



MCHS FALL EVENTS ENJOYED BY THOUSANDS

Since the last newsletter, MCHS held a Family History Walk, a Living History Days Festival, a sold-out paranormal event, and the annual Dining in History event. In addition, MCHS has attended numerous festivals and farmers markets around the county, trying to reach as many people as possible. Forgive us if our Educational Outreach Committee takes a brief break for the holiday season from late November to early January!

That's not to say MCHS won't be available. The library will be open, so you can come to us!

Thank you to everyone who helped us accomplish this ambitious fall schedule which needed many volunteers, sponsors, and participants from the community to succeed. A special shout out to Stephen Hansen who acquired grants and directed the Living History Days Festival, Jeff Skoblow for organizing the Family History Walk, and Carol Manning with her Educational Outreach Committee members for planning the Dining in History event.

TWO UNUSUAL MADISON COUNTY HOMES

LAKEVIEW CASTLE

By SCOTT OLIVA

Lakeview has been a place of mystery since its construction over a century ago. This aura of alienness can be attributed to various reasons, including its French chateau architecture, its location, the rumors that the builder was a very rich eccentric Frenchman from St. Louis who built it for his English wife, and the eventual uses of the property.

The early years of Lakeview are intertwined with two men – John J. Biszantz and Professor (Doctor?) Eugene Rinaldo. Even though their involvements with Lakeview were relatively short-lived, their “back stories” are both interesting and unusual.

John J. Biszantz bought the future site of Lakeview in 1894 to build a country estate. It was located in Choteau Township, south of what is now the Cahokia Diversion Canal (which didn't exist at the time), and east of three railroad tracks. There are no public records related to why Mr. Biszantz bought this particular piece of property. It was situated a considerable distance from his home and business in St. Louis, essentially, in the middle of nowhere. It is about halfway



Undated picture of the “castle” called Lakeview or Lake View. (John Dunphy)

Cont. on page 4

MCHS LIBRARY NOW A FAMILYSEARCH AFFILIATE

Local genealogists now have additional resources available for building a family tree. The Madison County Archival Library at 801 N. Main Street is now a FamilySearch Affiliate Library, which means it has access to more online genealogy resources to help researchers explore their families. FamilySearch is the largest genealogy organization in the world.

Out of the more than 120,000 libraries in the United States, there are only a few hundred affiliate libraries in the country. Application for acceptance as a FamilySearch Affiliate was a lengthy process, but worth it according to Robert Clouse, MCHS Vice-President and Director of Operations.

“The MCHS Archival Library contains a wealth of resources not available in any other facility,” said Clouse. “We

share in the excitement our patrons express with the discovery of new links to their family's history. We are excited to provide these expanded genealogical resources to patrons.”

FamilySearch has over six billion searchable names and two billion images of historical genealogical records. As an affiliate, even more records will be available to library patrons using

computers at the Archival Library.

FamilySearch adds over 300 million free genealogical records and images online annually from all over the world and manages the famous FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City. It has amassed billions of birth, marriage, death, census, land and court records from more than 130 countries to help aid discovery and make family connections.



Hours

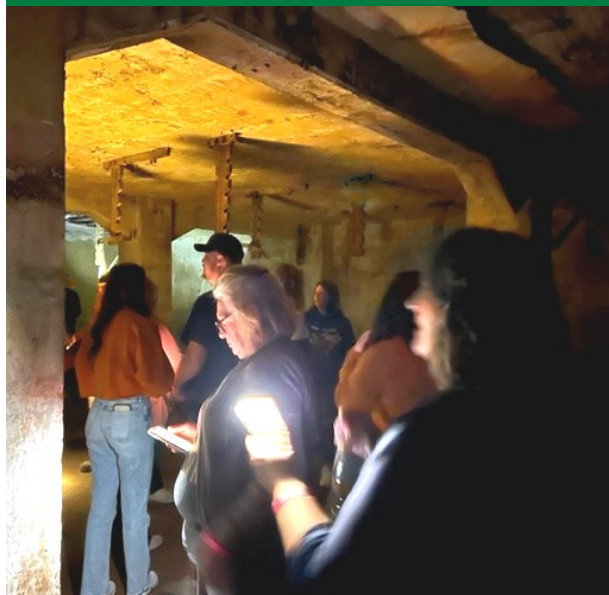
Wed - Fri, 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.
Sunday 1- 4 p.m.

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



MPIC HOLDS MCHS FUNDRAISER

Pictured above are participants in the Midwest Paranormal Investigators Consortium's very successful fundraiser for MCHS held on October 21 at the Mineral Springs Hotel in Alton. Photo courtesy of Lynn Engelman.

