



The Bell Tower

The newsletter of the Oswegoland Heritage Association...

August 2020



Roger Matile, editor

The Oswegoland Heritage Association's Board of Directors

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Little White School Museum carefully reopening after pandemic closure

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck northern Illinois, the Little White School Museum, like other Oswegoland Park District facilities was forced to close to protect visitors and staff alike. The museum closed March 13.

Now the museum is planning to reopen on Saturday, Aug. 1, although with limited hours and a limited capacity for visitors.

After the March closure, museum manager Tina Heidrich, museum director Roger Matile, and assistant director Bob Stekl continued to work to handle a variety of issues including working with the Paly Foundation to postpone "Pollinators on the Prairie," a special exhibit that was to have opened in the museum's main Roger Matile Room in July for a one-month run. Thanks to the Paly Foundation's understanding, the exhibit was postponed until the summer of 2021.

Although the museum was closed, volunteers continued to help with research requests received by email including a researcher from England working on a book about John Dillinger that will include a section on John "Red" Hamilton, a Dillinger confederate buried in the Oswego Township Cemetery. Other researchers were working on the histories of their homes and other buildings in the Oswego area, while others had general questions on Oswego history.

During the pandemic, the Oswegoland Heritage Association Board met May 28 at the Oswego Township office building thanks to the assistance of township supervisor and OHA Board member Brian LeClercq. At the township office, some members attended electronically while others were able to come to meet in person, with face masks and observing social distancing.



Three board members, Tina Beard, Brian LeClercq, and Fred Mitchell were reelected to full three-year board terms. Beard and Mitchell attended the meeting electronically, thanks to technical help from Oswego Township.

Current plans call for the museum to be open Thursdays through Mondays from 12 noon to 4 p.m. each day starting Aug. 1.

"That schedule could change depending on what happens with COVID," Matile said.

Because of the unique challenges posed by the pandemic, visitors will be asked to call ahead at 630-554-2999 or visit their web site, www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org, to reserve times to visit the museum gallery and whatever exhibit is currently available in the museum's main room.

"It's also possible that walk-in visitors can enjoy the museum, depending on whether we've reached capacity," added museum manager Tina Heidrich.

Reservations will be available for each hour from noon to 3 p.m., with visits limited to 45 minutes each to give staff time to clean before the next visitors arrive. Numbers of

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We are

tax-exempt!

Remember, the Oswegoland Heritage Association is a federal tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization. All cash donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

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visitors in the museum gallery will be limited during each 45-minute time slot. The first hour of each day will be set aside for visits by seniors and other medically vulnerable people and their families.

Starting Thursday, July 30, community residents can make reservations by visiting the museum web site, typing littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org in the search bar of their web browser or, during the new open hours, by calling the museum at 630-554-2999.

"Going forward, we will evaluate and

adjust as this fluid situation continues," Heidrich said. She added that the museum has been working closely comparing notes with other small Fox Valley-area museums as well as with the Illinois Association of Museums in preparation for opening.

"This has been a trying time not only for the Little White School Museum, but also for museums—large and small—all over the nation," Matile noted. "We're in a lot better shape than many."

For more information, email info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org or call during new hours starting Aug. 1. ♡

Bell Tower sponsor:

**Your Business Name
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Want to see your business's name right here three times a year? Just purchase a Business/Institutional membership, and your name or the name of your business or organization will appear in this space in three consecutive issues. See page 4 for membership information.

Despite the pandemic, collections still growing...

Thanks to friends and members of the Oswegoland Heritage Association, the Little White School Museum's collections are continuing to grow on a weekly basis.

As of July 20, the museum's collections database contained 31,519 items. Since March 20, items donated to the Little White School Museum's collections included items recovered from sites around Oswego, Danny Bliss; and a campaign bottle given to his family when they bought a new Zentmyer Ford in the 1960s by Mark Grimshaw.

The most important group of items

Benefit the OHA with Amazon Smile

Do you buy items from Amazon.com? If so, you can use your purchases to benefit the Oswegoland Heritage Association. Here's how:

Go to www.smile.amazon.com and use your Amazon user and password to sign in. For the organization you wish to support, type in Oswegoland Heritage Association. And that's it; you can start shopping. It would also be a good idea to bookmark the AmazonSmile site so you can easily go to it the next time you buy something. Also, after you've used AmazonSmile a bit, the regular Amazon.com site will ask if you want to go to the same page on the AmazonSmile site.

