

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 12

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NUMBER 4

MUSEUM ON MAIN

Our collection includes more than 6,300 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 2017-18

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CATCH THE SPIRIT! COUNTRY CHRISTMAS IS COMIN' TO TOWN

The holiday spirit is in the air again along Main Street in Tiskilwa, and it's time to mark your calendars for our annual Country Christmas, organized by our non-profit groups and local businesses. On Saturday, December 9, from 9:00 to 2:00, a sled-load of events have been planned to kick off the season of cheer. There's good reason to believe that **Santa Claus** will appear once again to listen to children's hopes and dreams as well as oversee numerous festivities in the Gem of the Valley.

The hardy elves of **Tiskilwa Community Association** have once again lined Main Street with fresh fir trees to be decorated this week in a prize competition for the top three entries. In addition, TCA will set up a fire pit in front of the library, providing folks of all ages with a warm-up of hot chocolate and hot dogs roasted on an open fire in front of the library. The self-proclaimed "Church Ladies" of **Tiskilwa Community Church** are preparing festive treats for their annual Rug and Bake Sale in the church basement, and the **Tiskilwa Public Library** will host a holiday craft activity, too.

Our **Museum on Main** will offer a decorative, cozy place to wander around, whether or not the weather outside is frightful. Our featured display this year will be miniature Christmas trees, loaned to us by community members, to brighten our Country Christmas. Depending on the number of trees that magically appear at the MoM on the final two weekends of November, the display will be in the Timeline Gallery showcase and perhaps throughout the museum. We hope that many folks will participate in the raffle for a hammered copper candlestick (See photo on page 5) designed and donated by local blacksmith **Vickie DOC Schertz**. Throughout the day, 1950s Lionel model trains will circle a special tree in Gallery 1, with **Ed and Charlie Waca** working as the main engineers. At 1:00 p.m., the **Bureau County Chorus** will perform upstairs in our Community Room. Don't forget to bring along a few items for the Bureau County Food Pantry as your concert "price of admission" as well as a good way to get into the spirit of the season.



At press time, we had not yet heard back from all participating businesses, but we're hoping to catch a glimpse of two lovable alpacas outside the **Tiskilwa Farms** store at the corner of Main and Walnut Streets. Traditionally, Tiskilwa's three eateries, **Kelly's Place**, the **Indian Valley Inn**, and **Piccolo's Pizza** have rustled up delicious luncheon specials to satisfy the hungriest of merrymakers.

To "Catch the Spirit," see the complete listing of events and times on page 5.



Saturday, JANUARY 27: We are excited to present **Eric Taylor** of Chicago in an hour of instrumental and vocal music to warm your hearts and chase away the winter blues. Beginning at 2:00 in the Community Room, Eric will be performing his original compositions as well as familiar music of The Doobie Brothers, The Band, and Elton John. The setting will be a low-key, coffeehouse style, with Eric singing as well as playing the acoustic guitar. With family roots planted firmly in Tiskilwa, Eric (son of **Joel Taylor** THS '74 and grandson of Tiskilwa's **Barb Philpott**) will be staging this free concert as a goodwill gesture to the community and a chance to restock the shelves of Bureau County Food Pantry with donated items.

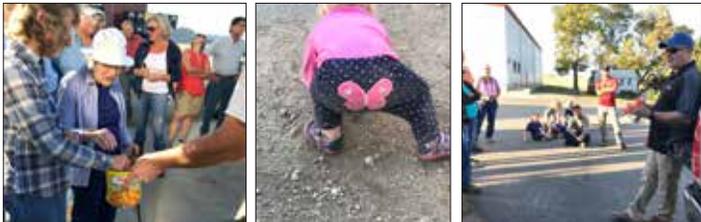
For early birds who've already joined, thank you! A list of the entire 2018 membership will appear in our March issue.

October 8: Visit to the Wright Farm

On a perfect afternoon to enjoy "October's bright blue weather," the Wright Family hosted sixty visitors at their Centennial Farm, recognized by the Illinois Department of Agriculture as being in their family for more than 100 years. Judy's great-grandfather, William Chesney, purchased the original 80 acres in 1868.



Many visitors had a chance to be up-close-and-personal with the gargantuan machines of modern-day farming.



Using four different staging areas, Todd, Glen and Cole Wright, along with Chad Colby, enlightened visitors from every age group about harvesting equipment and the agricultural uses for drones.



After the setting sun cast its final shadows on walking tours to the feed lots and fields, the day concluded with a tasty picnic supper, provided by the Wright Family.

