

# WOOD COUNTY ROOTS



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## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

### Greetings Everyone!

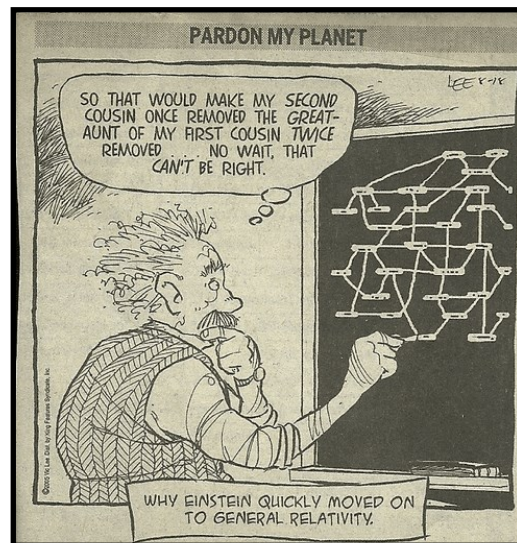
So it looks like we may be finally seeing the end of the pandemic. Here's hoping we can stay away from another outbreak of it.

We are having a program coming up at our June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting at Power's Bluff in Arpin. I am excited to finally have a speaker at our meeting! There is an article with more details (time of program, lunch, etc.) in this newsletter so be sure to check that out. Kudos to Wayne for again pulling everything together for what is sure to be a very interesting program.

Meanwhile, courthouses, libraries, research centers, etc., should be opening for us to again enter their hallowed halls for genealogical research. I for one am getting tired of everything on the Internet, Zoom, email, etc., and am anxious to be out and about in the real world. Let's get out there and stir up our ancestors' bones to reveal all they have to tell us.

I am planning a trip with friends to the Norwegian Heritage Center in Stoughton. I am curious about the place after seeing their ads in the Our Wisconsin magazine. My friends will be going to Norway as soon as the country opens up again to tourists. We are hoping to find some info on their Norwegian ancestors before they go.

**Happy Hunting!**  
**Bev Peaslee, Chair**



## OFFICERS

Officers were voted in at the end of last year to take us on into the new year. Please help the officers out in any way that you can. Our society is only as strong as its members.

- Chairman:  
Bev Peaslee
- Vice Chairman:  
Wayne Peters
- Secretary:  
Sue Miller &  
Myra Sweet
- Treasurer:  
Tina Krummel
- Trustee:  
Mary Moss

## Dues!

It's that time of year again—your annual dues are payable now. Our membership year runs from **August 1 through July 31.**

Check your newsletter label. The line above your name has the expiration date of your membership. There is a membership form on page 1357 of this newsletter. Please check with Tina, our treasurer, on the status of your membership.

## Meet the Old West's Last Gunfighter

From Oregon State Archives.  
Historical City Point Wisconsin@Histcitypointwi · History Museum

You know Jesse James and Billy the Kid. You've watched "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," and heard tales of John Wesley Hardin and the Dalton Brothers. All legends in their time, all still outlaw icons today. Every era eventually ends, and the Old West was no exception.

The lawlessness that began with the Civil War's conclusion stretched into the earliest days of the 20th Century. And when that era finally wrapped up, who was its final desperado?

Meet Harry Tracy, who went down with guns blazing in 1902. He was wildly famous in his day, much like John Dillinger and Bonnie and Clyde were later on. If the FBI had existed then, he would have been Public Enemy #1.

And you won't believe his sad, chilling, heartbreaking, murderous story.

Harry was a walking bundle of contradictions. Strikingly handsome, with an Abercrombie & Fitch model's disdainful smirk, he could be excessively polite and courteous. Women adored him,

and he revered them as symbols of Victorian sanctity, especially his mother. He could be charming company, even funny when he so chose. He could also be withdrawn, lonely and moody. He had deadly aim with a gun and was savagely dangerous. Harry had bad luck and made bad choices, and even when he tried to



do the right thing, he got an especially bad break.

So, just how did this forgotten figure go bad?

He was born Harry Severns in Pittsville, Wisconsin in 1875. His father was described as "fanatically religious," and there are dark hints the boy was physically abused. By the time he was 16, Harry couldn't take it any-

more. He was already a crack shot, bitter, and deeply in love. Harry's sweetheart was Eugenie Carter, and he desperately wanted to marry her and start a new life together. But that took money. So he robbed a post office of \$160. He was kissing Eugenie goodbye as he prepared to hightail it out of town when the sheriff spotted him and opened fire – quickly becoming the first man Harry sent to his grave. There was no turning back now.

