



# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

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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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### For Genealogy Queries write to:

MCHS Genealogy Dept.  
PO Box 269  
Aledo IL 61231-2504

Or: E-mail the museum

Email: [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com)



Please address all correspondence to:  
PO Box 269

**Memberships available for \$15/household**

For membership or change of address contact:

Essley-Noble Museum  
Box 269  
Aledo, IL 61231



Website: [www.mchsil.org](http://www.mchsil.org)

Email: [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com)

## Where in Mercer County is...?

By Stephanie Braucht

There's a saying that you know you're in the country when you give (or get) directions based on things that aren't there anymore. Unfortunately, there are many places in Mercer County that "aren't there anymore." But many of the locals sometimes use them as references when giving directions. There are other places in the county that still are there by virtue of being residential areas, but have no post office and have lost most or all commercial enterprises. While people in the surrounding area might know the locations of these places, others very well might not, and might appreciate knowing. Hopefully this article will shed some light on those mysteries. Interestingly, the U.S. Weather Service uses some of these as markers in their broadcasts of storm and tornado warnings. When the weather service warns that there is a tornado one mile north of Petersville, then you will be able to determine if you are in danger! In attempting to tell about these locations, the GPS coordinates are included in the descriptions, when they have been available. In describing locations, the present tense is used in most cases, even though no building or landmark might be currently evident. No doubt this is not a complete inventory of all such communities in Mercer County, but it is based on the information that was available to this writer. Many post offices in Mercer County's past have had name changes, sometimes numerous ones, and sometimes the location changed while the post office retained its name. Some post offices even went back and forth in terms of being part of the mail service for neighboring counties. Due to the current length of this article, most of those changes are not documented here, but can be found in the *History of Mercer County Illinois 1882-1976* by Daniel T. Johnson.

### Abington Township

**Ogle** (41-06' 26" N; 090-53' 02" W) is at the corner of 110th Street and 25th Avenue. It was a stop between Keithsburg and Seaton on the Iowa Central Railroad.

There was a waiting station and a general store.

### Duncan Township

**Marston** (41-18' 26"N; 090-48' 07"W) is located on 150th Street, roughly halfway between 160th Avenue and 170th Avenue. At one time this was a thriving village, and it even had its own brass band from about 1885-1890. The Antioch Baptist Church is there today.

**Pomeroy** is located slightly west of the corner of 110th Street and 120th Avenue (also known as Sawmill Road). It took its name from



the experimental orchard established there in 1845 by Tyler McWhorter. He named his orchard and nursery Pome-Roy, which meant royal fruit. He provided trees to many orchards in Mercer County and eastern Iowa. There was a post office, church, and school, as well as McWhorter's business. One building remains, which is referred to as Pomeroy Hall and as Lloyd Hall. In the not-too-distant past it was used for community or family gatherings, but it has fallen into disrepair.

**Prince** is on the corner of 120th Street and 145th Avenue, where Adolphus Hadley was postmaster and ran a general store. Prince was named after U.S. Congressman William Prince.

#### *Eliza Township*

**Eliza** (41-17' 45" N; 090-58' 04" W) can be found at the corner of 65th Street and 185th Avenue. In about 1850 Edwin Bishop settled here and ran a blacksmith shop. His son, Harrison Bishop, had a carpenter shop, and Isaiah Bishop had a general store and drug store here. Thus it was first called Bishop's Corner, before it was called Eliza. There was a post office in the store, a church, and a school. Today there is a restaurant there, as well as a church. A school building, which is used for events by the community, also remains.



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**Ferdinand** is one of those places that may

have moved from Mercer County to a neighboring county. At least one map (1851) shows Ferdinand in northeastern Eliza Township, and at least one other map (1918) places it a little farther north, in southeastern Drury Township of Rock Island County.

**Petersville** (41-16' 46" N; 090-56' 19" W) is at 80th Street where it intersects with Mueller Road. It once had a post office and a store.

#### *Greene Township*

**Carbon Station** is located between Aledo and Viola, on the old railroad line. It had a post office in the home of the postmaster, John Carnahan.

