

# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

## "Preserving Mercer County History"

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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



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#### **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  
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Essley-Noble Museum  
Box 269  
Aledo, IL 61231



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### **The Soldiers' Monument Dedication**

by Stephanie Braucht

In 1876, our country was approaching its one hundredth birthday and was still trying to heal from the effects of the American Civil War. With both of those events in mind, many residents of Mercer County began a movement to erect a monument in order to honor men from this county who gave their lives in the recent Civil War, and they wanted to do it in time for the Centennial of our nation's birth. Despite concerted efforts, the monument was not completed in time for the Centennial celebrations. However, it was completed in time to be dedicated on the Fourth of July in 1878. Inscribed on the base with the names of all Mercer County's fallen men who served in the Civil War, it still stands in Aledo, in the middle of the block bounded by NW 2nd Street, NW 3rd Avenue, NW 4th Street, and NW 4th Avenue. At the top of the tall column is a statue of a Union soldier. In the early years, it was surrounded by an iron fence. Later the entire block was called Monument Park, as a fountain and



bandstand also had been erected there. Today, all that remains is the monument itself, a solitary canon, and some buildings that have been erected on the north and south ends of the block. An article in the *Aledo Weekly Record* of July 10, 1878, provided a detailed account of the events of dedication day. Reportedly, the crowds began pouring into town at

daylight on the Fourth of July. By noon it was estimated that there were 15,000 to 20,000 people in town. Many thought the number was even higher. Nearly every township in the county was largely represented, and there were visitors from adjoining counties, some having traveled thirty to forty miles. According to the newspaper article, the crowd was simply immense. Aledo was filled to overflowing with visitors.



The celebration began at about 8:00 a.m. with a loud salute from a pair of 12-pound howitzers manned by soldiers from the Rock Island Arsenal. During the rest of the morning there was much bustle and excitement with the arrival of people in loaded trains and of delegations in wagons, carriages, and all kinds of conveyances. Adding to the excitement and noise level were bands playing and firecrackers exploding. Streets and sidewalks were almost impassable, and merchants were kept busy. All over town, the decorations on private and public buildings were elaborate and expensive. Flags and evergreen boughs were everywhere. A huge double arch was erected at College Avenue and 7th Street, and a single arch was at College and 5th Street. The bank buildings were decorated with wreaths and festoons. Between the offices of the two

newspapers, the *Weekly Record* and the *Banner*, was a sign saying "Mercer County Press."

At 1:30 p.m. the parade began, led by Chief Marshall Frick and his aides. Other entries in the parade were: the Alexis Martial Band of Keithsburg; the Viola Cornet Band; ex-soldiers and others from Keithsburg, Abington, and other townships; two pieces of artillery (the Howitzers) with six men, under a Sergeant- from the Rock Island Arsenal; the Aledo Light Guard Band; Odd Fellows of the county and the lodge from Woodhull; Aledo's Champion Fire Hook and Ladder Companies; the New Windsor Cornet Band; representation of the States- from Aledo; a lady driving a four-horse hitch, drawing a wagon with 38 young ladies representing the different states- from Viola; carriages containing the Orator of the Day, officers of the Mercer County Soldiers' and Sailors' Association, soldiers of the War of 1812, invited guests, and others.

Following the parade, dedication exercises were held. The assembly was called to order by Col. J.M. Mannon. The Viola Cornet Band played, and then the Reverend O.W. Van Osdell said a prayer. The Aledo Light Guard Band played, followed by a reading of the Declaration by the Honorable J.C. Pepper. An octet, directed by Mr. Alexander Woods, sang "Wrap the Flag around Me, Boys." Members of the octet were Miss Katie Shearer, Miss Mary Fulton, Mrs. W.N. Graham, Miss Nota Bassett, Alexander Woods, William Woods, Harry Graham, and A.C. Welliver. Miss Clara Swayze accompanied them on the organ. The main speaker, General John A. "Blackjack" Logan then gave the address. The Illinois native had been a general in the Union Army during the Civil War and had served in the Illinois House of Representatives, as well as the United States Senate and House of Representatives. He also had been the second Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic. After General Logan's stirring address, the monument was unveiled to resounding cheers. The dedication program was

closed with a national salute fired by the artillery from the Arsenal. An evening display of fireworks from the roofs of the county office buildings completed the day's festivities. At that time, the county office buildings were in a block adjacent to the monument park block, as the present courthouse was not to be built until 20 years later. In describing the day, the article in the *Weekly Record* stated, "Everything and everywhere, was in good taste and eminently appropriate. Nothing to compare with it was ever before witnessed in Western Illinois." The Fourth of July in 1878 was a day to remember in Mercer County!



### Curator's Corner

Thanks to all who donated desserts and who helped in the Rhubarb Fest booth.

Note that starting July 1 the days that the museum is open have changed. We will no longer be open Wednesday and Sunday, but through the summer schedule of April-October the museum will be open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday 1:00-5:00. The change reflects low Sunday attendance and it will better accommodate out-of-town researchers, giving them three consecutive days. Nov.-March we remain open Saturdays only 12:00-4:00.

We are looking forward to Fair Week July 12-16. Our display will focus on Ice Block Making, Corn Shelling, Rope Making, and Name That Tool. Stop by our booth in the Merchants Building and visit with us.

*Veda Meriwether, Curator*



### ~ Change in Open Days ~

Starting July 1 the museum summer open days will be Thursday, Friday, and Saturday 1:00-5:00 April-Oct.

*Note that this is a change from the previous W-Sat.-Sun. schedule. The Nov.-March Winter schedule remains Saturdays only 12:00-4:00.*

### For Civil War Researchers

Through the generosity of Joseph Stanuszek we have recently acquired a large number of the books in the series entitled *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. The entire collection of 128 books represents the most extensive collection of primary sources on the history of the American Civil War, published in Washington, DC by the Government Printing Office. The books include selected first-hand accounts, orders, reports, maps, diagrams, and correspondence drawn from both War and Navy Department records of both the Confederate and Union governments. Our acquisition contains 75 of the 128 books in the series.



### Back Copies on the Web

There are now links to back copies of the MCHS newsletter on the website. We reserve access to the current year to the paper copies mailed to members only, but you may access digital copies of summer 2005 through fall of 2014. 2015 newsletters will be posted later this year.



### What is It?

The previous item was an egg-grading scale.



This item is made of metal in the shape of a bird. It clamps to a table and the mouth opens when the tail is pressed. It is about 4" long and 5 1/2" tall.



## Coming Events

July 1	Start of <u>new</u> open schedule: Thur. Fri. Sat. 1-5:00 April-Oct.
July 12-16	Mercer Co. Fair booth Merchants building
Aug. 27	Antique Days
Oct. 17	Tentative date of Fall open meeting. Program TBA
Oct. 29	Last day of summer schedule
Nov. 5	Start of winter schedule. Sat. only 12:00-4:00

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