Joining AmazonSmile is a quick, easy way to help support the mission and goals of the OHA. ♡

donated to the museum during the pandemic closure was a large collection of Shoger family documents, photographs, and artifacts by Jim Shoger and Russ Breitweiser. The collection included the wedding dress and suit that Clarence Shoger and Catherine "Kate" Ward wore for their 1906 wedding, dozens of other Shoger family items that had been packed in the original wooden trunk that Georg Michael Schoger made in Germany for the family's 1856 trip to the U.S. (see page 3 for more information).

In addition to the donations received,

the museum also purchased a United Press Wirephoto taken during the visit of the King of Greece to the J. George Smith farm in Oswego Township on Nov. 6, 1953. The photo shows the Smith family meeting with the king.

Without the help of our donor friends, it would be impossible to protect and preserve Oswegoland's rich history. Thanks to our most recent donors, that history is a little safer now than it was last year at this time. ♡



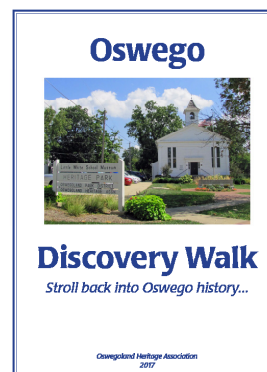
Stroll through Oswego history...

Oswegoland Heritage Association members are reminded that each member family is entitled to one copy of the *Oswego Discovery Walk* booklet.

The self-guided walking tour leads visitors past 21 of Oswego's most historic sites on a 1.5 mile stroll from the Little White School Museum along village streets to the Fox River at Hudson Crossing Park and back.

Families can get one free booklet by presenting their membership cards at the museum reception desk. Additional copies of the booklet are also available for sale at \$5 each.

Another free membership premium



this year is a free Little White School Museum stylus-ballpoint pen. Just present your membership card at the museum reception desk.

Other regular membership benefits include three newsletters a year, free admittance to one OHA-sponsored program a year, and a 10% discount on museum store items. The names of Business/Organization members are printed as sponsors in three consecutive *Bell Tower* newsletters.

Along with regular benefits, Lifetime Gold members also receive a free copy of the 192-page history, *150 Years Along the Fox*.

For more information, visit the OHA membership page at <https://littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org/give/membership> ♡

August Heritage Notes

Limited programming at the museum this autumn...

Despite the COVID-19 emergency, Oswegoland Heritage Association Program Chair Tina Beard has been working on offering a fall OHA program. The normally active programming at the museum has largely been put on hold thanks to the pandemic.

Current plans are to offer a virtual presentation of **“Casting a Historic Vote: Suffrage in Illinois,”** by Jeanne Schultz Angel from the Illinois Roads Scholars Program. The presentation on 19th Century women’s suffrage will be presented in honor of the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment. The amendment secured the right to vote for women across the United States. Prior to passage,

women could not vote in state or national elections. Watch the museum web site at littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org or local media outlets such as the Oswego Ledger for more information as the proposed date of Sept. 12 draws closer. For more information now, email the museum at info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org.

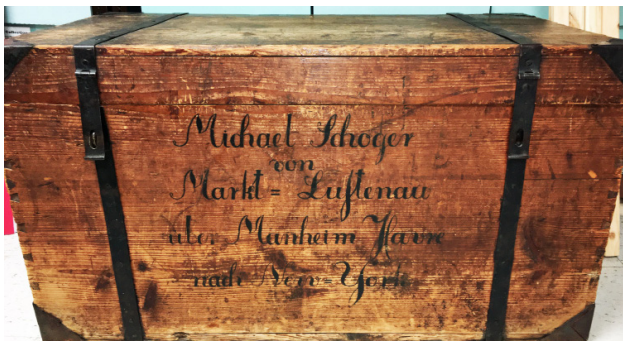
Remembering Our Veterans is still scheduled for November, although pandemic events may change plans. Visitors will learn the history of Oswego’s fighting men and women through a display of rarely seen military artifacts from the museum’s collections, including items from the Civil War, World Wars I and II, Korea, the Vietnam War, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

A special exhibit will recognize the 50th anniversary of the Korean Conflict. Wall of Honor photos honor over 200 Oswego area service members. Also honored are those military personnel with direct Oswego connections who were killed in action, from the Civil War through Vietnam. All ages are welcome at this free event open daily during regular museum hours. Hosted by the OHA in partnership with the Oswegoland Park District.

