

THE WAPSIPINICON

A newsletter published quarterly by the
TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Named "Volunteer Institution of the Year" in 2010
by the Illinois Association of Museums

VOLUME 16

MARCH 2021

NUMBER 1

MUSEUM ON MAIN

AND

GALLERY ON GALENA

Our collection includes more than 10,000 artifacts, displayed to preserve and interpret local history.

The **MoM** is housed in an 1855 Illinois Historic Landmark Building at 110 East Main Street.

The **GoG** is in the former Legion Hall, 550 North Galena just south of the tracks.

MUSEUM HOURS:

SATURDAYS: 9 TO 2

GALLERY HOURS:

FIRST SATURDAYS: 10-1

BEGINNING MARCH 20,
both museums will REOPEN
to the public.

Admission is free,
and our volunteers
will show you
around.

For private tours,
 call Ed Waca
 at 815.646.4016.

Board of Directors 2020-2021

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HAPPY FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY TO US!

Hey, it's time to celebrate! (Virtually, of course.) In January 2006, eight friends sat around a kitchen table to discuss start-up ideas for the Tiskilwa Historical Society. Since that evening, we've grown into a thriving organization with two museum venues and more than 300 members. A few more than half of our supporters live nearby; the rest are long-distance friends whom we call "Tiskilwannabes." As the "About Us" link on our website has explained from the very start, "We are a small group with big ideas, and we hope to grow in accomplishments as well as membership. By preserving the past and honoring the present, we want to contribute to the future of our little village in the valley, Tiskilwa, a gem with many facets." Our same goals hold true today.

Only a few months after that first meeting, in August 2006, we opened our own building on Main Street, gifted by the **Trustees of Arispie Township**. That stroke of good fortune happened with a tip from **Ali Imtairah**, the grocer next door to the township building. By early 2007, we'd begun offering monthly programs to help tell the story of our local history as well as our citizens' contributions and experiences in the world at large. Fifteen years later, we've now hosted an average of ten programs a year, more than 150 in all! We're currently updating our library of DVD recordings of each program; in our June issue, we'll provide details for borrowing them.

With the constant donation of Tiskilwa treasures, we soon outgrew our first **Museum on Main**. Through the special efforts of **Tiskilwa United Methodist Church** members, we were able to move into our new home in March 2010. As we've mentioned at many programs, the UMC's only stipulation was this: "Before we deed it to you, we want to use our building fund memorials to put on a new roof." Such overwhelming kindness and generosity gave us a boost in morale as well as finances! Ever since, we've tried to be good stewards of the wonderful, historic building through a strict schedule of maintenance and improvement. In February 2010, we closed the doors of the first museum to pack and move. With the help of several members of the **Tiskilwa Community Association**, we moved everything to our new facility and began to set up our displays. Pictured at the right, on March 21, 2010, are six members of the early board of directors: (Row 1, left) **Cecille Gerber, Jean Cavada, Dorothy Ary, Sally Kitterman**; (Row 2) **Richard Fisher, Ed Waca**. On that first day of spring, Mother Nature greeted us with a mild little snowstorm! Throughout the years, we've welcomed a few visitors each Saturday and scores more for our programs and during town festivals. We've kept track and – with the notable and sadly historic exception of 2020 – our yearly guest list averages 1,400 visitors!

In 2019, through the generosity of the **Tiskilwa American Legion Post 346** and the **Princeton Elementary School District 115**, we acquired the former Legion Hall for our second venue: **Gallery on Galena**, opening on Monday, November 11, 2019. We've used this museum to showcase military memorabilia and to create a facsimile of a one-room school house. Visitors to our museums have noted that a warm, welcoming atmosphere is evident the minute they've stepped in the door. Parents (and grandparents) don't need to nag their kiddos "Don't touch!" because everything not under glass is intended to be played with or examined. Come on down!



2021 TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP — SO FAR!

THANKS TO EVERYONE who has joined.

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS

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Vickie Miller Weber (Montgomery)
Fred & Darla Williams (Litchfield Pk, AZ)
Patsy Morris Wooden

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◆ SILVER BENEFACTORS ◆

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Lee Helle (Northport, WA)
◆ GOLD BENEFACTORS ◆
Bill & Margaret Wendle (Tiskilwa)

Editor's Note: We emailed **Steve Borge (THS' 66)** to ask if we might reprint his memoir, written ten years ago. In agreeing, he said, "*I can remember back in those days there were lots of farm kids who lived within a 2-mile radius and were all within 5-6 years of one another in age: Novotny (3), House (3), Borge (3), Gutshall (3), Wood (2), O'Neill (5), Rocke (1), Tyne (1), Janicki (2).*"

School Days, Country Style by Steve Borge

The year was 1954. In so many, many ways the world was different than it is today. There were no cellphones, laptops, iPhones, or iPads. There was no Google, eBay, YouTube, Twitter, or MTV. In fact, at my house, there was no TV period.

Nope, we didn't own a television. Since I was six years old at the time, I didn't worry about that. Instead, my main concerns were more like this: When is Dad going to fix the flat tire on my bike? And where is my baseball glove? However, in August that year, I do vaguely remember a new worry popping up on my horizon, one that I wasn't sure I was ready for: I was about to start school – first grade!

Back in 1954, the old one- and two-room country schools still stood here and there around the various Tiskilwa townships, but they were slowly dying. Even though at that time there were still many farm families and those country schools had provided quality elementary educations for a lot of kids, country schools were almost gone. Providence Grade School was the last one standing for Tiskilwa. With a new addition to be completed at the Tiskilwa Grade School for the fall of 1955, Providence School was scheduled to be shuttered after the '54-'55 school year. That made me one of the final first-graders to attend Providence. One of six.



*Happy days at Providence School for **Steve Borge, Art Gutshall, Jimmy House, Sherry Dorff, Eileen Janicki, and Janet Cohrs.***

When I think back on those times, I think of a slower pace of life – when things seemed simpler and less hectic. Maybe it really wasn't, but looking back from 2011, it seems that way.

Providence Grade School was a two-room school house with first and second graders in one room and third, fourth, fifth and sixth graders in another room. Not too many students were in any one class: first grade was the smallest with 6, second grade was the largest with (I'm guessing) about 15. Seventh- and eighth-graders had to go all the way into Tiskilwa to attend "junior high" there. The Providence School building itself sat a couple hundred yards south and a

few hundred yards east of the **Providence Congregational Church**, close to the **Henry Whited** farmhouse.



*From our Country School display: The two-room country school at Providence, as photographed in 1951 by **David Rapp** of Buda.*

As I said, I was one of six: three boys and three girls. Our teacher was **Mrs. Dorothy Teach**. Now come on, what better name for a teacher could there be than Mrs. Teach!

I remember being nervous that first day of school. And, later, I remember reading about Dick, Jane, Mother, Father, Spot and Puff. But I don't remember too much else about the actual schoolwork we studied and learned. Unfortunately, this was a problem that would replay for me regularly over the next 12 years. But I do recall several experiences we had.

My best memory by far was the spring of 1955. Because Mrs. Teach had responsibility for both first and second graders, she kept one side of the room busy while she worked with the other side. To help herself in that regard, that particular spring, occasionally she would let the first-grade boys spend the afternoon outside, all afternoon. The next time it was the girls' turn, outside all afternoon. (When you're six, it's easy to keep boys and girls separated. By the time high school rolls around, not so much.)

We couldn't believe it! All afternoon to be outside and goof around before we went home. We would play tag, challenge-pump on the swing set, ride the teeter totter and merry-go-round, play catch with the football or softball, shoot baskets, play in the dirt, or just lie on our backs in the warm sunshine and watch the clouds roll by. Not a care in the world. It was a time that I've obviously never forgotten, and it's certainly one that I think about every so often.

But that was then and this is now. Now I am an adult, in fact, retired. I am bombarded by 24/7 news, weather, sports. I watch and read about oil spills, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes. Hear about wars, hatred, bigotry, racism. That bad news can sometimes get me down. But when that happens, it helps me to think back to when times seemed better – when country schools were still around – nearby, educational, fun, and safe. And they provided strong foundations for kids to become successful adults.

When I think about that time, this is what I always remember: six years old, outdoors with my two best buddies, away from my chores at home, away from schoolwork, and away from the girls. Life was good. God bless you, Mrs. Teach.

UPDATES FOR GALLERY ON GALENA AND MUSEUM ON MAIN

Behind the Scenes at Museum on Main

During the January 4 and February 1 board meetings, we've been busy lining up speakers for the fall. Our first confirmation is local favorite **Brian "Fox" Ellis**, who will portray Chief Black Hawk on November 8, 2021. Planning continues on the installation of a security system for both buildings. In the past two months, we've responded to a flurry of inquiries sent through our website on topics as diverse as the Owl's Head formation, Jack's Stables in the 1950s, and whether we'll be selling hoodies anytime soon.

Behind the Scenes at Gallery on Galena

We made arrangements to transport the *Bureau Valley Chief* archives, generously donated by **John and Ginger Murphy** (THS '66 and '68), to the lower level of our Gallery on Galena on November 21, 2020. We dubbed it "Operation Heave-ho," and it was indeed carried out with military precision. A few days later, several of us gathered at GoG to clean, organize, and stack 100+ bound copies as well as review the loose paper copies in boxes. The continuing round involves cataloging the microfilm, with issues from 1884 sporadically until 1889, and then quite completely after that – with the mysterious exception of October 1906 to September 1922.

