

SPEAKERS FOR HISTORY-RELATED PROGRAMS
TIPPECANOE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



Dr. Pete Bill

A retired educator and administrator of the Purdue College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Bill had a 33-year teaching career, and has been the recipient of 29 teaching awards at the Veterinary College, Purdue University, and national level including national recognition by the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges and the Association of Veterinary Technician Educators. Dr. Bill is an active history researcher and collector of artifacts of Purdue and Tippecanoe County, a frequent presenter at Tippecanoe County Historical Association events, and an invited speaker for local, state, and national associations and organizations.

Title	Description	Presentation Length
Michael Murphy: the Flying Irishman of Tippecanoe County	Michael Murphy was born near Tippecanoe County and became a daring barnstormer and wing walker in the early days of aviation. Despite being famous nationally for his aerobatics, he became the Army Air Corps' premier instructor and advocate for the US Glider program at the beginning of WWII. As such, he was assigned to fly the lead glider into Normandy on D-Day, a story captured by Steve Spielberg in <i>Saving Private Ryan</i> and in the documentary <i>Silent Wings</i> . This presentation will talk about the breadth of Michael Murphy's exciting life and lasting legacy on professional aerobatics as Tippecanoe County's "Flying Irishman".	45-60 minutes Power Point presentation
Keeping the Wings Level: The Story of Lawrence Ignatius "Cap" Aretz	Cap Aretz is known to most Lafayette residents for his Aretz Airport that was located northeast of Lafayette on State Road 25. However, his aviation story begins during the waning years of World War I and extends through the earliest days of Tippecanoe County aviation and Purdue's own university airport where Cap rubbed elbows with the likes of Amelia Earhart, Wiley Post, and barnstormers of the day. The presentation will give an insight into how Tippecanoe County entered the aviation age with the help of Lawrence Ignatius "Cap" Aretz.	45-60 minutes Power Point presentation
Tippecanoe County and the Great Flood of 1913	The details of the Flood of 1913 has been captured in books and magazines for over a hundred years. However, the story of the flood in Tippecanoe County rarely is mentioned. Research into local news sources and documents has uncovered many stories of heroism, loss, and renewal that confronted Tippecanoe County citizens when faced with	45-60 minutes Power Point presentation

	<p>this unprecedented natural disaster. Come learn about some of the stories and see images rarely seen before of the destruction in Lafayette and West Lafayette.</p>	
<p>Charlie Shambaugh: Tippecanoe County's "Mechanical Genius"</p>	<p>Always one to tinker with anything mechanical, Charlie Shambaugh created Lafayette's first commercial airport, was an automobile entrepreneur, and built and drove race cars in the Indianapolis 500 in its earliest years. Come hear about one of Lafayette's more "interesting" characters and his recognized "Mechanical Genius".</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Slowball Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon</p>	<p>It's not often a Tippecanoe County farm boy grows up to be a world-recognized Pulitzer Prize winner. But John T. McCutcheon's hayseed start laid the groundwork for his extensive travel adventures, his work as an illustrator of world events, and his "Forest Gump" ability to be in the right place at the right time in history. Come hear about McCutcheon's young life here in Tippecanoe County and how the self-described "country bumpkin" became well-recognized friends with presidents, kings, and dignitaries from all over the world.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Lizzie Shoemaker: Breaking the glass ceiling in Science at Purdue in 1886</p>	<p>In 2021 Dr. Pete Bill chanced across a posting on E-Bay of an early Purdue University diploma. After acquiring it research revealed the diploma for an 1886 Masters of Science degree belonging belonged to a young lady raised in Chauncey, Indiana (now West Lafayette) and received two years after receiving her 1884 Purdue BS degree. As it turned out, it was not just any diploma but was the first advanced degree diploma ever granted by Purdue. The discovery led to a treasure trove of early photographs, documents, letters, and artifacts of Lizzie Shoemaker's life rescued from an abandoned storage locker in Phoenix, Arizona. In them was the story of how she battled against the odds as a young woman in science to become Purdue's first advanced degree recipient and who would later go on to help Pomona California become the "Queen of the California Citrus Belt" before the turn of the 20th century.</p>	
<p>Return from the Dead: the Story of Governor Harry Leslie and the 1903 Purdue Train Wreck</p>	<p>The 33rd Governor of Indiana attended Purdue as a natural leader and outstanding athlete until an event in October 1903 changed his life forever. Come hear about Harry Leslie's return from the dead and how it is forever linked to one of the darkest days in Purdue University's history.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Gambler, River Rat, Lafayette's Founder ...</p>	<p>William Digby was an unlikely candidate for having his name etched in history. Yet he founded Lafayette and left</p>	

