



EXCITING NEWS!

MCHS has received some very good news regarding funding but is not at liberty to announce it yet. (You'll probably hear about it by the time this newsletter arrives in your mailbox.) However, the bottom line is that we hope to begin construction of permanent museum exhibits before the end of this year!

Due to this new development, the museum exhibit schedule is currently on hold. Watch for future announcements from the Interpretive Committee who are hard at work with museum designers to create a newly reimagined Madison County History Museum.

Are we excited? Well, closer to ecstatic!

A HISTORIC MANSION ON THE PRAIRIE

by Cindy Reinhardt

When traveling on Gilomen Road, approximately two miles north of Marine, Illinois, it is an unexpected pleasure to see an incredible Second Empire Victorian mansion in the middle of nowhere. It was built circa 1861 for Emsley and Anna Keown at a cost of \$18,000. The opulent three-story red brick house with a bell tower, balconies, decorative iron railings, and a mansard roof is not a typical little house on the Illinois prairie.

Emsley Keown's grandparents were Irish immigrants who settled in North Carolina. From there, they moved to Kentucky, and his parents then moved to Madison County where Emsley was born in 1826. They were farmers and immediately invested in land in Pin Oak Township. Emsley bought his first farm when he was 25 years old, 160 acres in the southwest quarter of Section 8 in Marine Township. That was considered a fairly large farm in those times.

In 1855, perhaps in preparation for his upcoming wedding, Emsley purchased 40 acres of ground where his mansion would later be built, and the following year he bought an additional 40 acres south of that. By the time he was 30, he owned all but 80 acres of a half section of land. These were the first of many land purchases which would eventually make him a very wealthy man.

In the meanwhile, a week before Christmas, in 1855, Emsley Keown married Caroline Edwards, who grew up in nearby Jarvis Township. The following Christmas day, their son Charlie was born. His exact date of death is unknown, but it can be assumed he died in infancy. Four years later, in January 1860, Caroline died, too.

Emsley's second wife was a young widow, Anna Ground Evans, the daughter of English immigrants. Her father, Daniel Ground, came to America with assets which allowed him to immediately purchase a large farm so, like Emsley, she grew up in an affluent household. She married Dr. Joseph Evans on May 30, 1853. He invested heavily



This is one of more than two dozen images of the Keown Mansion taken by photographer James Drake sometime in the 1960s. A portfolio of his work is in the Archival Library collections. (Drake)

in real estate in addition to running his medical practice and being active in civic affairs. The 1912 Madison County Centennial History said he, "for many years wielded a large influence in the eastern half of our county." Joseph and Anna had two sons, Joseph and Daniel, before Dr. Evans died in 1858.

Emsley Keown and Anna Ground Evans were married in December 1860, and began their life together on his farm where plat maps indicate there was already a house in existence.

According to the Madison County Portrait and Biological Record (1894), the couple settled "on Section 8, Marine Township, where was erected a fine three-story brick residence, which cost \$18,000."

Cont. on page 4

2025 ANNUAL APPEAL SUCCESS!



The MCHS Fundraising Committee would like to extend a hearty "Thank You!" to everyone who contributed to this year's Annual Appeal. The campaign this year brought in over \$36,000 which will be used to help cover operating expenses for 2025. MCHS can accomplish so much only because of the generosity of our donors!

Library Hours
Mon. - Fri., 9 a. m. - 4 p. m.
Sunday 1 p. m. - 4 p. m.
Call for Museum Hours

**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

NEW TO MCHS BOARD

MCHS is pleased to welcome Mark Von Nida to the MCHS Board. Many residents of Madison County have met Mark over the years during his 30 year career as an elected official in Madison County. Before his retirement he worked first as County Clerk, then as Circuit Clerk.

Mark has always had a strong interest in history. Today he lives with his wife Susan in the LeClaire National Historic District of Edwardsville.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

MCHS is able to operate successfully due to an army of volunteers who do everything from serving as docents, indexing materials, gardening, painting, and even producing this newsletter.