On a wing and a prayer, we put out an APB for a microfilm reader, and lo and behold, **Dave Sampson** showed up with a machine that belonged to his Aunt Mary, a genealogy buff. Much to the surprise of his wife, **Julie Perry Sampson** (THS '67), this expensive contraption had quietly occupied a corner of their basement since Aunt Mary's passing. Works great! Beginning in the spring, we'll make appointments to access the microfilm at GoG upon request.



At the former Chief office, "Easy does it" were the bywords as **Bill Wendle** descended steps to the basement to retrieve back issues.

At Gallery on Galena, **Charlie and Ed Waca** (THS '64 and '66) unloaded boxes and bound copies of the Chief dating back to 1884.



Masked mover **Jerry Zabransky** (THS '63) navigated the steps to the Gallery basement with his arms full of bound issues and **Bill Wendle** waited at the bottom to transport them to tables.

At right, **Jane Jones** helps to organize microfilm of the newspapers.

Wapsipinicon Editors:

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Did you know . . .

Tiskilwa Community Church

Ring the Bells for You

Tiskilwa residents are familiar with the resonant sound of bells from the Community Church that toll the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. But have you noticed that every day at 2:20 p.m., there's a song that fills the air to thank all nursing home and hospital staff, caregivers, emergency personnel, firefighters, and police? We applaud this kind gesture by sending the TCC our own shout-out of appreciation.

GRAND RE-OPENING SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 20, FIRST DAY OF SPRING

We've been chomping (or do you prefer "champing"??) at the bit to welcome the public back to our two museum venues, and the time is drawing near! We'll certainly practice social distancing and ask visitors to wear facial coverings, but we'll be back in business.

Beginning on Saturday, March 20, the Museum on Main will again be open every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Our designated schedule for the Gallery on Galena is each first Saturday, beginning April 3. However, if you'd like to visit the Gallery on a different Saturday, stop by the Museum and one of the staff will meet you over at the Gallery. On non-Saturdays, just call Ed Waca (as noted on page 1) to show you around. By the way, we are always looking for new staffers to welcome visitors. Just let Cele know. (815.646.4353)

IN MEMORIAM

Thank you for memorials received since press time in December:

Joseph W. Albrecht, DVM	Ralph Martin
Aina Bachio	Gail McCauley
Delmar Beams	Homer & Dorothy Miller
Maynard & Lois Beil	Arley & Jeannette Morris
Benson Family	Arthur "Coopie" Nelson
Blake Family	Beverly Sue Helle Oesch
Madelon Borge	Jerry O'Neill
Wayne Broeren	Fred Roberts
Gene Gustafson	Terry Roberts
Richard Hedrich	Dan Russell
Louise Kunkel	Pat Russell
Richard Madsen	Mildred Sidebottom
	Mel Tynne

A NOTE ABOUT YOUR 2021 MEMBERSHIP:

If your name is not listed on page 2, perhaps you've forgotten to join for 2021. Sorry, but this is the final issue that we can mail to you without receiving your 2021 dues.

TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Annual dues: Jan. 1 to Dec. 31

MEMBERSHIP: Individual \$15; Family \$20

SPONSORSHIP: (Includes membership dues – and it's tax deductible)

Friend: \$50 Promoter: \$100 Patron: \$250

Bronze Benefactor: \$500; Silver Benefactor: \$1,000;

Gold Benefactor: \$2,500

Please make check payable to Tiskilwa Historical Society and mail it to P.O. Box 87, Tiskilwa, IL 61368. Thank you!

Let Me Call You Sweetheart (Continued from previous issue)



Since December, a few of our readers have helped us with names of a number of couples to add to the list of scores of other long-married THS grads. That list began with the Class of 1910, but this one stretches back to 1883 with the sweethearts *Nettie Towner & G.E. Welsh!*

From there, in vaguely chronological order:

Minnie Pettegrew & Clement Kitterman,

Grace Hunter & W.V. Kenney, Pauline Jack & Delbert Albrecht, Lydia Kitterman & Harold Kirkpatrick, Gladys Clark & Irv Thompson, Anna Nordstrom & Donald Landis, June Anderson & Charles Lee, Grace Gingery & Donald Smucker, June Reynolds & Raymond Skaggs, Vallie Strader & Donald Ballard, Jeanette McClellan & Arley Morris, DeeAnn Schertz & Coopie Nelson, Alice Vail & Bob Gustafson, Joanne Erickson & Russ Gustafson, Mariele Funderberg & Richard Fisher.