Volunteers Concoct a New T-H-S Event



On October 31, we participated for the first time in the Halloween Event sponsored by the Village of Tiskilwa. By relocating three "Voices" gravestones from our Pow Wow Days float to the west lawn, we created a creepy venue for distributing candy to Trick-or-Treaters. Gail & Paul McCauley provided a swaying ghost, Joe and Donna Murray donated pumpkins, and Betty Brokaw designed little "Bridey Murphy," as shown directly in front of the announcement sign. In costume from left: Julie Sampson, Ed Waca, and Jan Lohaus.

November 6: "Voices" Revisited



This year, our annual "Salute to Veterans" featured chilling tales of Valley Forge from a local Revolutionary War veteran, Aaron Sturges, portrayed by Tom Ashby. Other actors from left are Linda Ashby as Lydia Sturges, Phil Kaufmann (THS '76) as O.W. Battey, Joy E. Schertz (THS '62) as Romelia Stevens, and Ed Waca (THS '66) as Bill Slygh.

T-H-S Project Honors All Local Veterans

In November 2015, we launched a "Voices of Vets" program to recognize and honor the service of community members who served (or currently serve) in the military. At this point, our booklet has 28 entries, beginning in the 1860s, and we hope to receive many, many more. Will you participate?

HERE'S THE PLAN: We're building an archive with a military-duty photo and a caption plus a brief account of each vet's service, and a story or two from their time in the service. The stories may be handwritten, typed, or audio-taped accounts.

****What kind of stories?** You can make the narrative straightforward, humorous, heroic, or a combination of all these elements. Maybe you have letters written to folks at home. The veteran can be yourself or someone else, past or present.

****Pick up a form** at the museum OR check online.

****Is there a submission deadline?** Nope. But would you talk over this project with your family during the holidays?

2018 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

We've enclosed a renewal form and envelope. At the upper left of your address label is the date of your most recent renewal.

If your date notation is followed by an "H" you are receiving complimentary membership as a member of our Nonagenarians Honor Club.

For this issue only, we'll use postal mail for all members; however, the newsletter will still be available on our website.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: If you are a current employee or retiree of a company with a Matching Gift Program, we'll happily fill out the paperwork.

In 2017, we received an extra \$1,600 this way!

POW Recollections: A Brief Memoir by David A. Rosenquist

I had never thought about documenting my military service prior to reading the “Voices of Vets” article in the 12/2016 *Wapsipinicon*. Not knowing if my story would be of any interest, I contacted Cecille Gerber, Museum Director, to find out. After briefly describing my work in 1973 with American prisoners of war following their release from captivity in North Vietnam, Cecille encouraged me to record my experiences and to submit the results for inclusion in the “Voices of Vets” archive.



From mid-1970 to late 1973, I was assigned to the Mental Health Clinic, USAF Regional Hospital, Westover Air Force Base situated in the verdant Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts. Although I was officially classified as a psychiatric technician at Westover, I was permitted to work there as a psychologist, having finished a Master’s Degree a couple of weeks prior to reporting for active duty.

Following ratification of the *Paris Peace Accords of 1973*, the North Vietnamese government released 591 American prisoners of war they had been holding in captivity for periods ranging from a few months to nearly a decade. The POWs’ return to American soil was called “Operation Homecoming” and the release/return process was officially known as “repatriation.”

David and son Jared posed for a photo in April 1972, at Chicopee, Massachusetts, near Westover Air Force Base.

EDITOR’S NOTE: We have space to print only an excerpt from the memoir of David Rosenquist (THS ’64). To read his entire account – full of details about the complicated road that led David to cross paths with POWs and hear their stories – please visit our website tiskilwahistoricalociety.org and click on the link “POW Recollections” OR stop by the Museum on Main to read it in our Voices of Vets archive. “Major G” is one of five prisoners of war whom David debriefed in 1973.

(1) **Major G.** is a 37-year-old U.S. Air Force F-105 pilot with a wife and an 11-year-old daughter, repatriated following a six-year captivity in North Vietnam.

He was shot down north of Hanoi on 11 March 1967 while engaged in a raid against an iron works. Major G’s plane was struck twice by ground fire, first in the rear causing moderate but manageable damage, and then near the cockpit, immediately disabling the engine and causing the plane to burst into flames.

After radioing his position and the nature of his emergency, he ejected from the aircraft and was apprehended immediately after landing by soldiers of the Chinese Army who promptly relinquished him to the custody of North Vietnamese Army officials. He was subsequently placed in a truck and driven south to the outskirts of Hanoi where he was briefly put on display to be mocked by the local civilians.