Continued:

## Meet the Old West's Last Gunfighter

Harry was a wanted man, a criminal. An outlaw. When he turned up later in Missouri, Harry had acquired the surname of Tracy. He hid in an Ozarks shack for a while, then forced two men identified as "bums" to help him rob eight hunters, making off with \$750.

Harry was a murderer and a robber ... and he hadn't even turned 18 yet.

He bounced around from Cincinnati to Chicago and then went west, hoping to make something of himself and reunite with his beloved Eugenie. Harry recognized the importance of having money – he just wasn't willing to work for it. A dangerous pattern developed. His version of going to an ATM was pulling an armed robbery and living off the loot until the cash ran out. Then he robbed again. And again. And again.

In Salt Lake City, a holdup went bad and he was invited to visit the inside of Utah's Penitentiary. But Harry wasn't behind bars for long. He outfoxed his guard, slipped away and started over in Colorado.

In 1894 (at age 19, mind you), a Colorado Springs saloon holdup was bungled, and two lawmen were killed as he fled. Next stop was Montana, where he joined a gang of horse and cattle thieves. The leader often got drunk and beat his Native-American wife. This offended Harry's strangely exalted notion of womanhood, and he ended the beatings by putting a bullet through the abusive husband's head.

Harry dropped out of sight for a while after that, roaming the West and brooding over Eugenie, his lost love.

Then, a miracle happened: out of the blue, he ran into her in Cripple Creek, Colorado. Harry wasn't going to let her get away again, and they were soon married. He seemed genuinely interested in turning over a new leaf. He bought a little ranch

in Idaho, and for a few months the newlyweds were blissfully happy.

But Fate was determined to never let Harry be happy for long.

Two friends were accused of stealing horses, and they headed to Harry's ranch to hide out. A posse tracked them down and surrounded the place. For once, Harry had no part in this crime. So he and Eugenie decided to flee an increasingly ugly situation. They tried to run for it. The posse opened fire, and Eugenie was hit. Harry went berserk and started shooting like a madman, killing three posse members and sending the rest running for their lives.

Harry held Eugenie in his arms as she died, then gently placed her body on their bed. He mounted his horse and road off into the night. His one sincere attempt at "going straight" had ended in bloody failure.

If Harry was bad before, it was nothing compared to how he behaved now. He particularly blamed lawmen for his woes.

After a few years of riding and robbing his way around the West (where he claimed to have briefly been part of Butch & Sundance's Hole in the Wall Gang), Harry turned up in the Pacific Northwest as the 1800s drew to a close.

He met a fellow bad guy named David Merrill. They committed one holdup after another until they were caught and hustled off to Oregon's Penitentiary, where the final chapter of Harry's short, bloody saga unfolded.

Harry and Merrill had a buddy smuggle two rifles into the prison's stove factory.

They made their break on June 9, 1902. As prisoners were milling around the yard, Tracy and Merrill ran out of the factory with their Winchester. Harry shot a guard in the forehead, then used another as a human shield. Reaching the

Continued:

### Meet the Old West's Last Gunfighter

safety of nearby woods, Merrill killed the guard. In all, three guards and three civilians were shot dead in the escape.

With that, the greatest manhunt in Pacific Northwest history was underway. It was front page news nationwide. And the stories were luridly juicy.

June 29: Tracy and Merrill were reported in Lewis County, with lawmen confident the pair were surrounded.

July 3: The Seattle Daily Times wrote, "In all the criminal lore of the country there is no record equal to that of Harry Tracy. Jesse James, compared with Tracy, was a Sunday school teacher."

July 4: It was said Harry killed two officers and mortally wounded two others near Seattle.

July 8: Harry reportedly held up six men near Olympia and confessed to killing Merrill in a bizarre duel after a disagreement.

And so it went. Harry would drop from sight and the trail would grow cold. Then he would show up hungry at some farmer's door, demanding food and lodging and threatening to kill the family if they alerted law enforcement. Incredibly, some hostages later said Harry was pleasant, cheerful, even good company.

And yet, he also murdered at least five men while on the run. The public was nearing Panic Mode. The governors of Washington state and Idaho offered a combined total of \$6,000 in rewards for Harry (you could buy a small mansion with that amount back then), dead or alive.

His luck finally ran out on August 6, 1902. He was cornered in Creston, Washington and shot in the leg during an ambush by a posse. Totally surrounded, Harry committed suicide to avoid capture.

It was over. After murdering an estimated 25 men (mostly law officers), committing at least 43 robberies, 12 or more one-on-one hold ups and

making at least six jail breaks Harry Tracy, the last gunfighter of the Old West, was dead at age 27.

His lifeless body was publically displayed (just like Jesse James, the Daltons and other gunmen of the era), there was a prolonged, nasty fight over the reward money (which dwindled from \$6,000 to \$2,500 by the time it was reluctantly paid), and Harry Tracy faded into the mist of time.

From Oregon State Archives.

**Historical City Point Wisconsin**

@Histcitypointwi · History Museum



Just an FYI for those who are members of the **Wisconsin State Genealogical Society**, there is talk of a dues increase at the first of the year. You can register for two years ahead, if you wish to save some money. (I would recommend it.)

Many societies have been discussing raising their dues prices, due to the cost of postage and general expenses to keep the societies going. So be sure to turn in all of your societies dues as soon as you might be able to save a few dollars for a couple of years.

Tina Krummel  
President of WSGS

## Presentation at Powers Bluff Skunk Hill June 19th 2021 at 1:00pm

The woods are sacred to at least four Wisconsin Indian tribes and home to two known native burial grounds.

Join Robert A. Birmingham, archaeologist and author of the book "Skunk Hill:



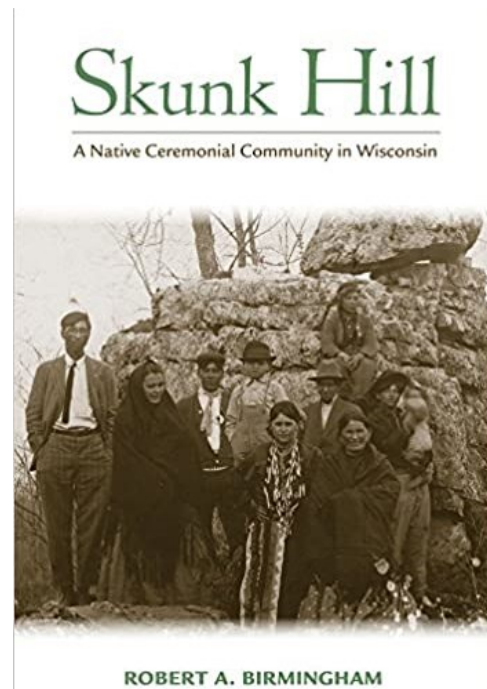
A Native Ceremonial Community in Wisconsin". The book traces the largely unknown story of the Skunk Hill community, detailing the role it

played in preserving Native culture through a harsh period of US Indian policy from the 1880s to 1930s. Bring a lunch to this informal lunch-and-lecture series!

The Potawatomi established the village of Tah-qua-kik, or Skunk Hill, in 1905 on a 300-foot-high bluff in present-day Wood County, Wisconsin.

In *Skunk Hill: A Native Ceremonial Community in Wisconsin*, archeologist Robert A. Birmingham traces the largely unknown story of the community, detailing the role it played in preserving Native culture through a harsh period of US Indian policy from the 1880s to 1930s. Drum Dance, also known as Dream Dance or Big Drum, is a central focus in this text. Even though the community disbanded in the 1930s, the site is now on the National Register for Historic Places with two dance circles still visible on the grounds.

**Robert Birmingham**, author and editor of many publications on Wisconsin archaeology, including his



most recent Society Press books [Skunk Hill: A Native Ceremonial Community in Wisconsin](#), [Life, Death and Archeology at Fort Blue Mounds: A Settlers' Fortification of the Black Hawk War](#) and [Aztalan: Mysteries of an Ancient Indian Town](#), is the former Wisconsin State Archaeologist (1989-2004) at the Wisconsin Historical Society. He teaches anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha.

## Free Digital Readiness Fair

I received this information in the mail and I am passing it along to our members.

**Come to the Fair!** Join us this summer at one of four Digital Readiness Fairs “hosted” throughout Wisconsin. These **free**, virtual events are open to the public but require registration. Local history practitioners and invited guest experts will share their experiences working with digital projects including their challenges and successes, “best practices” and a few lessons learned along the way. We’re excited to showcase digitization projects from around the state and help folks build their own “community of practice” with others engaged in digital projects. Participants will also learn more about our ongoing [digital readiness](#) work, [Recollection Wisconsin](#) and the [Wisconsin Historical Society’s Local History Outreach Program](#).

Registration and for more information:

<https://recollectionwisconsin.org/fairs>

**June 29, 2021 from 9:00am—12:30pm**

Presentation will be virtual

Hosted by the Appleton Public Library.