During Summer and Fall we are especially in need of people to work festival booths, giving out literature about MCHS, which helps build awareness. Have a skill you can share? It's a great way to meet new people and help a great cause. Call our new volunteer coordinator, Donna Bissett to join the team! (570-994-2973)

HAIL DAMAGE REPAIRS

Rain delays plus some additional work required has delayed repairs to the garage roof. The roof was damaged in last year's

hail storm, but we hope to see the work started soon.

The other project still on the agenda from that storm was the painting of the exterior of the addition to the museum building. It was scraped and primed last fall, but now has the final coat of paint and it looks incredible.

RECENT EVENTS AND PROJECTS

The largest project in July is the MCHS Summer History Camp for children on July 14-17, a wonderful fun and educational camp, featuring four days of field trips to historical sites.

Coming in a close second is the Country Picnic on July 19 at the Mudge family farm near Grantfork. We hope to have a great turnout.

MCHS representative Cindy Reinhardt gave a program on Route 66 in Edwardsville at the West Bend Service Station/Route 66 Tourist Information Center on June 26.



The freshly painted museum addition.

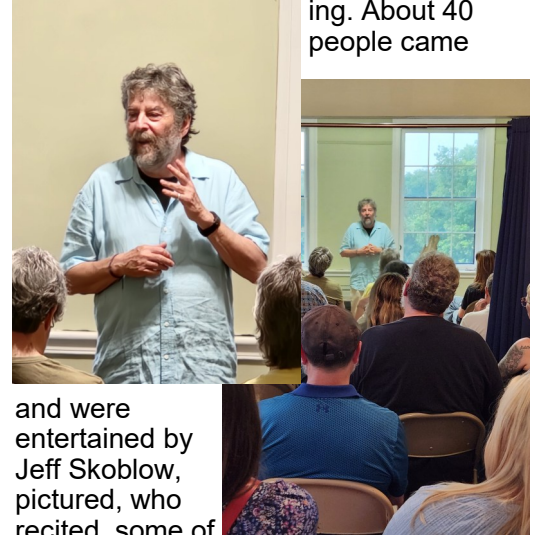
During the month of May, MCHS provided eight building history stories, published in the *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, to commemorate National Historic Preservation Month.

The Educational Outreach Committee also hosts a booth once a month at

the Edwardsville Land of Goshen Market. Stop by to say "Hi!"

WHO KNEW POETRY COULD BE SO MUCH FUN!

The first MCHS Literary Salon at the History Museum last month was a wonderful evening. About 40 people came



and were entertained by Jeff Skoblow, pictured, who recited some of the greatest hits of the Romantic Era. These included a few bawdy limericks of Robert Burns which the crowd was more than happy to sing along! We look forward to the next Literary Salon.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

This year, membership renewals have been very slow to arrive and they are more important than ever. If you have not yet renewed and plan to do so, please take care of it as soon as possible.

If you have already renewed, you're one of our heroes! Your membership dollars help pay operating expenses.

MCHS BOARD

Fred Faust, Pres.
Robert Clouse, V-Pres.
Arnold Meyer, Treas.
Candace Ladd, Sec.
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STAFF

Robert Clouse
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Archives Librarian
Jenn VanBibber
Museum Curator

Sunday Staff

Robert Clouse
Stephen Mudge
Cindy Reinhardt
Rotating staff

PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

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 the MCHS website, or at the Library.

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

MCHS EVENTS

LOYET PROJECT COMPLETE

The Loyet Collection consisting of 439 slides and 16 three-inch reels of magnetic audio tape recordings documenting the experiences of Granite City native Wilbur Henry Loyet when in the U.S. Air Force and as a Peace Corp worker in Ghana.

In 2023, MCHS received an award from the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board, through funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, National Archives and Records Administration, to partially fund the digitization and cataloging of the slides in the collection. This year we received a follow-up award to contract the digitization and transcription of the sound recordings, and correlate them to the slides. We discovered that many of the audiotape "letters" provide detailed explanations of slides taken in Ghana and other locations in Africa! The transcriptions are available in the MCHS online archive and are linked to the respective slides.