Following his public exhibition, he was placed in solitary confinement for a period of 40 days. He says that he was able to fairly quickly estimate how long he would be in solitary by

counting scratch marks on the wall of his cell made by POWs who had occupied the space before him.

He was kept in leg irons throughout his solitary confinement and endured protracted episodes of brutally punitive interrogation, during which his captors made constant threats on his life.

Once each day for several weeks, they would remove him from his cell and take him to another building in the prison camp where they would place a pistol against his temple and pull the trigger. He freely admitted that after several days of these mock executions, he prayed there would be a bullet in the chamber so that the nightmare would end. He was also subjected to virtually all of the behavior control [i.e. torture] methods itemized in the DOD psychiatric questionnaire.

Major G. divides his six-year captivity into two phases, with the break point being the fall of 1969. Prior to that time (in his first 2 ½ years of captivity), Major G. and all those imprisoned with him experienced constant threats of non-repatriation and being tried as war criminals.

[continued on page 5]

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT BUILDING FUND AND FORMER LEGION HALL: WATCH THIS SPACE!

At press time, we are in the final stages of legally acquiring the former American Legion Hall and its underlying property from the **Princeton Elementary School District #115**. The property is being surveyed in November, and we're hoping that the transition will occur by the end of the month.

As you read in the September issue, we plan to divide the space into two parts: one for displaying military items and the other to set up a facsimile of a one-room schoolhouse. Since our report in this space back then, we have several pleasant updates to share.

FIRST: Above and beyond membership dues and sponsorships we use to keep the building and programs afloat, we've received several donations specifically directed to our new Building Fund. We are grateful to the following individuals who've contributed to it. Dare we call them our BFFs? (**Building Fund Friends**)

- Elaine Bowers (Princeton)*
- Joan Morris Bruder (Bloomington)*
- Andy & Julie Faville (Geneva)*
- Charlie & Jane Fredenhagen (Tiskilwa)*
- Charlotte Pettegrew Golinvaux (Wayzata, MN)*
- Gerald Gutshall (Downers Grove)*
- Cathy Longman (Gold Canyon, AZ)*
- Alice McCauley Malloy (Shorewood)*
- Randy Senneff (Peoria)*
- Ann Longman Serrato (Gold Canyon, AZ)*
- Lloyd & Beverly Smith (Princeton)*
- Tiskilwa Alumni (Donations collected at Alumni Banquet)*
- Nita Vaughn Von Holten (Walnut)*
- Leslie & Stephen Benson Warner (Evanston)*
- Anonymous*

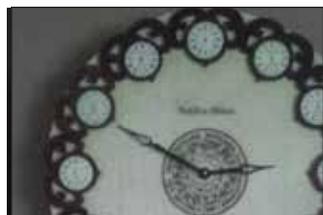
For those Building Fund donations designated as memorial gifts, we're designing a special plaque for display at the former Legion Hall listing those names. As you may recall, T-H-S member **Bob Sash** has pledged to match individual donations up to the amount of \$10,000!

SECOND: Now a word about the "non-matching funds." With the proceeds from the "**Voices of Mount Bloom**" fundraiser plus the sale of pocket watches donated by **Lee Helle**, we've also earned a significant amount of money specially earmarked for this project, as needed, or stashed away for any future building projects.

Our goal is to once again make this building a source of pride for our community to use it as a charming annex (staying in its present location) for our growing collection. **We'd love to display prints of PHOTOS OF EVENTS HELD AT THE OLD HALL over the years.**



When he heard of our wish to honor Lee Helle for the gift of his pocket watch collection, **John Damon** of Princeton [left] offered to create a clock using the extra dials and loose pieces from Lee's collection. We're quite sure you'll agree that his artistic result is sensational. Thank you, John!



IN MEMORIAM

Thank you for memorials received since our September newsletter.

- ISABEL BITTING**
- MARY ELLEN DUGOSH**
- JOHNNY FRIEL**
- BLANCHE JANSSEN**
- JOHN O'NEILL**

VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE TO MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN



Before the September 11 program, our treasurer **Judith Wright**, left, honored **Betty Brokaw** and **Richard Fisher** and recognized their years of serving on the T-H-S Board. The "Barn Quilts of Bureau County" program that followed, presented by T-H-S members **Valerie Jensen** and **Rita Dabler**, was well received by an audience of quilts, barns, and barn quilt enthusiasts.



