

# Grundy County Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 8 Issue 2 April 2020

## MUSEUM NEWS

### CLOSURE

On March 16, 2020, Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker mandated that social gatherings of 50 or more people be cancelled for the next eight weeks. Given other recent developments in the Covid-19 crisis, the Board of Directors has decided to close the Museum until April 9th at which time we will consider reopening. The Board has also cancelled our membership meeting on April 24th. Out of concern for the health of our museum visitors, we urge everyone to follow the CDC's recommendations: practice good hygiene and if you're sick, please stay home.

### WANT TO HELP OUT A LITTLE??

Like many of you, I have an Ace account but I do not, by myself, buy enough to get a rebate or store credit. BUT, the Museum now has an account and all you—our many members—would need to do is give our phone number and your small purchase would be added to many small purchases which would allow us to apply the benefit to light bulbs, garbage bags or any of the multitude of things we need to keep the Museum going. If you would consider doing this it would be greatly appreciated. A reminder—our phone number is 815/942-4880.

### THANKS—TO ONE AND ALL OF OUR VOLUNTEERS

We have new storage shelves in our archive room dedicated to holding acid free boxes of old newspapers. These shelves were built by one of our dedicated volunteers—Dave Finch. Also, thanks to each and every volunteer—last year almost 5,000 hours of time were donated in support of our museum.

510 W. Illinois Ave. • Morris, IL 60450 • 815-942-4880

Web site: [www.grundycountyhs.org](http://www.grundycountyhs.org)

E-mail: [grundyhistory@att.net](mailto:grundyhistory@att.net)

Facebook: Museum of the Grundy County  
Historical Society—Illinois

Museum Hours: Thursday, Friday, Saturday  
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

### Group Tours by Appointment—Call for Appointment

The Grundy County Historical Society Newsletter is published four times a year. It is distributed to members of record free of charge via e-mail and USPS. Subscriptions start at \$10 for students annually.

### Board of Directors

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### UPCOMING PROGRAMS

All our programs are free to members and nonmembers alike except for a dinner fee for our Annual Meeting. Unless otherwise noted, programs will be held at the Museum, 510 W. Illinois in Morris.

**Our April program has been postponed due to concerns over COVID-19. We will keep you posted as to when this program can be rescheduled. Thank you for your understanding.**

**May 26, 2020, 7:00 p.m.:** Presentation to be announced.

The annual meeting is a dinner meeting and **will be held at the First Presbyterian Church, 200 E. Jackson Street in Morris.** A modest charge for dinner will be announced closer to the event.

### PHOTOS

Photos—we love old photos especially with names or identifying information on them. And now we are worried—why? Well, consider the following.

1973—first cell phone invented

1984—first cell phone for public

1993—smart phone

2002—cameras on phones

And where are those photos? Dead phone? Photos gone. Printed photos? Never done. The cloud? Never printed. Where will all the photos be when you change your phone or your phone dies???

REMEMBER—print out your BEST photos. Don't let history die in your phone.

## MAINTENANCE

It happens in homes as well as in the Museum. It has been 12 YEARS since we opened the Museum thanks to the never-to-be-forgotten volunteer work of Dan Dransfeldt, Ed Cunnea, and Ken Sereno. The carpeting on our floor has thus been used for 12 years and 12 Festival of Trees, untold tours, and whatever else. So, we had it cleaned. Volunteers came in on the 14th of March and we moved all SMALL things off the carpet. No cases or heavy items were moved. The carpet looks lovely now that it has been cleaned.

Then we had a leak in our ladies bathroom and this leak went from the bathroom to the foyer outside the bathroom messing up the tile and raising it. We have gotten estimates to put down new tile which is as close to the original tile as possible and a date will be chosen to replace the old tile.

These are the first two repairs that we have had to do since we opened which, for a public space, is not bad at all. Dan Dransfeldt is our volunteer who replaces light bulbs, checks the furnace filter and all those unsung tasks required to keep everything maintained weekly.

## FIRE PROTECTION

Laws have changed and we needed to beef up our fire warning system including pull stations, smoke detectors, radios, and whatever else needed to keep our building and collections safe.

After applying to the City of Morris, we were granted TIF funds to pay for this work. Estimates came in and we chose D & I Electronics out of Plainfield for the work. D & I was not only lower in installation cost but was also significantly lower in monthly monitoring fees. In fact, working with them on installation has been easy. They have been in the Museum the last four Mondays to do the installation. Their estimate was proven accurate as we had an overage of only \$90.00. One of the units for security—a motion detector—had to be replaced as it was an old one. Why did it need to be replaced? Because, I, personally, was tired of being called at midnight to 3:00 a.m. when it failed and said there was an intruder when there was none. So our overage was very small indeed.

