



WESTERN SPRINGS

# Historical Society

Summer 2021



## THE CASE OF THE MISSING WINDOW

*The Benezette Williams house at 4380 Central Avenue was the epitome of elegant living when it was built back in 1888. The two-story, grand home featured extensive porches and several stained glass windows, including two matching arched ones. You can still see one of these windows on the front of the house today...but whatever happened to its twin window?*

### STORY BY JOHN BRANNEN

My parents, Lawrence and Adriana Brannen, acquired the Benezette Williams home well over 50 years ago. I remember as a child going into the basement and seeing a very beautiful and bejeweled arched stained glass window sitting on a wood workbench.

Sometime in the early 1980s this arched stained glass window went missing, and we all wondered what could have happened to it. The family was distressed because it was such an integral part of the home. Nobody could account for its whereabouts – until one evening in 1987 when I received a mysterious phone call.

An anonymous female caller left a message on my answering machine stating she knew where our stained glass window was located! She left a man's name and address. I thought it was an odd message, maybe even a prank phone call, but something told me to investigate this potential lead on our beloved stained glass window.

I drove to the address and rang the doorbell. A man answered the door and I told him about a certain phone call I received from a woman instructing us that we could find our stained glass window at his home. He immediately



made some remark about his ex-wife and explained he had a stained glass window, but he purchased it.

I told him we had a lost stained glass window that belonged to our historical home in Western Springs, and that there were two such windows. And, if this was the one we thought it was, it would match its sister window.

He led me to his family room, and when I saw the window – even from a distance – I knew immediately it was "The One." The man had built his new family room addition around this beautiful stained glass window! It was the centerpiece. I told him this belonged to our home and asked how he acquired it. It was clear from his story that the description of the man who sold him the window was a former property manager who worked for our mother after our

father passed away. He apparently sold it directly to this man who in turn, installed it in his home.

I demanded the window be returned immediately, and he replied he spent a lot of money on its restoration and framing. He wanted to be reimbursed for these incurred costs. While at his house, I saw two clear choices – not pay him and take him to court for purchasing stolen merchandise. Or, pay him for the money he had spent on restoration and take immediate possession of the window. I chose option #2 because we were anxious to get the window returned without delay.

Since that time the stained glass window has been hanging in our homes in LaGrange and in Indian Head Park. It's such an elegant and historic window. We'd like to share it with the Western Springs Historical Society so others can enjoy it too.

**To see the recovered stained glass window, visit our new exhibit at the Tower Museum on Saturdays, 10am–noon.**

**The WSHS would like to thank the Brannen family for donating this very important piece of history in loving memory of their parents, Lawrence and Adriana Brannen.**

## A LETTER FROM THE BOARD

# Saving the Past for Our Future

The mission of the Western Springs Historical Society is to instill an appreciation of the village's past in residents of all ages and to promote the preservation of the cultural, economic, and aesthetic heritage of our town. You may know us primarily through the Tower Museum on the Green in downtown Western Springs, but our work to fulfill this mission takes many forms.

In addition to the Tower Museum, we are also responsible for the Ekdahl House Museum on Wolf Road and an Archives office in the Grand Avenue Community Center. The Ekdahl House was built in 1887, only one year after the Village was incorporated. We maintain the house as an outdoor museum where visitors view the house as it existed in 1887 and explore the village's connection to 19th century issues such as immigration, the role of women, and the importance of community. Our Archives holds a vast collection of newspaper articles, pamphlets, photos and other materials relating to the people, places and events of Western Springs that is constantly being updated with new materials. While the Archives office is still closed to the public, we are answering queries via email at [info@westernspringshistory.org](mailto:info@westernspringshistory.org).

Needless to say, all of these efforts rely on the support of volunteers. With the easing of pandemic restrictions, we have reopened the Tower Museum and anticipate the Archives office will reopen soon. As always, we are looking for volunteers to help keep these resources vibrant and up-to-date. If you have an interest in the history of our town and a little free time (anything from 2 hours every 2-3 months to three hours every week) please consider volunteering for the Western Springs Historical Society. You can reach us at [info@westernspringshistory.org](mailto:info@westernspringshistory.org).

