



MCHS News

November 2015

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 3 No. 6

715 N Main Street
Edwardsville, IL
62025

Hours:

Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm
Group Tours Available

Free Admission

Museum Phone:

618-656-7562

Library Phone:

618-656-7569

Web Address:

madcohstory.org

E-mail:

info@madcohstory.org

About Us:

The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

FAMOUS BUT FORGOTTEN - PART II

by Cindy Reinhardt

Madison County celebrities from the past are often unknown today. Every few years MCHS shines a light on some of these once famous but now forgotten residents. This issue features an international bestselling author, a publisher with a lasting legacy, a man of political influence, and a businessman who changed an industry.

MINNA INGLIS CLARK FLETCHER

Madison County residents knew her as Minna Clark, but to the world, she was Inglis Fletcher, a bestselling author in the 1930s-1960s. Minna Towner Inglis Clark was born in Alton, Illinois on Oct 20, 1879, the daughter of Maurice and Flora (Chapman) Clark. In the 1920s she began using one of her middle names, Inglis, instead of Minna. Inglis was the maiden name of her paternal grandmother.

When Minna was very young, her mother moved the family to Edwardsville to live with her relatives since Maurice, a railroad manager, was working in Canada. Their new home was with Inglis' maternal grandparents at Chapman Place, which was described by Inglis as a "long rambling whitewashed brick home." The house was on 12 acres of land

Continued on page 4



Queen's Gift by Inglis Fletcher was published in 1952 and became an international bestselling novel. It was the seventh novel in Fletcher's Carolina series.

WINTER CALENDAR

New Exhibit

BEGINS DECEMBER 1

**INFLUENCE OF THE CITY BEAUTIFUL
MOVEMENT ON MADISON COUNTY**
Madison County Historical Museum

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT (1890-1920) WAS A MOVE BY ARCHITECTS AND OTHERS TO REFORM URBAN PLANNING BY PROMOTING BEAUTIFICATION OF BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS FOR SOCIAL WELL-BEING.

Program

SUN, JAN 24 - 2 P.M.

THE ALTON CIVIL WAR PRISON
Presenter: Donald J. Huber
Madison County Archival Library

HUBER IS A LIFE-LONG RESIDENT OF ALTON WHO STUDIED HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE AT SIUE. HE HAS BEEN RESEARCHING ALTON HISTORY FOR MANY YEARS WITH A SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE CIVIL WAR PRISON.

ABOUT US

MCHS BOARD

Gary Denué, Pres
Russell Marti, Vice-Pres
Arnold Meyer, Treas
Norma Asadorian
Miriam Burns
Norma Glazebrook
Mae Grapperhaus
Murray Harbke
Candace Ladd
Jeff Pauk
Cindy Reinhardt
Sue Wolf

STAFF

Suzanne Dietrich
Director
Mary Westerhold
Archival Research Mgr.
LaVerne Bloemker
Archival Research Asst.
Carol Frisse
Archival Research Asst.
Jenn Walta
Curator
Casey Weeks
Asst Curator

VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the museum or the archival library. Please call if interested.

MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our web site, at the MCHS Museum or at the Archival Library.

PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

WEB SITE

madcohistory.org

ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

By Mary Westerhold, Archival Research Manager

Two major improvements have been made to the Archival Library. For the first time since the "new" Archival Library building opened in 2002, there are signs designating the building as the Archival Library. Previously, the only sign for the facility was located in front of the museum causing confusion among many visitors as to the actual location of the library. Hopefully the signs will become another "finding aid" for the library!



The other improvement is the mounting of two large plaques in the foyer of the

library. In 1912 Madison County celebrated its centennial and built a temporary arch in front of the 1857 courthouse. Designed by Michael B. Kane, the arch contained two large plaques in the interior. On the plaques were images of Illinois territorial governor Ninian Edwards, who created Madison County, and Charles Deneen, the Illinois governor at the time of the centennial. These images are large reliefs, measuring over 3.5 feet tall by nearly 3 feet wide and weighing over 200 pounds each. After the Centennial, they were displayed in the office of Kane Architects in the Bohm building. When the Kane family closed the office in 2011, the plaques were donated to the Madison County Historical Society and are now displayed in the Archival Library foyer.



One of the governor plaques can be seen inside the right leg of the Centennial Arch (pictured above). At right is the plaque depicting Governor Charles Deneen who was governor of the State of Illinois during the Centennial celebration. (MCHS photographs)



MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn Walta, Curator

The museum has seen an influx of interesting donations this fall. One such item is an emergency kit from a former Civil Defense fall-out shelter donated by Karen Gaines in September.

During the 1950s the Cold War led to fear of a nuclear disaster. The government established fall-out shelters that were stocked with supplies in case of attack at various locations in every Madison County town. Many families also set up their own fall-out shelters because capacity of the

government shelters would accommodate a small percent of the population.

Construction workers recently found a Civil Defense medical kit during a renovation of St. John United Church of Christ in Granite City. The church had been a designated fallout shelter in the 1960s. The cardboard emergency kit contained water purification tablets, gauze, alcohol and other medical supplies. The kit was on display this summer as part of the museum's medical exhibit: *First Do No Harm*.

RECENT NEWS

NEW MCHS DIRECTORS

At the MCHS Annual Meeting on Nov 8 four new directors were appointed to the MCHS Board. The new members are Mary J. Bade of Maryville, Tallin Curran of Granite City, Anna Darr of Alton, and Athena "Tina" Hubert of Pontoon Beach.

In addition, four expiring terms were renewed. These members of the board, with the date they were first appointed, include Mae Graepperhaus of Troy (2006), Murray Harbke of unincorporated Madison County near Wood River (2012), Norma Glazebrook of Godfrey (1997) and Sue Wolf of Edwardsville (2003).

The Society regretfully accepted the resignation of Russell Marti whose term was expiring after six years of service. During his time with the Society, Russ was chair of the building committee and oversaw numerous major projects for MCHS. He will be greatly missed.

PLAZA COMPLETE AT LAST

On Oct 6 representatives of MCHS, the Archival Library and Museum staff, Madison County government and the City of Edwardsville gathered for a ribbon cutting to mark the completion of the plaza between the library and museum.

The plaza is located on what was once a city street, so the work began with the vacation of F Street and became a collaborative effort made possible through grants from both the City of Edwardsville and Madison County Parks and Recreation, combined with Society funds and individual contributions. These included the distinctive design of the plaza by landscape architect Peggy Lambdin, a monetary donation from the family of Patricia Wendel, the donation of century old brick pavers from Dr. Joseph and Sharon Helms, and a donation of bricks for the gate posts from Richards Brick Company.

DINING IN HISTORY

The Society's annual dinner and meeting, held this year in the Madison County Court House in celebration of the building's Centennial, was a great success. The event sold out early and those who obtained tickets enjoyed the evening of dining, music and socializing. Circuit Clerk Mark Von Nida provided an entertaining program on Madison County mysteries and court room dramas.



MCHS President Gary Denu in his remarks at the annual meeting announced plans for restoration of the Weir House. Details will be included with a membership renewal reminder that will be sent to members in December. (Photo Courtesy of Larry Taliana.)

2016 NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Sept-Oct ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

John Weir \$1,000

James G. Staat Tuckpointing

Edward Coles \$ 250

Michael and Cindy Reinhardt

James Madison \$100

Tallin Curran

Family \$50

Philip & Amy Alfeld

Art & Pam Asadorian

Eddie & Norma Asadorian

Barbara Crowder & Larry Taliana

Kendrick and Donna Bisset

Alvin Deibert

Christopher & Pamela Farrar

William Mudge

Bill & Marlene Shaw

Gayle K. Wolff

Individual \$35

Diane Anderson

Donna Carli

Elizabeth Dalton

Lynn Engelman

Kathryn A. Genczo

Bernard Hellman

Janet Matoesian

Lois T. Poole

Donna Rhoades

Sharon Petty

Melanie Valencia

ADVICE TO WRITERS

In her autobiography, *Pay, Pack and Follow* Inglis Fletcher gave the following advice to writers:

“Perhaps this is the place where I should give a bit of advice to would-be writers. Don't talk about it. Write. Don't write a few pages, then run to your friends and ask them to listen while you read what you have written. Don't take too seriously the opinion of your friends. There is just one person to listen to and that is the editor who is going to publish what you have written.

Write every day, if only a few lines. You will develop the habit of writing and that is the most important thing. For writing is a habit and the sooner you recognize that fact, the sooner you will develop your writing talents...

The sound of your own voice, reading a bit of verse, a few pages of a story, is a trap to keep you from serious work. More often than not your efforts will end there.

“They say” writing is a lonely job. But you are never lonely when you are writing. You are carried along an exciting path by the people you are creating.

If one has the creative impulse to write, one must write; whether or not one sells is not important. The act of creating is the vital thing.”

