



The Society Story

Newsletter of the LaSalle County Historical Society
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John Hossack and the Underground Railroad

The February 25, 1888 edition of the *Ottawa Free Trader* recalled a runaway slave incident of 1859 that involved Ottawa residents.

John Hossack was born in Scotland and left his homeland at age twelve. He worked first in his uncle's confectionery business, but finding that not to his liking, he found work on the "Long Soo" canal on the St. Lawrence River. He eventually made his way to Ottawa after securing contracts on the Illinois & Michigan Canal. He then began a lumber and grain shipping business.

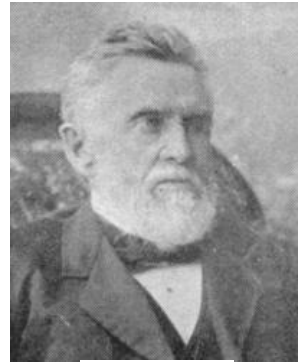
Attracted by the view from Ottawa's south bluff, in 1854 he built a stately home there which still stands today. He was prominent in every enterprise but the period of his life in which he took the greatest pride was his



The Hossack Mansion

connection with the "underground railway." It was common for slaves to find shelter in the Hossack mansion, despite the heavy penalty imposed for such violations of the fugitive slave law, which Hossack denounced as "infamous and contrary to the laws of God."

In September of 1859 three fugitive slaves were captured and subsequently appeared before Judge Caton of Ottawa. Following a trial Hossack, Dr. Joseph Stout, James Stout and five other men kidnapped the slave known as Negro Jim (Jim Gray) and sent him on his way to freedom. The Ottawans were arrested and tried in the city of Chicago and reported in *The Ottawa Free Trader* as follows:



John Hossack

THE TRIAL OF JOHN HOSSACK

The trial of Mr. Hossack began on the last Tuesday in February, 1860, and ended March 6th. He was defended by Hon. I. N. Arnold, S. A. Goodwin and Joseph Knox, who volunteered their services free. On the side of Government were U. S. Attorney Fitch and Judge Arrington. The proof was clear as to the defendant's overt acts in the rescue of negro Jim, established by the testimony of Judge Caton and Peter Meyer. All the defense could do was to prove the good character of Mr. Hossack, which they did by B. C. Cook, Esq. and W. D. Houtelling. The jury found the defendant guilty and he was fined \$100 and costs, which were both promptly paid by Long John Wentworth. Note: Wentworth was mayor of Chicago.

DR. STOUT'S TRIALS

Dr. Stout was about the most independent and peculiar prisoner ever in the Cook county jail.

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As an offset to a firmness of character such as would have done honor to any hero in the book of martyrs he is one of the kindest of men. His heart is perpetually bubbling over with benevolence, and his rare qualities of sociability, good nature and charity for everybody, make him a companion to be sought for and cherished. Everyone liked him. The jailor was his sworn friend in a moment; Sheriff Gray gave him the liberties not only of the prison, but of the city; visitors from everywhere swarmed to see him. He walked about the city when and where he pleased, restrained only by the injunction of reporting at the jailor's rooms at night, for he boarded with the family. This went on till the U. S. attorney found him becoming vastly popular with the public, so as to spoil his case for a successful prosecution, and therefore the doctor's freedom was narrowed once more to the precincts of the jail.

The doctor's trial followed Hossack's, and, as actors say of a play, had a brilliant run of two weeks. The late Edwin C. Larned appeared for the defense, and distinguished himself in an able address to the jury. The jury failed to agree, were sent back, remained all night, returned to court, and when asked if they agreed, the foreman said: "Agreed! no, sir; and we couldn't if we kept here until the year 1900" They were discharged, and pending the next trial the Court told the doctor he could go where he pleased, if he would agree to return when wanted, but he refused to accept the offer! April 20th the case had been tried again and the jury found him guilty. The doctor arose and demanded an immediate sentence. The judge said he was not ready and told the doctor to go home, but he wouldn't, and didn't; and April 21st finding the doctor still regularly in attendance in court, His Honor, after apologetic and kindly remarks and some reference to the majesty of the law, fined the doctor \$100 and costs and to remain

in jail ten days.

Note: In the following year Union troops in Missouri assisted Jim's sister in crossing the Mississippi River and travel to Bloomington, Illinois.

