



WESTERN SPRINGS

Historical Society

Winter 2021



ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT

PEGGY TAYLOR

The following is gathered from an oral interview conducted by Nancy Caris as part of the WSHS Oral History Project, which seeks to capture the memories and reflections of long-time residents or those who have had significant impact on the Village.

You may recognize her name as the artist of the set of watercolor notecards that are sold around town but Peggy's connection to Western Springs and the Historical Society goes much deeper than just her donated artwork.

Margaret "Peggy" Ruth Pole was born at West Suburban Hospital to parents Ruth Cowan and Robert Craig Pole. Peggy grew up in Oak Park with her brother Robert, where she attended Hawthorn School and Oak Park River Forest High School. She went to Denison for college which is where she met her future husband, Kent Parsons Taylor. She also attended the University of Chicago for one year.

After living in the LaGrange Highlands for three years, Peggy and Kent moved to Western Springs in 1959 where they raised their four sons, Craig, John, Kent and Chandler. For 15 years, Peggy was the Director of Religious Education at the First Congregational Church of Western Springs. Kent was a counselor and dean at Lyons Township High School and also coached football and basketball. Their first house was on Clausen where they lived for 39 years and hosted float building parties for students from the Foreign Exchange Club. Next they lived on Central Avenue one block from church for 22 years. Both homes were ideal for walking and biking to work.

As a child, Peggy took art and dance lessons in grade school "like all little girls." In high school she was inspired by her art teacher who took Peggy and her classmates to The Field Museum to draw the large stuffed animals. While in high school, she was allowed to take extra art classes at the Oak Park River Forest Art League, The American Academy of Art and The Art Institute.

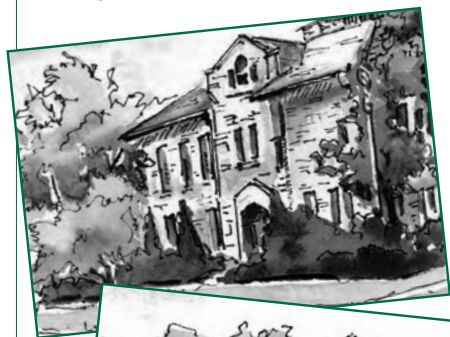
The set of color notecards by Peggy Taylor includes paintings of eight different Village landmarks and makes a lovely hostess or holiday gift! They are available at Village True Value, the Tower Museum and WSHS Archives.



Later in life, Peggy took workshops at the LaGrange Art League and watercolor classes with Barbara Short at First Congo. After Barbara passed, Peggy took over teaching the classes, which she said was a "natural transition."

Kent, who passed away in 2019, grew up in Western Springs and was very involved with the community including a stint on the Village Board. Peggy and Kent were members of many groups and could always be seen together at every community event. Peggy was active with the Western Springs Historical Society since its inception. As she tells it, "As secretary of the newly founded WSHS, my first contacts were the 'pillars of the Village'—Eldon Link, Frank Abbott and Maud Erickson—a wonderful experience as a newcomer in town when my husband Kent knew everyone! Kent's roots were deep and wide—and I was (am) grateful to have shared them."

Aside from donating her time, Peggy also donated her artistic talents with her drawings of the House Walk homes and her beautiful watercolors of Village landmarks. We are grateful to Peggy for having shared her talents, and her memories with us!



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Holiday Greetings

On behalf of the Western Springs Historical Society, I would like to wish everyone a very Happy Holiday Season! As we enter this time of celebration with family and friends, we should take time to recognize how lucky we are to live in a place that values family, community, schools and business.

Although we are living through trying times, the WSHS is still working hard to preserve and showcase our Western Springs history. The Tower Museum is open and running every Saturday from 10am to noon (the children's museum will open back up in January). Check out our new sign for the Tower Museum, which we hope will signal to people that the tower is more than just a historical building, but rather a fully-functioning museum.

The WSHS trustees are always working hard to improve our presence in the community. We are in the process of digitizing our archives, located in Grand Avenue School, which will allow us to access all information easily and efficiently. We are also beginning a beautification project on the Ekdahl House and its grounds. There are many more projects and events we are working on "behind the scenes" such as the upcoming Walking Tour. Visit our updated website to see what is happening at westernspringshistory.org.

Although we as a community are doing well, we should realize that the pandemic has put a damper on a lot of our social events. We had to put a hold on our celebrated House Walk until further notice. The House Walk is our largest revenue stream, so we have to get creative with new ideas and events in order to pay the bills. The "Paint the Tower" event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Tower as a museum was a small success this past September. A family-friendly event where artists of all levels painted scenes around the tower, is one we hope to hold every year. But our most consistent and important source of revenue comes from YOU, through memberships and donations. Please consider becoming a member, as it is a small way to become involved in our community and a way of being part of the solution.

Again, Happy Holidays! Stay safe, be kind, be thankful and pay it forward.

Mark Tobin

President, WSHS

CELEBRATING A VILLAGE ICON

On September 18th, artists of all ages and skill levels gathered on the Tower Green to try their hand at painting our Village's historic icon, which first opened as a museum in 1970.

The inaugural *Paint the Tower Plein Air Event* was the brain-child of the WSHS President Mark Tobin, a local artist and art teacher at the LaGrange Art League. Due to the pandemic and cancellation of the 2021 House Walk (the main fundraiser for the Historical Society), we've had to come up with alternative ways to raise funds. We also wanted to commemorate the (delayed) 50th Anniversary of the Tower Museum so Tobin came up with the idea of charging a fee for artists to gather on the Tower Green and paint the iconic Tower.

Plein-air painting, or "en plein air" is the act of painting outdoors. "Plein-air art is capturing a moment and a feeling," Tobin said. "They try to capture a mood and having people paint together helps everyone observe the process."

Artists were able to sign up in advance online and could purchase art kits if they didn't want to bring their own supplies. Many folks took advantage of the beautiful fall day and bought kits "at the door." The event was a great success and the WSHS hopes to make it a yearly endeavor.

We would like to thank: the LaGrange Art League for generously donating over 20 easels for the artists' use; local resident Greg Cone for providing musical entertainment; Kirshbaum's for their smiley cookies and BB's Donuts for their boxed donuts donations.



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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 planes crash in 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.

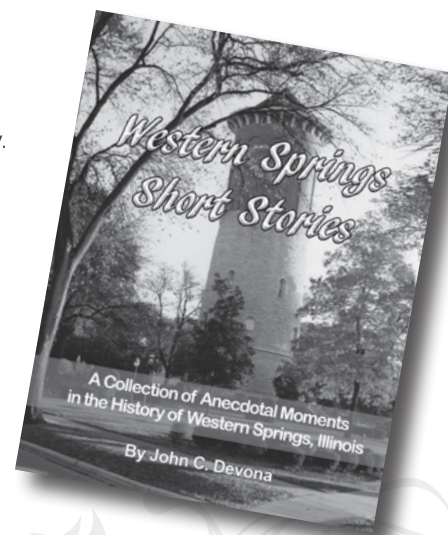
John, a resident of Western Springs since 1972, has been a volunteer for the WSHS since 2011. He's served as a Trustee, the Archives Manager, Newsletter Editor and museum docent, among other roles. He also wrote a weekly story for the WSHS website called "Blast from the Past". At the suggestion from 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 holiday gift for any resident past or present, young or old.

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 by filling out and returning the form below. All book profits support the Western Springs Historical Society!

**Price increases to \$30 after January 1.*



BOOK ORDER FORM

Western Springs Short Stories by John Devona

Name

Address

City State Zip

Phone Email

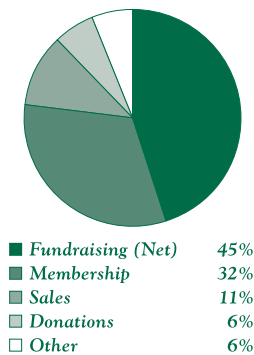
	Unit Price	Quantity	Total
Western Springs Short Stories Book	\$25.00		
Shipping/Handling (per book)	\$6.00		
		Amount Due	\$

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.

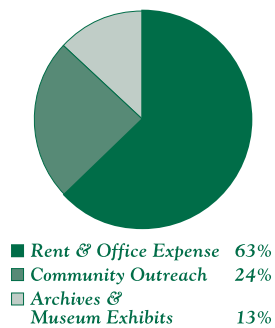
2019-2020

Combined Financial Report

REVENUES = \$69,745



EXPENSES = \$36,482



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 2019 and 2020 (the most recent two year period for which complete data are available).

WSHS Welcomes New Archives Assistant



The WSHS Board is pleased to announce the hiring of Colin Steele as the new Archive & Digital Assets Coordinator!

Colin grew up in Western Springs, attended LT and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Arizona. There he specialized in the archaeology of religion and museum studies. His past experiences include working with the Arizona State Museum and the Bureau of Land Management in their respective repatriation divisions, as well as the Arizona State Museum's Archaeological Repository.

He is beyond excited to start working with the Western Springs Historical Society team in order to help organize and manage existing and future archival materials and objects!

Let's Talk!

Do you have a neighbor, friend or relative who is a long-time resident of Western Springs? Perhaps you know someone who works in town and has been instrumental in the communities development? If yes, then please let us know! We are looking for candidates interested in sharing their reflections and remembrances of village life with the WSHS. Interviews last approximately one hour and participants receive a recording of their interview free of charge. Email us at info@westernspringshistory.org or call 708-246-9230.

Family Reunion

WSHS member Gurrie Rhoads — life-long resident and developer of the Commonwealth subdivision — and his five siblings visit the Tower Museum as part of their family history tour of Western Springs, which also included stops at their original home on Grand and the Grand Avenue School.



Pictured L to R: Cheryl Rhoads, Virginia Rhoads Kingland, Paul Rhoads, Kathleen Rhoads Carpenter, Gurrie Rhoads & Mark Rhoads

Character Counts

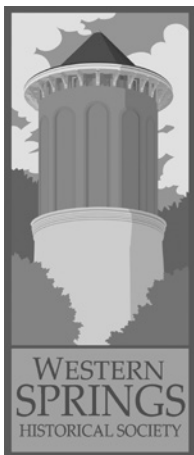
It's not too early to start thinking about nominations for the 2022 Preservation Awards! Many of the homes that have received awards over the years have been nominated by proud owners; however, anyone may nominate a building for an award.

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 (residential or commercial) that fits the scale and historic style of Western Springs and the building may be of any age.

The WSHS appreciates the efforts by all homeowners to maintain their homes. A resident's commitment to preserving their home or adding to it in a period appropriate manner contributes to the charm and character of our village.

Visit our website in February 2022 for more information and nomination forms.



WESTERN SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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WesternSpringsHistory.org

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NEWSLETTER GRAPHICS

Mary Rintz

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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 are in need of qualified volunteers to docent the Children's Museum, re-opening in January 2022. This is a perfect position for teens who are looking to fulfill their community service hours!

The Tower Museum is open Saturdays from 10am to noon, so the time commitment is minimal, yet the rewards are many. Training is provided. It's easy, fun and you will be helping this worthwhile organization thrive. Email info@westernspringshistory.org if you are interested.

Make a Difference

As we approach the end of 2021, please consider supporting the Western Springs Historical Society. Become a member, renew your membership, gift a membership and/or make a tax-deductible donation. Payments can be made by sending a check in the enclosed envelope or via PayPal on our website. Visit www.westernspringshistory.org and click the yellow "Donate" button. Thank you!