MINNA INGLIS CLARK FLETCHER (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

four blocks east of the Madison County Court House on what is now Leverett Lane (named after her uncle, George Leverett). The house was also home to a number of unmarried aunts. Gatherings at the home often sparked lively debate since her grandfather, Joseph, was a Southern sympathizer from North Carolina's Tyrell County and her grandmother a New England Yankee. They had religious differences too, Joseph being a Unitarian and the rest of the family Episcopalian. There were ongoing political discussions as well.



Maurice and Flora Chapman Clark with their three children circa 1900. From left: Murray, Minna (Inglis), Jean, Flora and Maurice. Murray died shortly after this portrait was taken. Jean married and eventually settled in California. (Photo from Minna's autobiography)

When Minna was eight, her father gave up railroad work and returned home. The family built a house of their own on Hillsboro Avenue on part of the grounds surrounding Chapman Place.

Although by her own admission she was not an outstanding student, Minna began writing stories at the age of ten. She was one of 14 graduating students in the Edwardsville High School Class of 1897. After EHS she went on to take art classes at Washington University but did not complete her degree.

While still in college, Inglis was introduced to her future husband through a Colorado friend. Their relationship developed through correspondence in the early stages, but John “Jack” Fletcher soon came to visit her in person. In 1902 they were married at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Edwardsville.

Jack was a mining engineer whose career would take them all over the world with the longest stints in Alaska and San Francisco. In her 1959 autobiography, Inglis tells of their nomadic life, calling the book “Pay, Pack and Follow,” because often Jack would have to leave immediately for new assignments, leaving her to pay the bills, pack up the house, and follow him to the next town or mining camp.

In 1928, Inglis left her husband and teen-age son at home when she went on a seven-month tour of British Central Africa

on her own. The trip garnered much attention with the Oakland (CA) Tribune hailing her courage, saying she was “the first white woman to penetrate the heart of Africa alone.”

Her first books, were based on her experiences in Africa. *The White Leopard* (1931) and *Red Jasmine* (1932) were successful novels that included observations about the nature and culture of Africa. The first was a collection of stories for young boys and the second book was a novel for adults.

She then turned to researching the genealogy of the Chapman family,

her maternal ancestors from Tyrell County, North Carolina. This led to a fascination with North Carolina history that inspired her award-winning 12-volume Carolina series. The books in this series were translated into seven languages and sold millions of copies world-wide. Inglis was a voracious researcher and spent a year researching each book before beginning the writing process. *Raleigh's Eden*, the first in the Carolina series, was published in 1940 and the last book in the series in 1964.

The nomadic life they shared for many years came to an end in 1944 when the Fletchers moved to Tyrell County, North Carolina where they lived at Bandon, a former plantation house she restored with her husband. John “Jack” Fletcher died in 1960 and in 1963 their beautiful historic

Continued on page 8

CHARLES HELMUTH SEYBT



The drawing above by Charles Seybt depicts the City of Highland in 1861. (Courtesy of Roland Harris)

Charles Helmuth Seybt first arrived in Highland, Illinois in 1861 when he was hired to create a rendering of the city in the days before photography. He was born in Saxony (Germany) on Mar 16, 1840, and came to America at the age of 16. The son of a prominent minister, he had an excellent classical education but was not fluent in English when he arrived. Family stories relate that he ran away from home because he didn't want to follow his father into the ministry profession. He worked his way across the country until settling on a Wisconsin farm for six months where he learned English. He then obtained a job in St. Louis with a lithograph company which sent him to Highland.

When he arrived in Highland he met the love of his life, Francis (Franziska) A. Suppiger, who was the eldest daughter of one of the founding families of Highland and reportedly the first person born in the new community. Charles and Frances were married in 1861.

In 1863, the Republican Literary and Publishing Society founded by Seybt and Dr. Gallus Rutz, started Highland's first newspaper, *Die Union*, later called the *Highland Union*. The paper supported Lincoln and Northern sympathies in opposition to the *Highland Bote*. Neither Highland newspaper at the time was written in English.

In 1864, Charles ran for office as Madison County Sheriff, but failed. It is notable because this was one of his few failures. Charles was a multi-talented man who seemed to succeed in nearly all his endeavors.

After 1864 Seybt dedicated himself to the milling industry, taking a position with the Highland Milling Company which was destroyed by fire in 1889 (a common occurrence in those days). Seybt and his partners then purchased the former Joseph Suppiger Mill (founded by Seybt's father-in-law) and renamed it the Highland Milling Company.

Recognizing a need for affordable fire insurance for mills, Seybt organized the Millers' National Fire Insurance Company of Chicago and locally the Illinois Millers' Mutual Fire Insurance Association of Alton, serving as president of each association for 38 and 42 years respectively. He was also a long-time chairman of the Executive Committee of the Millers' National Association where he was a representative for the U.S. flour markets.

