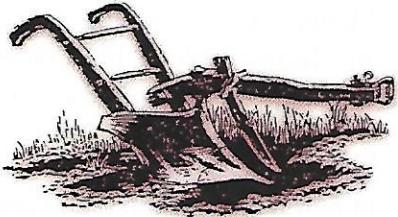


# Grundy County Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 5 Issue 1 January 2017

## MUSEUM NEWS

### FESTIVAL OF TREES

Thank you to each and everyone who attended this year's Festival of Trees. This is our one and only fund raiser per year and your attendance, your bids, and your generosity are appreciated. I think it was a fun time as many of you met friends and family at the Festival and there were many conversations.

Each and every bid gave the Museum money to help its operating funds and budget for the coming year.

To each of you who bid on a tree, wreath, or centerpiece, we also appreciate your patience while you checked out.

A special thank you to Countywide Plumbing for delivering the trees which they have done for several years now.

We featured a "before" picture of the goat cart donated by the Holderman family in our last newsletter. Well, here are a couple of "after" pictures of the finished cart. The winning bid on this item garnered the highest bid made on any of our FOT items.

Thank you!

### Museum visitors

We always tell our visitors during the month of November that it is NOT the best time to visit the Museum as most of our displays are covered with table cloths with trees and wreaths standing upon them. We invite our visitors to return when we are done with FOT. And, thanks to



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

e-mail: [grundyhistory@sbcglobal.net](mailto:grundyhistory@sbcglobal.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 to the Society start at \$10 for students annually.

### Board of Directors

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all the hard work of the volunteers who worked until 7:00 p.m. on Sunday night, our Museum is now fully a Museum again after being a beautiful celebration of Christmas.

But, museum business never stops. During FOT, we had the following inquiries.

- How old are our Museum's bibles? **Answer:** Our oldest, 1822, Holderman-Brown-Vreeland family.
- Do you have a brochure from the 1950's listing Morris stores. **Answer:** Yes we do.
- Do you have a photo of my grandfather. **Answer:** Yes we do.
- How many fossils do you have? **Answer:** There are many in two of our display cases, besides a mastodon leg bone in its own case. In addition, we are working with the Field Museum to arrange for a special loan of some of the fossils given to the Field Museum by two citizens of Grundy County.
- Can I donate photos to the Museum? **Answer:** Yes, but we need names of the people in the photos.

**WHY?** Because we have a 3-ring binder just filled with photos of unidentified people. We entitled it "WHO AM I?". If you ever want to look through "WHO AM I?", just ask Dorothy. We'd love to find out the names of everyone whose picture is in this binder.

So, even though FOT took over our museum for the month, we still received enquiries and questions for us to research.

## FUNDS

We are conservative by nature and by necessity. For instance, you know that K-Mart is closing down. Well, we contacted the liquidator and bought quite a few things from K-Mart during its closing. What did we buy? Well manikins, for one, which cost anywhere from \$175 to \$400 each were purchased for \$75 each. A display unit was purchased for \$50 and we bought a poster display—you know with flip pages to showcase the posters—which we will use to display photos of historical significance. It was only \$10. We also bought several sign holders for \$2 each.

## NEW DOLL COLLECTION

We now have a date for the new Doll Collection. It will be in place in the Museum by January 12. Plan on stopping by to take a look and enjoy the variety of these custom made dolls.

## NEW DONATION

And a fantastic one it is! A woman in Ohio called us because she had inherited some “papers, photos, and so forth.” Luckily for us, as she went through them, she found photos of the 1880 graduating class from the Normal Scientific School once located here in Morris. Young men and women were educated to become school teachers at The Normal Scientific School. According to our records they graduated over 4,200 students during the lifetime of the school.

Remember—everyone—we thrive on photos, documents, and the minutia of everyday living in the past. Remember, too, that today will be tomorrow’s past.

## FUTURE MEETINGS

March 28, 7 p.m. in our meeting room: Art Hornsby will speak about businesses located in Morris in the 1950s.

## GRUNDY COUNTY TRIVIA

The village of Eileen was once known by what name? Find the answer elsewhere in this newsletter.

## GRUNDY COUNTY WEB SITE

The Museum is looking for someone to redesign our web site and we have found them! We’re hoping to have our new web site up by the end of January. In the mean time, be sure to visit our on-line presence at our facebook page: Museum of the Grundy County Historical Society-Illinois.

