



# MCHS News

May 2019

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 7 No. 3

**Historical Museum**  
715 N Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

**Hours:**  
The museum is currently closed for renovation.

**Archival Library**  
801 N Main Street  
**Hours:**  
Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm  
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm

**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.

## ORPHANS & WAIFS IN EARLY MADISON COUNTY

Orphans in the 19th century were not defined the same as today. The term "orphan," now recognized as someone without parents, in those days also included waifs, that is, homeless, neglected or abandoned children. Throughout this article "orphan" will refer to both waifs and orphans who are simply children with no adult to care for them. An "orphan" might actually have one, or perhaps two, surviving parents, but those parents abandoned them because they were physically or financially unable to provide for them.

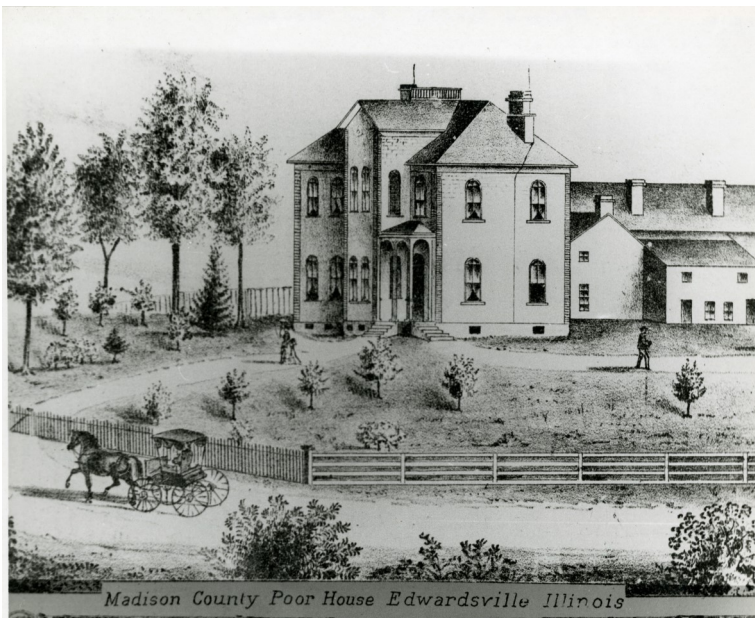
In early Madison County, these orphaned children were generally taken in by someone they knew within the community, a relative, friend or neighbor. However, there were some children, especially when the county was not well populated, that had no one willing to take them in.

Beginning in the 1840s, these children were turned over to the County which sometimes paid local residents a stipend to provide a home for the homeless waifs. The County did the same for the poor until construction of the Madison County Poor Farm in the 1860s. The Madison County Poor Farm, which was located on what is today South Main Street in Edwardsville (site of the new Edwardsville Public Services building) became a large complex of buildings that included a hospital, insane ward, residences (men's and women's) and more for the poor. The complex did not include an orphanage, so the County tried to find family homes for orphans as soon as possible. The "family system," as it was called, worked similarly to the foster care system used today, although without supervision. The children were given to whoever was willing to take them.

The County recognized the benefits of the family system over institutionalism as described in this 1875 *Alton Telegraph* article,

**A county poor house, however well kept, is a totally unfit place for man or woman; and much (less so) for the children, idiots**

**and insane persons who often collect therein. Humanity in its lowest and most brutish, if not in its most depraved forms, is there herded together, generally without occupation, and at best dozing away the monotonous hours. Our own county poor house is not by any means of excellence, but the possibilities of evil that it has escaped can only be realized in all their horrid deformity by visiting county poor houses in other parts of the state.**



Above is a depiction of the Madison County Poor Farm as shown in the 1873 *Atlas of Madison County*. (MCHS)

To find homes for the orphans, the County often placed ads in the local newspaper, sometimes for a single child, other times for multiple children as can be seen in this *Edwardsville Intelligencer* notice from 1869:

**To the Public - There are at this time thirteen children in the Madison County Poor-House, ranging from infancy to ten years old - five boys and eight girls - all healthy, but without relatives or friends able to support them, and for whom, the county authorities are anxious to procure good homes. Any person wishing to take a child can call on the undersigned for further particulars.**

**John H. Weir, Physician.**

*continued page 4*

## ABOUT US

### MCHS BOARD

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LaVerne Bloemker  
Archival Research Asst.  
Carol Frisse  
Archival Research Asst.  
  
Jenn VanBibber  
Curator  
  
Mary Z. Rose  
Asst. Curator

### VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the museum or the archival library. If interested, please call 618-656-7569.

### 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 website, or at the Archival Library.

### PUBLICATIONS

#### MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually  
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

## ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

By Mary Westerhold

### GUARDIANSHIP INDEXING PROJECT COMPLETE!

A few years ago, the Archival Library Volunteers (The "C.R.E.W." - Committed Reliable Enthusiastic Workers) started a project to index 200 boxes of guardianship files in the collection. This project is now **COMPLETE!**

This index was needed because guardianship files are rather unique. These files were created when a minor was due to inherit property (real estate, money, etc.) from a deceased individual. A guardian was appointed to care for the property until the minor was of age to inherit. A guardian was appointed even if the minor had a surviving parent, and it was not always the parent who was appointed guardian. Frequently, the guardian also had physical care of the minor, but not always.

Another unique feature of the guardianship files is that certain information important to genealogists, such as family relationships, birth dates, marriage dates, and death dates, are often included. This is especially important before civil records exist when these

dates and relationships are difficult to find anywhere else. Finally, the guardianship files in the collection begin as early as 1814 and continue through the 1950s.

While there is a general index to the files, the guardianship files needed some special attention. The general index listed one name for each file. For the guardianship files, that could be the name of the deceased, the guardian, the minor, or the oldest of several minor children. This made searching for individuals difficult. To add another wrinkle to the search, the name on the file was not always the same name that was listed in the index.

The new index includes the names of the deceased individual, the minor(s) involved, and the guardian(s). In addition, the date of the file and the name on the file are also included. The date helps differentiate between individuals of the same name. This is especially useful when a family tends to name children after other family members.

Many thanks to the dedicated volunteers who worked on this project and to ALL of the volunteers who work on the many projects that could not be completed without their efforts!

## MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn VanBibber

If you haven't seen me at the Archival Library preparing paperwork or evaluating donations, I am probably working with artifacts at the Helms Collection Center. I lovingly refer to it as "my lair." While the museum building is closed for renovations, I am able to spend more time working directly with the artifacts.

While creating storage solutions for recent acquisitions, sometimes I take a break to address a small collection of artifacts that requires special attention. Recently I looked at the modest MCHS collection of musical instruments. Items include cottage pianos, violins, zithers, and wooden flutes. I turned my attention to four drums.

First, I set up a studio in the hall to photograph the artifacts in detail. Then all dimensions were taken and recorded before looking for appropriate materials that would safely store the items.

I was most interested in two drums that

were used by F.M. Johnson of Alton, a principal musician during the Civil War in the 32nd Regiment, Company F, Illinois Volunteers. One drum was complete, while the other was stored in pieces between two boxes. Neither of those acidic boxes had any identifying information on the exterior.



*Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Johnson*

I get a great amount of satisfaction from rehousing artifacts into new acid-free boxes. I joke that I know I am in the right profession when I am happy about opening a shipment of empty boxes.

One of my favorite activities is interacting with these artifacts and soaking in the fact that when handling these 150 year-old drums, I can touch history (with gloves,

of course!). There is that direct connection with a time long gone. While I catalog all the scratches and marks on the items, I think about how they got there. Then the research begins to catalog the item so it can be found for future use in an exhibit.

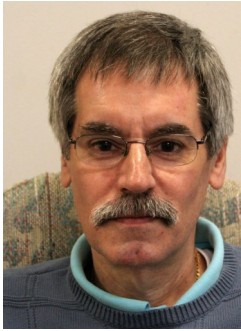


## TWO SPEAKERS SERIES PROGRAMS IN JUNE

MCHS will present events on two Sundays in June, Both are at 2 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall on the lower level of Immanuel United Methodist Church at 800 N. Main Street in Edwardsville, Illinois.

**Sunday, June 9 - 2 p.m.**

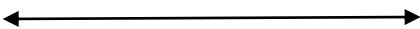
### **Eastern European Immigrants of Madison County: *Traditions from Home***



Marvin Moehle

Presenter Marvin Moehle of Granite City is the grandson of Macedonian immigrants who played a major role in his life. They taught him the native language, traditions, folklore, and the village culture of his ancestors. As a child, he took an interest in ethnography, preserving the traditions, stories, and culture of the people in his Lincoln Place neighborhood in Granite City. While still in school he began recording the stories of early immigrants in his neighborhood and collecting traditional folk clothing and other items immigrants brought with them to the New World.

Moehle owns one of the largest private collections of folk clothing in the United States and Canada. He has often exhibited his collections and has given programs related to the collections for organizations, universities, and museums. The costumes he will bring to the presentation include typical work clothes, festival costumes, and mourning clothes that represent traditional Christian and Muslim costumes of Macedonia, Croatia, and Roma cultures. Most are village costumes from the late 1800s and early 1900s. He invites visitors to come early to watch and ask questions as he sets up a display representing a portion of his collection.



## MEET THE MCHS BOARD

MCHS is fortunate to have highly qualified candidates on the Board of Directors. Board profiles began with the January issue of this newsletter and continue below with Lacy McDonald of Godfrey.

### **Lacy McDonald – Godfrey**

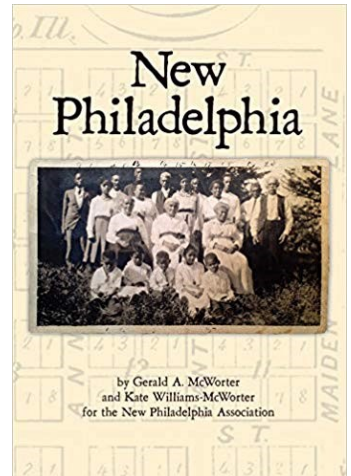
Lacy McDonald manages the Genealogy & Local History Library branch of The Hayner Public Library District in Alton. Lacy holds a master's degree in Library and Information Science and a Graduate Certificate in Rare Book and Special Collections Librarianship from the University

**Sunday, June 30 - 2 p.m.**

### **New Philadelphia and the Story of Free Frank**

In partnership with the Hayner Genealogy and Local History Library of Alton, MCHS will host Gerald A. McWorter and Kate Williams-McWorter, authors of a new book on the town of New Philadelphia, Illinois.

New Philadelphia, located in Pike County about 20 miles east of Hannibal, Missouri, was the first known town in the United States to be founded and platted by an African-American. The abolitionist town was platted in 1836 by Frank McWorter, a former slave from Kentucky who bought his way out of slavery. Then, over a period of many years, he purchased 16 members of his family, beginning with his pregnant wife, and brought them north to freedom. Located only 20 miles from a slave-holding state, New Philadelphia was a regular stop on the Underground Railroad. The story of Frank McWorter, also known as Free Frank, is both fascinating and inspiring. Although little remains of the town today, the site is on the National Register of Historic Places.



Gerald McWorter is the great-great grandson of Frank McWorter. Gerald is an professor emeritus at the University of Illinois and Kate Williams-McWorter is an associate professor at the same university. Following their presentation, the authors will have copies of their book available for sale which they are willing to sign.

The same program will be presented at Hayner Genealogy and Local History Library at 401 State St. in Alton at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 29.



of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She grew up in Arkansas and has since lived in Iowa, Minnesota (where she attended Carleton College), Florida, and several cities in Illinois. Lacy currently lives in Godfrey with her husband Jeff and their two children.

## 2019 NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

**Feb. 15 – April 15 ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!**

### **\$100 Patron**

Scott Baima  
Bernice Brown  
Judy Chapman  
Mike & Susan Featherstun  
Roberta Mueller

### **\$50 Family**

Walter & Mary Bohn  
Fred & Cheri Faust  
Joyce Giaquinta  
Glen Carbon Heritage Museum  
Scott & Peggy Hagin  
Joe & Genevieve Hill  
Richard & Sandra Kinder  
Gayle Kassing Wolff

### **\$35 Individual**

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Viva Fisher  
David Hanser  
Gary Harmon  
Dallas Harrell  
Nancy A. Hess  
Jean Hughes  
Beverly Kane

Patti Koertge  
Davie Sue Raker  
Vickie Sheridan  
Meg Solon  
Michele Sowerby  
Marilyn Sulc  
Carol Wetzel  
Billie Mae Wilson  
Wood River Heritage Council

## MADISON COUNTY ORPHANS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Some children were adopted by families who treated them like one of their own. Newspapers of the time would often make note in obituaries of how many orphans the deceased had taken into their home. One woman's obituary said she was the "mother of twenty orphans," all taken care of at her own expense. Other orphans, not so fortunate, were seen as free labor, especially on farms where help was always needed. Some were indentured until a certain age. Siblings were often separated.

However, as the population of the area increased after 1850, so also did the number of orphans. The Civil War, epidemics of disease and the short life expectancy of the times all contributed to the problem.

Although there were numerous orphanages in St. Louis, there were few in Illinois, especially Southern Illinois. One of the few orphanages available to Madison County

residents was the Illinois Soldiers' Childrens' Home authorized by the Illinois State Assembly in 1866 following the Civil War. However, the Assembly didn't provide funds for the home, just a governing body to operate the home after donations of at least \$50,000 were received. In 1867, they provided \$30,000 toward the home which opened in June 1869 in Normal, Illinois. The home was available to all children of slain or disabled Illinois soldiers, and it can be assumed that might include some from Madison County, but not many. The facility could provide a home for fewer than 200 children.

Most of the St. Louis area orphanages were founded by churches including homes run for the Hebrew, Catholic, Methodist, Episcopal and German Protestant religions. When an orphanage was finally established in Madison County, it too came from the faith community. In 1883 the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum opened in Alton.

### THE CATHOLIC ORPHANAGE AT ALTON

Property on Prospect Street was acquired in early 1883 by the Springfield Diocese for use as an orphanage. There was a house on the property, formerly the home of James Lea, and it was conveniently located across the street from SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Alton. It opened in June of the same year with 18 children under the care of the Sisters of the Precious Blood, an order of nuns headquartered in Ruma, Illinois.

The building was a large home, but inadequate for 18 children. The four upstairs rooms became the dormitory and the dining room was in the basement. A 1928 diocesan history called it "uncomfortable and unsanitary." In 1896 a new orphanage was constructed on the northeast side of the house on Prospect Street. Ten years later another unit of the orphanage was built on the southwest side of the Lea House and the following year the original house was dismantled to be replaced by a third unit, completed in 1908. There was now just one building, modern and with many amenities that could accommodate 200 children. Unfortunately, by 1914, the orphanage had again exceeded capacity when the number of children grew to 250. Plans were made to expand again, but by the time they were ready, the United States was at war and all building construction was halted.

Orphanage publications indicate there was a wide range of



Above, the Catholic Orphanage in Alton circa 1920 after the additions were completed. (MCHS)

activities designed to educate and entertain the children. They were required to help with sewing, cooking, shoe repair, cleaning and numerous other chores that prepared them for life while also reducing costs for the orphanage. The boys had a drill team coached by officers from Western Military Academy and could join the home's Boy Scout Troop. The community also provided assistance with area farmers donating fruit and produce in season, and many community groups and

churches sponsoring entertainments and outings for the children.

