



from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

An Early Gift

RECENTLY CHRISTMAS CAME A LITTLE EARLY via the U.S. Postal Service when a book “Illinois Township Laws – Edition 1946” was delivered to me. I was expecting it as I had received an email a week before from Rita Vollmer, Supervisor of West Township in McLean County. Rita had found the book boxed away in her home that her grandparents had previously lived in.

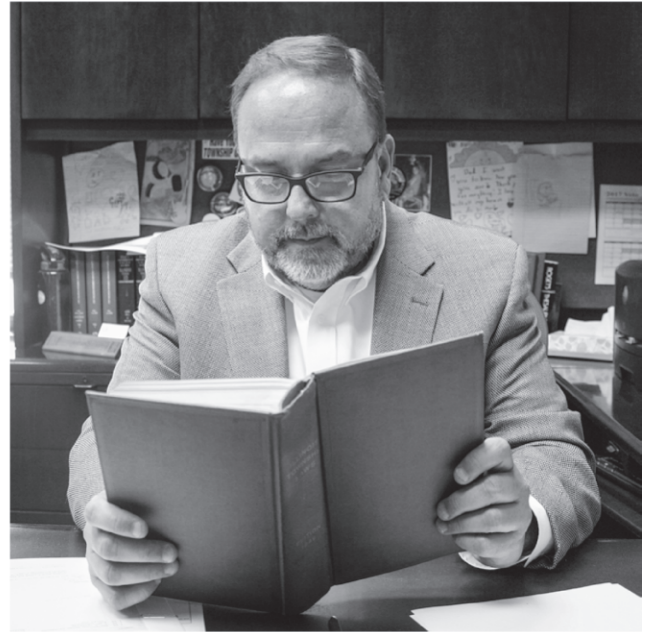
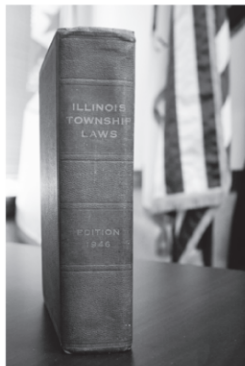
I asked Rita how she came to have possession of the book and she explained that her great-great-great grandfather, Henry West, was one of the first settlers in the southeast McLean County area, and the township is named after him. Henry West served as the first West Township Supervisor from 1858-1867 and served again from 1868-1869. One of Henry’s children, Simeon West, served as supervisor from 1873-1876 and again from 1877-1881. Rita explained that Simeon was a farmer and a well-traveled entrepreneur



RITA VOLLMER

who also founded a town in Texas (Deer Park), which is near Houston. Simeon West left 20 acres of original timberland to the township with the stipulation that the south 10 acres be developed as a park but the north 10 acres to remain untouched. Rita said that the land remains today under the protection of the McLean County Parks Department.

Rita’s great-great grandfather, Harrison Horine (whose son Fredrick married one of Simeon’s daughters, Mary) served as Supervisor from 1893-1899. Simeon’s son, Henry Clay West, served as Supervisor from 1905-1907. Rita’s grandfather, Lillard Horine, son of Fredrick and Mary, served as supervisor from 1947 until his death in 1962. He was the one who would have had the book that Rita sent me. After Lillard passed away his wife Freda Horine, Rita’s grandmother, was appointed to finish his term and then continued in her role as super-



visor by being re-elected until she retired in 1993. Rita said that Freda was 92 when she reluctantly decided not to run again. She had served a total of 31 years. Rita was elected in 1993 and continues her family tradition by serving as West Township Supervisor for a total of 24 years and counting. Rita joked that she may come close to her grandmother’s 31 years in office but she will come nowhere close to being 92 when she retires!

Rita Vollmer is very proud of her family heritage on West Township and rightfully so. She explained to me that West Township has a population of 216 and no incorporated areas at all. She also said that it contains some of the best farm ground in Central Illinois.

I want to take this opportunity to again say “Thank you” to West Township Supervisor Rita Vollmer for sending me the book and for sharing your family’s rich history and dedication in West Township. The book will be placed in our “library” in our boardroom at the TOI office in Springfield. Hopefully during the holiday time, I will get an opportunity to read the book completely and see how different the laws were back in 1946 compared to today. Rita’s gift was truly a wonderful early Christmas present for TOI.