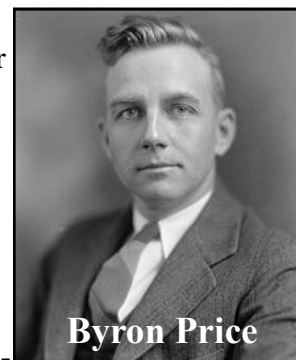




## A Star Spangled Public Servant

To most of the world and the people living on the Hawpatch, Wednesday, March 25, 1891, was just an ordinary day. But for John and Emaline Price it marked the birth of their son Byron. Little did this humble farmer and his wife realize, or anyone else for that matter, the impact this little boy would have on the nation and the world. But the day would come when he would head up the Office of Censorship during World War II and ultimately become the Assistant Secretary of the United Nations.

As a student at Topeka High School, Byron got his first taste of journalism as the editor of the school newspaper. Following his graduation in 1908, he enrolled at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. As a student at Wabash, Price worked as a club reporter and delivered newspapers for the Crawfordsville Journal-Review and for the Indianapolis Star, as well as the college newspaper. He was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa while at Wabash. After completing his B.A. degree at Wabash College in 1912, he got a job with the United Press.



Byron Price

From May through December of 1912, Byron was a reporter and editor in both the Chicago and Omaha bureaus of United Press. He joined the Associated Press (AP) that December, an organization he would stay with for the next 29 years. Life with the AP saw him serving as a day editor in the Atlanta bureau, and then as a correspondent and the New Orleans bureau chief before being transferred to the nation's capitol.

In 1917, with World War I raging, Price took a leave of absence from the Washington AP office and enlisted in the U.S. Army. Serving first as a lieutenant, Byron rose to the rank of captain with the 52nd pioneer infantry. While in France, his regiment was recognized for conspicuous service in the Meuse-Argonne offensive that played a significant role in bringing about an end to the war. Upon mustering out of the army in 1919, Price rejoined the Associated Press's Washington Bureau.

When he returned to Washington, he covered the closing days of the Wilson Administration, the White House of Warren G. Harding, the disarmament conferences of the 1920's and the Teapot Dome scandal. Price reported on 11 national political conventions and organized the Associated Press coverage of six of them.

At the age of 29, Byron Price married Priscilla Alden in New York City on April 3, 1920. Priscilla was the daughter of William F. Alden, a Washington D.C. attorney. How and when the couple met is unclear, but their marriage would last for 58 years until her death in 1978. Regrettably the two would never have children.

Priscilla was a 9th generation direct descendant of John and Priscilla Mullins Alden. John Alden (1599–1687) was a crew member on the historic 1620 voyage of the *Mayflower*. Rather than return to England with the ship, he stayed with the Pilgrim colony at Plymouth. Originally Alden had signed on in Southampton, England, as the ship's cooper, responsible for maintaining the ship's barrels. He was one of the signers of the Mayflower Compact. He married fellow *Mayflower* passenger Priscilla Mullins, whose entire family perished in the first winter.

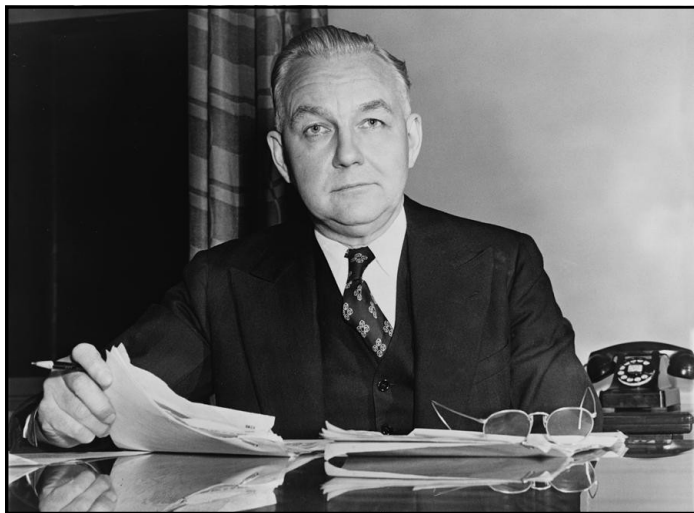
In 1922, Price was promoted to news editor of the Washington Bureau and then in 1927 was made bureau chief. After ten years as chief of the Washington AP office, he

### In this Issue

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was chosen to be executive news editor of the entire organization in 1937. Price served in that position, with headquarters in New York City, until 1941. On the twenty-ninth anniversary of the day he joined the Associated Press, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed him Director of Censorship following the outbreak of World War II.

