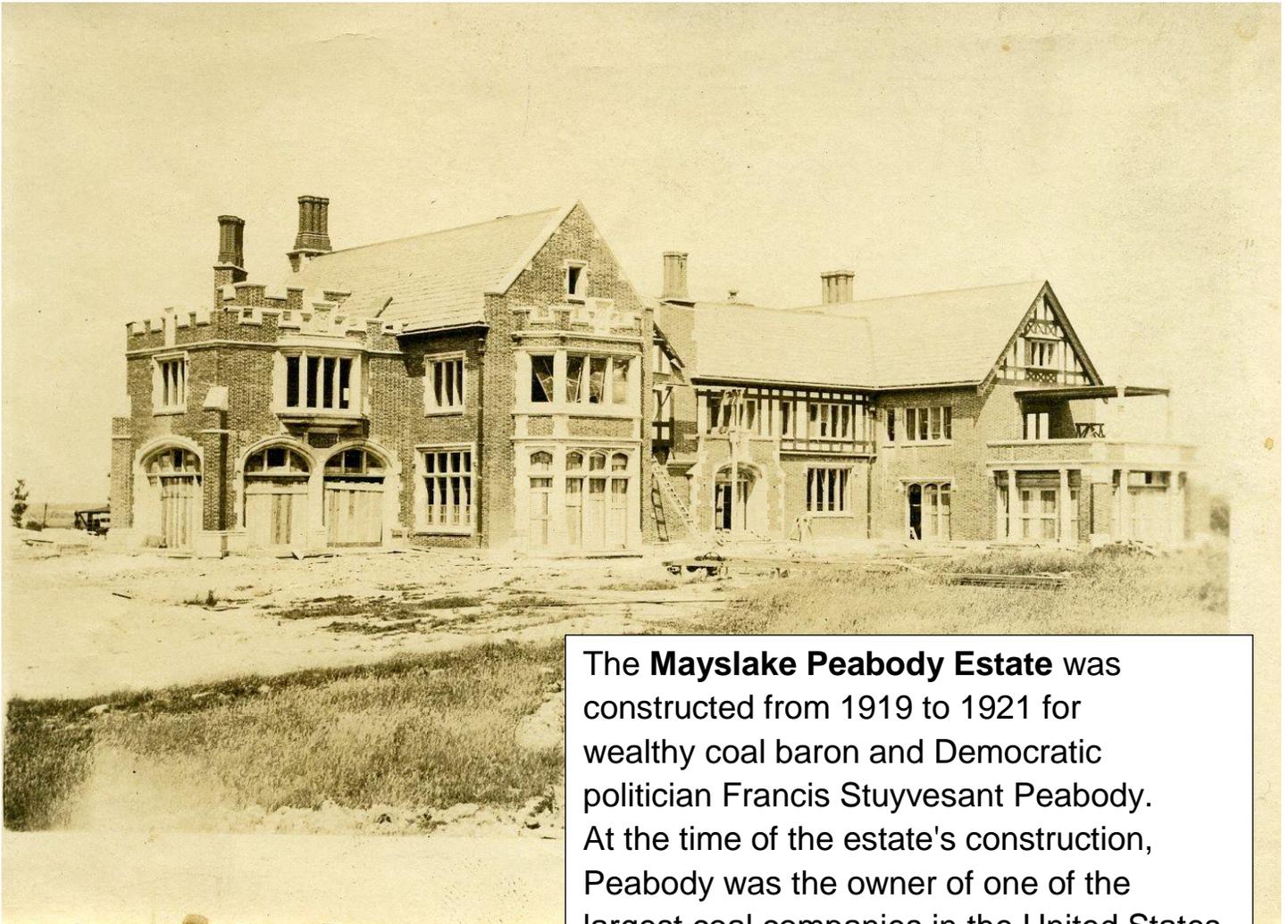
The Forest Preserve District is already planning new exhibits and programs for Mayslake Hall's reopening in 2023, including an exhibit of Joel Sheesley's paintings of the West Branch DuPage River.



Francis Stuyvesant Peabody

Francis S. Peabody founded a small Chicago coal company in 1883 and called his company Peabody Coal Company. With a hundred dollars, a partner, two mules and a delivery wagon, he and his partner started the company. In less than two years, he bought out his partner. From day one, Peabody Coal Company flourished and in 1895, Peabody opened its first coal mine in the Illinois Basin. With the rich coal reserves in the Illinois Basin, and the determination of Francis S. Peabody, the Peabody Coal Company prospered. From his first mine in Williamson Country, IL, the company was able to acquire thousands of acres of the Illinois Basin's vast reserves.

As the twentieth century dawned, just about anything that moved or produced heat or power was derived from the primary source of coal. Large ships on the seas and small boats on the inland waterways were powered by coal. The railroad companies were expanding and using more coal. The demand for electricity was doubling about every ten years and most all of the generation was provided by coal. Peabody Coal Company was ready and supplied an enormous amount of coal. For the next 60 years, and only mining coal east of the Mississippi River, and only by underground mining Peabody Coal Company grew by leaps and bounds. Francis S. Peabody was succeeded by his son, Stuyvesant "Jack" Peabody, and then his grandson, Stuyvesant Peabody, Jr.



The **Mayslake Peabody Estate** was constructed from 1919 to 1921 for wealthy coal baron and Democratic politician Francis Stuyvesant Peabody. At the time of the estate's construction, Peabody was the owner of one of the largest coal companies in the United States, the Peabody Coal Company.

Peabody first began purchasing land in the eastern portion of DuPage County in 1910. He used the land to create Peabody Farms, later renamed Mayslake Farms.

By 1919, Peabody had approximately 848 acres of land for use. Construction of Mayslake Hall, his Tudor

Revival style country house began in 1919.

The estate is named in honor of his first wife, who died in 1907, and his daughter, both of whom were named May.^[4]

Only a year after Mayslake Hall was completed, on August 27, 1922, Francis Peabody died of a heart attack during a fox hunt on his property. Peabody was 63 years old at the time of his death.



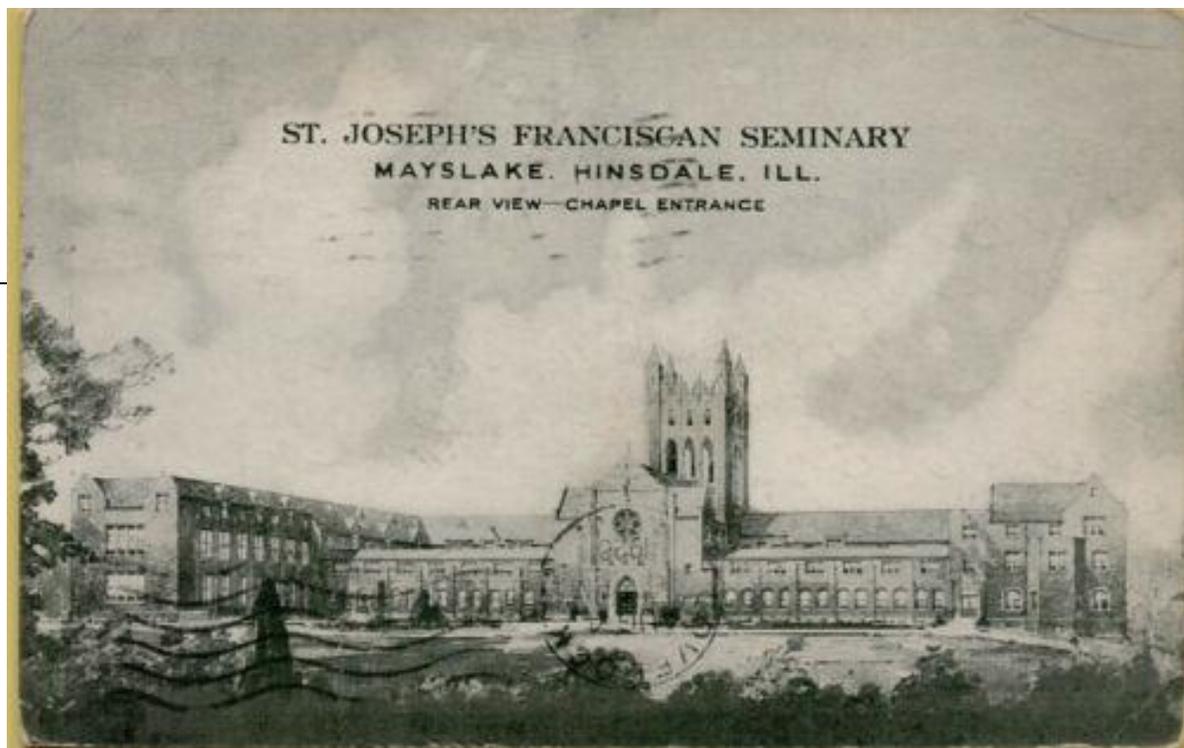
Stuyvesant Peabody
on "Wood King"

