

Jack Kowiak

Phone 585-247-8799

Email

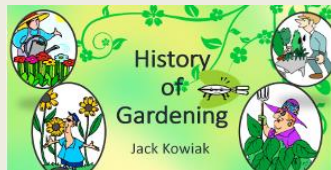
97blueberries@gmail.com



**Presentations that
educate and entertain!**

All presentations are approximately one hour in length and use an entertaining PowerPoint slide show format. These presentations have been given at libraries, senior groups, clubs, and historic associations. References are available on request.

Plants



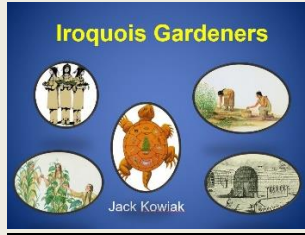
The History of Gardening

The home garden has become an essential element of American life. Whether the garden contains flowers, vegetables, or landscaping, people seem to have a need to channel their “inner farmer.” Gardening has a long and fascinating history. This presentation will examine how gardens have changed through history, important gardening innovations and their inventors, and the intrepid plant explorers who discovered some of our most popular garden plants.



Amazing Backyard Plants

Learn the remarkable stories of some everyday plants in your own backyard. Learn about the weed that helped the Allies win WWII, the bush that is responsible for us speaking English rather than French, and a dinosaur snack in your own backyard. You will be amazed in the ways these plants impacted both our history and lives today.



Iroquois Gardeners

The Iroquois had a deep knowledge of both wild and cultivated plants. This talk will give you an appreciation for their horticultural expertise and you will learn about a particular plant that was as important to our local Native Americans as the buffalo was to the Plains Indian. Local settlers had good reason to be impressed with the agricultural talent of our local Haudenosaunee and you will be too!



Man's Most Valued Plants

We often take for granted the role that plants play in our lives. Their contribution to our day-to-day lives goes far beyond what is on our dinner plate. This presentation will reveal some of the most important plants in the world today and show how they are vital to our everyday well-being and survival.



Your Buggy Neighbors

Your closest neighbors are not the Jones' next door, but the thousands of insects that share your yard with you every day. This talk will take a closer look at those interesting fellows under your feet and flying above your head. We will talk about friends and foes, surprising facts, and some popular myths regarding backyard insects.



Bug Society

Insects can live in extended families just like people. Whether it is a large colony of ants or a small family of beetles, this talk will reveal the amazing cooperation that can take place within a bug society. Their level and care and cooperation with each other can teach humans a thing or two.



Your Thirsty Plants

We spend a lot of time and effort to keep our flowers and vegetables watered, but where does all that water go? This talk covers some of the ingenious systems that plants use to find and transport the water they need.



Plant Science & Scientists

How can one plant seed take sunlight, dirt, and water and construct a mighty oak while another seed takes those exact same ingredients and constructs a beautiful fragrant rose? What is the difference between a botanist and an agronomist? Who are some of the most famous plant scientists? This talk will unlock some of the hidden secrets of plant biology and the people who study them.

Holidays



THE STORY OF VALENTINE'S DAY

Hearts, Cupid, candy, cards, and everything Valentine's is covered in this presentation that examines the origins and history of the many customs surrounding this holiday. Learn how this romantic holiday came to be and how it developed and changed through the generations.



All About St. Patrick's Day

How much do you know about the real St. Patrick? Why do we eat soda bread and corned beef and cabbage on St. Patrick's Day? We will answer these and many more questions as we explore the origins and traditions of this fun March holiday.



Spooky Goddesses (Halloween)

Let us look at Halloween from a ladies' perspective. This presentation recounts the adventures of some hair-raising goddesses from ancient history. These eerie stories will not only give you a chill, but also teach some important moral lessons. Have a fun and educational fright with these ancient stories.



Spiritualism (Halloween)

The story of Spiritualist Movement began long before the Fox Sisters and continued long after it. It was the fastest growing belief system in America in the mid-19th century. The story of its rapid growth and eventual decline contains some fascinating twists and turns. Meet some spirits and have some fun in this interesting trip into our history.



