



WESTERN SPRINGS

# Historical Society

Winter 2019



## Our First Village President:

# AN ARDENT PROMOTER

*Thomas Clarkson Hill is perhaps best known for transforming the farmland between Ogden Avenue and 47th Street into what is now Western Springs. He was a land developer who was more instrumental than anyone else in promoting life in the "Queen Suburb of Chicago."*

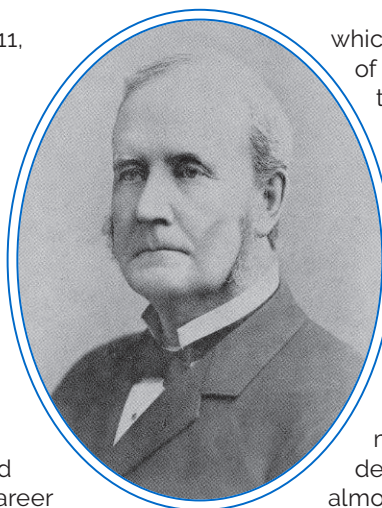
T.C. Hill, as he was known, was born on March 11, 1831 in Guilford County, North Carolina to Samuel and Mary Bronson Hill who were very prominent and influential members of the Society of Friends (Quakers). He attended the New Garden Boarding School then spent three years at Harverford college near Philadelphia. In 1855, Hill moved to Carthage, Indiana, where he established a successful mercantile trade.

Two years later, T.C. Hill married Adaline Butler of Knightstown, Indiana and they eventually had eight children: Anna, Gertrude, Mary, Oliver, Ione, Virginia, Mamie, Louise and Elizabeth. Shortly after the Civil War, Hill moved his family to Chicago where he began a new career as a land developer. And, in 1872, Hill and his family moved to 4344 Grand Avenue where he resided until his death in 1896 at the age of 65.

In 1870, much of the land within the present boundaries of Western Springs was bought by a real estate syndicate made up of the sons of wealthy Chicago merchant Phillip F. W. Peck; William R. Page, a Chicago lawyer; and T. C. Hill, the promoter and salesperson. The total cost was \$105,000.

Sensing that the railroad line from Chicago, which ran through the area, would make the location a viable suburban community, the landowners planned to subdivide and develop the property. The Peck-Page-Hill syndicate sold 24 lots before most of the city of Chicago was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1871. Hill gave generously of his time as an on-site emergency volunteer during the fire's aftermath. As a result, development stalled and only 12 lots were sold in all of 1872.

In the wake of the Great Fire, Hill's goal was to lure Chicagoans away from the urban metropolis. From the rubble of Chicago to the tranquility of rural bliss was the path onto



which T.C. Hill hoped to coax enterprising residents of the big city. To entice them he ran ads such as this, one of the very earliest—so early in fact that the post office and church he mentioned were not yet in existence...but were planned.

"Western Springs is situated on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, nine miles from City limits. One hundred feet above the level of the lake. A natural grove on a part, and shade trees and evergreens on all the streets. Sidewalks to nearly every house. The soil is rich and well adapted to grape and other small fruits and vegetables. the powerful mineral spring attracting much attention and destined to be a favorite summer resort. Trains almost hourly. Fare about double street car fare, and the time but a little longer than to city limits on street cars. Store, Post Office, Church, School and other facilities. More building going on than at suburb on the CB&Q Railroad. A two-story house and 50 foot lot for \$800 on easy monthly payments. Stop paying rent and city taxes and secure a home in one of Chicago's most desirable suburbs at prices suited to the times."

By 1880, the population of the village was 172 but T.C. Hill never ceased to work at trying to increase that figure. In an 1881 *Chicago Times* ad, he pointed out "The society is first class." among other things. Settlers kept arriving and building construction kept rising. And, in 1885, 59 residents, mostly Quakers, cast their ballots at the railroad depot to consider the question of incorporating as a village. By a relatively narrow vote of 34 to 25, the referendum was passed. The Village of Western Springs was incorporated in 1886, with an election for village trustees held on Jan. 30 that year. Hill, who had served as the first postmaster in 1873, was elected president. He also served as president again in 1888.

# Looking Ahead & Giving Back

Although 2019 is not over yet, our WSHS Executive Board began a new "year" in June with a changing of the guard. Susan Wyckoff stepped down as President after two years, though she remains a Trustee. Susan has been involved with the Historical Society since 2011. She was a co-chair for the 2017 House Walk, and was heavily involved with the 2019 Housewalk. I, along with our Board of Trustees, would like to thank her for all her hard work and continuing dedication!

