 Olney Memories # 121  March 2, 2016

Greetings! Things are going great! We have new members, I keep getting more help in finding replacements for the non-working e-mail addresses which I so much appreciate. Interest is sparkling in the OM’s and new “memories” are coming to the surface…..it won’t be long until another issue will be ready to send out! Send in your memories to make this happen all the sooner….

Ann Weesner King

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News Flash re: TAC-TPAA’s 2016 RCHS (ERHS) scholarship drive!

With two weeks remaining in the drive (ending March 14th), we are short $4K!  We’ve done well getting in range with alumni contributing $7,128!

The drive ends March 14th.   Want to help?  Mail a check (for any amount) to Janet Everette to the address below.

Do know that **Tiger Pride Alumni Association** is a tax exempt, charitable 501 (c) (3) organization dedicated helping our school district.

**Mail check to:**

**Janet Everette, Treasurer, TPAA**

**906 East Cherry Street**

**Olney, IL. 62450**

**Make your check out to Tiger Pride Alumni Association.**

To know more, visit TAC’s “2016 Scholarship” page at <http://www.erhsalumni.net/Scholarships-2016.htm>

Thank you, on behalf of the young 2016 RCHS (ERHS) grads who will be selected for one of our 10 or 11 scholarships of $1,000.

Happy Days!

Richard Williams

Founder, TAC and TPAA

End of flash

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Harvey Zimmerle

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**Subject:** **Richland County**

Bits of History from Richland Country’s Past - Rus E. Scherer Class of 62

 DID YOU KNOW ???

 The first political ownership of the territory now known as Richland County was by the French. In 1702 the French settled in Vincennnes which became the most important French settlement in this territory.

 In 1841 Richland County was carved out of the easterly part of Clay County and the western part of Lawrence County, which were both originally part of Edward County – a block of land that once included the eastern half of Illinois and Wisconsin, reaching to the border of Canada.

Before the white man settled in Richland County, the Indians hunted here. After the war of 1812, a settlement was made and the Indians gave up their lands and went father west and north. The last Piankashaw, common to this area of Illinois and Indiana, was a woman who died in Olney in 1932.

 Our town’s name came from Judge Aaron Shaw, who had suggested the name of Olney after his loyal friend Nathan Olney, a Lawrenceville banker.

 In the early days providing a place for the county and circuit courts to conduct business was no easy task. The first commissioners met in the nearest available cabin. One located just east of Olney on the Trace Road. Rent was $1.00 per month with the county furnishing the stove for heating and the cabin’s owner the wood. Several other structures followed. One building, 40 feet square and two stories high, was painted white and known far and wide as the finest courthouse in the part of the state. The courthouse that preceded the present building was an imposing structure with an elevation of 52 feet and surrounded by a dome that reached an awe-inspiring height of 122 feet. This building lasted until 1914 when it was destroyed by fire, possibly caused by a passing Illinois Central train when a spark from the engine lodged in one of the hundreds of pigeon and sparrow nest the infested the cupola.

 Richland County has a rich military history, built by patriotism and commitment. An 1865 report showed Richland County furnished a total of 1,577 men during the Civil War, 54 more than government quota. Nearly 1,000 men served in World War I, including John R. Lindsey, a brigadier general. The original registration in the draft enacted in 1940 showed 2,148 names from Richland County during World War II. The county produced four World War II generals-William Campbell, Frank Shilt, Edmund Sebree and Reginald Harman-giving Olney the nickname of “The Town of Generals.”

 The 1950 Census placed the U.S. Center of Population a little west and north of Dundas, on the Carl Snider farm. On October 18, 1951, a large parade and celebration brought out 25,000 residents and visitors, including Gov. Adini Stevenson, Sen. Paul Douglas and the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

 Olney was a typical county town of the nineteenth-century Midwest. With stores strung along the main street, the bustling area was the hub of activity for the surrounding countryside.

 The real growth of Olney began in 1855 with the completion of the O & M Railroad. On once occasion in 1858, 17 carloads of immigrants, with their household goods and faming utensils, landed at the Olney depot.

 Through Lincoln and Douglas never debated in Olney, both presidential candidates spoke at separate political rallies in Olney on the same day, September 20, 19856. A special plaque commemorating the occasion is located on the courthouse lawn.

 Most Richland County natives have no idea the Village of Claremont was once a resort town. A large lake once extended on both sides of the railroad tracks on the west side of Claremont. The lake-supporting boat rides, a large hotel and summer resort-was a popular “Sundaying” center in the 1880’s and 1890’s. Special train excursions ran from St. Louis to the Claremont resort.

Claremont had its spot in national politics. Miss Marie Brehm, a teacher at Claremont School during the 1887-88 term, was an ardent advocate of prohibition and women suffrage. Her interest and enthusiasm in temperance and moral welfare cause her to travel widely throughout the world. She worked her way to the top of the National Committee Prohibition Party in 1920 and was on the Prohibition Party’s ticket as candidate for vice president of the United States in the 1924 national election.

 Another big attraction of the decade of the 1880’s was the Illinois State Fair, held in Olney in 1887 and again in 1888.

 The lack of television, movies and the automobile was no hindrance to the enjoyment of life in the 1880’s. Visiting was popular and church festivals and suppers were commonplace. For the cultured, the Opera House was well attended. And roller skating was becoming an attractive amusement.

 In the mid 1890’s, the citizens were excited over the possibility of getting the Eastern Illinois Normal School. With assistance for the Business Men’s Association (forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce), Olney entered the fight to win the school. The new school’s trustees made two trips to Olney and were favorably impressed. However, on September 5, 1895, notification came that Charleston had been selected as the site for what is now Eastern Illinois University.

 Richland County has produced two U.S. Congressmen: Former sheriff George Shipley who, at the time of his election in 1958, was the youngest member of Congress: and the Class of 1962’s own Terry Bruce, elected in 1985, who served as majority whip at-large during his second term.

 The first school in Richland County was near Watertown, a small village on the west bank of the Fox River near present-day Olney. The school was partitioned off one end of a tavern and furnished with slab seats and board desks. One of the students was Elijah Nelson, a grown man who attended the school located near his house. There being no steel pens in those days, a principle examination for being hired as a teacher was the candidate’s ability to construct a pen from a goose quill.

An interest in a college at Olney predated the present Olney Central College but some 70 years when Olney as one of the cities considered a site for Eastern Illinois University. A citizens committee was formed on August 27, 1957, to pursue bringing a junior college to Olney. A 1959 survey revealed an overwhelming support for a community college, with more than 50 percent of high school seniors indicating they would attend a two-year college in Olney. When Pure Oil decided to close its transportation operation in Olney, the company was persuaded to deed its 13 acres of land and large office building to the district. On September 15, 1962, a referendum to establish a junior college passed by a 5-1 margin. Classes started in September 1963.

 It is believed The Olney Times was the first paper in the United States to come out openly for the election of Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860. By 1890 four newspapers-three weeklies and one semi-weekly-were published in Olney.

 In 1898, Dr. George T. Weber left Ingraham, obtained his medical degree, came to Olney, bought the old Arlington Hotel and established the Olney Sanitarium with a capacity of 15 beds. In 1907, the Olney Sanitarium was incorporated under the laws of Illinois with the establishment of a training school for nurses. Over the years, other Weber family members joined the staff and at one time four brothers and two sisters were working together.

 In May 1949, petitions bearing 1,600 signatures were presented to the Country Board of Supervisors requesting a special bond issue for construction of a 120-bed county hospital. Voters approved a special election in October 1949 and within four years the new hospital was dedicated, giving Olney the largest hospital in a wide area. Over the years the hospital has been expanded and improved upon numerous times.

 Bird Haven, the Robert Ridgeway Memorial Arboretum & Bird Sanctuary, is located near East Fork Lake. Ridgeway was a noted ornithologist, scientist, artist and author. After a distinguished career, including a 50 year association with the Smithsonian Institution, he retired to Olney in 1916 and developed Bird Haven, a bird sanctuary and experimental area for the cultivation of non-native trees and plants. In the 1920’s, this tract was said to have been second only to a tract in Japan in the number of species of plants in contained in one area.