## NOW WE ASKED THE QUESTION

We have been busy—getting estimates, completing needed work, running back and forth to the Morris administrative building, handling inquiries, genealogy questions, and so forth. Now we, in turn, have asked the City of Morris a question. In our Museum we have a license plate made of leather with

metal numbers 64 and the word 'MORRIS'. Our question to the City is WHEN did Morris issue license plates. It has to date before 1911 because that is when the State of Illinois started issuing license plates. No answer is expected soon because that is a lot of digging we have asked the City of Morris to do.

## BUMP OUT

What is the Bump Out?? It is our name for the space which Ken Sereno purchased three years ago from the Christian Youth Center for storage use. We are now working on the Bump Out.

This Bump Out gives us plenty of space for Festival of Tree supplies as well as storage for things that do not require a climate controlled space. This space, however, is not closed in at the top so birds and bats can come in. The bottom is also open so we have mice and ground squirrels visiting too. We are currently getting estimates to close it in and make it critter free. We also plan to extend our heating ducts into the area—not to heat or cool it enough to work inside the space, but enough to allow us to use it without freezing into a block of ice or melting into a puddle.

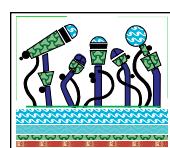
Funds for this are from the last of the monies donated to us for the new addition by the Sereno Family.

## WHO AM I?

Last issue's mystery person was Mrs. S. S. (Nancy Perkins) Randall. Can you guess, from the following description, who this issue's mystery person is? Look for the answer in our next issue—July 2020. When the Corona virus threat has ended and the Museum has reopened, stop in to discover this issue's mystery person.

I was born in Wauponsee Township in 1868. I lived in a brick house erected by my great-grandfather. The bricks were made from clay obtained on our farm. I was Treasurer for the City of Morris in 1907 and City Clerk in 1909. I was Circuit Clerk from 1920 to 1956 and was president of the Grundy County Title & Abstract Co. *Who am I?*

## RADIO



Find the Museum on the radio the first Monday of every month. Tune in to "People Are Talking," WCSJ, 103.1 on your FM dial, from approximately 9:15 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

## FACEBOOK



Besides our web site, we have a Facebook presence thanks to Dorothy Cunnea, web mistress of the Facebook page. So, a hearty hello to all 1,362 of our

Facebook friends. We appreciate your interest in our Museum as well as your support. If you are not currently a member of the Historical Society, please consider joining the Society in addition our Facebook page. Friend us at the **Museum of the Grundy County Historical Society-Illinois**. A Historical Society membership application can be downloaded from our web site, [www.grundycountyhs.org](http://www.grundycountyhs.org), click on the Membership/Newsletter tab. Thank you!

## NEW MEMBERS

The following people are new members of the Grundy County Historical Society. We thank them for their support.

Lorene Kennard - Ind

## SAVING BUTTONS

Every household had one—a button bin or some container for stashing those buttons snipped off old, worn-out shirts so they could be used again. All kinds of buttons would accumulate in those button bins, which eventually ended up in attics, antique shops, or historical society museums.

The button bin could also be a way of keeping a child entertained. After several generations of seamstresses in a family, those buttons were full of stories about the garments they were attached to: who made it, who wore it, and what life event happened while it was being worn. Many little girls were taught to string those buttons onto an old piece of string to make a “charm string.” The buttons had to have a shank in order to do this, so charm strings date back to the Victorian Era of the late 1800s to early 1900s.

All the buttons on a charm string were special, one of a kind, the prettiest and shiniest. Many little girls began collecting buttons from friends to add to their string. They were traded, or given as gifts, but never bought. The unfinished string was kept out on the dresser in plain view as a conversation piece, to brag about, and to tell stories about—for example, the military button off Uncle Hank’s uniform that went through the Civil War. And maybe the visitor would be inspired to contribute a button of her own. Rummaging through grandmother’s button box could be the beginning of a childhood charm string, and become a lifelong collection.

Several charm strings and button collections are now a part of the Grundy County Historical Museum and are currently on display. Once these buttons come together it’s easy to see how they’ve changed over the years as historical items in their own right.



Before plastic, buttons were made of metal, bone, wood, and clam shells. By the early 1900s the nearby Fox River clam industry opened a button factory at Millington. Black glass buttons date back to the Victorian era when Queen Victoria wore black buttons made of jet which is a mineraloid, a type of lignite that takes a beautiful polish. Jet is actually derived from decaying wood that undergoes extreme pressure and heat. The wood then becomes fossilized as a compact black material, that takes a fine polish, but still expensive.

