



Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 2

Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

April/May/June 2006

Publisher Kellogg's Printing

Mercer County Historical Society & Essley-Noble Museum

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

Hours: 1:00 - 5:00 PM
Wed., Sat., & Sunday
April through the end of October.



Officers & Board of Directors

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Bill Bertrand, Vice President
Beverly Gray, Secretary
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For Genealogy Queries write to:

Cheryl McCaw/Shirley Crawford
MCHS Genealogy Dept.
1406 - SE 2nd Avenue
Aledo IL 61231-2504



For membership or change of address contact

Jim Runyon
756 State Hwy 94
Aledo, IL 61231
582-7762



Website:

http://www.geocities.com/mchs_61231

Do You Know This Soldier?



This image is from the **Carlson Studio collection** of negatives and photos recently donated by Darlene Johnson. Thank you Darlene for sharing your wonderful collection with us and future generations! There are hundreds of negatives, many glass, many 5x7's, and some of the extra long ones. Darlene and the MCHS Board have agreed that the WIU Archives is best equipped to preserve and display to a wider audience those negatives that it deems of general interest. At WIU, archivists are presently sorting through a multitude of negatives and some prints. This will take quite some time, but eventually, per our partnership agreement, WIU will provide us with high-quality digital images of the prints and negatives they keep and store. Those not of general interest, e.g. unidentified people and places, will be returned to the Essley-Noble Museum.

Currently at the museum is the above color photo of an unknown, presumable WWI Medic, as well as a few charming photos of unlabeled family members. We are hoping that someone will recognize these people and help identify them. One wonders if this young man survived the war and hopefully lived to enjoy great-grandchildren.

At the museum, and among items not being digitized by WIU are boxes of 5x7" negatives from area schools showing individual and group images. Included are Aledo H.S. 1930-37, 1941-47, 1949-51, 1954-55; Ipava 1940-41; Keithsburg and Little York 1946; New Windsor Lutheran (?); Seaton 1939, 40, 42-45; and Woodhull 1940. Also the RMA 1933-35, 43-44. The people are not identified, but the negatives may be viewed by placing them on a light box. Also, a low-quality positive image can be captured by our scanner.

The museum has yearbooks to help identify many of the people from the years above, but missing are the complete Seaton and Ipava series; Keithsburg 1944, 46, 49; New Windsor Lutheran 1941; and RMA 1944. Donations of these yearbooks would be greatly appreciated, or even a loan in order to copy pages that could help identify people in the negatives.

More Reasons to Visit

The Essley Noble Museum opens for the 2006 season on Saturday, April 1. The hours remain the same: Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 5:00 P.M. If a group would like to visit at another time, please call during open hours or 584-4820 or contact any board member. There is no charge although we welcome any kettle donations.

Recent artifacts have included laboratory equipment from the Aledo High School. One item was a cut-away of a steam engine showing how the gear valve works. If you have a catalog or book showing his item with the description, please contact me at 584-4820. I saw it in a display last year so know an advertisement of explanation exists.

If you are interested in donating items to the museum, please contact the phone number above or any board member.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR VOLUNTEERS!

- Joy Norton** for cataloging and indexing.
- Nancy Ferguson** for indexing.
- Sandra Sharer** on the computer making one master index of names for obituaries from 1857 to the present.
- Board of Directors** **Members of the Society**
- Unnamed Helpers** **YOU**



Fifth Grade Tours

Shirley Ball, Harriett Reynolds, and Alyce Robinson are busily planning the annual 5th grade tours. This is an informative and very enjoyable event for the youth to appreciate the lives of our ancestors. They experience hands-on activities such as rope making, quilting, blanket tying, washing clothes, and shelling corn, as well as touring the machine shed and museum and experiencing a session in the one-room school house.

Tours are at the museum after lunch on May 5, Westmer; May 8 & 9, Sherrard and May 10 (AM), Aledo. These are fun for everyone involved and **volunteers are needed!** No experience is necessary, free on the job training! Call Shirley at 537-3151, Harriett at 482-3290, or Alyce at 584-4572 if you can help out part or all of the time.



The Essley Noble Museum, machine shed, and school house are ready to welcome a new season of visitors. Before entering, note the new **flagpole** purchased with funds from the Marvin "Bus" McWhorter estate. To the right of the entrance read the inscription on the **Millersburg Church cornerstone**, donated by James Earl.

Inside, check our display cases of many common and lesser-known **birds**. Three cases of birds were donated by the Eugene Parkman family. Eugene (1863-1929) ran a general store and was a member of the city council for 27 years. During his lifetime he accumulated an extensive collection of birds. Another case was originally given to the Aledo school district by Mr. Joseph W. McRoberts. The displays have recently been cleaned and labeled and the birds secured on their perches.



The **railroad exhibit** donated by John Hagrelius, Monmouth, has been moved to "The Story of Mercer County" section. It has been modified to tell of the railroads coming to, and impact on, the county. The American Central arrived in Mercer County in 1869, bisecting the county east-west. Over some local objections, the line was leased to the CB&Q, a branch coming from Rio, through North Henderson, and on to Monmouth. The Rock Island Southern was an extension of the Rock Island and Mercer County Railroad. The latter ran to Reynolds, Preemption, Sherrard, and Cable to transport coal miners. The RIS extended southward, connecting Matherville, Gilchrist, Burgess, Monmouth, and Galesburg. Spurs were built to Aledo and Alexis.

A small diorama depicts the role of religion in Mercer County's development. A **model of the Pope's River (Presbyterian) Church** made by Teresa Sloan, an 8th grade social Studies student, is featured. This exhibit responds to the final statement on the pioneer cabin, "They brought their religion with them—the bible for personal use, communal worship as soon as congregation could be formed."

New to our digital collection are photos documenting the construction of the **Aledo Post Office**. Also we are processing a collection from the **Carlson Studio** (See previous article.). Remember

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to check the progression of **native prairie** plants on the south side of the main building.

With each visit you will enjoy old exhibits as well as discover many items not previously noticed. Bring friends and family, our jewel of a museum is a "must see" for out-of-town guests. Welcome!



SPRING OPEN MEETING



Mark your calendars for our Spring Open Meeting April 17, 7:00 PM at the Essley Noble Museum.

Members of the Viola Sesquicentennial History Committee will speak about researching and preparing their sesquicentennial book. This book is in preparation for the Viola Sesquicentennial celebration July 28-30, 2006. The committee is Elloise Lilliman, chair person, Curt McAtee, Ramona McMeekan, Joan Mack, Martha Thorp, Linda Brown, Carol Whan, Martha Hultgren and Carlene Adams. Much of the material has been supplied by people of the Viola community, The Times Record and old history publications.

The speakers will give insight into Viola's origin and growth. Many topics in the book will be presented. The Viola History Book will include information about early settlers, businesses, railroads, coal mines, brick yards, rural one room schools, Viola Schools, and life in early 1900s, etc. You will learn many interesting facts about Viola and the surrounding area.

This should be an informative and colorful program and after the meeting refreshments will be served. There is no admission and everyone is welcome so bring family and friends and visit the museum.



Meet the Board

David Duncan, president, farms as the fourth generation on his home farm in Ohio Grove twp and he is fifth generation in Mercer Co. He and his wife Marcia have three children.

Bill Bertrand, vice president, moved to Aledo from Kansas with his wife, Ila, in 1971, after accepting a position as a fishery biologist with the Illinois Department of Conservation. He retired in 2002 from an administrative position supervising fisheries work on the Mississippi, Ohio and Wabash Rivers. Ila has recently retired from teaching at Apollo School, having taught there since 1974. Their son Ryan was raised in Aledo and is now married and living in Normal, Illinois. Leisure pursuits include birding, genealogy, traveling, reading, biking, kayaking, and several "collections". Bill has spent hundreds of hours helping others with genealogical queries received over the internet, as well as pursuing his own family lineages.

Jim Runyon, treasurer, came to Mercer Co. in 1956 as the Farm Bureau manager. He married Barbara Sandquist in 1956 and they have three children. He retired from the National Bank of Aledo after 27 years and currently serves as the MCHS treasurer. He and Barbara live in Aledo. Jim has been active in developing the museum's prairie plot, as well as a multitude of other projects.

Beverly Gray, secretary, teaches music at Muscatine and is the organist at the Hamlet-Perryton Church. She and her husband Jim live in Perryton twp and enjoy their three grandchildren. Bev's dad was born in Keithsburg and Jim's family has resided in Mercer Co. for over 100 years.



Rhubarb Floats!

No, not really, but look for root beer floats and rhubarb dessert being sold by the MCHS in conjunction with the Mason's fish fry in the Central Park shelter house June 3, 11:00-7:00 at the 15th annual Rhubarb Fest. Also you may visit the museum with extended hours during the festivities.



A PASSING OF NOTE

A bit of U.S. history recently passed here in Mercer County. A.J. "Skim" Gerard who spent his life in New Boston and Aledo died Feb. 8, 2006. He was the last Mercer County resident who survived the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, being aboard the USS Honolulu. "Skim" was also aboard ship off the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay when Japan surrendered Sep. 2, 1945. "Skim" married Betty Simpkins who survives him as do two daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Springfield Tour

The Mercer County Historical Society will be sponsoring a bus trip to the Lincoln Museum and the Old State Capitol in Springfield, tentatively in early August 2006. Members will get a break in price, but details are still being worked out. More information will follow.



Coming Events

April 1 Museum opens for the season

July 11-16 Mercer Co. Fair

April 17 Spring open meeting 7:00 P.M. at the museum. Topic: Viola Sesquicentennial

July 28-30 Viola Sesquicentennial
MCHS float in the parade July 29

May 5, 8, 9, & 10 Fifth grade tours

Aug. Springfield Lincoln Museum/ Old State Capitol - More information later

June 2-3 Rhubarb Fest Dessert in the park
June 3 - Museum open

Your Support is Vital!

Annual memberships expire December 31, 2005. We count on dues and donations to provide necessary funds for our projects and for the maintenance of the Essley-Noble Museum complex. Thank you to all of our patrons!

() Annual Membership - \$15.00 (one household)

Send to: Jim Runyon

() Lifetime Membership - \$300.00

756 Hwy 94

() Corporate/Business Fee- \$100.00

Aledo, IL 61231

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____