

Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING
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When Physical Labor Was *Really* Taxing

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society

The Long Grove Community Church was organized in 1846, some ten years or so after settlers had congregated in the area. The gap between settling and church formation was a practical one as it took time to get things like bridges built so people could reasonably get to a meeting. The first simple wooden forerunner to our current historic covered bridge (which was built 1906), was likely around this time. As there wasn't much in the way of organized government at that time, there was no arguing over who would pay for the infrastructure - it was more a question of who would volunteer to build it themselves. The first "taxes" weren't monetary, but rather required labor - registered voters were expected to volunteer from two to five days a year of their time to build roads and bridges. If you're pondering local women showing up for road duty with their trusty pic axe, remember that at that time there were no women voters. Voters over the age of 50 didn't have to work. Those who didn't volunteer were fined. Even as late as 1900 when paying your taxes in dollars was more the norm, farmers were allowed to claim a credit for local road work they performed. This "credit for volunteerism" was abolished in the early 1900's when some auditing discovered that a road work day amongst farmers was often more social than physical.



HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

Celebrating the covered bridge being one step closer to the National Historic Register.



People, roads, and bridges aside, it took one more thing to happen to spark a church in Long Grove – some “radical” competition. Early on the scene in Long Grove were members of a religious sect often referred to as “jumpers”. The term came from their practice of spontaneously crying out (amen, halleluia, etc.) during services and then jumping, falling, and thrashing about until near exhaustion. The religion was of Welsh origin and the local Long Grove German Lutherans were said to have quickly reacted to establish their own “more civilized” worship services in 1846. Construction of the church followed a year later in 1847. The “jumpers” never succeeded in establishing a foothold here, although years later in the 1890’s there was a somewhat related “holy jumpers” sect that succeeded in Chicago and Waukesha, Wisconsin.

As you may have read, exciting news from Springfield regarding our historic covered bridge – we’re going to Washington! The State recently reviewed the bridge and are formally requesting that it be placed on the National Historic Register. We should get a ruling from the National Park Service on that later this fall. Keep your fingers crossed. Pictured are Historical Society members celebrating the bridge being one step closer to becoming Long Grove’s first and only listing on the prestigious register.

Alas, this recognition does not stop a wrecking ball. Enjoy this month’s “Save The Bridge” limerick and do what you can to spread the word about our endangered bridge.

SAVE THE BRIDGE · NO. 2

*Down the walk, ‘cross the bridge, and you’re there
An old church, some graves, and a prayer
A bridge that old
Has stories untold
Raise your voice, Save The Bridge, show you care!*