

THE WAPSIPINICON

A newsletter published quarterly by the

TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

* 2010 Volunteer Institution of the Year, Illinois Association of Museums

*2020 Project Winner of Illinois Governor's Hometown Award,
representing the Volunteers of the Tiskilwa Community

VOLUME 18

DECEMBER 2023

NUMBER 4

MUSEUM ON MAIN

AND

GALLERY ON GALENA

More than 17,000 artifacts in our two museums preserve and interpret local history.

The **MoM** is housed in the former Methodist Church, 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:

SATURDAY: 10:00-1:00

GALLERY HOURS:

FIRST SATURDAYS: 10-1

Admission is free, and our volunteers will show you around. For an appointment, call Ed Waca at 815.646.4016.

Board of Directors

2023-24

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(Two vacancies)

SANTA AND LESSER LUMINARIES ARE COMIN' TO TOWN: WALK TISKILWA ON DECEMBER 9

The holiday spirit is in the air along Main Street, and it's time to **Walk Tiskilwa on Saturday, December 9, between 10:00 and 1:00**. Come on "Over the Creek and Down the Street" to delight in some down-home cheer. Bundle up and **CATCH THE SPIRIT** as we invite the residents and visitors to enjoy the day. **Santa** will be available for whispered wishes at the Community Church.

Janet and Curt (THS '85) Dugosh have taken on most of the organizing responsibilities this year, and Janet's charming promo on page 5 gives details on all the locations and specifics.

Our Museum on Main and Gallery on Galena will offer cozy, decorated spaces to time-travel through Tiskilwa's history. At the MoM, we'll host three special features for holidays:

As you enter the Timeline Gallery, look to your left to see our December showcase featuring a delightful "Snow Village" shared and arranged by **Marg Wendle**. (THS '70) As you enter Gallery 1, you'll spot the **Waca Brothers, Ed** (THS '66) and **Charlie** (THS '64), teaming up again for their traditional Lionel train display, as it chugs around a tiny Christmas tree.

Continue through the east door to Gallery 2, and marvel [*We hope!*] at the brand new display of more than 100 Tiskilwa High School trophies, plaques, and other recognition – for sports, music, cheerleaders, drama, and FFA. The photo at right shows part of the new display of THS items passed on to us by

Kenny Fisher (THS '77, *pictured above*) and **Kelly Fisher Johnson** (THS '79) when they sold Kelly's Place, where school memorabilia was housed and displayed after the high school closed in 1995.

At Gallery on Galena, Santa's helpers have been busy cleaning and setting up an area in the lower level of the Gallery for THS alumni to come down and pick up the trophies you'd like to take home to your man-cave or she-shed. If you're an outta-towner, just designate a friend to do the deed. We're sure you will agree that we've displayed as many trophies as we could fit into MoM. In addition, **Mayor Michael Murray** has mounted a dozen plaques in the Village office. Nevertheless, about 90 items remain that we were unable to display. After much discussion, **the TiskHistSoc board decided to offer these reminders of Tiskilwa High School's glory days to the public**. We realized that, with the school's closure almost thirty years ago, most of the people who find them most meaningful are still with us. But not forever. Don't miss this chance to come and get 'em. (Freebies!) We want them to have good homes rather than sit on shelves in the GoG basement.



Gallery on Galena, Lower Level
Saturday, December 9, 10:00 to 1:00
Giveaway: THS trophies & plaques

Thank you to those listed here who recently renewed or joined for 2024.
We finished 2023 with 366 members! [Renewal forms are enclosed.]

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS

◆ INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES ◆

Leigh Hendrickson
David Raikes (Marseilles)

SPONSORS

◆ FRIENDS ◆

Sylvia Albrecht Aschliman (Chicago)
Ron Clodfelter (Boca Raton, FL)
M. Ted Johnson (Princeton)
Marc Smucker (Magnolia)

◆ PROMOTERS ◆

Dale & Chris Anderson
Dave & June Battey (Minooka)

◆ PATRONS ◆

David & Jane Bitting (Pekin)

◆ BRONZE BENEFACTOR ◆

Joann L. Albrecht (Albuquerque, NM)

◆ PLATINUM BENEFACTORS ◆

Bill & Margaret Wendle

Friends of Mt. Bloom Exceed Fundraising Goal

As our readers know, a Mount Bloom North gateway dedication ceremony was held during Pow Wow Days, capping a campaign to raise money for this final project by The Friends of Mount Bloom. They've announced the generous support of more than 30 donors in the local community who responded to a postal mail appeal as well as society members who read about the effort in the *Wapsi*.

As a result, the donations collected (and the fact that Doc & Tom Schertz donated their blacksmithing talents) passed the \$3,500 goal. The remaining donations will be used to create a special fund for the costs of continued maintenance of FoMB's projects: the cemetery steps and railings, the gazebo and surrounding gardens, and three gateway signs – at the base of the steps as well as the north and south (the old gateway) entrances to Mt. Bloom.

Because FoMB projects were related to our society's mission to preserve history, we agreed to serve as the fiscal agent for all donations since the FoMB formed in 2008. At this point, however, all remaining funds will be transferred to Mount Bloom Cemetery's general account. If you still intend to contribute, please mail your check to [Mt. Bloom Cemetery](#), 765 Brewster St. c/o Ginger Murphy, Tiskilwa, IL 61368.



The new archway looks dramatic in October's bright blue weather.

In a donation note from Ann Longman Serrato (THS '73) in Arizona, (The Longmans are "Tiskilwannabes," living far away but holding places in their hearts for our little village) Ann wrote this: "Sure enjoyed my fiftieth class reunion and Pow Wow Days. It was terrific to be present for both the dedication of the town mural and the cemetery archway. Everyone does such a great job of keeping our town beautiful and significant. Somehow, I feel that the whole "village" loves all of you back. I could tell – its spirit was showing. Ann and my sister, Cathy Longman

Wapsipinicon Editors:

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Recent Programs Appeal to Diverse Interests

To take in the varied program themes of folk music, railroads, and veterans, our audiences came from far and wide to our fall programs.

September 24: Award-winning musician **Chris Vallillo's** Sunday afternoon concert of instrumental and vocal music created a lot of toe-tapping. His songs ranged from heartfelt tributes to farmers as the backbone of this nation to poignant expressions of nostalgia to a joyful celebration of the beauty of our Illinois countryside.



October 9: In **Mike Matejka's** first-class presentation, "What's Comin' Down the Line? Railroads in the American Mind," he shared legends and revealed many little-known facts about railroading. Mike



engaged the audience with his conversational manner as well as his use of illustrated, factual references to Tiskilwa's connection with the Rock Island Line. Audience members included devoted rail "roadies" from Tiskilwa, Princeton, Marseilles, Malden, Utica, Bradford, and Ogelsby! We thank the Illinois Humanities for underwriting the grant for us to host Mike's visit. After the program, Mike (above left) stayed to chat with audience members, including **Bill Wendle**.

November 13: **Terry Johnson**, president of the **Illinois Valley chapter of Quilts of Valor**, presented fascinating facts and personal stories about the humble beginnings and continuing legacy of the Quilts of Valor Foundation. Representing Tiskilwa High School Alumni Association, **Randy Senneff** (THS '73) distributed Tiskilwa keychain gifts to the veterans. The highlight of the evening was presentation of



Quilts of Valor to two veterans who are Tiskilwa residents: **Jack Piacenti** and **Joe Hannon**. (THS '65) Several family members and numerous friends attended to honor them and hear about the QOV.

Above: Jack & Liz Piacenti and family. Jack served in the Army for two years as an SPC 5. After basic training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, Jack was stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado, before being deployed to Germany. He received a sharpshooter award during his service.

Below: Joe & Tracy Hannon and family. Joe enlisted in the U.S. Army



in 1966 and completed his training at Ft. Campbell, KY, and Ft. Meade, MD. After achieving a rank of Spec 5, he sailed from San Francisco to Vietnam. Joe operated heavy equipment to build roads and airstrips with the 538 Combat Engineers in both Thailand and Vietnam.

He returned stateside to Fort Collins, Colorado, and mustered out on December 7, 1968, in time to return home to his family for Christmas.

Editor's note: A few months ago, member Ann Rothery of St. Louis made inquiries about our information concerning local abolitionists who aided enslaved fugitives. Although we were unable to provide many details, Ann forged ahead, using **The Underground Railroad in Western Illinois** by Owen Muelder as a major source. Thank you, Ann, for sharing!

Underground Railroad in Bureau County

by Ann Blaisdell Rothery

Growing up on a farm in Milo township, I heard a family legend that held my fascination. The legend was that our ancestors became part of the Underground Railroad (UGRR) when they settled in Illinois. As my father had told us, "Everyone wants to believe that their family was part of the UGRR, so we don't know if the stories are true."