This required world travel to check on the European markets and to

assess crops throughout the Midwest. He visited Europe annually for many years at a time when travel was by ship, train and horseback. When he died in 1918 his death was reported in newspapers all over the Midwest as well as in Europe.

For over 50 years Charles and Frances Seybt were leaders in Highland society. In addition to his success in business, Charles was a talented pianist and one of his daughters had exceptional ability as a vocalist. They often entertained in their home or at local functions at the Turnverein which Charles managed for a number of years. Like many wealthy families from southern Illinois, the Seybts spent summers in Wisconsin. With their travel schedule the Seybts spent much of their time away from Highland, but it was always their home.



These portraits of Charles and Frances Seybt were probably taken shortly after their marriage in 1861. (Courtesy of Roland Harris)

VASIL STEPHANOFF

Vasil Stephanoff (Stefanov) was born October 1, 1884 in Bulgaria. He immigrated to America with his wife, Stoyanka, in 1907, settling in Granite City where they partnered with Vasil Gramaticoff (Gramatikov) and Alexander Shumenoff to establish a Bulgarian language newspaper that would become the largest foreign language paper in the United States. Before 1920 Shumenoff left the business to start a bookstore in St. Louis.

The *Naroden Glas* or *National Herald* was a daily newspaper that was delivered to readers throughout the United States and to hundreds of subscribers in Europe as well. It was the longest lived and for many years the only daily Bulgarian newspaper in the United States, covering the immigration of Bulgarians to America and Canada with emphasis on the locations where they were settled and conditions to be found in various cities for homes and employment. The newspaper had correspondents in Indianapolis, Chicago, and other American cities with large populations of Bulgarians. Stephanoff and Gramaticoff, chose Granite City for their newspaper because a century ago the steel mills there had attracted nearly 10,000 Bulgarians to the tri-city area of Granite City-Venice-Madison.

The newspaper reported national news and information about political conditions "back home" for an American population of Bulgarians who had not yet learned English. It covered politics conservatively, encouraged giving to the Red Cross during times of war, and collected funds for families impacted by the world wars in Bulgaria. It was a common bond that cultivated the preservation of Bulgarian ethnic communities. It is one of the reasons so many Bulgarian cultural traditions were preserved in Madison County and elsewhere.

A 1924 special edition of the *Granite City Press Record* said, "Both Mr. Stephanoff and Mr. Gramaticoff are active in the

civic affairs of the community, being of special value in development of a high standard of living, economic citizenship and education of foreign-born residents hereabouts. Each is a thoroughly educated, trained newspaper man and patriotic citizen of the United States. Interpretation of their editorials and news matter always develops a sense of integrity and laudable enterprise."

The *Naroden Glas* Publishing Company, later called the National Printing Company, also operated a large foreign language bookstore. They printed books, pamphlets

and other literature in many languages where special typeface was needed for characters not used in English. Like the *Naroden Glas*, books were also shipped to locations around the globe.

In the early days, both the Stephanoffs and the Gramaticoffs lived "above the store" at 1812-1814 Delmar Avenue. Perhaps because of his growing family or an awareness that their Bulgarian-speaking audience was shrinking, Gramaticoff left the business in the

early 1930s. The Stephanoffs remained with Vasil the editor/publisher of the newspaper and his wife involved with bookkeeping and other clerical work. Although the publishing company continued to thrive, the newspaper in its final years was reduced to a weekly publication. The Stephanoffs continued to publish the newspaper until his death in 1950, making it the longest lived of the many Bulgarian newspapers once available in the United States.

Historians today look to the Bulgarian almanacs published by the *Naroden Glas* Publishing Company in 1918, 1924 and 1932 as the only published resources documenting the immigration to and migration of Bulgarians in America.

At left is the *Naroden Glas* newspaper and publishing office, circa 1923, at 1812-1814 D Street (now Delmar) in Granite City. The newspaper was also known as the *National Herald*, although *Naroden Glas* translates literally to "People's Voice."

(Courtesy of Marvin Moehle)



Stoyanka and Vasil Stephanoff as pictured in the 1923-24 *Naroden Glas* Bulgarian Almanac. (Courtesy of Marvin Moehle)



CHARLES BOESCHENSTEIN

In many ways Charles Boeschenstein doesn't belong in the category of "famous but forgotten" since he is known by many as a banker and the former publisher of the *Edwardsville Intelligencer*. But many are not aware of his influence over state and national politics.