USED BOOK SALES SUCCESSFUL

Thanks to everyone who donated books and volunteered to work book sale booths for our first MCHS book sales. MCHS sold books at two silent auctions (Trivia Night and Dining in History) plus attended the Edwardsville Public Library's Book Festival and had a book booth at Chautauqua. All together, book sales brought in nearly \$3,500. A special thanks to Mike Reinhardt who organized and priced the books in addition to being one of the volunteers selling books. Leftover books will be weeded and some held over for book sales next fall.



INTERN MICHAEL VOLTZ

This year, August-October, MCHS had a paid intern, Michael Voltz, whose primary job was to serve as a community liaison at festivals and MCHS events. Having a young, smart, outgoing presence to share booth space with our seasoned volunteers was perfect. Michael's assistance was made possible through a grant from DCEO.



Even Abraham Lincoln enjoyed shopping the MCHS Book Sale at Chautauqua. When directed to the books on Lincoln, remaining in character, he said, "Would you like me to proof them for you?"

(Reinhardt)

VOLUNTEERS!

There's a saying that the reason volunteers are not paid is not because they are worthless, but because they are "priceless!"

Donna Bardon
Craig Becker
Betty Byrd
Lynn Engelman
Dixie Engelman
Mike Featherstun
Susan Featherstun
Gary Forshaw
Laura Fowler
Laurie Frey
Chiquita Hatcher
Nick Hoffstetter
Bill Iseminger
George Jones
Marcus Keen
Damon Kirk
Cherie Kuhn
Marty Lane
Shirley Malench
Jon Parkin
Steve Rensberry
Mike Reinhardt
Connie Royston
Ellen Thorson
Gregory Thorson
Sue Wolf

Volunteers assist with the Probate Project, take care of the MCHS grounds, host festival booths, and much more!

MCHS BOARD

Fred Faust, Pres.
Robert Clouse, V-Pres.
Arnold Meyer, Treas.
Candace Ladd, Sec.
Norma Asadorian
Leslie Bednar
Donna Caban Bisset
Tallin Curran
Bob Daiber
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Stephen Hansen
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Stephen Mudge
Jeff Pauk
Cindy Reinhardt
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Operations Director
Mary Z. Rose
Archives Librarian
Jenn VanBibber
Museum Curator

Sunday Staff

Robert Clouse
Cindy Reinhardt
Stephen Mudge
Carol Manning

PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor
cindy.reinhardt@madcohistory.org

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 web-site, or at the Library.

THE Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

RECENT NEWS

NEW MCHS BOARD MEMBER

MCHS is pleased to announce the addition of Donna Caban Bisset to the MCHS Board. Bisset grew up in Edwardsville and is a long-time member of the Society, even while living in distant places. Bisset has a different relationship with the museum building (Weir House) than anyone else on the Board.

Her childhood home was on the same block, and she often played house on the stoop that in earlier times led to Dr. John Weir's patient entrance. She and her siblings also made a game of peering through the mail slot on the front door to watch the blue-haired lady, Edna Weir, come down the stairs. Weir, a school librarian, knew they were there and played along. Bisset said they were hard to miss since the open mail slot allowed giggles to be heard in the hallway and the cover didn't close quietly. The Caban children also knew the family that rented the second floor apartment.

Bisset is a retired registered nurse who with her husband, Kendrick, has lived in numerous communities around the country. They returned to Edwardsville in 2021 to be near family, purchasing her mother's home. Until her recent death, the household included Bisset's mother, Claire Caban. Bisset's family is community-minded with a curiosity about history and a tradition of volunteerism.

Bisset takes the place of William Krause who retired from the Board due to increased business responsibilities that don't allow time for him to fully participate as he intended. He served on the Board for three years and plans to volunteer as an Edward Coles reenactor whenever he is needed.



MCHS will host a paranormal investigation of the Weir House (the museum building) on January 20 through the Midwest Paranormal Investigators Consortium (MPIC). During the past year, major interior work has been done on the building, so MPIC is interested in learning if it makes a difference in paranormal activity. Perhaps they'll find out if Edna Weir, the last Weir to live in the house, approves of the work done!

Last fall, MCHS announced it would be holding periodic paranormal fund-raising activities with the MPIC. They began with multiple investigations of the Weir House which raised several thousand dollars to support repairs to the historic building, and contribute to museum and library operations.

Recently, MPIC organized and led an interactive paranormal event at the historic Mineral Springs Hotel in Alton to benefit the Society. The fundraiser brought in over \$2,000 and was a sold-out event!

Due to major work being done on the Weir House, there has been no exploration since 2022. The January 20 event will be held from 7 p.m. - midnight and is limited to 20 participants (15 years and older). Tickets are \$40 per person, with reservations taken on a first-come, first-served basis.

