

## In Our Collection—The Letters of Tess Mueller Part One

John Hart



The collections at the Tripp Heritage Museum contain a number of family histories, scrapbooks, photographs, video tapes, audio tapes and other items donated by contributors from numerous families. One that I have recently reviewed is a binder of letters written by Therese Mueller of her 1937 around the world trip. She wrote letters to her mother and brother, from stops on

her 14-month trip from July 1937 to August 1938. These letters were compiled by her sister-in-law's niece, Kathryn Englander.

Therese Catherine "Tess" Mueller was the daughter of Dr. Henry and Mathilda Czeikowitz Mueller, born March 30, 1892. Her father was born in Germany in 1858. Her mother was born in Minnesota in 1869. She was an infant when the family arrived in Sauk City by 1894. Tess's brother Otto Harmon Mueller was born March 23, 1895, at Sauk City. Otto married Dorothy Theresa Littel. Dorothy's father, Frank Xavier Littel, was a long-time businessman (furniture retailer/undertaker) and a charter member of the Lake Wisconsin Country Club in 1925. Both families were members of the Sauk County Free Congregation. Therese was the only graduate of the Sauk City High School in 1908. She had completed her courses in just 3 years. She attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, graduating in 1912. She started her teaching career at Mazomanie. Tess enrolled in the St. Paul College of Law and earned a law degree. She later began a long teaching position at Lindblom High School in Chicago. While in Chicago she took post-graduate courses at the University of Chicago, earning a master's degree in 1935.

1937 was a significant year in world history, marked by several notable events. The world had largely recovered from World War I and was in recovery from the Great Depression. The Italians under Mussolini in 1936 had occupied Ethiopia. Hitler had been in power for the past

4 years. He convened a meeting in Berlin on November 5th, 1937, attended by his military and foreign policy leadership, in which Hitler outlined his expansionist policies. The meeting marked the beginning of Hitler's foreign policies becoming radicalized. By March 1938, Germany would absorb Austria and the Sudetenland into the Third Reich.

In January and February 1937, severe flooding along the Ohio River affected multiple states in the U.S., leaving around 1 million people homeless. The Spanish Civil War continued throughout 1937, with significant battles such as the Battle of Guadalajara and the Battle of Brunete. Pablo Picasso completed his masterpiece "Guernica". On May 6th, the German passenger airship Hindenburg caught on fire and was destroyed during its attempt to dock in New Jersey, resulting in 36 deaths. The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco was completed and opened to the public on May 27, 1937. On July 2, 1937, aviator Amelia Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan disappeared over the Pacific Ocean while attempting to circumnavigate the globe.

It was in the midst of these world events that on Saturday, July 24, 1937, Tess Mueller and her travel companion, Bess Buchanan, aboard the "SS President Hoover" steamship, passed under the recently completed Golden Gate bridge for a two-week passage to Yokohama, Japan. In the mid-Pacific Ocean, the ship's commander G.S. Yardley, received a telegram on August 4th telling of "the threat of general war was strong in Tokyo, and that the Japanese army gathered in north China is expected momentarily to drive south...to an area which has a population or more than 20 million." The Second Sino-Japanese War would soon commence with the Battle of Shanghai, which was the first of 22 significant battles between the Imperial Japanese Army's National Revolutionary Army and the Republic of China. It lasted from Aug 13, 1937, to Nov 26, 1937, and was one of the war's greatest and bloodiest conflicts. It was later dubbed 'Stalingrad on the Yangtze' and is widely recognized as the battle that kicked off WW II.

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ager, Jack Berndt at (608)  
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appointment.

*From the Desk of*  
**SPAHS Board President**  
*John Hart*

This summer couldn't be more different weather wise than last year. It's been more pleasurable with cooler temperatures and more rain. Geomagnetic storms from solar flares have supercharged northern lights across Wisconsin. There's been some great photos posted on social media showing stunning backlit local landscapes.



*John*

Last fall our 1st program featured author and educator Patrick Jung and was so successful that we sponsored another program this spring on April 27th. We again had a full house. For the year we hosted 130 attendees who Patrick shared with his expertise on the Black Hawk war and the Battle of Wisconsin Heights and led a tour of the battleground location just 3 miles south of Sauk City. Due to the strong positive feedback, we are likely to sponsor another event next spring. Watch for future announcements.

SPAHS has also been asked to join a committee being established by author and educator Patrick Jung and retired DNR Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Coordinator David Gjeston. We all know Patrick as being the author of two books on the history of the Black Hawk War and the Battle of Wisconsin Heights. David was instrumental in having the DNR identify the exact location of the battle site and the purchase of the property from the Black Hawk Ridge Recreation Area which was private property owned by the Larry Isenring family. David also created an advisory citizens committee and directed the placing of the site on the State and National Register of Historical Places. David and Patrick have identified two goals. First to appoint the Tripp Heritage Museum as a reference center for the acquisition, collection and archiving of published and unpublished historical materials documenting the battleground. The second goal would be to support a professional archaeological survey of the historic battleground site. This would likely be a multiple year effort to identify and secure buy in with all the appropriate stakeholders. We will keep you updated on our efforts.

We would like to thank the Sauk Prairie High School Class of 1964 for their recent donation of \$290 from their reunion committee. Members included Dan Endres, Linda Wiedenfeld, Don Ballweg, Judy Zeman, Vi Hosking, Jackie Tarnutzer, Jeri Huseth, Dick Nolden, Jack Berndt, Chris Parchem, Jackie Barnhill and Marilyn Horstman. I hope this challenges other reunion classes to donate in the future.

Next year 2025 will be the 100th Anniversary of the Lake Wisconsin Country Club. SPAHS is providing support to a Country Club committee planning their observance of the anniversary. In our society collections we have a number of photos from the 1920's and 1930's. Those of you who have a personal or family connection to the golf course are invited to submit family photos and/or stories to us at SPAHS. Our email address is spahs@frontier.com and by phone at 608-644-8444.

Thank you all for supporting our part in preserving our Sauk Prairie Area History.



## In Our Collection...

...Continued from Page 1

With this background, Tess Mueller's steamship docked at Yokohama on August 6th.

On August 8th, Tess writes to her mother from the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo:

"It was not hard to get through customs in Yokohama; all the officers were very considerate. Bess agreed to hire a taxi to drive to Tokyo. She had been insisting that we take the electric interurban, but the thought of my four pieces of luggage was too much for me. Even my legs were wet with perspiration."

"This hotel was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, owner of Taliesin, you know. All of the rooms and corridors are low and rather dark. Our bath is an enormous sunken tiled one; the washstand is about a foot lower than any I have used."

"We had lunch in a Japanese cafeteria yesterday, dinner at the Imperial Hotel, lunch today at the Seyoken Restaurant in Ueno Park. We have driven around the city and have seen all the advertised sights. At the shrine of the Second Shogun, a famous piece of architecture the Buddhist priest had me ring the gong and taught me a little Japanese prayer to repeat to hammer strokes on the drum."

"We don't get any war excitement because we can't understand Japanese. The people seem very quiet and unconcerned. Right now, no American can go to Peiping, but the trouble may be over in five weeks. We take the train tonight for Matsushima, a seaside resort nine hours north of Tokyo. From there we go to the mountain resort of Nikko because it is cool. I am having a good time although I do have my homesick moments."

Perhaps unknown to Tess at the time was that after her ship, the SS President Hoover, reached Hong Kong, it was diverted from Hong Kong to evacuate US nationals from Shanghai. On August 30th, the liner was moored in the Yangtze River, awaiting clearance to enter the Wusong River to reach the Port of Shanghai when, despite a 30-foot US flag draped on her top deck behind

the bridge to identify her to aircraft as a neutral US ship, the Republic of China Air Force mistook her for the Japanese troopship Asama Maru and bombed her.