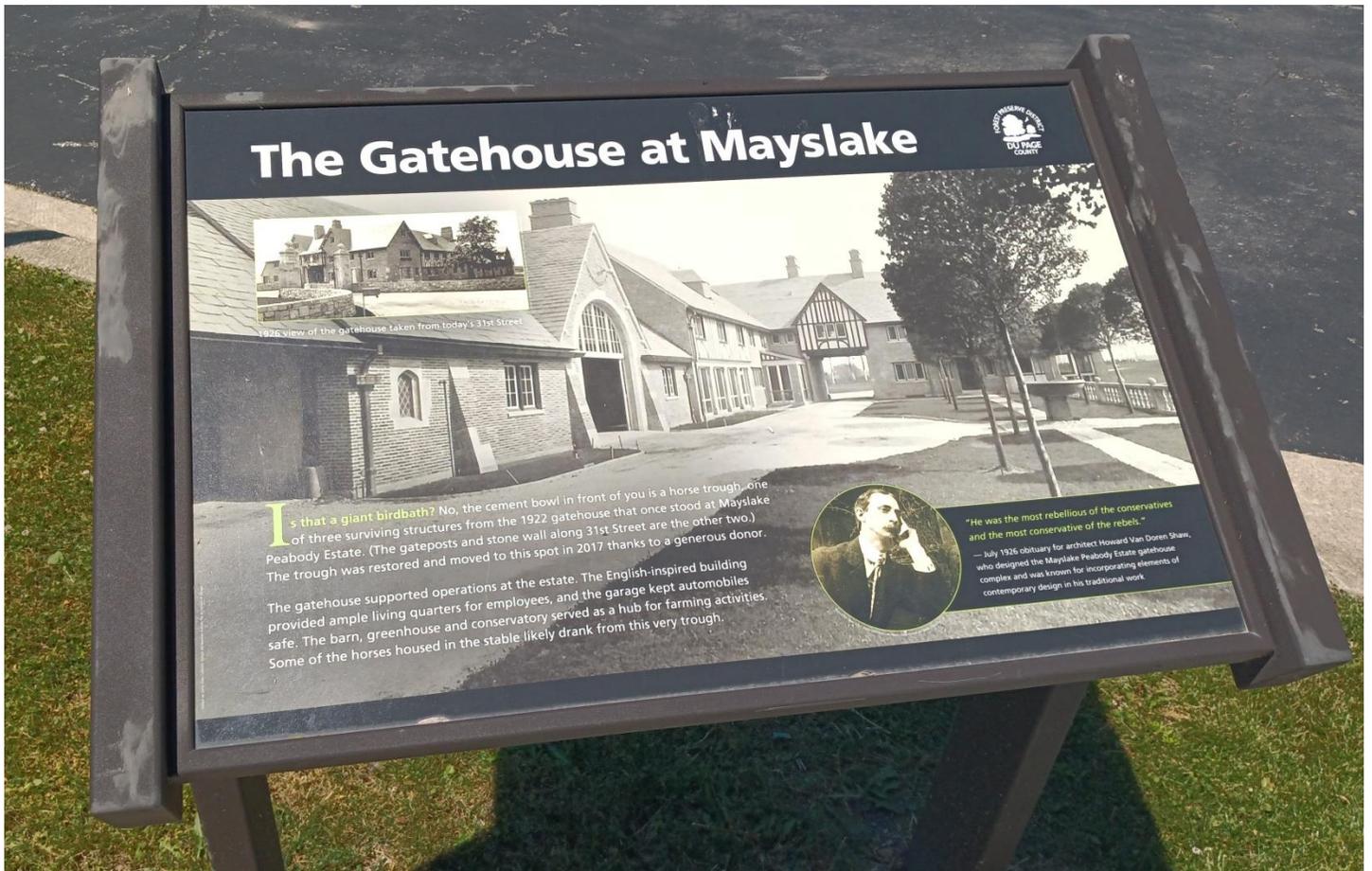
After Francis Peabody's death, on March 28, 1924, the estate was sold to the Franciscan Order for a total of \$450,000. Beginning in 1925, the Franciscans used Mayslake Hall as a retreat house.

After Peabody's death, the Portiuncula Chapel, a replica of the Our Lady of the Angels chapel in Assisi, Italy, was added to the property in memory of him. Completed in 1926, the chapel was one of the first replicas of the original chapel in the United States. Originally, the chapel was located at the site of Peabody's death. It was moved to its present location near the mansion in 1973. Behind the chapel, a semi-circular memorial wall surrounding a flower and herb garden, was constructed by the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor.

In 1927, St. Joseph Seminary was added to the property complex, but was later demolished after the minor seminary closed in 1977. In 1951, an additional wing was added to the country house (now known as the retreat wing). St. Paschal's Friary was also built on the estate between 1952 and 1964. The Friary was demolished in 2011. During the 1930s and 1970s, the Franciscans sold large portions of the estate.

In 1991, the Franciscans announced the pending sale of the remaining 87 acres to a developer who planned to raze remaining buildings and build 130 luxury homes. Conservationists, historic preservationists and DuPage County citizens formed a group to save the historic property. With the assistance of the group's efforts, DuPage County voters approved a \$17.5 million referendum providing the Forest Preserve District with funds to purchase Mayslake in 1992. The area is now part of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County.