Celluloid buttons ruled during the late 1800s through the 1920s. This stuff was opaque or transparent and made into all kinds of shapes, sizes, and colors. By the 1940s they were replaced by plastic—starting with Bakelite which could be carved and decorated with metal or sequins.



Celluloid buttons

Cloisonne buttons from the 19th to 20th century were special because they were hard to make. Tiny wire threads were soldered to the base, making a cavity that could be filled with colored enamel and then fired.



Cloisonne buttons

Lucite, a polyacrylic resin made by DuPont, was used to make buttons in the 1930s. Old Lucite buttons can have glitter in them or mounted with rhinestones.



Bakelite buttons

Those old coat buttons in the button box are probably made from vegetable ivory. This is the Corozo nut from the Tagua palm tree. These interesting buttons were popular from 1870 to 1920 and are still made and used today.

Most old metal buttons are brass or copper, but sterling and pewter are also found.



China buttons



Bone buttons



Cloth covered buttons

China buttons are very sturdy so they were frequently sewn onto work clothes. They were made in Europe and the U.S. and came in all shapes, sizes, and colors. They were inexpensive and widespread.

Bone buttons are also thick and sturdy. They are made mostly from cattle bones. They turn yellow or light brown as they age.

Cloth covered buttons had a revival during the 1960s when fabric stores sold kits for dressmakers to use to make matching buttons to go with their chosen fabric.

Buttons are made out of so many different materials, in so many different sizes and shapes, and cover such a time span that the National Button Society has devised a classification system, similar to the Dewey Decimal System for books, which is based on comparison and continues to evolve as button knowledge expands.

Buttons can be bright and cheerful and pretty. They're inexpensive and easy to find. They're also interesting and collectible.

## ROADS—A BIT OF HISTORY

Travelers today move speedily and reliably over Illinois' vast network of paved roadways. One hundred years ago, many of these roads were unpaved, two hundred years ago, these roads were rutted wagon trails and one thousand years ago, they were narrow footpaths blazed by ancient native peoples. Many of the roads we traverse today are probably built on top of those ancient roads and paths. When I grew up Southmor Road located one mile south of the Illinois Bridge, it was a gravel road and the dust billowed up from the road and entered the homes, requiring my mother to dust daily. In regard to trails, today some of the old trail names still exist such as the Cahokia Trail, the Kaskaskia Trail, the Vincennes trail, and the Appalachian Trail.

### ***Did you know???***

The first official Illinois state road map was not published until 1917. Today these roads may be state highways and/or interstates, but they started as native footpaths followed by wagon roads and then auto routes. In the 1920s named routes were assigned state and national highway numbers. Remember, we have 'Old Stage Road' and roads named after original settlers such as Nelson Road, Hoge Road, Gore Road and Southmor Road got its name because it was south of Morris.

## ***The Mother Road—Route 66***

US 66 covered 301 miles (484 km) in Illinois. It entered Illinois in East St. Louis after crossing the Mississippi River. Near there, it passed by Cahokia Mounds, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The highway then passed through Hamel, Springfield, passing by the Illinois State Capitol, Bloomington-Normal, Pontiac, and Gardner. It then entered the Chicago area.

After passing through the suburbs, U.S. 66 entered Chicago itself, where it terminated at Lake Shore Drive.



Original Route 66 pavement in Illinois

### ***Eisenhower's Interstate System***

Then the Dwight D. Eisenhower's national system of interstate and defense highways (commonly known as the interstate highway system or simply the interstate) is a network of that forms a part of the national highway system of the United States. The system is named for Dwight D. Eisenhower who admired the German roads during WWII. Construction was authorized by the federal aid highway act of 1956 and the original portion was completed 35 years later. The network has since been extended, and as of 2012 it had a total length of 47,714 miles (76,788 km), making it the world's second longest after expressways of China. About one-quarter of all vehicle miles driven in the country use the interstate system. The cost of construction has been estimated at \$425 billion (in 2006 dollars).



Note: primary roads such as interstates have a 1 or 2 digit identification. North-south roads are uneven numbers such as Route 47 and Interstate 55. East-west roads are even numbers such as Interstate 80. North and south interstate numbers start lowest on the West Coast such as Pacific Coast Highway 1 and get larger as you go further east. Interstate east and west numbers are lowest in the southern part of the United States and get larger as you go north.