## FACEBOOK



Hello to all 537 of you who are friends on Facebook. We appreciate your interest and support. Please consider joining. We really like your photos and discussions which are fascinating to us and to the rest of the people using our

Facebook site. Dorothy Cunnea is our very dedicated volunteer handling Facebook and we hope you continue to “discuss” on our site. If you wish to access the Museum’s facebook page, request a friendship from Museum of the Grundy County Historical Society-Illinois.

## 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.

## WHAT IS A BILLION?

Our government now talks in trillions and one might have a hard time putting that number into something they can grasp. An advertising agency did a good job of putting *a billion* into perspective back in late 1990.

1. A billion seconds ago, it was 1959 [31.71 years].
2. A billion minutes ago Jesus was alive.
3. A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the Stone Age.
4. A billion days ago no one walked on the earth on two feet.

The way the government spends our money, a billion dollars ago was only 2 hours and 30 minutes.

## MORRIS WOMAN A CRACK SHOT

*Mrs. Samuel Hoge Takes Part in Ottawa Meet.*

### The Only Lady Entrant

*DEMONSTRATES HER CLEVERNESS BY BREAKING FIFTY OUT OF A POSSIBLE SIXTY-FIVE CLAY PIGEONS—HER SHOOTING IMPROVES ON EVERY APPEARANCE AT THE TRAPS—HER WORK WITNESSED AND ADMIRE BY MANY—OTHER MORRIS PEOPLE IN THE EVENT.*

(From Ottawa Free Trader)

Ottawa has produced lady shots as has also many other cities of the state, but seldom is a performance of feminine cleverness with the clay pigeons so clearly demonstrated as at the Rainmakers’ grounds during the big fall tournament yesterday afternoon.

Mrs. Samuel Hoge, of Morris, was the only lady entrant and naturally enough her work was watched with more than the usual interest displayed at such events. Mrs. Hoge shoots a small bore gun and had sixty-five birds thrown out for her to try her skill upon. Out of the sixty-five possibles she broke fifty. Some of the flukes were not clean misses and the dust could be seen flying from the clay targets. Her last shot brought forth a round of appreciative applause.

Mrs. Hoge, is a Morris lady, and has appeared at the local traps before. On every appearance her work shows a marked

improvement and at her present rate of progress she will soon be among the foremost lady shots of the country.

(The above is extracted from a 1910 issue of the *Morris Herald* from the Frank Hoge collection, and is used with permission.)

## FEEDSACKS

by Donna Sroczynski

For centuries, countless items were transported in bulky, wooden barrels and boxes, awkward and heavy to carry and store. In the early days, homespun linen was hand sewn into bags for the grain that was kept for use in the home, and for next year's planting. The sacks were considered valuable personal property, and were usually stitched or stencilled with names or initials to identify the owner.

Beginning in the mid-1850s, cotton became cheap and made bags cheap to produce. The invention of the sewing machine, then improvements in its design enabled bags to be stitched tightly shut. Elias Howe patented his lockstitch sewing machine in 1846 and strong seamed cotton bags became possible. Feedsacks became a commercially viable product, and began to be mass produced by the late 1800s.

As the economy shifted from a rural, agrarian economy to a more urban, industrialized one, barrels fell by the wayside. Increasingly, more and more grain, feed, and flour products as well as sugar, seed, animal feed, fertilizer, hams, and sausages made use of the cloth sacks to ship and store.

At first, the users would bring back the emptied sack to their feed supplier to be refilled, but it was easier for the miller to prefill sacks, so the empty sacks found other uses in the home as towels, linens or clothing.

At a time when many rural families had limited resources, these bags were considered nearly as valuable as the items they contained. Feed and flour company logos were printed with water-soluble inks and removed by an arduous combination of washing and soaking in concoctions that included lye, lard, Fels-Naptha soap (I just bought a bar the other day) and bleach. Thrifty women used the whitened textiles to stitch clothing, curtains, sheets, and towels. Getting the fabric to a pristine state was no easy task and there are stories of the wife who didn't bother to remove the "self-rising" label from the flour sack she used to make her husband's underwear, or the young girl who tripped and fell, revealing "Southern Best" stamped on her derriere.

All bags, however, were not equal. Bags came in 2 lb. to 196 lb. but also in grade, from unbleached, low thread-count bags for grain to bleached, fine cotton for milled flour. Patterns first put in an appearance, it is believed, in 1926 when Asa T. Bales, on behalf of the George P. Plant Milling Company in St. Louis, had a patent granted for a decorative

Principals of the George P. Plant Milling Company in 1985.



feed bag, "The cloth of which is adapted to be used for dress goods when the product has been removed." His dyed cotton gingham-pattern sack quickly caught on, and improved textile printing techniques and fast dyes encouraged a host of other firms to follow suit.

