

# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

## "Preserving Mercer County History"

Volume 17, Issue 4

Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

Oct/Nov/Dec 2013

Publisher Kellogg's Printing

### 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



### Officers & Board of Directors

Bill Bertrand, President  
Dave Duncan, Vice President,  
Mary Jane Sticklen Secretary  
John Huffstutler, Treasurer  
Shirley Ball  
Stephanie Braucht  
Ronn Dillavou  
Dave Frieden  
Beverly Gray  
Twyla Holmes  
Roger Kiddoo  
Doug McCaw  
Richard McMeekan  
Linda Morrow  
Jean Wistedt  
Veda Meriwether, Curator  
Dennis Henderson, Sunday Host



### For Genealogy Queries write to:

MCHS Genealogy Dept.  
PO Box 269  
Aledo IL 61231-2504  
Or: E-mail the museum  
Email: [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com)



Memberships available for \$15/household

For membership or change of address contact:



Please address all correspondence to:

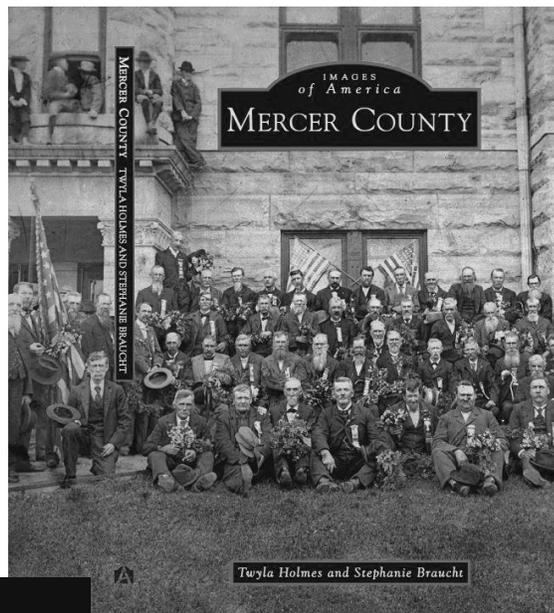
Essley-Noble Museum  
Box 269  
Aledo, IL 61231



Website: [www.mchsil.org](http://www.mchsil.org)

### Coming Soon

*Mercer County*, a new pictorial history book, will be available December 2, 2013. On behalf of the Mercer County Historical Society, co-authors Twyla Holmes and Stephanie Braucht have searched the museum and private collections for photographs that illustrate people, places, events, and activities from Mercer County's past (and a bit of the present). Containing over 200 black and



Twyla Holmes and Stephanie Braucht

#### ALEDO, ILLINOIS

Mercer County's location on the east bank of the Mississippi River has made it an attractive site for habitation for thousands of years. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Native Americans of the Sauk (Sak) tribe were drawn here for the abundance of fish and wild game. The formal organization of Mercer County began when the Northwest Territory was created in 1787. Then, in 1812, the area was included in the Military Tract, designated by Congress as bounty land, to be given as payment to soldiers who served in the War of 1812. The first settlers arrived in the 1820s via the Mississippi River or covered wagon, and Mercer County was established in 1835. Primarily an agricultural area, it has also been home to business and commerce. A variety of interesting individuals have lived in or influenced the county, including an oil baron, a baseball Hall of Famer, a country music star, and a young surveyor who one day became president.

Twyla Holmes and Stephanie Braucht are both lifelong residents of Mercer County and members of the board of directors of the Mercer County Historical Society and the Essley-Noble Museum. Holmes's family roots run deep in the county, and she has a true love of local history and genealogy. Braucht's genealogical link to Mercer County is through her husband, whose family has also been here for numerous generations. She is a retired teacher and school counselor who loves conducting research, especially in history and genealogy.

The Images of America series celebrates the history of neighborhoods, towns, and cities across the country. Using archival photographs, each title presents the distinctive stories from the past that shape the character of the community today. Arcadia is proud to play a part in the preservation of local heritage, making history available to all.



white photographs, with text, the book is being published by Arcadia Publishing as part of their Images of America series. Arcadia is the leading local history publisher in the United States and has over 8500 books in print, with more added every year. The book will be available for purchase at the Essley-Noble Museum and at [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com).

Cost will be \$21.99. If it needs to be mailed, there will be an additional fee. All profits will go to the Mercer County Historical Society. Contact the museum if you want your name on a waiting list for the book to be mailed. Add \$4 for postage and it will be mailed as soon as the book is available. This, as well as other publications put out by the Historical Society, would make excellent Christmas presents for friends and relatives with connections to Mercer County.

## Fall Open Meeting

Our Fall Open Meeting will be Monday, Oct. 21, 7:00 p.m. at the Essley-Noble Museum. There will be a very short business meeting, then Jason Olson will tell about the Prentiss House at New Boston, which he bought and has been renovating. The public is invited and there is no admission. Refreshments will be served afterwards and you will have an opportunity to visit the museum. Below is a poem that Jason wrote about his new home.



### *The Prentiss House*

by Jason Olson

*The day has flown by it's evening at last,  
My day and my work are finally the past.  
In stillness and quiet I lay down and read,  
The book's pages of knowledge filling my need.*

*With light on the stand and cat at my feet,  
This feeling of bliss just cannot be beat.*

*I stop for a moment all lost in my thoughts,  
To look at the window's fine film of frost.*

*Then I remember outside it is cold,  
And the house built around me is really quite old.*

*Walls of thick brick that remind me of stone,  
Are built up around me and give me a home.  
A century plus they have stood here with grace,  
Providing a home; a beautiful place.*

*Struck with a feeling how fortunate am I,  
To live in this place from days long gone by.*

*Children have cried, and wives have lamented,  
Death has come, and could not be prevented.*

*Other children were were born and went on their own,  
Built their own lives and built their own homes.*

*Empty it has sat at various times,  
Waiting for someone with very keen eyes.*

*To swoop in and rescue this beautiful place,  
At times having to do so with very great haste.*

*Wall paper has come and wall paper has gone,  
But if these walls could talk you would here quite a song.*

*Now it is my turn to own this estate,  
With dreams of making it vast and great.*

*But I don't really feel it is mine all alone,*



## Curator's Corner

Welcome to our new members -Membership keeps our museum open. Thank you for the many new accessions this quarter.

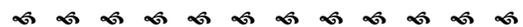
We are looking for volunteers to help organize our museum. I am listing some of the things we could use help with: Landscaping and refreshing our outside, notebook repair, organizing and compiling notebooks, and able bodies to help move displays. Our winter is soon upon us and starting in November we are open to the public on Saturdays only. Now is the time to think about re-organizing.

Veda Meriwether, Curator



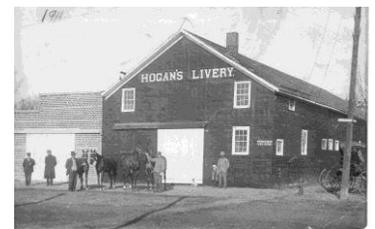
## Mercer County Artist in Exhibit at Figge

A New Deal for Illinois: The Federal Art Project Collection of Western Illinois University is a current exhibit at the Figge Art Museum in Davenport, IA. Among the internationally recognized artists on display in the exhibit is Gertrude Abercrombie (1909-1977), a surrealist, who lived for many years of her childhood in Aledo. The exhibit is on view from September 14, 2013 through January 5, 2014. Our museum owns some of her original works, currently in storage. There are plans to rotate them out for viewing soon.



## Hogan's Livery

This picture from 1911 shows Hogan's Livery Stable in Aledo. It was located at 201 W. Seventh Street. Seventh Street is now named Main Street. John Hogan, 58, was the liveryman. His twenty-eight year old son, James, was the veterinarian who had his office here. Another son, Grover, 16, also worked at the livery. John and his wife, Mary, and eight of their children were living in Aledo at the time of the 1910 census.



## Building Project

Work has begun to level and prepare the site east of the machine shed for the proposed expansion to the museum. With the groundwork we will have expended the money in our building fund and donations are needed for the building itself. Thank you to all of those who have earmarked funds for the building project.

Breeden Tree Service did a fine job of tree removal and trimming and, as this is being written, Tony Muhlenburg and crew are leveling the site and removing stumps. The area will be seeded until some future time that a building can be erected.



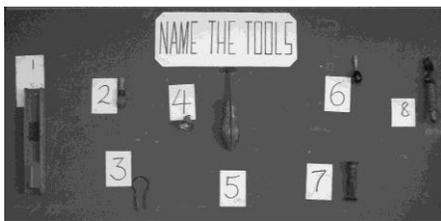
## Membership Dues Increase

For some number of years, operating expenses have exceeded income. Rock-bottom interest rates from CD's combined with rising costs put us farther behind each year. Reluctantly, we are raising membership dues from \$15 to \$20 starting in January 2014. Membership goes from Jan. 1-Dec. 31, but new memberships for 2013 will be prorated. Lifetime membership remains at \$300 so if you are thinking of joining now or before you renew for 2014 this amount would simplify record keeping as well as support our efforts to preserve Mercer County history. We truly do appreciate our patrons. Thank you!



## Name the Tools 2013 Mercer Co. Fair

1. Vegetable shredder
2. Shaving brush
3. Jar opener
4. Sheep bell
5. Shoe stretcher
6. Darning sock egg
7. Barrel hoop driver
8. Shock tier

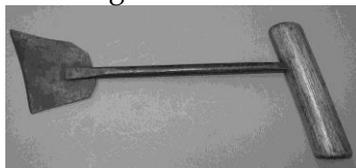


Congratulations to Carl Ritter from Illinois City for getting the most correct and to Rosie McManus from Taylor Ridge for the random drawing.



## What is it?

The previous item was a carpet stretcher. This item is 10.5 inches long with a wooden handle. What is it?

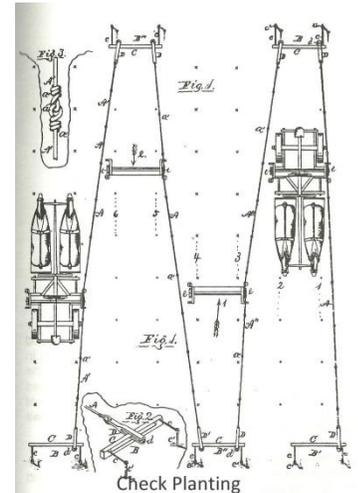


## Planter Wire Patents

By ... Stephanie Braucht

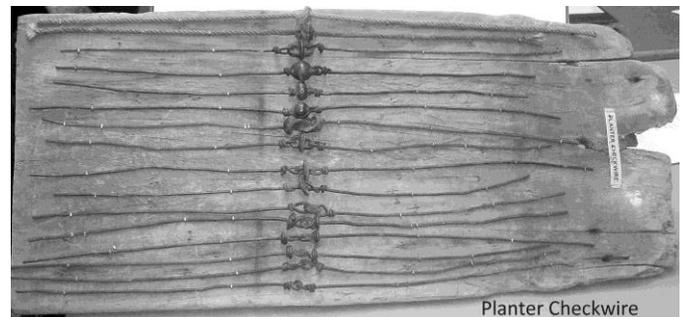
In the early days of agriculture in Mercer County, the best pattern for planting corn was in check-rows. Check-rows caused the corn to grow so that it formed rows that were at right angles to each

other. As a result, the corn could be cultivated (to kill weeds) by going first in a north-south direction and then in an east-west direction (or vice versa). Up until about 1857, the farmer was required to activate the mechanism on his planter that caused the seed to drop. He had to make sure he was travelling in a straight line and was dropping a seed at appropriate intervals while doing so. The first patent for a check-line to automatically trip the seeding mechanism on the planter was recorded on February 10, 1857.



A check-line was a cord, rope, wire, chain, or metal strip with enlargements at regular intervals that would activate the planting mechanism as it travelled through the planter. These enlargements were called "knots," regardless of whether they were actually tied knots or were metal enlargements of some kind. Using a check-line made it much more likely that the corn would be planted in the desired check-row pattern.

Two Mercer County men were very instrumental in the development of the check-line technology. John Thomson and John Ramsey, both of Aledo, registered the first patent for using a knotted cord. It was registered with the U.S. Patent Office on September 24, 1864. After that, Thomson followed up with another patent that included a cast knot on a wire. On January 5, 1886, he registered an



improvement on that patent which showed an oblong-shaped cast knot. These men made important contributions in the long (and ongoing) history of improvements to farming technology.

*Thanks to Ronn Dillaou, who contributed information for this article.*



## Items for Sale at the Museum

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

**Mercer County** (Coming Dec. 2) .....\$21.99

Soft cover, 9.25X6.5", 128 pages  
Add \$4 for postage

**Mercer Remembers**.....\$25.00

Soft cover, 11X16", 119 pages  
Add \$8 for postage

**1864 Mercer Co. Atlas**.....\$35 members

Color, soft cover, 37 pages  
Add \$8 for postage

**\$40 nonmembers**

**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.

### Calendar of Events for 2013

- Oct. 21 Fall open meeting. 7:00 at the museum.  
Jason Olson will give the program on the  
New Boston Prentiss House that he purchased.
- Oct. 30 Last day of regular hours 1:00-5:00
- Nov. 2 Start of Winter hours:  
Saturday's only 12:00-4:00

This newsletter sponsored by:

