

Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

“Preserving Mercer County History”

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Mercer County Historical Society

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Essley-Noble Museum

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Phone: 309/582-2280

Hours

April – Oct: Wed, Sat, Sun 1-5:00pm

Nov - March: Saturdays 12:00-4:00pm



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The Camperdown Elm ~ What IS that tree in Central Park?

Bill A. Bertrand, Mercer County Historical Society

The following article written by Bill Bertrand first appeared in The Times Record and it is reprinted below for our newsletter subscribers.

As a member of the historical society, I have often been asked about the old and apparently deformed tree next to the Central Park pavilion in Aledo. Dave Lawson, a longtime member of the society was able to provide an answer on the kind of tree it is, and clues as to how the tree came to be there.



Dave has an article copied from the November, 1967 issue of *Flower and Garden* which states that the Camperdown elm was “enjoying a new vogue.” The tree in the park is, of course, much older than 50 years and I will provide a theory on how it came to be there, after a bit of history of this unique type of tree.

The parent of all Camperdown elms was discovered, as a freak seedling, by the forester on the estate of the Earl of Camperdown near Dundee, Scotland circa 1835-1840. The forester dug up and replanted the young tree in the gardens of Camperdown House, where it is still alive today. *Flower and Garden* described it as “being a dwarf form of a forest tree” that “develops massive limbs that ascend, twist, and curve back on themselves to make a branch pattern of the utmost force and intricacy”. It is a genetic variation, of Scotch or Wych elm, that cannot reproduce by seeds. All descendants of the original tree are grafts from an existing Camperdown elm onto another Scotch elm, or sometimes onto a Dutch, Siberian, or English elm.

In the latter 1800s this variety of elm became an ornamental in vogue as a curiosity for planting in parks and campuses in Europe and the United States. Perhaps the most famous one was planted in 1872 in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York, where it is described

Thank You!!

Thank you to the many volunteers who helped with the 5th grade tours and the Rhubarb Fest desserts.

by poet Marianne Moore as the "crowning curio of the park." The tree in Aledo's Central Park was one of two or more planted in the late 1800s or early 1900s as indicated by photos of the park taken in the museum's collection. I have not found any reference to the actual planting of the trees, but Dave Lawson remembers a Camperdown elm growing in Mr. Parkman's yard across the street from Dave's childhood home. Census reports show that Dave's parents at one time lived on South College Avenue and across the avenue and a little ways up the block, lived Mr. Eugene Parkman. According to "Aledo 1900", a special edition of *The Times Record*,

Mr. Parkman was chairman of the Public Grounds Committee of the city council, being credited as "largely responsible for the beautifying of our parks". Central Park was described as "set with many beautiful shade and ornamental trees" under his chairmanship. One might surmise that the trees in Central Park were grafts from Mr. Parkman's tree, or perhaps purchased for the park at the same time as Mr. Parkman bought his tree. Whatever the actual story on its being in the park, the sole remaining Camperdown elm has been a unique feature of the park for many decades, and hopefully for many yet to come.



Corn Cob Jelly

Shelling corn was one of the activities that the fifth graders from the Mercer County and Sherrard school districts participated in during their tours of the museum. This year they were treated to a taste of a product that can be made with the leftovers from the shelling process- corn cob jelly. Yes, jelly made from corn cobs! Our ancestors were skilled at making things from practically nothing, and also skilled at not wasting anything. There have been numerous inquiries



about how to make corn cob jelly, so we'd like to share two recipes with you. One uses field corn and the other uses sweet corn.

Ronn Dillavou's Mother's Corn Cob Jelly

Wash and dry (in the sun) about a bucket of **red corn cobs**. These would come from field corn. The red cobs give the jelly its color.

Put the cobs in a large kettle with water and boil about 20 minutes. Must have 7 cups of cob "juice." Strain the juice, then make according to the recipe for apple jelly on the Sure-Jell box, as follows:

- 7 cups prepared juice
- 5 cups water
- 1 box Sure-Jell Fruit Pectin
- ½ teaspoon butter or margarine
- 9 cups sugar, measured into a separate bowl

Prepare **hot water bath** for later. Bring boiling water canner, half full with water, to simmer. Wash jars and screw bands in hot soapy water; rinse with warm water. Drain well before filling. Pour boiling water over flat lids in saucepan off the heat. Let stand in hot water until ready to use.

Cook the red corn cobs in a kettle long enough to get at least 7 cups of juice. Strain the juice through cheese cloth. Measure 7 cups of prepared juice into a 6-8 quart saucepot. If needed, add up to ½ cup water to make 7 cups.

Stir pectin into juice in saucepan. Add butter/margarine to reduce foaming. Bring mixture to full rolling boil (doesn't stop bubbling when stirred) on high heat, stirring constantly. Stir in sugar. Return to full rolling boil and boil exactly 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim off any foam with a metal spoon.

Ladle immediately into prepared jars, filling to within 1/8 inch of the tops. Wipe jar rims and threads. Cover with two-piece lids. Screw bands tightly. Place jars on an elevated rack in the canner. Lower rack into the canner. Water must cover jars by 1 to 2 inches. Add boiling water if necessary. Cover and bring water to gentle boil. Process for 5 minutes. Remove jars and place upright on a towel to cool completely. After jars cool, check seals by pressing middle of lids with finger. (If lids spring back, lids are not sealed and refrigeration is necessary.)

Jo Ann Conover made the jelly that the fifth graders enjoyed on the tour, and she used cobs from sweet corn instead of field corn.

Corn Cob Jelly from Sweet Corn

- 12 large ears of sweet corn
- 2 quarts water
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 package Sure-Jell
- sugar

Prepare jars and hot water bath as in previous recipe.

Cook corn. Cut kernels from ears and store for another use. Measure 2 qts of water into a large pot. Add corn cobs. Bring to a boil and boil hard for 30 minutes. (At this point the pot should be uncovered so it will boil down for a more concentrated result.) Turn off heat and remove cobs. Strain corn liquid through cheese cloth, if desired. Or you can leave the corn bits in it.

Measure remaining corn liquid. It's suggested to use about 3 ½ cups of it. Put that in large pot. Stir in lemon juice and Sure-Jell. Add a dab of butter or margarine (foam prevention). Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Add sugar equal to the amount of liquid used, and stir to dissolve. Bring to a rolling boil and boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Ladle into prepared hot jars. Adjust lids and bands. Process in hot water bath, as in previous recipe, for 10 minutes. Makes 5 half-pints.



Preserving Photographs, Old and New

By Twyla Holmes

Do you have boxes or albums of old photographs that you have inherited from relatives? And have you written the names and places of who and what is in those photos? You need to do it now while there are still relatives and others who can help you identify them. So many of our old photos are being lost because there is no one left to tell us who they are. Not being able to identify them makes them no good to anyone, and that's a shame.

You need to get them out and go through them and then find someone in the family who can help you put names to the faces and places. If you remember being told who anyone is, now is the time to write it on the back. If you think you know but aren't sure, write a note on the back saying "Probably so and so" or "Possibly..." At least that will give future generations a hint.

Even your current photos need to be identified, for in years to come they will be just like the older ones with no one to identify them.

Information needed for future use is to name the person or people (as many as possible), the place the photo was taken, and the date (at least the year). There is always other information you can add, such as who they are related to, or who took the photo.

As photos are now being taken with phones and other devices, often without being printed, we need to print them out so they can be preserved. Having hundreds of photos on the computer and having it crash would be a great loss. What happens to the pictures stored in your phone if it's lost or stolen or when you get a new phone? And, as technology changes, future generations might not be able to access photos stored on today's memory cards or disks. Do your family a great favor and start making your own photo albums. As we say at the museum, "We preserve our past for future generations."



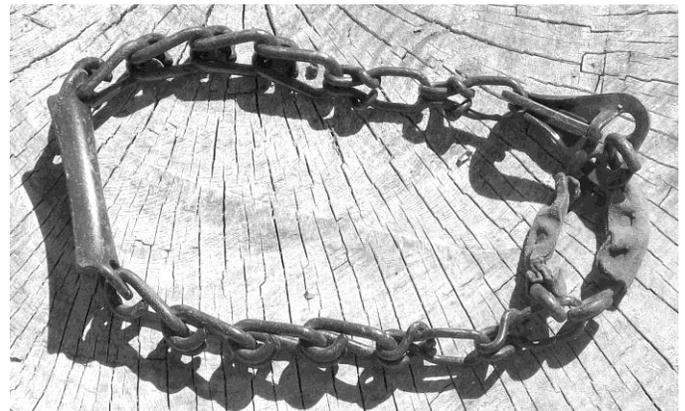
Come to the Fair

Come visit our booth in the SW corner of the Merchants Building afternoons and evenings during the Mercer County Fair, July 7-11. There will be displays, including one of Mercer County high schools' pennants as well as the "Name That Tool" contest. We also will be selling a variety of books available through the museum



What is It?

The previous item was a turret from the courthouse roof. There are two varieties on display in the main building. This item is a metal chain that comes apart. It has a groove on one end and a leather loop on the other and is 7" in diameter.



Coming Events

July 7-11 Mercer Co. Fair Merchants building
Aug. 29 Antique Days. Extended hours 10-5:00
Oct. 19 Fall open meeting, program TBA
Oct. 31 Last day of summer hours
Nov. 7 Begin winter hours, Sat. 12:00-4:00



Curator's Corner

Please help identify the church shown to the right. My volunteers have searched to no avail, but perhaps one of you will recognize it. It is a church in Mercer County. We will have the photo at the Mercer County Fair. Please stop at our fair booth to see it, the pennants of Mercer County Schools-past and present, and other special displays.

Veda Meriwether, Curator



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