I recently have uncovered information that more folks than previously known – from Arispie, Indiantown, Milo and Wyanet townships – were involved in the UGRR. It just may be that someone reading this article has ancestors who were involved.

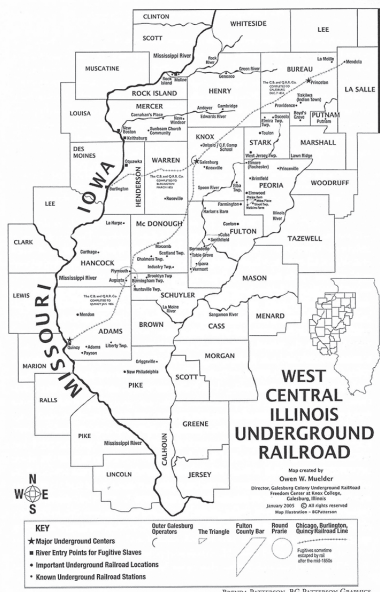
The UGRR operated in the North to aid runaway slaves in their attempt to reach Canada and freedom. Of course, it was not an actual railroad and it was not underground. It was called "underground" only because it was secret and "railroad" because it seemed to run regularly like train routes.

Terminology related to the railroad industry was also used. Underground "agents," "station-keepers," and "conductors" were titles given to individuals performing specific functions in the movement of "passengers."

"Stations" were added or removed as ownership of the house or farm changed. If a new family supported slavery or if the site was discovered to be a station, passengers and conductors were forced to find a new station.

Establishing stations was done quietly, by word-of-mouth. Very few people kept records of their activities. This was not an omission but a protection for fugitives who needed help and anti-slavery activists who were helping. If caught, the fugitive enslaved people would be forced to return to their Southern owners, and citizens caught aiding escaped people faced arrest and sometimes even jail.

The map to the right is published in Owen Muelder's book *The Underground Railroad in Western Illinois*.



A cluster or web pattern of stations was prevalent in our part of Illinois. One explanation of this seems to be that "operators" knew that safe havens established reasonably close to each other served as handy escape valves. If the temperature got to be too hot at one station, the pressure could be eased by directing fugitives to another hideout relatively nearby. As the chain of these "depots" were knitted together over time, the close proximity of optional stops helped to increase the odds that escaping slaves would reach freedom.

The Illinois Underground Railroad was an important part of a multi-state network. Sometimes routes of the UGRR were organized by abolitionists, the people who opposed slavery. More often, the network was a series of small, individual actions to help fugitive enslaved persons.

Earlier this year as I was perusing old editions of the *Bradford Republican* online, I discovered a short piece written by my great-grandfather recalling an event from his childhood that supports our family's UGRR claim of providing safe houses. This first-person account describes that both the Blaisdell and Berry families were station-keepers at Boyd's Grove in Bureau County. Even better, this brief article was published again several weeks later in September 1893 in the *Bureau County Tribune*. J.C. Blaisdell, the editor of the smaller Bradford newspaper wrote the original piece printed here.

Bureau County Tribune, Princeton, Illinois. Friday, September 22, 1893, page 4, column 3.

Of late many of our exchanges have been relating incidents of abolition days, and the Bradford Republican tells the following: On a "cold, rainy night in November 1855 my father's family was sitting about the open fire-place in a log cabin, in which we lived at Boyd's Grove, when there was a knock at the door, but without waiting for an answer, mother's youngest brother, Joseph Berry, Jr., opened it and called father out. In a few minutes the two came in followed by a negro man, his wife and two children. The sight of the fugitives, the story they told of their wrongs and sufferings made an ineffaceable impression upon my mind. After a hearty supper had been prepared for them, for which they seemed very grateful, they were taken to Mr. Pilkington's, near Providence, and from there the same night to Owen Lovejoy's. My mother's father, Joseph Berry, Sr., in those days lived in the next house south of the M. E. church at Boyd's Grove; he was an active abolitionist, but the night to which this item refers had company at his house who he dared not trust with a secret of this kind, so they were sent to father for food and help.

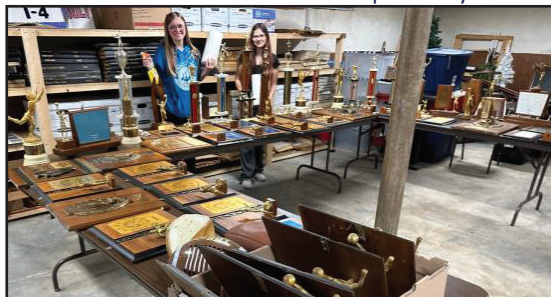
The Underground Railroad has the intrigue of a mystery and all the thrill of a great adventure, but more importantly, it was an act by brave people of both races to do what they could to combat the greatest evil of their time.

If your ancestors were in Bureau County before the Civil War or if your congregation was organized prior to 1861, you may have connections to the Underground Railroad, too. Please email me at annrothery@gmail.com and you can tell me more.

We're pleased to announce that our **May 13, 2024, program** will feature **Owen Muelder**, author of *The Underground Railroad in Western Illinois*. Muelder is also director of *Galesburg Colony Underground Railroad Freedom Center* at Knox College, officially recognized by the *National Park Service "Network to Freedom"* Program in 2006.

Special GIVEAWAY on December 9:

Two Princeton High School freshmen, **Jazzlyn DePauw** and **Jasmine Whitford**, volunteered to clean and organize THS trophies in the lower level of the GoG. Come on down and pick out your faves!



If you combine the page-one photo of Kenny Fisher with the new shelving, the above and below photos of the east wall and racks of class photos with other memorabilia, you'll have a three-dimensional view of the new display. Below left, **Curt Dugosh (THS '85)** shows his scholarly senior photo to his wife, **Janet**. The All-Conference recognition board hangs at the far end of the display frame. Visit Museum on Main any Saturday to see for yourself!



Volunteers Help Create New Trophy Display



To make it all happen, we rounded up the usual suspects, board members such as **Marg Wendle (THS '70)**, far right in the above photo. But we also enlisted the help of Saturday visitors, including **Scott Mehaffey** of Flossmoor and **Michael & Connie Wysocki** of Schaumburg.



(At right) One of members, **Genevieve Cummins**, was honored at the recent "Friendsgiving" event at the Tiskilwa Library, hosted by the Friends of Tiskilwa. HAPPY 99TH BIRTHDAY, Genevieve! Ever since our beginning 17 years ago, Genevieve has been an active member: helping the former "Ruby Crew" staple, stamp, and mail the early *Wapsi*, providing a showcase of her salt-and-pepper shakers, and sitting front and center at numerous programs.

Top Three Reasons That Farm Trucks Are Never Stolen

Although most trucks we see on Main Street are well-kept, we have a feeling there might be runabout pick-ups like this one . . . perhaps stashed in a barn?

3. They have a range of about 20 miles before they overheat, break down, or run out of gas.
2. Only the owner knows how to operate the driver's side door to get in or out.
1. It's difficult to commit a crime when everyone is waving at you.

❖ VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO . . .

- ❖ **Rick McCauley** for donating all materials and labor for the new shelving. Rick built the unit in loving memory of his aunt, **Alice McCauley Malloy (THS '56)** who passed away earlier this year.
- ❖ **Scott & Sondra Owens** for removing the decaying tree at the back of our Indian Rock Garden. The attractive garden at the west side of MoM's main entrance was planned and developed by their son, Ryan Owens, for his Eagle Scout project in 2012.
- ❖ **Taylor's Way Lawn Care and Tree Service** for donating and planting the autumn brilliance serviceberry tree.



Visitors Always Brighten Our Saturdays

In September, two grandsons of **Jan Lohaus (THS '73)** – **Brayden** and **Trystan Jeffries** (ages 12 and 6) from Honey Grove, Texas – found time to inspect just about everything at MoM. Trystan's big stretch to pinpoint their hometown on our map was supervised by Brayden and their friend **Tom Hall**.

Over the creek and Down the street to...



Christmastime in the Valley WALK TISKILWA

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2023 10:00am to 1:00pm

St. Mary's Hall - Local Vendors and Crafters. Alpacas on the front lawn.

Dugosh Farms, Dugosh Designs, BA Designs, Juanita Roberts, Alpaca Store

Tiskilwa Community Church - Visit from SANTA CLAUS...Ho Ho Ho

Cookies and coffee for snacking. Baked goods, rugs, vanilla, and knives for sale. Splash Tech will be displaying their 3D printer and website. Book signing and sale of "Cowgirl Prayers", a book by local author Katie Chism.

Tiskilwa Library - Crafts for Kids. Toy Donation Drop. Local Crafters and Bakers.

Cynthia Smucker Art & Baked Goods, Naptime Bakes, Deb Johnson

Gallery on Galena - Military and Country School displays.