I would also like to introduce myself, Mark Tobin, as the new president of the Historical Society. I have lived in Western Springs for over 16 years, in Old Town, with my wife and four children. What qualifies me to be the president? Well, not a whole lot! We bought an 1890 historic home and it came with a Trustee position. I am joking of course, but what really qualifies me is simply that I appreciate this great village of ours and the people whose shoulders we stand upon that made Western Springs what it is today. Throughout my years here in town, I have volunteered for many things such as a parent volunteer at Laidlaw, a YC teacher at St. Johns, a WSHS Trustee, the lead for the third grade walking tours at the Tower, and much more.

Western Springs is a great place to live and raise a family, filled with people who believe in family, friends, and community. Western Springs has great schools, great parks and a vibrant community spirit. It's a place where we know our neighbors and come together to support each other in hard times and celebrate together in good times.

I appreciate, and am grateful for, what Western Springs has to offer and I try to teach this lesson to my children. I emphasize that it is a privilege to live in this great community and they

should appreciate all the good things we experience. I try to stress the importance of being part of the solution rather than the problem, which means giving back to the community. This brings me to the point that we should ALL appreciate how special Western Springs is and encourage everyone to give back in one way or another.

There are many opportunities within the Historical Society to give back. The WSHS is always looking for new people to be part of the team, whether as a trustee, a docent at the Water Tower Museum, or just by becoming a member. The Historical Society is an all volunteer group that receives no government funding, but rather depends on the many events sponsored by the WSHS, along with membership dues and donations. If you appreciate the Water Tower Museum, the Ekdahl House or the Archives, and if you enjoy the House Walk and Mayfest then I encourage you to take advantage of what the WSHS has to offer. We are always looking for ways to improve the Tower and the archives and would love to hear feedback or ideas.

Many thanks to all of the volunteers, members and donors that keep the Historical Society going. We look forward to 2020 and celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the WSHS Water Tower Museum. We hope you will join us, so keep an eye out for event announcements in the new year. And remember, appreciate, give back and be part of the solution.

Happy holidays!

**Mark Tobin**  
President, WSHS

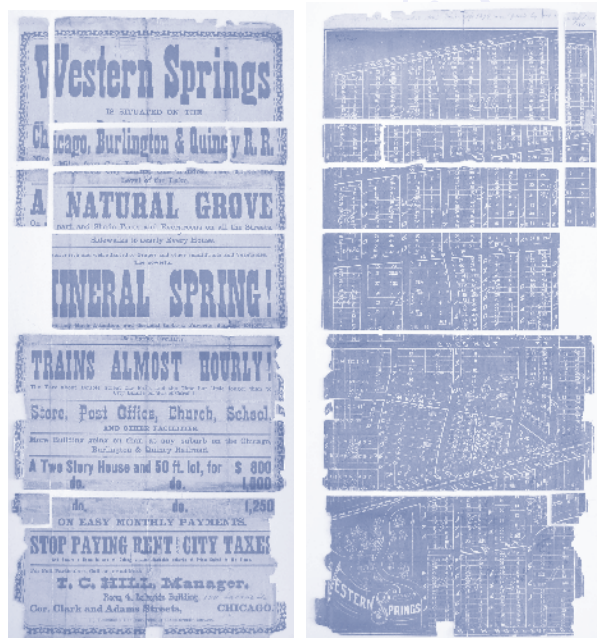
## Saving History

At right is a photo of an original double-sided T.C. Hill ad/map of Western Springs from 1879. The WSHS is raising funds to help defray the cost of the restoration by the Graphics Conservation Co. and we are hoping you can help! As you can see, the map is in pieces and has required a lot of work, but our team and historic map professionals believe it has a story to share and is worth the extra effort it has taken to save this artifact.

We thank you in advance for any contribution to this cause that means so much to us. All donations over \$100 will receive a reproduction of this map once the artwork is completed.

We look forward to sharing this fully restored map in the Water Tower Museum in early 2020.

If you would like to donate, please visit, [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com) and search "Western Springs Historic Map."



# WESTERN SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Jeffrey Wingert

### WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we rely 100% on the generosity of our members. Your financial support through membership dues, donations, fundraising events and memorial bequests helps us to continue our mission of preserving and presenting Western Springs' history. Thank you for supporting the Western Springs Historical Society!



