

Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

“Preserving Mercer County History”

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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



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

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

Essley-Noble Museum
Box 269
Aledo, IL 61231

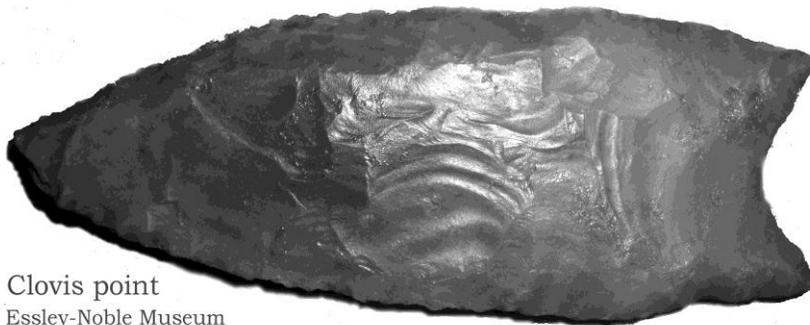


Email: mcmuseum@frontier.com
Website: www.mchsil.org

Clovis Point at the Museum

The November 2013 issue of *Smithsonian* is entitled “101 Objects That Made America”, a special issue “that tells the story of America in 101 objects.” The possibilities were “drawn from 137 million artifacts held by the 19 museums and research centers of the Smithsonian Institution.” One of the select 101 objects is a Clovis point, an Indian artifact of which **we have an example in our own local museum**. It is described as possibly the first truly American invention. The *Smithsonian* article, in part, is quoted below.

“Clovis points are wholly distinctive. Chipped from jasper, chert, obsidian and other fine, brittle stone, they have a lance-shaped tip and (sometimes) wickedly sharp edges. Extending from the base toward the tips are shallow, concave grooves called “flutes” that may have helped the points be inserted into spear shafts. Typically about four inches long and a third of an inch thick, they were sleek and often beautifully made. After discovering Clovis points in New Mexico, Howard and others looked for traces of them in collections of artifacts from Siberia, the origin of the first Americans. None have ever been found. Clovis points, it seems, were an American invention – perhaps the first American invention.



Clovis point
Essley-Noble Museum

More than 10,000 Clovis points have been discovered, scattered in 1,500 locations throughout most of North America; Clovis points, or something similar, have turned up as far south as Venezuela. They seem to have materialized suddenly, by archaeological standards, and spread fast. The oldest securely dated points, discovered in Texas, trace back 13,500 years. In a few centuries they show up everywhere from Florida to Montana, from Pennsylvania to Washington state”.

The Clovis point at the Essley-Noble Museum was examined and dated by state archaeologists from Dixon Mounds Museum. It is part of a collection of Indian artifacts once owned by Ward Hampton, which were collected in western Mercer County. Stop in and see this truly American invention made thousands of years ago.

Fenton Park *By Stephanie Braucht*

Located on the south end of Aledo, Fenton Park provides recreational opportunities for countless people every year. Anchored at one end by a public swimming pool and at the other end by a ball diamond, there is plenty of green space for picnicking, plus two lodge buildings that can be used for events such as reunions, parties, and "garage" sales. This area is available for the public's use, thanks to a particular family.

When Amelia Ann Fenton died at her home at 603 West Seventh Street in Aledo on February 17, 1927, she was the last surviving member of her family. Before she died, she had made a request that no flowers be sent for her funeral, but that those who wanted to send flowers should instead give that money to Attorney Walter L. Mannon to be used in buying food for the needy people in Aledo. In her last will and testament, Amelia, who had never married, left specific bequests to close friends or their children. In addition, she designated that the remainder of her estate be used to purchase land in or near Aledo for the establishment of Fenton Public Park and Playground as a memorial to her father.

Amelia's father, William Fenton, was born in County Limerick, Ireland, November 1, 1826. He married Matilda Ruttle (also spelled Roettle) in Ireland on July 16, 1851, and shortly thereafter the couple came to the United States. They settled in Schuylerville, New York, where William worked on a farm. In 1854 they moved to Drury Township, Rock Island County, Illinois. The 1860 U.S. Census shows them living in Millersburg



Township, Mercer County. Then they moved to Newton County, Missouri in 1866. In May of 1883 they returned to Illinois and lived in Aledo until the fall, when they bought and moved to their farm in Millersburg Township, two and a half miles west of Aledo. William and Matilda had four children, two boys and two girls. Two of the children died in early childhood, and son Alonzo John died at the age of 26 in 1882. Matilda died December 3, 1891, at the age of 74. William died April 5, 1916, leaving Amelia as the last surviving member of this family. William's obituary commented that he was an exceptionally well-read man and that he possessed a library of merit not commonly found in homes. His many friends enjoyed his wit and his company. He had never affiliated with any church, but was a firm believer in a supreme being and "departed this life trusting his soul into the keeping of the ruler of the universe." He was buried in the Drury-Reynolds Cemetery in Drury Township of Rock Island County, alongside his wife and three children.

Amelia was the second child of William and Matilda Fenton. She was born August 29, 1854 in Drury Township, Rock Island County. After her death in 1927, she was buried with her other family members in the Drury-Reynolds Cemetery. In her will, she stated:

My father, William Fenton, in his lifetime, often expressed a wish that his estate, or a portion of it, might ultimately go to the establishment and maintenance of a public park or playground for the use of the children and youth of Mercer County.

Since the estate of my father has descended to me and is subject to my control and disposal, in consummation of the wishes of both my father and myself, I desire to provide for the establishment and maintenance of such a public playground and recreation place as a memorial to my father.

