

# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

## "Preserving Mercer County History"

Volume 22, Issue 4

Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

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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: Thurs, Fri, Sat, 1-5:00pm  
Nov - March: Saturdays 12:00-4:00pm



### **Officers & Board of Directors**

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Mary Jane Sticklen Secretary  
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Tarah Sipes Anderson  
Veda Meriwether, Curator  
Dennis Henderson, Saturday Host



### **For Genealogy Queries write to:**

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



**Memberships available for \$20/household or \$300  
for a lifetime membership**

*For correspondence, membership or change of  
address contact:*



Essley-Noble Museum  
Box 269  
Aledo, IL 61231



**Website:** [mercercountyhistoricalsocietyil.org](http://mercercountyhistoricalsocietyil.org)

**Email:** [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com)

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[www.facebook.com/mchsil](http://www.facebook.com/mchsil)

## **A Prominent Immigrant in Mercer County History**

Submitted by Bill Bertrand

Carl August Carlstrom, arrived in 1869, a poor immigrant from Sweden with no money and no education, but persevered through a life of hard work to live to see his son, Oscar, become a renowned lawyer, elected Illinois Attorney General.

In 1869, Carl started work near Aledo at McWhorter Nursery, then took on a job as a mason, working in and around Aledo for a couple of years. He sent for his fiancée, Clara Piel, to join him and they were wed in Aledo January 13, 1871. In April of that year Carl borrowed money and bought 40 acres of timbered land next to an old river backwater near



New Boston, planning to start a farm and family. But in November, 1871, he lost that land to a Sheriff's sale, and it would be a number of years before he became a landowner again. One might speculate that this very early bad experience with the law and lawyers, might have prompted him later to urge his son, Oscar, to study law.

Starting again, Carl made money as a "wood dealer," cutting 4-foot lengths of wood to sell at \$3 a cord for fuel for the steamboats traveling the river. By 1880 he had enough money to buy many acres of bottomland, which he cleared for farming. He was once again set back by the flood that year that wiped out most of the settlers in the bay area.

Carl persisted and eventually owned a farm outside of New Boston where he lived until moving into New Boston around 1916. Carl and his first wife, Clara, had seven children, but only three survived to become adults. Clara died in 1882, and Carl remarried in 1886 to Hedda Carlson, with whom he had eight children, of which four survived childhood. Carl was known for his size and strength, and one time on a dare, carried 480 pounds of wheat up stairs into a mill - one sack on each shoulder and a sack under each arm. He was also blessed with a "native intelligence" and taught himself to read and speak English. Carl died in New Boston, October 28, 1926.

A lack of formal education taught Carl the value of schooling, so he saw that his first son, Oscar Emonval Carlstrom, born July 16, 1878, would have the benefit of which Carl had been deprived. Oscar attended local district school and then high school at New Boston before enlisting in the army in 1899 to serve two years during the Spanish American War. After his first stint of service, Oscar attended law school at Northern Illinois University 1902-1903. He was admitted to the bar in 1903 and started his profession in the Aledo firm of Bassett and Carlstrom, practicing law alone or with various partners, until he was elected county prosecutor in 1916. In late 1916, Oscar again enlisted in the army and served in World War I, this time as a captain. He was assigned to command Battery B, 123<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery and was sent over to France in May, 1918, returning a year later to be discharged June 7, 1919.

Returning to the law practice, Oscar served as Mercer County state's attorney, 1916-1924, and as a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1920. Described as "one of the most gifted orators in the history of the Republican party in Illinois," Oscar campaigned for and served as Illinois Attorney General for two terms, from 1925 to 1933. From 1933 to 1940, Carlstrom practiced law in a Chicago office. He also campaigned in Republican primaries for governor, in 1932, 1936, and 1944. Returning to Aledo, Carlstrom was elected and was serving as Mercer County Circuit Court Judge, when he died at his home in Aledo, March 6, 1948.

The honor and achievements gained by son Oscar Carlstrom would have been unimaginable to the poor Swedish immigrant Carl Carlstrom who came to Mercer County in 1869..



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**Curator's Corner**

I was invited to enter the clock tower and watch the restoration of the courthouse clock this past August. We will have pictures of the repair

process in our museum for the public to view. Roy Burlingame and his nephew Steve Smith have donated their time to restore a piece of our history where once again the giant clock in the tower will display the correct time in all four directions.

Note that the open hours for the museum will shift to the winter schedule (12:00-4:00 Saturdays only.) starting Nov 3rd and lasting until April 4, 2019.

*Veda Meriwether, Curator*



**Your WWI Ancestors**

By Bill Bertrand

Many people have an ancestor who served in WWI. We've mentioned before that the Essley-Noble Museum has a wonderful reference source for research on your Mercer County veteran. The Honor Roll Committee gathered extensive information on the people who served from Mercer County, compiling this into files that can be searched by name of ancestor. Those files have been laboriously indexed and organized in protective covers, so that the public can use them to find details about their ancestor that they may never have known.



Information on many veterans includes schools attended, service records (rank, company, where served, dates of start and end of service), membership in organizations, and religious affiliation - information that may not have been passed along in family history. For example, there is Oscar Carlstrom, on whom research has been conducted for an article and display.



The Honor Roll Committee files were compiled during the years 1920-22, thus information provided was of relatively recent or even current status at the time of WWI. If you spoke to your ancestor decades later, his or her memory may not have been as reliable. By learning some of the details of their life, and relating them to your own

life experiences, that ancestor can become a more important and relatable part of your family history.



**Fall Open Meeting:  
"Mercer County in WWI"**

Plan to join us on Monday, October 15th, 7:00 pm. for our Fall Open Meeting and program at the Essley-Noble Museum. Following a short meeting, the program will be "Mercer County in WWI." Objects from the Historical Society's collection will help tell the story of how Mercer County residents experienced WWI "over there" and at home. Refreshments, an opportunity to tour the museum, and socializing will follow the program. The meeting is free and open to the public.



**Volunteers Needed**

The museum is seeking enthusiastic volunteers for a variety of projects and tasks around the museum. We are looking for museum hosts, research, inventory, and special event assistance. Training sessions will be scheduled and opportunities can be tailored to the interests of the volunteer. If you are interested call the museum at 582-2280 and leave a message and you will be contacted.

**Changes in MCHS Board Members**

Welcome to new MCHS board members Susan DeBlock, Greene Township, and Chris DeFrieze, New Boston Township. Regretfully, Doug McCaw, due to his busy schedule, has resigned as a board member, although he plans to keep in touch and attend what meetings he can as a Mercer Co. citizen. We thank Doug for his dedication and long service on the board.



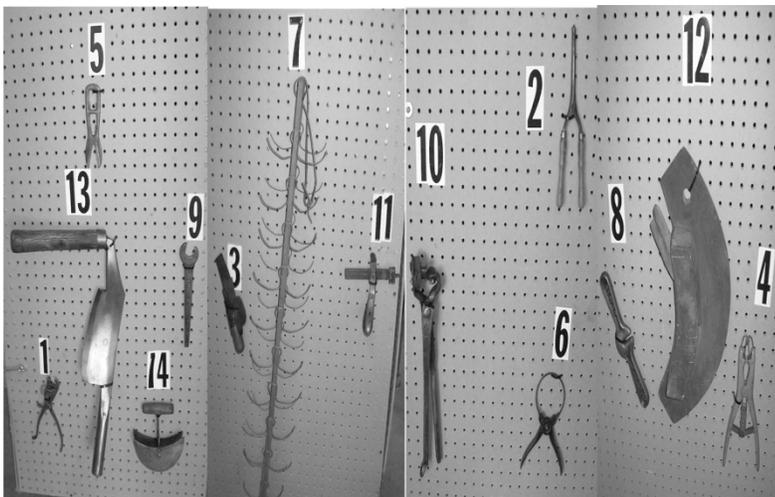
**What Is It?**

The item in the past newsletter was a horse-drawn ice block remover. This mystery item held by Ronn Dillavou has a violin-type bow. What is it?



**Congratulations to Ron Shike,  
Mercer County Fair, Name That Tool  
winner from a random drawing of  
those who got 100% correct.**

**Name That Tool Answers**



1. saw set
2. curling iron
3. broom knife
4. elastrator
5. alligator wrench
6. jar lifter
7. corn dryer
8. wire tightener
9. cream separator wrench
10. ear notcher
11. leather cutter
12. sun plane
13. champer knife
14. food chopper

Thank you to all who have donated. Come to the museum to view any of the items. Since some may be in the storeroom awaiting display, ask to see them. There is always something new.

DONATED ITEM	DONOR
• Quilt, Zeke's Tap ledgers	Barbara Greer Sawin
• Book by Don Brown about his great grandfather's farm	Don Brown
• Photos, 1937 school diploma	Jenny Zimmerman
• Gen. Hugh Mercer and IL landowners 1876 books, Henderson Co. cemeteries, Haverfield genealogy, Terry genealogy	Charles McCaw
• Gold plate, chain, and photo of Capt. O.C. Richardson's Civil War sword	James Richardson
• Joy, IL Christmas postmark stamps	Patty Maynard
• 1924 Astrum, photos of Walnut Grove School	Judy Redlinger
• Binder of C.H. Johnson, Greenbower Farm history	Niel Johnson
• "Direction for care of a tower clock" from Courthouse clock tower	David Staley
• Book <u>Assn Work</u> (history of the IHSA)	Scott Johnson
• J.R. Braucht WWI memorabilia, Braucht General store and family photos, 1886 Postmaster appt. Certificate for Geo. Braucht	Vicki Gagnon
• John Deere walking plow	David Close
• Coal tender for steam engine	Ginger Tarr
• Pump with wood handle from McCreight farm	Tom Tucker

This newsletter sponsored by:



MIDWEST BANK

### Coming Events

- Oct. 15** Fall Open Meeting "Mercer Co. in WWI" 7:00 p.m. at the museum. Everyone welcome.
- Oct. 27** Last day of summer hours at the museum
- Nov. 3** Start of winter hours. Sat. only, 12:00-4:00