The Gatehouse at Mayslake



1926 view of the gatehouse, taken from today's 31st Street

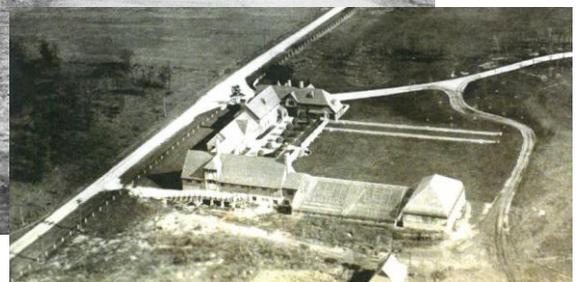
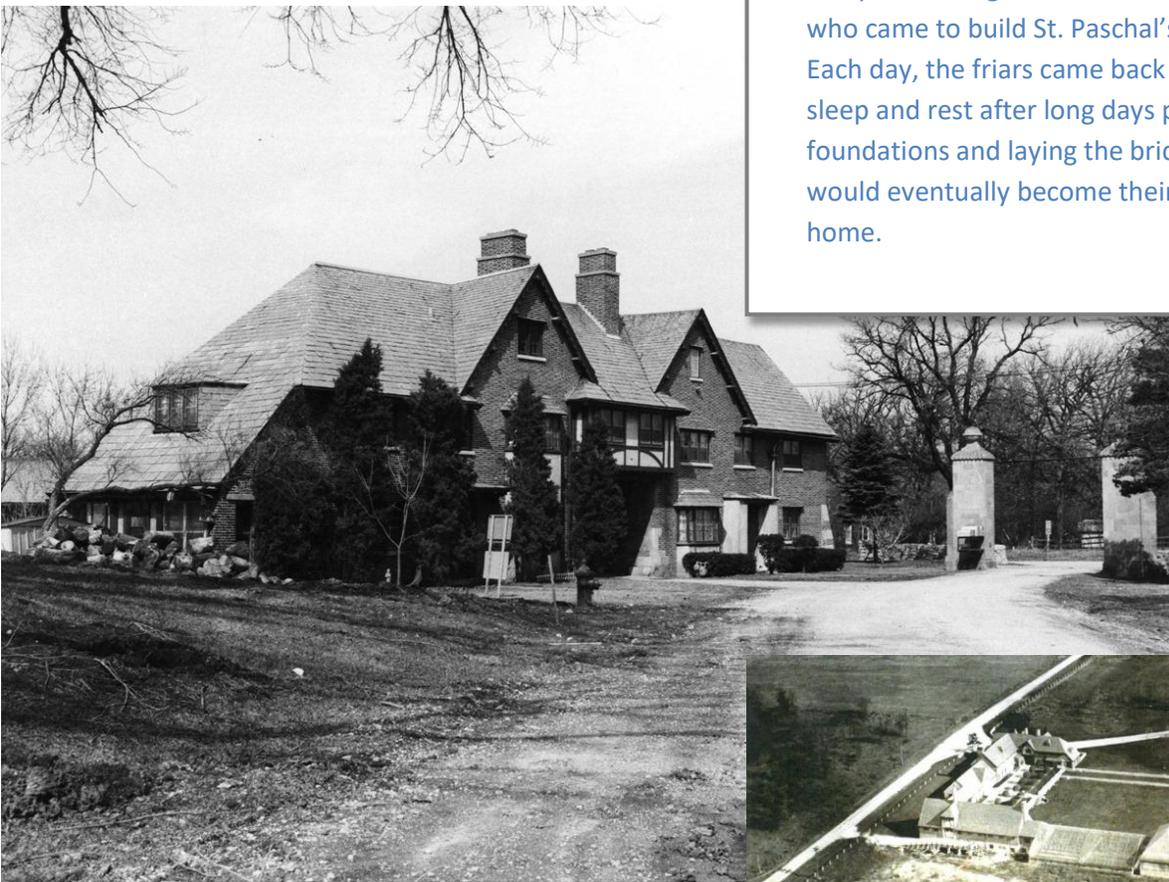
Is that a giant birdbath? No, the cement bowl in front of you is a horse trough, one of three surviving structures from the 1922 gatehouse that once stood at Mayslake Peabody Estate. (The gateposts and stone wall along 31st Street are the other two.) The trough was restored and moved to this spot in 2017 thanks to a generous donor. The gatehouse supported operations at the estate. The English-inspired building provided ample living quarters for employees, and the garage kept automobiles safe. The barn, greenhouse and conservatory served as a hub for farming activities. Some of the horses housed in the stable likely drank from this very trough.



"He was the most rebellious of the conservatives and the most conservative of the rebels."
— July 1936 obituary for architect Howard Van Doren Shaw, who designed the Mayslake Peabody Estate gatehouse complex and was known for incorporating elements of contemporary design in his traditional work.



The **GATEHOUSE** served as the friary of the original crews of brothers who came to build St. Paschal's. Each day, the friars came back here to sleep and rest after long days pouring foundations and laying the brick that would eventually become their new home.





Franciscan Order of Friars Minor

The Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart, a Catholic religious community of men now headquartered in St. Louis, was founded in central Illinois in the mid-1850s and has mainly served the Midwest throughout its history. It is a territorial province of the worldwide Franciscan Order, which has a membership of over 25,000.

The Franciscans purchased the Mayslake property for \$450,000 on March 28, 1924. The Franciscans spent the next year converting the mansion into a retreat house. The spacious living room was converted to a chapel, and its doors and eight windows were fitted with stained glass. In the 1950s a two-story retreat wing was connected to the house, providing an additional 112 rooms and a new chapel.

