



# The Society Story

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

---

## Donated school records provide snapshot of the past

Our sincere thanks to Ken Talty who donated many Otter Creek Township school records, some dating back to the 1880s.

“These are especially valuable because they include attendance records, school board minutes, receipts, and employment records,” according to Mary G. Small, chairman of the Society’s Collections and Exhibits Committee. “They provide a wonderful snapshot of the county’s educational environment in the development period. For example, the attendance records illustrate how teenage boys had to leave school in the spring and fall to help with planting and harvest chores on their families’ farms,” she said.

“Board minutes give researchers insight to the directors’ debates on whether enough children lived in the area to keep certain schools open, or if they had to consolidate or close some,” she added.

She said Talty told her the records were among his grandmother’s belongings stored at home in the attic. He said he heard of the museum’s interest in the records while attending a museum event in April, and brought them in to be examined.

“We encourage everyone who may have old records, photos, or anything related to the county’s history to let us know before they dispose of them. Even seemingly unimportant bits and scraps could shed light on different parts of our history,” she said.

“If you don’t want to donate your materials, please let us examine them, photograph them, and add the information to our research library. If you want to keep them, they will be returned to you, or if you want to donate them they will be stored under carefully controlled archival conditions,” she added.

Contact Mary at 815-667-4861 for an appointment with the Collections and Exhibits Committee to view your historical material.



Ken Talty and Mary Small examine records from Otter Creek School.

## Rural School Book Available

Copies of our new book *Remembering the Rural One-Room Schools of La Salle County* are available in the Museum gift shop for \$29.50. Pick up yours today! If you need to have a book shipped to you, please call the Museum office. Postage and handling is an additional \$4.75 per book.

## **Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War**

June 3, 1861: Senator Douglas dies. Had the Democrats settled their differences in 1860 and ran Stephen Douglas only instead of splitting and nominating three men for the presidency, Douglas would have been a strong contender for the presidency and a likely winner but would have had only two months as president. If they had chosen the same vice presidential candidate Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia would have succeeded to the presidency.

June 8, 1861: The state of Tennessee chose to secede from the Union. The mountainous area of east Tennessee voted against secession 2:1.

June 11, 1861: "West" Virginia delegates meet at Wheeling to begin secession from the state of Virginia.

June 19, 1861: Francis H. Pierpont is chosen as provisional governor of Federal (West) Virginia.

June 28, 1861: In Sacramento, California the Central Pacific Railroad Company organizes. In 1862 Lincoln signed legislation authorizing land grants for the construction of railroads.

## *Thank You*

Thank you to Jeff and Ben Ficek for installing new components in our light fixtures. We are very grateful to Springfield Electric for their donation of all components for the fixtures.

The new ballasts and fluorescent lamps have considerably brightened our library and office. These rooms are used every day by staff, volunteers and visitors, and the difference is amazing. We appreciate their generosity.

*The Officers, Board and Staff of LaSalle County  
Historical Society*

## **Remembering Rural Schools 100 Years Ago Saturday, June 25, 2011**

We invite you to a special event planned to celebrate the recently printed book entitled *Remembering the Rural One-Room Schools of La Salle County*.

The Aitken School Committee invites all former fourth grade students who attended the school program since 1990 to attend the special celebration. In addition the public is invited to participate. This is the only time the program will be presented to the public.

You will experience life of 100 years ago. You will attend the 1865 Aitken School and observe elementary students as they participate in lessons, chores, and discipline as they were 100 years ago. The teachers presenting attended a one room rural school and taught in one during World War II.

Costumed re-enactors will also escort you to the 1849 museum, the 1875 post-and-beam exhibit barn, and the 1890 stone blacksmith shop (with a working blacksmith.)

Cost for the event is \$6 for adults and \$4 for children.

Lunch will be served and music, singing, dancing, and games will follow. There will be plenty of opportunities to share stories about your rural school education and experiences.

Please reserve your place at this celebration early because space is limited and we want you to participate.

