



Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

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Mercer County Historical Society & Essley-Noble Museum

1406 - SE 2nd Avenue
Aledo, IL 61231
Phone: 309/582-2280

Hours

April – Oct: Wed, Sat, Sun 1-5:00pm
Nov - March: Saturdays 12:00-4:00pm



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For Genealogy Queries write to:

MCHS Genealogy Dept.
PO Box 269
Aledo IL 61231-2504
Or: E-mail the museum

Email: mcmuseum@frontier.com



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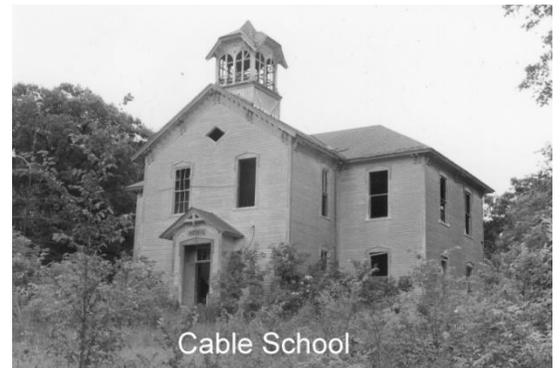
Where in Mercer County is...? Part 3 Conclusion:

By: Stephanie Braucht

In conclusion, is a brief description and location of lesser-known places in Mercer County – towns that used to be or have lost their post offices, but are still known by the locals. You also may find the complete article, with updates, in the genealogy reference section at the Essley-Noble Museum, in a ring binder entitled "Ghost Towns."

Richland Grove Township

Cable (41-17' 02" N; 090-30' 26" W) can be found by going south of Sherrard on 300th Street, then east on Camp Creek Road to 303rd Street. Cable was established the 1870's, when the Coal Valley Mining Company came looking for a new supply of coal because their vein in Coal Valley was running out. In 1871 Cable was the largest town in Mercer County. By 1880, the population was 1000, which reportedly grew as high as 1500 to 2000. Much of the population was composed of miners and their families.



Cable School

The mine eventually played out, people moved away, and in 1926 the village was dissolved by vote of the remaining residents. **Griffin** (41-14' 25" N; 090-29' 22" W) is on 120th Avenue, east of 305th Street. The Northwestern Clay Manufacturing Company was located here. It sat on a 100-acre tract of land, and had its beginnings in 1879. At one time, 17,000 tons of bricks were produced here each month, and 95 men were employed by the company. Clay was available from a pit nearby, and a local stream provided water. A source of coal to heat the kilns was also available in the immediate area. At one time the town had a church, school, grain elevator, stockyard, grocery store, and three hotels.

Swedona (41-16' 45" N; 090-26' 41" W), the first settlement in Richland Grove Township, is at the junction of Knoxville Road and Meadow Gate Road. Originally known as Berlin, this town was laid out on September 10, 1836 by Abner Arrasmith and Jacob Walker. There was another town in Illinois named Berlin, so the first post office here was called "Cedar Ridge." The name of the town was changed to Swedona in 1869.

Rivoli Township

Hopewell is on Route 17, west of New Windsor. After having organized in Rivoli Township in 1848, a congregation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church built the Hopewell Church in 1870.

There was also a one-room school near the church and a cemetery to the southwest. The cemetery is still there.

Suez Township

Alexis Junction (41-04' 03" N; 090-38' 18" W) is west of Alexis on Routes 135 and 67, just west of 240th Street. A short spur of the Rock Island Southern Railroad ran between here and Alexis. Some references show Alexis Junction in Warren County, as it is very close to the line between Mercer and Warren Counties.

Bridger's Corners is the name given to the area at the junction of Route 67 and 50th Avenue. Originally settled by Henry Bridger, this was the first town in Mercer County that was not on the Mississippi River. The post office situated at this crossroads was known first as **Pope's Creek** and then as **Suez**.

Burgess (41-07' 38" N; 090-38' 29"W) was once a very busy village. Its location is on 40th Avenue, between 230th Street and 240th Street. It was named for County Judge Henry E. Burgess, and it grew up as a result of the Rock Island Southern Railway being built through the area, which was completed in 1910.

Martin

(41-08' 50" N; 090-38' 13" W) is located on 55th Avenue, halfway between



230th Street and 240th Street in Section 5. In 1875, 80 acres there were owned by F.M. Martin. Very little has been found regarding Martin, but it is listed as a populated place (historical) at lat-long.com, and GPS coordinates are given for it. In 1875 F.M. Martin also owned 149 acres immediately north of this 80, in Greene Township, Section 32. F.M. Martin & Co. owned 75 of those acres. This likely was the Martin Coal Mine (described in Greene Township, under Laoc), so it appears that there is some relationship between Martin and Laoc.

Norwood (41-05' 21" N; 090-38' 17" W) once had a post office, two stores, a millinery shop, blacksmith shop, two churches, two doctors, and a flour mill. This is located on 15th Avenue, approximately 1/2 mile west of 240th Street.

Old Norwood (41-05' 20" N; 090-37' 42" W) is marked by the Norwood United Presbyterian Church and adjacent cemetery. This is at the crossroads of 15th Avenue and 240th Street. The village of Norwood,

originally named North Henderson (not to be confused with the present town by that name) before being re-named Norwood, had its beginnings here. When the Rock Island Southern railroad came through farther to the west, the businesses relocated to that spot, a half-mile west.

References:

Atlas Map of Mercer County Illinois, Illinois: W.R. Brink & Co., 1875

"Bridger's Corners, First Inland Town, Now Farm Land," *The Times Record*, August 19, 1936

Plat Book: Mercer County Illinois, Rockford: Rockford Map Publishers, 1959

History of Mercer County, Chicago: H.H. Hill and Company, 1882

Quick, Janet, & Snell, Pearl, "Ghost towns and shrinking communities dot Mercer landscape," *Rock Island Argus*, Rock Island, IL, March 7, 1976

Sackville, Patty, ed., *Mercer Remembers: 1835-1985*, Times Record Company, Aledo, IL

Thomas, Clarence E., ed., Official Directory of Mercer County, Illinois, Aledo: Times Record Co., 1935

www.lat-long.com



Member Feedback

We want to thank Marchia Forber for contacting us to share additional information about Arpee and Mannon. Apparently at Arpee there was a dance hall/tavern/restaurant/house of ill-repute. Marchia writes, "Lura 'Dude' Ballard Stead had an 'orchestra' downstairs. She played ragtime piano, and upstairs..... There's a picture of Mrs. Stead dressed to the nines with a feather in her hat as tall as she was. It's in the New Boston Museum. She was one of my two piano teachers. A unique individual."

In Mannon there was a meat locker business started after World War II by a Fender family. You could, for instance, buy a half or a quarter of a side of beef and they would prepare and package it and rent you a freezer drawer to keep it in. The business went under after a lengthy power failure.



Curator's Corner

Events for Antique Days were a great success for the museum. Good weather along with great people. The Scott's Battery group gave a great presentation of Civil War demonstrations using the cannon that was fired every hour throughout the day. For those of us interested in the Civil War, it was most informative. Our volunteers also sold rope with our rope making machine and demonstrated hand-shelling corn.

Our new accessions for this quarter have been given by Ron Carlson, Joyce Mizner, Bill Ives, Shirley Mills, Mark Appleton, Ruth Kinney, Arlene Hudson, David Olson, Kathryn Bredberg, Joyce McGrady, Ruth Ann Jackson, Mabel Mayhew, Marilyn Nelson, Roger Kiddoo, Joyce Peterson, Ivan Harkey, Gary Morrow, David Nelson, Betty Reichel, Niel Johnson, Hugh Brown, Ilene Tracy, Marcia Forber, Alexandra Benedict, Lyle Kugler, Teresa Holmes, Paul Lee, Bill Bertrand, Twyla Holmes, Jim Earl, Mercer County High School and George Schlenker. As you can see, the list is growing and we appreciate all the interest and donations to the museum.

Get ready for our Fall open hours in November, which are Saturdays only, from 12:00 to 4:00 pm. Everyone is welcome to leave a message on the phone or email to keep in contact with us here. Have a safe and warm winter.

Veda Meriwether, Curator



Fall Open Meeting ~ Oct. 17 at The Depot

Note that the topic and location are different from previously reported. Since the renovation of the Pope's River Church is not completed, that meeting place and topic have been canceled. However, **we are pleased to welcome back Dr. Marrietta Castle in the persona of Mary Todd Lincoln. The meeting will be Oct. 17 at 7:00 P.M. at The Depot**, east of Central



Park in Aledo. Dr. Castle brought Mrs. Lincoln to life for us in the Spring of 2010 in an extremely interesting program. This is one to see again and bring your children or grandchildren with you, as it is a fascinating performance. Her presentations are based on research into Mary's life, including the discovery by historians in 2005 of some of her letters and other documents. Dressed in a period costume, Dr.

Castle portrays the President's widow as she might have appeared in 1875, ten years after the assassination and just before she left the sanitarium where she had been committed by her son. Dr. Castle received her Ph.D. from the University of Iowa and is Emeritus Professor for Western IL University. As a literacy consultant, she has assisted schools with long-term projects to improve reading and writing instruction and she is involved in several history-related projects.

This will be a special meeting since not only will we be entertained by Dr. Castle's presentation, but there also will be the **drawing for the golden double eagle coin**. Only a few short weeks are left to purchase your raffle tickets and with the limited ticket sales range, there is an excellent chance that you could be the winner.



The meeting is free and the public is invited. Refreshments will be served.



Where Was Ohio Grove Christian Church?

By Jim Runyon

The search for the Ohio Grove Christian Church began in May 2010 when John Roth, while attending Country Bank's "Night at the Museum," saw the "Crazy Autograph Quilt" which was made by the women of Ohio Grove Christian Church and auctioned in 1888. It (reportedly) has 430 signatures. John asked, "Where was Ohio Grove Christian Church?" I had no idea, so the search began.

The three Mercer County histories provided no clue. Nor did any atlases, until I got to the 1875 "Atlas of Mercer County." It showed four churches in Ohio Grove township. Two of them still stand - Pope River and Sunbeam Presbyterian. I knew where the third, Methodist Sun Beam, had stood.

So, the fourth church was probably the Christian church, shown in Section 1. The current atlas indicated that it was on Earl and Joyce



Robbins' farm (SW corner of NW 1/4 of Sec. 1). Earl confirmed that there had been a Christian Church there, and he thought perhaps Joyce had a picture. A year later, Hallelujah! Joyce found the picture and remembered that I wanted a copy.

Joyce says the church was closed about 1944. Tom Balmer, whose father razed the building, believes it was dismantled circa 1962



What is It?

The previous newsletter's "What is It?" was a dead calf pull, used to pull a deceased calf from the cow.

This item is about 1 ½ inches in diameter and attached to a six to eight foot length of rope.



“Name the Tools” for 2011 Mercer Co. Fair

1. Citrus squeezer/herb press
2. Newspaper holder
3. Shaving brush
4. Oxen shoes
5. Cookie and dough mixer
6. Jar lifter
7. Cattle horn weight
8. Well water bail



Contest winner for getting all correct: Roger Mixer, East Moline. General drawing: Jim Edwards, Aledo

Items for Sale at the Museum

If not picked up at the museum, postage (book rate) is extra. Inquire for insurance or special shipping.

1882 History of Mercer County.....\$25.00
Hardback reprint, 1005 pages, add \$4 postage

1900 Mercer Co. Census & index.....\$20.00
Approx. 3” thick, add \$4 postage

Mercer County Cemeteries\$25.00
Locations/color photos, 87 pages, add \$3 postage

Abe Lincoln in Mercer County.....\$5.00
Soft cover, 51 pages, add \$3 postage

Celebrating Yesterday-Viola 125 years.....\$10.00
Soft cover, 110 pages, add \$3 postage

Betty L. Beer note cards, pkg. of 6.....\$3.00
Indicate “False Spring” or “Nathan Listening”
\$1 postage for one or both

RI Southern R.R. routes of Mercer Co.....\$5.00
Circa 1914, 18.5”X18.5” map copy
Add \$4.75 for postage and shipping tube

Bicentennial plate.....\$5.00
designed by Suzy Bogguss..

Sesquicentennial plate.....\$5.00
For plates, inquire about shipping.



Coming Events for 2011:

Oct. 17 Fall open meeting 7:00 p.m. at The Depot
Raffle drawing; Mary Todd Lincoln

Oct. 30 Last day of summer hours

Nov. 5 First day of Winter hours, Saturdays only
12:00-4:00

This newsletter sponsored by:

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Tony Holtschlag, AAMS®
Financial Advisor

110 North College Ave
PO Box 202
Aledo, IL 61231
Bus. 309-582-0875 Fax 866-444-7696
Cell 309-221-7887
tony.holtschlag@edwardjones.com
www.edwardjones.com