We look forward to hearing from you!

## *The Board of the Western Springs Historical Society*

Mark Tobin, Mary Rintz, Mike Medema, Lori Mitchell, Pete Caris, Chris Cone, Jim Havlat, Karla Hudson, Susan Morrow, Mike Scodro, Patsy Shutack, Sue Stepaniak, Leslie Walters



## LT STUDENTS DONATE THEIR TIME AND TALENT

*By Sara Walters, LTHS Student Volunteer Coordinator*

Congratulations to the Lyons Township High School student volunteers who have been helping out the WSHS for the last few months! We appreciate the effort that was put into their work and are pleased that many of the volunteers exceeded expectations and repeatedly requested additional projects. With their help, we were able to update years of educational tools, create walking tours, museum exhibits, and a computer-aided drawing of the Tower Museum, as well as managing snow removal at the Ekdahl House Museum. Each project was completed independently to follow Covid-19 safety guidelines.

Our twelve volunteers were from all over the neighboring communities, including seven of us from Western Springs:

Jasper Burns  
Natalie Glawe  
Nichole Kozney  
Genesis Magpayo  
Leah Miles  
Eric Naglak  
Ella Neary  
William Payant  
Kevin Rife  
Alejandra Rodriguez  
Sara Walters  
James Upton



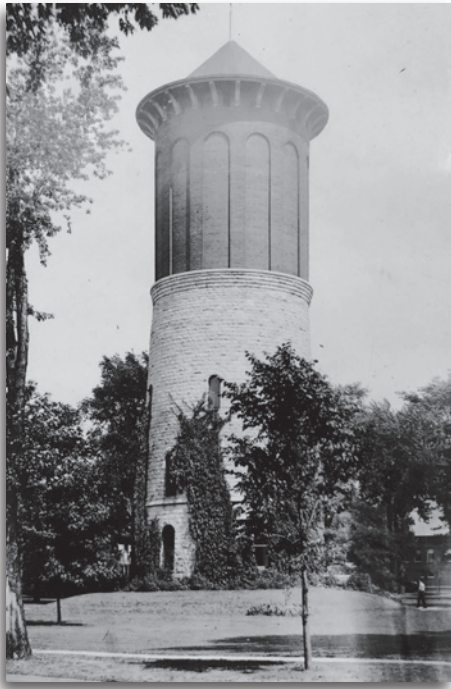
Do you know a high school student who loves Western Springs and is looking for a way to get involved? The National Honors Society has plenty of volunteer opportunities for all sorts of talents and interests. Visit [LTHS.net](http://LTHS.net) and search for NHS. You will find a list of our current volunteer positions on our club's home page. You do not have to be part of the NHS to participate, we welcome all volunteers!





# WE NEED YOUR HELP!

*As an all-volunteer organization, the Historical Society relies on the generosity of people like you to manage all of our various offerings. At this time, we have several key positions that we are looking to fill. The time commitment and skills needed are different for each but in all cases, we are looking for people who have an interest in the village and would like to take an active role in keeping up the wonderful place we call home!*



If any of these volunteer positions listed below are of interest to you or if you know of someone that might be interested, please contact us at [info@westernspringshistory.org](mailto:info@westernspringshistory.org). We would love to hear from you!

## *Tower Museum Staff*

*The Tower Museum is open weekly on Saturday mornings from 10am to noon.*

**MUSEUM DOCENT:** Each Saturday, two docents are responsible for opening the museum and greeting guests. The position can be as engaging as you wish — from interacting and teaching the guests about our exhibits to simply greeting guests if you are not comfortable with a lot of interaction. New docents will be teamed with an experience docent and training will be provided.

**EXHIBITS DESIGNER:** This is the ideal position for someone with a flair for design and an interest in our village's history. The Exhibits Designer works with the Museum Manager to identify subjects for temporary or permanent exhibits, pulls together suitable artifacts from the collection, researches background information/ prepares text for the exhibit with help from the Archives volunteers, works with a graphic designer to format write ups, and installs the final exhibit. The designer also oversees the dismantling and storage of exhibits when they are taken down.

## *Archives Staff*

*Our Archives, located at the Grand Avenue Community Center, is open weekly on Tuesdays from 9am to noon.*

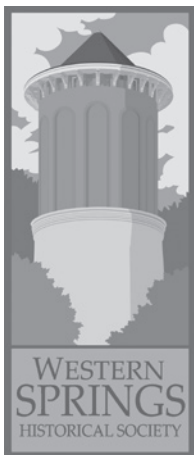
**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT:** Our Archives Administrative Assistant is responsible for overseeing the activities at the Archives on Tuesday. Specific tasks include opening and closing the Archives each week, fielding calls/ emails from the public, overseeing activities of Archives volunteers, picking up/answering mail, keeping track of and purchasing supplies as needed, and interfacing with the Archives Manager. The Administrative Assistant can also participate as Preservationist, Cataloging Specialist and Researcher as needed or desired.

**CATALOGING SPECIALIST:** This position includes the basic functions of the Preservationist, but requires the desire to learn additional archiving technical skills. Knowledge of PastPerfect software is helpful but not required. This position interfaces with other Archives staff, and direction is provided from the Administrative Assistant and the Archives Manager.

**PRESERVATIONIST:** Responsibilities includes recording acquisitions, cataloging existing and new artifacts, creating new digital formats of our vast collection of photos and documents. This position interfaces with other Archives staff, and direction is provided from the Administrative Assistant and the Archives Manager.

**RESEARCHER:** Beyond the internet, Researchers have access to our collection of documents and photos to create new historical content for newsletters, social media, exhibits and to answer ongoing public requests. This position interfaces with other Archive staff, Exhibit Designers, and direction is provided from the Administrative Assistant and the Archive Manager.





**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 &  
DOCENTS WELCOME**

Call 708-246-9230

**ARCHIVES & WORKSHOP**

Grand Avenue  
Community Center  
Second Floor

**ARCHIVES HOURS**

Tuesdays 9 AM – Noon

**OFFICERS**

**Mark Tobin**  
President

**Mary Rintz**  
Vice President

**Mike Medema**  
Treasurer

**Lori Mitchell**  
Secretary

**TRUSTEES**

Pete Caris  
Chris Cone  
Jim Havlat  
Karla Hudson  
Susan Morrow  
Patsy Shutak  
Mike Scodro  
Sue Stepaniak  
Leslie Walters

**NEWSLETTER**

**GRAPHICS**  
Mary Rintz

**WESTERN SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 139  
Western Springs, IL 60558

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## LOCAL POSTAL PATRON

### *Family Fun at the Tower!*

After a long break due to the ongoing pandemic, our Tower Museum is back open on Saturdays from 10am to noon! We need to keep the Children's Museum closed for the rest of the summer, but our LT student volunteers have created Scavenger Hunt activity worksheets to keep our younger visitors engaged. We also have outdoor activity worksheets including a walking tour for a fun and educational adventure. Stop in on any Saturday and do all the activities in one visit or spread them out over several visits.

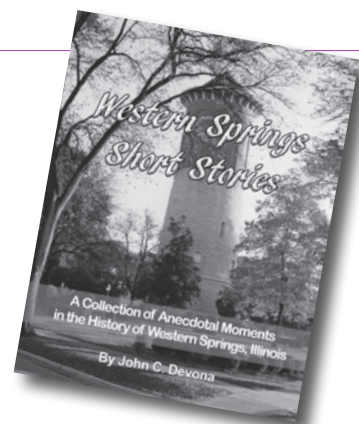


### *Our Storied Past*

Western Springs resident, and past WSHS Trustee, John Devona has written and published *Western Springs Short Stories*. This collection of anecdotal moments on the history of our beloved village is a must-read for any resident past or present, young or old.

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 also makes a great gift.



Books can be purchased for \$25 at the Tower Museum on Saturdays, 10am to noon or at the following Western Springs stores: Casey's, Clever Girl, the Fruit Store, The Uptown Shop and Village True Value. You can also purchase the book online at [westernspringshistory.org](http://westernspringshistory.org). All book profits support the Western Springs Historical Society!