



FALL EVENTS DREW GOOD CROWDS



The Belleville Stags beat the St. Louis Brown Stockings 14-8 in an 1860s era ball game on October 15. (Scott Oliva)

MCHS had a full fall calendar with the Family History Walk, vintage ball game, a new paranormal event and Dining in History. All were a success and the paranormal event even had to add an extra day to the schedule to accommodate everyone that was interested.

The ball game proved especially popular with over 200 fans enjoying the entertaining show put on by the two teams, including a batting practice where everyone was invited to participate. Incidentally, if you brought a baseball glove to the event, we have one at the MCHS Archival Library's lost and found.

Below, William Krause is portraying Gov. Edward

Coles at the original court house square as part of the Family History Walk in September. Participants also met local resident Matilda Gerke (1926), surveyor Beniah Robinson (1840), and saw a short play about Gov. Ninian Edwards.

The Living History events (family walk and ball game) were so successful that the Society plans to expand on the concept next year.



OUR MADISON COUNTY STORIES

Editor's note: After a request for stories in the last newsletter, more than a dozen came through with a variety of interesting, informative tales that tell of earlier times. These stories remain in the style they were written with light editing if needed for clarity. The first two stories tell of the formative years at SIUE.

EARLY DAYS AT SIUE

By Mike Reinhardt

After graduating from Edwardsville High School in June of 1964, I was the first member of our immediate family to attend college. For financial reasons and convenience, the new Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville was my choice. There was one problem...the university buildings didn't exist. It was in the process of being built on 2,600 acres west of Edwardsville. Until it opened on a limited basis in the fall of 1965, classes were held at the former Shurtleff College in Upper Alton or at Rock Junior High School in East St. Louis.



The former Hardbeck home on Bluff Road was an early location of Lovejoy Library. Homes like this one on university property became known as "tract houses." (SIUE)

At the end of August 1964, I started my employment as a student worker at the "library." It was in the former home of the Hardbeck family on Bluff Road, about half-way between Poag Road and Whiteside Cemetery (Road). George Hardbeck was the first landowner to sell his property. As the new university developed, the different departments of the university were quartered in former homes located throughout the newly purchased land. These were called tract houses.

My pay was \$1 per hour. There were no restrictions on the number of hours a student could work. Tuition per quarter was approximately \$90. I had an Illinois State

SIUE - cont .page 4

Hours

Wed - Fri, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sunday 1-4 p.m.

Madison County History Museum
and Library
801 N. Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Contact us:

Library: 618-656-7569
Society: 618-656-1294
Email: info@madcohistory.org

RECENT NEWS

The Educational Outreach Committee met recently and has a large variety of programs planned for next year.

The schedule includes four Speaker Series events, a repeat of the Summer History Camp, a Trivia Night, and a two-day Living History event with a Chautauqua, vintage baseball game and Family History Walk all rolled into one Fall weekend. There will be workshops, more paranormal events, our annual Dining in History event, and more.

Looking at the schedule of events, it's clear that additional hands would make the load lighter. We always tell

LIBRARY CLOSURES

Please note the library will be closed on the following dates:

Nov 6 MCHS Annual Meeting
Nov 25-28 Thanksgiving
Dec 24-25 Christmas
Jan 1 New Years Day

people that their financial support is enough; however, if you are also willing and able to volunteer, we would be very grateful.

For example, there will be four MCHS Speaker Series events where we need a regular crew, 3-4

people, to help set-up, take down, and greet people as they come in.

If you are able to volunteer for one or more of our events during the coming year, please call 618-656-1294.

CHECK FROM EDWARDSVILLE MASONIC LODGE

MCHS offers a hearty "Thank you!" to the Edwardsville Masonic Lodge for holding a breakfast to benefit MCHS. Included in this picture are: Front (from left) MCHS President Fred Faust receiving the \$635 check from Dave Hutt, Treasurer of the Edwardsville Masonic Lodge; MCHS Board

Members Carol Manning and Robert Clouse; second row (l-r) MCHS Board Members Candace Ladd and Cindy Reinhardt; back (l-r) MCHS Board Members Jeff Skoblow and Arnold Meyer and in the center Jeff Cassens, Junior Warden of the Edwardsville Masonic Lodge.



SPECIAL VOLUNTEER PROJECT

We are pleased to announce that the Archival Library is hosting staff from Family Search who are digitizing the probate records in our collection. When completed, these records will be found and viewed on familysearch.org.

For those not familiar with the popular genealogy website, familysearch.org is a database of public records, much like ancestry.com, but free.

Family Search is doing the work onsite and at no charge to the Society, but needs the help of volunteers to prep the documents. This involves unfolding the documents to lay them flat and repairing them (if necessary) with special archival tape.

It takes approximately a day to prep a box of probate files, and since the scanner can digitize about ten boxes a week, extra hands are needed to prep these files. There are 1300 boxes of probate files.

The prep doesn't require heavy concentration, so you can easily chat with fellow volunteers while you flatten and mend documents. Given space restrictions, Archives Librarian Mary Rose would like to establish a schedule of volunteers, so volunteer coordinator Candace Ladd is taking care of that. If you can volunteer, please call 618-656-1294 or email info@madcohistory.org.

Volunteers have worked on a variety of projects over the last two months, but as of last week, as many volunteers as possible have been redirected to work on the probate project to make it run smoothly.

RECENT VOLUNTEERS

THANK YOU!

Donna Bardon
Craig Becker
LaVerne Bloemker
Betty Byrd
Gary Denué
Lynn Engelman
Gary Forshaw
John Harvey
Kat Housewright
Emily Klingensmith
Cheri Kuhn
Cara Lane
Marty Lane
Scott Oliva
Mindy Phillips
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Mike Reinhardt
Connie Royston
Mary Westerhold

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

– Helen Keller

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PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor
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VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the Museum or the 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 a MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our website, or at the Library.

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

PROGRESS AT THE WEIR HOUSE

Editor's Note: Progress in restoring the museum building has been painfully slow, but the goal of a newly designed and renovated museum building is in sight! Below is a report from Operations Manager, Robert Clouse.