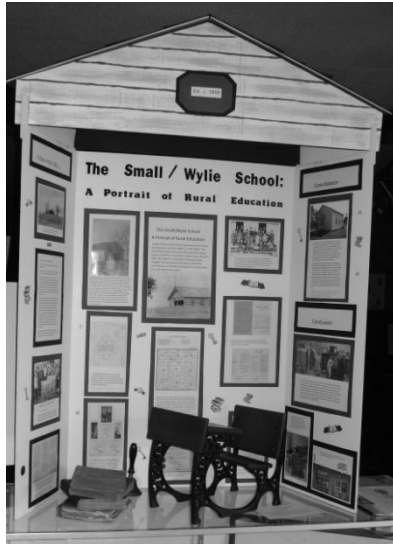


Volunteer Elizabeth Schuetz guides students in a play about the first meeting of Indians and fur traders during a school visit.

## Waltham Student Wins Award

Kyle Small participated in the 2011 Illinois History Expo on May 5, 2011 in Springfield, Illinois. More than 150 students throughout the state participated.

Small's exhibit was *The Small/Wylie School: A Portrait of Rural Education*. This project is currently on display in the LCHS Museum. Kyle received a Superior rating and also a monetary award from the Daughters of the American Revolution. His teacher is Jane Wilson of Waltham Township.



## *Thank You*

Thank you to Gary McConville of ZB Supply for donating a paper towel dispenser to the Museum. We appreciate your kindness.

### **Robert A. "Jim" McClevey 1910 - 2011**

Robert Andrew "Jim" McClevey passed away on April 28 in Ottawa.

Jim was a Life Member of the LaSalle County Historical Society and had served on the Board of Directors. He was a philanthropist who supported many charitable institutions including the LaSalle County Historical Society.

He is survived by three nieces. Jim will be greatly missed by his many friends.

## Shabbona's Rock

Originally located in Ophir Township on the outside the log home of Abner Westgate, this large stone was a favorite resting place of the Indian Chief Shabbona, renowned as the white man's friend. On his visits to Abner Westgate, Shabbona might stay for two or three days but he always remained out of doors, preferring to eat the food which was given him on this natural table.



The rock was moved from Section 19 to Section 20 to Mendota, and finally to the LCHS Museum yard in Utica where it may be seen today. Surrounding the rock you will see prairie plants native to Illinois, such as compass plant, prairie dock, little blue stem grass and prairie coneflower.

## **New - Old Bottles**

Thanks to Joshua Lawson the Gift Shop has a new and unique addition. Josh is a plumber, historian, lecturer, and explorer of former home and business sites where he prospects for long lost privies. Josh has found many bottles in these long-abandoned sites where residents disposed of unwanted items in days of yore in the same manner currently used - drop them into the toilet. The difference is that glass bottles survived the years and Josh has donated many of his duplicates to the gift shop for sale to anyone seeking a unique item. The bottles all have trademarks of Ottawa Brewing Association, Princeton Bottling Works or Ottawa Sanicula Mineral Springs. Get yours today!

## Calendar of Events - 2011

June 11-12 - Utica Garden Faire and Walk for info visit [www.uticagardenclub.org](http://www.uticagardenclub.org) or call 815-223-5555 or 815-667-4543

June 18-19 - Railroad Crossing Days, Mendota Union Depot Museum. Call 815-539-33373

June 25, "Remembering the One Room Rural Schools 100 Years Ago", 9:30 - 2 pm, Museum Complex, Utica

October 9, 2011 - 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Burgoo Festival

[www.lasallecountymuseum.org](http://www.lasallecountymuseum.org)

e-mail: [office.lchs@gmail.com](mailto:office.lchs@gmail.com)

Fax: 815-310-7613

La Salle County Historical Society  
101 E Canal Street - P.O. Box 278  
Utica, IL 61373

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U. S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Utica, IL 61373  
Permit No. 330

### Memorials

*In Memory of Rose Byczynski* from Frederick and Cynthia Carus

*In Memory of Robert McClevey* from Frederick and Cynthia Carus; the Officers, Board and Staff of LaSalle County Historical Society

*In Memory of Phyllis Woodward* from Frederick and Cynthia Carus

### Construction Update

The road construction in Utica and the surrounding area is progressing despite the sometimes rainy weather.

Route 178 remains open although there may be delays. We suggest you avoid the I-80 overpass at Utica and use US 6 or IL 71 to Rt 178 instead.