Those interested can view the Loyet collection on the MCHS website at: <https://madcohistory.org/archival-library/archival-library-resources/>



Wilbur Loyet enjoying a bowl of homemade pito (beer made from millet) and socializing in Bolgatanga, Ghana.

FINNISH RESEARCHER

In May, Teuvo Peltoniemi, a Finnish author, visited the Archival Library to research N. O. Nelson and the Village of Leclaire. The library has a large collection of materials about Leclaire and the Nelson family. We often have requests for information from far away places, but they don't often come in person!

MUSEUM EXHIBIT ENDS JULY 31

WED. - FRI. NOON - 4 P.M. AND SUN. 1 - 4 P.M.

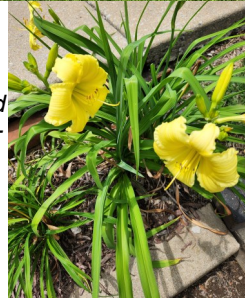


QUILTS & STITCHERY
PAST AND PRESENT

THE GARDENS AT MCHS



Volunteer Mike Reinhardt takes care of the grounds at MCHS, planting numerous pots and flower beds as well as bringing in lilies, Rose of Sharon, and numerous other flowers and shrubs. Last year he built a planter on the south end of the parking lot where previously there had been an inconvenient ditch which was a danger to motor vehicles. The long herb garden on the south side of the museum was designed and has been maintained by the Edwardsville Garden Club for many years. The beauty of the MCHS grounds is much appreciated by visitors.



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**MCHS is very grateful for an
anonymous donation of
\$2,000 for the
MCHS News**

THE HOUSE

"Fine," indeed. Built in Second Empire Victorian style, the house was three stories of magnificence facing the southern prairie. The main part of the house had three stories, and a wing on the north side of the house had two stories. The northern portion of the house had a basement while the front portion of the building was built without a basement.

The first floor was given a large central entrance hall with a grand staircase that reached the upper floors. On the left were twin parlors separated with pocket doors, each with a white marble fireplace. On the right was a bathroom and a large bedroom. It is not possible to know for certain that the bathroom was in the house when built in the early 1860s, but it was a hallmark of this style home, and an oral history of the house provided by Deborah Heuser Stuffie, indicates that the house was one of the first to have indoor plumbing.

The second floor of the main part of the house had three bedrooms and a bath, and the third floor features a long central foyer with bell tower and a ballroom on either side of the central hall. An unusual feature of the ballrooms was a secret passage that circles the rooms behind the exterior walls. It's large enough for an adult to stand and walk through except when they came to one of the four dormers. There was only room to crawl under the windows. The house was built with four dormers in the mansard roof, two on the front or south side of the house, and one each on the east and west sides.