As a recap on progress in the restoration project, all five front windows on the second floor have been completed, including storm windows. Work continues by Kurt Ackerman's company, Old House Restoration, on the four front façade main floor windows. That work is supported by grant funding from the City of Edwardsville's Façade Program and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Development (DECO). The windows have been removed and are at his shop for restoration. This work was previously approved by the Edwardsville Historic Preservation Commission.

A preconstruction planning meeting with Board Members, Pfund Construction and Foresight Services was held to address the roof issues. Based on engineering and architectural review by Foresight Services, it has been recommended that the entire roof structure of the original building be replaced, including rafters. Foresight is producing plans and specifications for the roof replacement and hopes to be completed with those documents in late October 2022.

We continue to collect some water in buckets from roof leaks in the front and rear of the house after significant rain events, but later summer and early fall has been exceptionally dry weather. No water has been noted in the basement following even recent heavy rains.

Kurt Ackerman and Mathias Lunt work on Weir House window restoration. The upper windows have all been completed. (Reinhardt)



Kurt Ackerman and Mathias Lunt work on Weir House window restoration. The upper windows have all been completed. (Reinhardt)

Funds to replace at least a portion (exact percentage currently unknown) of the roof will be provided from the DCEO grant.

Discussions remain underway to determine the most cost-effective construction method of replacing the roof as well as to assure that water does not penetrate the building during construction.

Ned Giberson will begin restoring the front entry way (door, elliptical fanlight, side light panels, and false columns) and the side door to what was Dr. Weir's office (NE corner of house). This work includes restoration/refinishing of the exterior and interior of the fenestrations.

The front entryway is the key architectural feature of Federal period buildings, and certainly the most distinctive part of the Weir House façade.

Ned Giberson's work comes with high approval ratings. Giberson's work will also be partially funded by the Façade and DCEO grants. This work was also previously approved by the Edwardsville Historic Preservation Commission.

Because the Weir House is on the National Register of Historic Places, the DCEO grant requires approval of the work on the Weir House from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). That documentation was submitted on October 18, and SHPO has 30 days to undertake the review.

Previous restoration work, already completed, includes removal of exterior paint, restoration of the back porch and most of the windows. An all new HVAC system was installed and many smaller projects. One of the first projects completed was a new roof to stop leaks, but as stated above, the new roof proved to be inadequate. This issue, plus the halt to fundraising events during COVID, have been the major issues that have slowed the renovation project.



A view of the front entry taken in 1965 when the Weir House first opened as a museum. (MCHS)

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER SPONSOR: TOM & MOIRA (KELLEHER) LAFAVER

IN HONOR OF THE KELLEHER AND GERKE FAMILIES

The Kelleher and Gerke families came together in 1953 when Mary Jean Gerke (1930-2006) married Joseph Thomas Kelleher (1928-2001). Both had deep roots in Madison County.

The Irish Kelleher family was from St. Louis. In the 1920s, one of their sons, another Joseph Thomas Kelleher (1897-1980), moved to Madison County where he married Mildred Brockmeier (1900-1983) in 1923. The Brockmeiers were a pioneer Madison County family, arriving here well before 1850.

The Gerkes were also a pioneer family. William Peter Jerome Gerke (1808-1840), a German immigrant, married Lavina Blakeman (1815-1836) in 1832. Lavina's father, Curtis Blakeman, was one of the founders of Marine, Illinois.

SPONSOR A NEWSLETTER

One of the Society's major expenses each year is printing and postage expenses for the *MCHS News*. The Society looks for a \$500 sponsor for each issue (6 annually). MCHS is very grateful to the Lafavers for sponsoring this expanded issue that tells individual stories from Madison County families.

Sponsors can use their space to promote a business, congratulate a family member on a special occasion, or create a tribute to a special person. The \$500 donation is roughly the cost of for each eight-page newsletter.

The January newsletter, on the Mississippi River Festival, still needs funding. Call 618-656-1294 if you would like to sponsor a 2023 newsletter.

Teachers' Scholarship, so I paid about \$18. We received a monthly pay-check. Since I started in August after the payroll had been turned in, I didn't get my first paycheck until November 1.

But I didn't care since my employment was in Receiving, a section of the Order Department. It was my "dream" job. Boxes of books, new and old, arrived every day in preparation for the opening of Lovejoy Library. Christmas couldn't top this. An added bonus was that I could keep the dust jackets of the books.

The physical work site wasn't as ideal as the job. The Receiving and Cataloging Departments were located behind the farmhouse in what had previously been a garage and prior to that a stable. The arriving boxes were stored in the section that had been a smokehouse. We had heat in the winter, but no air conditioning in the summer. However, we

would roll the garage/stable doors aside to let the breeze blowing across the American Bottom into our office. That allowed us to see and smell the abundant iris that lined the road down to the barn where everyone parked. A source of excitement in this bucolic setting was the occasional return of a snake to its former lair.

Remnants of the Hardbeck farmhouse are still there. A few bricks are scattered where our "office" was. What must have been a cistern is at the top of the steep hill. A huge elm tree is still growing, despite all the scars on its trunk. Out front, there are three stone steps which used to lead from Bluff Road to the house. There is one thing that hasn't changed. You can still sit on those steps and look west at the plowed fields and distant woods across Bluff Road. However, behind you is the campus of SIUE, once considered the stepchild of the Carbondale campus, which now has a larger enrollment than its parent.

PRODUCING AN EARLY SIUE YEARBOOK

By Donna Bardon

The SIU Edwardsville Campus opened for classes Sept. 23, 1965, after nearly a decade of planning and construction. As a student, I was thrilled by the prospect of the beautiful campus and by the opportunities to take new classes and meet new people.

As fate would have it, I was named editor of the 1966 *Muse* yearbook, which gave me a unique position to experience it all! The yearbook staff was enthusiastic about the fresh possibilities of telling the story of the new campus; however, the reality was confusion - everyone on campus had a new phone number and a new office; student organizations had new presidents; meeting places were still under construction. Every task was more difficult than anticipated.

The yearbook staff of 18 students worked with portable typewriters and cardboard boxes of papers until office space was completed. Most weekends were devoted to the yearbook. The staff was determined to tell the story of the new campus and capture the excitement of the experience. The challenging work paid off when The Associated Collegiate Press awarded an All-American Award to the 1966 *Muse*, one of only 12 college yearbooks to receive the prestigious award.



The yearbook ended with a photo essay and these words:

AS CLASSES BEGAN AT EDWARDSVILLE...

We went on tours...

But still got lost...

We commuted by car...

Yet, at times, had to walk...

Our classrooms weren't finished...

Instructors carried their offices with them...

We ate from vending machines...

And relaxed in the out-of-doors.

Sometimes, we were serious...

Sometimes we clowned...

We're setting our own traditions. We're taking these changes in our stride to build a great institution.

The Muse staff: Pictured front row from left: Bonnie Mueller, Peggy Neff, John Cwan, Mike Lowery, Janet Witt. Back row: Carol Jean Loebach, Donna Yates, Shirley Fuller, Harriet Landwehrmeier, Mary Church, Ginger Dustman. Not pictured: Mildred Arnold, Advisor; Tom Bardon, Kathleen Barton, Barbara Bean, Jim Bridwell, Linda Clemons, Richard Steinbruegge, and Barbara Walter. (SIUE Muse)

TIMES OF TRANSITION FOR GOSHEN ROAD

by Bev Meyer

As I recall 70 years ago, our well-known Goshen Road was "out in the country" away from the hustle and bustle of the small-town life of Edwardsville. The many, many farms located along Goshen Road were operated by the ancestors of county landowners, William Take and his son-in-law Louis Bode. The land belonged to and was farmed by Giese, Knecht, Holtmann and Bode (just to name a few)—all part of an extended family. Goshen School was there too and provided the place for the neighborhood children's education until the fall of 1954 when the LeClaire School opened on Franklin Avenue and the younger children started riding a bus to school.

Of course, as the older generation leaves this earth for a better place, children move away to pursue their careers, property gets sold and then developed into subdivisions, a new up-to-date grade school and middle school, Meyer YMCA, Plummer Park, hospital expansion, restaurant, bank, I-55 Corridor, and the list goes on. However, there remain some hints of history—the Old Goshen School is still there as a private residence and some of the ancestors continue to produce corn, beans, and hay on their farm land. Now Goshen Road serves as a busy thoroughfare for our Edwardsville/Glen Carbon community as development and expansion continue to flourish. A time of transition continues.

FROM THE HISTORIANS

Editors note: The next stories are not personal memoir, but are the result of research by some fine local historians.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR AN AFRICAN AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

By Charlotte E. Johnson

The First Baptist Church of Upper Alton, Illinois, was organized April 25, 1830, by Rev. John Mason Peck, president of Shurtleff College.

In 1833, there were 40 members. Thirteen of those members were dismissed to establish the First Baptist Church of Lower Alton, Illinois. In 1834, Rev. Ebenezer Rodgers became the pastor of both the Upper Alton and Lower Alton First Baptist Churches.

It was at the Lower Alton First Baptist Church that he met a Black man, Alfred Richardson, and his family.

Alfred Richardson, the oldest son of Elijah Richardson, was born a free man. In 1834, Elijah moved his family to Alton, Illinois, from Memphis, Tennessee. Soon after moving to Alton, they began attending Lower Alton First Baptist Church, but felt unwelcome. (This was during the time of Elijah Lovejoy's death.) In 1836, Alfred and his family attended Sunday church and were concerned about how they were treated. Alfred told a friend, "We are not going to that church anymore."

Alfred asked the pastor, Rev. Ebenezer Rodgers, for help in organizing a Colored Baptist Church in Alton. Rodgers introduced Alfred to a "pray group" who called themselves the "African American Mission Freedmen."



Rev. John Livingston
(Jessie Mae Finley)

Rodgers invited Rev. John Livingston, the first and only colored ordained minister in the State of Illinois at the time, to listen to their concerns. He was not sure if Alfred's group really understood or were ready to support a church. He left them with instructions to pray about it and to think about what they wanted a church to be.

In 1837, Rev. Livingston returned for a second meeting, to serve as a moderator of the group. After discussion, the group was organized into "the African Baptist Church and Friends of Humanities." The group met

at the home of Charles Edwards, in the 1200 block of East Fourth Street in Alton. Those present included both white (w) and colored (c) people interested in the church:

- ◆ Rev. Ebenezer Rodgers (w), pastor of First Baptist Churches of Upper Alton and Lower Alton.
- ◆ Mr. and Mrs. Charles Edwards (c), hosts of the meeting
- ◆ Alfred Richardson (c) who had requested a church. He made his living as a blacksmith.
- ◆ Rev. James Lemen Sr. (w) who represented the group known as "Christ Churches for Humanities." He had moved to Illinois at the request of then Pres. Thomas Jefferson to help prepare for Illinois' entering the Union as a free state.
- ◆ Rev. James Lemen Jr. (w), pastor and builder of Bethel Baptist Church in Collinsville, Illinois.
- ◆ Capt. James Ogle (w), father-in-law of James Lemen Sr., moved to Illinois before James Lemen. He immediately freed all his slaves. The First Colored Baptist Church that Rev. Livingston organized, Salem Baptist Church of Ogle Creek, was with these freed people. It was on Capt. Ogles' farm near O'Fallon, Illinois, in St. Clair County.
- ◆ William Charles Barton (c), a member of Salem Baptist on Ogle Creek who had married one of the freed ladies named Penelope. In 1815, they had to register as freed people of color.
- ◆ William Calvin Johnston (c), a member of the African American Mission Freedmen, was a stonemason originally from Scotland. He is the one who buried Elijah Lovejoy.
- ◆ Edward White, a member of the Lower Alton First Baptist Church, worked as a watchman at the glassworks.
- ◆ John Anderson (c), a printer in the office of Elijah Lovejoy, served as clerk for the meeting. He was a member of the African American Mission Freedmen.
- ◆ William Merriman was a member of the Salem Baptist Church of Ogle Creek.



William Charles Barton
(Wilbert Barton)

WHERE DID HAMEL'S NAMESAKE GO?

by Laverne Bloemker

Andrew J. Hammel, also known simply as A.J., bought two military warrants for land grants in 1848 from veterans who served with his brother Nelson. The grants were for a total of 320 acres located in Township 5 North Range 7 West of the Third Principal Meridian in Madison County, Illinois.

By 1854, A.J. and his family were living in Township 5-7. He was very active in buying and selling plats of land, establishing several businesses including a general store and hotel and a flouring mill. By 1866, A.J. was already interested in the proposed railroads and their expansion westward. In 1872 he sold his property in Illinois and left the state.

Research has shown A. J.'s children living in Springfield, Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas. A. J. died in October 1876 and his wife Mary Jane died in December 1876 according to records from his son George. However, the location of their final resting place is not known.

Andrew Jackson Hammel, whose surname was shortened to Hamel, died not knowing that Hamel Township, the Village of Hamel, Hamel Avenue and many businesses would bear his name.

Editor's Note: The next three stories are from Keith Veizer who grew up in Granite City's Lincoln Place.

VEIZER, VIZER, WIEZER, WIESER

According to my father's story, four Jozsef Vizers, including my grandfather, came to work in Granite City and live in Lincoln Place in the early years of the 20th century. All of them had emigrated from Kompolt, which is a historically Germanic village in northeastern Hungary near the famous old city of Eger, whose citadel held off a Turkish army in the late 1500s, but fell to a second invasion a generation later.



The author's grandfather, Jozsef Vizer (Keith Veizer)

All four of those Jozsef Vizers worked at the Commonwealth (later General Steel). Every working day, the four Joes walked up the modest rise that creates "The Hollow" (as my father usually referred to Lincoln Place), then turned to the right along the railroad tracks that led to the foundry's main gate. My father said that because of the multitude of Joe Vizers, there was confusion every day mail was delivered, and every Friday that pay envelopes were handed out at the foundry.

Was there a meeting after work to resolve the confusion at one of the Hungarian taverns on Pacific Avenue (changed to Niedringhaus in the 1940s)? Or, did each of the Joes solve the problem in his own way, choosing a spelling that would distinguish him and his family?

My dad did not have an answer to these questions, but he said that in Kompolt there was no such problem, because families were known by the father's nickname. My grandfather's nickname was "Kisbegrö" which meant "little jug" in their German-influenced Hungarian dialect. At a wide and sturdy 5'4", he was, indeed, built like a little jug. He also liked a few shots from a jug washed down with a bucket of beer after a long day in the foundry, so that nickname lived on in Lincoln Place long after "Jozsef Vizer" became "Joe Veizer."

PIG-KILLING – 1915

One of my father's most vivid childhood memories of growing up in Lincoln Place was the annual late fall pig-killing (disznööles in Hungarian). It was quite a party, and everyone in the extended family had work to do.

The men strung up the pig from a thick tree branch and "stuck it," or cut its throat, catching its blood in a tub and, then burning off its hair. Finally, they butchered the pig into bacon and the other prime cuts, and extracted the lard.

Margaret Elek Nonn says in her SIUE interview, "I don't know if you want to hear this, but my job was stirring the blood...My mother would fry the meat, and then she would put it in this crock pot and put lard all over it and keep it for the winter." Women ground up the rest of the pig and added spices to make sausage (kobasz and hurka or blood sausage).

In her interview, Theresa Vivod Petras recalled that the pig was slaughtered in the early morning, and then that pig's hair was burned off with straw. She adds, "They used to cut the ears off. That was the best tasting."

The little boys' job (my dad's) at the pig-killing was to submit to a thorough foot-washing before being lowered into a big pot to stomp and dance on the salted and shredded cabbage, helping it to become sauerkraut. As I recently learned from a sauerkraut connoisseur, the purpose of all this youthful stomping and dancing was to make sure that the cabbage was flattened and on the bottom of the pot, completely covered by the liquid. Otherwise, the fermentation would be imperfect and the sauerkraut would soon spoil. Dad must have enjoyed the exercise, the sauerkraut itself, and even more the attention, because he so often told his kids about the joy of making sauerkraut.

CHRIS STOYANOFF 'S BAKERY

On the corner of a lot dominated by my dad's Standard Oil service station in the late 1940s was a small and inconspicuous brick building. There was no sign hanging above the door and no printing on the small front window proclaiming the name of the proprietor or the nature of the business. Yet this humble business place was one of the great and unifying institutions of the Lincoln Place neighborhood.

No sign was needed because everyone knew that toiling therein was Chris the Baker. A blind man could have found his way there by following his nose to Chris's wood-fired oven, where earthly dough was transformed into manna from heaven.

Throughout the interviews of elderly residents and former residents of Lincoln Place conducted 20 years ago by SIUE graduate history students, Chris and his bakery were mentioned almost as often as the joys and benefits of the "Clubhouse," the community house that was the center of education, recreation, and social life of this immigrant neighborhood for decades.

According to Millie Todoroff Chandler, Saturday was the day Chris "donated for the entire neighborhood. He baked bread; he gave it away to everyone. In the summer," she continues, "we didn't want to heat the kitchen. My dad would make some stew and take it there on Saturday (to be cooked)."

I don't recall Chris baking cakes or doughnuts or anything but bread. But that did not matter to me since his crispy Hungarian bread, rescued from his oven mid-morning at just the right moment on wide, long-handled paddles, was tastier than either. (Mary Asadorian asserts that, "Chris's paddle was so big you could put a child on it and shove it (into the oven)."

Later in the day, Chris made a darker round loaf, and last would come the Armenian peda, a long, crusty, fluffy bread good for sandwiches or with soup. Each European nationality in Lincoln Place was supported by its own particular "staff of life," created by Chris who was, I think, Macedonian.

This lean and diminutive baker in a white apron with a cleverly folded sheet of newspaper for a hat seemed like a very old man to me when I was a child. Long after we moved to Nameoki, Dad and I were still bringing home warm bread from Chris's carefully wrapped in newspapers every Saturday morning. However, by the late 1950s, the bakery was no more. For many who grew up in Lincoln Place, though, it is still a vivid and unforgettable memory that embraces all their senses.

