

# Grundy County Historical Society Newsletter



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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.

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## MUSEUM NEWS

SUMMER IS OVER and we have been so busy that our Board of Directors did not even take a vacation this year. Our meetings were held as scheduled.

### STATUS OF THE WORK ON THE MUSEUM:

The original museum space included a garage with a lift door. Once we added the Sereno addition, the garage was enclosed between the two exhibit halls (old and new). This was dangerous because if someone used the door from the research side to come to the old portion of the museum or bathrooms, they would be faced with a three-foot drop. Thanks to Dan Dransfeldt, the garage now has a floor level with the rest of the museum. Now there is no chance someone will open a door and fall down three feet.

The Board has decided this new usable area could be used by Dan as a work room and then beginning in October, the FOT designers will use the space as extra storage for their supplies, eliminating having to use work space in the meeting room. After FOT, the Board will discuss again how to best use this space. We have also hired Lyon to extend our heating and cooling into that area. Dan did all the flooring with no air conditioning—just a fan!

### CORN FESTIVAL

Once again, we were in the Corn Festival Parade—trying to inform the Grundy County citizens that there is a Museum here representing the history of the people of the county.

### RESEARCH

Research is still ongoing—the web page has an e-mail capability and we receive inquiries which we have to research, interesting information to add to our vertical subject files, and so forth. Lee Sharp is doing genealogy research and is here every Friday.

We also receive research done by others and recently received the *History of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Morris* by Fred Kreppert.

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

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

**October 22, 2019, 7:00 p.m.:** Rom Marketti will present a Civil War program. This program will be held at the Coal City Library at 85 N. Garfield St. in Coal City.

**November 29-30-December 1, 2019:** Festival of Trees at the Museum.

**March 24, 2020, 7:00 p.m.:** Geoffrey Moreland will tell us about U.S. Flags.

**April 21, 2020, 7:00 p.m.:** Our Program Committee will do a show and tell regarding Hats.

**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.

Thank you very much for this information. If anyone else is doing research or has information, please remember to share it with the Museum. Those items are treasures to us.

From Renee Martin, we have received many coal mining photos which were in her family. It is rare to find this type of photo as people did not usually take 'snap shots' as cameras in homes were rare. The photos were from South Wilmington but are wonderful images of horse drawn carts as well as equipment and miners from inside the mines.

## MISCELLANEOUS

We sold our 12-ft.-high × 10-ft.-wide overhead door from the garage for \$100. Thank you to the buyer. We still have our cash register for sale. It cost \$600 (almost never used) and we only want \$200 for it. Call the Museum and we can give you its model number as well as other information about it if you are interested.

Our membership yearbooks have gone out—thanks to each and every member who supports our organization.

Facebook—as of this writing we have 1,267 followers and it is an active facebook page—take a look at it. It also contains obituaries in a timely manner.

## ORGANIZING, ORGANIZING, AND MORE ORGANIZING

We are still organizing and refining that organization, straightening the shelves everywhere and trying to put things into logical spots so they can be easily located. Also, we're discovering items that had been tucked away for safety reasons when there wasn't enough storage space. They are now being organized properly.

## VISITORS

Last week was an opportunity for me to see two of the women with whom I went to high school so—so—so many years ago. Janice McCollum July and Sandy Harper Mariotto both stopped in the Museum.

Sandy came in to see the Museum and was impressed.

Janice came in with historical information on Page Jewelers, the Morris Country Club, plus artifacts from the Morris Community High School. By the way, Janice also solved a problem we had. We had received two doors from a law office but the only info we had was the law office was above a jeweler. Janice told us it was above Page Jewelers.

In addition, the sister of Jack Lavier who died last year also visited the museum. Jack and I had attended the Stine School together.

For me, it was a little like 'nostalgia week'.

## MEETINGS

Our first program in September was a talk and demonstration about metal detecting and anecdotes of Kevin Barclay's experiences as a metal detector. His program was on September 24th and entitled "Metal Detecting, saving history one hole at a time." His talk was fascinating and humorous. In addition, his points on what to buy and not buy will save some of our future metal detectors from wasting money on the wrong equipment. Two attendees asked him to come and metal detect on their property.

Kevin also went on to say that he is a member of several metal detector organizations and that often, with a big property, they will have 10–20 members doing the detecting.

He was asked if he had done any metal detecting in Morris because he had lived here years ago. He said he had not done much. He had only worked the house he live in near Chapin Park as well as the park itself. By the way, when he got his first metal detector he

had to try it out right away. He went out at about 5:00 p.m. and started working on Chapin Park, going up/down and up/down in an organized manner. It got dark so he went home for a flashlight and then continued. He was scared later when he was tapped on the shoulder since he had earphones on. But it was his wife, asking if he was coming home anytime soon. He said he had three or four more passes to go and then he would come in. She asked him if he knew the time and he guessed 10:00 p.m. She said it was 3:00 a.m. and he realized he had to get up for work in two hours. So the caution is—metal detecting can be addictive.

Our next meeting, held at the Coal City Library, will be on the Civil War and our speaker will be Ron Marketti.

## UPDATES TO FIRE SYSTEM

We have received a grant in order to do the fire prevention that is now required by law. This includes smoke detectors, strobes, horns, pull stations, and so forth. And yes, we do have a fire sprinkler system but that works WHEN there is a fire so the additional equipment is to give warning when smoke is detected. This work has been awarded to D&I Electronics out of Plainfield and they have begun the updating.

## FESTIVAL OF TREES

FOT—Yes, it is coming! This year's Festival of Trees is happening on November 29th, 30th, and December 1st. I had to check this date but it is correct. Thanksgiving is late this year so there is less time for Christmas shopping. So, perhaps this is a good time to bid on a beautifully decorated tree and save yourself some time. Our major raffle this year is a \$500.00 shopping spree sponsored by Century 21 Coleman Hornsby and the Historical Society. Come join us and look at all the beautiful trees, wreaths, and centerpieces and . . . while you are here, HAVE FUN.

## NEW MEMBERS

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

Sandra Mariotto, Marianne Murphy, Joan Neff Smith and Chet Lewis, Sally Van Cura, David Carr, all from Illinois and Zane A. Samuel from Florida.

## WHO AM I?

Last newsletter we introduced the *Who am I?* feature. Last issue's mystery person was Miss Winona Canady. James Schaible was the first person to e-mail the Museum with the correct answer. Can you guess, from the following description, who this issue's mystery person is? Look for the answer in our next issue—January 2020. Or, stop in to the Museum before then to discover this issue's mystery person. We'd love to have you visit.

My great-grandfather and grandfather purchased the Morris Plow Factory on Illinois Avenue in 1864. I was an alderman and city electrician and was the Morris Fire Chief in the 1920s. I was superintendent for the Inter-urban from Morris to Yorkville, and before retiring, worked for Henry Weitz at Stockdale manufacturing fertilizer pellets. *Who am I?*

## FACEBOOK



Besides our web site, we have a Facebook presence thanks to Dorothy Cunnea, our very dedicated volunteer who is web mistress of the Facebook page. So, a hearty hello to all 1,267 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 as well as our Facebook page. Friend us at the **Museum of the Grundy County Historical Society-Illinois**. You can download a Historical Society membership application from our web site, [www.grundycountyhs.org](http://www.grundycountyhs.org), click on Membership/Newsletter. Thank you!

## 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.

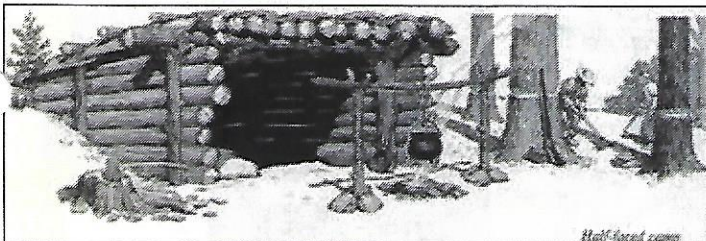
## THE PIONEER'S ARRIVAL

It was just this time of year—September–October—that the early Grundy County settlers would set out in their covered wagons looking for new land. Fall—not Spring—was the best time to travel, because the wagons would not bog down on dirt roads wet and muddy from Spring rains. A trip from Ohio to Illinois would take one month. Winter would set in by the end of November. The wandering pioneers had to chart their course by way of the imber groves, heading to a location that would provide water, shelter from the winter winds, and a supply of firewood to keep them warm until spring.

