

"About a Million Times Better Than Chipotle!"

THE OTHER DOOR

a taqueria with soul
SE corner of center and scranton
lake bluff

DAILY NORTH SHORE GO

(<http://dailynorthshore.com>)

Sign up for the Daily North Shore Email

Sign Up!

Life at the Ryerson Home

by *Sam Eichner* (<http://dailynorthshore.com/author/sam-eichner/>) • October 27, 2014

1 Comment (<http://dailynorthshore.com/2014/10/27/photography-exhibit-reveals-lifestyle-at-former-ryerson-home/#comments>)

0



A celebration for friends at the Ryerson house in 1960

- [Email](#)
- [Tumblr](#)
- [Print](#)
- [Gmail](#)
- [Favorites](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- [More... \(294\)](#)

AddThis
(<http://www.addthis.com/website-tools/overview>)

The path to Brushwood, off of Riverwoods Road, winds its way through a chute of tall trees, with sinuous limbs that appear to reach out for each other to form a hooded canopy.

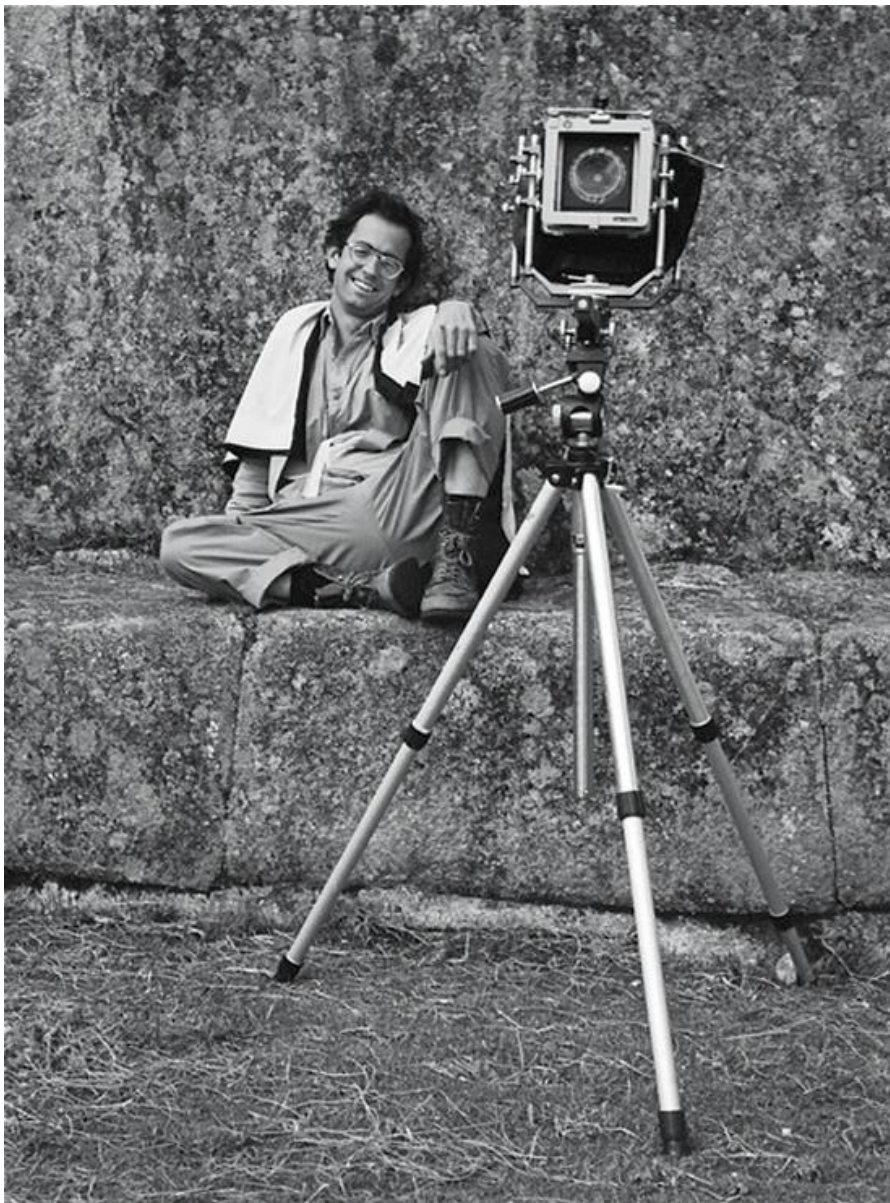
Beyond sits the house: a country-style, red-brick affair, large but not ostentatiously so, choosing instead to bow to the picturesque woods that serve as its backdrop.

Decades earlier, this home belonged to Edward L. Ryerson, a Chicago businessman and civic leader who, between 1942 and 1972, used the property as his family's summer home before donating the house and the 279 acres of eponymous woodland that came with it to the Lake County Forest Preserve. Today, it is the welcome center for those interested in exploring Ryerson Woods, as well as a locus for discourse on nature and culture; until Thursday, Oct. 30, it will also host a new photography exhibit from Ryerson's grandson, Edward Ranney.

"It's really a show to open up how one family used a specific special place," Ranney says, "and to give people who don't know any of us the human context that the place was built on."

For the exhibit, Ranney, a well-known photographer, juxtaposed a select group of photos he took of Brushwood in 1972 with 30 or so photos his grandfather took in the three decades previous.

"The intent," Ranney notes, "is not only to show the feeling and style of the place but also the enjoyment and fun of the people who used those rooms and were a family there."



Edward Ranney

At one end of the home, Ryerson's photos portray various members of the family, at rest but just as often at play. When a subject of the photos himself, Ryerson is often pictured in mirth, entertaining his grandkids as a magician with a top hat and what is obviously a fake mustache.

His grandson's photos, taken a year after his grandparents' deaths, are much more subdued. In one, a bold, curvilinear tree stands in the foreground before a dwindling army of its stark companions, stripped bare by a change of seasons. In others, ornately furnished rooms are vividly captured, yet it is this same quality that works to pronounce their hollow,

polished emptiness. A particularly striking photograph shows a chair slightly misaligned with its desk, left ajar like a door, as if someone had only just evacuated the room.

It is an altogether strange sensation to experience photos of a place while you are standing inside the same such place, years later, though perhaps this is the point: to bridge the Brushwood of the past with the Brushwood that stands before us today.

“It really was a family place and, of course, it’s outstanding for its beauty and seclusion and privacy,” Ranney says. “But my grandparents made it a point of opening it up to people. So you have this interesting combination of it being a family house and now, with their dedication, it being totally a public house.”

When the exhibit ends, Ranney says the photographs will remain at Brushwood, where they will become a permanent collection of images for generations to come.



Nora Ryerson, foreground, and Nancy Ranney, June 1960; Photo by Edward L. Ryerson