THE GREAT LINCOLN PLACE FIRE

By Eddie and Norma Asadorian

Thursday, September 17, 1953, was a day which gained national news coverage for the little immigrant neighborhood known as Lincoln Place in Granite City, Illinois. In the evening on that fateful day, the "Great Lincoln Place Fire," destroyed nine buildings, killed two people, injured nine individuals, left over two hundred people homeless, and caused more than \$200,000 (1953 dollars) in property damages.

The spectacular fire started on the south side of Niedringhaus Avenue and rapidly became a raging fire fanned by strong winds which shot flames 150 feet into the air, according to an account in the Granite City Press Record. Granite City Fire Chief Elijah King told reporters from the Press Record that several thousand feet of fire hose lying in the street were burned and made useless by the intense heat and flames.

Although seven local fire departments answered the call for assistance, a lack of water pressure at the Lincoln Place fire hydrants made it seem inevitable that the entire Lincoln Place neighborhood was destined to be devoured by the fire. Strong winds pushed the leaping flames from one building to the next on the south side of Niedringhaus Avenue and then carried the sparks and flames across to the north side of the street, spreading from building to building there, as well.

Reports at the time attributed the start of the conflagration to a small rubbish fire near a shed by a scrap lumber yard, but no one seemed to know how it started. Decades later, at a public program organized by the Lincoln Place Heritage Association, Mary Kambarian Asadorian spoke about the "Great Lincoln Place Fire."

After her presentation, a man from the audience rose and said he had information about how the fire started. He told the audience that when he was a little boy, he was playing with two older boys from the neighborhood. They were playing with matches by Malik's Lumber Yard. He said they struck the matches which caught the rubbish on fire near the shed by the lumber yard. Knowing they would be in trouble if caught, he said they were frightened and ran away. Consequently, no one knew those little boys had started the fire.

By the time someone noticed the rubbish fire and called Fire Chief King, the wind had taken the fire into the shed. According to the Press Record, the Fire Chief reported he "...immediately radioed police headquarters for a department to be dispatched to the scene, and as the flames spread to the shed, he borrowed a dime to call out another department."

Nine people, including firefighters, were injured during the fire and two individuals succumbed to the flames. The deceased included Mrs. Rosetta Lewis and Mr. Pedro Espinoza. Initially, Mrs. Lewis and her husband, Alfred Lewis, escaped the rooming house where they resided, but Mrs. Lewis ran back into the burning building to retrieve her "...\$44 old-age pension check..." and Mr. Lewis recounted later, "That's the last I saw of her."

In a twist of fate, Mrs. Lewis was the mother of Edison Phelps, Chief of the Long Lake Volunteer Fire Department

in Pontoon Beach, whose firefighters came to battle the blaze. Mrs. Phelps' body was recovered from the rubble of the boarding house. Pedro Espinoza also died in the inferno when he ran back into the boarding house to recover some of his belongings. Pedro Munoz told the Press Record he saw Espinoza and yelled at him not to go back into the rooming house. Munoz said the stairway was already "...a mass of flames..." when Espinoza went back in the building.

Among some of the buildings damaged by the fire were boarding houses, a bookstore, a pool room, a coffee house, various houses and sheds, a dry-cleaning shop, a barber shop, and Abie's Tavern, owned by Abie (Abraham) Kambarian. Years later, in an interview with the author, Mary Kambarian Asadorian, daughter of Abie Kambarian, recounted how her father's tavern, dry cleaning shop, and their family home behind the tavern were all annihilated by the fire. Like other families affected by the fire, she said her family lost everything they owned, including family heirlooms. They escaped with only the clothes they were wearing.

Harrowing images in the Press Record showing the destruction left by the fire confirmed the total devastation wrought by the inferno. Because of the inability of the firefighters to get enough water pressure to deliver sufficient water to douse the flames, the widespread fear was that the entire Lincoln Place neighborhood would be leveled by the fire.

Granite City Fire Chief Elijah King told the Press Record "...the lack of water pressure which severely hampered fire fighting (sic) efforts...in Lincoln Place resulted from a 'dead end' of the hydrant water line in Lincoln Place and that the first pumper to connect onto a hydrant drained off most of the water." Consequently, there was little the firefighters could do but watch the fire consume one building after another. Residents of Lincoln Place resorted to trying to spray water from their garden hoses onto their homes to save them from the advancing fire.

People living close to the fire line evacuated their homes in a hurry and some tried to save their belongings by carrying them out into the street. As the call for help went out to surrounding fire companies, one group which came to assist was the fire department from the Granite City Army Engineer Depot, located at the west end of Niedringhaus Avenue. According to Mary Kambarian Asadorian, it was the firefighters and their pumper truck with its own water supply from the Army Depot who eventually halted the spread of the fire, thus saving the rest of the Lincoln Place neighborhood.

In the aftermath of the fire, help came from several sources. The local Red Cross and Salvation Army set up a disaster center at the Lincoln Place Community Center and distributed clothing, furniture, and household supplies. The local YMCA provided shelter for some of the survivors. Neighbors and families also came to the aid of those left destitute and homeless, helping them to find places to live, often with relatives. As families began to build their lives anew, the Great Lincoln Place Fire forever left its ashy imprint on the lives of the survivors of this memorable conflagration.

COLLINSVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL AND LIBRARIES

By Mary Sue Schusky

In the 1940s, my sister and I walked to Webster School and home for lunch every day. I well remember the fragrant aroma that wafted up the hill from the Suppinger (Catsup Bottle) plant filling the air at the 159 intersection of Morrison and Church Streets. After Labor Day it always signaled "back to school."

Our teachers, all women except for physical education, were strict but fair. My grandfather, Charles Dorris, served as Superintendent of Schools for many years, though the original school building, across from the City Hall, has been replaced. Webster School remains the first and oldest school in Collinsville. (The oldest school building is now Jefferson School.)

Another regular walk was to the Collinsville Memorial Public Library. We loved the librarian, Myrtle Bowers, who

helped us select our books to take home. Built in the 1930s on West Main Street, of American colonial style architecture, the library has been enlarged with three additions including a community room. Both my father, Irving Dilliard, and my grandfather, Charles Dorris, served as Presidents of the Library Board and Mark Schusky, my son, is the current Board President.

