



Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 2

Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

Apr/May/June 08

Publisher Kellogg's Printing

A New Car

Mercer County Historical Society & Essley-Noble Museum

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

Hours: 1:00 - 5:00 PM
Wed., Sat., & Sunday
April through the end of October.



Officers & Board of Directors

Bill Bertrand, President
Dave Duncan, Vice President,
Mary Jane Sticklen Secretary
Jim Runyon, Treasurer
Robert Armstrong
Shirley Ball
Ronn Dillavou
Dave Frieden
Beverly Gray
Cheryl McCaw
Doug McCaw
Harriett Reynolds
Alyce Robinson

Ruth Giffin, Honorary Director
Shirley Crawford, Curator
Dennis Henderson, Sunday Host



For Genealogy Queries write to:

Cheryl McCaw/Shirley Crawford
MCHS Genealogy Dept.
1406 - SE 2nd Avenue
Aledo IL 61231-2504



Memberships available for \$15/household

For membership or change of address contact:

Jim Runyon
756 State Hwy 94
Aledo, IL 61231
309-582-7762



Website:

http://www.geocities.com/mchs_61231

The following is an account related by Pearl Barnes in a Christmas letter sent to Jim Runyon.

This picture was taken in 1915 with my mother and father. Many of our relatives and neighbors had cars. Really, all it took for us to have one, was a determined agent. One from Coal Valley approached our dad and after some dickering, he agreed to buy a Reo, providing the agent would take us to the Aledo Fair. He agreed and the deal was completed. He and his daughter came from Coal Valley in the car. My mother had a picnic dinner prepared,

which she served on a table cloth on the ground, back of the car. My Uncle Tom and Aunt Hanna ate with us. Ate the end of the day



Jim & Hanna Barnes 1915

when we went home, the car was ours. We were so happy.

My parents, Hanna and Jim, are trying to appear casual, but believe me, they were proud of it. Ray Barnes was to teach me to drive. Sunday I drove the car to Viola to church with him, for a starter. The rest of the day was spent driving, but the mileage was not great, for the speed was slow. We loved it when we put the top down and let our long chiffon scarves blow over the back. And when a rain came up, we all jumped out, put the top up, and put the curtains on. We would be soaking wet.



Doris Emrick Lee

Doris Lee, painter and printmaker, was born in Aledo, IL in 1905. She developed a whimsical realistic style, portraying country life and family celebrations. She studied at the Kansas City Art Institute, Rockford College, and after continuing studies in France and Italy, returned to the States. She also attended the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco.

As a Works Progress Administration artist during the 1930's, she was commissioned to create several murals in Washington, D.C. by the Treasury Dept. Two murals are in the Main Post Office in Washington, D.C. and another is in the Summerville, GA, Post Office. In 1935 Doris got national attention for her painting *Thanksgiving*, which hangs in the Chicago Art Institute. The kitchen in this painting was painted from her memories of the kitchen in

her Aledo home. In 1937, the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired her painting *Catastrophe 1936* for its permanent collection. Doris also did a ninety-foot design for the musical *Oklahoma* and scenes for Rogers and Hammerstein plays.

Doris married photographer Russell Lee and later she married her teacher and artist Arnold Blanch and for many years lived and worked in Woodstock, N.Y. Both marriages ended in divorce. She passed away in 1983 in Clearwater, FL at the age of 78.



Dating 19th Century Photographs

Undated photographs pose problems identifying generations of ancestors, but the type of photo and backing can present clues. Earlier photographs often are found in decorative cases, usually made of wood and covered with tooled leather or embossed paper. The earliest photos found in these cases were **Daguerreotypes**, introduced in 1839 and popular into the 1850's. They are readily identified by changing from a positive to a negative when viewed at an angle. Daguerreotypes were largely replaced by **Ambrotypes**, patented in 1854 and used until about 1865. Ambrotype plates do not have dating marks, as Daguerreotype plates sometimes do. Early ambrotypes had a second plate of glass sealed to the image, with a black background placed between the two. Later, the black background was applied directly to the glass that held the image.

Tintypes, first appeared in 1856 and were popular first with, then without, cases. They had pretty much stopped being made by the time of World War I.

1856-1860 Tintypes were made on heavier steel plates than later ones, which were stamped with "Neff's Melainotype Pat 19 Feb 56" along one edge.

1861-1865 Tintypes from the Civil War period were usually smaller than many of their predecessors, 3 1/2 X 4 1/2 or 2 3/4 X 3 1/4 inches. They were often placed in paper holders and decorated with stars and other patriotic emblems, and had cancelled tax stamps on their backs. From September 1864 to August 1866 a tax was assessed for photography to help support the war.

1870-1885 The Phoenix Company began making plates with a chocolate-tinted surface. Also during this time rustic backgrounds became popular, and photographers frequently posed their subjects with fake stones, fences, and other rural props.

1863-1890 Tintypes about the size of a postage stamp were made popular by the Gem Galleries. They were often used in small albums or fitted into jewelry, such as lockets, cuff links, tie pins, rings, and garter clasps.

1875-1930 During the Carnival Period itinerant tintypists frequently set up at places like Niagara Falls and the Boardwalk at Atlantic City and took tintypes, some of which included backgrounds suggestive of the area in which they were taken.

Cartes-de-visite, 4 x 2 1/2 inch paper on card stock, became popular in the 1850's and 1860's. They were also taxed during the Civil War and can be dated by the presence or absence of revenue stamps. Early cards usually had a double gold border around them, the outer being somewhat heavier than the interior one and the corners made at ninety-degree angles. Cards with square corners were only available from 1860-1881. Those with rounded corners were only available from 1870-1891. The thickness of the cards is also a clue to their time period. Cartes-de-visite were made until about 1900, but were replaced in popularity by the larger cabinet card.

