



LaSalle County Historical Society September 2007 Newsletter

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President's Message

School Days, School Days . . . Good Old One-Room School Days

Corncobs are not on the list of supplies twenty-first century teachers need in preparation for school opening today. They were in the early days of rural one-room schools in LaSalle County and they are still used today as hundreds of Fourth grade students flock to the Society's one-room Aitken School house.

There they attend classes as conducted one hundred years ago – carrying in the cobs, coal, and wood and doing many other chores, reciting poems, doing arithmetic on their slates, and so forth.

Many successful people in LaSalle County spent their formative days in one-room country schoolhouses.

John Huston Finley, born and raised on a prairie farm near LaSalle County's Grand Ridge, graduated from Knox College in Galesburg and distinguished himself at the age of 29 in 1892 being the youngest president in Knox College history. He accepted a teaching position at Princeton University in 1901 and in 1903 he was selected president of City College of New York. In 1913 Finley was appointed Commissioner of Education for the State of New York, joined the staff of the *New York Times* and was named the newspaper's editor-in-chief in 1937. He lectured worldwide, wrote eight books, and was awarded 32 honorary degrees. And he attended a one-room country school!

Another distinguished graduate of a one-room rural school near Streator (Heenanville) is Clyde William Tombaugh, an American astronomer. He discovered Pluto, the ninth planet in our solar system in 1930, while reviewing photographic plates at the Lowell Observatory. Later Tombaugh became engaged in ballistic research at the White Sands (New Mexico) Missile Range.

Lt. Gen. Richard C. Henry was born near Streator, Ill., and attended the one-room Patterson School in Vermilion Township with classmate Kenneth Elliot. Both are members of the LaSalle County Historical Society and remember the days when airmail planes flew over Patterson School. Earlier one of those pilots was none other than Charles A. Lindbergh! Elliott and Henry remember all the students waving at the pilots as they flew over. From time to time the pilots would drop handkerchief parachutes with enclosed notes. Hubert Elliot has one of those notes. On one occasion a pilot named Jewel landed and visited the playground to say "Thank you."

General Henry graduated from Streator Township High School, enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in the infantry until his appointment to the U. S. Military Academy, West Point. He was a command pilot with more than 4,000 flying hours, including 207 combat missions in F-4's in Southeast Asia. In 1978 he was named commander of the Space and Missile Systems Organization, later named the Space Division.

These are only three prominent graduates of rural one-room schools. There were thousands of others in many walks of life.

My cousin, Shirley Gleim Beal, wrote about her days in the Paddy Ridge School. It was so dark and dreary on some of those long winter days that her mother organized card parties in the winter and raised enough money so electricity could be installed in the classroom. Quite a lady!

There are countless interesting stories of the rural one-room schools in LaSalle County. The School Committee of the LaSalle County Historical Society is writing a book to capture these wonderful stories -- *Remembering the Rural Schools of LaSalle County*. Send your name and address to reserve a copy!

Mary G. Small
President

Pathway to History



Mary Small, Carol Pearse and Luceille Werner

Carol Pearse, a fourth grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary School in Ottawa, brought in a donation of money collected by her students. The gift is for the Pathway to History that will mark the entrance to the museum addition. Mrs. Pearse and her students have participated in the Society's Aitken School Program for many years.

Capital Building Fund Donations

Our thanks to those members who donated in the past month:
Suzanne Bruner, Cheryl Budde, Margaret & Francis Bybee, Marilyn & Warren Cobb, M/M Harry Debo, M/M Roland Dieter, Atty. Peter Ferracuti, Wayne Gleim, William Greenwood, Jennifer Guest, Phyllis & Henry Hackman, Nancy & Bill Henkel, Gen & Mrs. Richard Henry, Ina Kurz, John Lamb, Esther Linder, Dr. & Mrs. J. M. Majeske, Dr. William B. McDonald, Rose & Howard McLachlan, Dr. Joan Mickelson in honor of Anna Hanson and Engelbrecht Mickelson, Harriet & Don

Morehead, Margaret & Thomas G. Pearse, Jr., M/M W. Thomas Robinson, Estate of Ada M. Sargent, Inger & Harry Schaller, Lisa Schmitz, Virginia Schulte, Joe Seeburger, Pat & Andy Senica, Elaine & Floyd Setchell, M/M Ronald F. Steinmayer, Shirley Voights, Patricia & Gerald Waszkowiak.

