

### **The Skokie Historical Society is Cutting-Edge**

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The Skokie Historical Society (SHS) is filled with many interesting facts about the town of Skokie. Skokie is a very diverse town, with people migrating here from many other countries. According to the Skokie Festival of Cultures Web site, at least 32 different cultures are celebrated in Skokie. It is important to keep everyone united because we have so many different lifestyles. The Historical Society helps people come together by teaching them Skokie's history. It has been teaching history for 127 years.

The SHS helps bring history to our community. One way is through its big genealogy research center. Researchers can use the library and the archive to find out information about their Skokie ancestors. One family that is often studied there is the Meyer family.

Another way the museum helps bring history to the community is through the Backlot Bash. In the summertime the Village of Skokie and its historical society holds a Backlot Bash. The first annual Backlot Bash was held in 2007. The Backlot Bash brings everyone together and it is a way to raise money for Skokie. At the Backlot Bash participants honor Charlie Chaplin, who was an actor for Chicago's Essanay Studios from 1914 to 1916. Essanay filmed many early movies in Niles Center, which is now named Skokie. At the Backlot Bash there are also booths to teach about the early film

history in Chicago and Skokie. Film booths are not the only kind of booths. There are also religious and cultural booths. This means that the citizens teach other people about their religion. I personally like the booths because I can see other peoples' religions.

Another way that the community is involved in learning and making history is by meeting on the second floor of the Historical Society. During these meetings they talk about ways to help the community. These meetings make history because they are talking about Skokie and how to improve it. This makes new history because they study the old history of Skokie and improve upon it. The museum also has a library people can use to learn about history. In the library you can learn about the firemen, the log cabin, and anything Skokie-related.

One such example is that the Museum has lots of information on the old Skokie fireman in the library and on the first floor, Engine House. While I was there I saw the equipment the firemen used to help the Skokie Park District. I think it is amazing that the firemen used such old equipment to help Skokie.

Do you like photos, movies and videos? Then the SHS has many for you to see online in its Digital Past Web site. Some of the videos from the 1900s in the Digital Past are of the residents of Niles Center (Skokie), the Skokie Valley Symphony, Niles East High School 1930s building instructions, Niles East football games, the "Skokie People Speaks" Series, and the World War II veterans being interviewed by the high school students. These videos are priceless because Niles East High School does not exist anymore. It is now Oakton Community College. These pieces of history are saved for us to learn about in the Digital Past.

Another priceless artifact is the Meyer's Family Log Cabin that was built in 1847. The Meyer family lived there with their twelve children. When you look out of the window in the log cabin, you will see beautiful prairie grasses in the garden. The log cabin shows citizens how people lived in the 1800s.

According to a museum pamphlet, "The Health Department relocated to Village Hall; it became the home of the Skokie Historical Society." Also Mr. Meyer owned the farmland where he made wagon wheels and sold them in Chicago. What makes the log cabin seem so special is that Skokie is the only village to have a log cabin for its museum. Also, the logs are made from five different types of trees, especially oak and walnut. When the cabin was in Skokie it stood at 5406 Lincoln Avenue. According to the information, "The log cabin had been covered in siding and used as a chicken coup and shed." The Village of Skokie decided to move it in 1974 to where the log cabin still stands today, on 8031 Floral Avenue. The log cabin has beauty all around the outside. You can mostly see, "various plants and prairie grasses that were present in the 1840s."

The artifacts are a big part of the SHS because we can remember what the firemen used to put out the fires. Some of the artifacts are the water pump, a wagon, a trampoline to help people if they had to jump from a building, and my favorite, the pole. The pole is something that the firemen use to hurry to get to the fires. One of the fires that caught my attention was the Chicago Fire, on October 8, 1871, which lasted for three days. Another horrible disaster was the Goodyear Dirigible Disaster. The terrifying event occurred on July 21, 1919. A blimp crashed into the Illinois Trust and Savings Building. The two gasoline tanks from the balloons crashed to the floor. You can see the artifacts from these collections in the historical society.

As you can see, the historical society provides a learning opportunity for those who are from all different races. Skokie Historical Society influences our community to become great citizens who work together. Skokie is a wonderful town to live in. You get great opportunities, like many historical learning experiences. [From Betty Jacob and Sellmagic, Almir. "Skokie Historical Society." *Skokie Historical Society*. Sept. 2005. Skokie Historical Society. <<http://www.skokiehistory.info/>>. (Jan. 13, 2009); Village of Skokie, "Skokie Village Walking Tour." "Skokie Village Walking Tour. 1978; and Village of Skokie, "Niles Center Fire Department." *Niles Center Fire Department*. 1881.]

