



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 13 **JUNE 2018** **Number 2**

MUSEUM ON MAIN

Our collection includes more than 6,500 artifacts, displayed to preserve and interpret local history. Our museum is housed in an 1855 Illinois Historic Landmark building (the former Methodist Church) at 110 East Main Street, Tiskilwa.

MUSEUM HOURS
EVERY SATURDAY
9:00 TO 2:00

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

For private or group tours,
call Ed Waca
at 815.646.4016.

Board of Directors 2017- 2018

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- Randy Senneff

Museum Director
Cecille Gerber

STRAWBERRY & ARTS FESTIVAL TO WELCOME SUMMER TO OUR VALLEY ON SATURDAY, JUNE 9

When the Museum on Main's lawn begins bustling with activity -- fruit, artwork, and fun -- we know it's once again time for Tiskilwa's annual STRAWBERRY & ARTS FESTIVAL. On June 9 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., local artists and artisans will display and sell their original work, kiddies can splash around with projects-in-paint, and **Hungry World Farm** will serve scrumptious strawberry shortcake with big dollops of ice cream on top. Come to think of it, who could ask for more?

And yet -- wait, there IS more! From 12:00 to 1:00, **Phil and Pam Kaufmann** will be making music in a casual singalong under a shade tree. Throughout the morning, various homeowners will host town-wide garage sales. **Tiskilwa Public Library** will offer crafty fun for little readers. You can find lunch at nearby **Piccolo's Pizza** and **Zig's Station** or just down the way at **Kelly's Place** or **Indian Valley Inn**. In the photo at the right, **Connie Kauffman** plants impatiens in anticipation of a showy bed of blooms by the festival date of June 9.



In a new event extending the weekend fun, **Randy Senneff** is hosting a **Tiskilwa Country School Bike Tour** on Sunday, June 10, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Two different loops are available, each starting and ending in town. Call, text, or email Randy with any questions: 309.253.3052 or rrsenneff@yahoo.com.



Nancy Joiner Harmon's photograph of "Moonlight Over the Canal" is a fine example of the numerous works -- from photo-art to oil paintings to fiber art to baked goods -- that will be on display. A few non-profit organizations will have information available, too. Canvas tents will cover most of the booths, but in the event of a downpour, we've arranged to move the displays indoors. On the other hand, if Mother Nature sends us a few sprinkles, just grab your umbrella before you come on down.

Looking ahead to **SUNDAY, JULY 8**, festivities for our annual **Anniversary and Volunteer Recognition Picnic** will begin at 4:00 with a honey of a program presented by Tiskilwa's own **John Sims** and **Jayne Barnes** who've been involved in beekeeping for the past few years. Recently, all of us have read about the importance of bees to the future of food production in general, as well as the specific health benefits of honey. Join us as John and Jayne explain the facts and myths about the secret life of bees.

With our board members at the grill by 5:00 on July 8, you can enjoy hot dogs and fixin's, as well as visit with your friends and neighbors, all for a free-will offering. We invite the community to celebrate the twelfth anniversary of our Tiskilwa Historical Society's start. Sometime in the evening, we'd like to give a special shout-out to the dozens of volunteers who've kept the home fires burning for our museum's displays, activities, programs, and events since our first public meeting in 2006.

**** Make your reservation for the 2018 THS ALUMNI BANQUET. Details on page 2.**

TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Thank you to those listed here who recently joined or renewed as well as the early birds whose names were inadvertently omitted in March. We're back at full strength with 300+ members for 2018!

◆INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES◆

- Anonymous
- Bill & Sharon Anderson
- Jean Miller Anderson (Napa, CA)
- Janet Brown Annunziato (New Canaan, CT)
- Janet Balensiefen (Princeton)
- Sally Berg (Gainesville, FL)
- Bob & Kay Brokaw (Kewanee)
- David & Shirley Brokaw (Kewanee)
- Eileen Burress (Princeton)
- Cliff & Kathy Cartwright (Princeton)
- John & Theresa Cotter Family
- Bob & Cindy Davidson (Princeton)
- Nancy Hannon DeBord (Princeton)
- Leroy Drake Family (Princeton)
- Constance DuCanto
- Ken & Nancy Fisher (Putnam)
- Kory & Jennifer Fisher Family
- Richard & Mariele Fisher
- Peg Norton Foster (Buda)
- Betty Jo Gustafson
- Ben & Rinnea Holman (Diamond)
- Abby Stacker McAnally (Downers Grove)
- Nicole Miller & Eric Olson (Swaziland, Africa)
- Ed O'Neill (Dunlap)
- Pat O'Neill (DeKalb)
- Jerry & Ellen Nick (Wheaton)
- Brian & Lisa Padilla (Spring Valley)
- Jane O'Neill Piccatto (Spring Valley)
- Helen Cotter Price (Scottsdale, AZ)
- Marilyn Madsen Pattelli (Lexington)
- Jack & Liz Piacenti
- Geraldine Pruitt
- Sue Andriotis Rush (Jacksonville)
- Phyllis Sims
- William C. & Nancy Sims
- Mel Tyne
- Jan Wagner
- Christy Wagner (Peoria)
- Joyce Washer (Princeton)

