

Since 2015

Volume 7, Issue 1

January - February - March 2024

THE CHAIR'S REPORT



Jack Pollitt, Chairman
Canton Area Heritage Center
Executive Board
Cell: (309) 338-5667

It has been over eight years since we gathered at the Railroad Station to discuss the possibility of creating a local museum. Prior to that, an IHC museum was discussed on several occasions with Dennis Crawford, and other IHC personnel, who agreed we would need to very soon interview the elder employees who were still alive and in turn get their memories on paper. We were aware that the feelings of many residents and the governing bodies of the community were not the happiest with IHC. No one was more displeased than I, but it was part of the history of Canton and needed told with the closing reasons recognized and reviewed.

Mr. Crawford and I eventually agreed that *all the history of the community* would need to be part of the endeavor, as well as the immediate area, if the venture were to get off the ground. Dennis was deeply involved in Canton Main Street and in our community.

Later, a meeting was announced regarding the discussion of such a project. Cheryl Bielema led the

meeting as Canton Main Street Chair. There was a good turnout. Many were former IH employees who were supportive of our fact-finding efforts.

Faced with the effort involved and the fact that no assets were available for such a project, interest dwindled among some of the initial supporters. We enlisted help from local historians, teachers, and certain collectors to join our group. We worked for nearly three years hunting for sites, encouraging one another, and quietly receiving aid from a few key community leaders. [Editor's Note: During these years, the planning group achieved non-profit, tax deductible status as a 501(c)3 organization.] We proudly opened over five years ago.

My wife Mary and I are enthusiastic and believe the museum will still grow with our current staff's efforts and energy, as well as enlisting persons with new ideas and community spirit. Mary will work with me to support and advise me from her 42 years in clerical and office manager experience.

My Past Careers. I have worked in education and manufacturing plant management. I taught English and art as well as coached three sports at the Jr. High level. I fondly remember my students receiving outstanding levels in art and declamation contests. We enjoyed winning 82% of our basketball games as well as finishing 2nd in track at the state level one year.

A few friends persuaded me to take an employment test with IHC. The outcome of the test resulted in my receiving a job offer. I spent 20 years with IH, mostly in materials planning and product distribution as one of the five manager positions in the plant. Later, I became the Plant Manager and inherited the undesirable position of being in charge of the plant closure.

In future newsletters, I'll say more about my work experiences. I also want to share our goals for the museum. I'm happy to serve and wish you all a Happy New Year!



2024-2025 Officers: Mary Lou Kuchan, Secretary; Jim Morgan, Treasurer; Jack Pollitt, Chairman; and Phil Gregory, Vice Chairman

Special points of interest

- FOLLOW OUR PROGRESS IN THIS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
- MEET MOVERS AND SHAKERS, THEN AND NOW
- LEARN INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY
- PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL HISTORY PROGRAMS
- VOLUNTEER WHERE AND WHEN YOU CAN

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Our hours are
Fridays, 10am-12 noon
Saturdays, 10am-2pm
Sundays, 1pm-3pm
Come see us!
Want a group tour? Call
(309) 647-2242 and
leave a message.

The Museum Newsletter

RESEARCH MATERIALS TO BE FOUND AT THE MUSEUM

One of the growing parts of the Canton Area Heritage Center is the library. The Center's mission is "...to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Canton's and the surrounding area's history, culture, and industry." The library helps fulfill the mission by providing a large variety of books, magazines, three-ring binders, yearbooks, and more.

The contents of the library come from two main sources. One is donations from the public. The other is through the research, writings, and compilations of Canton Area Heritage Center volunteers. Visitors will find stories and photos pertaining to a little bit, and in many cases, a lot, of anything and everything.

A sampling of what's available for the public to see includes --

- ***A nearly complete collection of Canton High School, Canton elementary and middle schools, and Canton Community College/Spoon River College yearbooks. The high school yearbooks go back to 1912.
- ***Fulton County area school pictures from the early to mid-1900s with the names of those in the photos.
- ***Editions of the Canton High School newspaper, The Pennant, dating back to 1908.
- ***Canton, Fulton County, and Illinois history books.
- ***International Harvester history.
- ***A history of every Canton Community Concert Association performance since the organization began in 1955.
- ***Stories about and pictures of well known individuals who left their mark here, became nationally prominent, or even notorious.
- ***Standout athletes from Canton.
- ***Three-ring binders displaying advertising matchbooks from businesses in the area's past.

***There are other three-ring binders with interesting and unusual stories and pictures about...

- Bicycle racing...a popular activity in Canton in the 1890s.
- St. David's role in Prohibition.
- Canton's "battle of the hitching posts" between 1882 and 1910.
- The history of aviation in Fulton County, starting in 1913.
- The Fay Rawley story.
- Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus "singing ringmaster," Harold Ronk. The list goes on and on.

Donations to be considered for use in the Canton Area Heritage Center library are welcome. Items in the library are not available to be checked-out and taken home, but feel free to look as long as you like during regular Canton Area Heritage Center open hours.

Kevin Stephenson, Museum Volunteer



Dues are Due. Find membership form on page 4 of newsletter if you haven't already joined for 2024. We so appreciate your support!



New Acquisition: A Signature Quilt completed in 1893-1895 for the newly-married couple, Della and George White of London Mills, has been donated recently. Friends and neighbors embroidered their signatures and dates within the blocks. The quilt was donated by Nancy Krull of Wheaton, IL. Nancy has also provided a wealth of documents -- provenance listing contributors, copies of census records and township maps marking locations of these neighbors' farms.

PAST YEAR IN PHOTOS

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Cemetery Walk photos by Stilled Moments, Dave Barbknecht.
DVD copies of the event are available for \$20 + mailing.



2023 Events. The Fundraising and Programs Committees planned these events -- Cemetery Walk; a traveling museum at the Fulton Co. Bicentennial; YWCA Super-K Kids Tour; Annual Meeting with portrayal of Elizabeth Cady Stanton; Museum Workday and Christian Church Volunteers; SRC Lifelong Learning Conference Sessions.



Preserving our history...

2024 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Address:
111 South Main Street
P.O. Box 526
Canton, Illinois 61520

Phone: 309-647-2242
Fax: 309-647-2712
Email: cahcpo19@att.net

Thank you in advance for your willingness to be a part of honoring our area's rich and vibrant history.

- High School Students/ Seniors (age 65+) - \$15
- Individuals - \$20/ Family - \$35
- Community Organization - \$50
- Business/Commercial - \$100

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Check the appropriate category:

☐ Student/Senior - \$15 ☐ Individual - \$20 ☐ Family - \$35

☐ Community Organization - \$50. Name: _____

☐ Business/Commercial - \$100. Name: _____

☐ Donation amount: _____

Return form and check to Canton Area Heritage Center, P.O. Box 526, Canton, IL 61520



We're on the Web:

[www.cantonillinois.org/
heritage-center](http://www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center)

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day of the year. He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety. Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Do all you can, and make as little fuss about it as possible.

—Charles Dickens

DID YOU KNOW?

Photo courtesy of Dickson Mounds State Museum



During the operation of Camp Ellis near Ipava, IL, three German prisoners of war died of natural causes at the camp. The following highlights one funeral for a 20-year-old prisoner named Richard Barthel.

He was a member of the German Air Corps and was buried in his air corp uniform. Fifty of his fellow war prisoners attended and conducted the services with the aid of the American Chaplain. The Chaplain conducted the service entirely in German. There were ten pall bearers, 20 members of a choir group, and an 8-piece band comprised of additional camp prisoners. The choir sang several numbers and appeared to be led by a man who was a professional song leader.

The casket was draped with a German flag and the ten pall bearers formed a semi-circle around the casket. After the service, the flag was removed and the casket was opened to view the body. While the casket was opened, the prisoners attending passed in review of their comrade and gave a German military salute. Once the casket was closed again, one of the German officers addressed the group briefly. He then walked to the side of the grave, rolled back the grass carpet laid on the ground, picked up a handful of the clay and tossed it on top of the casket. He clicked his heels together sharply as he drew to attention with a snappy salute, then returned to the semi-circle of men. This procedure of tossing dirt on the casket, heel clicking and saluting was repeated by the other pall bearers.

The firing squad then fired three salutes. A marker painted on a white board was placed at the head of the grave. It bore the printing:

Richard Barthel, Soldat (Soldier) German

Note: All three of the prisoners' remains who died while at Camp Ellis were returned to Germany after the war ended.

Reference: *Argus Spotlight*, April 26, 1944, Macomb, Illinois

Jim Morgan, Treasurer