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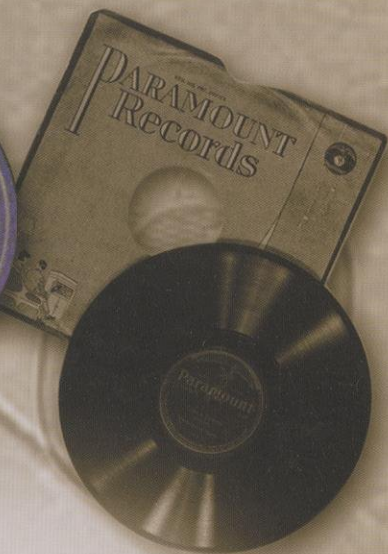
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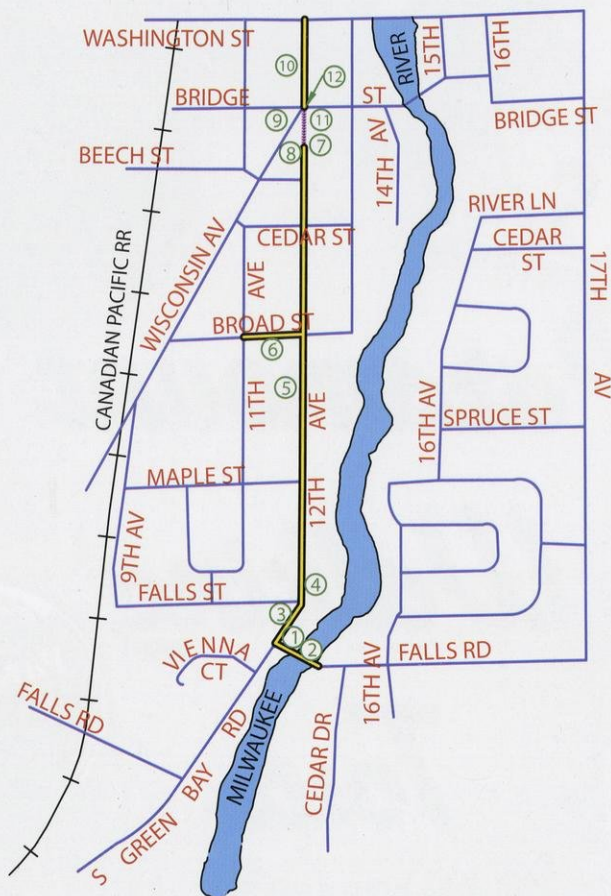


Paramount Walking Tour



PARAMOUNT WALKING TOUR

VILLAGE OF GRAFTON
OZAUKEE COUNTY, WISCONSIN



TOUR SITES

- ① WI. CHAIR COMPANY HISTORICAL MARKER
- ② VIEW FROM BRIDGE LOOKING NORTH
- ③ BELIEVED SITE OF RECORDING STUDIO
- ④ ALFRED SCHULTZ HOME
- ⑤ MINTZLAFF - BEVINGTON HOME
- ⑥ TIMOTHY WOODEN BUILDING
- ⑦ FORMER GRAFTON POST OFFICE
- ⑧ GRAFTON HOTEL
- ⑨ GRAFTON FAMILY RESTAURANT
- ⑩ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL
- ⑪ PARAMOUNT RESTAURANT
- ⑫ PARAMOUNT PLAZA AND WALK OF FAME

LOCATIONS

- FALLS RD. AND S. GREEN BAY RD. INTERSECTION
- FALLS RD. BRIDGE OVER MILWAUKEE RIVER
- 1803 S. GREEN BAY RD.
- 1750 12TH AVE.
- 1629 12TH AVE.
- 1111 BROAD ST.
- 1314/1316 12TH AVE.
- 1312 WISCONSIN AVE.
- 1305 WISCONSIN AVE.
- 1219 12TH AVE.
- 1304 12TH AVE.
- WISCONSIN AVE. AND BRIDGE ST. INTERSECTION

MAP INCLUDES REVISIONS THROUGH JUNE 1, 2007

This booklet is provided by the Village of Grafton Historic Preservation Commission. Comprised of Village Trustees and residents, their sole purpose is to archive, protect and showcase Grafton's history. As a village commission, they are a 501(c)(3) organization and rely in part on monetary donations. Tax-deductible donations of artifacts or relics relevant to Grafton history are also needed. These items are catalogued for an eventual permanent display in Grafton. If you would like to make a donation, please contact the Village hall at 262-375-5300.

"There's a whole new awareness of Grafton's connection to blues, jazz, gospel and other music. Our historical contribution to music and our connection with the blues is both legitimate and important."

*-Village President
Jim Brunnquell*

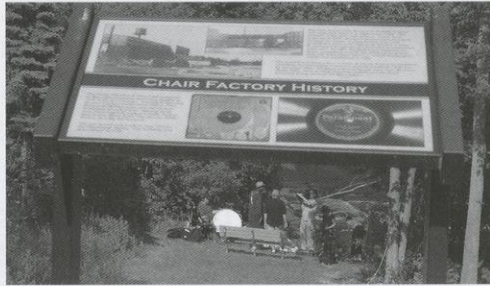
PHILIPP

PHILIPP LITHOGRAPHING COMPANY 1960 Wisconsin Avenue, P.O. Box 4, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024

Philipp Lithographing Company is a proud supporter of the Village of Grafton and the Paramount Walking Tour. Philipp Litho, a member of the Grafton community since 1960, specializes in large format printing for the corrugated industry and point of purchase displays.

Wisconsin Chair Company Historical Marker

Corner of Falls Road and S. Green Bay Road



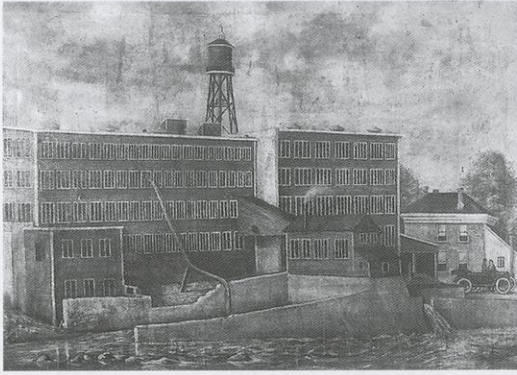
The tour begins at the Wisconsin Chair Company historical marker. When the Port Washington based company entered the phonograph cabinet business, they decided to give away records as part of their sales promotions, and history was made. The subsidiary business for the records was called the New York Recording Laboratories, Inc. From 1917 to 1932 they produced 78 rpm records on a series of labels such as Paramount, Broadway, Puritan, and Famous. The records were originally recorded in New York, Chicago, and Richmond, Indiana. They were mass-produced in the building pictured in the upper left section of the historical marker.

Big names in music history had their records “pressed” (manufactured) here: Louis Armstrong, W.C. Handy, Fletcher Henderson, Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, “King” Joe Oliver, and Blind Lemon Jefferson to name a few. Approximately 25 percent of the nation’s segregated “race records” were made (not necessarily recorded) right here along the Milwaukee River in Grafton, Wisconsin. These records have provided the musical education for generations of musicians and singers. The Wisconsin Chair Company provided the community with over 100 local jobs, and the hard working individuals who were employed here cranked out as many as 1,000 records per hour! If you walk around the area, you will see remnants of the building and flooring.

Now take a walk up to the bridge.

The Chair Company Foundation

View from Falls Road Bridge facing north



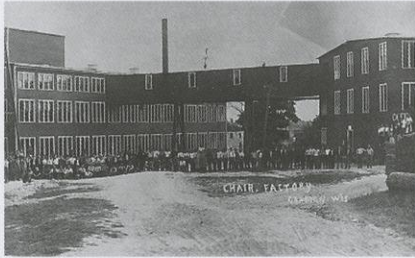
Standing on the Falls Road Bridge looking north, you can see the foundational wall of the factory. This painting by M.P. Goossens, dated 1915, was discovered in the building before its demise. It depicts the view of the east side of the factory. To your left, the remnants of the long foundation give you a good idea of just how large the pressing plant was. The building was razed in 1938. A private home now sits on top of the foundation. Near the southern part of the foundation wall is a rusty power wheel that provided power to the plant via the Milwaukee River.