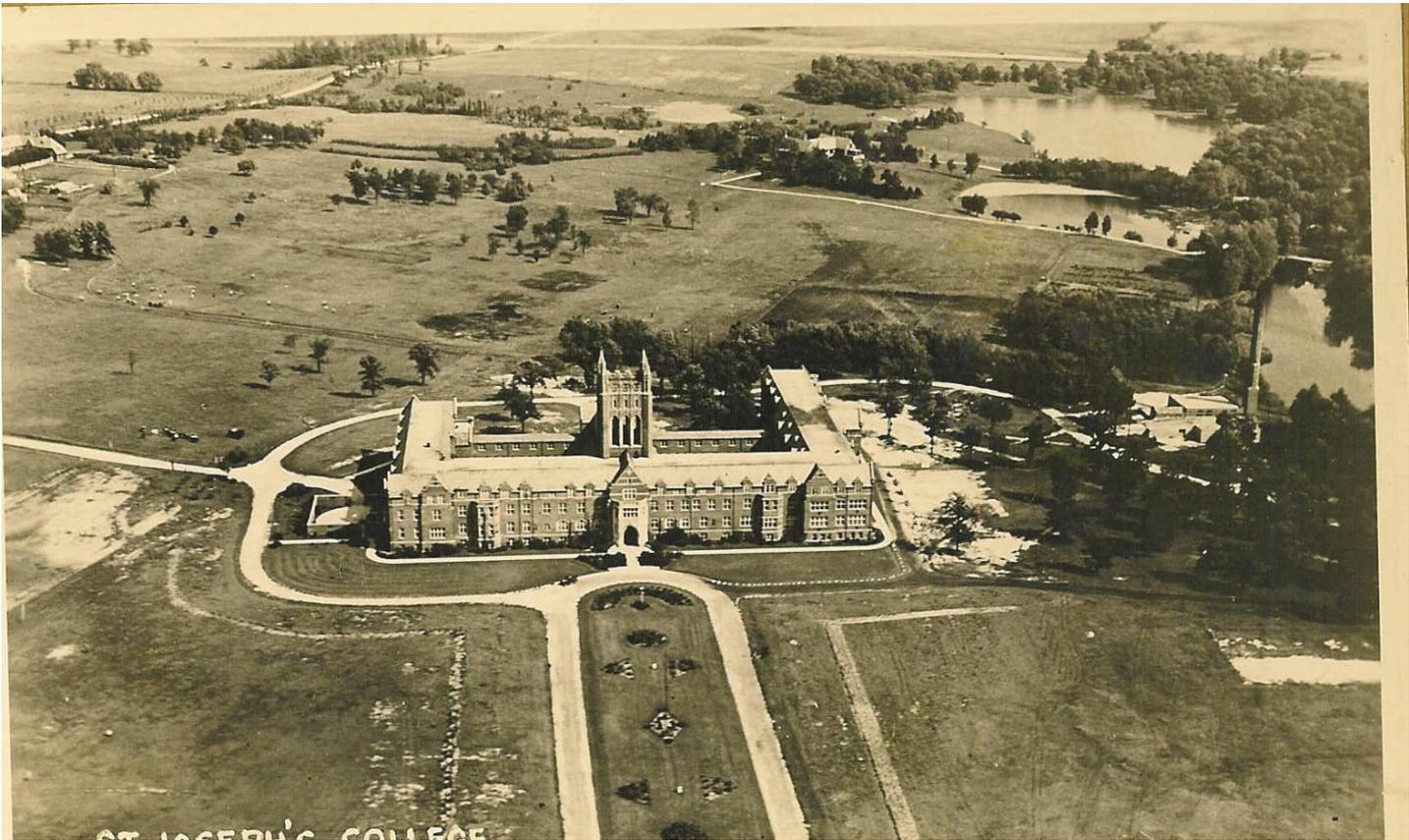
Mayslake has played an important role in the spiritual life of the Chicago metropolitan region, with over 250,000 people participating in retreats at the site between 1925 and 1991. Held each weekend of the year retreats focused on the application of religion to daily problems. Activities included lectures, spiritual readings, a visit to the Portiuncula Chapel and prayers. Mayslake was conducive to mental rest, and time was set aside for relaxation and walking about the expansive grounds. Retreatants came from all walks of life, and classes often featured special groups, such as labor organizations. Jack Peabody attended three retreats in the 1920s, noting,

“In this modern life it is hard for us to get our minds in position to give the proper values to spiritual things unless we can devote some time to thinking and studying about them as I did at the St. Francis retreat.”

<https://www.dupageforest.org/mayslake-peabody-estate/history>



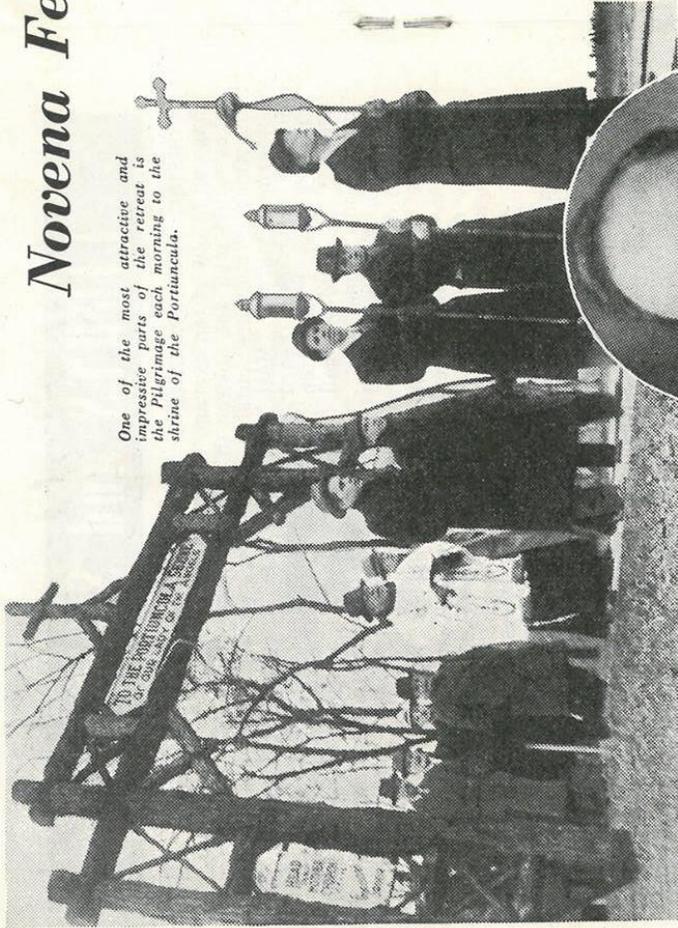
ST. FRANCIS RETREAT,
MAYSLAKE, HINSDALE, ILL.



ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

Novena Featured at St. Francis Retreat

One of the most attractive and impressive parts of the retreat is the Pilgrimage each morning to the shrine of the Portiuncula.



TODAY marks another step in the spread of the nationally famous Novena in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows, for we inaugurate for the first time in a place devoted exclusively to lay retreats—St. Francis Retreat, better known as "Mayslake," near Hinsdale, Ill., seventeen miles west of Chicago.

The new devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows will form a most appropriate service for the opening of the retreat each Friday evening. No doubt this Novena at Mayslake will be the means of starting many men to make the entire Novena. In this way the fruits of the retreat will be developed and resolutions strengthened. With the Blessed Mother interceding for them before the throne of Her Divine Son, they will be in a far better position of attaining the ultimate aim of the retreat and Novena,—the salvation of their soul.

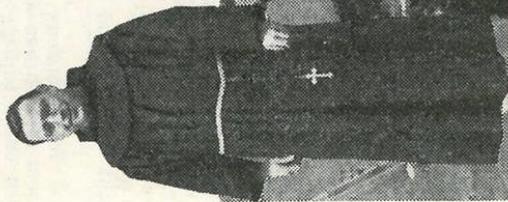
The retreat house, the former \$700,000 mansion of the late Francis S. Peabody, lies on a magnificent estate of 500 acres dotted with trees and shrubs and jeweled with three glistening lakes. The beautiful lodge and adjoining buildings at the entrance to the vast estate cost \$285,000. After Mr. Peabody died suddenly on August 27, 1922, the heirs sold the estate to the Franciscan Fathers of the Sacred Heart Province.

The spiritual and even material advantages of the Sixty Golden Hours, from Friday, 7 p.m., to Monday, 7 a.m., can not be described adequately in words. You have to make a retreat in order to appreciate its marvelous benefits for both soul and body. The devout Catholic, the luke-warm type and the man who has not been to the sacraments for 20, 30 or 40 years find in the retreat new light and strength for the great battle of life—the salvation of their immortal soul.



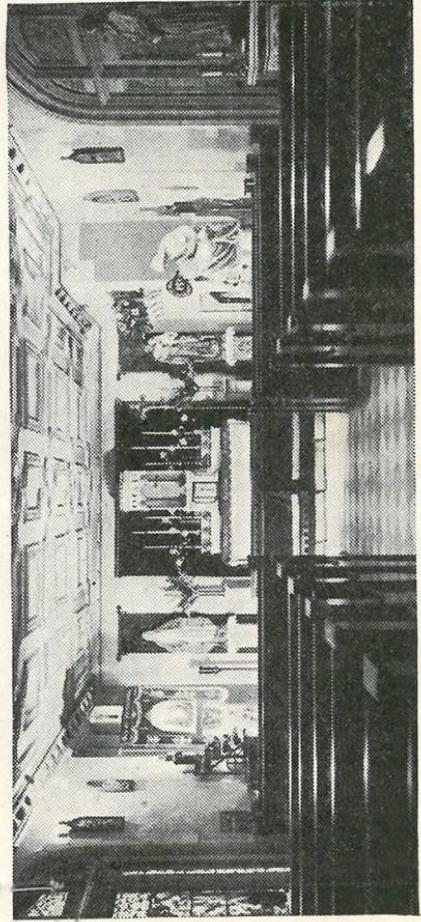
Chicago Daily Times Photo.

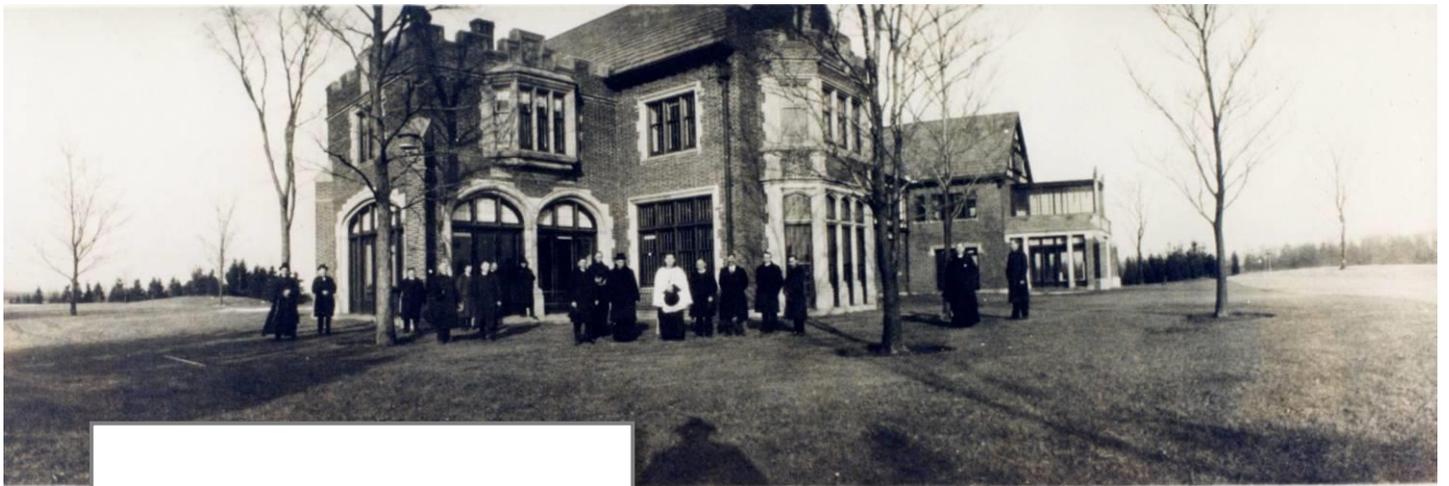
Right, Rev. Joseph Forst, O.F.M., Retreat Master at St. Francis. Left, Rev. Oliver Kimnich, O.F.M., Field Secretary.