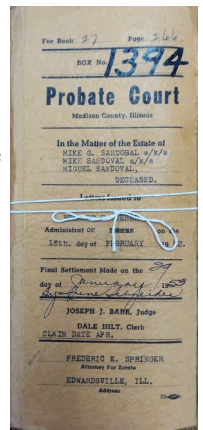
To make reservations, contact Lynn Engelman at 703-994-0806 or email lae2017@gmail.com with your name and contact information. Watch the Society's Facebook page and website for future opportunities.

MCHS is grateful to Lynn and the Midwest Paranormal Investigators Consortium for their work and generosity in helping to preserve the history of Madison County.

PROBATE FILE UPDATE

It has been about a year since the MCHS Library partnered with FamilySearch to digitize the probate files. To date, an amazing 350,000 images have been captured! Approximately 270 of 1,000 boxes of files have been completed. Current estimates are that the project will be completed by the end of 2026, which is much sooner than the initial expectation. However, this depends on having enough volunteers preparing the documents for the FamilySearch imagers.

If you'd like to help, visit the archival library Monday-Friday 9-4 or Sunday 1-4 to learn more and get a hands-on demo of the project. Documentation is provided for those that need volunteer hours for school, and the work is simple enough for students 10 and above.



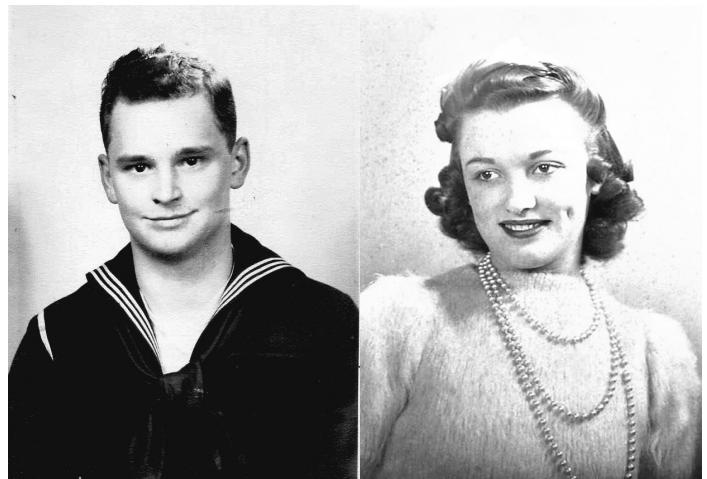
ANNUAL APPEAL PLANNED

MCHS will hold a kick-off reception at the Weir House on Wednesday evening, January 31 for the Annual Appeal. MCHS would need approximately 1,000 members to financially meet the cost of annual operating expenses. We're growing (350), but not there yet! Please consider supporting the MCHS Annual Appeal.

THIS NEWSLETTER SPONSORED BY
MICHAEL REINHARDT
Thank You!

Although he graduated from Edwardsville High School, Mike Reinhardt is a native of Granite City. His family has lived there for generations, except for a few years when he was in high school. He moved back to Edwardsville in 2000 when he married his wife, Cindy.

Mike dedicates this newsletter to his parents, Milton "Mike" and Edith (Hawks) Reinhardt, and his grandparents, Oscar and Emilie (Schuetz) Reinhardt, and Thomas and Bernadine (Jones) Hawks.



Milton "Mike" George Reinhardt (1921-1987) and his wife, Edith Lovern (Hawks) Reinhardt (1922-2014), circa 1944.

“THE CASTLE” AT LAKEVIEW (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

THE BISZANTZ FAMILY

John J. Bisantz was born in Ohio, on April 11, 1861. His father was a German immigrant and his mother a native of Ohio. As an adult, he moved to St. Louis where he worked as a building contractor and real estate developer. By the late 1800s, Bisantz was quite busy buying and selling various properties throughout the city.

On May 31, 1883, he married Lillie V. Black, the daughter of Hugh T. and Missouri (Webb) Black. Lillie was born June 21, 1861, in St. Louis. On May 16, 1884, Lillie gave birth to their only child, Edna Lillian Bisantz.

Lillie Bisantz died on Aug. 6, 1890, at the young age of 29. She was buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis.

John and his daughter, Edna, lived at Lakeview on and off until around 1910 when they moved permanently to Los Angeles. Soon after moving, Bisantz became involved with a spiritualist while attempting to contact his deceased wife. He returned to St. Louis for a time to escape the notoriety of the spiritualist's ensuing trial in Los Angeles.

In 1907, Edna married Walter Sloat in Los Angeles. She died in the same city in 1945 at age 61, and Walter in 1948. John, who never remarried, died June 6, 1954, in Los Angeles. He was 93 years old. John, Edna, and Walter are all buried with Lillie in Bellefontaine Cemetery.

Author's Note:
Bisantz's name has been spelled variously as Bisant, Bizant, Bezant, etc. I use “Bisantz” since it is the spelling inscribed on the family tombstone.



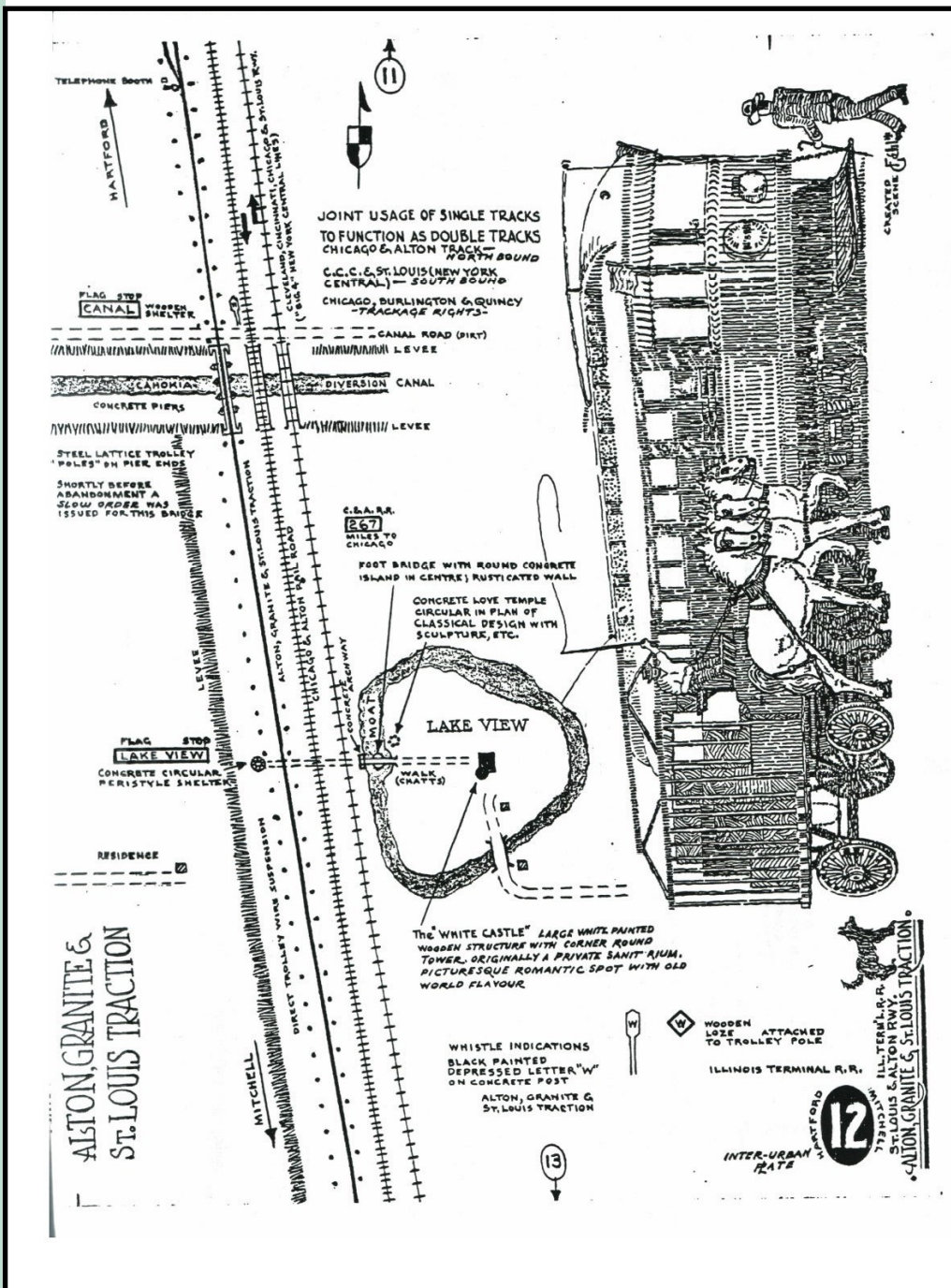
Above: This labeled aerial view showing the location of Lakeview was created by Bob Gill several years ago.

between Alton and Granite City, and nearly an hour away by train from the dirt and noise of a growing St. Louis. Lakeview was on the Alton, Granite City, and St. Louis electric line and was given its own station/stop which allowed easy access to St. Louis.

Constructed around 1898, the famous house and grounds were, needless to say, a unique home for Madison County in more ways than one.

Descriptions of the house and grounds vary, but generally “the castle” was a French Chateau located on

Cont. on page 5



In this page from a book of detailed maps of the Illinois Traction System by Dale Jenkins. From his drawing, readers can see the location of the entry road, the drawbridge, and the tracks,

AKA THE “HARTFORD CASTLE”

some 36 acres. It was surrounded by a moat about a mile in length. The moat has been variously described as being from 40 to 65 feet wide and one, four, or ten feet deep. It was stocked with fish and a St. Louis resident once won a bet by catching over 300 fish within a couple of hours. The island was created by digging out the moat and piling the dirt into a mound for the base of the future house.

