

Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

“Preserving Mercer County History”

Volume 18, Issue 4

Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

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Mercer County Historical Society &

Essley-Noble Museum

1406 - SE 2nd Avenue
Aledo, IL 61231
Phone: 309/582-2280

Hours

April – Oct: Wed, Sat, Sun 1-5:00pm
Nov - March: Saturdays 12:00-4:00pm



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Veda Meriwether, Curator
Dennis Henderson, Sunday Host



For Genealogy Queries write to:

MCHS Genealogy Dept.
PO Box 269
Aledo IL 61231-2504
Or: email the museum



**Memberships available for \$20/household or \$300
for a lifetime membership**

*For correspondence, membership or change of
address contact:*



Please address all correspondence to:

Essley-Noble Museum
Box 269
Aledo, IL 61231

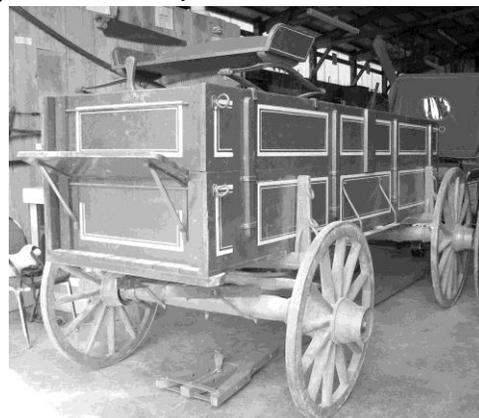


Website: www.mchsil.org
Email: mcmuseum@frontier.com
Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/mchsil

Historic Farm Wagon

Come to our implement shed to see the farm wagon restored and donated by Don Burgess and with Mercer County connections. Following is the history as written by Don:

This farm wagon you are viewing originated in Millersburg, Illinois around 1900. It was constructed by a blacksmith/wagon maker by the name of James M. Burgess. James was born in Kentucky in 1841 and at age 13 the family moved with his family to Peoria County. He became an apprentice blacksmith around 1858 at age 17 and relocated to Millersburg to begin his career. James married Amelia Bethuram in 1858 and the marriage produced five children: Arthur (deceased 1899), Willard H. resided in Kilbourn, Wisconsin (and played a large part in the story of this wagon), Henry E. became a well-known attorney and judge in Aledo, Illinois (and grandfather of Don Burgess owner of this wagon), Ruth E. Minter of Duncan Township and Edna Lingafelter of Rock Island, Illinois.



James M. Burgess constructed the wheels, running gear, wagon tongue, and the seat. It is not known who assembled the wagon. James's son Willard became a blacksmith and also farmed in the Aledo area before moving to the Wisconsin Dells to continue his blacksmith skills and farming. Records do not indicate if this wagon traveled to Wisconsin with Willard, but it eventually ended up there. James died in August 1918. James's grandson Schyler, son of Willard, traveled to Millersburg to bring everything from the shop to the Wisconsin Dells. The possibility exists that the wagon was transported at this time. After Willard's death his son Fletcher worked the farm. Fletcher married and had two daughters, Carol Burgess and Mary Burgess Schwark. Carol and Mary reside on the farm where they were raised. In 1990 I visited Carol and Mary. I toured the barn and the outbuildings on the property, discovering various wagon parts. I inquired about the wagon parts, and Carol and Mary told me they were made by our great grandfather and were in use on the farm until 1950. The sisters painted the wagon parts and put them in storage. I persuaded my cousins to let me have the wagon parts and transport them to my home to restore the wagon. This was a huge undertaking and I ended up taking the wagon parts to the Amish community of Arthur, Illinois, and they did the restoration.

Historic Farm Wagon cont'd.

Reading a journal James had written it was discovered the wagons James constructed cost \$5.00 a wagon. I paid \$5,000 to have the wagon restored! Bringing the wagon to my home generated a snowball effect in that I purchased a team of Belgian horses complete with all the harness required to pull it and I purchased a small farm!!! The tongue of the wagon broke one day when driving the wagon so the present tongue is not the original nor is the box. All parts of the wagon are the original restored pieces. Everything is painted in the original colors, green being for John Deere.

I think this wagon and its story is so historical it belongs to Mercer County. I am honored to donate this special wagon to your museum and I hope all who view it feel its uniqueness.

Don Burgess

- great-grandson of James M. Burgess
- grandson of Judge Henry Burgess
- son of Gene L. Burgess

Carol Burgess

Mary Burgess Schwark

- great granddaughters of James A Burgess &
- grand daughters of Willard Burgess
- daughters of Fletcher Burgess



Curator's Corner

We have received many new items for our museum guests to view. Thank you to the RMA alumni, Gray family, and Rathbun family for their contributions to the museum, as well as many others. Our Genealogy Department is working fast and furiously to take care of the many requests coming our way.

Shirley Plumb has compiled an extensive 18-page index of names in the publication Mercer Remembers. This is being copied for a nominal fee and will be available at the museum by mid October.

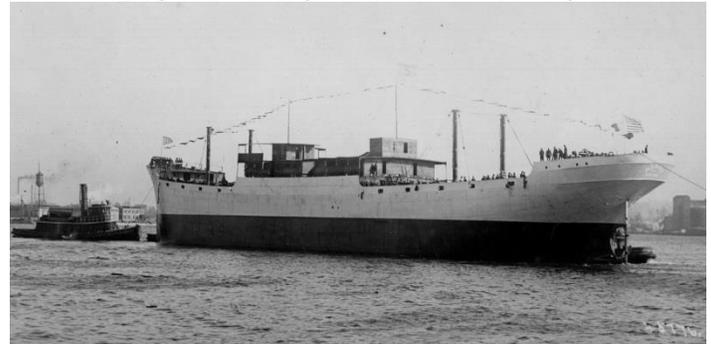
The display group has been working to rearrange and add new things in our museum. The displays are looking better than ever. Thanks again for your hard work.

I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the Dillavou Family for the loss of Wendell Dillavou. The blacksmith display is in the works to honor him and will be shown in the Machine Shed soon

Veda Meriwether, Curator

S.S. Aledo by Stephanie Braucht

The town of Aledo was commemorated on November 23, 1918, when a 7,000-ton steel cargo ship named Aledo was launched at Shooter's Island, New York. Miss Margerie Cooke of Aledo was sponsor of the ship, and had the honor of performing the traditional christening with a bottle of champagne. Margerie was the daughter of



Justice and Mrs. George A. Cooke of Aledo, who also were in attendance.

Actually, Justice Cooke was largely responsible for the town's name being chosen for the ship. He had served as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives from 1902-1909 and was an Illinois Supreme Court judge from 1909-1918, serving as Chief Justice from 1913-1914. Along with colleagues, he was the driving force behind the creation of the "Mercer County Plan" which was adopted by many states as the best method for handling State Council of Defense work in country districts. The name of Mercer County's seat was chosen for the ship because of all the Liberty Loan, Red Cross, and War Work campaigns accomplished locally to support our country's efforts in World War I.

The ship was the S.S. Aledo. The "S.S." stood for "screw steamer," which meant it was driven by "screws" (propellers). Her measurements were 392 ½ feet of length and 29 feet of depth, with 52 feet of beam. Cost to build the ship was \$1,500,000. Every part of the ship, including all machinery and furnishings were made in the yards of the Standard Shipbuilding Corporation there in New York. She was expected to travel at eleven knots (thirteen miles) per hour by a 2,500-horse-power marine engine supplied with steam from four boilers. Earlier in the week prior to the launching, Justice Cooke had the privilege of driving two rivets in the galley of the ship, and Aledo Alderman Sydney B. Bolton drove one.

Upon arrival at the shipyard on the day of the launch, Miss Cooke was presented with a large bouquet of American Beauty roses and later was given a beautiful combination gold vanity case and purse as a souvenir from the Standard Corporation. The launching party was treated to a champagne luncheon on the steamer Ursula.

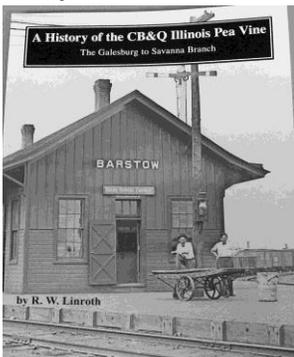


Aledo residents in attendance at the launch were: Justice and Mrs. Cooke and Miss Margerie Cooke, Sydney. B. Bolton, Mrs. S.L. Beckwith, Miss Ethel Bridgford, Miss Eleanor Harney, Dr. F.E. Shult, Harold M. Vertrees, Walter L. Mannon, and Miss Frances M. Hebel. Others in attendance were former Mercer County and vicinity residents: Mr. and Mrs. E.K. Cherrill, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest E. Calkins, L.A. Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Cox, J. Edgar Black, William C. Moore, and Mr. and Mrs. James W. Dickerson.



2014 Fall Open Meeting

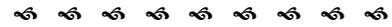
The Fall Open Meeting of the Mercer County Historical Society will be on **Monday October 20, 7 p.m.** at the Essley-Noble Museum. It will focus on the history of the CB&Q railroad in Mercer County. The guest speaker will be Ralph "Bud" Linroth of Galesburg. Bud worked many years as a conductor for the CB&Q. He began his career in Galesburg in 1971 and retired July 1, 2008. He worked the local out of Alpha, which included Mercer County stops, many times in the 1970s. He recently has



published a very interesting book, *A History of the CB&Q Illinois Pea Vine- The Galesburg to Savannah Branch*. The book contains many great photos of the CB&Q, including some excellent ones from Mercer County.

