

Highwood Historical Society

MAKING HISTORY EVERYDAY

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Welcome to our New Look: A Museum Without Walls

The Highwood Historical Society's major goal is to seek new office space in Highwood. In the meantime, we continue to develop excellent programs and displays. Check out the Highwood Library window for our latest display on Highwood's Own "SuperBowl Heroes", recognizing many of our home-grown athletes and Highwood Sports Hall of Fame members.

Plan to attend our next special program presented by Steve Draska: "The Life and Wars of General Philip Henry Sheridan." Thursday, March 20th, 7:00pm, St. James Parish Hall, see registration details below.

We are continuing to work with the Highland Park Rehab and Nursing Center to collect interviews with Highwood seniors. If you are interested in sharing your Highwood story, be sure to contact us.

On April 23rd, we will host the Lake County Historical Alliance meeting at Bridie McKenna's. We are pleased to have this opportunity to share the history and locale of Highwood with our colleagues from other historical societies throughout Lake County.

If you have any suggestions on space for us (office building, house, etc.), please contact me—847-682-9039 or email highwoodhistory@gmail.com. We are a 501(c)3 not for profit organization. We will provide liability insurance and pay all utilities for this needed space. There are tax advantages to providing and donating space to not for profit organizations. Thank you for any consideration you can give us.

Teta Minuzzo, President

We all know that Fort Sheridan and Sheridan Road were named after him, but exactly who was Philip Sheridan? Just how does the son of Irish immigrants graduate from West Point, serve on the frontiers of both Texas and the Pacific Northwest, rise to Chief of Cavalry during the Civil War and end his career as Commander in Chief of the Army?

Hear the fascinating story told by Historical Society Member Steve Draska as he explores the "Life and Wars of General Philip Henry Sheridan". Lecture is free of charge, coffee and refreshments served, all guests are welcome. Call 847-682-9039 to reserve your seat today.

Highwood Historical Society

presents

"The Life and Wars of General Philip Henry Sheridan"

By Steve Draska

March 20, 2014, 7:00 pm

St. James Parish Hall

140 North Avenue, Highwood, IL



The Mystery Within the Box

By Amy Lynn Strege

In every family's history, there's a bit of mythology, and my family is no different. There are a ton of fantastic tales of near-death experiences, feats of strength and public recognition of my ancestor's grandeur.

One of the main characters in these tales has been my great-grandfather, Thomas Mussatto, who was mayor of Highwood. He was my grandmother's father and she always had the highest respect for him. Most of the stories actually came from her brother John Mussatto, who I knew as "Uncle Johnny" but most Highwoodians knew as "Mouse." Uncle Johnny was always cracking jokes and teasing people, and for that reason I always took the stories with a grain of salt, thinking they had to be exaggerated. But in the past few months I have found out that at least one of the stories does have a ring of truth to it -- the story of how and why Mayor Mussatto resigned.

In my family, the story of great grandpa's resignation is an exciting tale involving a killing at a bar, the mafia, a judge that had been either bribed or threatened, a valiant stand against evil, and a betrayal. Basically the story goes that a man died at a bar, Mayor Tom pulled the license but a Chicago judge overruled his decision, he then in turn wrote a resignation letter with the intent of the City Council rejecting the resignation and standing behind him. But the mob somehow convinced enough people and the City Council agreed to accept his resignation. He subsequently appointed John Frantonious, who he saw as honest and above the fray in the entire situation.

Though in reading 28 Miles North by Marvyn Wittelle, there is also some mention of the situation, her account is slightly less sensational, merely saying that there was a dispute over a liquor license and that my great-grandfather resigned. Therefore, when I was afforded the priceless opportunity to examine a box of her personal effects related to 28 Miles North, I snatched it up with gusto.

In this box were many treasures, initial layouts of the book, pictures, letters sending copies to local leaders, pricing lists, and the like, which were all very, very cool. In addition there was a lot of legal paperwork surrounding the attempted and failed republication at around the time of the Centennial celebration in 1987, including an attempt to reinstate the Highwood Historical Foundation, who is the actual holder of the copyright. This paperwork was my actual "assignment," to figure out what had happened and whether 28 Miles North could ever be republished, which of course is a story all its' own, and once unraveled may warrant another article.

However what I found that was unexpected and had

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completely changed my view of my own family's history was a reporter's notebook filled with shorthand, cursive, and print, all in Marvyn's own hand. She was a reporter for the Highland Park News. What was shocking was the contents.

In this notebook, she apparently was taking notes at a trial. Not just any trial but it just so happens, THE trial involving my great-grandfather's resignation as mayor. Here on these pages, in confusing combinations of writing styles, including indecipherable shorthand, was an account of how a person with suspected mob connections, who had had a liquor license revoked in Wisconsin previously, had opened a bar in Highwood, how a man in his bar had been killed in a bar brawl of some sort, and how Mayor Mussatto had pulled his liquor license, shutting his bar down, and how he felt he should be still allowed to run the bar. It occurred to me that this must have been the trial in which a judge overruled my great-grandfather, and gave the man his liquor license back.

It was an absolute revelation to see, in scrawled handwritten notes made interchangeably from a pencil and a blue felt pen, portions of that story of my childhood which I thought had to be an exaggeration. What's more, to find out that, at some point, my great grandfather's name was mentioned in a court of law as someone who took a stand and revoked a liquor license in order to protect the town, was just incredible.

And that's when I realized why history is so important. Someday, years from now, my great granddaughter will open up a box somewhere and see some evidence that the mythology of me was actually partially true, and it will empower her and connect us, even though we have never met, just as my discovery connected me to my great-grandfather in ways I never expected.

I want to complete the story, if possible, and I could use your help! Do you, or someone you know, know anything about the story of Mayor Mussatto's resignation? Do you, or they, remember someone dying in a bar fight somewhere around 1950? What bar was it? Was the mob really involved? Why did the City Council really accept his resignation? Any information you have would be appreciated, in order to solve the mystery within the box.

Amy Strege is a Board Member of HHS and a Junior Partner with the law firm of Finn & Finn, Ltd. She can be reached at 847/599-0202 or stregeamy@waukegan.com.

HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 132

HIGHWOOD, IL 60040-0132

Looking Ahead: Annual Meeting to discuss Illinois Coal Mining and the Cherry Mine Disaster of 1909

Highwood's population nearly doubled in the 1920's, a large portion of which came from families leaving the small coal towns of Illinois, Iowa, and Indiana. Come and hear the tragic story of the 1909 Cherry Mine Disaster where 259 men and boys perished below ground and 21 men survived, buried alive for eight days. Details for the May event will be available in our next newsletter. Do you have any family artifacts, mining mementos or family lore regarding coal mining? Please contact the Historical Society to contribute to our event and exhibits.



Photo courtesy of miningartifacts.org

WANTED!

We are looking for copies of

28 Miles North
by Marvyn Wittelle

and the
Highwood Centennial Book,
1987

Please call 847-682-9039
if you wish to donate or
sell them.

Visit us on the Web
www.highwoodhistoricalsociety.com