Memorials

Passwater Family for Mildred Walter, Dave & Mary G. Small for Mildred Walter

Burgoo Help Needed

Plans are coming together for the 38th Burgoo Festival to be held in Utica on Sunday the 7th of October. We are in need of volunteer help for Saturday, Sunday and Monday of Burgoo weekend. Saturday is set-up day and Monday morning is clean-up time. Sunday is of course the day of the big event and help is always welcome at the various food stands and in the museum complex.

Malcolm Whipple stores some of our large items and help is requested during the days prior to the festival to bring these items to the Museum grounds. Contact Malcolm at 667-4339 if you are willing to give him some assistance.

Burgoo Raffle

There are many great prizes to be won in the 2007 Burgoo Raffle. Our thanks to the many local businesses that have donated items for the raffle. Tickets will be sent out to members and available to the public soon.



WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE . . .

Although the insurance company doesn't recognize 18-20 inches of sewage as a flood, it did the same damage as a flood.

The heavy rains of Aug. 23 overwhelmed the Village of Utica sewage and drainage operations, resulting in water backing up into basements all along Mill Street.

The museum losses were toy furniture, some textiles, a number of old record books, and inventory from the museum gift shop. The water soaked everything to a depth of 22 inches. Several hundred publications for sale were destroyed, as were hundreds of dollars of office supplies. Two dehumidifiers, and a refrigerator were among the items destroyed by the water.

The Pioneer Room was dismantled down to the floor and walls so it could be sanitized and made usable again.

The most noticeable effect of the flood could be seen on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday as staff, board members, and other volunteers converged on the museum.

They retrieved soaked quilts, ball gowns, military uniforms, tablecloths, and other textiles. Volunteers rinsed them, spread them on the lawns and patio to dry, and disinfected them.

Hundreds of books, albums, receipts, photos, and other paper artifacts were rescued and set out to dry.

Sincerest thanks to all who helped! Some of those helpers were Nancy and George Maze, Malcolm Whipple, Sandy Giacomi, Ed Gleim, Erin, Henry, and Greg Maze; Kylie Mercer, Maxine Cole, Dolores Passwater, Bob and Sue Martyn, Lou Wise, Daphne Keenan, Debby Baker, Art Kardas, Dave and Mary Small, Bill Gish, Jean Pohl, Harold Barnes, Edmund Thornton, Julia Messina, Nancy Anderson, Stan and Laura Dziedzic; Luceille Werner, Gail Heller, Chris, Don, and Micha Jensen; interns Ashley Bloomquist and Stephanie Martin and more. I am sure I have missed some volunteers, but will present a more complete list as time goes on.

Help came from many places. Katherine Anderson, daughter of board member Nancy Anderson, is a conservator at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, and provided guidance by telephone as the volunteers continued to rescue water-soaked artifacts.

Mary Turner, executive director of the Illinois Association of Museums, recommended procedures and vendors dealing with emergency restoration.

The Utica Volunteer Fire Department performed in an excellent and professional manner. They arrived on Friday morning and began pumping floodwater from the basement. They

stayed on the scene for 10 hours, until the water stopped flowing and the level began to drop.

Mark Whitlock, Illinois State Military Museum, suggested recovery procedures.

Stan Amerski, curator of the New Orleans Museum, provided information, and said "I swam in my flood waters during Katrina."

Amanda Gleason, curator of Springfield Art Association, listed conservators and sanitizing companies.

Sen. Garry Dahl explored State and Federal disaster grants and provided a 40-foot trailer from Double D Express for temporary storage.

Wal-Mart donated distilled water for rinsing artifacts.

In short, many people have come to our assistance in a heart-warming demonstration of neighborly cooperation.