Crowded conditions were an incubator for contagious disease and the orphanage was not spared when the 1918 influenza epidemic struck. In December 1918 two children whose mother had just died from influenza were brought to the orphanage. As soon as they showed symptoms of the disease, they were quarantined, but it was too late. The disease spread quickly and at its worst the orphanage staff was dealing with 108 patients at one time. Additional sisters were brought in to help with nursing, but isolating patients in the overcrowded conditions was nearly impossible. The 1928 diocesan history said, "The disease was very treacherous, and elsewhere it claimed victims by the score, but here at the orphanage, under such excellent care, only two cases proved fatal."



Girls at the orphanage practice embroidery. (CCH)

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## THE CATHOLIC ORPHANAGE AT ALTON (CONT FROM PAGE 4)

Efforts to raise funds for a new, more spacious orphanage began in earnest immediately following the worst of the influenza epidemic. There was now an even greater need due to all the children orphaned by both the flu epidemic and WWI. The fundraising campaign told potential donors that "A gift to the orphan is a pure gift to God."

A tract of land was purchased on State Street from the Hayner family in 1919 and in September 1923 an orphanage with a capacity to accommodate 500 children was opened. The five-story modified Gothic building that cost more than a half-million dollars still stands today, but is no longer an orphanage. In the years following construction, the model for caring for orphaned children gradually changed to the foster care model used today. The former orphanage continues to serve children by providing a school for at-risk elementary and high school students.

It should be noted that, from the beginning, the goal of the orphanage was not to house children long-term. The

staff continuously searched for families who could provide new homes for the orphans. Some were adopted formally, but many were fostered until they reached their majority. At right is an article from the orphanage's newsletter seeking parents for an infant.

There are also stories of single parents paying board for their children during the week at the orphanage and bringing them home on weekends. Despite the large demand to find homes, Madison County also provided homes for many orphans from other locations.



Alvin Billy

Alvin Billy was born November 20, 1925. We have the legal authority to adopt him into a good family. Any one interested in his adoption kindly write to Rev. B. Wubbe, 1400 State St., Alton, Ill. Enclose in your letter a recommendation from your pastor.

## THE NIEMIETZ BROTHERS AT THE CATHOLIC ORPHANAGE

The story of the Niemietz family is one of hope and tragedy. Adam Niemietz emigrated from Austria to Staunton in the early 20th century with the hope of a new life in a new country where anyone could achieve the American dream. Soon after his arrival he sent for his wife, Katharina, 23, and son, Victor, 1, who arrived in America through Ellis Island in February 1908.

In America Adam found a job as a coal miner and the family grew to include two more sons, Wilhelm and Robert born in 1908 and 1910 respectively. The family was in America less than ten years when in 1915 Adam was killed in a coal mining accident. On Jan. 4, 1917, Katharina married Ernst Entenbach. Before the end of the year she died in childbirth. The three Niemietz boys, aged 7-10, were taken to the orphanage in Alton.

The brothers were separated when the older boys were placed with farm families soon after their arrival. Victor was taken in by a family in Greene County and Wilhelm, then called Willie, went to live with a family in Brown County. The youngest boy, Robert, was too young for farm work. He would spend four years in the orphanage (1917-1921) before being placed out.

Robert passed on many stories of growing up in the orphanage. He told his family that he and other boys at the orphanage assisted with building the stone wall that surrounded the orphanage on Prospect Street. In the diocesan report of 1928 they describe the six-foot high wall as a great addition to the orphanage because it provided privacy for the nuns and orphans. Robert lived at the orphanage during some of the worst years, through the years of WW I food shortages and the influenza epidemic. He described the conditions as being austere, certainly no extra food during those years, but, despite the shortages, he said the children were always treated kindly.