I, therefore, devise and bequeath to the person or persons who shall successively occupy the office of mayor of the City of Aledo, Mercer County, Illinois, all the rest, residue and remainder of my estate in trust nevertheless for the following purposes, to wit: With a portion of such funds said trustee shall purchase a tract of land either in or adjacent to the City of Aledo, of a size and nature adapted to the purposes herein expressed.

The primary object in the purpose of said tract shall be its establishment as a place of rest, recreation, and amusement and physical development of and for children and youth of the public generally.

It is my wish and desire, and I hereby direct that such tract together with the buildings and improvements that may be erected thereon, shall be known as the "Fenton Public Park and Playground."

Amelia's entire estate, conservatively valued at \$20,000, consisted of the family homestead containing 77 acres, her home in Aledo, and other effects and personal property. After deducting the bequests to individuals, it was estimated that approximately \$10,000 would remain for purchasing land for the park and equipping it.

Fenton Park was well established when the public swimming pool was built and opened twelve years later, on Saturday, July 8, 1939. *The Times Record* of July 12 reported that there were 909 paid admissions in the first four days of operation. Admission was \$.10 for children under 17 and \$.20 for persons older than that. It was also reported that John Bickett, manager of the Penney store downtown, had the dubious distinction of being the first person into the swimming pool in business attire. He was taking pictures on opening day when he received either a playful push or a thoughtless nudge. Unfortunately, his light meter was ruined and his watch and camera needed cleaning and drying. Everyone else seemed to enjoy the new pool immensely.

Mercer County residents are thankful to the Fentons for their thoughtful and generous gift of Fenton Public Park and Playground.

Thanks to Jean Wistedt for her research on this topic.



Curator's Corner

We are beginning the New Year with a "Bang" thanks to our board members Twyla Holmes and Stephanie Braucht compiling our newest Mercer County Arcadia book. It has received a warm welcome from all of you. If you haven't purchased a copy of the book, please put it on your list of things to do.

Our Genealogy Department volunteers have been working hard to help complete all the requests that have come in. We have had many new family works added to our shelves. The floor space of the genealogy department has been expanded to give more room for researchers as well as an area for meetings.

Thank you to all of you who have helped so far in contributing money for our new building expansion project. The ground work has been completed, but we have a long way to go to finance the building itself. Please earmark funds for the building project. *Veda Meriwether, Curator*



Mother Gray and the Big Ship

Karen Cox Gray has published a children's picture book, *Mother Gray and the Big Ship*, featuring a Gray family legend. Karen and her late husband discovered the elements of the story while on a research trip to Maine. Karen added imagined dialogue to the tale. This Gray family was living on Squirrel Island, Maine, in the early 1800's. They were directly affected by British and American naval activities during the War of 1812.

Josiah, son of Samuel and Mary Ball Gray, moved his wife, Lucinda Fish Gray and most of their eleven children from Maine to Mercer County in 1855. A copy of *Mother Gray and the Big Ship* is in the Essley-Noble Genealogical library. Any descendant of Josiah and Lucinda Gray who would like a complimentary copy may contact Karen at researcher12@comcast.net.

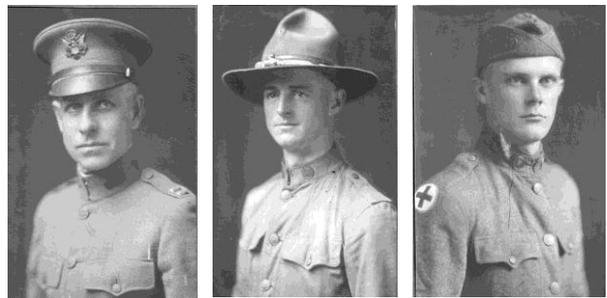
New at the Museum

We have added a new feature to the website, New at the Museum, which is replacing the unidentified photo feature under Museum Projects. Check it out by clicking on the banner at the top. We will endeavor to periodically add or replace information and photos of some of our newer acquisitions.



WWI Soldier Photos

The American Legion has given the museum numerous photos of WWI soldiers presumably from Mercer County, but many, if not most are not identified. If you have relatives from that era who fought in the war, stop in and see if you can help us identify these proud soldiers.



Thank you

Thank you to our corporate members and newsletter sponsors who give us needed financial and community support. Our sincerest apologies if we have left anyone out.

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Your Support is Vital!

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2013 - Membership starts on Jan. 1. "Due to operating expenses exceeding income, annual family membership is now \$20. Lifetime remains at \$300. This amount would further help us with museum operation as well as simplify bookkeeping. Thank you to all of our patrons for any contribution!"

- () **Annual Membership** - \$20.00 (one household)
- () **Lifetime Membership** - \$300.00
- () **Corporate/Business Fee** - \$100.00

Send to: Essley-Noble Museum
Box 269
Aledo, IL 61231

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____

What is it?

The previous item was a tobacco cutter.

This item is about 5 inches long with a metal handle and blade. What is it?



In Memorandum

We are saddened by the death of Harriet Reynolds, who, along with her husband Marshall, were faithful MCHS board members.



Book *Mercer County* Now Available

Mercer County, the newly-published pictorial history book from Arcadia Publishing by local authors Stephanie Braucht and Twyla Holmes, is now available and has been selling well. The book contains 128 pages, displaying 229 black and white photos with commentary. More than half of the photos have not been published before or have not been widely circulated, some being from glass negatives held by the Essley-

Noble Museum. *Mercer County* sells for \$21.99 and is available locally at the museum during open hours, at Wagner Pharmacy, or through mail order from the museum (Include \$4 for postage). All proceeds go to the Mercer Country Historical Society.



Calendar of Events for 2014

- Jan. 1** Memberships due—Thank you!
- Apr. 2** Start of regular hours Wed, Sat, Sun 1:00-5:00 pm
- May** 5th grade tours
- June 7** Dessert at the Rhubarb Fest



This newsletter sponsored by:

