



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 15

MARCH 2020

NUMBER 1

MUSEUM ON MAIN AND GALLERY ON GALENA

Our collection includes more than 7,500 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.

MUSEUM HOURS:
SATURDAYS: 9 TO 2
GALLERY HOURS:
FIRST SATURDAYS: 10-1

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

For private tours,
call Ed Waca
at 815.646.4016.

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SPRINGTIME BURSTS FORTH WITH A BEVY OF DIVERSE PROGRAMS

Our spring line-up of presentations truly has something for everybody. In keeping with our efforts to engage the entire community, we've scheduled four programs, each of which is "durn near" perfect for students, their parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, too.

MONDAY, MARCH 9 at 7:00: In "Pre-Civil War Quilts: The Secret Codes to Freedom," **Connie Martin** of Aurora will share the significance of quilt patterns with special stitching as messages to slaves escaping on the



Underground Railroad. Connie's multi-media program is based on extensive research into detailed, generation-to-generation stories as well as material preserved in a family Bible. Longtime T-H-S members may recall a fascinating presentation in 2013 by Connie's mother, **Dr. Clarice Boswell**. We present this program in collaboration with the **Tiskilwa Public Library**, where young and not-so-young residents can find age-appropriate books about the Underground Railroad, including Dr. Boswell's book: *Lizzie's Story: A Slave Family's Journey to Freedom*, a lively record of the life of Dr. B's grandmother, whose parents were slaves.

MONDAY, APRIL 13: We've invited **John James Audubon**, naturalist and artist, to Tiskilwa! Yes, we're aware that John died in 1851, but author and storyteller **Brian "Fox" Ellis** will bring history to life in his portrayal of Audubon. The fame of this early American artist and naturalist continues through his distinctive illustrations of birds in their natural habitat. We invite you to spend an hour in Audubon's studio, beginning at 7:00 p.m., as he shares tales of his adventures while recording every species of bird in North America. Audubon will charm and alarm you with stories of his travels into wild places. To make the evening fun, Brian is an expert in creating audience participation. Brian is part of the **Illinois Humanities Council (I.H.C.) "Road Scholar" program** that enables non-profit organizations such as ours to offer free humanities programs to our community.



MONDAY, MAY 11 at 7:00 p.m.: "Mussels, Moonshine, and Music: Migrant Workers in the Early 20th Century along the Mississippi" – How's that for a title to catch your attention? Using artifacts, photos, oral histories,



and toe-tapping fiddle music, the nationally recognized musician and historian **Dennis Stroughmatt** will guide us on an exciting voyage of discovery. He'll introduce us to the lives of river-based folks who all worked across Illinois more than 100 years ago. A little-known fact is that the Midwest and upper South were once home to thousands of migrant families who lived and worked on rivers as sharecroppers, fishermen, mussel shellers, button cutters, traveling minstrels, and, yes, even moonshiners! Their work was hard, but they played hard too, reveling in the lively music they heard in Memphis and St. Louis. Dennis holds a master's degree in history from SIU-Carbondale and a Certificate of French Quebecois Studies in Quebec. He is not only a musician but a passionate educator who entertains as he teaches. He is also a Road Scholar, whose presentation is made possible through a grant from the **I.H.C.**

MONDAY, MAY 25: Beginning at 11:00 a.m. in the East Park on Memorial Day, U.S. Navy veteran **Jennifer Fisher** will emcee Tiskilwa's annual **Memorial Day Ceremony**. An honor guard, a noteworthy speaker, and patriotic ceremonies will be part of the event. Immediately following the program, the Tiskilwa Historical Society will host an event at its new Gallery on Galena. Specially planned activities will involve our military memorabilia as well as our realistic replica of a country schoolroom.

2020 TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP — SO FAR!

THANKS TO EVERYONE who has renewed or joined for 2020. We appreciate your support! Unless otherwise noted, members are from Tiskilwa.

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS

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ABOUT 2020 MEMBERSHIP:

If your name is not listed here,
perhaps you've forgotten to renew?

(See page 5 for membership form.)

Editor's note: One afternoon in early February, I stopped by Eunice Morris's home in Dover, just as four longtime friends were finishing their weekly card game. I pulled out my trusty iPad and recorded an hour and a half of laughter and reminiscences for our Oral History Project. Here are paraphrases of a few highlights.

Side note: Since they are all THS grads, they agreed we could use their photos from our high school collection. Complication: When C.D. Long was principal from 1926 to 1945, he banned yearbooks as a frivolous waste of money. Although our museum has entire-class photos from some of those years, we have no studio photos. (If your family has a class photo from '26 to '45, could we copy it?)