For more information about OHA and park district programming at the Little White School Museum, check the museum web site at littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org, the museum’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Little-White-School-Museum>. You can also call the museum at 630-554-2999 during regular hours or send an email to Info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org. ♡

New acquisitions are Oswego immigrant treasures...

From Germany to Oswego in 1856



Georg Michael Schoger’s handmade travel trunk, is now in the collections of the Little White School Museum.

One of the Little White School Museum’s latest acquisitions traveled quite a distance to finally end up as part of the museum’s collections, thanks to a donation from Jim Shoger and Russel Breitweiser.

In 1854, Georg Michael and Eva Maria (Brunner) Schoger dispatched three of their sons from their home in Germany to the United States to find the family a new home. The three boys reported back that a fine farming area awaited the Schogers on rich prairie land in Kendall County, Illinois’ Bristol Township, just a short distance west of the Village of Oswego.

The couple and their seven remaining

children decided to join the three advance scouts and in preparation, Georg Michael built a large, sturdy travel trunk of good German pine, reinforcing it with handmade iron straps and reinforcement.

The nine remaining Schogers immigrated from Germany to Oswego in 1856 with their seven remaining children. The family arrived

in New York harbor aboard the ship St. Nicholas on Sept. 12, 1856. They then boarded the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Emigrant Line in New York for the rail trip to Chicago. The Emigrant Line sticker is still attached to Georg Michael’s travel box.

When they finally got to Kendall County, the Schogers settled on land in Section 12, Bristol Township, that extended across the township line into Section 7 of Oswego Township.

Most of the family soon Anglicized their name to Shoger, although some family members still prefer the German spelling. The numerous Shogers—Georg Michael had 21 children by three wives—eventu-

ally married into most of the German-speaking families in the Oswego area including the Hafenrichters, Hemms, Burkarts, Ebingers, and Haags, as well as the Youngs and other non-German Oswego families.

The Shogers soon became integral parts of the Oswegoland community. For instance, Georg Michael’s son, William, enlisted in Company K, 20th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment during the Civil War and was killed in action at the Battle of Raymond in Mississippi.

Georg Michael’s travel trunk was not the only family heirloom that Jim Shoger and Russ Breitweiser donated. Breitweiser donated the 1906 wedding suit of Georg Michael’s grandson, Clarence Shoger, and Jim Shoger donated the wedding dress, wedding photo, and wedding certificate of his bride, Katherine “Kate” Ward. Also included in the donation are numerous Shoger family photographs (most identified), documents, and family artifacts from kitchen ware to antique toys enjoyed by generations of Shoger children.

For information on donating to the museum, email info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org. ♡

Free!
Please Take One

Oswegoland Heritage Association
Box 23
Oswego, Illinois 60543

When royalty visited Oswego Township...

When he heard the King of Greece was going to visit their family farm in Oswego Township, young Kent Smith figured a famed mechanic was on his way to see the family. But as it turned out, it was the actual king of the nation of Greece, King Paul. The Greek monarch traveled to the farm of Kent's parents, J. George and Anne Smith, on Nov. 8, 1953 and joined the family for a traditional fried chicken dinner after touring the Smiths' dairy farm on Wolf's Crossing road just east of U.S. Route 30.

This summer, the Little White School Museum acquired a United Press Wirephoto taken during King Paul's visit to the Smith farm that shows the family along with the king and one of the Smiths' Holstein dairy calves. In 2010, the museum acquired another wirephoto of the family dining with Greek Queen Fredericka in Chicago.

Museum staffers regularly check on-line sites for photos, postcards, and other Oswego-related history items to enrich its collection. ♥



During his 1954 visit to the U.S. King Paul of Greece visited the J. George Smith farm in Oswego Township. Pictured are (L-R) back row, J. George Smith, Anne Smith, King Paul; in front, Kent, Nan, and Cheryl Smith.

✂ Clip and mail

Gift membership?

The Oswegoland Heritage Association has some exciting plans for the future. Why not take out a membership for a friend or relative who has an interest in Oswego's fascinating history and heritage? Benefits include museum store discounts, three newsletters a year, and more. Just fill out this form and mail.

Name: _____

Address 1: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____ St. _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

I prefer to receive my newsletters electronically: _____

Membership type:

Friend, \$20 per person: _____

Sponsor, \$75 per person: _____

Business/Institution, \$150: _____

Lifetime Gold, \$1,000: _____

Make checks payable to the
Oswegoland Heritage Association and mail to:

Membership
Oswegoland Heritage Association
Box 23
Oswego, IL 60543

Check out our web site at www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org