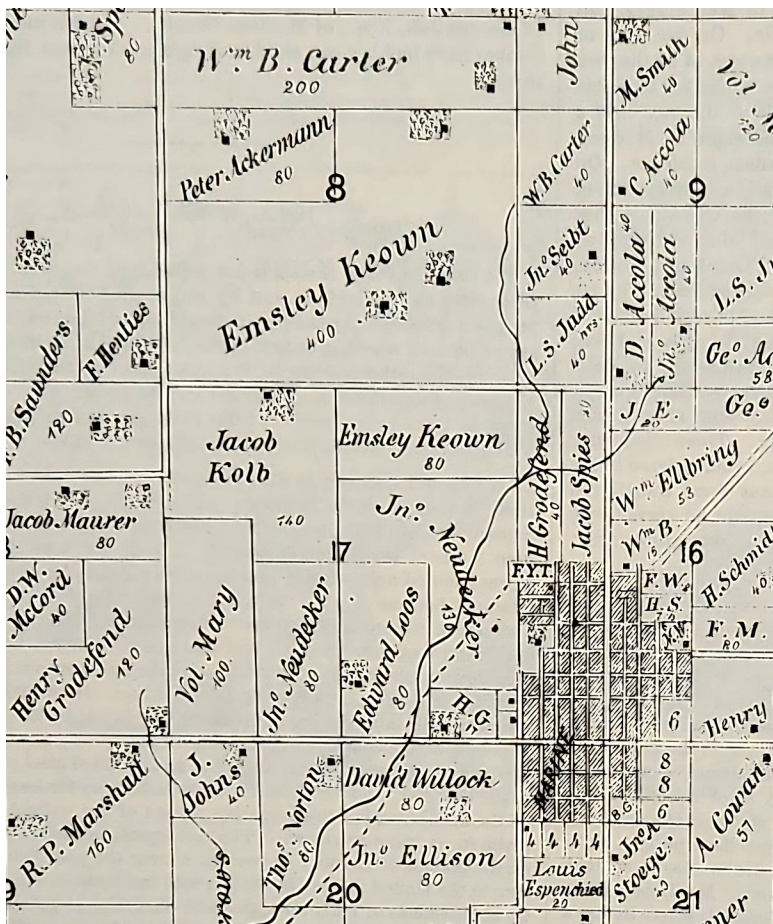
Because the secret passage seemed like the ideal hiding place for people travelling the Underground Railroad, oral history passed down through the years said that is what it was used for. Although possible, it's not likely. First, the house probably wasn't completed until after the Civil War was underway. Secondly, documentation of conductors from letters and

diaries from the time do not list the Keown farm as a location for the Underground Railroad. It's more likely that the passages were built as a weather break for insulation or for storage of tables, etc. needed for entertaining in the ballrooms.



The drawing above, as well as the plat below, are from the 1873 Atlas of Madison County. The drawing was colorized by the Heuser family and hung in the house for many years. The plat below shows the location of the Emsley Keown property in comparison to the Village of Marine, Illinois. The house was located under the "n" in Keown on the plat. The 480 acres of Keown property shown here is only a portion of the Emsley Keown estate.

(Colorized drawing courtesy of Dan Heuser; Atlas from



The northern wing of the house was built with lower ceilings than the main part of the house. As a result, domestics going from the second floor of the northern wing into the main house, had to move up steps to the floor of the main house. The second floor of the north wing had additional bedrooms, probably used by domestics who were always part of the household for the Keowns. A back staircase down to the kitchen was probably built for their use.

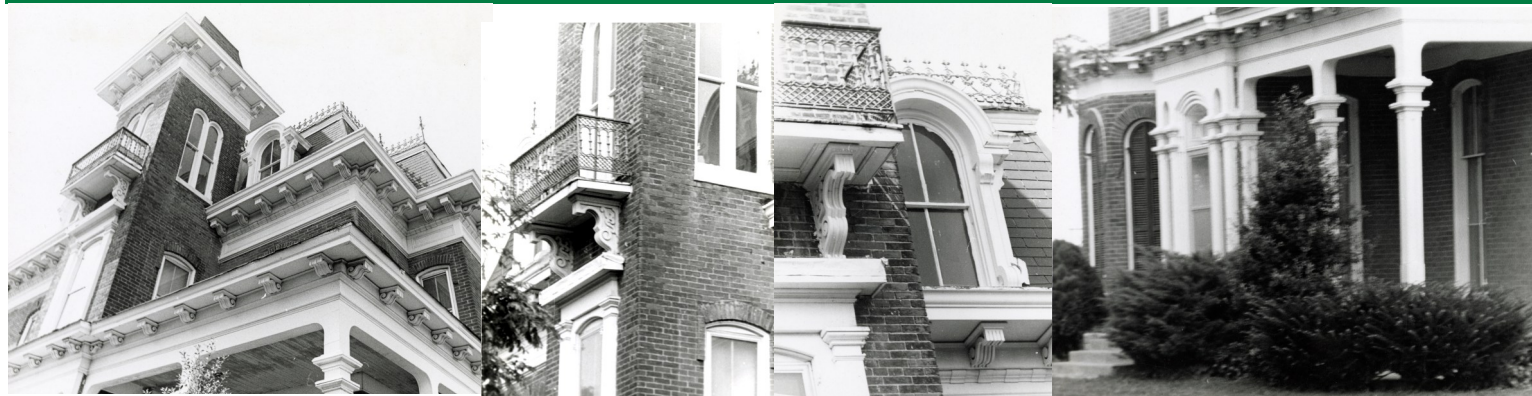
The first floor of this part of the house had a dining room off the foyer of the main house that featured a black slate fireplace. Beyond that, on the north side of the dining room was a small kitchen. A larger kitchen was not needed since just outside the back door was a brick summer kitchen. From the kitchen were stairs down to the basement where there were wooden food storage bins for potatoes and other root vegetables. Cellar doors led out to the summer kitchen for convenience. Although the basement was made of stacked stone, at the far end was a brick wine cellar.

