



# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 2

Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

Apr/May/June 07

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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### For Genealogy Queries write to:

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



**Memberships available for \$15/household**

For membership or change of address contact:

Jim Runyon  
756 State Hwy 94  
Aledo, IL 61231  
309-582-7762



**Website:**

[http://www.geocities.com/mchs\\_61231](http://www.geocities.com/mchs_61231)



### Jottings from Dixie

An interesting book is *Jottings from Dixie*, a collection of 55 newspaper columns written to the *R.I. Argus*, then later to the *Union*, by Stephen F. Fleharty while serving with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Illinois Infantry during the Civil War. Fleharty takes his readers from the organization of the 102<sup>nd</sup> of volunteers in Knoxville, IL, in 1862 through the fall of Atlanta in the summer of 1864. He chronicles the campaigns and camp life, with personal observations of the people, cultures, and political issues of the times. His newspaper columns are presented as written, with copious notes by the book's editors. This is a fascinating narrative of general interest, but even more so for those with ancestral ties to Mercer County pioneers, who may find familiar references. The book may be borrowed from the Mercer Carnegie Library.



### History of the GAR

After the close of the Civil War, groups of men began joining together--first for camaraderie and then for political power. The most powerful among the various organizations would

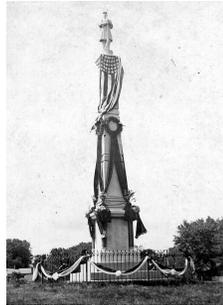


be the **Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)**, which by 1890 would number 409,489 veterans. It was founded by Benjamin Stephenson on April 6, 1866, in Decatur, Illinois, membership being limited to honorably discharged veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marine Corps or the Revenue Cutter Service who had served between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865.

## Mercer County Historical Society

The GAR founded soldiers' homes and was active in relief work and in pension legislation. Five members were elected President of the United States and, for a time, it was impossible to be nominated on the Republican ticket without the endorsement of the GAR voting block.

In 1868, Commander-in-Chief John A. Logan issued General Order No.11 calling for all Departments and Posts to set aside the 30th of May as a day for remembering the sacrifices of fallen comrades, thereby beginning the celebration of Memorial Day.



The final Encampment of the GAR was held in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1949 and the last member, Albert Woolson, died in 1956 at the age of 109. (From "A Brief History of the Grand Army of the Republic," <http://www.suvchw.org/gar.htm>)

The above photo shows a probable meeting of local GAR veterans in front of the courthouse. The local post was also instrumental in establishing the monument in Monument Park in Aledo, shown here on Decoration Day, 1900.



### GAR Grave Markers



Decoration Day is coming and GAR grave markers may be purchased for about \$35. One source is Balch Brothers Flags

<http://balchflags.com/19.htm>.

The markers are made of cast bronze or aluminum, are 6-7" in diameter, and include a stake for a flag. Markers for other wars are also available.



### Curator's Corner By Shirley Crawford

#### 1866 New Boston Newspaper reveals many interesting items:

Warren Noble, New Boston, brought a copy of an old New Boston newspaper into the office of *The Times Record*, which bore the date of Saturday, February 17, 1866, published by Jas. H.

Scott. The edition is of volume one, and the 45<sup>th</sup> edition. Mr. Noble said it was found in cleaning out a desk, the paper probably belonging to his grandfather, Leroy Noble.

No news of sensational interest is found in the four-page edition, but a selling story, that might be used by a salesman, is printed on the front page regarding the Noble corn plow, which may account for this particular issue being saved. Warren Noble's great-grandfather, David J. Noble, was the inventor of the plow.

### Has Easy Seat

In stating the advantages of buying a Noble plow, the story stipulated that it had an easy seat for the operator to ride on and that he sat near the ground "where he can set up the young and tender corn." It also pointed out that the machine was light in weight which facilitated the lifting of the plow at the end of the row in turning.

One item in the paper that proved interesting stated that William Drury and lady were riding in a sleigh drawn by two elk taken from his park. The temperature was about 20 degrees below zero. On Wednesday it was 23 degrees below.

Another item: "Rev. E. Wasmuth, pastor of the M.E. (Methodist Episcopal) church in this place, is holding a series of meetings. The weather being very unfavorable, no definite results have yet been reached."

Yet another interesting news note reported that a wild boar, which had been an inhabitant of Bay Island for a number of years, had been captured. "His tusks, some three inches in length, and which have brought many a dog to grief, were broken, and the gentleman has taken board on the mill premises of Wells Willits. His appearance is singularly ferocious and his size and general contour very peculiar for his species."

*Curator's note:* The MCHS Board has passed a motion that during other than regular operating hours non-members doing research will be charged a yearly \$15 fee, which would entitle them to membership in the MCHS.



**Museum Open for the Season on April 1**

The inside of the Essley Noble Museum has been spruced up with a fresh coat of paint and repairs to cracks in the plaster. Opening is Sunday, April 1, and it will be open regular hours (See left column, front page), even if on a holiday. Bring out-of-town Easter guests to enjoy the many exhibits in the main building as well as the machine shed and the school house. There will be expanded hours as well during the Rhubarb Fest. Of special interest is an 1864 Mercer Co. plat map on loan from the Mercer Carnegie Library. This map has also been digitized and at a future date individual plat book copies will be offered for sale. MCHS has many unpublished soft and some glass negatives from the Carlson Studio, donated by Darlene Johnson. More information on viewing them will be included in the summer newsletter. **Welcome!** We hope that you visit often and spread the word to others.



**SPRING OPEN MEETING**

Mark your calendars for the Spring Open Meeting on Monday April 16, 7:00 p.m. at the Essley Noble Museum.



A program will be presented by Jody Millar, who is the Bald Eagle Recovery Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

She has been working with bald eagle recovery for the past 10 years of her 27-year career with the Service. Ms. Millar holds a Masters of Science degree in biology from Western Illinois University and a Bachelor of Science from University of Minnesota.

She has had the privilege of being able to observe bald eagles throughout much of the United States and watching the return of wintering eagles along the Mississippi River remains a cherished event she often shares with her children.

This should be a very interesting program and the evening will also provide an opportunity to visit the displays at the museum. There is no admission and refreshments will be served after the meeting. The public is welcome so be sure to bring family and friends.



**Dessert in the Park**

On Saturday, June 2, the MCHS will again be selling rhubarb dessert and root beer floats in conjunction with the Mason's fish fry in the Central Park shelter house. This is an important money making project for us and we are counting on your support.



Reminiscences or stories about Mercer Co. history, places, special events, etc. are most welcome. Please send to Mary Jane Sticklen, 1452 160 St., Aledo, call 582-5814, or email [mjst@qconline.com](mailto:mjst@qconline.com). Photos can be scanned and returned.

**Your Support is Vital!**

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2006. 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)
- ( ) Lifetime Membership - \$300.00
- ( ) Corporate/Business Fee- \$100.00

Send to: Jim Runyon  
756 Hwy 94  
Aledo, IL 61231

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Mercer County Historical Society  
Fifth Grade Tours**

Early May brings the always popular MCHS-sponsored fifth grade tours. This is an informative and very enjoyable event for the fifth graders of Aledo, Westmer, and Sherrard where they experience hands-on activities such as rope making, quilting, blanket tying, weaving, washing clothes, and shelling corn, as well as touring the machine shed and museum and experiencing a session in the one-room school house. In addition, Westmer and Sherrard students take a bus tour of interesting places in Mercer County in the morning and eat a sack lunch before participating in the activities at the Essley Noble museum in the afternoon. Shirley Ball and Alyce Robinson are heading the dedicated committee for planning the activities and **volunteers are needed** and most appreciated. No experience is necessary and free on the job training! It is truly a fun and

rewarding experience working with these very enthusiastic and appreciative students. Call Shirley at 537-3151 or Alyce at 584-4572 if you can help out part or all of the time. Tentatively, Westmer's tour will be Friday, May 4, and the following week will host Aledo and Sherrard.



**Coming Events**

- April 1** Museum opens for the season
- April 16** Spring open meeting 7:00 p.m.  
Bald Eagle program by Jody Millar
- May 4, 7-?** Fifth Grade Tours
- June 2** Dessert in the park at the Rhubarb Fest.  
Special open hours at the museum
- July 10-14** Mercer Co. Fair. Wheelwright Tom Sveum returns to demonstrate his craft in an expanded MCHS booth.

*Small enough to know you, large enough to serve you.*

Reynolds, Illinois 61279

**The Reynolds State Bank**

*This newsletter issue sponsored by:*