Over time, manufacturers realized increasing the value of the bags could improve profits and started including instructions for removing labels right on the bags. Bags were stamped with stitching lines for reuse as roller towels and with embroidery patterns like the classic "Wash on Monday, Iron on Tuesday, Bake on Wednesday" series. Manufacturers hoped ambitious women would convince their husbands to buy additional feed in order to complete the entire set.

Feedsacks started as burlap bags and then they became cotton material. So when a farmer or his wife bought chicken



A modern-day version of a burlap bag used for commonly created bulk beans. From the editor's collection.

from these pretty printed textiles. Feedsacks, feedbags, grain sacks, grain bags—it doesn't matter what you call them.

Sometime in the 1920's, an enterprising manufacturer of cloth bags hit upon an interesting idea—maybe he could sell more sacks if they were decorated to be more desirable for the farmer's wife. And the era of the printed feedsack began. No longer just beige muslin, with advertising for the feed company, now sacks began to appear in a wide variety of popular colors and prints. Later paper labels were applied so that the fabric could be reused without the advertising.



A dish cloth made from a feedsack. In this case the logo has been washed out of the fabric. *From the editor's collection.*

mentioning today that you wear size 2. If you wished for a long gown, this would take 4 sacks.

Given that an average rural family owned 100 chickens, 2 cows and 5 pigs, they had more than 20 yards of cloth at their disposal every month. A standard 100-lb. feedsack averaged about 37 X 43 inches when unstitched and laid flat—there were, of course, variations in size and shape. If there was a shortfall, women visited their local store to

make it up and the bag swapping that went on to secure the required number for a sewing project united communities. The National Cotton Council offered pages of pattern advise and tips in conjunction with sewing pattern from Simplicity and Butterick for obvious reasons—new synthetics were fast encroaching on the supremacy of nature fibers.

Wives and daughters instructed husbands and fathers to buy feed in sacks with particular patterns so they could complete dresses. In addition to overall florals, patterns included border prints (perfect for pillowcases and curtains) and children's favorites, like cowboys and animals. If the pattern sold well, it might be reproduced as yardage. During the wartime era of the 1940s,



feedsack sewing was deemed patriotic and prints with "V" for victory and Morse code appeared. Many "exotic" Mexican and tropical themed fabrics got their start as feedsacks and Mickey Mouse was popular in the 1950s. Plaids and stripes saw a more limited run and solid colors were available during the Depression.

In the mid-1920s, mills started producing sacks in printed fabrics. More than 40 mills made fabric for bags in thousands of different patterns. Instead of printing directly on the sack, factories affixed their logos to easily removable paper labels. A typical women's dress took three feedsacks; bragging that you were a two-feedsack girl was the equivalent of

Through the money shortages during the great depression, and shortages of cloth during the war years, feedsacks filled the needs of thousands of women for fabric to create the things they could not otherwise buy—recycling at its best, with farmers' wives fighting over the prettiest patterns. Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever.

Technological advances during World War II, however, meant that by 1948 more than half the items previously in cloth bags were sold in paper or plastic (cheaper to produce and considered more sanitary and rodent-proof). At the end of the 1950s, increasing costs led manufacturers to begin to use heavy paper and other materials for feeds, and the cloth bag fell out of use. Cloth bags disappeared, though some are still made for Amish and Mennonite communities, small mills, and as well as the tourist industry.

Those found today are almost all remnants of these three-and-a-half decades of production, carefully washed, folded, and stored away for use by thrifty farm wives. And we often see them at yard sales and farm auctions.

Today there are books on the cloth patterns used. You can buy many of these on ebay and in fabric stores which specialize in vintage feedsack fabrics, many of which were saved for decades by farm wives and others interested in these pretty fabrics.

## AND HOW DOES IT TIE TO OUR AREA?

In this area Myrecks Hatchery, which was located on west Washington Street in Morris, sold feed in cloth bags. I remember going there and looking for the same pattern in sacks of the chicken feed we were buying so there would be enough material for a dress or pajamas. My aunt made me a lovely sundress which was sleeveless with no straps and in an 'A' line pattern from feed bag cloth. Check out the picture at the top of this page of a dish cloth made from a feed bag which belongs to one of our members. She inherited it from her mother.



An employee of Myrecks Hatchery sorts and packs chicks for shipment.