 In 1925, a city ordinance was passed giving the right-of-way to a white squirrel on any street in Olney. In 1943, Illinois legislators passed a state law declaring “It is unlawful for any person to take white squirrels in the state at any time.”

 On March 1, 1870, an association of musicians, under the name of the Olney Silver Cornet Band, was incorporated. In the early 1880’s, the organization was enlarged and the name changed to the “Olney Cornet Band,” which was the official band at the Stare Fair held in Olney in 1887 and 1888. Following several more reorganizations and name changes, the band became the Cummins Municipal Band in 1932, the name it holds today. The band is believed to be the oldest continuously municipal band in Illinois. At lest on musician from the class of ’62, Paul Parker Gay, still plays in the band at the weekly summer concerts held in the Olney City Park.

 Charles B. Tripp was born in Woodstock, Canada on July 6, 1855. The family moved to the area (near Sumner) after his father retired from the railroad. Tripp attended school in Olney, and was very successful in life despite the fact that he was born with no arms, not even shoulder blades. The deficiency prompted him to go on to accomplish greater tasks and live a normal life. He became an experienced wood carver and furniture maker using only his feet, which he had trained to do the tasks most people use their hands to do. As a means of showing people he could do anything a person with arms could do, he traveled with Barnum & Bailey Circus for 19 years. He married late in life and continued to travel with the circus in the summer, while spending the winters in Salisbury, North Carolina. During the winter months he often made his living by making furniture until the circus would return. He died of pneumonia in 1930 in Salisbury. His body was transported to Olney by train for burial in Haven Hill Cemetery.

 Richland County is perhaps the Chowder Capital of Illinois, if not the world. Chowder is believed to have originated in the early 1900’s and probably stemmed from the southern dish known as “Bourgeois” and prepared using every type of meat available, from squirrel and rabbit to beef, pork and chicken. In Richland County, there are church chowders, village chowders, club chowders and private and backyard affairs that stretch from Noble to Claremont and from Dundas to Parkersburg, with Calhoun, Passport and Wynoose and Others in between.

 On September 16, 17 and 18, 1954, the National and Illinois Soil Conservation Days and Plow Matches were held at “Onion Hill” in northwestern Richland County, a little more than a mile from the newly designated Center Of Population of the United States. The Illinois State Police estimated for the first day at 21,000 to 25,000, on the second day between 60,000 and 62,000, and on Saturday for National Day, approximately75, 000 to 80,000 attended. Honored guest speakers included Ezra Taft Benson, the United States Secretary of Agriculture, attending for President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who sent a letter of regret; and Illinois Governor William G. Stratson.

 The Great Depression lasted for nearly 10 years, but in Richland County, the Depression began to end in 1936. By 1939 some people, perhaps half of the population, “never had it so good.” The reason was the discovery of oil. Although parts of Richland Country never produced a well, the surrounding counties of Clay, Jasper, Marion, Wayne, Jefferson, Clinton and Washington counties, comprising the Illinois Basin, were very productive. Many of the larger exploration and service companies built headquarters in Olney, which brought an oil boom to the area that lasted through the 1970’s.

Harvey Zimmerle

Class of ‘58

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Marvin Doolin

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 I'd like to add to the good memories of Mrs. Fletcher.  I was in fourth grade when we moved to Olney, so I missed kindergarten, but my brothers and I went to her story times during the summer, and we looked forward to each one.  My youngest brother was in one of her classes at Silver Street School.  I can't remember how he got to and from there.  We lived in the SE part of town, too far for a child that age to walk, and our mother didn't drive.  Was there an in-town bus?

Marvin Doolin

Class of ‘62

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Ann Weesner King

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Marvin, I remember there was a city bus when I was a child that went around town for a period of time, but I can’t remember the years that it ran. I’m hoping that some of our readers will remember and maybe can tell us more about the Olney City Bus Line….I lived at the West edge of town where West North Ave ran into Rt. 50 (which is 250 now) and the bus came that far out by our house and that was the turn-around point on the West side of town. I thought our town of Olney was really in the BIG Time when we had a city bus!

