



# The Bell Tower

The newsletter of the Oswegoland Heritage Association...

August 2021



Roger Matile, editor

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## Bob Stekl honored with OHA's 2021 Mary Cutter Bickford Award



Oswegoland Heritage Association President Judy Wheeler presents the 2021 Mary Cutter Bickford Award to Bob Stekl during the association's May 27 annual meeting.

He was elected to the OHA Board of Directors in May 2001, and served until he declined to seek reelection in 2019. He was appointed assistant museum director shortly after he began volunteering, a position he held until 2020. In addition, he served as heritage association treasurer from 2015 to 2019.

As one of the museum's key volunteers, Stekl was responsible for cataloging 56 percent of its collection, which currently stands at 31,877 artifacts, archival items, and photographs.

During his 18 years on the board, Stekl was responsible for obtaining two state grants that

provided funds to safely store the museum's huge textile collection. Stekl not only applied for and was responsible for obtaining the grant funds, but he also coordinated the purchase of the textile shelving, disassembled the old shelving, erected the new shelving and moved the collection to its new home.

Stekl was also responsible for initiating and gradually expanding the museum's annual "Remembering our Veterans" exhibit. The exhibit started as a single day event with Stekl coordinating various reenactment groups who enlivened the exhibit for the first few years. By his last year as exhibit organizer and coordinator, he was spending uncounted hours overseeing staff and volunteers as they assembled the exhibit, organizing special events such as an Oswego Chamber of Commerce coffee to introduce them to the museum and the exhibit, and greeting guests.

He was also responsible for urging area veterans to donate their uniforms, photos, and other military memorabilia to the muse-

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## Looking for Oswego history?

To visit the Little White School Museum virtually, go to their web site, [www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](http://www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org), click on "Visit" at the top right, then choose "Gallery to Go." To e-mail us, send your note to [info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](mailto:info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org). You can also find us on Facebook. And remember: OHA memberships make great gifts for friends and family. 🍷

At their May 27 meeting, the Oswegoland Heritage Association Board of Directors honored Bob Stekl with the association's highest honor, the Mary Cutter Bickford Award for Excellence in Local History.

Stekl retired from the OHA Board in 2019 after more than 18 years' service, and as a museum volunteer in 2020 after 20 years' service.

The award, named for lifelong Oswego resident and local historian, the late Mary Cutter Bickford, recognizes outstanding efforts to preserve Oswego area history. Mary Bickford's collection of hundreds of photographs, documents, and books and ledgers formed the basis for the Little White School Museum's archival collection that currently stands at nearly 32,000 items.

Stekl is the eighth winner of the heritage association's most prestigious award. Previous winners were John Hafenrichter, Ted Clauser, Helen Zamata, Stephanie "Stevie" Todd, Glenn Young, and Cathi Mundsinger.

Even before joining the board, Stekl worked as a volunteer, helping catalog the museum's collections, entering his first item in the museum's database in September 2000.

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"Bickford Award" from Page 1

um's collections, leading to what is today arguably the largest such collection at a small museum in Illinois.

When the OHA Board voted to undertake a major renovation and reimagining of the Little White School Museum's exhibit gallery in 2017, Stekl played a major role in helping plan the new exhibit space, and then spent hours helping select and collect artifacts and other materials used to create the exhibit.

"During the past 20 years, Bob's done it all, from leading youth field trips through the museum to curating and

mounting exhibits, to maintaining and maximizing the museum's storage areas," noted Roger Matile, museum director. "Bob's legacy in assuring the preservation of Oswegoland's rich history will be visible to everyone who visits the Little White School Museum for decades to come."

The Little White School Museum is a joint project of the Oswegoland Heritage Association and the Oswegoland Park District. Admission is free. Call 630-554-2999, email [info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](mailto:info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org), or visit the museum web site at [www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](http://www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org) for more information. ♡

**Bell Tower sponsor:**

**Your Business Name  
Could Be Here!**

*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 31,973 items. Since our April newsletter, items donated to our collections included the Aurora Census Report and Statistical Review Embracing a Complete Directory of the City from Renie Mitchell; a panoramic photo of the Illinois participants, including Oswego's Stan Young, in the 1939 School Safety Patrol Convention in Washington,

D.C., Glenn Young; Edna Wolf's 1908 confirmation certificate and a framed hand-tinted Willis H. Dean print from Mike and Beth McWhirter; a 1966 Oswego High School Chorus community birthday calendar, Janis Hoch; 1970s-vintage photos of the Weishev/Saxon Clinic, Dr. Alan Hahn; miscellaneous Oswego Township records, Robert Rogerson; items recovered from the old well, privy, and the grounds of the William Wormley House on Ill. Route 31 including bottles, inkwells, and metal tools by its owner, Phillip Chiapetta; metal and other items recovered by

metal detection on the grounds of the Gorton-Hopkins-Fred Mitchell House on Ill. Route 25 and 1988 and 1990 OHS football programs, Danny Bliss; Marilyn Ode's yearbook collection and Oswego school photos, Kathy Warren; Boulder Hill memorabilia, Kay Hatcher; plat book collection, Bill & Lori Patterson.

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. ♡

## 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](http://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. ♡

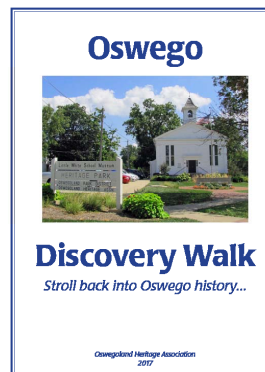
## Stroll through Oswego history...

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 pictorial history, *Oswego Township*.

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

# August Heritage Notes

## Programming is once again resuming at the museum...

A full slate of programming will resume at the Little White School Museum this autumn as well as continuing the balance of the summer. Programs on tap hosted and co-hosted by the Oswegoland Heritage Association (OHA) and Oswegoland Park District (OPD). To pre-register for programs requiring it, call the OPD at 630-554-1010 or visit their web page at <https://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org/>:

**Summer Storytime at the Museum, Fridays through Aug. 13, at noon:** Make it a FriYAY at the Little White School Museum for free Storytime on Friday afternoons this Summer. Kids, Parents, and Caregivers are welcome to bring a blanket, pack a picnic lunch, and sit on the lawn for either an imaginative reading from the As We Grow Preschool staff or a sweet live performance from the Limelight Theatre Company on the grounds of the Little White School Museum, just two blocks from historic downtown Oswego. Pre-registration—not required—is available at [www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org](http://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org) or drop in when your schedule allows. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Suitable for all ages.

**Oswego History Walk – Business & Industry, Sunday, Aug. 15, 2 p.m.** Participants age 16 and over are invited to journey back in time to discover the businesses and industry that once dotted the landscape of the Oswego area. Trace the spaces and places that served the community and learn about the people behind them. Is there a business from yesteryear still thriving today? Participants should be able to comfortably walk for approximately one hour and be prepared to be part of the conversation. Participants should meet at the Little White School Museum, 72 Polk Street, for this outdoor walk. Pre-registration, \$5, is required referencing program #20634, and space is limited. Co-sponsored by the OHA and the OPD.

**PrairieFest Quilt Show, Saturday through Monday, Sept. 4-6:** The Quilters Dozen Quilt Group and the OPD will co-host the free PrairieFest Quilt Show at Oswego's historic Little White School Museum during the community PrairieFest event. This year's community celebration will be held over Labor Day Weekend. Contemporary and antique quilts, hand and machine quilted, will be on exhibit throughout the Quilt Show. The Quilters Dozen will be seeking family quilts

or quilts area residents have created that they would like to exhibit during the show. Quilts may be dropped off at the Little White School Museum Thursday Sept. 2 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.. For more information on exhibiting your quilt visit [prairiefest.com](http://prairiefest.com).

**Boulder Hill at 65: An Anniversary Celebration, Saturday, Sept. 11, 1:30 p.m.:** Current and former Boulder Hill residents won't want to miss this exhibit accompanied by a multi-media program, "Boulder Hill's First 36 Years," by museum director Roger Matile. Using maps, photos, and slides taken during Boulder Hill's first 36 years by Bev and Ruth Skaggs, Matile will recount the story of what was one of the largest unincorporated subdivisions in Illinois and by far the largest community in Kendall County for its first 40 years of existence. Admission is \$5 for this program aimed at guests age 16 and older. Pre-registration is suggested by referencing program # 20880, but walk-ins are welcome the day of the program on a space-available basis at the Little White School Museum, 72 Polk Street, Oswego.