<p>The Enigmatic William Digby</p>	<p>traces of his passage throughout the area. His seeming simple life of plying the Wabash River for trade, playing cards, and gambling belied his more complex life and the impact he left behind on those around him. Come learn about some interesting facets of Lafayette's founder you may never had heard of before.</p>	
<p>Myths or Truth? Legends and Tales of Tippecanoe County</p>	<p>Did UFOs visit Lafayette? Does the Wabash River have it's own version of Nessie? Is there a real "Dead Man's Curve" in Tippecanoe County? Come see if what you know about our area can help you discern what is truth and what is myth!</p>	
<p>Healing Waters and Patent Medicines: Mudlavia and Harry Kramer</p>	<p>In the late 1800's healing mineral baths and sulfur water elixirs were "all the rage" especially among the more "well-to-do". Capitalizing on this national trend, Harry Kramer, a patent medicine dealer out of Attica, Indiana developed a huge hotel and spa centered around a "healing spring" in nearby Warren County that he called Mudlavia. The story of Harry Kramer and Mudlavia is a tale of one man's attempt to market the "healing power" of Mineral Springs in an extravagant place that today only exists in memory and abandoned ruins.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Lafayette's Own Helen Gougar: Activist, Suffragist, Advocate</p>	<p>If there is a woman in the United States mentioned in the history books associated with the fight for Women's Vote, Helen Gougar of Lafayette likely knew and worked with her. Helen was only 5 years old when the US Suffragist Movement began in 1848, and she died before seeing its conclusion with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. As a lawyer and advocate for temperance and the woman's vote, Helen occupied the middle era for the Suffragist movement therefore knew both the pioneers of the movement and those who would see the 19th Amendment come to be. Come hear Helen Mar Jackson Gougar's interesting story and the impact of her life on your right to vote!</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Joe Halsmer and His Flying Car</p>	<p>The patriarch of the Halsmer airport started out as a typical Hoosier farm kid trying to fashion flying machines out of old wooden crates and baling twine. However, the Halsmer brothers ended up being one of the more successful pioneers founding an active airport in Tippecanoe County and constantly tinkering with aircraft to improve flight. The pinnacle may have been Joe Halsmer's flying car. Come hear about the aviation adventures of Joe Halsmer.</p>	<p>45 minutes Power Point presentation</p>

<p>The Dapper Man About Town: George Ade</p>	<p>George Ade was a farm kid who hated farming. He was a grammatically correct prolific author whose greatest fame came from publications written in “popular slang”. He had three successful plays running on Broadway simultaneously but found Broadway exhausting and quit playwriting at his peak. He rubbed shoulders with politicians, actors, and famous personages, but was most at home on his rural estate in the middle of nowhere. He supported the arts and literature at Purdue, but his visible Purdue legacy is a sports stadium. George Ade could be said to be a walking contradiction of interests and experience. Come hear about George Ade, the dapper, and enigmatic, man about town.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Politics and World War I: The Homefront in Tippecanoe County</p>	<p>While we have all studied the basics of World War I, the degree of political intervention into everyday activities of all US citizens and how and why Americans responded is an amazing story few people today really know. We experienced openly condoned vigilantism, unbridled propaganda campaigns, and extensive and blatant censorship all designed to eliminate ANY resistance to the War at any personal cost. Yet, for the most part, these impositions became part of the “normal” War culture of communities all across America. What happened in the rest of the country, including the response to the War-time outbreak of the devastating “Spanish flu” was also mirrored in the life of Tippecanoe County citizens. This important and interesting story has been largely forgotten. This presentation will help you hear a story that needs to be told.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Don’t Eat That! Harvey W. Wiley’s Battle for the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act</p>	<p>Plaster of Paris or chalk added to milk to make it “white”? Pureed calf brains to add the “cream” to the top of the milk bottle? Pulverized saw dust and burnt beans passing as “coffee”? Strawberry jam made of pureed apple, grass seed (to emulate strawberry seeds) and toxic red dye? Red lead used in children’s candies to create a bright red color? These were all standard practices for adulterating food to fabricating totally fake food in the 1800’s. It was an early Purdue Professor (for whom Wiley Hall on campus is named) that pushed against government bureaucracy and outright graft (representatives paid off by large food manufacturers) to protect the public against dangerous food produced simply to profit the food producers. This battle is legendary and Harvey Wiley’s story is one to be shared to keep us aware of the need today for watchdogs to protect what we eat and drink.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>

