CANTON AREA HERITAGE CENTER

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Note from our Chairman

It is November and 2026, the year of celebrating our country's 250th birthday. It has been an eventful and progressive year. We have received some noteworthy historic items/donations and some of those will be described by others in this Annual Report.

While not as dramatic as our P&O/IH time keepers clock or the quilt from Scotland, the receipt of two plowshares from a young man in Indiana is worth acknowledging. They were made in a period from 1919-1929, when International Harvester continued to manufacture P&O plow products due to their performance, quality and popularity. Only one other plowshare was in the Center…it was the last piece manufactured at the Canton Plant. Plowshares were produced in the largest quantity of any other service part for years.

The annual production of the Cemetery Walk was again a huge success with over 200 attendees, even with threatening weather and competition of other events. Our thanks go out again to board members, Susan and Mike Walters, as well as the performers who volunteer their talents and time.

Finally, it is appropriate to mention the monetary award presented to our center by Illinois Humanities for our role in preserving the history of this area. It serves to remind us that we have become a vibrant part of the community, looked at for leadership and partnership in community activities serving the public.

Jack Pollitt, Chairman

Distributed at the museum's Annual Meeting, November 19, 2026

Thank you to everyone who has had a part in supporting our community museum.

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Facilities Committee

This committee oversees the general maintenance of the facility while initiating any improvements or rearrangement that may benefit the display of artifacts and memorabilia that have been donated or loaned to the Heritage Center.

Since we completed the expansion and enhancement of our additional area of the center in 2025, we made minimal purchases of equipment and display items this year. Purchases included two female mannequins to display sesquicentennial dresses that were donated, two additional quilt hanging devices for donated 100+ year old hand stitched quilts, and a Rollator chair to assist visitors who have mobility issues or unable to stand for long periods while touring the museum. Although we are now near maximum capacity for the space available, we will continue to find innovative methods to change or modify displays to keep attractive and vibrant.

Committee: Phil Gregory and Jim Morgan, Co-chairs, Ken Long, Jack Pollitt and John Putman

Fundraising Committee

The committee organizes fundraising, including the annual membership drive. Over $23,000 was raised from individuals, organization and businesses for meeting our day-to-day operations in FY 2026. We received a grant from Illinois Humanities in commemoration of the USA 250th Anniversary. The grant will be used to enhance narrative signage and accommodation of visitors around the museum.

We also have DVDs of our "Cemetery Walk" programs. "Cemetery Walk Revisited" reprised the portrayals of founders and early leaders during Canton's Bicentennial. A second DVD, "The Lives They Lived," features an author, soldier, two athletes, entrepreneur and FBI agent. The DVD is available for a donation of $15 and postage, if mailed.

A variety of books by local authors Brooks Carver, Roy Hopper, and Michael Walters are available. See the list of books on our web page, cantonillinois.org/heritage-center. Books will be mailed for a fee.

Committee: Cheryl Bielema, Carol Davis, Kevin Stephenson, Mike and Susan Walters

Programs Committee

The committee is responsible for publishing the quarterly *Museum Newsletter*, updating our Facebook page and the museum's web page, in addition to planning and co-sponsoring historical programs. Museum volunteers are trained and scheduled by this committee, too.

We have been showcasing the artifacts contained in the 1925 Time Capsule which was opened during Canton's Bicentennial last year. See our Facebook page for 18 intriguing stories. Another project is continuing – video streamed "Canton's Compelling History" segments, featuring Parlin and Orendorff Plow Works and International Harvester; Dairies and Cigar-making Companies; Agriculture and Sesquicentennial Farms; and Mining Companies of Fulton County. View them on our YouTube Channel.

An especially popular event was co-sponsored with Parlin-Ingersoll Public Library in recognition of National Radio Day. A radio program was enacted twice using a "Lone Ranger" script and live audience. There are plans to schedule another in the New Year.

See the attached **Programs - Community Engagement Report** highlighting the museum's outreach.

Committee: Cheryl Bielema, Chair, Jan Bruster, Hannah Cox, Sarah Melhouse, Kathy Myers, and Harold Rose

Promotion/Marketing Committee

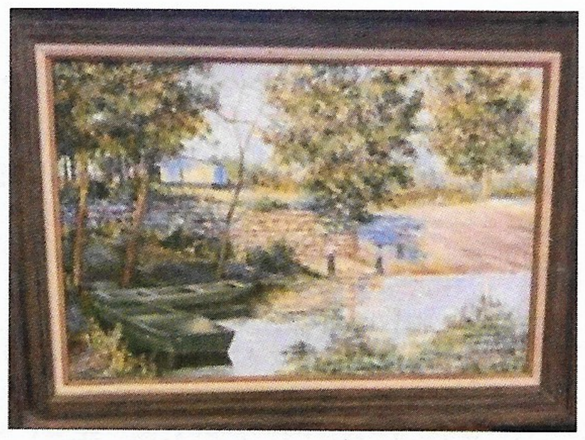
The Promotions Committee used a variety of resources in 2026 to increase awareness of the Canton Area Heritage Center. In addition to tours of the Heritage Center by CAHC volunteers throughout the year, news releases and flyers promoted and highlighted notable acquisitions by the museum, special events held in collaboration with the library, the annual Cemetery Walk in September, and the Heritage Center annual meeting in November.

News releases are sent to local and regional media outlets and other organizations: The Fulton Democrat, The Mason County Democrat, Canton Daily Ledger, Peoria Journal Star, WILP, WBYS, WPZA, City of Canton, Canton Area Chamber of Commerce, Canton Cable Channel 22, Canton Area Heritage newsletters and social media. Social media represented by Facebook also continues to be the primary source of promotion for the Heritage Center. Those figures are shown on a separate sheet.

Committee: Debbie Stephenson, Chair and Kevin Stephenson

Acquisitions Committee

Through its acquisition program, the Canton Area Heritage Center added several items to the museum's collection this year. We are deeply grateful to the sixty-one individuals who donated items for our displays. Here are a few notable acquisitions:



Larry Nelson donated an oil painting "Canton Lake Boat Dock" by local artist Ralph Thompson on behalf of Bill and Jeanette Brown of Golden, CO



Crazy Quilt made by Heiress Garland
donated by Janet Rae of Edinburgh, Scotland



Ketcham Dairy milk bottles and carrier donated by Sue Carpentier



IH Time Clock donated by the Ted and Martha Strode Family

Trowel used to place the cornerstone of the Post Office building donated by Dave Lewis.

An enhanced photo of United Electric Coal Co. employees of 1942 donated by Max Latimer.

Square Deal Dairy embossed bottle from Tony Kozelichki.

Two P & O watch fobs and IH watch fob donated by Mary Etta Scott.

Committee: Mike Walters, Chair, Deb Stephenson, Registrar, Kevin Stephenson, Mary Lou Kuchan, Dean Gibson, and Jack and Mary Pollitt.