Cabinet cards, mounted on heavy card stock and measuring about 4 1/2 X 6 1/2 inches, were introduced in 1866 but lost much of their popularity after 1900. Dating by:

Card color

1866-1880: white card stock of a light weight.

1880-1890: different colors for face and back of mounts

1882-1888: face of buff, matte-finished, with a back of creamy yellow, glossy

Borders

1866-1880: red or gold rules, singles and double lines.

1884-1885: wide gold borders

1885-1892: gold beveled edges

1889-1896: rounded corner rule of single lines

1890-1892: metallic green or gold impressed border

1896: impressed outer border without color

Corners

1866-1880: square, lightweight mount

1880-1890: square, heavy board with scalloped sides

The trend was to go from the simpler to the more ornate, so the more plain cards were usually produced earlier than the fancier ones. Later, the name of the photographer would be placed at the bottom of the card. Buff or maroon cards, often with the name of the photographer, date from the 1880s. Gold beveled edges and deckle edges with gold illumination in the

carved notches are usually from the 1890s. Dark green mounts are usually from the 1880s. By 1895 photographers frequently had a choice of a wide variety of color of mounts, including gray, amber, bottle green, maroon, and chocolate. Also, the glossy finishes typically came from later times than the buff ones, although unenameled finishes in assorted colors were being made around 1895. Of course we have to remember that photographers may have made use of plates or cardstock that had been popular in earlier times to place images on that were created later, so these features can only be taken as clues.

Thank you to Kathy Nichols of Western Illinois University Archives for supplying the information. For further help in dating photographs, contact the Archives 1-309-298-2717.



Spring Open Meeting

The Spring meeting of the Mercer County Historical Society will be on Monday, April 21, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Essley Noble Museum, 1406 SE 2nd Ave., Aledo.



Frances Cook Steen

The program will be about a multi-talented Aledo artist—Mrs. Francis Cook Steen (Stein) (1851-1933). Mrs. Steen was a published poet, musician/composer and artist. Dino Vlahos, son-in-law of former Mercer County residents Delano and Wanda Johnson O'Haver, has researched Mrs. Steen's life

which he will share with us. He will display some of her art and books of poems. Mr. Vlahos, Sleepy Hollow, IL, is a retired insurance underwriter who enjoys the challenge of research.

Come for this very interesting presentation and for a chance to see the museum, newly opened for the

season. The public is invited and refreshments will be served afterwards.

Museum Opening April 2

The Essley-Noble Museum, machine shed, and school house will open for the season April 2. Hours are 1:00-5:00 Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday. Admission is free, but donations are greatly appreciated. Expanded displays will feature artists with Aledo connections Doris Lee, Frances Steen, and Gertrude Abercrombie.

The museum has an extensive genealogy and records section featuring obituary indices from 1857, Mercer County census, cemetery, and land abstracts, local newspapers on microfilm from their earliest issues, plat books dating from 1875, family histories, and much more.

Items in the main museum include a desk used by Abraham Lincoln, a mounted bird collection, "The Story of Mercer County," railroad exhibit, original 3'x5' painting by Civil War artist William D.T. Travis, Civil War memorabilia, antique fire arms, Native American artifacts, Roosevelt Military Academy exhibit, furnished kitchen and parlor display, and thousands of other items.



Genealogy & records

The machine shed includes a rare wooden Brown corn planter, 1855 Self Rake reaper, 1904 horse-drawn U.S. mail wagon, and numerous other antique implements and displays.



Lincoln desk
Essley Noble
Museum

Your Support is Vital!

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2007. We count on dues and donations to provide necessary funds for our projects and for the maintenance of the Essley-Noble Museum complex. Thank you to all our patrons!

- () Annual Membership - \$15.00 (one household)
- () Lifetime Membership - \$300.00
- () Corporate/Business Fee - \$100.00

Send to: Jim Runyon
756 Hwy 94
Aledo, IL 61231

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Also visit the one-room school house and tour a plot of native prairie plants.



Marshall Reynolds

Marshall Reynolds of Alexis, a well-know figure in events promoting our pioneer heritage, passed on March 14, 2008. He was a charter member of the Edwards River Antique Tractor Club and participated in parades and other events with his antique cars or tractors. He helped with demonstrations for the Essley-Noble Museum's 5th grade tours as well as Aledo's Antique Days. He was a good steward of the land and was instrumental in preserving the Brownlee Cemetery native prairie area. Marshall was a member of Norwood Presbyterian Church, served in the Army in WW II, farmed in the Alexis area, and was active in public service. He has been active in the Mercer County Historical Society and had served as a board member. His wife Harriett is currently on the board. Marshall and all that he has done for Mercer Co. heritage will be remembered and greatly missed.



Rhubarb Fest

On Saturday, June 7, the MCHS will again be selling rhubarb dessert and root beer floats in conjunction with the Mason's fish fry in the Central Park shelter

house. There will also be expanded hours at the museum. Be sure to look for us!



Cemetery Committee

The MCHS Board of Directors realizes the need for a comprehensive map showing Mercer County rural cemeteries, active and inactive. If you know of any cemeteries that may be a generation away of being lost or forgotten, please call Ronn Dillavou 592-2937. Also, community members are needed to serve on the cemetery committee for identifying locations or for constructing the map. Again, call Ronn.



Coming Events

- Today** Renew membership
- April 2** Museum opens for the season
- April 16** Spring open meeting 7:00 p.m. at the museum. Artist/poet Francis Cook Steen, presented by Dino Vlahos.
- May** Fifth Grade Tours
- June 7** Dessert in the park at the Rhubarb Fest. Special open hours at the museum
- July 8-12** Mercer Co. Fair. Exhibits and demonstrations in an expanded MCHS booth.



This newsletter issue sponsored by:

