

Palmyra Historical Society Newsletter

Fall, 2014

Securing Our Place in History



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DESTINATION CANADA,

A Palmyra Version of the Classic American Road Trip by Terry Tutton

One early summer morning in 1953, Bill Tehan Jr. ("Tiny") came across the road (Hy. 59/Main St.) to the Standard Service station where I was working. Tehans lived in the house on the corner of Main and First Streets in Palmyra, WI, where the bank is today. Tiny said, "Tut, I'm going to Canada. Do you want to come along?" What an idea! I never would have thought of such a thing. I had just completed my junior year of high school and Tiny his freshman year. I didn't think there was much chance I would be able to go. First, I was working for Bill Reich and I doubted he would be keen on me being gone for almost a week. And then there were my parents. How could I convince them to give me permission to go? To my amazement Bill and my dad and mother gave me the green light. Neither of us had much money but in those days you didn't need much to travel a week if you did not insist on first class accommodations. We would go in a 1938 Ford that I presume was owned by Tiny's dad, Bill Tehan Sr. The car had four on the floor and a maximum speed of about 55 mph. It also had a spare tire that actually held air.

In those days cars didn't have seat belts or signal lights. I learned to drive first in Tehan's Model A Ford farm car, then dad's 1940 Ford that had the shift on the steering column. Tiny's dad's car had the gear shift on the floor. Otherwise the cars seemed much the same.

In a couple of days, early one morning, we were off for points north and expected to cut quite a swath on our way. We took our fly-rods hoping that somewhere we would get into some trout fishing. Never mind that it didn't occur to us that we would need a fishing license wherever we were. If memory serves the first day trip to northern Wisconsin was uneventful. Around dinner time we rolled into Duluth, Minnesota. The north shore of Lake Superior, Highway 61, was the Main Street in Duluth going right through downtown. Most of the buildings were not more than a story or two but one stood out as we looked ahead. It was a hotel and appeared to be the class place in town so we thought that two big spenders like us should stay there for the night. We pulled up right in front of the hotel and parked there for the night. We enjoyed a fine meal in the hotel dining room that evening. It was the one fancy meal we had on the trip.

The next morning we had breakfast and went out to get our car. No car! There was a policeman on the corner so we told him what happened. He said, "Can you boys read that sign in front of the hotel?" No parking. He said our car had been towed away and we would have to get to the yard where they towed errant cars. It was quite a way but we started hoofing it. When we got there a policeman was sitting at a high desk. He said we would have to cough up five bucks for our car. Five dollars lighter and wiser we headed out for the scenic route along the north shore of Lake Superior.

Inside This Issue

Recap of Old Settlers' Day.....	3
Interview with Dan Poulson.....	4
Christmas Tree Lighting and Santa Visit....	5
Past Perfect Update and more Board News..	5
Two Pictures from Old Settlers' Day.....	6

We noticed on the map that just before reaching the Canadian border we would pass the Grand Portage Indian Reservation. We didn't know anything about such things but thought maybe it would be something we ought to check out. Finally, we came to a rather inconspicuous sign that announced the reservation. There was a dirt road leading into the woods so we turned in. It seemed we were on it for a long time but then we came into a clearing and there were eight or ten small frame buildings except for one that was two stories. The buildings were on a beautiful little inlet from the lake. At first there didn't seem to be anyone there but in due time some Indians appeared. Apparently, the place was open to tourists but it was early in the season and we were alone in the place.

The two story building housed a dining room downstairs and rooms upstairs. It was all quite primitive and had seen better days. There were a number of Indian kids about our ages and we hit it off right from the start. First we rented a room. All the doors had only a latch and there was a chamber pot by the bed. We told the kids we had our fly rods and had hoped to do some trout fishing. To this day I don't know if it is legal for tourists to fish on an Indian reservation. The kids were happy to take us fishing on a great river draining into the lake.

Of course, we did not have fishing licenses but it didn't seem to matter. We had a good time and caught a few fish which we gave to the kids. Then we had a modest, but for us, fine meal in the dining room where we had the undivided attention of the whole staff, not to mention the bunch of Indians that ate with us. Then it was off to slumber land. By morning we both had some experience with the chamber pot. It was not a novelty for me as I had often used one on the Albert Tutton farm that was on Hooper Road and just up the hill from Hwy. E on the way to Punk.

We were in no hurry to get started but eventually headed toward the Canadian border. At the check point the guard said, "You boys don't have any fire arms do you?" Tiny said, "No, except for the pistol under my seat." I had no idea that we had a gun in the car. The guard said we could not take it into Canada but he asked us if we would be coming back through this checkpoint. We were going to do that so we left the gun and picked it up on our way south.

Not too far from the border were the adjacent towns of Port Arthur and Fort William. Today, it is one city, Thunder Bay. I am not sure which town we stopped in but we could see that our meager funds looked quite anemic. We checked into a very small flea bag. The only thing I remember about our stay in Canada was that next to the hotel was a pawn shop. There was a hunting knife with sheath that caught my eye. The blade had been broken off and then reshaped and the sheath was reshaped to fit the shortened knife. It was a beauty with good steel for keeping an edge. It had leather handle rings with brass spacers. Though I had been a Boy Scout for some time, for some reason I didn't have a hunting knife. Most of the scouts did. My brother, Craig, had a dandy regulation scout hunting knife that is now in the Turner Museum as mine will be one day. That knife set me back \$5 but I was glad to get it. I have used that knife all these years including on a National Geographic anthropological expedition to the Canadian arctic on which I used the knife to butcher caribou that Eskimos shot for us.

