

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

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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
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2018 Year of the Bird

Submitted by Bill Bertrand

2018 is the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)—a pivotal piece of legislation that continues to save countless birds' lives. And so the National Audubon Society has teamed up with National Geographic, Bird Life International, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to officially make 2018 the Year of the Bird (1).

Passed a century ago, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act prohibits the harming of just about all native birds, along with their nests and eggs. To this day it remains the primary tool for protecting non-endangered species. As threats to birds continue to evolve, so does the law itself (2).

What exactly is Year of the Bird? Good question! Throughout the year, all of the partners, along with more than 150 other participating organizations, are celebrating birds across all channels—magazines, television, social media, and more (1). The January issue of National Geographic is entitled “Why Birds Matter,” pointing out that the MBTA protects more than 1,025 species of birds, and provides several articles on the status and value of birds (2).

National Audubon describes the changes leading to MBTA. **1800s:** With few regulations in place, market hunters decimate U.S. bird populations, in part so that well-to-do women can wear hats adorned with ornamental feathers. By the end of the 1800s, Labrador Ducks and Great Auks become extinct, soon joined by Passenger Pigeons, Carolina Parakeets, and Heath Hens. Numerous other species stand on the brink. Outrage over these alarming trends leads to the formation of the first Audubon societies, as well as other conservation groups



1900: Congress passes the Lacey Act, the first federal law to protect wildlife. It takes aim at market hunters by prohibiting them from selling poached game across state lines.

1913: Congress passes the Weeks-McLean Migratory Bird Act, which bans the spring shooting of migratory game and insectivorous birds and declares them to be under the “custody and protection” of the federal government. However, two district courts soon rule the act unconstitutional.

1916: The United States signs a treaty with Great Britain (acting on behalf of Canada, then part of the British Empire), in which the two countries agree to stop all hunting of insectivorous birds and to establish specific hunting seasons for game birds. The stated goal is to preserve those species considered beneficial or harmless to man.

1918: To implement the new treaty, Congress passes the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which officially makes it a crime to “pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill,” or “sell” a migratory bird or any of its parts, including nests, eggs, and feathers. The newly passed act eliminates “the necessity of watching the legislation of every state and of combating the numberless attempts to legalize the destruction of birds for private gain,” according to famed ornithologist Frank M. Chapman (also the founder of Audubon magazine).

as residents or migrants passing through, but one bird that will never be seen alive again, anywhere in the world, is the Passenger Pigeon. When our nation was first being settled in the 1600s, the Passenger Pigeon was the most abundant bird in America. There were more of them than any other kind of bird --- not just millions, but billions of them. So what happened to those billions of birds? They were easy target for humans to hunt for food, and as the human population grew in our new country, there were more and more pigeons killed for food. Passenger Pigeons needed the forest for food - acorns, hickory nuts, chestnuts, beechnuts - and for nesting and roosting areas. When the forests were replaced with cornfields, the pigeons started to feed on the corn and this made farmers very angry so they started shooting the birds as well. After a couple hundred years of slaughter, the billions of birds were reduced to tens of thousands. Some people became alarmed about the loss of the pigeons but it was too late to help the birds. By 1900 the last Passenger Pigeon in the wild was seen on March 24 in Ohio. Finally, the last Passenger Pigeon alive on earth - a bird named Martha - died at the Cincinnati Zoo on September 1, 1914. The Passenger Pigeon in our museum display was collected by Mr. Parkman, when there were still thousands of pigeons left, and few people realized they were going extinct.

(1) <http://www.audubon.org/yearofthebird>

(2) National Geographic, January 2018



As part of the Year of the Bird acknowledgment, stop and see the birds in our museum. The mounted birds on display at Essley-Noble Museum were collected prior to MBTA, when anyone really interested in birds, had only one option to see and study them well - the birds had to be trapped or shot. Binoculars, as we know them today, did not exist. Most of the bird species displayed in the museum can still be seen in Mercer County, either



Curator's Corner

The 2018 Mercer County Fair is coming July 10-14 and the Essley-Noble museum will have exhibits as usual at our booth in the Merchants Building. Come visit with us and see if you can “NAME THAT TOOL.”

I want to thank all of the volunteers who gave of their time during the past months to help with the 5th Grade Tours and the Rhubarb Fest. Our success depended upon your help.

The main building of the museum is air conditioned and will provide you with a great excuse to get out of the house and cool off during our Midwest summer.

Veda Meriwether, Curator



Refrigerator Needed

The Essley-Noble Museum would appreciate a donation of a working refrigerator and/or freezer. Both of ours are one their last legs and are needed for the Rhubarb Fest, our main money-making project for the year, as well as for other special events at the museum.

If you have one to donate, contact Ronn Dillavou
309-337-4002.



Accessions for March – June 18

Thank you to all of you who have donated. Come to the museum to view any of the items. Ask since they may be in the storeroom awaiting display. There is always something new.

Riding crop, horse-hide mittens	Keith Chandler
Photo of employees of the Aledo Cheese factory	Sandy Lantau
Certificate to IL Bar for Henry Burgess	Randy Frakes
Merryman/Littlefield Cemetery binder	Zachary Staver
Boy Scout handbooks and items	Lyle Kugler
Framed picture of Joe Crawford with medals and ribbons from Vietnam	Jerry Crawford
Suitcase of WWI ephemera	Robert Crawford
Pictures of fire station open house (1967) and of Shell station (1936 & 38)	Lois Retherford
Edison light bulb	Rick Bargar
Kodak camera patented 1902	Lois Retherford
2016&17 MCHS yearbooks	Dennis Henderson
Military memory shadow box for Lachelle Mitchell-Schuch	Jerry & Wanda Mitchell
Husking peg	Rosamond Merideth
Information on Eddie McCreight & polio	LeAnn Heflin
Reynolds Centennial commemorative plate	Diane Kelly
Skim Gerard (Pearl Harbor survivor) memorabilia	Pam Long





What Is It?

The item in the past newsletter was a crawdad trap. The baited area allowed the crawdads to enter, but not escape. This item is made of metal and is approximately 3 ½ feet long. Note the off-center handle. What is it?



Coming Events

July 10-14	Mercer Co. Fair booth in Merchants Bld.
Aug. 25	Antique Days extended hours 10:00-5:00
Oct. 15	Fall Open Meeting "Mercer Co. in WWI" 7:00 p.m. at the museum
Oct. 27	Last day of summer schedule
Nov. 3	Start of winter schedule Sat. only 12:00-4:00

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