

taft times

Spring 2015

Northern Illinois University

Lorado Taft Field Campus

Oregon, IL

A New Taft Class: Garbology

United States citizens account for 5% of the world's population, yet we generate 40% of the waste found on Earth. That is a staggering statistic, and unfortunately all too accurate. Living in a land that necessitates newer, bigger, and higher quantities of products, Americans are contributing to the many maladies which plight our planet in a big way. At Taft, we are dedicated to lowering our environmental impact via composting and use of a waste water treatment plant; we also focus our Ort Reports on showcasing ways our students can reduce their waste when they return back home.

This year, many students have taken part in a Taft Choice class entitled Garbology, an area of anthropology which studies cultures through their waste. In each class, students are asked to consider the many items they dispose of and infer what future anthropologist might assume about their culture. The class itself is not only informative and thought provoking, but fun and active. Student participate in a myriad of activities which allow them to think critically and also use their hands. Students use tools to till and identify members of the F.B.I. (fungus, bacteria, and invertabrates) found in the compost, take a visit to our Waste Water Treatment Center and chemical test the cleaned water against drinking water, put together a landfill decomposition timeline, hunt for decomposers on a hike, and understand how many of earth's natural resources are linked to human consumption.



This is a great class for all grade levels, links well into S.T.E.M. programs and hits on many parts of the Human Impacts section of Common Core. If this sounds like a class your students would enjoy, speak to your coordinator about including it in your schedule during your school's next visit.

New Stairs

Ever wonder what was beyond the large rectangular cement "statue" near Poley? Some may have peeked around the corner and seen treacherous looking steps leading down a steep decline. Fear no more!



Thanks to the leadership of Taft staff Jared Wicks, many of the steps are leveled or more appropriately spaced. The Taft staff and our wonderful maintenance crew led students from Washington Gifted and South Middle schools in the new construction and repair work of the steps. These schools were able to work on the stairs because their schedules included a service project and a Taft choice class. It is now easier to walk down these steps and end at the spring or the quarry at Taft. Thank you to all who helped!



Bonnie and Debbie's Retirement



The Taft staff of all departments said a heartfelt “Farewell” and shared some cake as two of the longest running staff members retired: Debbie (of the maintenance staff) and Bonnie (of the kitchen staff). I ended up missing the cake, but would like to share what a treat it was to work with these fine ladies.

Debbie wins the award for Most Years at Taft, having spent a whopping 25 years getting to know the operations, facilities, and flora and fauna of campus. She started in the kitchen as extra help before working her way into the maintenance department. Debbie knew Taft’s maintenance history well, and would help offer insight into the way things had changed over time.

Debbie was particularly good with animals. She also took special interest in the stray cats that had families on campus, spending time in the quiet early mornings giving them attention so she could one day rescue them to her family farm. She also became so familiar with a particular deer that spent time on campus that she managed to pet it in the maintenance parking lot.

Bonnie (pictured above) spent a significant time at Taft as well: 13 years, both part time and full time. Bonnie had a real gift for laughter, and even on the most stressful of days (Wednesdays can be real doozies around here) she would be cheerful. She has what we like to call the “Bonnie Giggle,” which we already miss hearing around the kitchen.

I enjoyed sneaking into the kitchen to give Bonnie hugs during the day, and seeing her smile at the students and staff, no matter what was going on. I know she is looking forward to her retirement and having more hugs from her kids and grandkids. And she is looking forward to not having to drive through the snow to get to work.

Thanks for all your years of time and passion you’ve given to Taft, ladies! We’ve enjoyed getting to know you!

Prairie Pirates

When you think about the Midwest in the mid 1800’s, you generally think about rustic log cabins and intrepid pioneers trying to make a home for themselves. With the march of progress, however, there are always those looking to take advantage of the work of others. In the 1830’s and 1840’s, several decades before anyone had even heard of the Mafia, Illinois was plagued by a wide-reaching crime syndicate known as the “Prairie Pirates.”

The Prairie Pirates started operations around 1835. At that time, they were primarily led by John Driscoll and his four sons. Their operation covered everywhere from Texas up to Iowa & Wisconsin and east to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Their activities included horse thieving, burglary, arson, and even a counterfeiting racket, which distributed its counterfeit currency via a traveler’s rest home (sort of like a bed & breakfast).

Their membership was widespread, numerous, and influential enough to manipulate juries and sway local elections of city and county officials. Their members even included justices of the peace and constables. Besides coercing juries, the gang would always produce witnesses to give false alibis if any members were taken to court. Even if a conviction could be reached, the gang was able to pay any bail or help members escape their jail cell.

(Continued on page 3)



(Continued from page 2)

In March of 1841, our own city of Oregon, Illinois was on the hit list of the Prairie Pirates. They burned down the newly constructed Ogle County courthouse. One month after this act of arson, fifteen law-abiding men decided that they would take the law into their own hands. These men called themselves the “Ogle County Regulators” and set out to deliver an ultimatum to the bandits – leave or else! The “Regulators” all swore an oath to accomplish this goal or die trying. Before long, their numbers grew from the initial 15 to several hundred as volunteers from neighboring towns and counties joined them.

