



Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 3

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July/Aug/Sept 08

Kellogg's Printing Co.

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.



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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



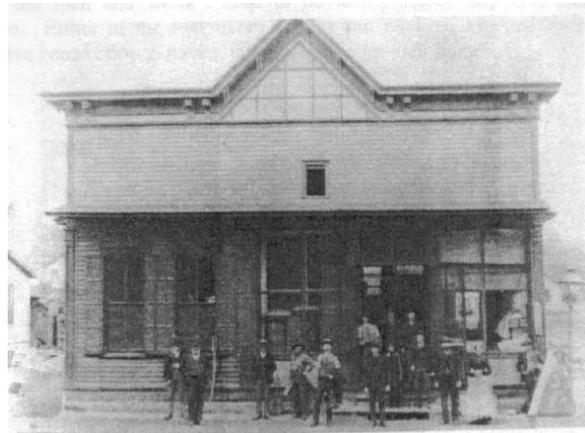
Website:

http://www.geocities.com/mchs_61231

Cable

Thank you to Dave Larson for his memories and for passing along information on Cable from Mr. and Mrs. John Moline and their daughter, Nellie Jane McKeag.

The village of Cable, section 21 of Richland Grove Township, Mercer Co., was named in honor of Philander L. Cable, who, after being in the banking business in Rock Island, went into the mining business. The mining of Cable's coal was run by three companies: Cable's, R.B. Ellis, and Mr. Peterson. These three companies were eventually consolidated into the Coal Valley Mining Company which thrived under P.L. Cable's management until he died in 1886. The Cable mine, including the biggest shaft and slope, was supervised by Robert Lee. Two mines in Cable put out approximately 80,000 tons of coal, employed 400 men and



Cable Company Store

used eight machines. Men worked a six-day week, and, during the peak, two twelve-hour shifts were run. Mr. Cable made his miners partners by giving them one-third of the yield from the mine, thereby averting strikes.

By 1890 Cable was a thriving town of nearly 2,000, the center of activity for the surrounding countryside and at this time it was considered for the county seat. The coal was transported to Rock Island by railroad, built by the Coal Valley Coal Company as a branch of the Rock Island Lines.

The availability of prospective jobs at Cable with the mining company attracted immigrants. Most of the early settlers came from England and Wales, along with others families from Germany and Sweden. Cable's inhabitants tended to settle in nationality groups such as Swede Hill, Tony Hill, New England, and Stringtown, named because the houses were strung along the road. Tony Hill was home to the affluent and Hungry Hollow home of the poor. At Slop Town, Camp Creek would overflow, inundating the homes.

The first building of any note was a brick building built by Dr. Roseberry. It was the drug store and the top floor was used as a hall and a meeting place and for dances which were attended by the whole countryside. Across the street to the north was the "Company Store" built by the Coal Valley Mining Co. and managed by Mr. J.A. O'Neil and Frank Ryan was the bookkeeper. It grossed \$18,000 a month, but it was lost in a law suit and eventually had to close. There also were two general stores, one owned by Sam Bell and the other by Greenwood and Von Ach.

There was a tailor shop run by Olaf Pearson; a millinery, by Sadie Doxsee; a cigar store, by Hiram Meeker; and the barbers were Hiram Meeker and Reuben Lewis. There were two livery stables, one managed by Fred McAttee, which burned in a terrible fire, and the other by B.A. Johnson. The blacksmiths were Oscar Hagman and George Lawson, grandfather of Dave. George Lawson was a very busy man. He was also a pump repairman, a mail sorter, owned a hardware store, was on the village and school boards, worked at the depot and railroad stockyards, and even acted as an undertaker once!

In addition to these places of business, there were a brick yard, a grist mill, and an Opera House. J.T. Hebblen owned the lumber yard and the appointed undertaker was Giles Hudson, who also owned a furniture store. Frank Rathbun sold agricultural materials and implements. Hugh and Son's Implement store offered some competition along with R.R. Cable and Col's farm store. At the time of his arrival in 1871, Billy Tomlinson said that Cable was the biggest town in the county. In 1878 he opened a restaurant. Cyrus Nimrick also had an eatery; Alfred Haigh a butcher shop; and Louis Hummel a bakery. Out-of-towners were welcomed at John Svard's hotel and visitors could also eat at Avangnor's Opera House. Along with a few "gallon houses" where beer was bought by the gallon to take home, there were a number of saloons.

The town hall has been the polling place and at one time it housed the fire engine as well as provided rooms for the village board meetings. Directly back of the town hall was the jail. By 1925 the jail was used to store the kerosene lamps that at one time lighted the streets. In about 1933, George McNeal bought the jail and moved it to the top of Tony Hill for a cow barn.

Cable had a bank with assets of around \$21,000, but the bank was not long lived. A large two-story school house was built, but due to shortage of money, the



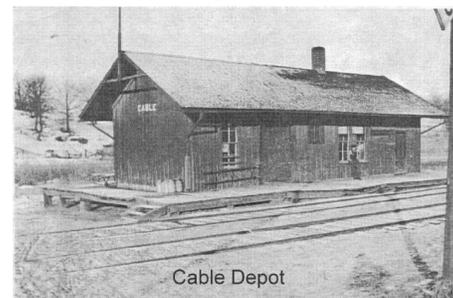
school just operated about six months of the year. The building stood in disrepair for years and eventually burned down.

The first automobile to be seen in Cable was made by Emil

Muerling of Reynolds. It was a gasoline engine driven affair, but the driver seldom took it out of the city limits because it had to be pushed up hills.

At one time there were six churches: the Primitive Methodist, Lutheran, Congregational, Free Mission, Catholic, and Baptist. Five of the six were either moved or torn down. Only the Methodist remains today. In 1933 it was given the name of Cable Community Church and in 1947 it was moved to its present location on Washington Street, the site of the first brick building in Cable.

By the late 1800's coal supplies at Cable were becoming depleted, the demand for coal was dwindling, and shaft and slope mining became too expensive. In the early 1900's the Coal Valley Mining Co. sank a mine at Sherrard and then at Matherville. Miners moved operations and Cable became almost a ghost town. The railroad ceased operation in the mid 1920's, the tracks were pulled up, the post office closed and in 1926 the depot was torn down. In that same year, the handful of residents left voted to dissolve the village.

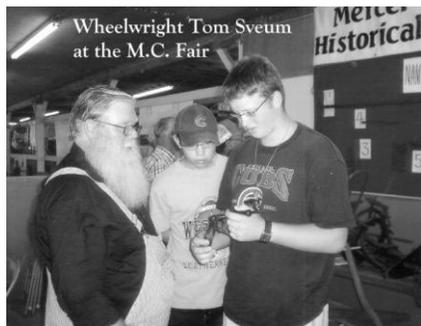


Cable stands today, a collection of approximately 30 houses. The inhabitants are either retired or work elsewhere, but the Community Church is still active and the cemetery well cared for. Dave Larson, now of Aledo, recalls one day he and his mother decided to walk the 20 miles from Aledo to Cable. Early on she sprained her ankle and Dave said, "We don't have to do this today." She replied, "That's all right. I just won't think about it," and they completed their journey. That attitude pretty well sums up the stalwart citizens of Cable, the town that wouldn't give up.



Come to the Fair!

Tom Sveum, a wheelwright from Janesville, WI, will be demonstrating his craft at the MCHS booth in the Merchants Building during the Mercer County fair. Tom, pictured here on the left of this photo, was here two years ago, but we did not have space for him to work. This year, we have the adjoining booth where he will be working on wheels to demonstrate this disappearing art.



Tom will be working at the booth July 9-11 from 3 to 7 p.m. (Or 2 to 4 and 5 to 7 p.m.)

In addition, Jim Holmes will give a rope-making demonstration Tuesday afternoon and Ronn Dillavou will have his corn sheller there on Wednesday.

The MCHS booth will be open throughout the fair so be sure to stop by to visit, see our displays, and enter our ever popular "Name that Tool" contest. Again, there will be two drawings—one from those who got the most correct answers and one from all who entered. After the fair, look for the tool display and answers in Cooper's window downtown Aledo.



Calling for History Guides!

The Mercer County Historical Society wants to create a cadre of guides to provide history tours on busses to the annual 5th grade events and adult tours as they are requested. If you are interested in Mercer County history and are able to speak to 35-40 persons, the Society will organize sessions to review the historical material and provide pointers for communicating it. Call Jim Runyon (582-7762) for more information or to volunteer.

5th Grade and Adult Tours

The annual 5th grade tours was another great success. A heartfelt "Thank you!" to the MCHS members, parents, teachers, and community members who helped. Shirley Ball and Alyce

Robinson again headed the planning committee and have done an outstanding job.

A number of adults have expressed an interest in taking the history narration and bus tour as offered to the 5th graders. Thinking this an excellent idea, the MCHS board of directors have made plans to offer this option. We are looking to partner with community organizations to promote the tour and arrange for busses. The Country Bank gladly accepted the first offer and has sponsored two such tours. Jim Runyon is our expert guide and we were transported back to 5th grade in spirit as well as reality by boarding the yellow school bus. We visited points of interest in and around Aledo, Millersburg, New Boston, Keithsburg (water permitting), and Seaton as well as the site of ancient Indian burial mounds, Verdurette, and points of interest too numerous to mention. We even spotted a herd of buffalo! This tour was limited to the western half of the county due to time restrictions as well to follow the path of settlement from west to east, but hopefully in the future, sites in the eastern half can be included. The adult tours are a new venture, but as long as there is an interest we hope to continue to offer the opportunity



Rhubarb Panic

Thank you to Gary and Nancy Ruggles who donated an upright freezer after our old one died this spring. The new freezer was put to immediate use for ice cream and root beer in conjunction with our booth at the Rhubarb Fest.

Thank you, as well, to those who donated rhubarb dessert and who helped with the MCHS booth under the large tent. By shortly after the noon hour we were the last to still have rhubarb dessert for sale and were a long way from selling out when the tornado warning sounded and people were urged to disband and seek cover. Panic ensued, not so much from the threat of being blown away, but that individuals realized that they still hadn't bought rhubarb and our booth was mobbed. We were selling half and whole sheets of crisp as well as individual desserts, and hauling supplies back out from Bev Gray's car in the pouring rain. It is something to ponder that, in the face of imminent disaster, the first thing on people's minds was to seek rhubarb.

Window Display

Be sure to check Gene Cooper's window at the corner in the 200 block of north College Ave. Ronn Dillavou has been putting together a rotating display of interesting artifacts from the Essley-Noble Museum that is well worth a few minutes to pause and reflect on the every-day lives of our ancestors.

Genealogy

The genealogical and records division of the Essley-Noble Museum appreciates donations of copies of family histories from Mercer County. These histories help genealogists piece together their own as well as Mercer County's fascinating past. Thank you to those who have shared with us, helping to preserve your ancestors' information as well as opening avenues of research to others.



Coming Events:

- July 8-12** Mercer Co. Fair. Wheelwright Tom Sveum returns July 9-11, as well as other exhibits in an expanded MCHS booth.
- Sept. 13** Antique Days demonstrations downtown.
- Oct. 20** Fall Open meeting 7:00 p.m. at the museum
- Oct. 29** Last Day museum is open until April '09.

FINANCIAL

COUNTRY

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