Topics and presenters are as follows:

**Lina Rosenberg, Foley**, Lawrence University Archivist “*Making the Most of Digitization on Demand*”

**Kitty Werner**, Digitize Oconto County Coordinator “*Digitize Oconto County*”

**Dorothea Salo**, Distinguished Faculty Associate “*Those Two Boxes of Tapes*”

<https://recollectionwisconsin.org/cop/digital-readiness-fairs>

**If you can’t make it to the Appleton Public Library Digital Readiness fair, Join us another day.**

**July 16, 2021 – 9:00 AM-12:30 PM (CST)**

Crandon Area Historical Society

**August 3, 2021 – 9:00 AM-12:30 PM (CST)**

Pioneer Village (Barron County)

**August 18, 2021 – 1:00 PM-4:30 PM (CST)**

Kenosha County Historical Society

(see the website for registration information.

<https://recollectionwisconsin.org/cop/digital-readiness-fairs> )

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

**DETACH AND MAIL WITH A CHECK FOR \$15 PAYABLE TO:  
HEART O’ WISCONSIN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 1565  
WISCONSIN RAPIDS WI 54495-1565**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**New members only:** You may have **one** free surname search if you reside outside of Wood County, WI (a \$10 value).

Surname you would like researched: \_\_\_\_\_

The membership list is published once per year in the December newsletter. We ask that you give permission for us to publish your address, telephone number, and e-mail address by responding to the following questions. **(Please clearly circle your answer; if no response is given, we will automatically publish):** I wish to have the following published in the December newsletter: my address? **Yes No**; my phone number? **Yes No**; my e-mail address? **Yes No**

Members may submit one free query per year, which will be published in the Society’s newsletter in order to contact others researching the same ancestors. It should be 50 words or less, not counting the name and address of the submitter.

Members and non-members may submit additional queries at the rate of 10 cents per word.

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a membership card mailed to you. Thanks.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- June 19, 2021**      ***Powers Bluff / Skunk Hill presentation 11:30 Shelter House for Lunch  
1:00 presentation by Robert Birmingham***
- July 17, 2021**      ***NO meeting***
- August 21, 2021**      ***First Meeting of the new Year. Welcome back stay posted for location  
and times.***
- Sept 18, 2021**      ***Meeting to be announced.***
- Oct 8-9th, 2021**      ***Fall Seminar located at the Mead Inn, Wisc Rapids. HOWGS is  
hosting and we will need helpers at this event. The plan is for in  
person attendance.***

***We will discuss keeping the Zoom component for the future meeting. There will be no  
Zoom for the June 2021 meeting due to no WIFI. Let us know your thoughts on the Zoom  
continuing or not.***

***Membership note:***

***Due to the Pandemic Meetings are cancelled temporarily, but when they do resume we  
will follow the regular day and time.***

***The third Saturday of the month from August through June (skipping January).***

***At 9:30 a.m. At McMillan Memorial Library***

***As a committee we have changed our meeting date and time temporarily to see if attend-  
ance would rise. We are in need of encouraging new members and activity from mem-  
bers who are in the Wisconsin Rapids Area.***

***We would like your input. You can email, or mail our President.***

***Email: [info@howgs.org](mailto:info@howgs.org)***

***U.S Mail : Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 1565  
Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin 54495-1565***

***Look for us on Facebook.com***

***Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society.***

***It is a now an open group so please check it out.***

## Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society

Chairman	Bev Peaslee
Vice Chairman	Wayne Peters
Secretary	Sue Miller & Myra Sweet
Treasurer	Tina Krummel
Trustees	Flores Gumz
3 years	Betty Pearson
2 years	Mary Moss
1 year	

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Book Purchases	Flores Gumz
Hospitality	Joyce Keehn
Indexing	Mary Peters
Library Files	Arlene Keehn
New Members	Joyce Keehn
Newsletter	Tina Krummel
Sunshine	Sue Miller
Website	Di Neinfeldt
Tech Data Admin	Ben Chitek

## Wood County Roots Editor:

Tina Krummel  
2520 Ranger Rd  
Wisc Rapids, WI 54494  
Phone: 715-325-5840  
E-mail: krummtin@gmail.com

**HEART O' WISCONSIN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

**PURPOSE OF SOCIETY:** To assist members and others in genealogical re-search and to preserve local records.

**DUES:** \$15 per household—one newsletter per address. Please list names of all persons joining. Due at or before 31 July. **Membership year runs from 01 August through 31 July.**

**MEETINGS:** Held monthly—August through June—on the Third Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at the McMillan Memorial Library, 490 East Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI (right across the street from the Hotel Mead & Convention Center).

**Wood County Roots Editor:**

Tina Krummel Phone: 715-325-5840 E-mail: krummtin@gmail.com

**Visit us on the web at [www.howgs.org!!!](http://www.howgs.org!!!)**