



# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

"Preserving Mercer County History"

Volume 25, Issue 1

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: Thurs, Fri, Sat, 1-5:00pm  
Nov - March: Saturdays 12:00-4:00pm



### Officers & Board of Directors

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Shannon Boynton, Curator  
Dennis Henderson, Saturday Host



### For Genealogy Queries write to:

MCHS Genealogy Dept.  
PO Box 269  
Aledo IL 61231-2504  
Or: email the museum



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

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



Essley-Noble Museum  
PO Box 269  
Aledo, IL 61231



**Website:** [mercercountyhistoricalsocietyil.org](http://mercercountyhistoricalsocietyil.org)

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

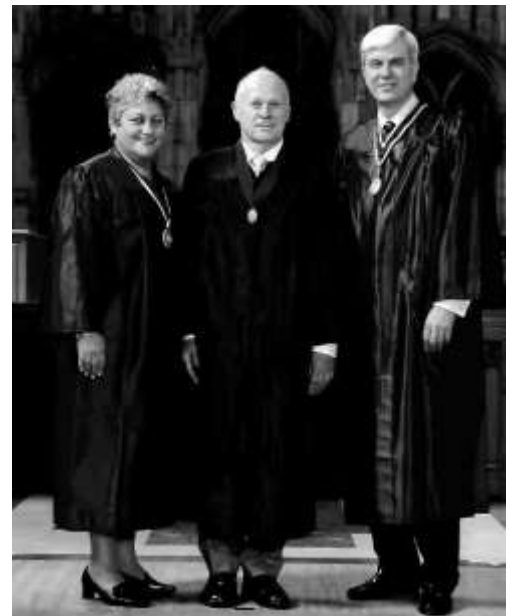
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## Small Town Living to Big Time Architect

By Shannon Boynton

Lonny Frye, a member of the Essley-Noble family was born in the year 1940 in Matherville, Illinois, during the time of the polio epidemic. The epidemic hindered relationships outside of the family and, like in today's time of COVID-19, Lonny and his family were isolated from others. Lonny had one older brother and sister and six younger half-brothers. Lonny was raised by his grandparents, Leota Essley-Frye and Amiel Frye, who took him in at a very young age after his mother passed. While living with Leota Essley-Frye and Amiel Frye, he learned numerous life lessons, hard work, and manners. He quoted, "Life is about self-sufficiency and making the most of what one had." Lonny used to visit the Essley-Noble Museum quite often with his grandmother, Leota Essley-Frye.



Lonny graduated from Sherrard High School in 1958 and from there continued his education at the University of Illinois for his bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture. From a young age, Lonny knew that he had a special interest in architecture. As a child, he would build playhouses for himself out of salvaged material from an old mine. Lonny's career skyrocketed after graduating from the University of Illinois. He worked on buildings such as private mansions, libraries, and even the John Hancock building in Chicago, Illinois. After finishing his work on the John Hancock, he was offered a sabbatical at the Academy in Rome. Lonny eventually left Rome to travel throughout Europe & the Middle East to learn more about architecture and art.

One of Lonny's biggest accomplishments was saving and refurbishing old Carnegie library buildings around the United States. He has saved over 50 libraries in America! During this

time, Lonon was nominated for the Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects award which became the highest honor he has received during his career. In order to receive this award, one must be nominated by his fellow peers along with a strong recommendation. Another highlight during Lonon's career was building a house for American radio broadcaster, Paul Harvey. He built Paul Harvey and his family two mansions in River Forest, Illinois and a new home in Phoenix, Arizona. Architect by day, clothing store business owner by night, Lonon Frye had his own furniture line and successful architect business. He also had not one, but two clothing stores in downtown Chicago. Lonon has now taken up painting in his retirement along with collecting art pieces.

Lonon's greatest professional experience was being inducted into the College of Fellows in 2004. In the picture provided, he is in the middle receiving this honor. He quoted, "I could look back and assure my father and grandparents that architecture was indeed a wise choice for me."



## Gone but Never Forgotten:

### Jim Runyon

By Shannon Boynton

We would like to remember past board member, treasurer and president of the Essley-Noble Museum and Mercer County Historical Society, Jim Runyon. He led the drive for the addition to the storeroom and air conditioning and he created the display that tells the



story of Mercer County, along with other displays. Jim was an upstanding citizen in the Mercer County area and his activities included the Aledo Exchange Club, Mercer County History Forum, and volunteer Sunday

school teacher at the Aledo United Methodist Church. He was a remarkable person and quite the local historian and he specifically was interested in Civil War history. He continued exploration into history and studied in his spare time. We cannot begin to say enough good things about Jim Runyon. Who has done much for the museum and Mercer County. We send

our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends as we remember such an honorable person.



## Curator's Corner

October was quite the success! We had 61 people attend our first-ever "Blast from the Past" yearbook/school event. We sold over 100 yearbooks and 55 Roosevelt Military Academy goodie bags. (Note: The items sold were all duplicate accessions, the originals are on display in the museum.) We had people from all over the Mercer County and Quad Cities area attend. Some notable attendees were past RMA cadets searching for their yearbooks. Thank you to all the attendees that helped raise money that continues to fund our local museum. Our museum runs solely on donations and memberships, therefore small events like these are paramount for the museum's growth. Since starting in August, I have implemented "Artifact of the Week" which takes place every Wednesday on Facebook. I choose an artifact from the museum and share the history of that artifact along with any vital supporting information. Another social media presence that I have shared with the community is "Flashback Friday" which features an advertisement from old newspapers like the Aledo Times Record, the Seaton Independent, the Keithsburg News, & Reynolds Press, just to name a few. It is fundamentally important to bring the Essley-Noble Museum into the next generation of social media presence, especially during COVID-19 to ensure visitors still know we are hard at work keeping this hidden gem alive. We would also like to send our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Shirley Ball, as we remember her as a past board member and an integral part of this community.

*Shannon Boynton, Curator*



## What is It?

The item in the past newsletter was a nail claw, used for prying up nails.

This mystery item is about 4 1/2 feet long and has a wooden handle with metal attachments.

What is it?



## Accessions for 2020

This is just a partial listing since board and committee meetings have been sporadic. Thank you to all who have donated and our apologies for leaving anyone out. When we are open again, come explore old and new displays.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Donor</u>
Aledo green cream pitcher	Benita Grooms
Swamp cooler for car	Bev & Jim Gray
1915 picture of Seaton School Children	Judy Redlinger
Aledo's Bauer Hotel key holder	Sue Cummings
Craig Drug Store, Aledo pharmacy bottle	Jennifer Zecher
MC Clerk's office Post card with picture of McKinley	Priscilla Kenney
<i>Chips from Sweet Home</i> , writings of D.D. Palmer	Todd Waters
National Bank of Aledo history booklet	Paul Flint
13 Astrums 1926-1996	Dave Lundberg
Dr. Robinson & Dr. Miller pillbox	Paul Flint
Brick from Mannon, IL brickyard, New Boston Church Centennial plate	Tom Patton
Two plates, pictures of Mercer Co. Courthouse & "Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from James Henderson	Brenda Gregory
Winola School memorabilia, multiple items	Susan Collins
Book: <u>Becoming Truman: 26 Years of Impersonating Our 33<sup>rd</sup> President</u>	Niel Johnson
Slides from 1955 MC Centennial (will be a DVD)	Ronn Dillavou
Picture of 1941 Viola graduating class, 1928 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade class, probably from Shale City	Craig Weber
Green glass Aledo sesquicentennial bell,	
Keithsburg 150 <sup>th</sup> sesquicentennial booklet	Ila Bertrand
<u>Journal of a Whaling Voyage</u> , ed. By John Black	John Black
RMA silk flag with stand	Dale Ague

### Your Support is Vital!

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2020. Membership starts on Jan. 1, 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 for your contributions!

( ) **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 \_\_\_\_\_

### Note to our new members:

*If you have newly joined in Sep-Dec. of 2020 your membership is automatically extend through 2021*

## Coming Events for 2020

**Jan. 1** Memberships due. Thank you!

**Apr. 1** Return to summer hours Thursday, Friday, Saturday 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Currently the museum is closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Check our Facebook page as well as state regulations for when facilities such as museums can open again. Social distancing and practices can be maintained with limited visitors.

Whether and when programs for the public and 5<sup>th</sup> grade tours will be held depends on the status of the spread of COVID-19. The safety of the public is our utmost concern.

**This newsletter sponsored by:**