**Coffee and Collections, Thursdays Sept. 16, Oct. 21, and Dec. 16:** Grab your favorite cup'o'joe and head to the Little White School Museum for an engaging morning of exploration. We'll specially select items from the museum collection to discover and discuss. Your favorite coffee may not change with each meeting, but the collection items will, so be sure to join us. Pre-registration through the OPD, \$5 per person for park district residents and \$7 for non-residents, is required. Register for program #21193 (Sept.), #21194 (Oct.), and #21195 (Dec.).

**Oswego History Walk - Downtown Barns, Sunday, Sept. 19 and Oct. 3, 2 p.m.:** Ever notice the barns in and around Oswego's downtown? Curious about them? Did you think barns could only be found on the area's farms? These answers and the history surrounding them will be covered during this unique walking tour of some of Oswego's urban barns still standing today. Pre-registration, \$5 per person, is required by referencing program #21083 and space is limited for this walk co-hosted by the OHA and the OPD. The walk will be held outdoors starting at the Little White School Museum, 72 Polk Street, and participants should be able to comfortably walk for approximately one hour. The walk will be repeated on Sunday, Oct. 3, at

the same time and place. Reference program #21084 to pre-register.

**Classic Stories and Crafts, Saturdays, 10 a.m. Sept. 28, Oct. 16, Dec. 18:** Start a new Saturday morning tradition for kids 5-8 accompanied by an adult. Timeless classic books and stories to delight all ages and crafts that extend the story or theme are sure to create lasting memories! Schedule in this special time to share together. Extend your experience before or after this special time with a visit to the museum gallery. Registration is per person and children must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration through the OPD, \$5 for park district residents and \$7 for non-residents, is required. Reference programs #21089 (Sept.); #21090 (Oct.); #21091 (Dec.)

**Oswego Cemetery Walk, Thursday, Oct. 7, 5-9 p.m.:** In partnership with the OHA, the OPD invites you to experience community history through the stories of those who have called our area home during the 20th Oswego Cemetery Walk. Participants will be guided through the cemetery to visit with the ghosts of early Oswego residents and pioneers. Pre-registration required. Be assured one of the limited spots by registering early for this historic event! See [www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org](http://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org) for registration time slots 5-9 p.m. Registration fee is \$5. To pre-register call the park district at 630-554-1010. Watch the local press and the Little White School Museum and Oswegoland Park District's web sites for more information on the Cemetery Walk's date.

**Remembering Our Veterans, Nov. 10-28, during regular museum hours:** Discover the history of Oswego's fighting men and women through an extensive display of rarely seen military artifacts selected from the museum's permanent collection, including photos, uniforms, war souvenirs, and equipment dating from the Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Featured will be the Wall of Honor honoring local service members and an exhibit honoring those Oswegoans killed in action. Admission is free.

For more information about OHA and park district programming at the Little White School Museum, check the museum web site at [littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](http://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](mailto:Info@littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org). 🍷

Please Take One  
Free!

Oswegoland Heritage Association  
Box 23  
Oswego, Illinois 60543

***New faces will greet you at the museum...***

Three new staffers, museum collections assistant Noah Beckman and museum assistants Emily Dutton and Anthony Czepiel began greeting visitors and working on exhibits at the Little White School Museum in July.

Beckman graduated from Aurora University with a degree in history, and a minor in museum studies. With an interest in small-town museums, he always takes time to explore what built a town, and how it became the way it is today, compared to other, similar towns. He currently serves on the Batavia Depot Museum Board.

Native Oswegoan Dutton just graduated from Oswego High School, and is studying marketing and graphic design, with a minor in museum studies at Aurora University. "History has always been a main interest of mine and I'm excited to have the opportunity to not only learn more about where I grew up, but also the inner workings of a museum here at the Little White School Museum," she said.

A 2017 grad of Oswego East High, Czepiel has lived in the area since he was two years old. Graduating in 2020 from Illinois State University with a degree in history and social studies education, he said he's excited to learn more about the history of the town he grew up near and is looking forward to helping others learn about that history. ♡



*New faces at the Little White School Museum this summer are (L-R) museum assistants Emily Dutton and Anthony Czepiel and museum collections assistant Noah Beckman.*

✂️ *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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **St.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Membership type:**

Friend, \$20 per person: ..... \_\_\_\_\_

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Business/Institution, \$150 ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime Gold, \$1,000 ..... \_\_\_\_\_

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

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Oswego, IL 60543

*Check out our web site at [www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](http://www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org)*