At this point, William Driscoll sent a letter to the leader of the Regulators threatening the direst violence against any that would oppose them. This enraged the Regulators, and a team of nearly two hundred of them armed themselves and marched to the Driscolls’ residence. Driscoll and his men immediately fled the house but returned to confront the mob with several officials from DeKalb, including a Sherriff and a Judge. After the Regulators explained the situation, however, these officials sided with the Regulators. The Driscoll family was given 20 days to leave the state. Rather than making preparations to leave, the Prairie Pirates met and planned out the murders of several of the leadership of the Regulators. Shortly thereafter, the leader of the Regulators, John Campbell, was shot to death on his farm by David and Taylor Driscoll.

The morning after the murder, the Ogle County Sherriff arrested John Driscoll and placed him in the Oregon jail. William and Pierce Driscoll were arrested that afternoon but David Driscoll had fled and could not be located.

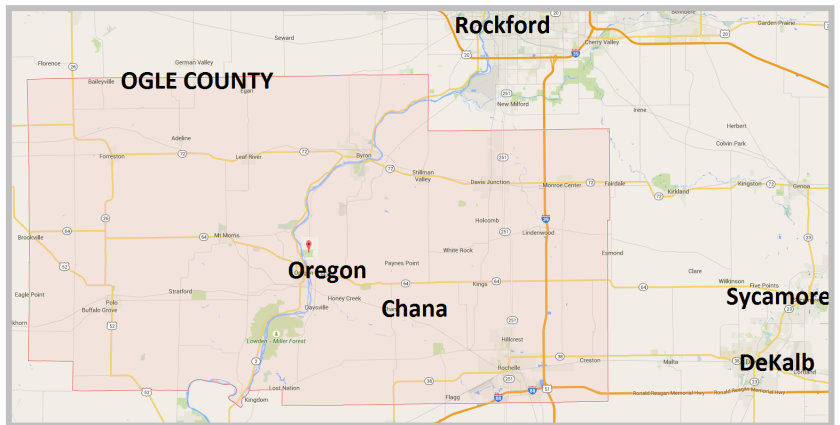
News of the murder of the Regulators spread quickly to Oregon, Sycamore, and Rockford.

Seemingly every honest, able-bodied man in the area came to the aide of the Regulators. So many people came to join the vigilantes that Rockford was reported to appear as a “deserted village”. A mob of the Regulators took all of these men to Washington Grove (near what is the town of Chana today). Along the way more vigilantes from other parts of the county and neighboring counties joined them until the assemblage numbered as much as 500 men. The mob contained men from all levels of society – lawyers, judges, doctors, farmers, preachers, constables, and sheriffs. One hundred and eleven men were chosen to form a jury, while one of the lawyers was chosen to oversee the proceedings and a judge swore in the witnesses.

When it came time to declare a verdict, the jury, all one hundred and eleven of them, unanimously proclaimed a guilty verdict upon William Driscoll and John Driscoll. The convicted were sentenced to be shot. The one hundred and eleven members of the jury were appointed to act as the executioners and were split into two groups, one group each to execute each of the Driscolls.

With their leadership gone, most of the criminal operations in Ogle County ceased. However, the Prairie Pirate organization did continue in its criminal actions in other areas. Then in 1845, a number of the last remaining leaders of the gang were arrested and brought to trial after several members of the gang offered confessions and gave witness against their fellow gang members. 1845 marked the end of the line for the Prairie Pirate reign of crime and terror.

Kett, H.F. “The History of Ogle County, Illinois” 1878 (Pages 350-380).



Nature Myths

Interesting “facts” that many people will swear are true but aren’t.

Porcupines can shoot their quills

While porcupines have a formidable set of quills and should be treated with a respectful amount of caution, they can’t actually launch their quills through the air. When confronted by a predator, they will often slap their tail at it, attempting to jab the attacker with the quills on its tail. Despite their generally slow, lumbering movement, this action can be quite rapid. Porcupines cannot shoot their quills, but the quills *can* be shed by the porcupine and left imbedded in the attacker. To the casual observer (or startled recipient of these spines), the result can seem as though the quills magically sprung from the porcupine into its target.

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/porcupine/>

We want to hear from you!

If you have heard of a nature myth, send it to Jhapner@niu.edu or abanner@niu.edu and you could be included in our next newsletter. Due to its popularity, we are creating a regular reoccurring Nature Myth section! We will select one nature myth to put in each newsletter.

Be in the next newsletter!

Email abanner@niu.edu your best picture of an animal, plant, or fungus that you took on your trip to Taft. Didn’t bring a camera? Send us a drawing of an Illinois species. We will research it and include that in the next newsletter. Don’t forget to include your name, school, and what class you were in that inspired your artwork.

Zero Ort!

Congratulations to the following schools for having ZERO ORT during a meal at Taft!

ZERO ORT for Multiple Meals

Glenbard North (3)
South Middle-East (3)
Budlong (2)
Washington Gifted (2)
Hurley (4)
GEMS World Academy (3)

Chesterbrook
Warren
Sarah Adams
South Middle-West
Thomas-Delta
Thomas-Gamma
Al-Huda
Disney II Magnet
Casals School of Excellence



Lorado Taft Field Campus
1414 North River Road
P.O. Box 299
Oregon, IL 61061
Phone: (815) 732-2111

Taft Times Contributors:

Newsletter Editors: Kendra Swanson & Amy Banner
A New Taft Class: Garbology by Shauna Guglielmo
New Stairs by Amy Banner
Prairie Pirates by Joshua Hapner
Good-byes by Kendra Swanson
Nature Myths by Joshua Hapner

