



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



### Officers & Board of Directors

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

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



### For membership or change of address contact

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



### Website:

[http://www.geocities.com/mchs\\_61231](http://www.geocities.com/mchs_61231)

## Celebrating Viola



Soon to be available will be a book celebrating Viola's sesquicentennial. The book, *Celebrating Yesterday*, contains a "running history" of the village from its earliest days to the present, a school history, agricultural history, biographies of prominent citizens, and reports from services, organizations and businesses.

Reports of churches and cemeteries are included, as well as mining towns in the area, with personal recollections adding interest to an era that is gone. Tales of the "Dolly" and the Rock Island Southern picture a time unfamiliar to many present residents but an important step in the development of Viola and the surrounding area. The book concludes with a trivia section which includes those bits of information that are too good to omit but don't fit into other parts.

Elloise Lilliman was asked by the Viola Sesquicentennial Committee to be chair person of the History Committee in 2004 and to write this history of the village. A committee was formed consisting of people who represented a variety of interests and backgrounds. Some were born and raised in Viola and had vivid memories of events and people of the area. One member had an extensive collection of Viola memorabilia. Others contributed in area of gathering information, organization, photography, typing and composition. Committee members were Curt McAtee, Carlene Adams, Joan Mack, Martha Thorp, Carol Whan, Martha Hultgren, Ramona McMeekan and Linda Brown. Residents and former residents were informed that this book was being prepared and information would be welcomed. Resources include Mercer County Records, Times Records and Argus newspaper issues, personal accounts from village residents, scrapbooks and personal collections.

Meetings began monthly, but by January increased to 3-5 afternoons a week. By March, the first portions of the book were ready to be sent to the Times Record for publishing. Since then, completing reports, proofreading and matching pictures to reports have kept the committee busy. In preparing this book, they gained much respect for the dedication of many residents, former and present, who devoted time and energy to fill the needs of the community and who formed the village into what it is today.

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The book will be available in early July at a cost of \$15.00 and can be purchased from local Viola merchants. There will also be a booth at the Mercer Co Fair where the history book and Viola memorabilia can be purchased.

A small temporary museum will be set up in the Community Center for the Sesquicentennial on July 28-30.



### CURATOR'S CORNER

By Shirley Crawford

A hearty thank you to all of the volunteers who helped with the Fifth Grade Tours. Below are excerpts from a few of the many student letters thanking those for the tour:

*I will most definitely take my family one of these days so they can also see what it is like to live in the past. That was the best 5<sup>th</sup> grade field trip ever. Thank you, Jorden*

*Thank you for letting me get this wonderful experience with all of the artifacts related to Mercer County. The biggest impact on me was how you had to turn the crank on the corn sheller to shell the corn. I would get tired if I had to shell 100 bushels of corn. Jesse*

*I really enjoyed coming to the Essley Noble Museum. I thought how people washed clothes when there were no washers or driers. I also liked the tour of the old machinery building. My rope turned out awesome. I couldn't believe that in one school house only about twenty-four students went there. I really enjoyed learning how to tie blankets. Also I wish I had one of those looms to weave with in art. Bayley*

*Looking at and doing things that people did in the late 1800's and early 1900's makes me*

*feel like I'm really there. Rope making, log cutting, schooling, clothes washing, tool looking, basket weaving, weaving, looking at old things, grinding, quilting, bird learning and blanket tying. They were all a lot of fun. Thanks again, Sincerely, Mackenzie*

*Thank you for giving us the opportunity to see your wonderful and amazing museum. The Essley Noble Museum was very fun and cool. It also made me wonder how the people back then lived and worked. I feel that were spoiled because we have cars, washing machines, big schools, and much more. My favorite part was when Bill Bertrand gave his speech about the birds. Noah*



### Meet the Board

From time to time in the newsletters I will include a "Meet the Board" mini-feature and introduce our dedicated members. MCHS Board meetings fall on the second Saturday of every month at 9:00 AM at the Essley-Noble Museum. The public is always welcome to attend a Board meeting, but anyone desiring speak should send a letter or call two weeks beforehand so s/he may be put on the agenda.

**Cheryl McCaw** was born and raised in Mercer Co. and now lives in Millersburg twp since marrying in 1950. She runs the family farm, belongs to the DAR, and is interested in genealogy and travel. She has two sons, Mike and Chuck.

**Shirley Ball**, Eliza twp, is a mother of three and grandmother of seven. She is a retired elementary teacher from Westmer and is a member of the Eliza Community Church. Shirley is a descendent of the Noble family and she is instrumental in organizing the popular fifth grade tours.

**Harriett Reynolds** is a lifetime member of Suez twp. She and her husband Marshall are active members of the Norwood Presbyterian Church, where Harriett is an elder and belongs to Circle. She is a DAR officer and is interested in genealogy and travel and can also be found poking around old cemeteries.

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**David Frieden** is a member of the Providence Baptist Church, an Eliza twp trustee, farmer for 60 years, and is a Maintenance Technician in industry. His grandfather was a Mercer County pioneer.

**Alyce Robinson** has lived in Mercer Co. all of her life. She was born in Keithsburg and is now a New Boston twp assessor and has served on the election board. She is a member of the Joy U.M. Church, William Dennison DAR, the Ladies Auxiliary VFW 1571, and the YMCA.

**Douglas McCaw** and his wife Janet live in Ohio Grove twp. He farms and is a member of the College Ave. Presbyterian Church. His family comes from long-time Mercer Co. pioneers.

**Bob Armstrong** and his wife Donna live in the historic Overton Hall in Suez twp. Bob is retired from the RI Arsenal and is busy with a variety of projects. He farms, is a John Deere collector, and enjoys his grandchildren.



**Bus to Lincoln Museum**

**August 3** the MCHS is hosting a bus tour to the new Lincoln Museum and the Old State Capitol in Springfield. The cost is \$55, admissions included, but lunch on your own. Pickup is at 7:00 AM at the Essley-Noble Museum and return by 8:00 PM. For more information, call Dave Duncan at 586-6571 or send reservations to **Lincoln Tour, Box 40, Aledo, IL 61231**. Reservation deadline is July 20. This is a fun, easy way to get to this excellent museum, whether your first time or a repeat visit.



**Meet us at the Fair**

Be sure to stop by to see us at our booth in the Merchants Building at the Mercer County Fair July 11-16. This year we have special guest Wheelwright Tom Sveum from Janesville, WI, who will be demonstrating his craft. This is a vanishing art and it will be very interesting watching Tom work. He will be there July 12, 13, and 14 from 1:00-5:00. Also featured will be our ever popular "Name That Tool" contest. See you at the fair!

**Prairie Blossoms**



South of the main building, the prairie plot is thriving. This spring the Prairie Smoke showed dainty pink flowers, then the seed heads "smoked" on the prairie. Blooms have come and gone, but there is still a riot of summer blossoms from the dainty wild petunia to the awesome accent of the Queen of the Prairie. Look for the unusual rattlesnake master. Notice the oak-like leaves of the compass plant, aligning themselves north and south. The cup plant leaves join at the stem, providing travelers across the prairie with a safe source of drinking water. Jim Runyon has made signs identifying the plants, and Mary Jane Sticklen has contributed plants from her garden.



Thank you to all who helped make a successful Rhubarb Fest. Volunteers hosted extended hours at the museum and others served root beer floats and rhubarb dessert at Central Park. Thank you, too, to all of those who stopped by to see us and to Mercer Market who worked with us in providing the rhubarb crisp and ice cream.



**History of the MCHS Ice Cream Social**

The Mercer County Historical Society Board met on August 2, 1977, to plan the first Annual Ice Cream Social for the fourth Friday of August. Hours were 5:00 - 7:30 PM, with a program at 8:00. Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Sloan were Chairmen. Mrs. Cameron conducted tours through the School house, and Mrs. Finch and Mrs. Parks helped in the Museum. Mrs. Baldwin was relief operator. The first menu consisted of steam burgers, which sold out by 7:00. Each township contributed pies and cakes and ham sandwiches and hot dogs were later added to the menu.

The Mercer County Historical Society's Annual Ice Cream Social is normally held on the fourth Friday in August from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. at the Essley -Noble Memorial Building Complex. Join us this year on Friday August 25 at the museum for sandwiches, sides, and

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a delectable selection of homemade pies and cakes to go along with your ice cream.



**Tired of the heat?**

It could be worse. At least we don't have to shovel humidity. Here is a photo from Joy, IL, of the great snow storm of Feb. 15, 1936.



**Coming Events**

- July 11-16** - Mercer Co. Fair
- July 28-30** - Viola Sesquicentennial  
MCHS float in the parade July 29
- Aug. 3** - Springfield Lincoln Museum/ Old State Capitol
- Aug. 5** - RMA Reunion
- Aug. 25** - Ice Cream Social,  
at Essley-Noble Museum
- Oct. 16** - Fall Open Meeting, to be announced.



***Abraham Lincoln Quotes***

And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.

Die when I may, I want it said by those who knew me best that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow.