Give-a-way of extra THS trophies ****These would make great Christmas gifts for a THS alumni****

Museum on Main - Displays & Showcases. A Petting Zoo will be on the front lawn

New display of 100+ THS trophies. Snow Village Showcase. Lionel Trains. Sale of "Chief Tiskilwa" keychains & Beautiful watercolor print note cards made by Jan Lohaus

MD Hardwood Floors - Camera collection on display and treats

Tours & Treats - One Forty East (140 East Main St) and Tiskilwa Inn Bed & Breakfast (155 High St)

Zig's Station - Coffee and a Give-a-way

Wood Carvings—Belle's Chip Schopp 141 E Main St

Christmas Music - Provided by Scott Bickett

Support our Local Restaurants for a Great Meal

Indian Valley Inn (IVI) - Hot Chocolate & Cinnamon Rolls. Raffle for Two \$25.00 Gift Certificates

222 Ale House - Raffle for Two \$25.00 Gift Certificates

Irene's Kitchen (La Cocina De Irene)

Philly Factory Food Truck

History Mystery for December



Lotsa smoke coming from a location on Sycamore Street near Owen Street!
What's happenin'? The card is postmarked Tiskilwa, 1914.
(See the top of column 2 for an explanation.)

History Mystery Solved: Did you know that for many years, Tiskilwa manufactured its own gas for cooking and lighting in homes and also for street lamps? The lamplighter, Ernie Lee, clopped around town on his white horse at dusk to light the old gas lamps on the corners. Later that night, he'd return to extinguish them.

The gas plant on the east side of Sycamore (behind the current Zig's Station) had a round expansion tank that when extended was about 30 feet in height. In early years, the gas was made from gasoline, but later coke and a special gas oil were used.

The gas plant equipment was repaired many times, but it finally closed about 1940. [Source: *When Tiskilwa Was Young* by Mary B. Steimle, 1985] The brick "gas plant" building still stands and is now owned and nicely maintained by **Brad & Connie Oeder**.

SIDEBAR: The note on the postcard, dated November 13, 1914, Friday A.M.: "Rec'd your card. Sorry we can't be there, but Jack said we would if he was through husking. MCB"

How Volunteers Make Things Happen at Our Museums



Always plenty to do in and around our two museums!

At left, **Larry Magnuson** secured the sign for the school display area in Gallery 2, Museum on Main, as we created an entirely new display corner.

At right, Larry and **Bill Wendle** re-located the Dave Doolittle Memorial bench. Several years ago, **Phil Smith** (THS '65) had the bench built in memory of his brother-in-law, Dave, a beloved coach and teacher at Tiskilwa High School. Its first home was at Indian Hills Golf Course, then later in front of Kelly's Place. Now it has a home in the Indian Rock Garden at the Museum on Main.

Collector's Corner: All Things Tiskilwa

Notecards of Tiskilwa Scenes: T-H-S member Jan Lohaus (THS '73) has printed notecards of six of her original watercolor scenes: the depot, the old Methodist Church, the 1912 high school, Tiskilwa mailboxes, wind turbines, and Main Street. A donation of \$10 is suggested for a four-pack, with all proceeds going to T-H-S.



If you'd like to have us mail items to you, please add a bit extra for postage.

Other items are available for these suggested donations:

- T-shirts in navy or gray (\$15);
- Long-sleeved gray shirt (\$20);
- THS Alumni Directory: 1878-1995 (\$15);
- Tiskilwa key chain (\$5);
- *When Tiskilwa Was Young* by Mary B. Steimle (\$5)

IN MEMORIAM

Thank you for these memorials received since our previous newsletter.

ISABEL BITTING
KATHRYN GORMAN
PAMELA GRENIER
DON LAWSON
ALICE MALLOY

KAREN FRIEL O'NEILL
GEORGIA & CLARENCE PHILPOTT
REX RINGENBERG
ALICE SCHINDEL
RAY SCHINDEL

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TISKILWA, IL 61368

www.tiskilwahistoricalsociety.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Constant Vigilance:

It's when everything is calm that you need to be most alert.



We thank **Nancy Joiner Harmon** (THS '76) for sharing this image, captured a few weeks ago, of a such a handsome lad in the timber. His image is one of many that will be in Nancy's photo calendars, available by ordering on her Facebook page. Nancy's 2024 year's calendar themes are Whitetail Bucks, Birds, and Wildlife – all from photos taken in the Tiskilwa area.

These generous businesses help to defray postage costs.

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140EAST
FOR Y
East
Sharing our historic home for short-term rentals, photo shoots and small events.
140EAST.COM  

DOC'S
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 Catch the Spirit and Walk Tisk
Sat., Dec. 9th
10am-1pm