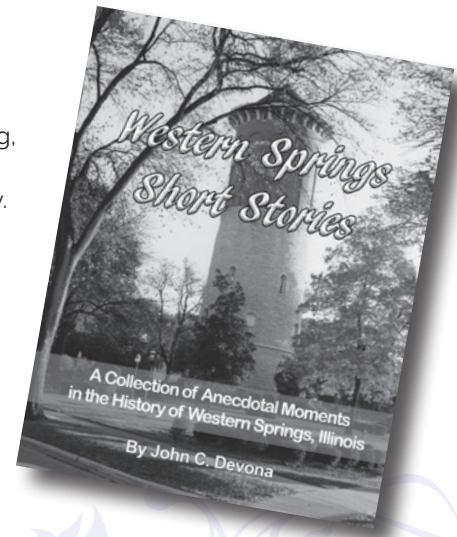
# OUR STORIED PAST

*Did you know that Western Springs once had its own zoo and a "Baby of the Month" Club? Or that we've had not one, but three plane crashes on our quaint town? You can learn all about these fun facts and more in Western Springs Historical Society's book, "Western Springs Short Stories" by John Devona.*

John, a resident of Western Springs since 1972, has been a volunteer for the WSHS since 2011. He's served as a Trustee, the Archives Manager, Newsletter Editor and museum docent, among other roles. He also wrote a weekly story for the WSHS website called "Blast from the Past". At the suggestion from some fellow residents, John decided to collect and update the stories and put them into one book for residents to enjoy.

The book's 514 pages feature 220 short stories and many photos. While not chronological, this collection describes our village's early years, right up to the

present. It is written in an entertaining, easy-to-read style, with each story requiring only a few minutes to enjoy. If you appreciate history or just want to learn more about our wonderful village, this is the book for you! It would also make a great gift for any resident past or present, young or old. Books can be purchased on Saturdays from 10:00 am to noon at the Water Tower Museum or fill out and return the form below if you prefer home delivery. The book is \$25 (\$20 for Members), with profits supporting the Western Springs Historical Society!



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## BOOK ORDER FORM

### *Western Springs Short Stories* by John Devona

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

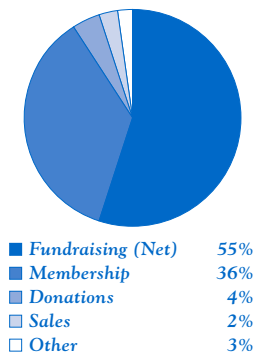
Email \_\_\_\_\_

	Unit Price	Quantity	Total
Members	\$20.00		
Non-Members	\$25.00		
Shipping/Handling (per book)	\$6.00		
		Amount Due	\$

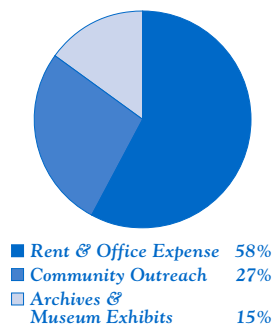
Please make checks payable to "Western Springs Historical Society" and include "Short Stories" in the memo line. Order form and check may be mailed to: Western Springs Historical Society, PO Box 139, Western Springs, IL 60558. Prices include sales tax.

# Combined Financial Report

## REVENUES = \$66,593



## EXPENSES = \$32,527



The Western Springs Historical Society is an independent all-volunteer, non-profit organization that does not receive any federal, state or local government funding.

As such, it relies on the generous support of concerned residents like you, combined with careful management of its financial resources, to ensure that the Society remains a viable organization, able to plan and implement programs and services for the community.

The pie charts shown at left summarize the revenue and expenses for the WSHS. Since the biennial House Walk represents a major source of income, some of which is carried over to cover expenses in the following year, these charts include data for both 2017 and 2018 (the most recent two year period for which complete data are available).

## We Need You!

The Western Springs Historical Society is always looking for volunteers. Currently, we are seeking Trustees to join our Board and copywriters to contribute to our newsletter. Whether you like history, architecture, or just getting to know your neighbors, helping out at the Historical Society is a great way to share your talents with the community while making new friends and acquaintances.

If you have any interest in helping us out please give us a call at 246-9230. We would be happy to discuss these and other volunteer opportunities with you!