Ann Weesner King

Class of ‘60

Ken Hane

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Hi Ann,

I read in the Olney Memories that you were trying to find out something about the house just west 0f 130 on West North Avenue. Is that the house that was just behind or maybe replaced by the White Spot Restaurant?  If it is, my family lived in that house for several years when I was in grade school and attended Central School. I am trying to remember what years that would be but I do remember I was young enough that after my first day at Central School I tried to walk home and got totally lost.... Cried and cried until I finally found my way home.... Just wondering if that is the same house your talking about....  If you lived at the end of that group of houses you would have lived close to across from Judy Baltimore and her mother.  Let me know if that is the same house you are speaking of.

Ken Hane

Class of ‘63

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Ann W.King

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So good hearing from you Ken.  Actually the house that was mentioned in the Olney Memories is a bit further down the road on WN Avenue Westward.  It was about half way to where West North avenue hits route  250 now.  Was route 50 when we were kids.   It was a 2 story mansion type house and on the south side of the road up a kinda semi-long driveway.

You just have to go further west from your house a ways.....

I remember Judy Baltimore and the houses where you lived.   The White Spot Restaurant on 130 is there no more.  A furniture store was there in it's place for years and now I don't know where is there.......something else.

Thanks so much for writing....Does anyone else have any input on this area?

Ann Weesner King

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Ann Hill

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| I clearly remember the old railway station. Uncle George would pick up Dick ( Landenberger) and me after church and take us there so we could see the noon train come in and possibly an ice cream cone at Tubby's!!!!  Ann HillJanice (Bagwell)jleahma@comcast.netIn response to what Gary Totten was asking I remember the Taylors quite well.  We lived a couple of blocks from their store.  We lived at 820 W. Elm St.  I remember Beulah also, her husband and her son, whose name I think may have been Jack, who bought the store when Ray retired.  But, of course, that's just when the big stores were beginning.  So it didn't do as well then and soon closed.  By that time we had moved outside of town, north of town on the highway. Janice (Bagwell) MaClass of ’61 --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- |

David Mitchel

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Nadele (my sister of class of ’60) and I got on WVLN twice as kids and that sparked an interest in all things Disk Jockey.
It took a while to fulfill a latent dream but this month, my wife Carol and I acquired controlling interest in an International radio station [WDMradio.Com](http://WDMradio.com)u can click above to listen.  It plays in all computers PC, MAC, tablets, and most smart phones.  (The Microsoft phone doesn't play us -- yet.)
Just go to any browser and enter *WDMradio.com*  (not case sensitive)   (The Opera browser won't work for about two weeks)

No login, no registration, doesn't collect email addresses; it just plays.  Volume control and mute.  Or stop the browser to stop the music.  It's all free of course.

24/7 programming at CD quality is on a random schedule this week for testing but next week we'll have a formal schedule published.  We've worked out deals with people to translate or run it in several foreign languages.

We're featuring easy music, gospel music and good sermons, nutrition to become centurions and uplifting stuff, the kind which makes Olney famous.  Free plugs for our friends.  If anyone wants to record an obituary or a funny story, we can play it.

We refuse donations and refuse promo fees so we're not beholden to anybody and can broadcast beauty and truth.  We just fund everything personally.  It keeps life simple.

We would love to showcase bands and combos who are playing their original music.  They keep ownership and copyrights to their stuff of course but we don't pay them.  Hopefully some will get "discovered."  We haven't decided to get an ASCAP license so we're not playing anything that requires royalties to be paid -- yet.

So, if you or Ray or anybody would like to send some **MP3** files on any subject, we'll get them into the schedule.
Play some things not copyrighted for us, and we'll put it on.  Classical music isn't copyrighted of course.  We'll adjust the mike quality for you so don't worry about going to a studio.
If anyone at Olney would like to listen, we'd be honored.

Thanks for being our friend,
David Mitchell - '58

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