

# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

## "Preserving Mercer County History"

Volume 24, 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**

Ronn Dillavou, President  
Beverly Gray, Vice President,  
Mary Jane Sticklen, Secretary  
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Jon Swanson  
Nancy Hessman, Curator  
Dennis Henderson, Saturday Host



#### **For Genealogy Queries write to:**

MCHS Genealogy Dept.  
PO Box 269  
Aledo IL 61231-2504  
Or Email: [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com)



*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



### **White Bronze Monuments**

By Bill Bertrand

Just inside the door of Essley-Noble Museum sits a little English walnut table with a display explaining its origin. Robert Jinks donated the table several years ago, in honor of his Sherrard ancestor, carpenter James Scholfield who made the table out of lumber used in a shipping crate from England. On a visit to England in 1927 he ordered white bronze grave monuments for his wife, mother, and granddaughter, and they arrived in a walnut crate. Not wanting to waste the wood, Scholfield made a table. White bronze monuments were no longer being made in the United States. I visited the grave sites in Sherrard Cemetery to see what was so special about these monuments that Scholfield would have gone to the trouble of having them shipped from England.



Once I saw them, it was easy to understand why the white bronze was so desirable. They appear with the sharpness of markers that might have been placed yesterday. At the time, I was content to develop the display information for the table at the museum, thinking that the Schofield markers were unique for Mercer County cemeteries. Then recently I visited New Boston Cemetery and saw another white bronze monument (photo), and it had been made in Des Moines, not England! This led to an internet search and a website posting by Joy Neighbors titled "A Grave Interest" which provided most of the following information.

Although not white, and not bronze, these memorials are usually very detailed, always different and found in very good condition. They were manufactured by only one company, The Monumental Bronze company of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Bridgeport did the original casting, but foundries and assembly plants were in a half dozen cities, including Chicago and Des Moines. Each assembly plant was allowed to place its name on the base. As a final step in the assembly process, a secret lacquer was applied to chemically oxidize the monument, creating the bluish-gray patina that gave it the name of "white bronze".

White bronze monuments were most popular during the 1880s to 1900, a time when many people considered granite and marble stones to be too expensive. Zinc, which is the element that makes up 99% of a white bronze monument, offered a less expensive alternative for a custom designed and detailed grave 'stone'. Unlike traditional gravestones and markers, zinc markers were sold only through a company catalog and in person by a sales agent who provided the catalog for the buyer to select the type of monument wanted, the designs for its panels, and the wording.

Monuments ranged in size from a few inches to over



25 feet high for those with statues. Designs from over 500 monuments could be chosen, with a wide variety of images for the panels. Prices ranged from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Monumental Bronze Company claimed its monuments were superior to granite and marble gravestones, and after more than 100 years, this claim has proven true, due to the quality and durability of the monuments made during the 1874 to 1914 period of U.S. manufacture. During World War I the government took over Monumental Bronze to manufacture gun mounts and munitions, and the company never produced another monument.

James Scholfield must have admired the beauty of the white bronze monuments so much that he was determined to have them even though they were no longer available in the United States. Now, after learning that there may be more of them to be found in our cemeteries, I challenge our readers to seek these distinctive blue-gray monuments and let the historical society know if you find any others than the Scholfield monuments in Sherrard or Noble monument in New Boston.



### Curator's Corner

The museum entered a float for the Holly Days Parade in Aledo December 6th. We enjoyed getting it ready with all our helpers and great ideas. We got 1st place in the nonprofit division!! As you can see it was perfect for the season! We want to thank our



donor of the red truck and generator. We are looking forward to next year when we may decorate a tree in the park and another float!

We are still working on the move into the new shed. That being said, my work load will get busy next few months getting our inventory up to date in the computer. I'm looking forward to getting everything in order. The new shed will make room for new displays so this summer you will want to come for a visit. Looking forward to 2020 and what it will bring for our museum. See ya soon.

*Nancy Hessman, Curator*



### Changes in the Board

The board of directors thanks Twyla Holmes for her years of tireless service, although we are pleased to have Jim Holmes take her seat. Jim has been invaluable for his work with building and grounds and Twyla will still be available to share her expertise.

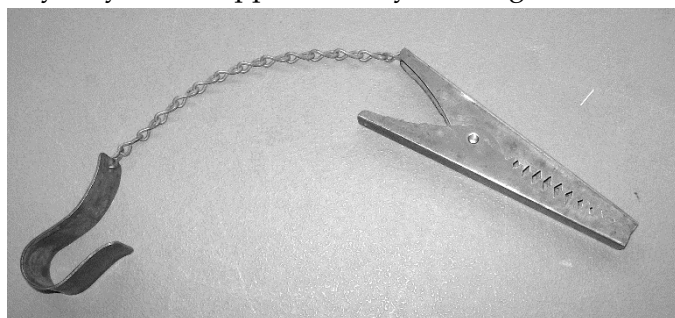
We also thank Tarah Sipes for her expertise and she promises to keep in touch. Welcome to Jon Swanson as a new board member.



### What is It?

The item in the past newsletter was one of a pair of hames, which were attached to the sides of the collar of a draft horse and to which the traces were attached.

This mystery item is approximately 18" long. What is it?



### Thank You!

We thank those who have considered The Mercer County Historical Society when planning their estate. The Society is dedicated to preserving Mercer County History and these gracious estate gifts are a great way to ensure the legacy of Mercer County history is preserved.



### Past Newsletter Issues Are Available

Past newsletters through the 2018's are now on our website.



## Accessions for November 2019

Thank you to all who have donated. Come to the museum to view any of the items. Since some may be in the storeroom awaiting display, ask to see them. There is always something new.

**Item**

**Donor**

Framed painting of Duncan Seaton

Charles Olson

Paperweight with picture of Park Pres. Church, Viola

Bill Wright

Aledo Green Dragon sports wear 1951-52  
 Aledo High School class of '52 composite picture  
 1928 Astrum yearbook  
 Aledo 1951 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion coffee mug

Wanda Lee Titterington

Maple Grove School class photos 1947, '52, '54, 2 unknown

Joyce Whitehall

Booklet "A Little Boy Named Mark" by Ann H. Lawson

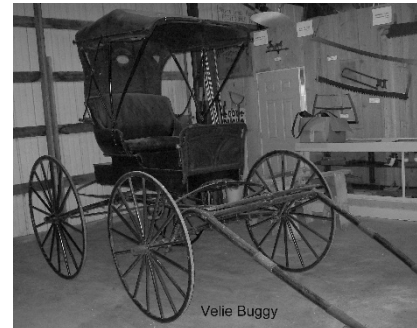
Pam Long

1907 Aledo HS graduation announcement of Ruth M. Wright  
 RMA 2018 reunion information

Tarah Sipes

2002 Mercer Co. plat book  
 1906 booklet Ordinances of Sherrard  
 Register & records for Preemption School Dist. 1930's-1940

Sherrard Public Library



Velie horse-drawn buggy

Connie Parkinson

**Your Support is Vital!**

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2019. 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 \_\_\_\_\_

## Coming Events for 2020

- Jan. 1** Memberships due. Thank you!
- Apr. 2** Return to summer hours Thur, Fri, Sat 1:00PM - 5:00PM
- Apr. 20** Tentative date of spring program TBA

### Available at the Museum

If not picked up at the museum, postage (book rate) is extra. Inquire for insurance or special shipping.

<b><u>Mercer County</u></b> (Arcadia Publishing) Soft cover 9.25X6.5", 128 pages, 229 b&w photos Add \$4 for postage	<b>\$21.99</b>	<b><u>1882 History of Mercer County</u></b> Hardback reprint, 1005 pages, add \$4 postage	<b>\$50.00</b>
<b><u>Mercer Remembers</u></b> Soft cover, 11X16", 119 pages Add \$8 for postage	<b>\$25.00</b>	<b><u>Twelve Moons: A Year with the Sauk and Meskwaki</u></b> Soft cover, 52 pages color, add \$4 postage	<b>\$13.00</b>
<b><u>Mercer County Cemeteries</u></b> Locations/color photos, 87 pages, add \$3 postage	<b>\$25.00</b>	<b><u>1900 Mercer Co. Census &amp; index</u></b> Approx. 3" thick, add \$4 postage	<b>\$20.00</b>
<b><u>1864 Mercer Co. Atlas</u></b> Color, soft cover, 37 pages Add \$8 for postage	<b>\$35 members</b> <b>\$40 nonmembers</b>	<b><u>Bicentennial plate</u></b> Designed by Suzy Bogguss..	<b>\$5.00</b>
		<b><u>Sesquicentennial plate</u></b> For plates, inquire about shipping.	<b>\$.50.00</b>

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