**Gilchrist** (41-12' 19" N; 090-37' 27" W) can be found at the junction of 240th Street and 95th Avenue. In the early 1880's, John Gilchrist and Charles Shuler opened four coal mines on land that they owned in this area. They established the Empire Coal Company, which later became the Alden Coal

Company. By 1899, the company was operating a mine a half mile south of this village.

**Laoc** (which is "coal" spelled backwards) is in the southwestern part of the township. It dates back to the late 1880's and had a post office and general store. The site of the Martin Coal Mine is nearby. There also is a cemetery in the vicinity.

**Old Gilchrist** (41-13' 52" N; 090-37' 30" W) is located north of Gilchrist, at the junction of 240th St. and 112th Avenue. This would be the site of the Empire Coal Company's first mine, which opened in 1885. There was a store, restaurant, church, and company houses. In 1893 the Empire Coal Company became the Alden Coal Company, and the company houses, store, and other buildings were moved to Wanlock.

**Shale City** (41-13' 11" N; 090-38' 26" W) is located at the western end of 105th Avenue, where it curves southwest before intersecting with 230th Street. The life of this small village was connected to the Hytex Brick (also known as Hydraulic Press Brick) plant, which operated here from 1910 through 1971. At one time Hytex Brick had 175 employees and could produce 75,000 bricks per day. Its bricks were shipped to destinations ranging from Canada to Alabama. The town had its own church, school, grocery store, and boarding house.

**Wanlock** (41-13' 09" N; 090-37' 31" W) The sites of two mines, owned by the Empire Coal Company/Alden Coal Company, are near here. When the houses and buildings were moved here from Old Gilchrist, the company also built an opera house. Wanlock is north of Gilchrist, about halfway between Gilchrist and Old Gilchrist, at the junction of 240th Street and 105th Avenue.

#### *Keithsburg Township*

**Columbia City**'s site is about a mile south of Keithsburg. It was laid out in 1837 by a Mr. Gavit on the site of an abandoned Native American camp, but it never developed into a town.

#### *Mercer Township*

**Mercer** was the name given to a proposed town, the site of which is located in the northeast corner of Section 21, about a mile east of Aledo. It was surveyed by Judge Ephraim Gilmore. At the time it was thought that a town was needed near the center of the county. Only one house was built, and this town never developed.

**Sugar Grove** (41-14' 06" N; 090-43' 55" W) was the first settlement in Mercer Township, dating to about 1832, when Abraham and John Miller settled there. It is located at the corner of Route 94 and 115th Avenue.

Early settlers learned to make maple sugar products from watching what the native inhabitants did with the maple trees in the area. Hence the name of the



village, which had a grist mill, sawmill, and one-room school. People also came here from all over the area for Methodist Camp meetings. The Sugar Grove Cemetery is still in existence.

***...To be continued. More communities will be included in the next newsletter.***



### Curator's Corner

Hello again to all, hoping the winter weather is behind us and reminding everyone of spring hours at the museum-starting April 2. We will be open 1-5:00 pm on Wed, Sat, and Sun for everyone.

Thanks to our last quarter sponsor-1st Community Bank and new sponsor Blick and Blick Oil.

We are ready to take orders for the book about Mercer County Cemeteries. It is currently being printed and will be available at the Spring Open Meeting on April 18 at 7:00 p.m. You can purchase one then or any other day the museum is open. Cost is \$25, with an additional \$3 charge for mailing, if that is necessary.

There are lots of new accessions and we are bringing out some of the older ones for display. Our new accessions for this quarter were given by: Gary Peterson, Melvin Larson, Chris Stark, Barb Myers, Charles Lee, Orin Rockhold, Teresa Welch, Richard McMeekan, Sue Kiddoo and Susan Littlefield Haines. Thank you again to all who have donated.

Our Genealogy Department committee members have worked very hard to make things easier to locate. Come see the organizational efforts that have been done. Thanks again Genealogy Department.