My last memory is walking to the Miner's Theater with our mother, Dorothy Dorris Dilliard, from our home in the Dr. Henry Wing house at the corner of Church and Aurora Streets. I don't remember buying "treats to eat" – we were always caught up in the movie. The Miner's Theater was built in 1918 with a one percent assessment taken from each coal miner's check.

The Miner's Theater is on the National Register of Historic places and is in the process of restoration. It is open for public events on a limited basis.

AN ACT OF KINDNESS

By Cheryl Hoppes Watkins

During the late 1920's, my Irish grandfather, Thomas W. Hoppes had to leave his wife and three children in the back country outside of Dover, Tennessee, because he heard there was work in Madison County, Illinois.

He had been a blacksmith in Erin, Tennessee. Some said he was the strongest man in the county. He eventually made his way to Collinsville where he found work at the now long defunct brickyard on Lebanon Road.



Thomas William Hoppes
(Cheryl Watson)

People coming from Dover, especially Irish, were not welcomed into the area. They were seen as uneducated hillbillies coming to take precious jobs. Times were hard and men were desperate for work to support their families. Work at the brickyard was backbreaking work - men were used as human conveyor belts, shoveling sand at the beginning of the process all the way through until throwing bundles of bricks from the kiln up into train cars for transport.

My grandpa was assigned to shovel sand. The men stood on both sides of the never-ending piles of sand. Imagine being on the downwind side! My grandpa could take a lot, but the constant amount of sand blowing in his eyes was almost too much to bear.

In those days of the Great Depression, you dare not complain because there was a line of men waiting at the gate for the opportunity to take your place. Nobody gave another person a break...except for one man.

As my grandpa struggled, a Black man on the other side of the line noticed. After a while, he said: "Tom, you trade places with me, I'm used to the sand in my eyes."

It might seem like a small thing, but it must have meant so much to my grandpa! We never knew his name, and I would guess that his family never knew. The story of that man's kindness has been told for generations in my family. Because of his act of kindness, my grandpa kept his job.

He saved enough to send train tickets to my grandma, aunt, uncle, and my dad. My grandmother got a job at the dress factory on Main Street. In 1938, they bought four acres from the brickyard on Lebanon Road, one for themselves and one for each of the children. The third and fifth generations of my family still live on that land.

Even if you receive nothing in return, even if it's undeserved, your kindness may affect the future.

NICOL VS NICHOLS

By Cindy Reinhardt

I didn't move to Madison County until 1975, but I have roots in Collinsville where my grandfather and many other relatives lived for generations. Two of the oft repeated stories of Collinsville when I was growing up were about the charity ball game that pitted the Nicol clan against the Nichols family, and the time my uncle, Albert Nicol, Jr., drank great-grandma Mary Tribout Nicol's holy water. I think I should stick with the ball game story.

The game took place on a Sunday afternoon in October 1931, at the Collinsville High School ball diamond. In the days leading up to the game, the newspapers reported on the feud between the two families and how a mistake in a quail hunt resulted in the Nicols family dividing into two factions, one adding an "h" and the other dropping the "s" in their name (complete fiction). My uncle Wilbur, who was one of the younger players, used to say there was a lot of trash talk about the



Cont. on page 10

EARLY INFLUENCES

MR. KINZEL'S INFLUENCE

By Russell Hughes

It was a short walk on East Fifth Street in Alton. Kinzel's Flower Shop was just next door. We ventured inside a few times with the folks prior to 1965, but by fall of that year, when I was between four and five years old and brother Rich between three and four, we would walk next door and into the store together, supervised always by mom or my grandmother from the front porch at 717 East Fifth Street.

John Valentine Kinzel, the proprietor, was nearing the end of his earthly run then, although he probably was not aware at that time. He and his daughter always greeted us like we were celebrities – loved us like family. Mr. Kinzel spoke in kind tones. He called us “gentlemen,” always, and taught us by example what it meant to be one. We would go on regular tours of the store, front and back, careful not to touch anything. We took turns sometimes holding open the front door for customers, putting to use the southern manners taught to us by our southern grandmother. Before we would leave, every time, he would give us each a carnation to pass on to mom.

Mr. Kinzel had put the store in his own name after purchasing it from an earlier proprietor back in 1928. Today, in October 2022, the shop is still operating under the Kinzel name, a chronological streak unmatched among other flower shops in the region.

We moved from that place in June 1966 to the LeClaire neighborhood in Edwardsville, just a block away from what was then known as the Wagner Complex, formerly the N.O. Nelson Foundry. Both parents worked for the newly formed Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, part of which was



Kinzel's Flower Shop today. (Russell Hughes)

then housed in the Wagner complex, so they both worked just a block from home. We could not have landed in a better place.

But the real story here is about our last day with Mr. Kinzel – late May 1966. He greeted us at the front door of the shop, kind as ever. It was a beautiful day. He was dressed all in white – white shirt, white shop apron, even white pants. (He always dressed and looked the part of a gentleman, because that is exactly what he was.) We did the usual front and back tour of the store and shop area that day, and he handed us each a carnation. We walked out behind the store then, where there were steps leading to the second floor, which I assume was the living quarters. He pulled a couple of nickel pops from an old soda machine back there, and we sat on the steps for a visit.

He knew we were moving/leaving – had lots of questions and some advice – offered it up as if he were our own great-grandfather. I remember golden sunshine bathing the steps, along with broken strips of light filtered into a mix of light and shadow from latticework near the back of the building. Most of his words that day have been lost in time, but the one thing that stuck was his advice to always look out for each other. (My brother and I have always been best friends. Mr. Kinzel's words played a part in that, I am sure.)

In 1967, about a year after our departure from the East Fifth Street scene, Mr. Kinzel passed. We were snug in Edwardsville by then, celebrating the arrival of our baby sister Robin and thriving in a neighborhood that can only be described as every kid's dream place to grow up.

In this moment, the memory of that place and time on East Fifth Street with Mr. Kinzel is bathed in a brilliant light, as it has always been. The sight of a single carnation will always take me right back there, where everything started.

LUNCH WITH A HOBO

by Donna Yates Bardon

I lived on Hoehn Street when I was a young child in the late 1940s. The street was developed in the early 1900s by my great-great-grandfather, Jacob Hoehn. After his death, some of the lots on the street were gifted to his daughters, including my great-grandmother, Matilda Hoehn Yates. My grandfather, David Yates, inherited two houses from her. My grandparents lived at 461 Hoehn St., and my parents rented 463 Hoehn from them. My grandfather David Yates was a conductor for the Litchfield & Madison Railroad, which had tracks near the house. He walked up Brown Street and crossed Vandalia Street to get to the railyard, now the site of RP Lumber.

Because of the proximity to the railroad tracks, we often had hobos stop by asking for food. My mom was always kind and made sandwiches for these men to eat on the porch. When I got to be three or four years old, I thought it would be fun to eat outside, too. In warm weather, Mom made me a sandwich, and I ate my lunch on the porch and

chatted with the hobo who had stopped by that day. I'm sure the conversations were entertaining to our visitors, because dressing up the cat in doll clothes and picking “bouquets” of clover flowers were two of my favorite activities.



Donna in 1948 at 463 Hoehn Street. (Donna Bardon)

REMEMBERING MY PARENTS

By Sharon Hawk

I lost both a mother and father in 2020. My mother Sally Wyciskalla Kula originally from Dubois, Illinois, went to Saint Francis De Sales High School in St Louis while living with her sister Julia Wyciskalla who was a Rosie the Riveter at what was Curtis Wright and became McDonnell

Douglas. Both sisters would pick up one or more of their seven brothers when on leave from World War II at the Union Station in St Louis. They would cook dinner and take them to the bus station if they had time to go to Dubois, Illinois, to see their parents. Sally had 8 brothers seven served in WWII, and three sisters.

Sally also worked at the yeast factory at Busch Brewery after high school, and on weekends she volunteered to paint gliders for the WWII effort at the old Checkerdome, now torn down. Sally would also at times go home to plow on the farm and help her dad and one brother with the farming.

She married Alfred Kula and settled on a farm of 12 acres on Taylor Ave near Vadalabene Park in Edwardsville. She raised chickens, ducks, and turkeys, canned her own food from her garden, and also made jellies and preserves. She sold and dressed turkeys for



Sally and Alfred Kula of Edwardsville (Sharon Hawk)

many of the tavern owners for Thanksgiving like Corner Tavern, Vanzo's etc. She passed on Oct. 17, 2020 married 74 years and a resident for sixty-eight years.

Sally's husband died on Dec. 5, 2020. Alfred Kula worked at what was originally Dow Chemical in Madison, Illinois. In WWII, he entertained troops by serving in the army band, playing the clarinet and saxophone. He met many of the big band leaders like Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, etc. while in the service. At one point, they sometimes borrowed his clarinet or saxophone if theirs was damaged or lost. He ended up being in the band because he almost died of a ruptured appendix upon entering the service. He loved music especially polkas, since he was Polish.

He learned to play his instruments better as he belonged to his father's band the Joe Kula Band. The Joe Kula Band played many weddings, anniversaries, and parties all over Madison County and also St. Louis. A picture of his band was at one time at the KC Hall in Maryville, now gone. Joe Kula played bass fiddle and the trumpet. Joe Kula and his wife, Veronica, lived most of their life in Madison, Illinois. Joe worked at the Car Foundry. All of these were great contributors to Madison County in the past.

Nicol vs Nichols (continued from page 8)

"s" and "h" standing for "Satan" and "Hell" so our family dropped them (also untrue), but it was all in good fun for a good cause.

Only members of the two families were allowed to play and each team had three generations on the roster. For the Nicol family, my great-grandfather, Gustav Nicol, Sr. was the manager, my grandfather, Albert, played second base and my uncle Wilbur was an outfielder. The Nichols family had J. L. "Brady" Nichols as manager, his son George, known as "Babe," as catcher, and Babe's son Arthur in left field.

The base umpires included Mayor M. W. Harrison and Chief of Police Frank Zamaroni.

Ed Nichols had four hits in four visits to the plate. (If only Ed Nicol had done the same!) My grandpa, Albert Nicol, was the slugger for his team, getting three hits in four times at bat, including a triple with two on base that gave them the lead. But, alas, it didn't last.

The Nichols team defeated the Nicol clan with a score of 11 to 5. It was all in good fun, and there were many in need during the Great Depression. The newspaper didn't report how much money was raised from the good-natured feud.



Albert Nicol Sr., circa 1930. At the time of the Collinsville game, Albert was living in Arenzville, Illinois, where he regularly played ball and was known as a talented player. (Reinhardt)

THE BLACKMORES

By Nancy Blackmore Hoffman

My mother, Dorothy Donoho Schwarz Blackmore, born in 1905 in Edwardsville, was credited with being the youngest driver in Madison County. When she was around six years old, her father had one of the first cars in Edwardsville, and there was a picture of her in the "Ford Times" sitting in the driver's seat of her father's car. I don't think she actually drove the car, but who knows? Schwarz Street in Edwardsville was named for her family.

My father, Joe Blackmore, had the distinction of being in the first graduating class at the "new" high school (now Lincoln Middle School) in 1926. (The school opened in 1924 but didn't have a gym.) My mother was a bit older than he was, and graduated from the old high school (Columbus School) where she eventually became a first grade teacher until she got married and wasn't allowed to teach any more as a married woman. It is interesting to remember that our four children and I all graduated from the high school where my father graduated, and where two of our grandsons attend as middle school students. Just recently I learned that the district is considering replacing Lincoln Middle School because it has some needs that can't be addressed while occupied. That is progress, I guess.

HIGHLAND'S WEDNESDAY NIGHT DANCES

By Diane Frey

During the mid-1950s, the local area youth looked forward to the social highlight of the week. This was the Wednesday night dances, which were held at Lindendale Park in Highland.

The dances drew young people from the whole area coming from various towns and schools. Admission was fifty cents.

The manager of the dance just happened to be my school bus driver. He asked if I would do his attendance report for the bus and he would let me into the dances for free. I quickly agreed to that exchange.