Thanksgiving Day Trivia

Perk up the conversation at this year's holiday meal with some little-known facts about our Thanksgiving holiday. Many of our time-honored traditions of Thanksgiving are not related to the Pilgrims, but are from some other surprising sources. Join us for an eye opening presentation about Thanksgiving.



The Origins of Christmas Customs

Get in the Christmas mood with this fun presentation by Jack Kowiak that looks at the origins of Christmas customs. Decorations, food, song, and just about every other aspect of the Christmas involves a cherished tradition. The story of how some of these customs originated and developed is fascinating. Why do we decorate with holly? What was the first Christmas carol? Come and learn the answers to these and many other interesting items.



Christmas Around the World

Many countries throughout the world have developed their own unique spin on how to celebrate the Christmas Holiday. Some of these customs were brought to America by immigrant communities, but others are only celebrated in their country of origin. We will look at the many different ways that people celebrate the Christmas Holiday around the globe.

History



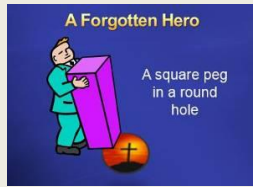
Beyond Susan B. Anthony

Many people in the Rochester area are familiar with Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Stanton, and Lucretia Mott in their fight for women's rights and suffrage. Many other important women significantly advanced the cause of women's rights leading to the suffrage amendment. We will learn more about the lives and contributions of some other key figures such as Mary Wollstonecraft, the Grimke sisters, and Victoria Woodhull.



New York's Holy History – America's Spiritual Soul

Upstate New York was the center of religious activity in America during the country's first 150 years. Many people are aware of the Mormons and the Spiritualists, but that was only the tip of the iceberg of the religious activity in our backyard. Many other key religious movements and denominations were founded in Western New York. This presentation will discuss some of the fascinating historical figures and events that took place in Western New York in the 19th century that went on to influence our entire nation and the world beyond.



A Forgotten Hero

Have you heard of Nelson Baker? Sometimes in the rush to identify new heroes in our society, we often overlook the heroes from our past. This talk will look at the remarkable life of Nelson Baker who was a square peg in a round hole who finally found his niche. Baker ran the largest complex of charitable institutions in the U.S. at the turn of the century - an inspirational story of achievement.



The History of Dreaming

It has been estimated that the average person spends 30% of their lives dreaming. This fun presentation looks at modern, as well as ancient beliefs on the nature of dreaming. We will travel back to ancient Mesopotamia and to the far reaches of China to examine various ideas about a phenomena that still puzzles scientists to this day.



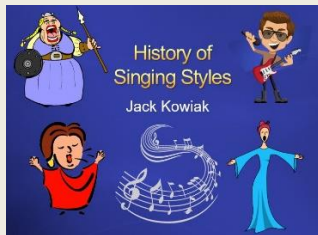
Jimmie Doolittle's 1942 Raid on Tokyo

This presentation marks the 76th anniversary of what historians have called one of the most dramatic, inventive, and heroic war exploits of all time - Jimmie Doolittle's 1942 Raid on Tokyo. The fascinating true story behind the planning, execution, and aftermath of the raid seems too exciting to be real history. Photos, film clips, and other material will be used to recreate this historic event that has been portrayed in Hollywood movies and made headlines around the world.



The Hidden Story of D-Day

The largest amphibious invasion in history has quite a backstory. There was considerable drama before the soldiers hit the beach. This talk examines the key decisions and politics that confronted Eisenhower and other military planners as they laid out plans for this momentous invasion. You will learn some surprising information on the keys to the Allied victory.



