

CTPA Quarterly Meeting January 26, 2015

Gage Building 7th Floor, 18 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago

Our first get-together of the year was very well attended, by 58 people in all, who enjoyed the buffet of cheeses, crackers and fruit, as well as an opportunity to socialize before the meeting began at 6:00pm. Donna Primas (president since 1995!) welcomed everyone and introduced the new officers for the next two years (who are essentially the “old officers” as before, with the exception of Ed Mazur, who has retired as one of the co-secretaries).

CTPA Officers February 1, 2015 – January 31, 2017

President Donna Primas CTG
Vice President Sharon Sylvester CTG
Treasurer Albert Walavich CTG
Co-Secretaries Gina V Driskell & Judith Randall CTG

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS. Donna introduced Associate Members in attendance, several who hire tour guides from among the membership.

- Brian Whitaker of Chicagoland Transportation Solutions
- Patrick Steffes of Forgotten Chicago
- Gilbert Longoria of Chicago Tour Company
- Alice Tell of My Kind of Town
- Gabriella DiPillo of Accenting Chicago
- **Antoinette Gonzales of Aries Charter Transportation**, who received special recognition for providing a motorcoach and driver to the CTPA Certification Committee for Routing test, the final portion of the three-part exam to become a Certified Tour Guide (CTG). The test takers proved they know how to direct a tour bus driver around town!

CERTIFICATION. Wayne Galasek CTG, as Chair of the Certification Committee, expressed appreciation to Aires/Antoinette for their generosity, and introduced the three CTPA members who passed the exam and are now “CTGs,” Certified Tour Guides, with the personality and humor to give terrific tours of Chicago:



Left to Right

Wendy Bright CTG, who educates and entertains as “WendyCityChicago”.

Val Adams CTG, an experienced CAF (Chicago Architecture Foundation) river cruise docent.

Kevin Doerksen CTG, who can be found on his website, “Wild Onion Walks” and at the Macy’s on State Choose Chicago information desk.

NEW MEMBERS. Donna Primas introduced a number of new CTPA members who were present:

- Leentje DeLeeuw, a journalist from Belgium
- Vladimir Petrovic, a Serbian speaker with experience in television and chauffeuring
- Leslie Robin, who will enjoy hospitality/transportation work
- Bonnie Brennan, a docent with the Glessner House Museum
- Tricia Lynch, recently retired teacher volunteering with Reading to Learn groups

UPCOMING EVENTS mentioned by Donna.

February 24 First ever Winter Party at BlackFinn, thanks to the efforts of a committee headed by Michael Levinson CTG and Jacquie Brave.

- March 12 Field Museum visit to see a new exhibit “We Call Them Vikings.”
- March 16 Quarterly Meeting featuring speaker Joe Schwieterman, author of “Terminal Town” about Chicago’s transportation history. **CTPA Directories are distributed!**
- March 18 Visit to the Maritime Museum in Bridgeport to see their exhibits, including artifacts from the Eastland Disaster of July 24, 1915, which marks its centennial this year!
- June 8 Quarterly Meeting
- June/July TBA Field Museum China Exhibit (exhibit opens June 24)
- October 5 Quarterly Meeting

As potential topics for other future meetings Donna mentioned that she had met with Chicago Park District people to begin to arrange a **CTPA tour of the new Maggie Daley Park**. Sharon Sylvester is pursuing **Eastland Disaster authors** and a **Hyde Park author** for the remaining quarterly presentations.

Candidate Guide Dave Clark distributed a flyer for “Walking in Lincoln’s Footsteps” one of his Route 66-related, Windy City Road Warrior tours, taking place February 7 at 10:06 a.m.

Ed Mazur CTG told the group about two new books in the Arcadia “Images of America” history series—*Avondale* and *Chicago’s Polish Village*—written by CTPA members Jacob Kaplan and Patrick Steffes of Forgotten Chicago.

Presentation on *Chicago River Bridges* by PATRICK McBRIARTY

Patrick McBriarty made an excellent presentation, well illustrated with photographs and line drawings, which can be seen in his book entitled *Chicago River Bridges*. The book evolved out of his curiosity about bridges and desire to do some writing on the subject. The interest has resulted in authorship of the large format coffee-table book and two clever volumes for children, an interesting website (www.PTMWerks.com), interviews on radio and TV, and frequent speaking engagements.

We know Chicago has long been a center for drawbridge innovation and development and we have happily bragged that we’re the “Drawbridge Capital of the World”. NOT! In Patrick’s lecture, we learned that Chicago can claim “the greatest variety” of bridges, but not the most. After extensive research, it’s determined that we are second to Amsterdam in terms of numbers. However, there is still much to boast about, as we also learned.