BOARD MEMBERS

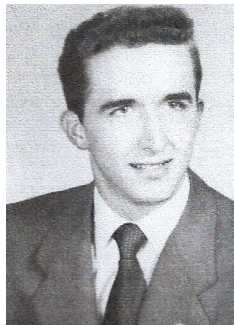
President: Terry Tutton
 Vice President: Tom Rauschke
 Secretary: Loraine Reich
 Treasurer: Doris Marsh

Members

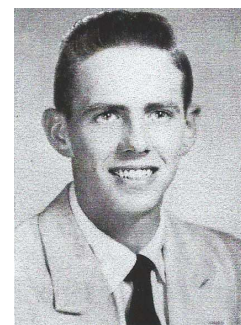
Betty Betenz (Emeritus)
 Carol Kaufman
 Leo Manogue
 Phil Rouu
 Tom Stanley

Volunteers

Caitlin Downey
 Marcy Hansen
 Cindy Holcomb
 Mary Tiller (Gardner)
 Kathy Weiss



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 "Tut" in 1954

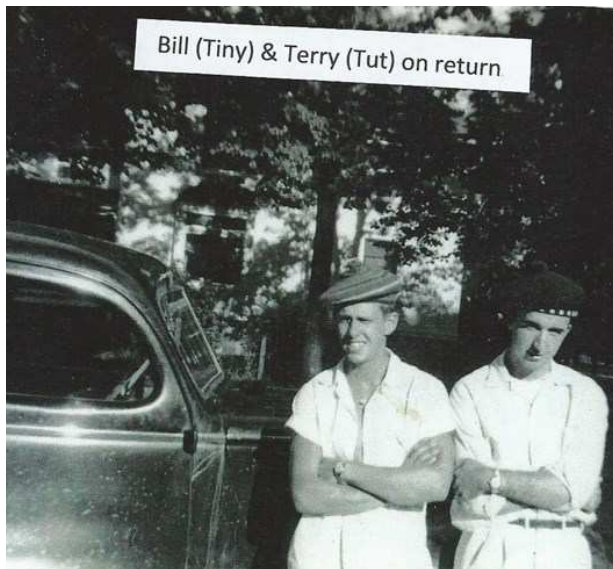


"Tiny" in 1956
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We didn't get far into Canada and we only stayed over one night because our finances dictated we head back south. In fact, I thought we were going to be lucky to make it home on the money we had. At the border we stopped and picked up the pistol and then took a slightly different route home than we had taken on the way up. In Ashland, we made our only stop for the night. We stayed at a big frame hotel with a great view of Lake Superior. I read not long afterward that the place burned to the ground. Today, it is a modern hotel and conference center.

We were both young guys and our waitresses were almost always young, good looking girls so, of course, we wanted to leave generous tips. Tiny is a friendly, big hearted guy and he always left the tip on the table. When he got up and turned away I scooped up the tip money and it is good thing I did because we rolled in to Palmyra on fumes and we had about 20 cents between us. We returned having had a good time that we filed in our memory bank of life's experiences.

*Bill Tehan Jr. graduated from Palmyra K-12 School and went to several colleges. He served in the Peace Corps and the Army Special Forces. He has held a variety of jobs. He and his brother, Jon both live in Mission, TX.



Home at Last, eh?

Terry has announced that he will resign from the presidency when the museum closes for the winter in December. He will remain as a volunteer .

OLD SETTLERS' DAY July 27, 2014

On a day when the wind threatened to blow away the Village Park pavilion and everything else in it, a good crowd gathered to honor Frank and Ginny Pfinder as our 2014 Old Settlers.



According to board member Barb Sekula, who with Betty Betenz manned the sign-in table, 133 persons registered for the event, the 130th time it has been held. Since not everyone registered, we estimated the crowd at over 150 people, a good showing on a threatening day.

The size of the gathering was bolstered by the fine turnout from the Pfinder family, Frank and Ginny and their three children and four grandchildren as well as their surviving siblings, Bill Thomas, Mary Schneider, Ken Thomas, Tom Thomas, Debbie Blossom and Tracy Bult. Only Helen Evens of Las Vegas, Nevada was not present.

After an hour or so of socializing and a sumptuous pot luck lunch presided over by the Palmyra Lionesses, the program got underway, our president Terry Tutton presiding.

The audience gasped as Frank edged to the microphone to lead off the family speeches. Some were heard to say that they had never known Frank to make a speech before, though all agreed that he seemed at home and even cracked a few jokes.

The children then participated in a revolving testimonial to their parents' lives that kept the audience chuckling.

Ginny then took center stage and entertainingly recounted her life's highlights and the couple's 48 years together.

Old Settlers' Day is an unparalleled opportunity to observe the connecting webs of love and affection that bind people together who grew up in a small town in a less hectic age. The presence of many younger people in the crowd assures that these values will continue to be passed down to new generations.

Persons unfamiliar with Old Settlers' Day might think about showing up just for the food, many of which are the cooks' favorite old time recipes.

OLD SETTLER INTERVIEWS, on Tape and CD

DID YOU KNOW...that the Palmyra Historical Society has interviews of all recent Old Settlers as selected each year by the society? We will be working to transcribe the audio portions of each interview to the printed page. This one was done by **Dale Drigot** who also handled the equipment for the interview.

The 2013 Old Settler was Dan Poulson who sat down with President Terry Tutton and four other board members to chat with Dan and his wife Jean. Terry, who is a friend of Dan's from when both were in the fifth grade together, did most of the board's questioning. What follows is a brief excerpt of a transcript of what was an hour-plus conversation, two old friends reminiscing. In this segment they recall an influential coach in their young lives.



TT: "Do you remember junior high athletics?"

DP: "Oh, I sure do and Wayne Gamble was probably the stimulus behind junior high athletics."

TT: "He certainly was."

DP: "And to get a letter at a young age was really a big highlight. He saw to it that we got letters in junior high and that was pretty important, and red and white were our colors."

TT: "Now, do I remember that he was a veteran of World War II?"

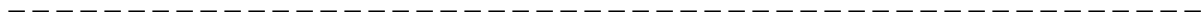
DP: "I believe he was and, of course, the bigger thing was that he was a veteran of Notre Dame. And he came to teach school and he was a classic guy. You know he was a baton twirler and had won several acclaims for his ability to twirl a baton. But he was very interested in the band and when he wasn't teaching and he wasn't tutoring—because he did a lot of tutoring—and I don't think a lot of people understood that, but Charles Turner wanted to go to the University of Wisconsin and he didn't have a foreign language grade and you needed a foreign language ... to get to the university. Wayne Gamble tutored him in Latin in the coach's office to get him so that he could go to the university to school. He was pretty important to this community."

TT: "Do you remember when we'd be out for football practice Gamble would get frustrated because we weren't executing the way we should and he'd get in there and run the ball with no pads and we'd lay it on him?"

DP: "And he always wore work shoes, and he didn't mind kicking. He'd come in, you're right, he came in a-blazin.' He'd teach you to block and he'd teach you to center, he'd teach you whatever he wanted you to learn. And he did it by being with you a lot. You know the interesting part, Terry, we always had practice across the street from the old high school which was that vacant lot between there and Cy Schafer's house on Wisconsin Street and in the fall would be covered in sand burrs and so practice was down and dirty and full of sand burrs and he didn't care. He would get just as many burrs on him as anyone else."

TT: "He had a really good way of teaching. If something didn't work one way it worked another way."

If you haven't yet sent in your 2014 **membership dues**, please use the form below to bring your membership up to date. Dues are \$15 per year. We thank you.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ Dues: \$15 per year _____

E-mail address: _____

website: www.palmyrahistorical.org

BOARD NEWS

Dale Drigot has departed the area, bringing his short lived but very productive six month tenure on the board to an end.

Citing health reasons, **Barb Sekula** has left the board. We thank Barb for her many years of faithful service.

Carol Kaufman has broken her hip in a fall. Join us in wishing her a speedy recovery.

We now have a new water heater in the board room.

Starting with the summer issue, **Peggy Hooper** has been helping us to proof the newsletter. Thanks Peggy.

The board continues to seek a replacement for President **Terry Tutton** who is retiring at the end of this year. We are also discussing a

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING AND SANTA VISIT SET FOR DEC. 6.

Set aside Saturday, December 6 for this annual event.

The Chamber of Commerce parade will reach the Carlin House about 6 pm. followed by caroling and adjournment to the Carlin House for a visit with Santa, refreshments and viewing this season's "collections from the community."

If you have a favorite collection (s) you would like to share with others, contact **Tom Rauschke** at 495-8003.

This will be the third consecutive year that we have featured the rich variety of collections from our neighbors in the community.

suitable way to honor him and his late wife Mary for their extraordinary contributions to history in Palmyra.

PAST PERFECT UPDATE

As of September 6, we have accessioned over two thousand items and entered them into our computer, with backup of course.

The pace picked up in August with computer-savvy volunteers **Cindy Holcomb, Kathy Weiss and Caitlin Downey** joining **Doris Marsh** and **Larry Reich** in data entry.

Others of us have completed proper accessioning of all the items in the Carlin House, many of which were missed in the rush to furnish the house with period pieces after 1978 when we acquired the house.

Renae Prell-Mitchell continues to advise and train us in organizing and saving our collections.

We expect a few more months of diligent effort will be required before our institutional memory can be said to reside in our computer.

Palmyra Historical Society
P.O. Box 265
Palmyra, WI 53156

Barbara Napoletano arrives with her mother, Allie Figi.



A Calkins grandson contemplates eating the first piece of a savory cake.



A Historical Society joke: A compliment, possibly unintended, from one board member to another:
“You are so yesterday.”