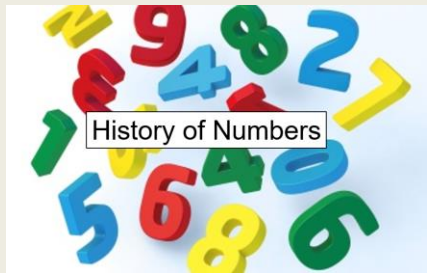
History of Singing Styles

Anyone with a good music collection can tell you that singing styles have changed over the years. The crooners of the 40's sound quite different from contemporary singers today. Those same crooners don't resemble the singing styles of operetta earlier in the century or earlier baroque or renaissance styles. This talk will look at some of the mechanics of singing and how and why singing styles have changed over the years.



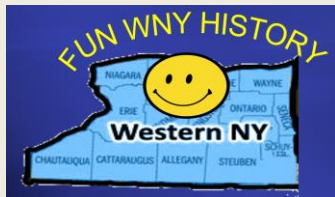
History of Slang

Everyone uses slang phrases every day. Left out of the dictionaries and discouraged by teachers, who creates these expressions and how do they spread to almost universal use? This talk looks at how slang develops and the surprising origins of some of our most common slang terms.



Count On It

Why do we count numbers the way we do? When did people first learn how to count? What did people do before they learned to count? Can animals really learn to count? Mankind's journey from counting objects to making the simple calculations that help you balance your check book today is both surprising and fascinating.



Fun Western New York History

Each of these talks will reveal an assortment of fun stories of some lesser known people in Upstate New York history. After listening to their stories, you will agree that it is a shame they were left out of our history books.

Fun WNY History 1

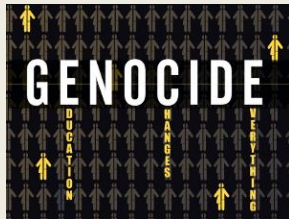
Listen to the amazing rags to riches story of some Western New York Sisters who became famous celebrities, as well as other stories.

Fun WNY History 2

Learn about a Western New York man that some claim was the ultimate criminal genius, as well as other stories.

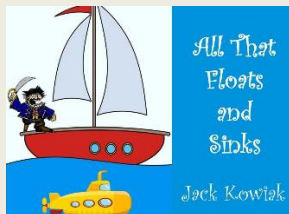
Fun WNY History 3

Hear about some Western New York daredevils that thrilled audiences across the United States, as well as other stories.



Why People Do Really Bad Things

Social scientists have found that genocides and ethnic cleansings are not carried out primarily by career criminals or sociopaths, but rather by “ordinary” groups of people who fit a general profile of the population. This presentation will review some of the latest research findings that attempt to explain how ordinary people under certain situations can commit such violent acts.



All That Floats (and Sinks)

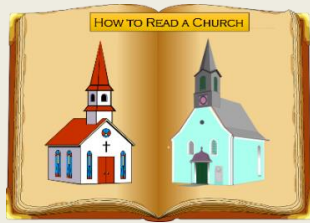
The history of ships from the earliest rafts of prehistoric man to the latest craft capable of exploring our deepest ocean depths is a fascinating topic. Throughout history, key innovations in ship technology had major impacts on the history of our world. Climb aboard for this engaging cruise through the history of all that floats.

Religious History



Understanding Religious Art

Religious art is full of symbolic meanings and messages. The code to deciphering these symbols was well known in its day, but has largely been forgotten in modern times. We will explore the origins and development of many of these symbols to give you a much better appreciation and understanding of religious art.



How to Read a Church

Next time you start to get bored during the Sunday sermon, don't doze off - look around! Most churches are full of symbols and artwork that many parishioners admire, but few really understand. This talk will help demystify many of the most popular symbols that are present in church decoration, artwork, and architecture. The stories on how many of these symbols came to be commonly used are often surprising.



A Tour of the Religions of the World

Did you ever wonder what type of church people go to in different parts of the world? (Do they even go to a “church”?) In this presentation we will take an around the world tour to overview the different types of religions practiced across the globe. We will explore how formally distant and little known faiths are now influencing our present viewpoints and society.



Women and Religious History

Women have been the guiding force behind many religions since their inception. Topics discussed in this presentation include how the role of women has varied across different religions and different periods of history; women based religious movements; notable female religious leaders; and the various reform movements aimed at improving the status and role of women in religion.