## House Walk Success

Thanks to the efforts of our 2019 House Walk co-chairs, Julie Kemnitz and Caroline Tobin, we sold more tickets this year than any other House Walk in the past! Congratulations and thank you to Caroline and Julie for their commitment to making this year's event an amazing one! We also want to thank their silent partner, Susan Wyckoff, for everything she did behind the scenes. And of course, the House Walk would not be a success without the generous homeowners, sponsors, and countless volunteers..we thank you!

## Keeping in Character

If you have a favorite home or building in town, it's not too early to start thinking about nominations for the 2020 Preservation Awards!

The awards, which were first granted in 1996, recognize owners for the thoughtful restoration or preservation of a structure in the Village (residential or commercial). Judges use criteria that have been established by the U.S. Department of the Interior and are recommended by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. Only the building's exterior is considered in determining the awards.

Awards are given in three categories: Preservation/Exterior Rehabilitation, Compatible Addition, and Good Neighbor. For the Preservation/Exterior Rehabilitation and Compatible Addition Awards the building must be at least 50 years old. The Good Neighbor Award is for a structure, either residential or commercial, that fits the scale and historic style of Western Springs and the building may be of any age.

Nomination forms for the 2020 awards will be available starting in January and will be accepted until February 29, 2020. Visit [westernspringshistory.org](http://westernspringshistory.org) for more information.

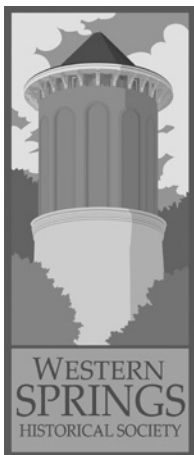
## Love History?

Come join the docent team at the WSHS Tower Museum! It's a great way to learn more about the history of this wonderful community, meet your neighbors and make new friends!

We especially need qualified volunteers to docent the 3rd Floor Children's Museum. This is a perfect position for teens (ages 12 and up) who are looking to fulfill their community service hours! Positions available for weekly or monthly hours depending on your schedule. The role of the Children's Museum's docent is to help to maintain a safe environment for visitors and the displays.

The Tower Museum is open Saturday mornings from 10 am - 12 pm, so the time commitment is minimal, yet the rewards are many. Training is provided. It's easy, it's fun and you will be helping this worthwhile organization to thrive.

Interested? Please contact Susan Cardamone at [s.cardamone@att.net](mailto:s.cardamone@att.net).



**WESTERN SPRINGS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 139  
Western Springs  
708-246-9230  
[WesternSpringsHistory.org](http://WesternSpringsHistory.org)

**THE TOWER MUSEUM &  
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**

are housed in the historic  
Water Tower

**MUSEUM HOURS**

Saturdays  
10 AM – Noon

**EKDAHL HOUSE MUSEUM**

43rd St. & Wolf Rd.  
Outdoor exhibit open 24/7

**VOLUNTEERS &  
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Call 708-246-9230

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Second Floor

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Tuesdays 9 AM – Noon

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**NEWSLETTER  
GRAPHICS**

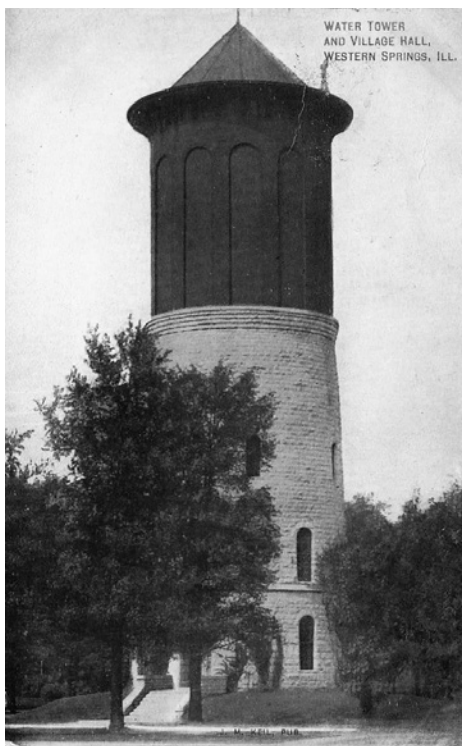
Mary Rintz

**WESTERN SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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### *Make a Difference*

As we approach the end of 2019, please consider supporting the Western Springs Historical Society. Become a member, renew your membership, gift a membership and/or make a donation. Tax deductible donations can be made by returning a check in the enclosed envelope or via PayPal on our website. Visit [www.westernspringshistory.org](http://www.westernspringshistory.org) and click the yellow "Donate" button. Thank you!