On the east side of the north wing, adjacent to the dining room and kitchen, was a long side porch. Decades after the house was built, probably in the 1940s, the side porch was enclosed to provide space for a washer and dryer and other modern amenities.

It was a large house and within a few years the Keowns had a large family. In addition to Anna's two boys from her first marriage, between 1861 and 1877, Emsley and Anna had eight children,

although two of them died in infancy. Sadly, the eighth of these children, a son named Page, was born five months after his father's death in November 1876.

BEYOND ORDINARY



The above photographs are part of the Drake portfolio. Through these can be seen the delicate balcony railings, cornices, window moldings and porch detail. The beauty and detail of the house are undeniable. (Drake)

Anna was made guardian of the children, something that was not always a given at that time. She continued to run the farm with the help of her older children who were by then adults. According to Federal Census records, the family usually had a live-in domestic and a live-in farm hand. It is likely that many others were day workers. Another person in the household was an orphaned niece, Mary Ground, who came to live with them and was under the Keowns' guardianship until her marriage in 1886.

As the children reached their majority, they were awarded their shares of their father's estate. One son, Mark, died at age 5, three years after his father. Anna died in 1911 at the age of 98. The only family still living with her in the big house when she died was her son, Emsley Jr. who was a bachelor, and not interested in keeping the big house himself.

The house was widely advertised because it was believed it would be the kind of house a wealthy businessman from St. Louis might purchase as an escape from the city, especially during hot St. Louis summers. A large advertisement with a picture of the house was placed in the St. Louis Globe Democrat.

The advertisement read in part: "Sale of Beautiful Residence. To close an estate, the magnificent brick residence shown above, containing 16 rooms, and costing \$15,000 to erect, will be sold at public sale on the premises, April 10, 1912." Notice the price is different than listed in the 1894 history. History sometimes contradicts.

The buyers, as it turned out, were not St. Louisans. Conrad and Phillipine (Dietz) Heuser (Heuser) were successful Marine area farmers looking to expand their acreage. In this case, they obtained 80 acres of ground and a "fine" house.

Conrad came to America from Germany with his parents in 1855 when he was nine years old. Phillipine probably came to America when she was a teenager, without her parents who came to America in 1867. Phillipine is not listed on the ship's manifest with her parents and came to Madison County while the rest of her family settled in Indiana.

