

Since 2015

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January - February - March 2023

## THE CHAIR'S REPORT



**Philip Gregory, Chairman**  
Canton Area Heritage Center  
Executive Board  
Cell: (309) 208-2943

As I reflect on how far we've come at the start of our eighth year, here is what comes to mind:

Our Executive Board members are just as passionate as they ever were about preserving our history.

We have an increasing number of supporters who give generously and help spread the word.

Visitors make nice comments about how the museum looks and what's been collected. Read a member's note describing his view of our work on page 2. Others write about the artifacts which trigger memories of growing up or living and working in Canton and in Fulton County.

One of our board members likes to say we have a compelling story to tell and it's still being written. Join us in the work, won't you?

Happy New Year, everybody!



## THE BICENTENNIAL June 20-29, 2025

**"Be kind whenever possible.  
It is always possible."**

--The 14th Dalai Lama



One of our new volunteers, Kathy Myers (R), and Cheryl Bielema (L), staff coordinator, planned the center's window display featuring a classic children's book, *The Fir Tree*, by Hans Christian Andersen.

The display was part of Canton's Old-Fashioned Christmas Walk in early December. See additional photos on page 2.

We're seeking additional volunteers in the New Year! Contact us to find out where you might help, given your interests and available times.

## DUES REQUEST IN 2023

We ask you to donate annually. NOTE: We now have a means for Caterpillar employees, present and past, to extend their donations.

The Canton Area Heritage Center is registered as a charity eligible to receive matching funds from **Caterpillar Foundation Matching Gifts program**. The Foundation's website states that "Since its founding in 1952, the Caterpillar Foundation has contributed to helping improve the lives of people around the world... As a Foundation, we focus on the complementary human, natural and basic services infrastructure needed for individuals to thrive and communities to be resilient."

Caterpillar active employees worldwide and U.S. based retirees donating a minimum of \$25 can submit a request for matching funds via the website:

[www.caterpillar.com/en/company/caterpillar-foundation/matching-gifts](http://www.caterpillar.com/en/company/caterpillar-foundation/matching-gifts)

The maximum amount of matching funds is \$10,000 annually per person. Matching funds are paid out on a quarterly schedule (i.e., any donation submitted by January 31, 2023, and confirmed by February 15, 2023, will be matched and paid in March, 2023).

If you're a Cat employee or retiree, please consider making a donation and request matching funds. Donations are tax deductible. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact us (309) 647-2242.

**Kathy Myers, Museum volunteer**

## Special points of interest

• FOLLOW OUR PROGRESS IN THIS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

• MEET MOVERS AND SHAKERS, THEN AND NOW

• LEARN INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

• VOLUNTEER WHERE AND WHEN YOU CAN

## Inside this issue

CANTON COUNTRY CHRISTMASSES	2
FROM A MEMBER	2
DID YOU KNOW?	3
THE DOORS IN CANTON	3
NEW ACQUISITION-CORN SHELTER	4



Our hours are  
Fridays, 10am-12 noon  
Saturdays, 10am-2pm  
Sundays, 1pm-4pm  
Come see us!



# The Museum Newsletter

## CANTON COUNTRY CHRISTMASES

We plan special displays at Christmastime. *Canton's Country Christmases: Tinsel, Toys and Traditions* was the theme. The museum was decorated with old toys, Santas, Christmas trees, tinsel and lights. Here are a few of our visitors in December. These children searched for the Elf on a Shelf and for artifacts pictured on Museum Bingo cards while touring the museum.



## FROM A MEMBER

Robert Williams of Bloomington, IL, included a note with his membership renewal. Bob was a member of Canton High School's Class of 1955. He had toured the Heritage Center during an earlier visit with his classmate and friend Jack Pollitt. We are very appreciative of Bob's remarks and his ongoing support.

"I'm so proud of the dedication and years of planning and developing, you and others who live in Canton...have contributed to the development, support, growth and the maintenance of the Canton Area Heritage Center project.

"To preserve Canton area's history and share it through the existence of the museum, the many activities...communication, and information sharing availability is a beautiful gift, not only to who have or had connections, but also to the State historians, family genealogy researchers and an education for our youth.

"Many thanks to you and the committees for the creativity and commitment to Canton--its past and its present and its future."

Sincerely, Bob



THE DOORS IN CANTON

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the first airport in Fulton County was located in St. David, IL? The founders were three local pilots who owned their own planes. In 1939 Gayle Ellis, Willis Baldwin and Charlie Parsel needed a place to store their aircraft. A farm was located along the south side of Route 100, halfway between St. David and Bryant. The farm was owned by Alma Tucker, who agreed to rent the triangle shaped parcel to Gayle Ellis and his father, Walter, for a reasonable amount.

The two built the first hanger on the site. This field eventually became known as St. David Airport. South of the parcel were lined with earlier coal mine spoil banks and on the north was power lines and the highway. There were also some trees on the property. There was but one runway at first, and all of these hazards were met with trepidation by some of the pilots who flew from the field. Years after, an interesting quote is said to have been made by a Civil Air Patrol (CAP) inspector, "If you can land and take off from St. David Airport you can do it at any airport in the United States."

There were other citizens of Canton and the surrounding area who also were learning to fly in 1930 and 1940. Since there was not an airport or flight instructor available locally, men went to Macomb or Peoria for training. William P. Ingersoll, Charles Pschirrer, Tony Butkovich, all of Canton, received flying instruction at Peoria Airport. It was not long before they acquired airplanes to fly. The first was William P. Ingersoll who flew his Aeronca Chief from his own farm airstrip. This group of early flyers would later form the Fulton County Flying Club in 1940.

[To be continued in later newsletters...]

Source: Haynes, Jim. (1998). *Shadows of Wings: An Aviation History of West Central Illinois, Vol. 1, 1910-1945*. Bushnell, IL: Robins Nest Co.

Jim Morgan, Treasurer



EDITORS NOTE. The following article was written for our April, 2020, newsletter. When the COVID-19 Pandemic closed our doors and other non-essential businesses, the decision was made to email it to our members and partners, only. We think it's time to bring the article back for all to read. This Doors concert was a memorable one since they went on to appear on the Ed Sullivan's Show later that week.

Jim Morrison and the Doors sang at Canton High School on September 13, 1967, just as their breakout song, "Light My Fire," hit #1. It definitely caused a stir as some parents forbade their teens to attend, and the Doors "created controlled chaos on stage." So said 19-year-old Connie Cook Smith, who interviewed the band and wrote a feature article for the Canton Daily Ledger.

Comments from a few Cantonites who attended the concert, as well as the organizer's daughter: Evelyn Baker: Terry Van Auker of the Wildlife, Dayton, OH, was the opening act for the Doors. (Photo on right, L-R): Deb Rodney, Mary Kay Bailey Watson, Evelyn Baker (me), Terry, Diana Johnson Reid and Carol Cardot Wages. Carol's band, The Continental Blues, won the Battle of the Bands that evening. We ALL watched the Doors together."

Larry Nelson: "I had never heard of the Doors until a week before; then I sat in first row directly in front of Jim. He took his time singing and the keyboard player was great. I believe Morrison was a poet and more into his poetry than being a rock star. I still think about that concert."

Charlie Tarboletti: "I ran spotlight. I did a run through with them and then picked up sandwiches from Louie's and ate on the stage with the

roadies while the Doors ate at Joe's in Norris."

Julie Dawson: "My father Jerry Dawson arranged the concert with James Heeren, [then] Canton Community College's Dean of Housing and Social Activities, while he served as Friendship Festival President. [Note: The college paid for the band as the Doors were touring at community colleges during this time]. Dad had wanted a name band - Jefferson Airplane wasn't available, so he asked my Uncle Steve Browning for suggestions. Steve said, 'get the Doors!' The day of the concert, Dad picked them up at the airport in our station wagon and took them to eat at Joe's. Jim Morrison had catfish. He expressed surprise that we ate it here, but said he liked it."

Steve Browning: "I knew the Doors. Their album had just taken off. I was in a band at the time, The Third Booth, and we sat together seven rows back. It was fantastic. They were as good as their album. They didn't talk between songs after Jim made a theatrical entrance; [he acted] like he was walking a tightrope. I was surprised to see some of my classmates get up and leave. Maybe they didn't like the theatrics or their psychedelic music as much as I did!"

According to Connie Cook's *Daily Ledger* piece, Jim Morrison wanted to make documentary films to permanently capture reality. He said the Doors' name represented the space between life and death.

Cook, Connie. (September 14, 1967). *Doors Exposed Canton to California Reality Cult*. Canton, IL: Canton Daily Ledger.



Terry Van Auker, lead singer of the Wildlife, walks and talks with local girls. Carol Wages (R) was a member of The Continental Blues, the group who won the Battle of the Bands earlier that day. Van Auker still performs, according to Evelyn Baker.

Cheryl Bielema, Newsletter Editor

Preserving our history...

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We're on the Web:

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

Have you renewed your membership for the New Year? You will find the membership form on our webpage, [www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center](http://www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center). Let us hear from you.



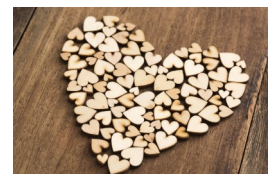
## NEW ACQUISITION: THE CANTON CORN SHELLER

In the 1800s and well into the 1900s, hand-operated corn shellers could be found on thousands and thousands of small farms in the United States and around the world. To find such a sheller in operating condition today is a bit of a rarity! Rusty Melhouse of Canton found this one at an online antique auction site in Shipshewana, IN.

The exact history of this particular corn sheller is unknown. The model name is clearly, "The Canton Sheller," and the stenciling further identifies it as "Parlin & Orendorff Co.," but it's not clear if it was manufactured in Canton. Lower line of printing says, "Kansas City, MO" (Missouri). In the early 1900s, there was a P & O distribution facility in Kansas City, and that may be the reason it's labeled this way.

How does "The Canton" work? The operator turns the crank handle. The ears enter the rounded opening on the top right side. This sheller can accommodate two ears of corn at a time. The simple and efficient mechanism inside includes rotating wheels. The action of the wheels turning the ears removes kernels from the cobs. The shelled corn then falls into a bucket through an opening at the bottom. The empty corn cobs drop into another bucket on the left side (as illustrated).

**Kevin Stephenson**, Museum Volunteer



*Be my Valentine!*