A drawbridge, guarded by a portcullis, crossed the water on the south side of the island providing the main vehicular entry to the property, while a pedestrian-only bridge gave access to the railroad stop on the west. This stop was unique in that it had a quite distinctive design for the Alton, Granite, and St. Louis railroad, or for any railroad, for that matter. At that time, most train “stops” were usually more akin to a rundown shack, barely able to stand, let alone provide any sort of protection from the weather.

The Lake View stop consisted of a circular concrete peristyle surmounted with eight pillars. In other words, a miniature version of a Greek temple. Similar “temples” were located throughout the grounds, and two still remain.

The landscape incorporated various flower beds, a concrete fishpond lined with columns, winding walkways and numerous concrete statuary. These statues were supposedly made for Mr. Bissantz using a new process (at the time) for creating works of art.

The white, stone, three-story house contained some 20 rooms (numbers vary) filled with expensive furniture, wall-mounted tapestries, mirror-lined hallways, and keepsakes from trips to Europe.

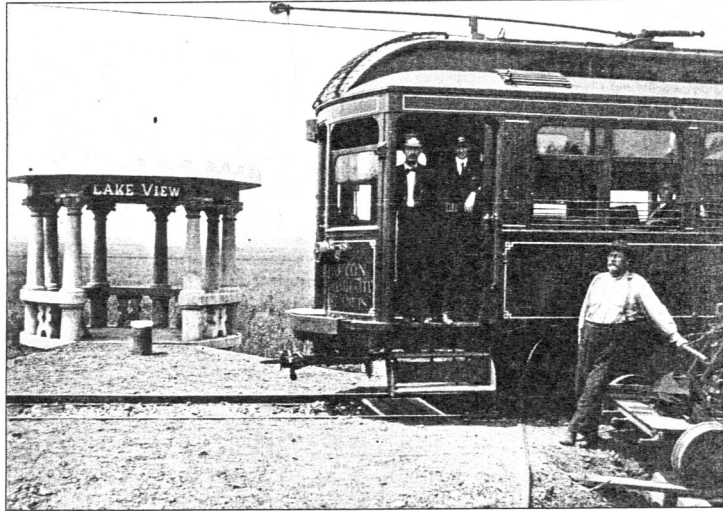
The size and isolated location of the house, along with its turreted towers, a four-story stand-alone water tower, and a moat with drawbridge, are unique to the area. Add to this the beautiful garden-like grounds, and it's easy to see how the designation of “castle” became attached to the Lakeview name.

It needs to be noted that, contrary to popular belief, Lakeview was not built for Bissantz's wife, as she died in 1890. John Bissantz moved to Lakeview with his young daughter, Edna. However, it was never a permanent residence, as it was used mostly as a summer getaway. In addition, trips to Europe and throughout the country kept them away for extended periods of time. About 1910, he moved permanently to Los Angeles to be near his daughter, who married Walter Sloat in that city in 1907.

The ghost story was established in April 1913, when Mark Podner, 23, of Madison, Illinois, claimed that while waiting for a streetcar a woman friend invited him to spend the night in the house. Upon entering the building, she disappeared. He became lost and disoriented in the mirror-covered hallways and claims that ghosts were his unseen companions. Unseen, but their presence was felt and heard in adjoining rooms. The next morning, he was found by the caretaker and arrested. Supposedly he went mad from the encounter. He tried to hang himself in the Madison County Jail.

In 1912, Professor Eugene Rinaldo of St. Louis entered the Lakeview story. At the time he was a noted academic of music and ran a conservatory in the city. His original idea was to turn Lakeview into a music academy but instead he opted for a military academy for young boys and it was so advertised in St. Louis and Chicago papers. Rinaldo arranged to buy Lakeview for \$50,000. The school opened in September 1913, with great fanfare and some eight students. As part of its military heritage, taps was played in the evening and the drawbridge was raised at night (to keep the students from escaping?). Regardless of Rinaldo's elaborate plans the academy only lasted one academic year and went bust by the summer of 1914.

Newspaper articles of the time describe Rinaldo as an unusual character who was involved with various schemes and legal problems, including a dalliance with a married



The elegant train stop at Lake View (aka Lakeview). Scott Oliva

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

1. The often reported, romantic story of the Hartford Castle is that the original owner was Benjamin Bissantz, a Frenchman who built the castle for his English bride.

So much to unpack! The original owner was John (not Benjamin) J. Bissantz (spelling from grave marker).

His father was a German immigrant and his mother a native of Ohio where Bissantz was born.

Bissantz's wife, Lillie V. Black Bissantz, was born and raised in St. Louis.

Her parents were not immigrants from England. Her father, Hugh, was born in Virginia, and her mother was born in St. Louis.

Bissantz did not build the castle for his wife, Lillie. She died in 1890 at the age of 29, four years before he purchased the property.

2. Since Bissantz's wife was English, at her death he had her body shipped home for burial.

Again, she wasn't English nor were her parents. She is buried at Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis.

3. The builder of the Castle is unknown.

It was likely built by the original owner (Bissantz) who was a building contractor and real estate developer or by his brother, Louis Bissantz, who was also a St. Louis builder.

4. Lakeview had 20, 30, or 40 acres

The property consisted of 36.4 acres.

5. The property was used as a sanitarium or a home for unwed-mothers

Although plans to establish these facilities were reported, no documentation has yet been found to show that either came to fruition.

woman. He also moved to Los Angeles for a while and was involved in questions concerning his supposed medical degree.



Remains of the fish pond at Lakeview. (Scott Oliva)

After this first instance of trying to make use of the unique Lakeview property, it enters an interval of some 25 years of rotating owners, innovative ideas, various lawsuits and continuing notoriety.

In May 1917, Lakeview was sold for use as a resort but this failed

before the ink was even dry on the deed. A syndicate of Alton liquor dealers led by James Marquis hoped to make Lakeview into the finest resort in the county, but Marquis died and since the liquor license was in his name, it became invalid. No liquor license – no resort. A further complication is that when this syndicate bought the mortgage from Rinaldo it was in the name of Marquis with no written agreement among the syndicate members.

Jonas Ross opened Lakeview as a summer resort in July 1917, advertising meals, dancing, and the use of the grounds for picnics. But no intoxicating liquors would be sold on the ground. By September Ross closed the resort.

Bisantz returned to his former home in August 1917, to file suit against the estate of Marquis and foreclose on the unpaid \$10,000 mortgage.

In 1919, the Lakeview deed was transferred to Eugene Rinaldo and Dr. T. S. Manning for \$12,000. They planned to organize a sanitarium which would entail constructing four outbuildings to handle some 200 patients. An unverified story says the facility was used for unwed mothers. The Lakeview curse continued, and both of these latest deals also fell apart.

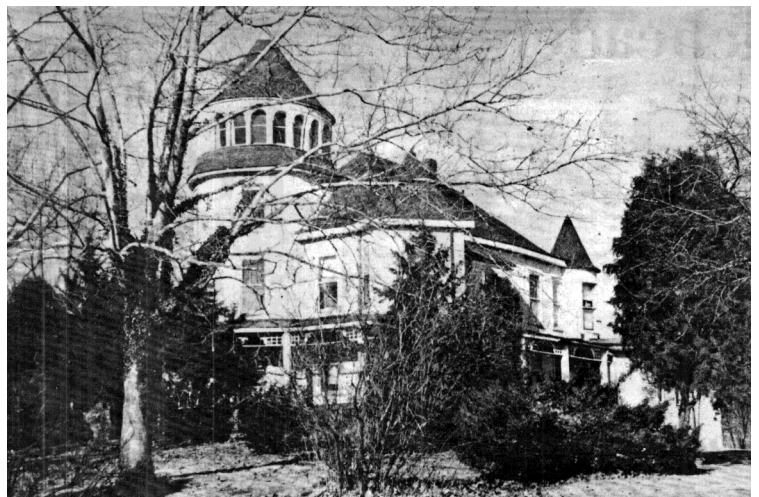
In 1923, Lakeview was sold at public auction for \$8,950 to Matt Vidakovich and partner Paul Billion. Vidakovich and his wife owned a grocery store in Wood River and over the years were involved in various real estate dealings throughout the area. As of today, the heirs of Matt Vidakovich still own the property. The Vidakovich family moved into the house in February 1925.

Now the story gets a bit more interesting. Apparently in November 1924, Lakeview was once again open for business under the auspices of a woman named Myrtle Devine. This time liquor was sold illegally, as this was during Prohibition. On the night of November 11, a group of eight bandits essentially took over the resort and robbed 76 guests of their watches, diamonds, furs, etc. The thieves were set up at the entrance to Lakeview and directed the cars to park at a certain spot. When the occupants left their vehicles and entered the building the gang was waiting to rob them. This ruse worked so well that they stayed all night and into the next morning stealing from new guests as they continued to arrive. Between \$5,000 to \$10,000 was the estimated haul.

This robbery was seemingly the last straw. Lakeview and its neighboring establishments inspired the sheriff to close all these enterprises later in the month.

Although the days of using Lakeview as a resort or roadhouse were over, the grounds were rented as a public picnic site and over the next few years numerous gatherings, from the Knights of Columbus to a Home Economics club, held events at the site. But over time, the general public came to regard Lakeview as a bonafide public park and wandered the grounds at any time without regard to it being a private residence. The Vidakovich family moved out and Lakeview was essentially open to anyone who found their way across the water. As is usual in such instances, looters gradually ransacked Lakeview and the resulting relentless destruction of the grounds and house culminated in a fire in 1973.

Today the only remains of the grand house, this unique county landmark, is a hole in the ground. Remnants of some of the garden features can still be seen in winter, but are overgrown in summer.



Lakeview, undated. (Scott Oliva)

Guest Authors

The history articles in this issue were researched and written by MCHS members Scott Oliva and Stephanie Malench.

Scott, originally from Wood River, is an Air Force retiree who later taught at the Illinois Center for Autism. Since his second retirement, he has become a regular at the Archival Library where he researches Madison County railroads through newspapers. He is creating binders of articles on local railroads, many of them from newspapers which are not digitized. These notebooks are a tremendous resource.

Scott also often photographs MCHS events. Some of his photographs can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Stephanie Malench, Edwardsville, is a second generation member of the Society. She is the recently published author of two books. "The Ultimate Beginner's Guide to Clean Living," and "The ABCs of Living Independently When You are Older or Frail."

Stephanie's company, Write by Steph, does all kinds of writing, from press releases, to grant writing, to obituaries or family stories for businesses and individual clients. She helps people get their projects in print.

Stephanie recently notified MCHS about a grant opportunity which paid off handsomely. MCHS is very grateful for the tip!

GANGSTER'S PROPERTY BUILT WITH A "MOAT"

By Stephanie Malench

If you drive southeast out of Collinsville on Summit Street, you will find what was the biggest house in Collinsville in the late 1950s, built by the infamous Frank "Buster" Wortman. The original address was 2 Summit St. and has been renamed 16 Oakleigh Dr. and is now a private residence.

Construction started on the home in 1955 and continued in spurts over several years. Wortman's operations manager, Sam Magin, "acquired" the 124-acre property in 1954 from a contractor named Walter Schuller. Wortman was interested in the property because of the moat surrounding the land (it is actually a lake) and the fact that the property lies in both Madison and St. Clair County, making it difficult for a Sheriff's Department to respond to calls due to split jurisdiction. (What Wortman did not realize was that the FBI would not have any jurisdiction issues in 1961.)

When completed, the house measured 8,000 square feet, had eight bathrooms, and cost approximately \$400,000 to build. Very little gambling took place at the property, and it was used as a place for Magin's son and friends to swim and hang out. The property was only accessible by one narrow bridge and was also built to serve as a "boys club" to cover for Wortman's underground gambling operation.

After his death, the home sold for only \$65,000 to local car salesman Fred "Bo" Beuckman. Beuckman then sold the eight-bedroom house with a three car garage and four acres of land for \$250,000 in 1979. The moat was reported by Beuckman to have a pipe with a valve running under it so that the moat could be drained in the event an item was dropped in the water. Developers had already begun turning the rest of the wooded area into a subdivision.

Buster Wortman was a well-known St. Louis-area bootlegger, gambler, and criminal gang leader. His first job in crime was hijacking liquor trucks for the Shelton Gang. Wortman served his only jail sentence, from 1934 to 1941 in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, for beating a federal agent outside a distillery in Collinsville operated by the Shelton Brothers Gang during Prohibition. Wortman overtook the Shelton Gang by slowly killing them off one by one. Once the Sheltons were gone, until his death, Wortman represented Al Capone's Chicago mob in Southern Illinois.

While Wortman was arrested numerous times for crimes ranging from vagrancy to murder, witnesses were never willing to come forward, so authorities could never prosecute and go to trial. Wortman was also politically connected in both Illinois and Missouri, including Illinois State Auditor Orville Enoch Hodge who was convicted in 1956 for embezzling more than \$1 million in taxes.

Wortman established the Wortman's Plaza Amusement Company, where he held a virtual monopoly on the illegal gambling industry of Southern Illinois, especially in East St. Louis, and St. Louis. His lounges attracted gamblers with slot machines, pinball machines, horse parlors, crap games, and card games.

In 1956 Wortman hit an IRS agent outside the Paddock Lounge, Wortman's bar in East St. Louis known for being a hangout for organized crime figures. The agent made it his life's work from that point to bring Wortman down.