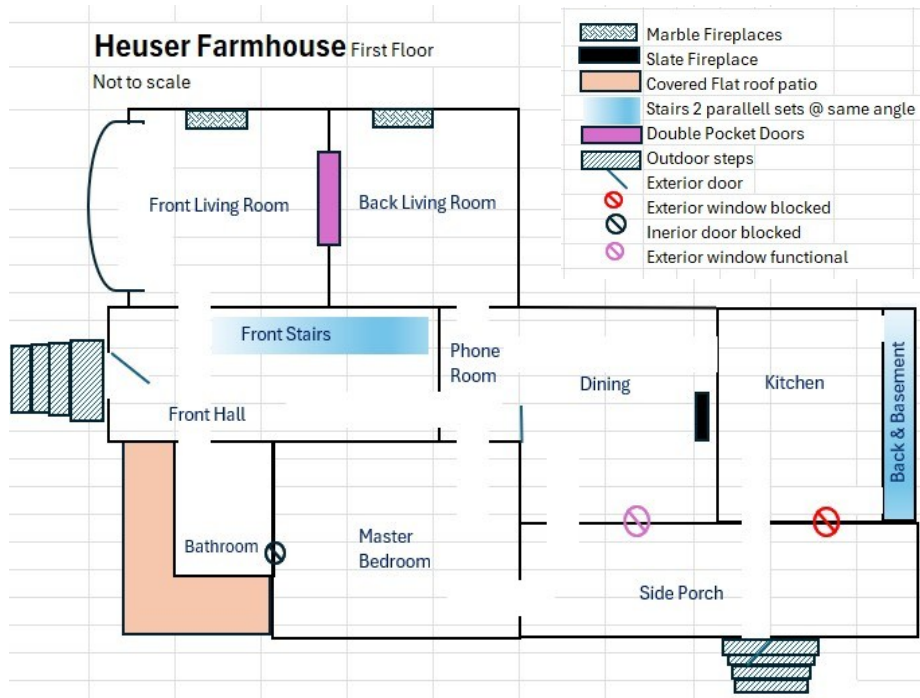
She married Conrad in Madison County in 1874. When they bought the Keown mansion,

they were near retirement. Conrad was 66, and his wife 62 years old. They were prominent, wealthy farmers who had lived a good life. Their daughters, Lizzie and Bertha, were already married and out of the parental home. Their son Henry married just two months after the house was purchased and set-up housekeeping at one of the other farms.

When Conrad died in 1922, his will stipulated that his wife had a life estate to the property. Through the courts, Henry, was able to purchase his father's estate from his mother and sisters, provided that a home was provided for his mother until her death. Phillipine died in 1926.

As mentioned before, Henry married a St. Louis woman ten years his junior, Ethel Wachenheim, the same year that his parents bought the Keown mansion. The couple had two children, a daughter Virginia born in 1914, and a son Wilbur, born in 1918. Henry, like his father, was a successful farmer. Virginia married a nearby farmer, Eldon Prott, in 1936. The following year, their son Larry was born.

Wilbur worked with his father on the farm until 1942 when he was called to service in World War II. Before his



Deborah Heuser Stuffle provided this layout of the first floor (not to scale) Note that the front stairs are on the south side of the house.

THE HEUSER FAMILY

company left for Europe he was called home by the death of his sister, Virginia, in 1943. His company, the 42nd Infantry Division, shipped out to Europe while he was gone. He was assigned to set up a driver's training program for the Women's Army Air Corp. In the early 40s, most women didn't know how to drive.

Henry & Ethel continued to farm until Ethel's death in 1945. A few years later, Henry married a widow, Evelyn Ingles Clark, and they spent their time between her homes in Florida and New York. Since Wilbur wasn't interested in farming, the farm and the mansion were leased to distant cousins. After Henry's death in 1955, the house and acreage was left to Wilbur. Wilbur, his wife Jaquelyn and children, Curtis and Deborah, after several years in St. Louis, moved to what they ironically called the "farmhouse."

Wilbur still wasn't a full-time farmer. He was appointed postmaster in Marine in 1959, a post he held for over 20 years. His daughter Deborah describes it as an idyllic time with lots of room to play, especially in those secret passages in the attic or in the haymow of one of three barns on the property. This generation of the Heuser family took good care of the family home. They also kept a remarkable photographic record of their time on the farm that they donated to the Madison County Archival Library. The Heuser collection contains nearly 100 images which depict life on the farm as well as family photographs of the Heuser/Heuser, Wachenheim, Dankenbring, Prott, and other Madison County families.

In the late 1960s, the Heusers moved to Marine and in 1971 sold the mansion to the first of a line of owners, none of whom kept it for long, until the current owners bought it the property 22 years ago.