When Robert was 11-years-old, he was placed out with Jacob and Ella Jantzen who had a dairy farm near Marine. Jacob and Ella had no children, and Robert became attached to his foster family, especially his foster mother, Ella, who died in 1931.

The Niemietz brothers were reunited in the 1930s and thereafter remained in touch, but Robert was the only one of the three that remained in the area. He married a local girl, Lenora Cassens and together they raised a family of four children.

After four years at the orphanage, followed by placement in a Catholic foster home, Robert was a devout Catholic his entire life.

*At right, the only known photograph of Adam Niemietz shows him (left) with a young Victor Niemietz and unknown man. Below, the Niemietz brothers reunited in the 1930s. From left, Wilhelm, Victor and Robert. (Bill Niemietz)*



## THE ARRIVAL OF ORPHAN TRAINS IN MADISON COUNTY

The same year the orphanage opened in Alton (1883), the first of what are now called "Orphan Trains" arrived in Madison County. The term "orphan train" was not coined until the 1970s, but has since become a popular topic for books and magazines. It refers to what was called the "placing out" of approximately 200,000 orphaned children from New York City to farms throughout the Midwest between 1853 and 1929 by the New York Children's Aid Society, the New York Juvenile Asylum and other institutions.

In Madison County, these children all came from the New York Juvenile Asylum (NYJA) between the years 1883 and 1904. During those years, NYJA's Western Agency had an apprenticing agent in Normal, Illinois, Ebenezer Wright, who almost always accompanied the children here. It was Wright's responsibility to find appropriate homes for the children, follow-up to make sure it was a good fit, and, if necessary, remove the child and find a new home for them. Some children were moved five or six times before settling in, but more than half stayed in their original placement. Under Wright's guidance, nearly 6,000 children were placed in Illinois. Wright and his small staff kept track of the children through visits and letters, but it was a large area covering the entire state of Illinois and parts of Iowa.

Prior to Wright's arrival with the children, notices were placed in local newspapers and families filled out applications requesting children. Homes were not inspected in advance. On the day the children arrived, they were taken to a hotel, the Madison in Alton or the St. James in Edwardsville, and paired with strangers who took them home.

*Edwardsville Intelligencer*, May 9, 1884:

**Mr. E. Wright, agent for the New York Juvenile Asylum, and Miss Cronein, his assistant, arrived in town yesterday with a company of children (twenty-five boys and two girls) from the above named place, for the purpose of disposing of them amid good families, mostly farmers. People flocked to town from a radius of twenty miles, and the supply did not equal the demand. They are taken on trial for four weeks, at the end of which time indentures are executed, binding the boys until twenty-one and the girls until eighteen. The gentleman will return again in about four weeks with another supply.**

Their new families were expected to provide moral and intellectual guidance while teaching the orphans to farm the land (boys) or care for the home (girls). After a trial period, if

all went well, an indenture was signed. This was meant to protect the children by providing a legal responsibility to the children, but, in fact, was harmful for the children, especially the boys. Contracts called for the children to remain with the placement until the age of 18 for girls and 21 for boys. This meant the farms where the boys were placed received free labor for at least three years beyond when these young men could have been out making their own way. In later years the age for boys was reduced to 18 years. The contracts also required that at the end of the indenture, the foster family would provide girls with a new set of clothes, a Bible and \$50. Boys received \$100 but were required to work three years longer than the girls.



*The St. James Hotel was one of the Madison County sites where orphan train children were taken for distribution. (MCHS)*

Despite the negative connotations of NYJA's name, the children held there were not serious criminals. Some may have been brought there after stealing food to prevent starvation, but most were just "street children" who had no one to care for them. Some were brought there by their parents who could not provide for them. All of them, if they had parents, were not sent West without permission from those parents.

