



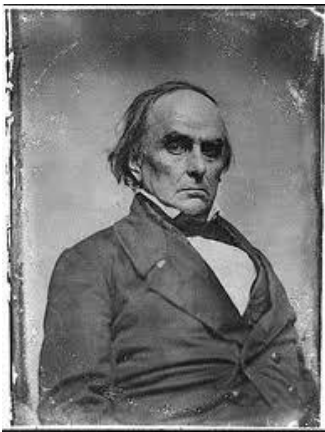
The Society Story

Newsletter of the LaSalle County Historical Society
April 2011 * 815-667-4861

The Webster Chest

By Ashley D. Bloomquist

A recent addition to the Museum collection is a four-drawer wooden chest.

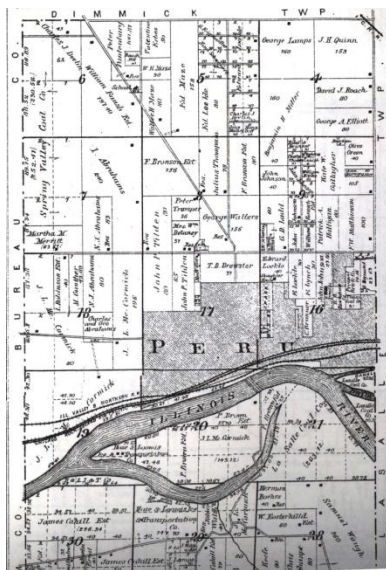


Daniel Webster

The chest of drawers was acquired by Addie Janz of Peru and donated by her son, Bill Janz. This chest of drawers has a tie to one of the most well-known orators and leading statesmen during the nation's Antebellum Period, Daniel Webster.

Daniel Webster purchased a huge tract of land that straddled La Salle and Bureau Counties in 1837. His son Fletcher lived on the land and built a small log cabin on it. This same land is the home of St. Bede Academy today. Fletcher was a prominent early settler of the area who practiced law

for three years before he left to pursue a career in statesmanship and customs. During his father's term of office as Secretary of State, Fletcher served as Chief

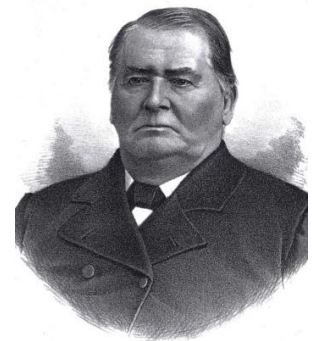


Clerk of the United States State Department. He was killed in 1862 at the second Battle of Bull Run during the Civil War.

Daniel Webster, although he did not live on his land, did visit his son in 1839, which was talked about for years afterward by the local people.

In 1837, John P. Tilden moved from Marshfield, Massachusetts to Peru, Illinois under the employ of Daniel Webster. Tilden, a widower with three children, had a limited formal education, but knew how to work the land and specialized in stock-raising. The farm he worked was 555 acres. In 1852, it is

reported that Tilden purchased the land from Webster. He married N. Susan Gordon on November 30, 1869. As a wedding gift the Webster family gave this chest of drawers to the newlyweds. Addie Janz believes that Daniel Webster may have made this, due to his interest in cabinet making. Mr. and Mrs. Tilden had one daughter, Flora L. Tilden.



J. P. Tilden

John P. Tilden

It is said that a young Abraham Lincoln, coming through on lawyer business, was an over-night guest at the Tilden home which was located on the north side of what was known as Cemetery Road, a short distance

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west of the Peru City Cemetery. As the house was small, but the family was large, it is said that Mr. Lincoln slept on the floor.

According to *History of LaSalle County, Illinois, 1886*, "Mr. Tilden says he endured all the hardships incidental to the settlement of a new country. He has had as pleasant a life as any person living, up to December 1, 1883, when he was shot in his own doorway, a gun being loaded with six rifle balls and with one buck shot, passing diagonally through his arm, sweeping it nearly away. The Grand Jury of La Salle County have concluded that the assassin was a son-in-law by the name of James T. Bachelder and have indicted him for an attempt to murder. He wished to murder Mr. Tilden and family and he will be arrested and tried if found in the United States. He is now (1886) a fugitive from justice. Mr. Tilden has not enjoyed good health since he was shot. He thinks that he has property enough to last him the short time he needs it and leave a little for his

Burgoo Meeting Set

There will be a Burgoo Meeting on Saturday, May 7 at 9:00 a.m. in the Museum library. Anyone who has ideas, suggestions or would just like to volunteer is welcome to attend.

widow."