Above portraits, assumed to be Conrad and Phillipine Heuser, hung on the walls of the their country home as long as anyone now living can remember. At right is their son Henry who was the second generation of Heusers to live on the farm. (Stuffle)



Above left, Ethel Heuser and her daughter Virginia and, at right, Virginia with her younger brother, Wilbur Heuser. (Deborah Stuffle)



Left: Henry and Ethel Heuser with their children, Wilbur and Virginia, circa 1942, before Wilbur left for service in WW II.

Above: Wilbur Heuser at the farm. Note the elaborate fence posts still remaining in this view. They no longer exist.

Left: Maintenance of the house is a constant challenge with three floors and a bell tower. Here the Heusers work on the house. (Deborah Stuffle and Dan Heuser)

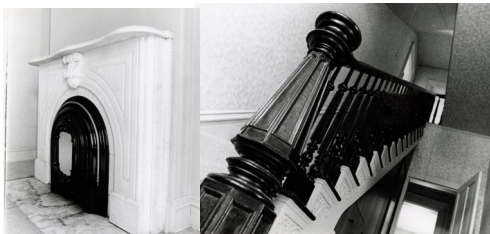


CHANGES

There have been changes over the years: the side porch was enclosed, the electrical upgraded, etc. The white marble fireplaces, previously mentioned, were sold and replaced with other vintage fireplace surrounds. The summer kitchen no longer exists, and nearly 50 years ago, one of the barns was moved to make room for a swimming pool. When the west side dormer was badly damaged in a storm, it was not replaced. That happened so long ago that no one still living knows when, but there are tales of the damage being caused by a tornado.

For the most part, although some of the outbuildings have changed, the house itself is remarkably well-preserved. After 165 years, it remains a lovely mansion on the Illinois prairie.

INTERIOR VIEWS

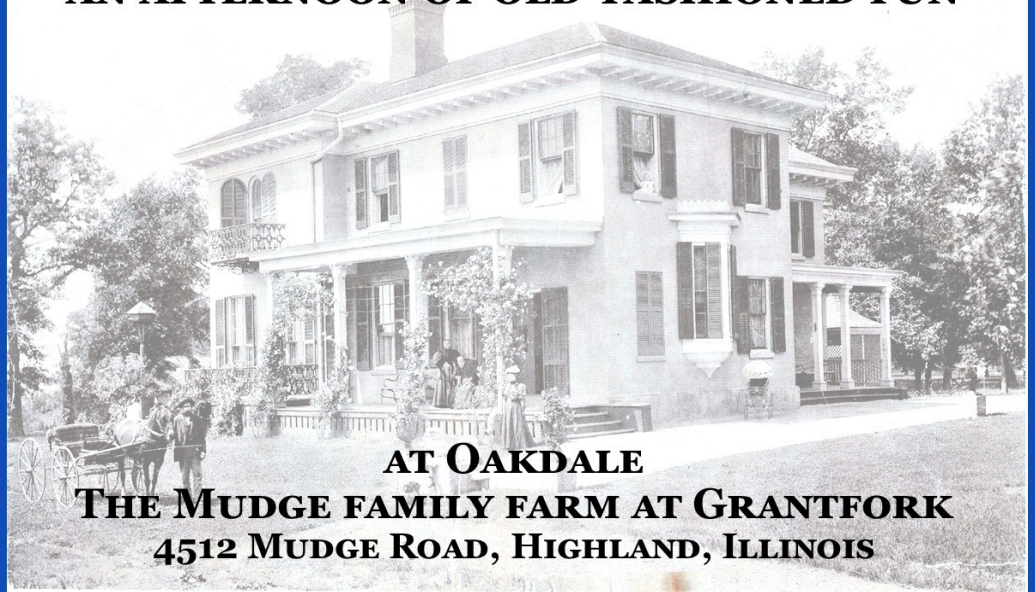


These interior views of the Keown/Heuser mansion show one of the white marble fireplaces, the front staircase, and the bay window from the inside. They are from the James Drake portfolio.



MORE MCHS EVENTS!