The pressing plant was connected to another building with a viaduct that crossed to the west over 12th Avenue. The early recordings were made in other cities, but the cost of shipping the original recordings across state lines, renting recording facilities, and the temperance of the wax inspired the idea of having a makeshift recording studio right here. The wax masters were simply taken across the viaduct, pressed, and put into wooden crates for shipping.

Please proceed north on 12th Avenue.

The Recording Studio

1803 S. Green Bay Road



After passing the Chair Factory site, if you turn back to face the foundation area, this is the view of the building you would have seen. The red, barn-shaped building on the right housed the famous studio where many legends recorded their music. A yellow brick private home now sits on that location.

The New York Recording Laboratories studio was in operation between 1929 and 1932. There is a lot of mystery surrounding the recording studio interior, as no photographs have been found. Pictured below is a sketch by local artist Don Henning of how it may have looked. The original recording equipment, piano, and guitar that were provided for the musicians have never surfaced. It was a makeshift studio complete with burlap draping covering the walls and windows. Other fabrics cushioned the ground in order to create a good “room tone.” The recordings were first made with artists singing into a large acoustic horn. The vibrations from the horn transferred onto a needle which etched grooves into spinning wax. Three “takes” of each song were common. The best take was chosen and sent to the pressing plant for a series of chemical baths. A metal “mother” was made and then a metal “stamper” which provided the mold for the records made of materials such as clay, shellac, and even bits of limestone. The recordings made in this studio are known for their poor quality, but those that have survived the test of time are quite valuable monetarily and historically.



Proceed north to 1750 12th Avenue.

Alfred Schultz Home

1750 12th Avenue



The following is an historical monologue based on information from Al Schultz's daughter Janet Erickson, who was recently featured on a 2006 PBS History Detectives segment about Paramount Records.

"Welcome to Grafton, WI. My name is Alfred Schultz. My family and I live in this stone house right next to the pressing plant and recording studio where I work. I am the chief recording engineer and pressing plant foreman for the New York Recording Laboratories.



One of my jobs, along with Mr. Walter Klopp, pictured here, was to listen to the different takes that the artists recorded. We usually liked them to record each song three times. Mr. Klopp and I often took the songs home to listen to them and pick our favorite take."

Photo courtesy of Keith Klopp

"Most of the recording is done in the daytime. Some is done in the evening. In the early days, they used to record in a big horn about 8 feet long. Big sheets of burlap have been hung in the recording studio so that a certain tone can be captured. The artists can practice here, too."

"I think that Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Ida Cox, "Ma" Rainey, Ethel Waters and Alberta Hunter are the most popular artists. "Ma" Rainey has been by here but not to record. When she visited, she got a kick out of my young daughter Janet. Janet sat on her lap, looked up to her and called her 'Grandma.' "Ma" Rainey was wearing a black dress and gold shoes that day. I won't ever forget it. She squeezed Janet and laughed."



1931 photo of (L to R) Alfred Schultz, Jr., Alfred Schultz, Janet (Schultz) Erickson, and their family dogs.

“My hours have recently been cut. The times have been awful for business. My shift changed from six days a week down to three, and only five hours a day. We press about 5000 records in a five hour shift. We ship them out in wooden boxes by train to dealers and distributors all over the states. The records sell really well in St. Louis, Virginia, North and South Carolina and especially in the south.”

“I’m trying to keep my sense of humor, though. That’s what I’m known for! Here, I got a little saying for ya: ‘It’s not the cough that sends you off; it’s the coffin they send you off in!’ Here’s a few more: ‘Why is a duck?’ ‘Do you walk to work or carry your lunch?’”

“Here I am pictured next to my house. Do you think I’m thin? Some call me “Spike Schultz” so I got it tattooed here on my right arm near my wrist. I often fish in the Milwaukee River. Carp are my favorite ‘cause they put up a good fight! The artists borrow my fishing poles from my backyard and fish in there, too. My cats Buttercup and Patches like to follow them down to the river just like they follow me. I usually give them a little fish you see.”



Please continue north on 12th Avenue. This route you are walking was probably frequented by some of the best pre-war recording artists ever, such as Charley Patton, Nehemiah Curtis “Skip” James, Eddie James “Son” House, Blind Blake, The Mississippi Sheiks, Tommy Johnson, Willy Brown, Henry Townsend, Meade Lux Lewis, King Solomon Hill, Famous Blue Jay Singers of Birmingham, Louise Johnson, Delta Big Four, Jabbo Williams, and many more!

Margaret Bevington (Mintzlaff) Home

1629 12th Avenue



From a telephone conversation on August 23, 2006, between Alex van der Tuuk and Mrs. Margaret Bevington (nee Mintzlaff), born in 1914

The African American artists came directly from Milwaukee via the Interurban railway. They stepped out of the Interurban at the south stop located on South Broad Street. There were two other stops in Grafton. The musicians walked past the Mintzlaff house on their way to the recording studio, and Margaret recalled them carrying their instruments in black cases and having food or snacks in the other hand. They were well dressed, wearing suits, coats, and hats. They looked like a happy lot, walking in groups of three, four, or five. Sometimes there were only two. The lesser-known artists seemed especially enthusiastic.

Some of them would sing while on their way, even harmonizing. Margaret's mother would take her daughter outside to the fence when they came by and sometimes the artists would stop and keep singing while her mother clapped her hands. Margaret's brother, 12 years younger, screamed when he first saw the African American artists at age 4. This would indicate that the year was 1931.

Her father, Alfred Henry Mintzlaff, invested in the set-up of the recording studio. When asked about that and why it would be located in Grafton after years of recording in Chicago, she said that Chicago trafficked to the area, bringing the underworld with it. During prohibition there were many illegal stills to produce liquor which brought people from Chicago.

Alfred's brother, her uncle Charles Mintzlaff (born 1890), worked for the record factory and daily biked to the place and brought his own lunch since the company did not pay much.

Proceed north to Broad Street.

Timothy Wooden Building

1111 Broad Street



The three-story Timothy Wooden Building was built in 1928 by architect Herbert W. Tullgren. Tullgren is known for designing other fine buildings including The Astor Hotel and Hathaway Tower in Milwaukee and the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Fond du Lac. This building was originally the Grafton High School. Currently it is home to the North Shore Academy of the Arts which offers opportunities in visual, performing and literary arts.

The Timothy Wooden Building also houses a Paramount display as well as the newly-built Mabry Recording Studio (pictured here) in honor of the Chair Factory studio!



Continue north on 12th Avenue to the south entrance of the Paramount Plaza.

Welcome to the Paramount Plaza!

As you enter the south end of the plaza, the first thing you may notice is that you are walking on a sidewalk resembling a piano keyboard. This is the Paramount Records Walk of Fame, but we will save more about that for the end of our tour.

The building to your right is the former Grafton Post Office. Records were shipped around the nation from here as well as by train.

Grafton Post Office

1314/1316 12th Avenue



Interurban Railway

Looking north on 11th Avenue from Bridge Street

(Photo courtesy of the News Graphic)

The Grafton Hotel

1312 Wisconsin Avenue



Photo of an original painting owned by Rob Ruvin who plans on restoring the historic building.

The three-story building adjacent to the Plaza is the Grafton Hotel. A lot of mystery still surrounds where the many recording artists stayed during their trips to Grafton. Most of the African American artists probably stayed in Milwaukee after a day's recording session in Grafton. However a few indicated staying in Grafton. In a 1965 interview, Son House claimed:

"There was a hotel, small hotel, two story (sic. three-story), that was special for all the recorders. And they give Charley a hundred dollars for me, him, Willie and Louise to buy cigarettes, sandwiches and to get us drinks. He'd ask you how many songs do you have in mind that you gonna play? Well, at that time, he was paying 15 dollars a side for 10 inch records. I got 40 dollars for mine. People back home was working for 75 cents a day. I thought that was big."

And there's this excerpt from Stephan Calt's biography on Skip James, *I'd Rather Be the Devil*:

"Together they rode an electric train to Grafton, a small town twenty miles north of Milwaukee. Laibly escorted him to a local hotel, where he was to rest before the session began in the afternoon. Before leaving James, Laibly asked him how many records he could make. 'As many as you want,' James replied. Soon James fell asleep. At eleven a bellhop woke him and took him to a café, where Laibly bought his lunch. As James ate, the 37-year old recording director explained the financial details of the recording session..."

*The PBS show, "History Detectives"
filmed the Grafton Hotel in 2006.*

Photo courtesy of Angela Mack



Now you'll want to stand at the north end of the plaza and let's look at some of the buildings in the area, beginning with the one across the street to your left.

Grafton Family Restaurant

1305 Wisconsin Avenue



“The corner location of 1305 Wisconsin Ave. has long been a center for entertainment in the village. This was the site of the Grafton House established by John Simon in the 1860s. In 1881 his son John B. Simon took over the business which included hotel rooms and a saloon frequented by skat players. He added a hall on the southeast corner of 11th Avenue and Bridge Street where dances and masquerade balls were held. In 1893 the property was sold to Robert E. Schnabel, who continued the tradition of pre-Lenten Masquerade balls and hosted dances for the fire department, baseball team, and threshers among others. Nic Schanen purchased the building in 1908 and added bowling alleys on the south side of the saloon in 1910.”

—an excerpt from *“A Tour of Historic Grafton”* by the Grafton Junior Women’s Club

“I remember looking forward to the Medicine Man coming to town. He would rent a room at Schanen’s Bowling Alley and put on two or three shows. He’d stay maybe a week and there would be a hire-wire act, three act plays, etc... all inside the bowling alley.”

—Elroy Woltring

The Schanen family continued to operate the establishment as a hotel/bowling alley and tavern throughout the years that the artists visited Grafton.

Photography By Michael

1219 12th Avenue



A few buildings north of the Grafton Family Restaurant (in front of the third streetlight up), you will see a white two-story with a brown awning. Started by Joseph Cramer, a daguerreotypist, this photography studio sits on a lot that he purchased in 1872 for \$11. It was later sold to his son John Cramer, and then in turn to Edward Laabs, Walter Burhop, and finally Michael Matthies, all of them continuing in the photography business. It is believed that the only photograph of Charley Patton known to exist in the world was taken in this studio. It is possible, yet not confirmed, that Blind Blake and Blind Lemon Jefferson had their photographs taken here as well. Most of the negatives from 1926 to about 1970 were disposed of, however, some glass negatives still exist from that time period. Included in the collection of glass slides are various people from the village of Grafton and chairs from the Wisconsin Chair Company.

"One of the first things one learns about blues history when one delves into the subject is the many great artists that recorded 78s for Paramount, and that Paramount was located in Grafton, WI."

*-Michael "Hawkeye" Herman
Blues musician, writer, historian
and educator.*

The Paramount Restaurant

1304 12th Avenue



Former Bienlein Central Hotel



Situated at the north entrance of the Paramount Plaza, this building was erected around 1844/1845. It has served as a county courthouse, jail, tavern, Lutheran church, and also the Bienlein Central Hotel. It is not clear whether the artists would have stayed here while in town; however, owner Joe Krupski has honored the Paramount legacy by restoring the

building and opening The Paramount Restaurant. Bringing fine dining and live music into the heart of Grafton is a fitting tribute to the musicians who recorded here all those years ago. The restaurant hopes to feature outdoor entertainment as well. The elements of the Plaza are currently in place to accommodate live or recorded music.