Prior to November's monthly program, the Class of 1967 presented a facsimile check for \$1,967 in memory of their classmates, Sam Bittner and Dan Sissel. Class president, **Bill Philhower**, [left] said that their three objectives were to gather together as many classmates as possible, to honor their deceased friends, and to contribute to the community. They accomplished all three goals by celebrating their 50th Reunion with 22 of their 29 classmates and making memorial donations to our Society as well as to the Tiskilwa Public Library. Other 1967 Indians pictured above are **Jerry Fisher** and **Julie Perry Sampson**. A hearty THANKS to all of you -- and past classes, too -- for continuing this generous Tiskilwa Alumni tradition!

TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SPECIAL BUILDING FUND APPEAL FOR 2017

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.

TISKILWA'S 2017

COUNTRY CHRISTMAS

Saturday, DECEMBER 9th

❖ **Museum on Main:**

- ❖ LIONEL TRAINS in motion 9 - 2
- ❖ DISPLAY OF MINI-CHRISTMAS TREES 9 - 2
- ❖ FOOD COLLECTION for BC Food Pantry 9 - 2
- ❖ BUREAU COUNTY CHORUS 1:00
(TCA Tree decoration winners will be named following the concert.)

Tiskilwa Community Church: RUG & BAKE SALE 9-12

Tiskilwa Farms: ALPACAS on display 9 - 1

❖ **Tiskilwa Public Library**
KIDS' CRAFT ACTIVITY 10-12

TCA Fire Pit: In front of Library 10-12 with hot dogs and hot chocolate

❖ **Lunch Specials** at Indian Valley Inn, Kelly's Place, and Piccolo's Pizzeria

"POW Recollections" [continued from page 3]

Minimal infractions of camp rules were punished with extreme severity, e.g., 30 days in solitary bound in leg irons for talking back to a guard.

Communication with POWs outside one's own cell was absolutely forbidden with violations resulting in severe physical torture. Major G. states he was moved to six different prison camps around Hanoi during the first six months of his captivity and in each instance, he was housed with two to four other men in cells ranging from 7'x7' to 8'x8' and time outside the cell limited to 20 minutes a day. The stress resulting from four men occupying 50-60 square feet 23½ hours a day, coupled with incessant physical and psychological mistreatment, was the most difficult aspect of his captivity. Storytelling and exercise became the primary coping mechanisms for these soldiers.

In fall of 1969, the "pressure and propaganda" suddenly and inexplicably ceased, and the severe punishment stopped. All the prisoners began receiving letters and packages from home and were allowed to write to their families. Cell size increased as did the number of men to a cell. Time outside the cell likewise lengthened. From 1969 to 1970, eight to ten men were housed in each room and, from 1970 through the end of 1972, there were frequently 30-40 men in several large rooms.

It was during this time that the prisoners developed their own "educational program" to pass the time. There were nightly lectures on a wide range of topics delivered by prisoners proficient in each subject, such as mathematics, art, foreign languages, hunting, business, and cinema. Weekly religious services were also instituted.

Toward the end, their North Vietnamese captors left them almost totally to their own devices and all but ignored their activities. Major G. noted that during his last 18 months of captivity, "There was no pressure; I could have taken another five years of that if I'd had to."

A Sampling from Collector's Corner:

Suggested donations: Directory \$15, Cap \$15, Shirt \$20

ALUMNI DIRECTORY: Reprint of 2009 booklet with listing of THS graduates, plus history of Tiskilwa School and Alumni Association

TISKILWA CAPS: Navy blue with adjustable cloth strap

TISKILWA SHIRTS: Long-sleeved Oxford gray shirts with T-H-S logo over heart and TISKILWA running down the right sleeve

PERFECT FOR HOLIDAY GIVING!

RAFFLE DRAWING ON DECEMBER 9



For a small donation, raffle tickets for this hammered copper candlestick, designed and created by **Vickie DOC Schertz**, will be available at the museum and Tiskilwa Library until noon on December 9. The drawing will follow the concert at the MoM.

TISKILWA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

110 EAST MAIN STREET

P.O. BOX 87

TISKILWA, IL 61368

www.tiskilwahistoricalsociety.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



The reflections and pathway along the Hennepin Canal always bring back a flood of memories for current and past residents of Tiskilwa.



*The ever-faithful Tiskilwa Historical Society Board for 2017-2019: Seated from left: **Judy Wright, Julie Sampson, Elaine Bowers, Gail McCauley.** Standing: **Charlie Waca, Cele Gerber, Ed Waca, Jan Lohaus, Randy Senneff.** Missing at that moment: **Connie Kauffman.** Special congratulations and "Welcome Aboard" to Julie and Randy!*

Indian Valley Inn

Tiskilwa (815.646.4244)

Mon - Sat:

5:30 a.m. - 1:30 a.m.

Sunday:

6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Mike McComber, Owner



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