Memories of Country School Days

Growing up on a farm southeast of Tiskilwa, **Elaine Burress Bowers (THS '44)**, shared Aldrich School memories that kept us laughing. I



remember it was a whole different world when those big farm boys came to school. They showed up about November and then sometime in April they'd disappear – depending on the farm weather, you know. They were good fellas and didn't cause any trouble, but you always knew when they were there because the school room smelled completely different. They milked cows and slopped hogs and then came to school whatever time they could.

Country girl **Agnes McCauley Ross (THS '48)** has fond memories of Kitterman Country School. Below the hill where the ditch is, that little creek had a wider space. During lunch hour, the teacher let us go down there and slide on the ice. I don't remember that anybody ever owned skates back then, so we just slid around. Agnes also remembers riding her pony to school, along with the **Gustafson boys, Bob and Russ**. While we were in school, we'd tie our ponies to the fence across the road. They got to eat grass all day, and we'd take them down to the creek at lunch time. I guess the ponies thought it was great. At least, they never argued with us.



Agnes also told us that she had three teachers during her elementary years, including **Eleanor Bacon Schertz**, **Marie Laughlin**, and **Eunice Albrecht Kauffman**. We had fun because she [Eunice] was young and she got engaged, but she wouldn't tell us who her boyfriend was. That was back in the days when you had to have your car registration strapped to the steering wheel. So we'd sneak out there and crank our necks to see whose car she was driving.

Agnes and Elaine both remembered the fabled **Mr. C.D. Long** as their high school principal. As Agnes remembers, He used to say, "You are here physically but not mentally." Elaine didn't recall that phrase, but she said that Mr. Long was *really* strict and saw to it there was *absolute* order. Interestingly, she also revealed this: He had the janitor, **Charlie Moran**, as his spy. If Charlie saw something going on that shouldn't be, he'd run and tell C.D. So we kids couldn't decide which one we disliked more.

We had three cute young teachers who were all scared to death of C.D. One was **Madelon Hill [Borge]**. Every once in a while, she and the two other young teachers would be giggling in the cloak room and Mr. Long would walk by. Boy, they'd snap to attention and fly

out every door and – poof! – disappear. Elaine went on to say, I'll tell you one thing, that old guy really taught us history and civics and patriotism. He did a good job on that.

Eunice Rediske Morris (THS '39) had a different take on school memories, right after graduation. I'd thought I was all through with school. But Mother says, "You're going to beauty school." It cost \$50 for a six-month course at Cinderella School over in Kewanee. My mother told me she'd scrimped and saved up \$25, and then she had to borrow the other \$25 to get me outta hock. That's how poor we were. So I graduated high school in May and by mid-June, I was in school again. When we finished the course, we went down to Peoria at the Pere Marquette. We had to demonstrate that we knew how to shingle hair and use spiral rods and curling irons. I bought my equipment from **Edna Kane** for my own place, back of a barber shop next to the butcher and locker on Main Street. Then **Blake** came along and that was that. He'd been in the service 11 months, 4 days.



Another little girl, **Phyllis Elmore Sims (THS '54)**, received her education at three different country schools, just at the time that they were closing for lack of enrollment and sometimes even re-opening briefly. She told us this: When I went to Kitterman School, we played down there in the pasture, as we called it. At the end of lunch hour, the teacher would ring the bell for all she was worth – but somehow we didn't hear it. So every once in a while, we had a nice long lunch period. Back to the **Gustafson** boys riding horses – I remember **Gene** and **Gerald** were just second or third graders, but they rode to school bareback on a big old work horse. After school, they'd give him something to eat. So when the big guy put his head down to munch, the two little boys would scramble up on his neck. Then he'd toss his neck back up, they'd get themselves situated, and ride him on home.



The Snows of Yesteryear

Elaine remembers one mid-1930s winter this way: The snow drifts were deep that year, and my sister Betty and I were tickled that we could walk over the top of the grapevines! The roads were all plugged up. One time that winter, my sister and I were supposed to be taking a nap, but we kept hearing men's voices. We were all spooked out, and we finally crept downstairs to whisper to our mother, "There's something going on. We hear singing." So she led us back upstairs, looked out our bedroom window, and said, "Come and look, girls! The WPA men are lined up, shoveling our road and they're singing as they swing the shovels." It took those fellas a long time to get the roads open, and some people rode bobsleds across fields. When we did get out, it was like driving through a long tunnel.