Approximately three-fourths of the children were boys and the average age was about 11-years-old. Statistics in the NYJA's annual reports show that the majority of children were born in Germany or America, but there were also children from Irish, English and other ethnic backgrounds. In 1884, NYJA statistics showed that 15% of the children were true orphans (no living parent), 53% were half orphans and 25% had both parents still living (7% were unknown). These statistics varied little from year-to-year.

Many of the orphans adapted well and became like members of the family that fostered them. Others had difficulties adjusting. Some families were incredible mentors, and others, as can be well-imagined, were less than ideal. For example, some would find a reason to break the indenture, ask that the child be taken from the home, a year to six months prior to the end of the indenture in order to avoid the payout required at the end of the indenture.

Overall, the program provided good homes to many children who often stayed in the Midwest and took up farming or other professions. But many also could not wait to return home to New York where their families still resided.

There were some complaints on the home front about the orphans brought to Madison County, as can be seen in this editorial in the Alton Telegraph from June 4, 1886:

**We do not want to appear cruel, still, it is hardly right and fair to expect Madison county people to take care of**



## ORPHAN TRAINS (CONT.)

foreign orphans. Of the six children brought here last week from a New York asylum two were Italians, one English, and two German-Jewish. We have some children in Madison County who could be provided with good homes. Why not give them the first chance?

Newspapers would often report the names of families who wanted children and who received them. In a May 1896 article the *Intelligencer* reported that the children were given to the following families:

**Alfred L. Dolbow, Wanda, girl**  
**W. E. Stahlhut, north of Edwardsville, girl**  
**Martin Drda, Edwardsville, boy**  
**Christ R. Schmidt, Liberty Prairie, boy**  
**Z. B. Owens, Liberty Prairie, boy**  
**Fred Unterbrinck, Moro, boy**

The same article gave a list of 33 families that wanted to take in children. Nineteen were requesting boys and 14 wanted girls.

Asylum children were brought to Madison County periodically between 1883 and 1904 when NYJA moved their placement efforts to Iowa. So far as is known now, there were approximately three dozen children from New York City who found homes in Madison County communities.

During that same time period, Madison County also took in orphaned children from the Children's Aid Societies of Chicago and St. Louis, often with the assistance of local ministers. It's no wonder that the orphanage in Alton was crowded.

Many of the children who came on the Orphan Trains are unknown because there is no existing census for 1890 where they could be identified with their foster families. By 1900, many had aged out and moved back to New York or to other areas of the Midwest. Others may have moved on to a different foster family than originally assigned. The best source for learning about these Madison County children are the records of the New York Juvenile Asylum.

## EDWARD LUCKERT - A BOY FROM THE ORPHAN TRAIN

Edward Luckert arrived in Madison County from New York in 1883 and was placed with a farm family in Nameoki Township near Granite City. The name of the family is unknown, but Edward described his life with them in the letter shown at right.

Edward was 16 when he arrived in Illinois. In 1892 he married the daughter of a minister, Margaret Koenig, in Gasconade County, Missouri. Although Edward had learned the trade of farming, he would work most of his adult life at the National Enamel Stamping Company (NESCO) in Granite City. The Luckerts had four children. Edward died in 1947 and is buried in St. John's Cemetery in Granite City.

EDWARD LUCKERT.—Came to Illinois in 1883, then aged sixteen years. He writes: "I am still in my first home. I am treated like their own children, and I am very well pleased with my home. I am making good progress in farming. I thought at first I could never learn it, but I can do almost any kind of farm-work now. I am attending school at present. I have learned to speak and read German, and I attend a German Sunday-school. I am trying to lead a Christian life. I thank the Asylum for all that it has done for me. I did not want to come West, but I am thankful that I did come. I am now seventeen, and I have four more years yet to serve, and I shall stay with my employer until my term expires. I read the letters in the Report with much interest."

*Above is a letter from Edward Luckert to the New York Juvenile Asylum in 1884 when he was 17 years old. It was published in the NYJA's Annual Report.*

## LETTERS FROM ORPHANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

One of the ways children who arrived via the Orphan Train can be identified is through letters published in the annual reports of the New York Juvenile Asylum.



### **FROM MR. LOUIS METZ, HIGHLAND - REPORT OF JOSEPH NUTT, AGED FIFTEEN, WHO CAME TO ILLINOIS IN 1884.**

Joseph's health is good, and his conduct good. He attended school five months last term, and he is very good in his studies. He has been nearly through Ray's Fifth Part, and in other branches he is equally good. He is large and strong, and not afraid to paddle his own canoe. He got a letter from his brother in New York a few weeks ago, and since then he has been rather homesick, but I try to keep him in good spirits, and we get along right well.



### **WILLIAM ROGERS, AGED TEN, CAME TO ILLINOIS IN 1899**

I will write you a letter about my circumstances. I am in a

very good place, and Mr. and Mrs. Henke are like father and mother to me. They are Germans and I am learning that language. I can say the Lord's Prayer and some other prayers in German, and I can write German some, and next winter I will attend the German school. I attend the German church, and I am learning a piece to speak next Christmas night, and I can say it now. I would not find a better home. My guardians are very nice, and they do not allow me to tell lies or do anything wrong, and I am very happy. Prairietown, ILL.



### **FROM D. B. GILLHAM, UPPER ALTON, ILL. - REPORT OF CHARLES A. HAUSER, AGED FIFTEEN YEARS, WHO CAME TO ILLINOIS IN 1884**

Charles is still with us. He attends school and his teacher gives a good report of his diligence, deportment, and scholarship. He has greatly improved in efficiency and home work. He is quiet, well behaved, and gentlemanly in his manners, and has made many friends.



# Madison County Historical Society

*Opening Doors to Madison County History*

801 N. Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

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## MCHS CALENDAR

**SUNDAY, JUNE 9**

**2 P.M.**

**Eastern European Immigrants:**

*Traditions from Home*

**Presenter: Marvin Moehle**

**SUNDAY, JUNE 30**

**2 P.M.**

**Founding of New Philadelphia**

**Presenters: Gerald McWorter &**

**Katie Williams-McWorter**

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 11**

**2 P.M.**

**The Wood River Massacre**

**Presenter:**

**Museum Superintendent Jon Parkin**

**SPEAKER'S SERIES LOCATION:**

**IMMANUEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**800 N. MAIN STREET, EDWARDSVILLE,  
(LOWER LEVEL; ENTRANCE ON SOUTH SIDE)**

## LETTERS FROM ORPHANS (CONT FROM PAGE 7)

**FROM THOMAS SUMMERVILLE, BUNKER HILL, ILL. - REPORT OF WILLIAM F. McDOWELL, AGED TWELVE YEARS, WHO CAME TO ILLINOIS IN 1883.**

After reporting that William, although not perfect, was doing well and satisfied in his home, Summerville, from nearby Macoupin County, said, "I am sorry that so many boys here have been disappointed, but I think the boys were not altogether at fault. The great trouble with some people is that they expect too much from the children."

## MARY'S RESEARCH TIP: SAVE IT NOW!

Documentation is one of the most important factors in research. With the explosion of digital copies of original records available online, it is easy to think that the record will always be accessible. However, as

laws change, the digital copy you find today of that record may be gone tomorrow. Be sure to save it or print it when you find it and record where you found it.

## IS THIS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER?

If there is a red dot on your mailing label, then you have not renewed your membership in MCHS for 2019 and, sadly, this will be your last newsletter. It breaks our heart, but to continue mailings when memberships have not been renewed, would break the bank! Please renew today!

You can renew online at: <https://www.madcohistory.org/membership/>, in person at the Madison County Archival Library, or by mail to MCHS, P. O. Box 422, Edwardsville, IL, 62025, or for information, call 618-656-1294.