Time was of the essence. So the men would immediately set to work with the broad ax, felling some of the younger trees to throw up a half-faced camp. This could be built quickly, since it had no door, window, or chimney. Two forked posts were set about ten feet apart, then logs were stacked horizontally, log cabin style, on three sides. The pole roof was covered with bark and branches. At the open side, which faced south away from the weather, a log fire would burn all winter long. Inside, the newcomers huddled in the corners, on thick mattresses of leaves and woolen coverlets, like sheep in the barn.

Elsie Armstrong, that stalwart pioneer woman who came to LaSalle County from Licking County, Ohio in 1831, describes living in a half-sided camp:

When we went to Ohio  
The snakes were very plenty  
And while we lived in camp,  
We killed fifteen or twenty.



And my husband killed a wildcat  
The third day we'd come,  
And to see that ugly beast  
Increased by fears some.  
I hauled up lots of logs  
And limbs to make a fire,  
And when the most afraid  
Wanted the flames the higher.  
And in that open camp  
In that wild woods away  
I stayed to guard the stuff  
Three months, both night and day.  
And still I kept up my firewood  
To keep the beasts away,  
And I was glad and thankful  
When I saw the light of day.

It was imperative to keep that open fire burning 24/7. At the first sign of spring a real log cabin was built, with a door and fireplace!

## Resources

Havinghurst, Walter. *Wilderness for Sale*. New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1956

Armstrong, Elsie. *Sketches of My Life*. 1903.

## ROCKING CHAIRS

A rocking chair or rocker is a type of chair with two curved bands (also known as rockers) attached to the bottom of the legs, connecting the legs on each side to each other. The rockers contact the floor at only two points, giving the occupant the ability to rock back and forth by shifting their weight or pushing lightly with their feet. Rocking chairs are most commonly made of wood. Some rocking chairs can even fold.

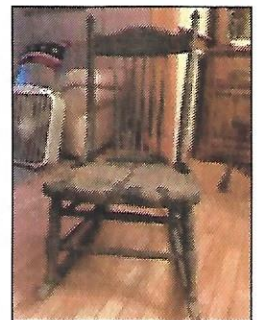
The word rocking chair comes from the verb to rock. The first known use of the term rocking chair was in 1766.

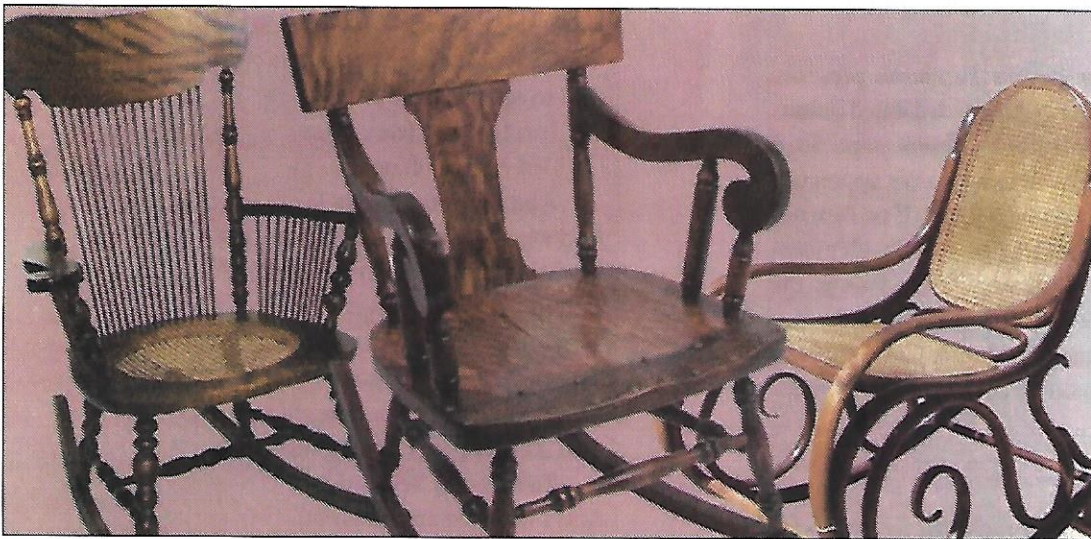
## PURPOSE

Rocking chairs are often seen as synonymous with parenting, as the gentle rocking motion can soothe infants.