Following his conviction, John Hossack addressed the court in a speech noted even today for its eloquence and persuasiveness. A copy of the speech is available on the Internet. Hossack died in Ottawa in 1891. In 1972 his home was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

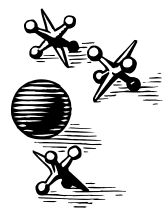
Summer Reading

These hot summer days when it is just too warm to weed the garden are perfect to find a cool place and a cold drink and do some reading. Here are two of the many books in our gift shop:

"Flat Bottom Odyssey" is Gene Jaeger's account of serving aboard an LST (Landing Ship, Tank) during WWII. With photos and maps, Jaeger tells the story of untrained men going to war on untried ships, and the spirit and even humor which got them through it all. 158 pages, \$18.00

For the younger adult, **"Across Five Aprils"** is the story of a Southern Illinois family during the Civil War. Nine-year-old Jethro Creighton must deal with the split in his family after one brother joins the Confederate Army and two others join the Union forces. Creighton was author Irene Hunt's grandfather and the story is based on tales he told the family about the war years. 209 pages, \$5.99

We have a good selection of books for both adults and children on Lincoln and local history. We also carry old-time games such as jacks and Jacob's ladders for the kids. Come on in and pick something out!



DOCENTS, DOCENTS, DOCENTS

Docents are needed for the museum, especially during the weekends. The hours are noon to 4:00 PM.

What is a docent? Dictionary.com describes a docent as: “a voluntary worker who acts as a guide in a museum, art gallery, etc.”

What are the duties? First of all you greet the visitors and note that we are supported by contributions and want them to register. Share the story of our building being built as a store and a grain market with the builder represented by the silhouette statue of Mr. Clark in front of the museum surveying for canal construction. Follow that with a brief description of the museum collection on the first floor: Lincoln, music, military, clocks, canal, Boy Scout, Wild Bill Hickok, Lindbergh, dolls, and more, plus the basement with Indian artifacts from our county, pioneer home, and rest rooms. A printed guide is available and you will be paired with an experienced docent.

Your reward: sharing our county's story, waiting as a newly naturalized citizen interprets for his school teacher parents visiting from Mexico City, assuring students from the Philippines that LST ships were indeed used when General MacArthur returned to free them from the Japanese invaders, watching a young mother and her daughter view the dolls, a boy looking at stereopticon pictures, a veteran recalling a grim era of his life, and adults of all ages renewing memories of "what used to be".

Keep up-to-date with LCHS - Follow
us on Facebook 
and Twitter  @LaSalleCoMuseum

Donations

Recent donations to our collections include clothing and school items from Lynn Elliott-Harding; school records from Waltham South School; and 1930-40 Starved Rock memorabilia from Clara Morris of Bruneau, Idaho.

Joan Fleming of Glen Ellyn donated a collection of El-Ess-Pe year books from LaSalle-Peru High School. They included those of her uncle, Albert LaFlamme, her father, Joseph LaFlamme, and her mother, Frances Draper, who taught at L-P. Joan's father-in-law, Bud Fleming, was LCHS Burgoomeister for many years.

Cruet Set

This cruet set was made in Biskidy, Poland at the Violetta Factory. It was once owned by LaSalle's first Mayor, Alexander Campbell who served as Mayor in 1852 and 1853. Campbell was a close friend of Abraham Lincoln and supported him for the Presidency. Lincoln was known to have stayed at the Campbell home so it is likely this set was on the table at dinner.

Campbell was a land agent and speculator and was elected a representative to the Illinois Legislature and as a Representative to the Forty-Fourth Congress from 1875-1877.



The set includes crystal and silver bottles and shakers on a silver stand. Clem Jasiak donated the set to LCHS.

Calendar of Events - 2011

Robert Baden-Powell Exhibit and "Down on the Corner" Ottawa - through summer
at Ottawa Scouting Museum. Call 815-431-9353

Through September 3 - Follies Theatre, Utica - Lost in the 50's. Call 815-667-7008 for reservations

Saturday, August 6 - Ice Cream Social, Utica Fire Department, from 4-8 pm

August 27 - Taste of Utica, Downtown Utica

October 9, 2011 - 42nd Annual Burgoo Festival

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Memorials

In Memory of Louis Aeschleman
from Carol O'Connor family, Doris O'Berto, Joseph
Ferrero, and The LCHS Board

In Memory of Agnes Miller
from Duane and Patricia Passwater

In Memory of Phyllis Woodward
from Eve Kirk and Leah Baskin

Passings

We are saddened by the loss of
our LCHS Life Members Louis
Aeschleman, Alice Fredericks,
and Wendell Liddle, Sr.

Our sympathies to their families.
They will all be missed.