Eunice told of Wisconsin winters in the 1920s, before her family moved to Illinois. I remember one time we were snowed in for a week. The snowplows were working on the main roads, and we had to wait our turn. So the day before the plow was to come, my dad took our team and a neighbor's team and broke the way for a mile up to the main road. After guys had plowed, the snow was up to the telephone wires. We had eleven cows in those days. 'Course, my dad couldn't get the milk to the factory, so we had lots of pudding and cottage cheese and ice cream, and the pigs got the rest. Those were some happy pigs – warm milk, twice a day, all week long!

UPDATE ON GALLERY ON GALENA

Memorial Day, May 25, 2020: As you read on page 1, following the ceremony in the East Park, we're inviting everyone over to the Gallery on Galena to enjoy a special event that is still in the planning stages. Check our Facebook page or website for an update in April.

Since December's newsletter, we've received several significant donations of items, including **Navy** and **WAVE (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service)** uniforms from the family of **Harold and Evelyn Albrecht**. In addition, the **Family of Donnie & Barb Sims** donated a spinet piano. Every country school room needs a piano, and this one is a beauty! Stop by on the first Saturday of any month to see dozens of items, all donated by community members.



If you need an off-hours tour, track down one of the Good Guys pictured above at left: piano-movers **Randy Senneff, Ed Waca, and Charlie Waca**.

Right: On February 1, our across-the-street neighbor, **Pat Theodore** stopped by with grandson **Nathan**, who enjoyed the light-up globe from the 1940s.



Thanks to new contributions from members and non-members alike, we've raised another \$4,704 since our December issue. Current restoration expenditures have amounted to \$43,051, and our total contributions stand at a STUNNING **\$44,596**. We're estimating that final projects, including additional sidewalks, will cost about \$1,000. Rest assured that any additional donations in excess of our current needs at the Gallery on Galena will be deposited in a separate Building Fund account for future use at both campuses.

Thanks to these **Building Fund Friends (BFFs)**, several of whom are second- or third-time givers: **American Legion Post 346, Anonymous, Lee & Bev Bachman, Chuck & Joan Bruder, Cecille Gerber, Patricia McKay, Tom & Sonny Miller, E. Irene Nordstrom, Todd & Sherri Sears, Tiskilwa Economic Development Corporation, Gretchen Van Heukelom, Nita Von Holten, Bill & Margaret Wendle, and Bob & Linda Wheeler.** (Happy 50th Wedding Anniversary to the Wheelers!)

UPDATE ON FUND FOR REPLACING COUNTRY SCHOOL SIGNS

Following our appeal in the December issue, we have now received \$308, more than half the replacement cost for our new signs. Thank you to these donors: **Alice Malloy, Joe and Janet Ballerini, Charles Fredenhagen, Roger Fredenhagen, Marcia Wheeler Johnson, Don Lawson, Wes & Heather Sampson, and Glen & Judy Wright.** If you would like to contribute, please send a check to us at P.O. Box 87 and jot "COUNTRY SCHOOL SIGN FUND" on the memo line. Thank you.



Welcoming International Visitors to Tiskilwa



On December 7, the **Tiskilwa Library** hosted **International Holiday Customs Day**. Several of their visitors walked across Main Street to our museum. Here, young women from **Brazil, Zambia, Egypt, and Laos** paused for a moment to mark the locations of their homelands on our Visitor Map, which now boasts 24 pins on foreign lands.

BY THE NUMBERS: Jan. to Dec. 2019

(Statistics compiled by our secretary, **Julie Sampson**)

1,253 @ 12*: Number of attendees @ number of events

586: Number of visitors who signed in on Saturdays in 2019

334: Members & Sponsors in 2019

7,275: Estimated volunteer hours, including GoG restoration

Our volunteer webmaster, **Adnan Imtairah**, reports these encouraging stats: **538** Facebook followers from **37** states.

Since starting in 2006, we have now cataloged more than

7,500 items, donated by **423** individuals or families!

* Including **Eric Taylor** concert and **Memorial Day Ceremony**

HOLIDAY VISITORS "CATCH THE SPIRIT" DURING ANNUAL COUNTRY CHRISTMAS

Bright sunshine welcomed dozens of visitors to our three-block party on Main Street, as visitors walked Tiskilwa during this year's Country Christmas on December 7. For this annual holiday event, organized by our historical society, **Tiskilwa Community Association** once again provided 20+ trees for a decorating competition. Everyone agreed that **Zig's Station** earned its top prize with the charming "I'll Be Gnome for Christmas." We asked **Carter Saletski** to befriend and pose with their gnome, the clever creation of Carter's mom, **Jodi**.



The **Bureau County Chorus**, under the direction of **Mary Kiefer**, presented a holiday program at the museum on December 7. This volunteer group, ranging in age from 16 to 83 (!) helped us collect 37 items as a "price of admission"—to donate to the **Bureau Food County Pantry**.