Taking a leave of absence from the Associated Press, he moved back to Washington, D.C., to assume his new position. Price became the U.S. Director of Censorship on December 19, 1941, only a day after the First War Powers Act was established.



The position allowed Price to censor international communication, issue censorship rules, and set up two advisory panels to assist him in his duties. Under his direction, the office quickly hired 13,000 men and women civilians through the Civil Service Commission to examine the mails and cables in ports and border cities. In addition, he hired about twenty newspapermen and broadcasters to supervise the domestic press and radio "voluntary" censorship. The entire staff eventually numbered 14,500, and Price organized the total program.

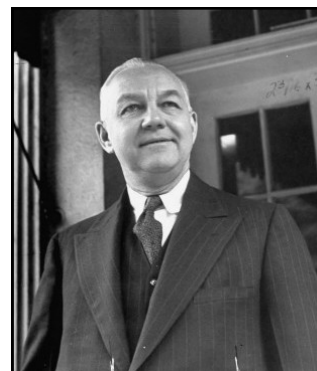
Byron Price would play a critical role when the atom bomb was being developed. In June of 1943, as the Director of Censorship, he sent a confidential note to 20,000 news outlets asking them *"not to publish or broadcast any information whatever regarding war experiments involving production or utilization of atom smashing, atomic energy, atomic fission, atom splitting, or any of their equivalents, the use for military purposes of radium or radioactive materials, heavy water, high voltage discharges, equipment, cyclotrons, and the following elements or any of their compounds, namely, polonium, ytterbium, hafnium, protactinium, radium, rhenium, thorium, and deuterium."*

- Answers:
- 1) 1908
  - 2) Franklin D. Roosevelt
  - 3) \$75,000 a year
  - 4) Ward Samuel Johns
  - 5) August, 1936

For his "creation and administration of the newspaper and radio codes" at the Office of Censorship, Price received a special Pulitzer Prize in 1944. In 1946, President Harry S. Truman presented him with the Medal for Merit for "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services as Director, Office of Censorship, from December 20, 1941, until August 15, 1945." Wabash College conferred upon him an honorary LL.D. degree in 1943 for his journalistic achievements, and Harvard University gave him an honorary M.A. degree in 1946.

When the Censorship Office was abolished, President Truman appointed Price his personal representative to investigate post-war conditions in Germany. Truman especially wanted him to report on relations between American occupation forces and the German people. He also served as an adviser to Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lucius D. Clay from September to November 1945.

In December 1945 Price became a vice-president of the Motion Picture Association of America. Then just before his fifty-sixth birthday, in 1947, Price left his \$75,000 a year job with the Motion Picture Association to become Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations for Administrative and Financial Affairs. He was the only American among eight assistant secretary-generals.

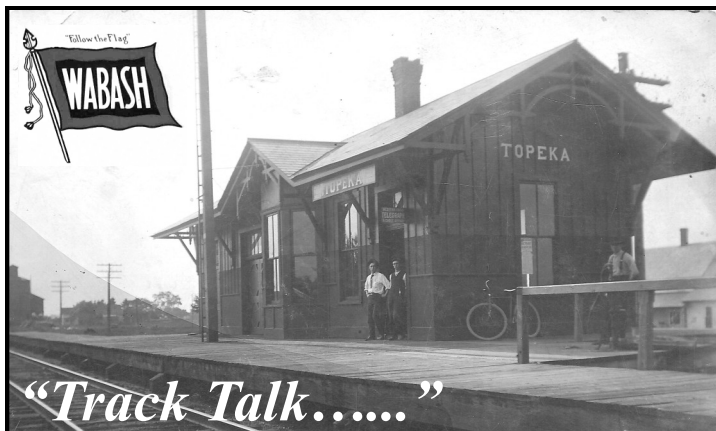


Leaving the Truman White House

The U.N. Secretary-General selected Price because of his efficient administrative record. At the time of his appointment, the United Nations was facing a financial crisis. He had to deal with the staff members' discontent over salaries and overtime, in addition to alleged inefficiency. But one of the bigger jobs he had to undertake in his new position was the supervision of the construction of the new U.N. building in New York City. He retired from the United Nations in 1954.

However, during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, Price reluctantly agreed to resume direction of censorship in the event of war breaking out with Russia.

Byron Price was described as being blond, five feet ten and a half inches tall, and 190 pounds. He played golf for relaxation, was a member of the Methodist Church, as well as many other press clubs and organizations. He died on August 6, 1981, at his Hendersonville, N.C. home at age 90.



