



AN
ALCOHOLICS
ANONYMOUS
HISTORY
IN
NORTHERN
ILLINOIS
AREA 20
SECOND ISSUE

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Preface To The Second Issue

The living tapestry of our unfinished Illinois AA history holds a spiritual fiber, where its individual strands have held their resilience over time. Time, the fourth dimension the Big Book refers to as the rocketed destination for our recovery, never ends and never retreats. Twentieth Century author William Faulkner suggested that “the past is not dead, it’s not even past.” The same is true of our Fellowship’s history. The past guides our present, overlaps, and blends with our current activity. Alcoholics Anonymous makes its progress slowly, approves its changes prudently, and corrects its actions continuously. Our rapid membership expansion outside of the U.S. and Canada in the twenty-first century seems balanced by our strength at home in North America. Area 20 service meetings, following the mid-1990s, experienced less of an increased membership than the steadiness of its AA members’ longer sobriety time. The challenge in this new century is to continue our outreach to new prospects and the still-suffering alcoholics in our midst, who heal as we grow. Our trusted servants give selflessly and humbly, aiding our effort to carry the AA message of personal recovery, our unity of purpose, and the success of service.

This updated monograph, *An Alcoholics Anonymous History In Northern Illinois Area 20, Second Issue*, now spans over sixty-four years (1939-2003) of AA in Illinois. Published, copyrighted, and posted online at the end of 2003, eight years of additional research and Area Assembly actions render its complete rewrite with new detail and a clearer sense of continuity.

Added acknowledgment and encouragement from the AA Archives staff and Archivists at the General Service Office, the recently established Archives of the Stepping Stones Foundation, the enthusiasm of the annual National Archives Workshops, and the trust and support of the NIA Assembly, motivated your NIA Historian’s research effort. The 2001 NIA Fall Assembly endorsed the Second Issue History Project, and a 2003 Panel Review of longtime NIA trusted servants fully examined and approved edits to the draft manuscripts.

Access to early correspondence, rare personal histories, Alcoholic Foundation documents, and many other GSO Archives records brought our first years into a clearer focus. While AA Archives policy and ethics disapprove the verbatim printing of many items, added footnotes direct the reader to sites and sources worthy of further study. Five years (the fourth dimension, again) of new research followed the 1996 Issue's release and supplied the information to propose the Second Issue NIA History Project. The incentive remains in the search for the facts of our history, the joy in the journey of discovery, and the challenge of a "treasure hunt" to uncover the threads of our past.

Archivists and historians present the facts to dispel the myths, legends, and half-truths that may always grow around any society's history. Without drawing conclusions from the facts presented in this book, our actions, events, and discussions produced the evidence. Facts, of course, do not necessarily need a cause to their origin, but facts certainly document results.

Alcoholics Anonymous history, the results of our service, continue to bring vitality to our living NIA tapestry. The readership of the *First Issue* collected an insight from its discoveries, of where and how we have grown in our Groups and General Service Committees. The intent of each rewritten chapter, topic-highlighted sections, and new appendices sets the focus on further understanding and an appreciative awareness for our NIA past that's "not even past." Nonetheless, our NIA history will always remain an unfinished tapestry. Years from now, another Area 20 Historian may revisit this work, in a new attempt to preserve freshly discovered details of an Alcoholics Anonymous history that can so easily be lost, forgotten, or turned into myth.

With this new chronicle, we can once again stand back to find a heritage of love and service freely given in Northern Illinois. My thoughts and prayers are that our love and attraction to general service remain enthusiastically contagious.

Northern Illinois Area 20 Historian.
November 2003

Preface To The First Issue

A tapestry has thousands of threads, interwoven into a compelling image. Our A.A. history can be seen as a living tapestry, an unfinished work that builds on the unity found in our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts. Each group's growth and each member's activities represent individual strands in the Area 20 history tapestry.

This monograph, *An Alcoholics Anonymous History In Northern Illinois Area 20*, spans over fifty-six years (1939-1995) and was published, copyrighted, and distributed to the Fellowship in 1996 with the approval of the NIA Assembly. A *Brief History of NIA*, four pages prepared at the request of the 1987 NIA Assembly, precedes this work and served as one of many sources.

Footnotes direct the reader to sources worthy of further study, assuring the reader of accuracy and the effort to provide the available historical facts found through research. Important acknowledgment is given to the Northern Illinois Area 20 Archives, the Chicago Area 19 Archives, and the A.A. Archives at the General Service Office. The effort and example of those who assemble and maintain A.A. Archives in NIA supplied the motivation to complete this project. The support of the NIA Assembly and the encouragement of the Archivist at the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous provided the incentive for my work.

Archivists and A.A. Historians endeavor to preserve A.A. history so that we need not repeatedly "reinvent the wheel." The accurate preservation of our successes and failures provide effective examples we can use in our effort to carry the message of recovery to other alcoholics. **Archivists and historians record and preserve the methods of how we carry our message**, and illustrate the resulting strengths of our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service in action.

Abiding with our Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions, the personal anonymity of A.A. members, both living and deceased, is respected throughout this work. Its research involved contacting families of past trusted servants for historical information, many who are non-members. This monograph may be viewed by persons who are not members of the Fellowship, and at this level of press, anonymity becomes more important and becomes an integral part of our history.

Alcoholics Anonymous history, like the living tapestry, will always have its critics, its appreciative audience, and its students and leaders who learn from its study. As we progress and act upon the Legacies entrusted to us, the current image changes and grows with us. In this chronicle, we can stand back to find a heritage of love and service freely given to our Fellowship in Northern Illinois.

***An Alcoholics Anonymous History of
Northern Illinois Area 20 is dedicated
to the Groups, leaders, and trusted servants
who have become parts of our history.***

**Beyond its linkage to our past,
this history is dedicated
to the future leaders and trusted servants
of Alcoholic Anonymous .**

Northern Illinois Area 20 Historian.
January 1996
Algonquin, Illinois