One bomb hit President Hoover's top deck, killing a crewman from the mess hall. Fragments from another bomb penetrated the main saloon, wounding six crew and two passengers. One of President Hoover's radio officers transmitted a distress call stating that Chinese aircraft were attacking her. Both an IJN destroyer and a Royal Navy cruiser came in response, but in the event, only medical help was needed. Despite her casualties, President Hoover sustained only minor damage, but she aborted the rescue mission to Shanghai and returned to San Francisco for repairs.


After repairs, the steamship SS President Hoover returned to service, departing from San Francisco on November 22, 1937, for Kobe and Manila. She was barely more than half-full, with only 503 passengers. During the voyage the Dollar Lines management signaled President Hoover's Master, George W Yardley, "You must be in Manila, absolutely urgent that you arrive not later than 6 a.m. 12th December, make all possible speed".

During a typhoon on December 11th President Hoover struck a reef off Taitung City in south-eastern Taiwan. Her bottom was torn open as far aft as her engine room and she came to rest with a slight list to port. It took 36 hours to evacuate the passengers who all survived. The ship was declared a total loss and after the owners retrieved some of the furnishings, they sold the ship for salvage.

End of Part One—Tess Mueller's Around the World Adventures will continue in Part Two. Through her letters, Tess recounts her travels through the Sino-Japanese War zone. Would she get to visit Peking and the Great Wall of China? The world will soon be "On Fire" with war and Tess previewed much of what was to come..



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# Student Educational Programs at Tripp

Jack Berndt

During the past school year, from January 1 to June 1, 2024, over 400 students from grades 2-12 participated in various educational programs at the Tripp Heritage Museum. We've been doing these programs since 2012, when my wife (Jody) started inviting the Bridges Elementary first graders to Tripp. For the first few years, the focus was a local historical photography presentation with the students afterwards getting the chance to roll up their sleeves to create their own cyanotype photos. Jody was adamant that a hands-on approach would be much more of a memorable learning experience than simply a lecture on a screen.

We've continued this hands-on history philosophy at Tripp and expanded it upstairs into the Oschner Gallery. Instead of only gazing at the Ed & Benjamin Oschner 100-year-old mounted specimens, we've provided sketch boards so students can increase their connection to the intricate details of the birds and other mounted specimens by making their own drawings.

In addition, two 1920s era manual typewriters (Smith Corona & Underwood) provide students with the challenge of pressing down hard on the keys to type. This activity is a student favorite! And a surprise, as students discover the differences between typewriters



# Keep Learning





and modern-day computers, which never jam and have an enter button to move to the next line. Students also enjoy sitting in old country school desks to use the antique 1890s-like personal chalkboards. Or take turns dressing up in some of our (extra) vintage clothing from the early 1900s.

Another favorite is the two 1960s rotary phones connected together. Students can dial-up a friend in another room and talk through a wire! Thanks too, to Giegerich's Sons, for their donation of a small printing (proof) press at Tripp, which gave the 5th graders from Grand Avenue this spring an opportunity to learn about Gutenberg's invention of movable type. There's more, but I think you get the picture. When the students come to Tripp, they are experiencing living history!

Lastly, we've recently added a new program, teaming with the Tower Rock Elementary teachers and 4th graders. It begins with a presentation on the presence of the Sauk/Sac tribes in Sauk Prairie and the 1832 Black Hawk War, which is followed by an actual field trip tour of the local Wisconsin Heights 1832 Battleground.

All these hands-on displays are permanently set up at Tripp. Visitors of all ages are welcome to stop by anytime and try their skills at touching and recapturing past skills which inevitably sparks present day wonderment, creativity, and connections. Visit during our regular open hours or call to set up an appointment: (608) 644-8444.

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# 2024 Tripp Club 21 Fall Presentations

Jack Berndt

## The Wisconsin River: The Last Ice Age to the Settlement Era

Mark Cupp  
Saturday, Sept. 21, 2024, 1pm  
Tripp Heritage Museum



Mark Cupp is Executive Director of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board, serving in that capacity since inception of the projection 35 years ago. Cupp also is a founding member and holds leadership roles in a number of archeology/history centered organizations including Cultural Landscape Legacies, Three Eagles Foundation and Cross Currents Heritage Center. Cupp has studied the history of the lower Wisconsin River valley for over thirty years and will share his knowledge with slides, historical quotations, and stories on September 21st as he provides a whirlwind tour through time from the last Ice Age to the settlement era. Mark will discuss geology, archeology and effigy mounds, early European exploration, settlement era and transportation changes through the centuries during his talk.

## 180th Anniversary of the Ragatz Honey Creek Historic Church

Saturday, October 19, 1-4pm  
Ragatz Honey Creek Historic Church



Join us for an old fashioned ICE CREAM SOCIAL as we celebrate the 180th Anniversary of the former United Methodist Church of Honey Creek, located on the SW Corner of Sauk County Hwy. PF and Church Rd. This program will feature: a brief presentation on the history of the Church, beginning with the pioneer family of Bartholomew & Agnes Ragatz; Bluegrass/country music by the JS Trippers; ICE CREAM, pie, cake, beverages, etc; and GEMUT-LICHKEIT!

## Pioneer Settlers on the Sauk Prairie - 1838-1861

Paul Wolter  
Saturday, Nov. 9, 1pm  
Tripp Heritage Museum



Euro-American settlement on the Sauk Prairie began almost immediately after news of the Treaty of 1837 reached the area. As pioneers crossed the Wisconsin River they found remnants of the great village of the Sauk that had been abandoned more than 50 years prior and encountered the Ho-Chunk who were being forced off of their ancestral lands. The great Sauk Prairie was settled first along with the banks of the Wisconsin River. Two villages were laid out which were soon competing with each other to be chosen as the county seat of the newly created Sauk County. Learn more about the settlement period, prior to the Civil War, at this presentation.

## Upcoming Events

**The Wisconsin River: The Last Ice Age to the Settlement Era**  
Mark Cupp  
Saturday, Sept. 21, 1pm  
Tripp Heritage Museum

**Holly Jolly Elf Day**  
Saturday, December 7th,  
9am-3pm  
Tripp Heritage Museum

**Pioneer Settlers on the Sauk Prairie - 1838-1861**  
Paul Wolter  
Saturday, Nov. 9, 1pm  
Tripp Heritage Museum

**Christmas Carols in the Country**  
Saturday, December 7th, 5pm  
Salem Ragatz Historic Church

**180th Anniversary of the Ragatz Honey Creek Historic Church**  
Saturday, October 19, 1-4pm  
Ragatz Honey Creek Historic Church



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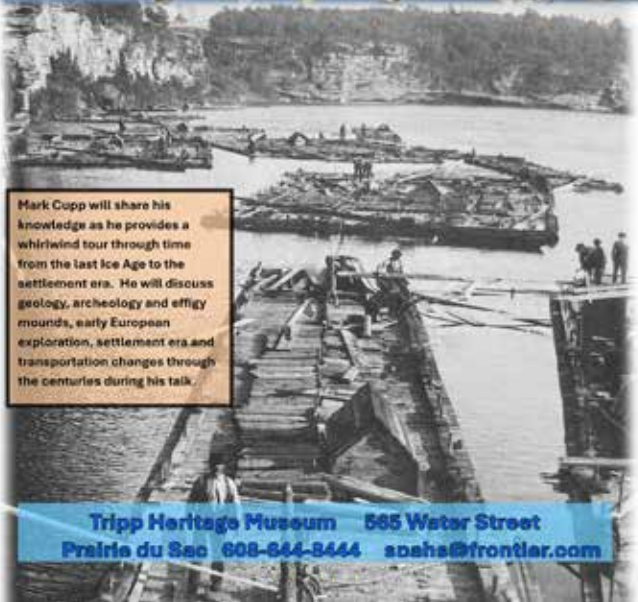
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**Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society**  
 Saturday, September 21, 2024 1:00 p.m.



Mark Cupp will share his knowledge as he provides a whirlwind tour through time from the last Ice Age to the settlement era. He will discuss geology, archeology and effigy mounds, early European exploration, settlement era and transportation changes through the centuries during his talk.



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