## Community Foundation Awards Grant to TAHS

We are pleased to announce that the LaGrange County Community Foundation has awarded the Topeka Area Historical Society a matching technology grant. This grant will enable us to purchase the necessary hardware and software to begin computerizing all of our records in the Depot Museum.

The total cost of the project will be around \$2,300. Hopefully we will have delivery of the grant by the end of the year.

**Your \$10.00 annual membership enables us to continue to preserve Topeka's rich heritage.**

**Renew your 2016 membership.... TODAY!**

***"Your Membership Matters!"***



## Sprunger Brothers Saw Donated to Historical Society

Thanks to the generosity of Brian and Terri Kachadurian, the Topeka Historical Society is now the owner of a fully restored Sprunger Brothers tilt table saw. On Saturday morning September 12th, the Kachadurians, who live in the Detroit area, stopped by the Depot Museum to deliver the saw he had restored.



**Terri & Brian Kachadurian**

One of Brian's hobbies is collecting and restoring vintage power tools. After viewing the historical society's website, he made contact with us to see if we were interested.

The saw is on display in the Depot lobby.

## Coming Events:

**November 17, 2015  
6 PM**

For reservations call  
260-499-0126

**January 19, 2016**

***"Counterfeit Justice"***

with Eric T. Alli

Dinner Meeting & Elections  
at: *The Carriage House*

**TBA**

**Topeka Area Historical Society Meetings are held  
at the Topeka Branch Library - 6:30 PM  
Everyone is welcome**

Visit us online at: [www.topekahistoricalsociety.com](http://www.topekahistoricalsociety.com)



## The Mile 146 Quiz:

1. In what year did Bryon Price graduate from THS?
2. Who appointed Price the Director of Censorship?
3. What was Price's salary with the Motion Picture Association of America?
4. Who was Ruth John's husband?
5. When did Maple Grove add a 10 foot addition?

## Topeka Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 33

Topeka, Indiana 46571

[www.topekahistoricalsociety.com](http://www.topekahistoricalsociety.com)

## 2015 Board of Directors

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## Museum Curator

Susie Salazar



## *The Hawpatch History Detective*

### **New Farmers State Bank Celebrates Historic Topeka**

When the new Topeka Farmers State Branch opened its doors for business on Tuesday September 29th, customers were greeted with a décor featuring both the modern and the historic. Bank directors went to great lengths to preserve Topeka's rich heritage.

When the old 5 & 10 store came down to make way for the new branch bank, Topeka lost a little more of her history. However, the stained glass window that graced



its entrance was salvaged. Now beautifully restored, that window again holds a place of prominence, located in the

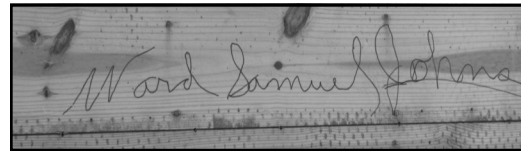
lobby between the tellers and the drive-up windows.

Bank officials also approached the Topeka Historical Society looking for ideas as well as permission to reprint a number of vintage photographs. Several photos of downtown Topeka from the early 1900s are displayed in the lobby along with a photo of the Wolf Grain elevator, the original depot and a westbound freight train powered by a steam locomotive.

### **Maple Grove Discovers Signatures**

When workers removed the old siding on the west end of the Maple Grove Church to do some renovations they made a delightful discover. There on the original boards were the signatures of Ward Samuel Johns and S.D. Miller along with the date August 26, 1936 written with a carpenter's pencil.

In the Fall of 1936, the then Maple Grove Menonite Church added a 10 foot addition to the west end of their sanctuary. How long the project took and how much it costs isn't known. But the name



Ward Johns is well known. Tragically he died from a

blood clot following surgery on May 26, 1953, leaving his wife Ruth and a 13 year old son David.

Ruth Johns (THS Class of '27) taught business, math, journalism and typing at Topeka High School and Westview High School for over 36 years. Many Topeka graduates will recall climbing the stairs to the typing room located over the office. Mrs. Johns will long be remembered as a teacher who loved to teach and genuinely cared about her students.

Today Tom Johns, Ward and Ruth's grandson, lives in the old family farm home located on South Main in Topeka. Tom and his wife Doris are active members and leaders in the Maple Grove Church. *HG*

[www.topekahistoricalociety.com](http://www.topekahistoricalociety.com)

Topeka Area Historical Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 33  
Topeka, Indiana 46571