The son of Swiss immigrant parents, Charles Boeschenstein was born in Highland, Illinois, on October 27, 1864. He attended public schools and Washington University, but before finishing school his interest in the printing trade began with a small printing press purchased when he was only 15-years-old. In 1881, he purchased the *Highland Herald*, Highland's first English language newspaper. The *Herald* was reported to have the first typewriter, a Remington, in Madison County.

Two years later Boeschenstein purchased the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* from the estate of James R. Brown and merged the two newspapers. The 19-year-old moved to Edwardsville, the county seat, and proceeded to implement innovations that resulted in healthy growth for the newspaper. The weekly newspaper grew from a weekly issue, to twice weekly, three times weekly and finally in 1907 became a daily newspaper (except Sundays).

While growing the newspaper Boeschenstein served a term as mayor of Edwardsville (1887-1889) where he was as innovative and progressive as he was in business. After one term though, he determined that he could make a bigger impact on public policy and community improvements outside of political office.

He brought the first linotype press to Madison County and continued to implement the latest technology to produce the best product in his business. He was a founder of the Madison County State Bank which later merged with the Bank of



Edwardsville where he served as a director and vice-president. He was a founder of the Edwardsville Water Company. He successfully requested funds from Andrew Carnegie to build the Edwardsville Public Library and served on the library board for decades. When Madison County celebrated its Centennial, Boeschenstein wrote the chapter on Edwardsville history and served as chairman of the Madison County Centennial Association.

He was one of the founders of the Southern Illinois Press Association and served as president of the Illinois Press Association. In the midst of all the above he joined the Illinois National Guard for six years, married, and raised a family of three children. Already what might be called an over-achiever, Boeschenstein was only getting started.

He was a life-long Democrat and was active in serving on various county and district committees. In a 1900 state caucus he was nominated as the party's candidate for Secretary of State, but declined the nomination. He was later courted as a candidate for Illinois Senator and Illinois Governor, but firmly refused. Also in 1900 he was elected to the state central committee and reelected eight times, serving eight years as chairman. In 1912, he was elected as a member of the Democratic national committee for Illinois that nominated Woodrow Wilson and would return to the national convention many times. A century ago, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch called Boeschenstein the most influential Democrat in the State of Illinois.

In 1909 he sold his interests in the Bank of Edwardsville and in 1917, a year after selling his interest in the *Intelligencer*, he became a founding director of the Edwardsville National Bank where he served as president until his retirement in 1947. Boeschenstein died in 1952 at the age of 89.



Upper photo: Charles Boeschenstein circa 1900. Lower photo shows the Boeschenstein home at 230 N. Kansas Street in Edwardsville where the family entertained Vice-President Thomas Marshall in 1914 (MCHS)



Madison County Historical Society

Opening Doors to Madison County History

715 N. Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Address Service Requested

PRSRT STD
Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #9
Edwardsville, IL
62025

FLETCHER (CONT. FROM PAGE 4)

home was destroyed by fire. Inglis Fletcher died in North Carolina in 1969 at the age of 90.

Although her immediate family moved away from Madison County shortly after the Fletchers were married, Inglis returned for occasional visits with extended family and friends over the years.

The Chapman House remained on Leverett Lane until about 20 years ago when structural problems made it necessary to tear it down.

There are several chapters in Fletcher's autobiography where she reminisces about her childhood in Alton and Edwardsville. The book is available through most local libraries and can often be found through used booksellers.



The Chapman Place on Leverett Lane in Edwardsville was torn down in the 1990s due to structural problems.

MARY'S RESEARCH TIP

Have you ever used a Sanborn Map in your research? These maps were created for use by Fire Insurance Companies to assess risks in towns and cities. The focus was on businesses, especially industries such as factories, mills, and coal mines, and the surrounding businesses and homes. These maps are in color and the color on a building designates the type of construction material such as brick, frame or stone. Not every house in the town is shown, but if your ancestor lived near the business or industrial area, you may find their dwelling listed. Out buildings, water hydrants, wells, etc., are also shown. The maps were updated over the years and it is interesting to trace the improvements in a town. You might find these at a local historical society (the Madison County Archival Library has six) or a university library. They are also online (for a fee) or on microfilm, but the microfilm is not in color. If you enjoy maps, you will find Sanborn Maps an interesting tool, even if your ancestors did not live in town!

At right is a small section of an 1892 Sanborn Insurance Map that includes the Weir House (Madison County Historical Museum) on the SW corner of Main Street and F Street. The German Methodist Episcopal Church (now Immanuel) can be seen on the NE corner. F Street west of Main Street is now the MCHS plaza.