ServPro of Springfield, IL, a restoration service, has been engaged for more than \$3,000 for sanitization of the basement.

Despite the generosity of our many supporters during this week of trial and tribulation, many needs are still unmet.

The most valuable of these remains personnel, as it always has been. People are our most valuable asset. We could not function without them, especially now!

We need people to fold and pack clothing, inventory artifacts, sort through books and papers, move artifacts into storage, and just be here to provide relief for the office staff and volunteers.

Several cash donations have already been received from members who cannot be on site or are unable to help otherwise.

Despite this bump in the historical highway, *our society and our museum will continue into the second century.*

Call 815-667-4861 to offer your help.

Sincerely,

Mary G. Small, President

Board and Officers of LaSalle County Historical Society

IVSO Concert Set for September

The Illinois valley Symphony Orchestra will perform "From Rags to Riches" on Sunday September 16, at 3 pm at Celebrations 150 hall in LaSalle. Selections in this 'history of jazz' will include works by Peru native Zez Confrey. CD's of the music will be available. Tickets to the concert are \$10 for adults, \$5 for students with identification and will be available at the door.

Website update

The newly redesigned and updated LaSalle County Historical Society website will soon be up at www.lasallecountymuseum.org. The website committee has worked long and hard gathering information and pictures to make this website reflect our mission here at the Historical Society.



New books in the gift shop

"Starved Rock State Park" Postcard History Series by Nancy Hill Barta, an LCHS member. Here she shares her postcard collection and love of local history with readers. Full of detail and wonderful photos. \$19.99

"1945 - One Year in The Life of An Illinois Farming Family" by Jeff Sparks is a true story of a family growing up on a farm near Grand Ridge. Andy and Mabel Durdan raised five daughters on the farm. Through his daily diary entries Andy gave his descendants and others a unique insight into what life was like during this pivotal year in American history. \$22.98

Telephone Instructions, 1885

In these days of cell phones and voice mail, it is sometimes hard to remember what phones were like in the very beginning...

From the 1885 LaSalle-Peru
Telephone Directory # 5:

Instructions to Subscribers

1. To call, turn the crank once, quickly, then take down the hand-telephone and place it to the ear. The Central Office will answer immediately by *telephone*.
2. Answer calls promptly *by telephone*; do not ring back.
3. Always hang up the hand-telephone promptly and ring for disconnection when through talking, as other connections may be waiting for you. Your line is reported "*busy*" until *disconnection signal is received*.
4. Stand with your lips six to ten inches from the transmitter, talk in an ordinary voice, and strictly avoid shouting.
5. When not in use, the hand telephone should always be left hanging upon the fork, large end down, otherwise you could not receive a call and the battery would run down rapidly.
6. You will be held responsible for an extra charge for all connections made from your instrument with other towns and toll-stations. The Central Office will quote rates upon application.
7. A reasonable charge will be made for moving instruments.
8. *The Central Office will give all available information regarding trains.* The railroad companies refuse to be annoyed by repeated requests for such information, but furnish it to the Central Office for distribution.
9. *Report alarms of fire to the Central Office;* do not undertake to call the Fire Department direct.
10. Report interruptions and poor service in writing, or by telephone direct to the manager.

Correspondence with the District Superintendent is solicited, when the wants of our patrons are not promptly and efficiently served by the local management.

Calendar of Events

September 16 - IVSO Concert "From Rags To Riches" Celebrations 150, LaSalle

October 7 – Burgoo Festival, downtown Utica

November 11 – Annual Meeting, Oak Ridge Golf Course Clubhouse, LaSalle

December 2 – Holiday Dinner Dance, Grand Bear Lodge, Utica

This newsletter is supported in part by a grant from the Community Bank of Utica.

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



Membership:

We welcome new members Margaret & Darwin Ross, Lisa & Todd Martinson, Tracy & Sid Haas, and LKCS of Peru.

It isn't too early to think of the holidays! A gift membership in the LaSalle County Historical Society makes a great present for those hard-to-shop-for friends. It's a gift of History – and a gift for the future

Our Goal