New Exhibit in Place

Stop in and see the new exhibit that has been recently added to the Museum, *Horse Racing in LaSalle County*.

Horse racing has been a popular sport since man first domesticated the horse in the days before recorded history. In LaSalle County today it is mainly confined to fairs but there were once sixteen race tracks located in local towns. The exhibit contains

a number of items on loan from Randy Tuftie.

In Passing

We are sad to report the loss of three of our loyal members. Joe Seeburger, Phyllis McDougall Woodward and Rose Byczynski have all recently passed on.

Joe Seeburger, of Centralia, Illinois, was a Life Member for many years and supported the Museum in many ways. He became a member after receiving help from a volunteer here while doing research on his family.

Phyllis Woodward, also a Life Member, was an Ottawa resident for 70 years before moving to California. She was a generous supporter of the Historical Society.

Rose Byczynski, of Utica, was an active member who often helped out as a weekend docent and Burgoo volunteer. They will be missed by all who knew them.

Cash Register for Sale

For sale – one used Sharp cash register, model ER 2385. \$20 / OBO
Call 815-667-4861 for details.

Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War

April 12, 1861: CSA forces fire at Ft. Sumter.

April 13, 1861: Ft. Sumter surrenders to CSA.

April 25, 1861: Senator Douglas, at Springfield, addresses the Illinois legislature and calls for support of the Union. Douglas had been Lincoln's opponent but now supported Lincoln's efforts to preserve the Union.

April 28, 1861: The Union gradually prepared for war but lack of facilities resulted in the 7th New York Infantry being housed in the US House of Representatives.

April 29 1861: The Maryland legislature voted to remain in the Union, 53 to 13.

Excerpt from *Remembering the Rural One-Room Schools of LaSalle County*

Final editing is being done in preparation for printing. We expect to have the book ready for sale by May 1, 2011.



**Gorman School
District No. 286**

This school was located in the southwest quarter of Section 13 in Mendota Township.

Sally Gorman Eich said, “The land for the school was acquired by my grandfather in the 1800s. After 100 years we received about half an acre and the rest went to the state.

“On my first day of school when I was five, I rode between two neighbor boys in seventh and eighth grade on my pony. They rode up the steps and into the school room. Since their oldest sister was our teacher, they never did that again.

“We had cloak rooms, boys to the left and girls to the right of the front door where our coats, boots, and lunches were kept. A

pot belly stove at the back of the room provided heat. We used cobs, wood, and coal to keep it going.

“Large blackboards and bulletin boards ran down one side of the room and there were windows on the opposite side. At the end of the blackboards a back door led out to the cyclone cellar and a hand pump,” she said.

“There was a large unique merry-go-round, outhouses, and a large play area with a makeshift baseball diamond in the yard. In the back was the cob, wood, and coal shed; and a pony and horse shed, for the older students’ animals,” she added.



The merry-go-round at Gorman School was won by reading the most books. Circa 1937

Order yours today...

Order Form

To order your copy of “Remembering The Rural One-Room Schools of LaSalle County” fill in the information on this form and send it with your check to: Schoolbook Committee, LaSalle County Historical Society, PO Box 278, Utica, IL 60173, or call 815-667-4861. Please contact the Museum for shipping costs.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

“Remembering The Rural One-Room Schools of LaSalle County” contains 456 pages of memories and more than 350 photos, almost all never before published. It describes life in the 299 one-room schools in the county’s 37 townships and contains an alphabetical index of more than 5,220 names.

Number of copies: _____

Price each, Tax included: \$29.50

Shipping: _____

Total: _____

Calendar of Events - 2011

February 5 - April 11 - "Abe Lincoln, Self Made in America," Ottawa Scouting Museum

April 20 - Civil War Round Table -Ottawa High Cafeteria - Mark Lause - 7:30 pm

April 18 - May 20 - **Fourth Grade School Program**, Museum Complex, Utica

October 9, 2011 - 42nd Annual Burgoo Festival

Watch our newsletter, our website www.LasalleCountyMuseum.org or find us on Facebook for information on programs and events for the coming year.

www.lasallecountymuseum.org

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Memorials

In memory of *Rose Byczynski from Lois Wilmot, Mike Sitterly, Dick and Darlene Garner, George and Nancy Maze.*

In Memory of *Phyllis McDougall Woodward, from George and Nancy Maze*



New Members

We welcome Dolores Passwater and Colleen Burns Jensen as Life Members.

We also welcome Kim and Berneice Parsons, Illinois River Winery, McDonald's of Utica, KOA Kampground and Hickory Hollow Campground to our membership. We're glad you joined us!