To the chapel, on the right, have come men from all walks of life, the big and the little, the rich and the poor, Catholics and non-Catholics.

With the gracious permission and blessings of His Eminence, George Cardinal Mundelein, this sumptuous mansion of some forty rooms was converted into a retreat house for men.





*Mayslake holds its first
retreat on 19 March 1925*

March 19, 1925







Scenes from Maylake
St. Francis Retreat House
in Hinsdale, Illinois, 1925 - 1991



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Dining Room
St. Francis Retreat
Hinsdale, Ill.



The old cemetery on Pine Hill was relocated behind the Portiuncula Chapel. Upon sale of the retreat house property, the friars' graves were finally moved to Queen of Heaven Cemetery in Hillside, IL.





*FRANCISCAN
BROTHERHOOD
EXPERIENCES*

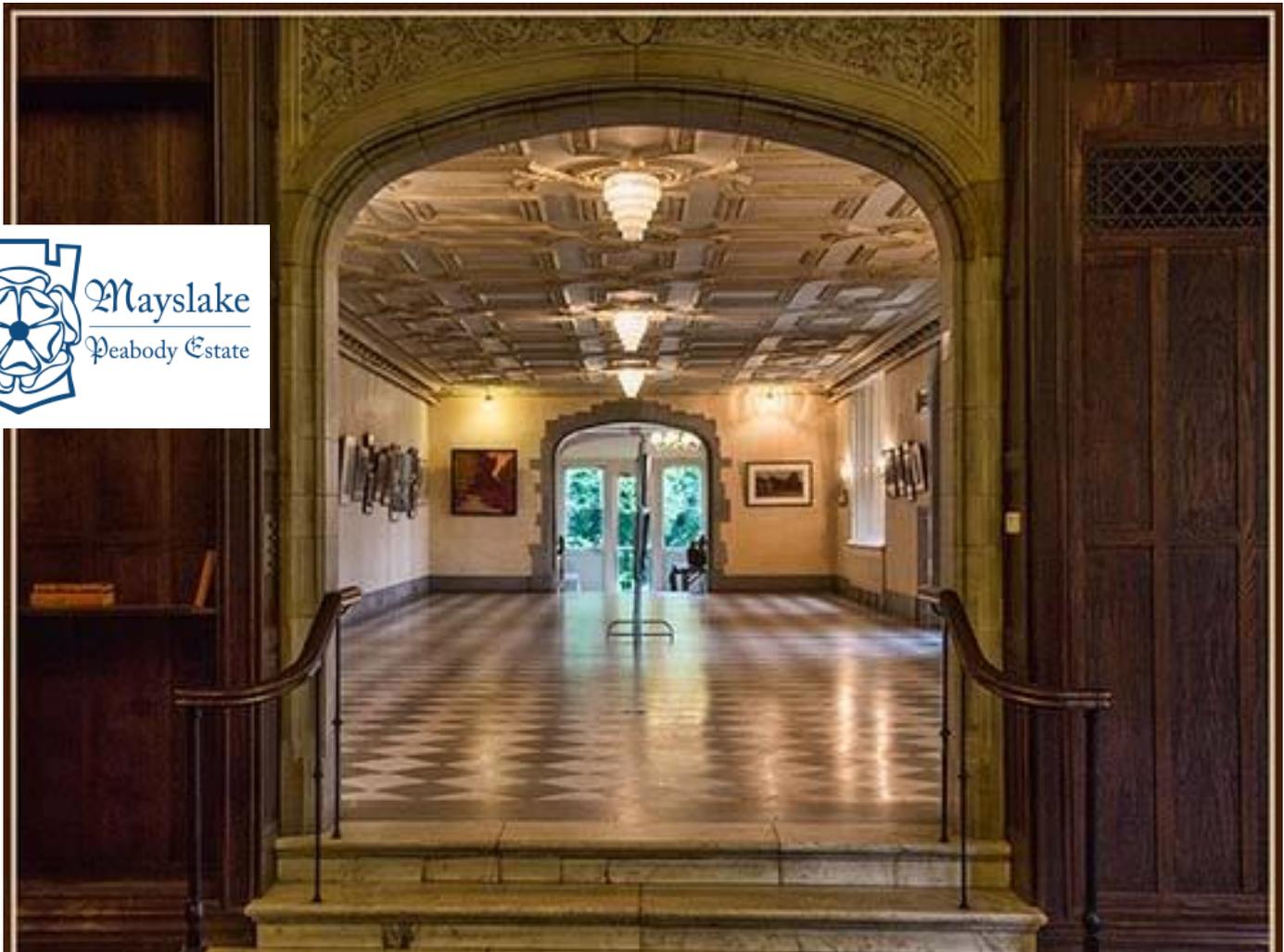
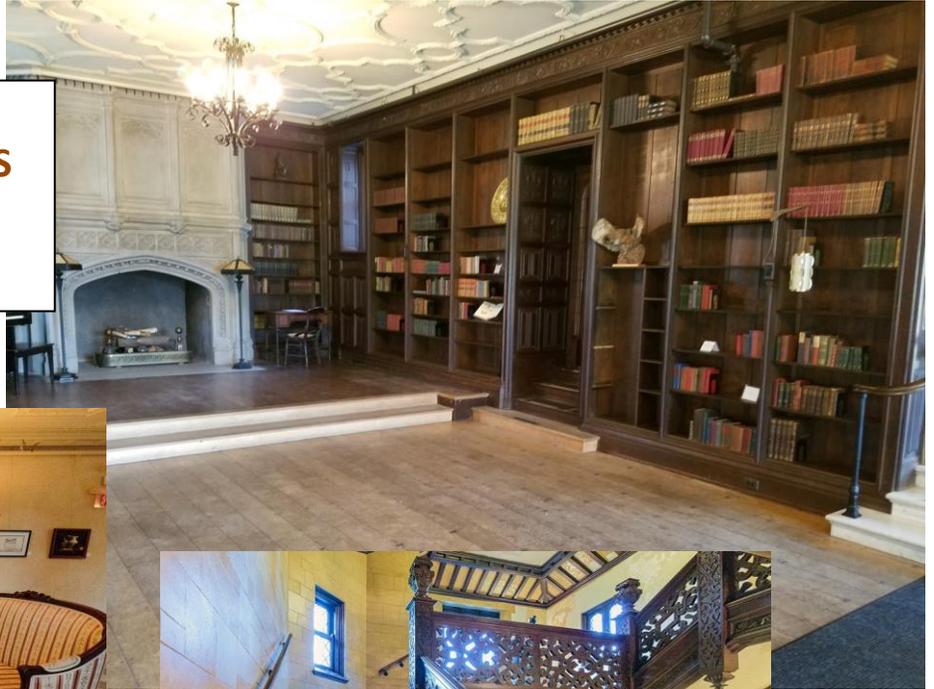
1979 & 1980

