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The History of Tessville, Illinois. (Lincolnwood, IL)

Potawatomi originally settled this wooded area, but vacated the land after the Indian Boundary Treaty of 1816. Rural development proceeded slowly on treacherous plank roads along present-day Milwaukee and Lincoln Avenues. Johann Tess, for whom the village of Tessville was originally named, and his family came from Germany in 1856, purchasing 30 acres of barren land in the area. Population slowly increased, and the first commercial establishment, the Halfway House Saloon, was established in 1873.

The agrarian population grew after the establishment of a Chicago & North Western Railway station in nearby Skokie in 1891 and the completion of the North Shore Channel in 1909, which made the easily flooded prairie land manageable. More saloons and taverns soon appeared, specifically along Crawford and Lincoln Avenues. Because only organized municipalities could grant liquor licenses, 359 residents incorporated in 1911 and named the village Tessville.



Grandmother Proesel; Founder of Tessville, IL.



Tessville Vehicle Tag

Tessville annexed land throughout the 1920s, finally stretching to Central Avenue on the west and Kedzie Avenue on the east. During Prohibition, Tessville became a haven for speakeasies and gambling facilities. Tessville was long reputed for drinking and gambling until the 1931 election of its longest-serving mayor, Henry A. Proesel, a grandson of George Proesel, one of the original American settlers.



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In 1932, Lincoln Avenue, formerly a plank toll road, became a state highway. Proesel then worked with the federal government's Public Works Administration and hired the community's entire unemployed workforce to plant 10,000 elm trees on the village streets. Most important, the community passed a liquor license law in 1934 that limited the number of licenses allowable within the city limits and became a model ordinance for other communities. Proesel finally changed Tessville's image when he renamed the village "Lincolnwood" in 1936.



Mayor of Tessville, Henry Proesel

Today, Lincolnwood, Illinois is a two-and-a-half-square-mile suburb of Chicago.