It also contains some pictures and information about the Rock Island Southern line in Mercer County. Bud's

presentation will center around the Galesburg to Barstow area, which will include the Alpha to New Boston branch of the CB&Q. Admission is free and the public is invited so come join us to hear Bud and see what is new at the museum. Snacks will be served following the meeting.



New Board Member

Welcome to our newest board member Courtney Wright. She is currently attending Western Illinois University Quad Cities Campus to obtain a Masters degree in Museum Studies and she is a manager at Aledo Happy Joe's. Courtney has been volunteering at the Essley-Noble Museum for some number of months now and has taken upon herself numerous projects. She says, "I am looking forward to working with the Mercer County Historical Society and gaining experience and knowledge through my time spent here." Also, Courtney has set up a Facebook page for MCHS that can be viewed by all.



Find us on Facebook

New board member Courtney Wright has opened a Facebook account for MCHS. This is an open link so you do not have to belong or "like," but just go to www.facebook.com/mchsil. Eventually a link will be added to the web home page.



What is It?

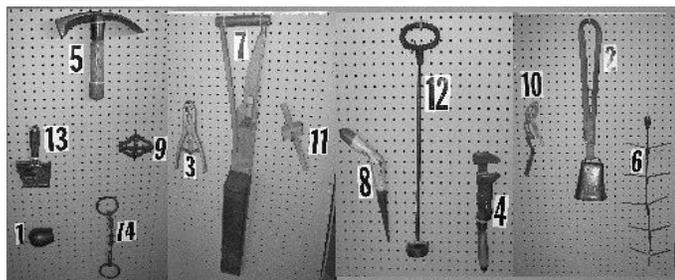
There has been no further information on the previous item, labeled as an "ink eraser," so we will let it go as that. This item was a curiosity purchased by board member Richard McMeekan. It is made of light-weight metal and is approximately 6-7" long. What is it?



Name the Tool, MC Fair 2014

1. Cattle horn weight used to turn the sharp-pointed horns downward
2. Cow bell
3. Sheep elasterator used to place a rubber ring, e.g. for docking a lamb's tail
4. Monkey wrench
5. Cooper's adze for barrel making
6. Corn dryer-Ears are placed on the spikes and hung to dry.

7. Corn planter
8. Dibble makes a hole for planting seeds
9. Gate latch
10. Jar opener
11. Scribe marks a straight line, like a chalk line would do
12. Branding iron
13. Chain breaker for detachable chains, as in an elevator or manure spreader
14. Mule bit



Congratulations to this year's winner:
Liane Freyermuth of Illinois City.



Coming Events

Oct. 20 Fall open meeting 7:00 pm at the museum.
 Ralph Linroth, history of the CB&Q railroad in Mercer Co

Nov. 1 Start of winter hours 12:00-4:00 Sat. only

Available at the Museum

Christmas is not that far away and here are some unique publications for those with ties to Mercer County. If items are not picked up at the museum, postage (book rate) is extra. Inquire for insurance or special shipping.

Mercer County (Arcadia Publishing)**\$21.99**
 Soft cover 9.25X6.5", 128 pages, 229 b&w photos
 Add \$4 for postage

Mercer Remembers.....**\$25.00**
 Soft cover, 11X16", 119 pages
 Add \$8 for postage

1864 Mercer Co. Atlas.....**\$35 members**
 Color, soft cover, 37 pages **\$40 nonmembers**
 Add \$8 for postage

1882 History of Mercer County.....**\$25.00**
 Hardback reprint, 1005 pages, add \$4 postage

1900 Mercer Co. Census & index.....**\$20.00**
 Approx. 3" thick, add \$4 postage

Mercer County Cemeteries**\$25.00**
 Locations/color photos, 87 pages, add \$3 postage

Abe Lincoln in Mercer County.....**\$5.00**
 Soft cover, 51 pages, add \$3 postage

Celebrating Yesterday-Viola 125 Years.....**\$10.00**
 Soft cover, 125 pages, add \$3 postage

Betty L. Beer note cards, pkg. of 6.....**\$3.00.**
 Indicate "False Spring" or "Nathan Listening"
 \$1 postage for one or both

RI Southern R.R. routes of Mercer Co.....**\$5.00**
 Circa 1914, 18.5"X18.5" map copy
 Add \$4.75 for postage and shipping tube

Bicentennial plate.....**\$5.00**
 Designed by Suzy Bogguss..

Sesquicentennial plate.....**\$5.00**
 For plates, inquire about shipping.

This newsletter sponsored by:

BEWLEY FUNERAL HOME

103 SW Third Street
 Aledo, IL 61231

Phone: (309) 582-3440
 Fax: (309) 582-3446
 bewleyfh@frontiernet.net
 www.bewleyfuneralhome.com