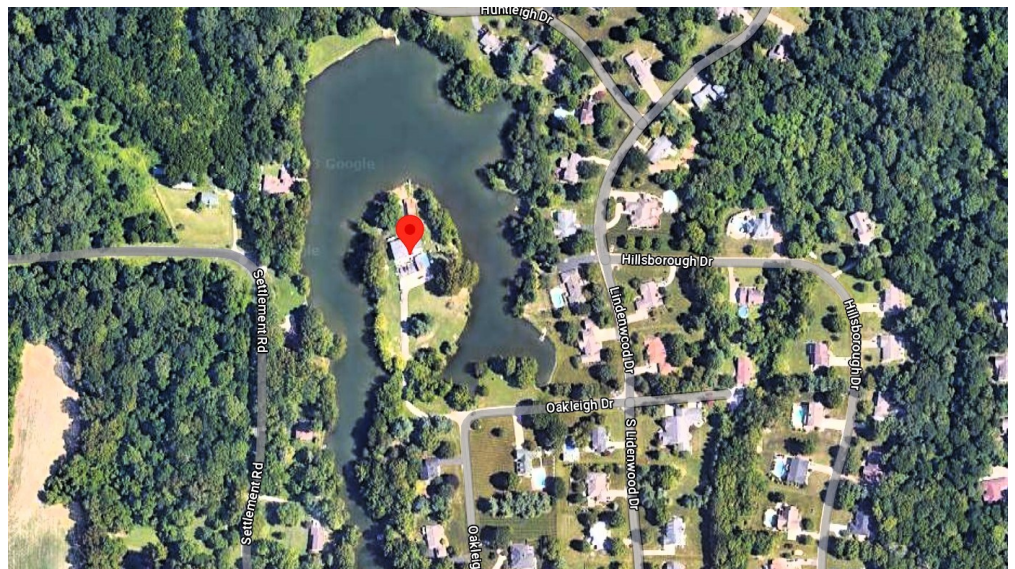
Finally, in 1961, the FBI conducted investigations at his "fortress" in an attempt to build a case that he had evaded \$50,267 in federal taxes which were supposed to be collected from fancy gambling halls and smoke-filled bookie joints from 1953-1955. Wortman was found guilty but walked free on appeal bond, along with one of his lieutenants Elmer "Dutch" Dowling and an unnamed third man on February 26, 1962. Dowling was shot dead less than a week later and Wortman was found not guilty during his retrial in 1963. Although he remained the most powerful name in southern Illinois gambling until his death, he was not able to overcome his financial losses from his legal battles and his gambling operations closed.

Shortly after this time, a Black street gang known as The Warlords started taking over East St. Louis. One such attempt was when members of The Warlords threw a hand grenade into McCoy's Tavern in East St. Louis. Wortman's associates threatened retaliation and The Warlords quickly backed off.

Wortman died on Aug. 3, 1968, due to complications from surgery for laryngeal cancer and is buried in Belleville at Mount Carmel Cemetery, just 12 feet from his chief nemesis, East St. Louis policeman Robert "Tree" Sweeney. With Wortman's death, organized crime and the mob moved out of Madison and St. Clair Counties and East St. Louis began crumbling from its glory that long-time residents knew.



Frank "Buster" Wortman



Aerial view of the former Wortman property. The moat was created by connecting two naturally formed parallel hollows. (Stephanie Malench)



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HOLIDAY HOURS AT ARCHIVAL LIBRARY

The scheduled closures for the coming holidays allows staff and volunteers to enjoy the season with family and friends, but also provides opportunities for family members who “come home” for the holidays to stop by the Archival Library to explore their genealogy.

As always, there are definite advantages to letting us know you are coming so Mary Rose, the Archival Library Research Manager, can have some things pulled for you in advance. Send requests to info@madcohistory.org or call 618-656-7569.

ARCHIVAL LIBRARY CLOSED

November 23-26 Thanksgiving

December 24-25 Christmas

December 31-Jan 1 New Years

Regular library hours are Wed-Fri 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Sunday 1 - 4 p.m. The library is available (free) to everyone.

MCHS MEMBERSHIP GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE

Please note that MCHS gift certificates are available for the person on your list that loves history. An individual membership is \$50. Call 618-656-1294 if interested.

DECEMBER-JANUARY CALENDAR

Saturday, January 20

Exploring the Weir House...Paranormally
Ticketed event - Details on page 3

Wednesday, January 31

Annual Appeal Kick-Off Reception
(Details in January MCHS News)

Sunday, February 11*

2 p.m.

Chip-a-Canoe

Building a Dugout Canoe using Only Stone Tools
An Experimental Archaeology Project

Presenter: Larry Kinsella

*Location: Main Street Community Center
1003 N. Main Street - Edwardsville

FABULOUS FALL FESTIVAL FUN

Thank you to Scott Oliva for the great photographs documenting Fall MCHS activities! From left: Jeff Pauk as Beniah Robinson on the Family History Walk. Next, during Living History Days, a Belleville Stags player takes a swing during the vintage “base ball” game, bow maker Paul Jarvis demonstrates a Native American craft in front of the Weir House, and Mike Leitner’s hotrod made a splash on the Weir House lawn.