Since my friends and I lived in the Marine area, it sometimes created a challenge of how to get to Highland on Wednesday nights. Somehow we always managed to get

a ride. My friend's brother had a car. He would begrudgingly give his sister's friends a ride, but charged a dime.

We danced to the music of Moonlight Serenade with the Shorty Schmitt band and the talented piano player, Gus Boda. Gus never seemed to look at the keyboard, but he did watch the dancing and kept up on who was dating who. On alternate Wednesdays Walt Schlemer band played. Both were very popular with the young people. *In The Mood, Bunny Hop* and *Hokey Pokey* were favorites.

Another challenge was how to get a ride home. Any girl who was asked by a potential boyfriend would make sure the ride also included her friends who did not have a ride home.

Many a romance started at these dances with plans for a Saturday night date and continued through a long marriage.

THE BEGINNING OF LECLAIRE PARKFEST

By Diane Jacober

When October rolls around, it brings back many memories of LeClaire Parkfest in Edwardsville. It is amazing to see the growth of the festival over the past 30 years.

In our humble beginnings in 1992, the Friends of LeClaire set out to share our neighborhood and its rich history with Edwardsville and the surrounding areas.

In August 1992, our core group met and volunteers were asked to cover all aspects in the planning of Parkfest. My husband Tom and I volunteered to find vendors that would provide food and drinks. The Edwardsville Jaycees agreed to help us set-up wiring around the park for roasters, crock-pots, and coffee pots. It was amazing to see the men string wires through the trees surrounding the bandstand.

Our goal was to have not-for-profit organizations participate and the money raised would benefit their organization. I remember the Jaycees grilling brats and selling beer, all the delicious desserts at the V.F.W. Women's Auxiliary booth, the aroma of caramel popcorn that filled the air as a group from St. Louis melted caramel in their iron pot.

The Lions Club's grilled hot dogs. They also sold soda and one of their members brought an old-fashioned apple press where they made fresh cider.

As I write this, plans for the 2022 LeClaire Parkfest are underway. The number of booths and participants has grown to more than 60 and thousands of people attend. But, the Friends of LeClaire still continue with the simple idea of sharing our neighborhood and its history with all who come, just like they did in 1992.

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

from Reba Klenke

Editor's Note: I am grateful to Reba Klenke for calling in her stories of life in Madison County in the 1930s and 40s.

Reba Rowlands Klenke, the daughter of Cecil and Phyllis Rowlands, moved with her family from Staunton to Edwardsville in 1931 when she was three years old. Her father worked for the Illinois Terminal Railway company, the streetcar that ran through the middle of town. Because her dad worked there, they could ride for free. She remembers often taking the train to visit her grandparents in Staunton, first with her parents and later alone. As early as six or seven years of age, her dad would take her to the station on Hillsboro Avenue in Edwardsville and turn her over to the conductor who would let her sit up front with him and made sure she got off at the right stop.

Her sister, Shirley, was born in September 1934 when the family was still living at 710 Fairview Ave. That address was later changed to 710 N. Buchanan St.

At that same house, her father returned from hunting one day and a snake crawled out of his bag! There was much consternation until the snake was found and removed from the house.

In 1934, Edwardsville held its first "Pet Parade," which also included dolls as well as various cats, dogs, rabbits

and other animals. The parade was a popular one and continued for several decades to come. One of Reba's favorite memories was one year winning the First-Place award for her collection of 100 dolls. She loved dolls, so people often passed their old dolls on to her. She had dolls that once belonged to her mother and both grandmothers.

When she was ten, the family moved to 839 Holyoake Ave. At that time, she had to give up her dog, Snowball. Her Dad liked the dog, but Reba's mother didn't and said the dog wasn't moving with them. As a consolation, Reba was given a Shirley Temple hat which helped somewhat because she was crazy about Shirley Temple, but she would rather have kept her dog.

She learned to swim in LeClaire Lake. When asked who taught her, she said she taught herself. She'd just waded out into the water until it was neck deep, then turn around and swim to shore. LeClaire Lake had a "beach" and was used for swimming until the late 1940s. She wasn't as successful when teaching herself to ice skate.

Reba loved her Edwardsville childhood and has many fond memories of family and friends from that time. After raising her family she went to work at SIUE where she worked with Senior Olympics as well as the Elderhostel movement through her position with the Continuing Education Program. She is now retired and has a home in Glen Carbon.



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**Historical
Society**

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IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION TO MADISON COUNTY

One of the first exhibits for the renovated MCHS Museum will reflect who came to settle in Madison County and where they came from. One of the primary sources for this is census records, but MCHS also wants to learn personal stories and make copies of the documentation that tells that story.

Do you have a picture of your immigrant ancestors? Naturalization papers? An item brought from the old country that could be photographed?

Did your family migrate to Madison County from elsewhere in the country? MCHS is aware of a large migration from Dover, Tennessee, to Granite City, but has no documentation of this. Some of the Italian immigrants went first to Northern Michigan or Colorado (coal mining) before hearing about Madison County and moving here to mine coal. Many Black families moved here from the South a century ago.

If you know these stories or have documentation, please come to the event shown at right to make your family part of the story told about Madison County.



MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORY HARVEST

THEME: IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION

Do you have items that tell the story of how your family came to Madison County? Bring an item to the Archival Library to be photographed or scanned! An image of your item will be entered into the historical society's collections, and you'll receive a high-quality digital image of the item.

NOVEMBER 19, 2022 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Madison County Historical Society Archival Library

801 N Main Street, Edwardsville 62025

WALK IN OR BY APPOINTMENT: 618-656-7569

FAQS

Do I have to donate the item? No! You keep the item. We'll just take a picture.

How many items can I bring? Please pick out one or two items that you find most interesting and relevant to the theme of migration.

How long will it take? Appointments should take about 20-30 minutes.

What kinds of things are you looking for? It could be anything*! Letters, photos, documents, special items that someone carried with them on their journeys... There are lots of stories, and lots of items that tell those stories.

*Anything of a reasonable size to photograph inside the library - that means you can't bring the '57 Chevy that your grandparents drove here in. (But send us a picture!)