NEW AND RENEWED SPONSORS

◆FRIENDS◆

- Joe & Janet Ballerini (New Lenox)
- Robert & Connie McChesney (Bath, ME)
- J. Douglas & Norma McQueen (Peoria)
- Terry & Sally Munson
- Barbara Reynolds Steigman (Rock Island)
- Cynthia Steimle (Davis, CA)
- Bob & Kay Telfer (Princeton)
- Deborah Cotter Wehrli (Naperville)
- Mike & Barb Williams (Cunningham, TN)

◆PROMOTERS◆

- Juanita Roberts-Beams
- Exxon Mobil Matching Funds
- Tiskilwa Community Association
- Ed & Rose Waca

◆PATRONS◆

- Susan Russell Freeman (Minneapolis MN)
- Charlotte Pettegrew Golinvaux (Wayzata, MN)
- OmniArts Foundation (Peru)

◆SILVER BENEFACTOR◆

- Caterpillar Foundation (Peoria)

REMINDERS: If you are a current employee or retired from a company that has a **MATCHING GIFTS** Program, we'll happily fill out the paperwork.

Also, if you have **Required Minimum Distribution from an IRA account**, please remember that we are a 501 (c) (3) organization, and contributing a part of your RMD to Tiskilwa Historical Society might be good for both of us.



On Friday, May 11, it was high time for outdoorsy spring cleaning. You can see where *Christy Wagner* and *Randy Senneff* stopped for a break from power-washing the steps. Other workers: *Ed Waca*, *Paul McCauley*, and *Connie Kauffman*. Not pictured here but also pitching in: *Stuart and Scott Owens*, *Charlie Waca*, and *Cele Gerber*.

TISKILWA HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI BANQUET

WHO: Anyone who loves dear ole THS

WHEN: On **SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 2018**
Social hour at 5:00 and dinner at 6:00

WHERE: The Cider Mill
14180 1800 East Street, Princeton

HOW to buy tickets (\$25/person): Purchase at Kelly's Place or Indian Valley Inn (both in Tiskilwa) or Heartland Bank (south branch in Princeton)

OR mail check to Sondra Compton-Owens, 734 Brewster, Tiskilwa, IL 61368 by 07/27/18.

An excerpt from *Mystics and Misfits: Meeting God Through St. Francis and Other Unlikely Saints* by Christiana Peterson

Editor's note: Christiana's family lived and worked at Plow Creek Farms, southwest of Tiskilwa from 2009 to 2017, when they moved to Columbiana, Ohio, where Matthew serves as pastor of Midway Mennonite Church. She has shared an excerpt from her new book.

My notions of our life at Plow Creek were already becoming a reality: the trickling streams and the calm rocking of the wind through the trees when Neva and I sat on a blanket in the afternoon, the cloud shapes barely visible through the firmament of extended branches and leaves that shaded us. I daydreamed of an older Neva running through the fields, picking



blueberries at random. We wanted her to know the life that humans have known for centuries, a life close to dirt and potent smells in which she'd know which season a zucchini squash grows in, and what an ear of corn tastes like fresh from the stalk. We wanted her to get muddy and snowed on, to be hot in summer and

cold in winter, to feed chickens and pick so many strawberries that her fingers were red with the juice.

We wanted to be able to call her to dinner from the woods and the creek.

When we moved to Plow Creek from Washington D.C., I guess Matthew and I had each been craving the same things: deep relationships and something out of the ordinary, some place to live out simplicity, to grow and to serve and to teach Neva what was important in life.

Most of all, we wanted her to know God, to live in a community that helped her be a faithful member of creation, to love and know her neighbors, and to be known and loved by them. I suppose we wanted her to have the life of the mystic Saint Francis—bucolic and good. And maybe she'd even end up a little bit like the mystic.