TEN YEARS AGO, OUR MUSEUM MOVED DOWN THE STREET

On a very snowy First Day of Spring on March 20, 2010, we hosted the Grand Opening of our relocated **Museum on Main**! From 2006 to 2010, our growing collection was housed in what is now the Alpaca Farm store. As we began bursting at the seams, **Tiskilwa's United Methodist Congregation** deeded their church building to us. On February 8, T-H-S volunteers stuffed their cars and SUVs with boxes chock-full of artifacts. After our frenzied week of unpacking, painting, sorting, and organizing, several **TCA** members and four high school students spent their Saturday morning moving the heavy furniture into place. When we submitted to the Illinois Association of Museums materials detailing the planning, execution, and result of our move, the committee was impressed enough to name us "**Volunteer Institution of the Year**" in 2010 at their annual fall conference in Naperville.



Representing T-H-S at the IAM Conference to accept the 2010 award: **Helen Kenney, Judy Wright, Jan Lohaus, Cecille Gerber, and Ed Waca.**

IN MEMORIAM

Thank you for memorials received since December press time:

Francis Ary
 Chet & Beverly Beams
 Delmar Beams
 Wayne Burrell
 Doris Mae Anderson
 M.L. Beil
 Benson and Blake Families
 Orville & Bessie Brokaw
 Gene & Oakley Feldges
 Albert Flaherty
 Jim Flaherty
 Leon & Elsie Fosdick
 Vera Albrecht Waca Gingerich
 Rich Hedrich
 Edmund & Grace Hickey
 Art Hoffman
 Louise Kunkel
 Gail McCauley
 Ed & Marion Miller
 Sam & Elsie Morris
 McComber Family
 Bud & Madeline Nordstrom
 N. Edwin & Helen Nordstrom
 John O'Neill
 Philpott Family
 Fred & Terry Roberts
 Dan Russell
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 Ralph Wagner

History Mystery for MARCH



This overpass was part of the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad, the first tracks to connect Chicago to the Mississippi River and cross over it. Once it spanned the Mississippi in 1856, it was renamed the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific. (CRI&P). Iowa Interstate Railroad trains still roll over this old overpass several times a day.

Could you find it on a hike? (See column 2.)

History Mystery Solved: These tracks pass over Tiskilwa road 2160 East Street, just east of Lock 6 on the canal. This road formerly connected to the Bottom Road, but now it ends at the Hennepin Canal. (Thanks to **Dave Horst** (THS '74) for sharing this image.)

For history buffs: In 1857, **Abraham Lincoln** represented the Rock Island in an important lawsuit regarding bridges over navigable rivers. The suit had been brought by the owner of a steamboat which was destroyed by fire after running into the Mississippi River bridge. Lincoln argued that not only was the steamboat at fault in striking the bridge but that bridges across navigable rivers were to the advantage of the country.

Source: *Lincoln* by D.H. Donald, published in 1999 by Touchstone, p. 157.

For music buffs: An American folk song, "Rock Island Line," is about the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad. It appeared as early as 1929, with the first recorded performance by inmates at Arkansas prison farm in 1934! Numerous artists have recorded it, often changing the verses. Sing along now:

*The Rock Island Line is a mighty good road
 The Rock Island Line is the road to ride
 The Rock Island Line is a mighty good road
 If you want to ride you gotta ride it like you find it
 Get your ticket at the station for the Rock Island Line*

Congratulations and Best Wishes to Aspen & AJ!

A note from **Aspen Sampson** and **AJ Egan**, who were married on January 25, 2020: "It meant so much to me after growing up in Tiskilwa my whole life to get married here, also! AJ and I aren't affiliated with any church so after many different options, we chose to get married in the Tiskilwa Historical Society. A huge thank you to everyone at the museum that allowed us to do this, and even bigger thank you to everyone that helped take down all the beautiful old wedding dresses and put up our new decor. It turned out so beautiful and we couldn't imagine having it any other way!"

Photo by Melissa Mata



WILL YOU CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS?

Sorry, but this is the final newsletter we will be able to mail to you without receiving your 2020 membership 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

Name _____

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I'm also including a MEMORIAL DONATION of \$ _____ in MEMORY of _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____

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

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We asked member **Monica Jamison Morris (THS' 76)** to share this Facebook post and photo, taken from the porch of her mom's rural Tiskilwa home. "Jack Frost paid a visit to the farm this morning."

These generous businesses help to pay postage costs.

JOHN F. HEDRICH
Trial Lawyer

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