Many adults find rocking chairs soothing because of this gentle motion. Gentle rocking motion has been shown to provide faster onset of sleep than remaining stationary, mimicking the process of a parent rocking a child to sleep.

The history of the rocking chair begins with the first instance of the word *rokken*, which was used to describe whoever rocked a cradle. The first rocking chair was invented in 1710 by tying two ice skates to the bottom of a chair, but it wasn't till 1787 that "rocking chair" finally entered the *Oxford English Dictionary for Usage*. At this time, rocking chairs were often designed for two or more people: a mother and child, an elderly person and his or her nurse, and so forth. Praised for their palliative





During the 1920s however, folding rocking chairs became more popular in the United States and in Europe. They were handy for outdoor activities and travel purposes.

## POPULAR ROCKING CHAIR STYLES

From the P & P Chair Company to Eames to Gehry, countless design visionaries have left their mark on the American rocking chair, creating an object that synthesizes both

properties, they were often installed in mental institutions and the homes of the sickly.

As the 19th century wore on, rocking chairs were embraced by an entirely new generation. They became symbols for the stagnancy of a growing middle class and an accessory in their performance of informal leisure.

Uniquely American, the rocking chair holds a special place in our hearts—and our porches. Both Harper Lee and Tennessee Williams utilized its iconic image, placing it gently within their fictional Southern landscapes. Hitchcock used it for an entirely different effect in “Psycho,” transforming the rocker into a symbol for vacancy and loss

## ORIGINS OF ROCKING CHAIRS

It is not known who originally invented the rocking chair—different sources claim everything from farmers to cabinet makers to American patriot and inventor Benjamin Franklin.

Though American inventor Benjamin Franklin is sometimes credited with inventing the rocking chair, historians actually trace the rocking chair’s origins to North America during the early 18th century, when Franklin was a child.

What is known is that rocking chairs originated in North America in the early 18th century. The idea most likely came from the cradle, which dates back to the 16th century, and the rocking horse, which dates back to the 18th century, both in Europe. Skates or rockers were added to the legs of chairs to convert them into chairs that rocked—hence ‘rocking chair’.

Rocking chairs became the most popular type of porch furniture by the close of the 18th century. They became common household furniture, and were often seen as a status symbol of sorts for the elders and heads of a family. Think of the stories you’ve read or the television shows and movies you’ve seen in which the grandparents are sitting in their rocking chairs telling tales of their youth or captivating the younger members of the family with fantastical stories.

Michael Thonet, a German craftsman, created the first bentwood rocking chair in 1860. This design is distinguished by its graceful shape and its light weight.

napping and modernism.

Popular types of rocking chairs in the 18th century included wicker rocking chairs, and the Windsor rocking chair, which originated in Windsor, England. The makers of Windsor rockers often used a variety of woods, a fact which was disguised by painting the chairs black or dark green.

The Boston rocking chair, a variation of the Windsor style, was created in New England around 1840, and was the first mass-produced rocking chair, which was later mostly machine-made.

Many of these wooden rocking chairs, as well as the wicker ones are still popular today. Other modern favorites include gliders, spring rockers, recliner rockers, swivel rockers, and Adirondack rockers (outdoor rocking chairs). Many people also like the simple designs of Shaker rocking chairs and the beautiful designs of Amish-made rocking chairs.

From simple every-day chairs with rockers attached to the bottoms, to beautiful, elaborate works of functional art, rocking chairs have certainly evolved over the last three centuries. Rockers are not only comfortable and soothing, they make great ergonomic chairs because when you sit in them without rocking, the chair adjusts to your centre of gravity, making you virtually weightless. If you don’t already have a rocking chair in your home, they make a great addition to a baby’s room, a living/recreational room, or if weather-proofed, a deck, patio, porch or balcony. You might even use one for what they were originally intended—a garden chair. Rocking chairs come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and designs, and in all price ranges, too. If you don’t already own a rocker, consider buying a beautifully crafted, well-made rocking chair as an addition to your own home, and remember there are many reasons that after nearly 300 years, they’re still one of the most popular choices for chairs in the home.