Matthew was thrown into the deep end of his first farm season. The farm's major

moneymakers were berries, particularly strawberries and blueberries. The farm team was composed of three families, as well as seasonal interns. Meanwhile, a woman named Adrienne managed the Valley garden, a large, half-acre space that provided food for market, food for community shares, and lastly, produce for Creekers (the nickname for those who lived at Plow Creek).



A misty morning at Plow Creek Farm, photo by Daniel Acker

Matthew was often out the door before I was awake. He came home in the evenings exhausted from the physical labor of weeding acres of strawberries, walking the fields to get a sense of their readiness, standing in the sun for hours while customers came and picked their own berries, and managing pickers in the early mornings before markets opened or farm orders came in. When farmers' market season began, he would be gone until ten some evenings. Having come from a nine-to-five D.C. job, he (and I) found this to be a big adjustment.

Matthew soon began to learn the names of the different types of strawberries—Jewel, Darselect, Earliglow, Honeoye—so that he could recommend them to customers who would come to pick them themselves in high season. He returned from his first few days sunburned and hungry. I quickly had to learn how to balance cooking bigger portions with not eating too much myself; after all, I was not outside walking the fields all day like my farmer husband, working up an appetite. I began to cook nearly every meal, and since we didn't have a dishwasher, every day I was left with mounds of dishes to do.

When harvesting began in late July and August, several women taught me how to preserve tomatoes, salsa, and applesauce. Others

(Continued on page 5)

UPDATE ON FORMER AMERICAN LEGION HALL

As of press time on May 20, the former American Legion Hall with its underlying land is teetering on the brink of becoming the property of Tiskilwa Historical Society. Just one more nudge and we're there!

Here's our information: On Monday, May 21, the Board of Princeton Elementary School District #115 will meet and deed the land underlying the building to the American Legion Department of Illinois in Bloomington. This extra step is needed because the Tiskilwa American Legion Post 346 disbanded in 2016, and as a result, the state organization now owns the building. When the Illinois A.L. group receives the land from the PES District, they will immediately sign over building – as well as the triangle-shaped property at the north end of the school grounds – to us. Whew.

Although the process for gaining ownership for the Legion Hall has been lengthier than we anticipated, we'll stick to our goal of hosting an **Open House on Saturday, August 4, during Pow Wow Days.**



As you can see, the ALH needs TLC -- ASAP! However, original knotty pine walls are a most appealing feature. At right, **Cecille Gerber** surveys the possibilities last March. In the final years that the Legion owned the building, they stored donated medical equipment that **Don Lawson** arranged to loan out or give away to anyone in need.

Our new Building Fund donors since March are **Bob and Eileen Prusator**. We now have \$5,340 in individual contributions to be matched by **Bob Sash**, up to the amount of \$10,000. Contributions are welcome anytime! See the boxed form to the lower right.

Although we've often explained our need for more "elbow room" in the museum, people still ask how we plan to use this Annex to our beloved Museum on Main. We'll divide the space into two parts: one to display military items and the other to set up a facsimile of a one-room schoolhouse. **CONTINUING WISH LIST:** We currently have eight old **SCHOOL DESKS** in our collection, but we'd like more!

A Sampling from Collector's Corner:

Suggested donations:

Directory \$15, Long-sleeved shirt \$20, Cap \$15

ALUMNI DIRECTORY: Reprint of 2009 booklet with listing of all THS graduates, plus a history of Tiskilwa Schools and Alumni Association: only 40 available!

LONG-SLEEVED GRAY SHIRT, with TISKILWA written down the sleeve in black italic letters

TISKILWA CAPS: Navy blue with adjustable cloth strap



Happenings at the Museum in April & May



*Left: Following her April 9th presentation, Civil War historian **Christina Lea Smith** was surrounded for a photo op by the many students who attended her program.*

*Right: Chicago musician **Phil Passen** charmed an audience of 50+ visitors with his cheerful, informative performance of "Music for Our Bicentennial" on the hammered dulcimer.*

THE AMAZING VOLUNTEERS OF TISKILWA:

They don't wait to be asked. They don't expect to be thanked.

We've observed so many volunteer activities over the winter and spring that we feel the need to brag about the generous members of our community. Of course, we're always thankful for our vols at and around the museum, but the list goes far beyond that. We won't try to name names, but rather list a sampling of the many jobs that people do "on the sly."

Clearing snow from Main Street sidewalks; trimming and burning brush at the bottom of the cemetery steps; planting annuals in Main Street's planters; organizing the Memorial Day ceremony; renovating the triangle plot by the West Park, planting flowers and weeding around the East Park gazebo; organizing the 5K Scholarship Run/Walk; raking leaves around Mount Bloom's gazebo; creating a baseball diamond – with dugouts, no less! – north of the old grade school. (Think of all the permissions and fundraising that go into such a project!) Thank you to all these folks and many others, too.



TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING FUND APPEAL FOR 2018

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED = \$ _____ DATE: _____

Please & thanks: Jot "BUILDING FUND" on the memo line, since it is a separate account from annual Memberships & Sponsorships.

IN MEMORIAM

Memorials received since our March newsletter

- DELMAR BEAMS
- DELMAR AND CATHERINE BEAMS
- JAMES COTTER, JR.
- B.J. FREDENHAGEN
- BARB HOPPER
- BARBARA PHILPOTT
- FRED ROBERTS
- RUBY I. STACKER
- PHILIP AND ELMER STEIMLE
- CLARISSA REYNOLDS STROM
- DAVID WHITED

History Mystery for June



Do you see what we see? Google Earth reveals a view of rural Tiskilwa's legendary past. Yes, that's a major hint to the right.

History Mystery Solved: Depending on crop or soil conditions, the oval of a Tiskilwa racetrack from the 1870s appears from a satellite view. The location is the SW quadrant of the four corners, directly south of **Nancy Cotter's** home. Thanks to **Davis Battey** for alerting us!

From *The Tiskilwa Register*, August 10, 1877:

The **Tiskilwa Driving Track Park** was described as one of the best: "The track, during the entire meet, has been in excellent condition; in fact, none better and [it] received many a compliment from strangers from abroad." At the time of this issue, the Park was holding its third annual meeting (August 7-10) and noted, "It has been a most successful affair. . . Attendance was good each day, especially on Wednesday and Thursday when it is estimated [that] upwards of 2,500 people were assembled on the grounds."

Orin Wilkinson, secretary of the Driving Track Association, states: "The citizens of Bureau County will have an opportunity of witnessing the best horses in the Western country. And all lovers of trotting will have a rare treat." Seven races are listed, with from four to fifteen horses entered in each class. "A \$600 purse is offered for each race, with a purse of \$1,000 for the free-for-all class."

TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP FORM

AVAILABLE ONLINE: tiskilwahistoricalociety.org

Please make checks payable to **Tiskilwa Historical Society**
P.O. Box 87, Tiskilwa, IL 61368

(Excerpt from *Mystics and Misfits*, continued from page 3)

shared with me their lists of summer and fall preserving, which included hundreds of jars of canned vegetables and fruits and quarts of blanched and frozen food. Learning to use the local food we grew was a busy pleasure.

I was occupied with the new duties of a farmer's spouse as well as with trying to learn new skills like making yogurt, weeding, feeding chickens, and keeping my doors unlocked for neighbors who dropped by throughout the day. Most of the time, I actually liked it. It felt like the opposite of the loneliness of living in D.C.: fullness, or the correct amount of busyness. Although we were off the beaten path, we were not solitary or isolated.

A year after moving to the farm, we were busy with the "simple life" as it would look in a less pristine version of an issue of *Country Living*: a life that included a house that seemed to blend in with nature itself. Dirt and straw from Matthew's boots left trails in the mudroom and up the stairs, mold collected on the walls from a humid summer with no air conditioning, and bugs got in.

I found myself obsessively vacuuming those bouncing Asian beetles from the corners of my sliding glass door after they flew in through holes in the screens on the open windows, bugs released by the harvesting of the acres and acres of soybeans from our neighboring farmers every fall. In the glow of sunset, you could see them, billions of them darting like particles in a ray of light.

The beloved Saint Francis—at least the pristine version of legend and picture book, preaching to the birds and saving a town from a wolf—might have been proud of our lives. These early obsessions and minor annoyances became, if not welcome, at least tolerated signposts of farm life that marked the seasons' passing. Like those rays of light that showed the flying insects, our life was dreamlike in its beauty. Even after a year, life in community was still a delight.

This excerpt was adapted from Christiana Peterson's new book, *Mystics and Misfits*. (Herald Press, 2018) All rights reserved. Used with permission. www.HeraldPress.com

TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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P.O. BOX 87

TISKILWA, IL 61368

www.tiskilwahistoricalsociety.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



After his program on May 14, musician/historian **Phil Passen** of Chicago invited audience members to come up and take a closer look at his hammered dulcimer. A few folks even tried their hand at it! Phil's program was made possible in part by a grant from **OmniArts**, a foundation dedicated to keeping arts alive in Starved Rock country.

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