In the 1880s, Chicago’s was the busiest port in the world. Just as Chicago attracted talent in architecture, innovating bridge-building engineers came too. Here was built the first turntable pontoon swing bridge in 1849; the first large-scale vertical lift bridge, 1894; the first Scherzer rolling lift bridge built in 1895; the first “Chicago-type” bascule (see-saw) bridge opened in 1902; and the world’s largest bascule bridge when completed in 1937 (Lake Shore Drive), to name a few. All are delineated in McBriarty’s book.

Patrick’s speaking style is comfortable and easygoing, making a highly technical subject quite easy to understand and also entertaining. The clear and simple drawings of how particular bridge types function were fun to watch, as they moved (were animated)!

The bridges themselves moved in various ways, being reinvented over the years many times out of necessity. Early bridges were “center swing,” meaning a huge pier-like contraption anchored the bridge in the middle of the river, while the bridge rotated on a turntable so that it aligned along the middle of the river, and boats passed on either side. Patrick illustrated some of these changes throughout our history, ending with the last design innovation to date, on the Columbus Drive Bridge which opened in October of 1982. It is the world’s second longest and widest bascule bridge (the first is over the Bay of Cadiz in Spain), but in its Chicago innovation, it has single-piece box-truss construction, which establishes the box-girder truss as a major refinement for modern bascule bridges. Its prototype is the 1978 Loomis Street Bridge over the South Branch

designed by City architect Jerome Butler, Jr. and chief bridge engineer Henry Ecale. Earlier techniques used rivets and later bolts to construct a bridge superstructure piece by piece on site. Improved welding technology allowed factory fabrication for final assembly at the job site, saving time and money. The Randolph Street Bridge built in 1984 also uses this method of construction.

Bridge houses are also part of history, and one can see them change in style. During the City Beautiful Movement when Edward Bennett carried forth the ideas from his and Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago, bridge houses reflected the Beaux Arts/Classical design. Later, as times changed, the Art Deco movement was popular, and bridge houses were built in a more streamlined style. There is still a 1913 Beaux Arts hipped roof bridge house at Washington Street, and one can see Art Deco in the State Street bridge houses, finally completed in 1949.

Some bridges (LaSalle Street, Michigan Avenue, Lake Shore Drive) have four monumental bridge houses, and some of us wondered if all four are necessary for operation when many bridges have only two bridge houses. Patrick explained that only two have equipment inside for raising and lowering the bridges.

During the spring in Chicago we can see the "bridge lifts" when sailboats come from the South Branch through the Main Branch out to the lakefront and their various harbors, and in the fall when they return to winter quarters along the South Branch. The schedule and timing of those bridge lifts (listed on line) is determined by the city, usually on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

Here's a paragraph from the book about raising the Lake Shore Drive Bridge, which may take about ten people!

"A bridge tender and electrician are posted in the SE and NW towers to operate each bridge leaf. Additional personnel ensure that pedestrian and vehicle traffic is off the bridge deck, particularly on the lower level, before a lift. There are strict protocols in place, aided by radio communication among CDOT staff. The actual opening and closing of the bridge usually takes only a couple of minutes, and the passage of vessels typically causes most of the traffic delay."

The bridges on the Calumet River, about 11 miles south, open on demand and are available 24/7, as the commercial traffic is nearly constant. Some bridges are operated on demand by remote control, and one of them can be seen along the South Branch near Ping Tom Park in Chinatown. It's the 1914 Pennsylvania Railroad Bridge Number 458, the only vertical lift bridge on the Chicago River, just waiting for a great photograph with its two enormous towers and crazy little "house" perched atop the center span. Metra, Amtrak and freight trains cross that scenic antique bridge.

Some bridge houses are no longer in use, like the one at Kinzie Street. That bridge, the sixth since its original in 1909, had such a low river clearance that it was one of Chicago's most active. It was the last city bridge to be manned 24/7 until 1998 when the entire structure was raised five feet for a new river clearance. Today this and the other North Branch drawbridges are fixed in place, no longer operational.

Some may have seen the documentary, *Chicago Bridges*, made by Patrick with filmmaker Stephen Hatch, originally screened at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival and later in Hamburg, Germany (another city of many bridges) by Chicago Sister Cities International. It was broadcast on Chicago and Milwaukee Public Television. An October 2014 release of *Drawbridges Open and Close* launched the PTM Werks Series of children's books introducing youngsters to STEM topics (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

For those of us in the audience who do boat tours on the Chicago River, or walking tours anywhere near all those bridges, or any guide on a motorcoach crossing any bridge, the lecture was enlightening, and the book would be a great addition to anyone's Chicago history library.

Judith Randall
CTPA Co-Secretary