The Paramount Plaza includes a curved limestone “timeline” wall, the keyboard-themed Walk of Fame, round medallion stones, and a Buy-a-Brick program for personal or corporate donations. Other elements worth noting – *musical notes, that is* – are decorative planters and benches. Truly the centerpiece of it all has to be the sculpture dubbed “Golden Cluster” created by Norm Christianson. The two-tiered fountain, largely funded by Grafton State Bank, features a life-size sculpture of “Ma” Rainey, Son House, and Louis Armstrong. Equally impressive is the aerial view of the Plaza (see blueprint on back page) which reveals the shapes of a record player, keyboard, grand piano lid, and guitar!



photo ©2007 Michael “Hawkeye”
Herman / www.HawkeyeHerman.com

The Paramount Walk of Fame



2006 Inductees

Photo montage courtesy of the Ozaukee Press

HENRY "THE MULE" TOWNSEND

Patriarch of St. Louis Blues

CHARLEY PATTON

Father of the Delta Blues

GERTRUDE "MA" RAINEY

Mother of the Blues

BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON

First Country Blues Star

NEHEMIAH CURTIS "SKIP" JAMES

Mississippi Blues Legend

THOMAS A. "GEORGIA TOM" DORSEY

Father of Gospel Music

2007 Inductees

EDDIE JAMES "SON" HOUSE, JR.

Preeminent Mississippi Bluesman

LOUIS "SATCHMO" ARMSTRONG

America's Jazz Ambassador





Henry Townsend's son, Alonzo, accepts the honor for his dad.

Photo courtesy of Michael "Hawkeye" Herman

In 2006, The Village of Grafton Plan Commission requested that the group Paramount GIG name the first giants in the Walk of Fame. The following inductees were chosen by a committee of nine people who spent months extensively researching the many recording artists. Each committee member voted for their top artists based on the following criteria developed by Milwaukee jazz musician and engineer Norrie Cox (1932-2007):

- **The artist's degree of recognition and acclaim by "aficionados"**
- **The artist's degree of importance to music history and development**
- **The artist's musical and genre virtuosity**

The Village of Grafton honored the then last surviving Paramount artist Henry Townsend with the first stone in the Walk of Fame and a special ceremony on September 24, 2006. He was invited to perform at the first annual Paramount Blues Festival. However, he became ill and could not perform at the festival or attend the ceremony. He passed away on September 24, 2006, at a hospital in Mequon, Wisconsin.

Thank you for taking part in the Paramount Walking Tour! We encourage you to spend some time in the Paramount Plaza and enjoy the restaurants, shops and other sights and sounds here in Grafton. Contact information and websites can be found in the back of this booklet.

The Village of Grafton thanks you!

Text for this booklet provided by Alex van der Tuuk,
Angela Mack & Melissa Schmitz.

For more historical information, articles, photos and archives visit
www.paramountshome.org

Special Thanks to:

Alex van der Tuuk – author of *PARAMOUNT'S RISE AND FALL* – to obtain a copy visit
http://mainspringpress.com/book_paramount.html **AND** watch for his soon to be
released book *OUT OF ANONYMITY: WISCONSIN ARTISTS RECORDING IN
GRAFTON.*

Ralph Zaun & the members of the Village of Grafton Historic Preservation Commission

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Steve Block – map design

John Safstrom

Darrell Hofland

Joe Krupski – www.theparamountrestaurant.com

Michael Matthies – www.studio1872.com

John Grosklous

Rob Ruvin

The Ewing Family

Janet (Schultz) Erickson, Curt & Joan Schultz & their families

Don Henning

Michael "Hawkeye" Herman – www.hawkeyeherman.com

North Shore Academy of the Arts – www.northshoreacademyofthearts.org

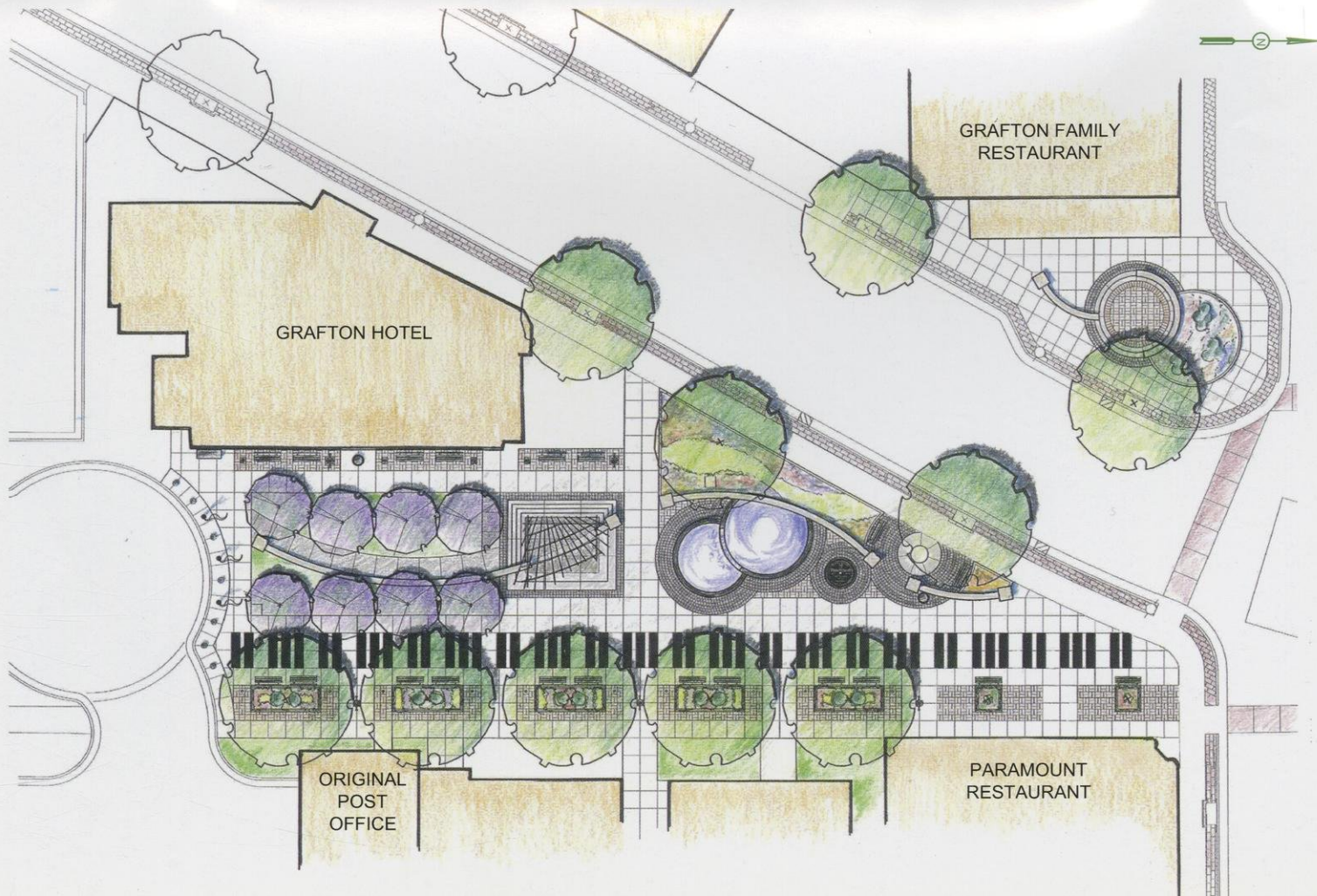
John Tefteller – www.bluesimages.com

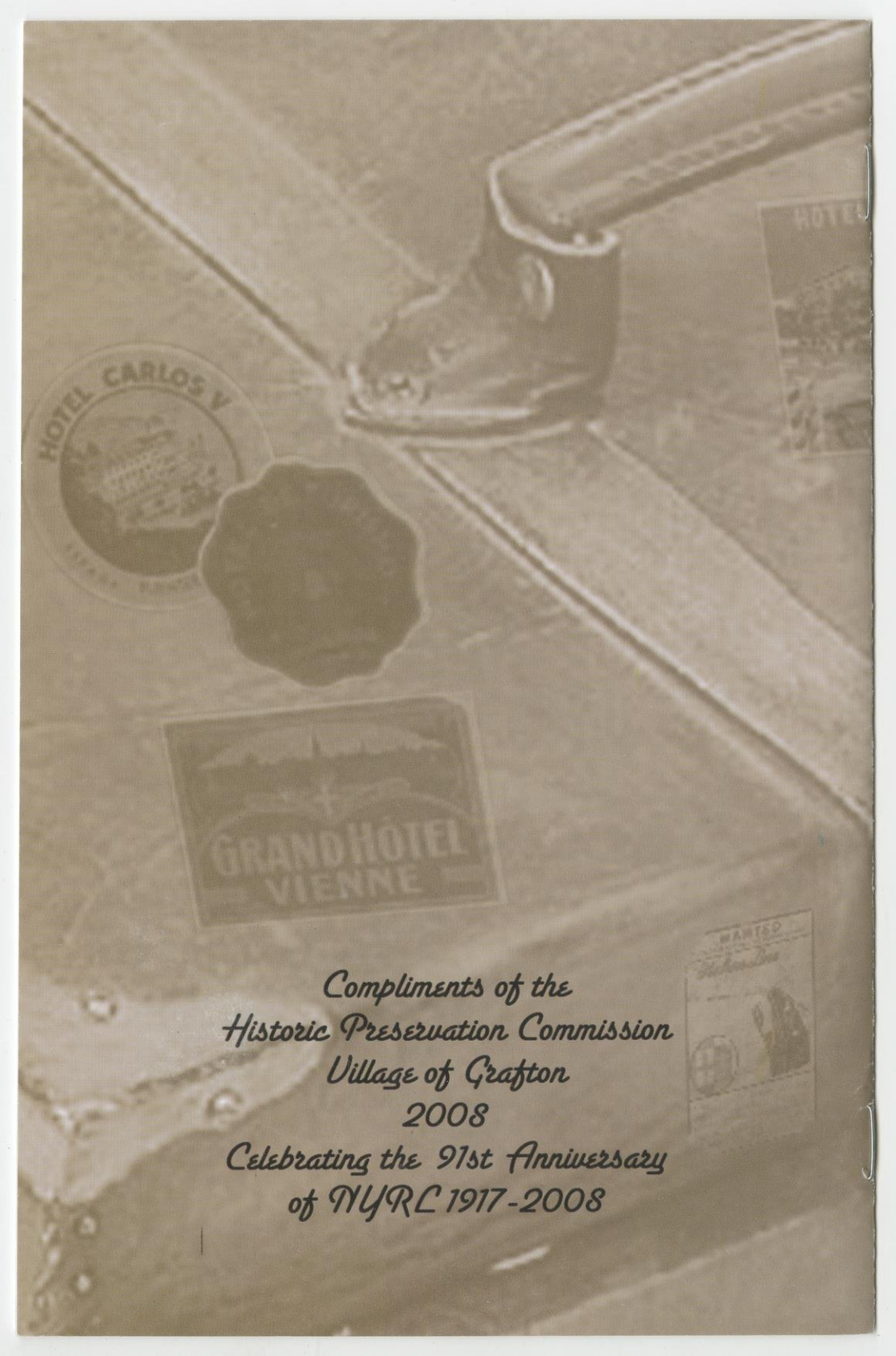
Norrie and Gwen Cox

**For Paramount Blues Festival information, please visit
www.graftonblues.org**

**To view a transcript of the PBS History Detectives segment
"Lost Musical Treasure" visit
www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/investigations/411_paramount_records.html**

**"Grafton City Blues"
at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater www.milwaukeeerep.com**



A sepia-toned photograph of a vintage suitcase, likely from the early 20th century. The suitcase is open, showing its interior compartments. A metal latch is visible on the right side. Several travel stickers are affixed to the suitcase. On the left, there is a circular sticker for 'HOTEL CARLOS V' with a central illustration of a building and the text '1904 - 1905' at the bottom. Below it is a dark, octagonal sticker. In the center, there is a rectangular sticker for 'GRAND HOTEL VIENNE' with an illustration of a city skyline. On the right, there is a 'WANTED' poster featuring a portrait of a man and the name 'Richardson' at the top. The background of the suitcase is a light, textured material.

*Compliments of the
Historic Preservation Commission
Village of Grafton
2008*

*Celebrating the 91st Anniversary
of NYRC 1917-2008*