Jim and Jane Jones Present History of Tiskilwa's Town and School Bands

The original "History of Town and School Bands" in one binder was donated to THS in 2003. After working for parts of three years, an updated and expanded History was re-donated to the Society at a recent board meeting. Jim and Jane were there to inform the Board of changes and additions to the work.

The History is now in two binders: Volume 1 - Town Band research and a new section, The Addendum. It contains copies of Grade School Band awards 1970-1990, an annotated section of news articles (1879-1883) and 1934 (Tiskilwa Centennial and Hard Road Opening) and a new section containing all data about Tiskilwa and Chautauqua. The time line was expanded from five pages to ten.

Volume 2 is the school band research (1934-1990). All data from the original work is still here – no deletions. New data includes expanded biographies of some major participants, new proof of earliest dates for the Town Band, the Addendum, new photos, and additions to the time line.

History Mystery for March



This 1958 photo features not only a father-son team of firefighters but also Tiskilwa's 1936 Diamond T Fire Engine that served faithfully until replaced in 1951 by a red Ford truck. After that, the "T" stood at the ready as a backup engine. Who are these guys? (See column 2)

History Mystery Solved. Of course! It's Eddie Waca and his dad Bill. Although Ed was not yet on squad, he joined for several years when he lived in Tiskilwa during the 1980s.

New Display to Honor Tiskilwa's Firefighters

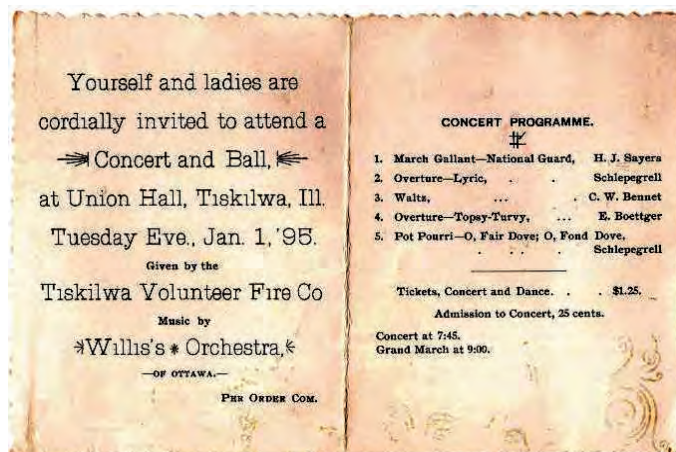
This fall, we posted a sign of appreciation on our announcement board to thank all our volunteer firefighters. When we asked TFD Chief **Randy Philhower** (THS '71) to prepare a list of volunteers over the years, he handed us a list of 105 names! For this spring, we're developing a Firefighters display in the Timeline Hallway showcase.

Randy also saluted **Roy Dorff**, who served as dispatcher for Fire and Ambulance Departments for many years. These 105 names are the members within his memory, which stretches back into the 1960s. The first name on the list is **Albert Lee**, who joined the TFD in 1923 and served as chief from 1943 to 1968, when he began to operate the radio at the fire station. In 1983, Albert received a certificate from the State of Illinois and a 60-year pin from the TFD.

In "When Tiskilwa Was Young," **Mary B. Steimle** (THS '22) also notes that the first TFD was a bucket brigade – and any able-bodied man was expected to help. They owned one hand-drawn two-wheel hose cart and one hand-drawn ladder cart which also carried the buckets. When World War I doughboys returned home in 1919, the TFD was reorganized and they purchased a Model T fire truck in 1920 for \$2,600. In 1936, it was replaced by the Diamond T [pictured at left] and kept in **Steimle's Garage**. The bell, pump, and special seat from the old Model T were installed on the new Diamond T. The TFD practiced early recycling called "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."



An 1895 New Year's Day Firemen's Concert and Ball, inviting "Yourself and ladies," was donated to our collection by the estate of **Julie Marcum**.



TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THINK SPRING! Early 20th century lawn mowers at the Country Club

We thought our readers, especially those living through this winter's frozen tundra in the Northlands, might enjoy this reassurance from our postcard collection. Several Tiskilwa residents were longtime BVCC members. **Dave Gerber** (THS '60) recalls a time during his high school years that his Uncle **Ogie Steimle** THS '22 invited him to be part of a foursome with **Monk Strunk** and **Francis Russell**. Dave said it took no time at all to get up there. In fact, he estimated the Monk averaged 90 mph the entire way to the Bureau Valley Country Club!

These generous businesses help
pay printing and postage costs.

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