Dozens of young men spent a week each summer on retreat learning about the friars, their ministries and their charism.



Mayslake Peabody Estate
INTERIOR RESTORATIONS

have been underway
since its purchase in 1992.







Exterior Restoration of Mayslake Hall

The restoration of Mayslake Hall might appear to be a daunting task at first glance, but like most challenges, this one also has a silver lining! The Forest Preserve District encourages our visitors to experience the restoration process firsthand to bring this building back to its previous splendor.

Over the past few years the Forest Preserve District, private donors and grants funded interior and exterior condition surveys at Mayslake Hall. These surveys identified priorities and specific techniques and materials to be used to meet the [U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#) and will be in compliance with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency requirements for landmark properties.

The restoration will be completed in phases, as funds become available. To date the entrance gate, part of the servant wing exterior, solarium, living room, library ceiling and back courtyard have been fully restored to their former glory. Next on the docket are the restoration of the grand staircase and sleeping porch. This phased approach has opened unique opportunities to provide students in the preservation field hand-on learning experiences.

THE RETREAT WING

added in the 1950s
included 112 guest rooms and the chapel





100 years have taken a toll on the outside of the original mansion – rotted wood, peeling paint, failing windows and other damage will be remedied soon.

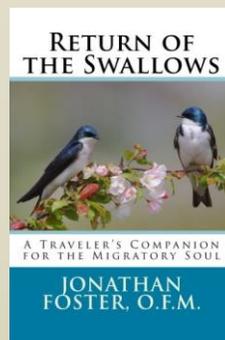




HÆC EST PORTIUNCULA
in qua per intercessionem Bm̄e. Virg. Mariæ
Xtus ore proprio D. Francisco Indulgentiam
plenariam et perpetuam concessit. Warr. A.D. 1227

The **PORTIUNCULA** Chapel, originally located on Pine Hill, near the friar cemetery, was relocated after the sale of the seminary grounds in the 1980s.

Fr. Jonathan Foster, OFM began his priestly ministry as a teacher. He was an instructor at St. Francis Academy, an all-girls school in Joliet, IL. In 1966, he joined the faculty at St. Joseph Minor Seminary in Westmont, IL. While teaching, he also accepted a position as the Religious Education Coordinator at St. Isaac Jogues Parish in Hinsdale, IL. Following these years, Fr. Jonathan became the Director of St. Francis Retreat House at Mayslake. For 15 years, 1976-1991, he excelled at being administrator, spiritual director, retreat leader, always exercising a collaborative style of ministry and empowering the laity. He founded Mayslake Ministries after the retreat house closed in 1991. He retired from this ministry in 2015.



Formerly known as the St. Francis Retreat House in Oak Brook, Illinois, Mayslake Ministries is a lay led 501.c.3 Catholic/Christian Not-for Profit Spirituality Center founded by Fr. Jonathan Foster, OFM, in 1991 as a “retreat house without walls.” Since 1991, Mayslake Ministries has served the spiritual needs of Christian/Catholic adult men and women from all walks of life, providing multiple spiritual opportunities for people who seek a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Our programs and services are sanctioned by the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the Dioceses of Joliet and Rockford, IL.