Join the Madison County Historical Society for AN AFTERNOON OF OLD-FASHIONED FUN



AT OAKDALE

THE MUDGE FAMILY FARM AT GRANTFORK
4512 MUDGE ROAD, HIGHLAND, ILLINOIS

Saturday, July 19, 2025
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

\$20 per adult/ \$10 children (12 & under)

includes

**Boxed lunch, live music, house tours
and games for all ages**

Pick-up games of softball played with vintage rules
Bring your lawn chairs/blankets and enjoy an afternoon in the country



MADISON COUNTY
**Historical
Society**

Madison County History Museum
and Archival Library
801 N. Main Street, Edwardsville.
For information, call 618-656-7569
www.madcohistory.org

2025 MCHS SPEAKER SERIES



MADISON COUNTY
**Historical
Society**

Sunday, August 10 at 2 p.m.

LOVING LINCOLN

STORIES ABOUT WOMEN AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Presenter: Stacy Lynn

Free Event - Open to the Public
Main Street Community Center, 1003 N. Main Street, Edwardsville, Illinois

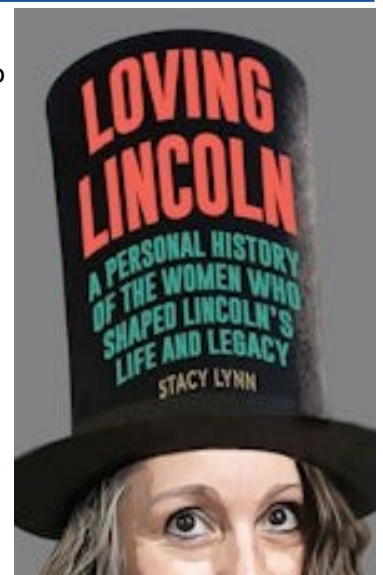


2025 SPEAKER SERIES EVENT

Stacy Lynn is coming back to Edwardsville, this time with a new book and new stories to tell. Her book, "Loving Lincoln: A Personal History of the Women Who Shaped Lincoln's Life and Legacy," was published this year.

In the book, she looks at the lives of thirty women who influenced Lincoln, perhaps helping to develop his moral character which is still admired today.

Join us for the last of this year's free MCHS Speaker Series events on August 10.





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MCHS CALENDAR

TRIVIA NIGHT FUNDRAISER

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23 - 7 P.M.

St. Gregory Armenian Community Center
3501 Century Dr., Granite City, IL*

Doors open at 6 p.m. - Game starts at 7 p.m.
Maximum of 8 players per table: \$25/person
Mulligans: 3/\$5; max of 12/\$20 per team

CASH PRIZES !

50/50 Raffle - Dead or Alive Game
Survivor Game - Heads or Tails Game
Silent Auction - Booze Raffle
Pastry Auction - Attendance Prizes

Cash Bar Available
No outside drinks or alcohol permitted
Bring your own snacks!

RESERVATIONS

For information, sponsors, or reservations:
MCHS Trivia Night Committee
Call (618)451-2611 or
Email hyaghchig@charter.net

WALK-IN TEAMS ARE WELCOME!

*From I-270 go south onto IL-3. Turn left onto W. Pontoon Rd.
(intersection at Walmart). Turn right onto Century Drive.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

SUMMER/FALL CALENDAR MUSEUM EXHIBIT

Quilting & Stitchery: Past & Present
Closing July 31

EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

MCHS Summer History Camp
July 14-17
Children 9-12
Reservations Required

An Old-Fashioned Country Picnic
Saturday, July 19
At Oakdale near Grantfork
(See flier on page 7)

August MCHS Speaker Series
Sunday, August 10 - 2 p.m.
Presenter: Stacy Lynn
Loving Lincoln

Trivia Night Fundraiser
Saturday, August 23 - 7 p.m.
(See flier at left)

SAVE THE DATES!
(Details to be announced later)

Family History Walk
Saturday, September 13
St. Louis Street National Historic District

Living History Days
October 4 - 5

Dining in History
Sunday, November 2