<p>The Steel Rail Revolution: How the coming of rail forever changed Tippecanoe County in the mid 1800's</p>	<p>We all assume Lafayette was founded in 1825 and just grew from there. But Lafayette's existence was not secured until 1850's when the unbridled railroad boom began to envelope the northern third of Indiana bringing Lafayette its first railroad, the Indianapolis & Lafayette Railroad. However, the boom also spurred corruption and fraud as hundreds of small, and largely unregulated, railroads popped up each selling and re-selling stock, bonds, trackway leases, and equipment to fund their development and operation. This presentation will showcase how the entrance of the railroad into Lafayette changed life for everyone in Tippecanoe County, and almost bankrupted Lafayette through a scheme of fraud and corruption involving historic local businessmen whose names you likely have previously heard.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Early Life and Medicine in Tippecanoe County 1825-1900: What is going to kill ya?</p>	<p>The average life expectancy in Indiana in the first half of the 1800s hovered around 38-39 years. There were doctors around to treat patients. And patent medicines that promised to cure everything from gout to ague were readily available in any general store and mail-order through newspapers or magazines. So why was death such a common, and tragically expected companion in Tippecanoe County in the 19th century? What was the state of medicine in the US during this time? This presentation may alter your understanding for what "Ol' Doc" really could do for patients and what ailments or dangers contributed most to the death of Tippecanoe County residents.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Early Medicine in Tippecanoe County 1825-1900 "If the cure doesn't kill ya, it just might cure ya!"</p>	<p>This is the second part of Early Medicine in Tippecanoe County. Medical science in Europe advanced in the latter part of the 1800's in Europe, but was slow to catch on in the US, especially outside of large East Coast cities. Thus, patients often relied on unregulated patent medicines ("snake oil") and home remedies to treat afflictions. Even when medical substances were dispensed or prescribed by licensed physicians, the ingredients used included things like heroine, arsenic, and mercury. This presentation will shed light on the rationale for why these poisonous substances were standard treatment widely used by Tippecanoe County physicians up to, and even after, the turn of the 20th century.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>
<p>Purdue University: it's tenuous early years</p>	<p>Given a twist of fate, it's quite possible that the only clue that there might have been a Purdue University would be a lonely historical marker indicating that "this site was a possible location for a university that was never realized".</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>

	<p>It's quite possible that this state's agricultural center could have been at Indiana University or Butler University (Indianapolis). Or the small cluster of buildings that formed the early Purdue campus would have been plowed under to restore the productive farmland on which they sat, or converted to early manufacturing only to be later abandoned and allowed to deteriorate to ruins. A lot of things had to happen for a small outcropping of buildings on former featureless farmland to become the Purdue University we know today. And most of this critical period occurred in the first 30 years of the university. This presentation will put into perspective how risky it was to add a second large university to a state that already had a shaky-foundation college in Bloomington and whose general farming public saw no need for a college to teach young people "how to farm".</p>	
<p>The Moses Fowler Dynasty in Lafayette's Formative Years</p>	<p>Most Tippecanoe County residents have heard of "Fowler House" located at 9th Street and South Street in Lafayette. And judging from its opulence, one might assume the owner was wealthy and a philanthropic pillar of the community. The commonly heard stories of Moses Fowler sometimes obscure a more complicated past. Prominent "biographical" books and publications portray him as a successful business man and builder of railroads, churches, and banks for the community. While much of this is true, the larger context reveals a more nuanced story. Moses Fowler was a complicated man, and this presentation will shed light on many aspects of his career and his impact on Tippecanoe County.</p>	<p>45-60 minutes Power Point presentation</p>