Be sure to check out the rotating displays in the window of the former Cooper's TV store, on the corner of College Ave. and SW 2<sup>nd</sup> St. The next display will be of old-fashioned ladies' fancy hats, boas, dress, and accessories in honor of Aledo's "Ladies on the Loose" annual event.

*Veda Meriwether, Curator*



## National Genealogy Conference to be Held in Springfield

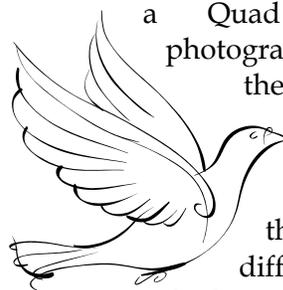
By Stephanie Braucht

The national conference of The Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) will be held in Springfield, IL, September 7-10, 2011, at the Prairie Capital Convention Center. Daily lectures and workshops will explore a range of topics, including research strategies, immigration, localities, technology, international records, and migration. Some of the participating organizations will be Ancestry.com, Association of Professional Genealogists, FamilySearch, Genealogical Speakers Guild, International Society for British Genealogy and Family History, International Society of Family History Writers and Editors, National Archives and Records Administration, National Genealogical Society, and New England Historic Genealogical Society. For more information, go to [www.fgs.org](http://www.fgs.org). I attended the FGS national conference several years ago, when it was held in Davenport, IA, and found it to be extremely helpful. At the time I was doing research about ancestors in the country of Slovakia, and what I learned at this conference was extremely helpful to me. If you are already doing genealogical research or wanting to do some and don't know where to start, you might want to consider attending this conference.



### Spring Open Meeting...for the Birds

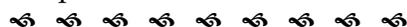
Come to our Spring open meeting Monday April 18, 7:00 p.m. at the museum. Our featured speaker will be George Schlenker, a Rock Island resident known for his presentations on birds as well as other wildlife. He is a member of the Audubon Society, was



a Quad City Botanical Center photographer, and has done work for the Putnam Museum and Niabi Zoo. George will share photos of birds in the area, comparing and contrasting them, and talk about the different characteristics. He is also

looking forward to questions from the audience.

Refreshments will be served after the meeting and you will have a chance to visit the displays in museum's main building. There is no admission charge and the public is invited.



## What is it?

The previous newsletter's "What is it?" was a rim splitter tool used to compress the split rim of a 1925-27 Model T Ford in order to remove the tire.

Now, what is this item? It has a crossbar that slides



with a row of sharp nail points across the bottom. Note the rope, crank, and hook.

We invite readers to

send their own What's It. Bring, send, or email a description and photo of the item to the museum and we will try to include it in an upcoming newsletter.



## Mercer County Cemetery Book

The book of Mercer County cemeteries is being printed and we are now taking orders. There are 87 pages and color photos of all the accessible and some not so accessible cemeteries along with their locations, GPS co-ordinates, and cross-indexed under their various names. Also included are cemeteries that are close to our borders. However, a list of burials is not included.

Books will be available for purchase for \$25 at the museum as well as at Rhubarb Fest, the MC Fair, and various MCHS events during the year. Or, if you wish to order by mail, include \$3.00 for book rate postage and a check made out to MCHS for a total of \$28 and it will be mailed.



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## Coming Events for 2011

**Apr 2** Start of Summer hours. Wed, Sat, Sun. 1-5:00

**Apr 18** Spring open meeting 7:00 p.m. at the museum  
George Schlenker about birds

**Jun 4** Dessert in the gazebo at Rhubarb Fest  
Extended museum hours

**Jul 12-16**  
Mercer Co. Fair booth, Merchants' Building  
Displays, "Name the Tools"

**Sep 10** Antique Days special exhibits - Extended museum hours

**Oct 17** Fall open meeting 7:00 p.m. at the museum  
Raffle drawing, Program to be announced

**Oct 30** Last day of summer hours

**Nov 5** First day of Winter hours,  
Saturdays only 12:00-4:00

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## This newsletter sponsored by:

**Blick & Blick Oil Inc.**  
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