

Since 2015

Volume 5, Issue 2

April - May - June 2022

THE CHAIR'S REPORT



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

Chair Phil has been sidelined for the past two months, recuperating from surgery. We welcome him back.

In the meantime, we have plans to honor graduates with an exhibit of graduation photographs along with a brief bio of our respective high schools, year graduated, and our future plans at the time. We wish our area graduates "Congratulations and best wishes in your future endeavors!"

We have a tour opportunity; see page 2 for the details.

If you've renewed a membership and/or donated for 2022, you are receiving a membership card. Thank you, all, for your support.

Skirt and Shirt couples included (L-R): Patty and Jim Whyde, Shirley and Roger Brush, Marilyn and Kline Laird, Rita and Don Tippey, and Janis and Keith Spenny.

Photos were donated by Betty Ann Manock, longtime square dance enthusiast and caller. Read the club history on pages 3-4.



2025 Bicentennial Update

Mike Walters, chair of the Bicentennial Committee, gave an update during a recent museum board meeting.

He listed several histories he would like to see compiled and published in anticipation of Canton's 200th year. One will involve local people writing family histories. He is consulting with Cathy Parsons of the Fulton County Historical & Genealogical Society about the writing project. Watch for more details if you would like to have your family included.

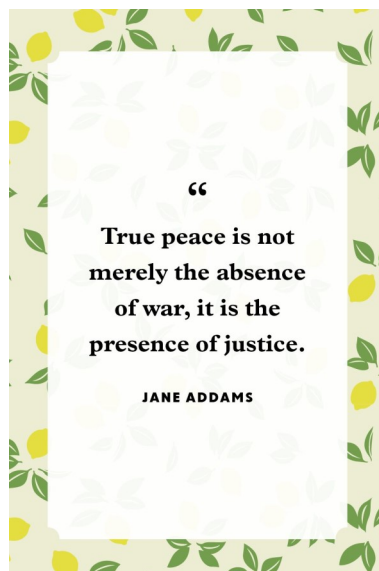


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PEACE

"Peace in your mind, peace on earth, peace at work, peace at home, peace in the world."

JOHN LENNON



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

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Skirt and Shirt Square Dance Group, 1976



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

GIRL SCOUTS DISCOVERY DAY

Kindergarteners and their families were invited to the Heritage Center, recently. Brianna Roseman, Girl Scout recruiter, said she likes to work with local organizations in order to introduce their resources as well as the scouting program. We worked together to plan a discovery day at the museum using a Heritage Center Bingo card. The girls received a goody-bag for identifying Bingo rows. We're always happy to work with organizations who wish to include our little museum in their plans. If you'd like to plan a tour, call (309) 647-2242 to leave a message, or email, cahpcp19@att.net.



Two Scouts recite the pledge for a prospective member. They are flanked by museum staff (L-R) Harold Rose, Mary Lou Kuchan and Carolyn West.

SRC/CAHC GUIDED MUSEUM TOUR: STILL TIME TO SIGN UP FOR APRIL 28

A community's history is much like a family's history. It's about where we come from, what makes us tick, and what has led us to where we are today. That's what the Canton Area Heritage Center is all about: P&O Plow and International Harvester, coal mines, prominent and influential names of the past, significant events over the years, Graham Hospital, cigar-making, music, dairies, and businesses that led the way in commerce...the list goes on and on! Be a part of a guided tour of Canton's own museum.

We are hosting this event in collaboration with the Spoon River College Community Outreach Office.

Guides are local people well-versed in area history who will also be glad to answer your questions. They include:

- Mike Walters...notable Canton families and individuals
- Dave Lidwell...coal mining
- Alesia Shaw...Graham medical history
- Jim Morgan...dairies and cigar making
- Kevin Stephenson...music, sports, and WBYS
- Jack Pollitt...International Harvester

The date is April 28, 2022; tours are scheduled at three times, 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 2:00 p.m. Please contact the SRC Community Outreach Office to register. Telephone, (309) 649-6260, or email, outreach@src.edu, for details. Fee: \$25.

PRESENTATION FOR THE FIRE INVESTIGATORS ASSOCIATION IN PEORIA

A historic event in Canton a quarter of a century ago was relived to a statewide audience in Peoria recently. A panel of Canton residents who were closely involved with the August 6th, 1997, "IH Fire" and its aftermath were featured presenters at the 30th Annual Conference of the Central Illinois Fire Investigators Association, February 27, 2022. The audience was made up of approximately 85 arson and police investigators, fire department first responders, insurance representatives, engineers, and consultants.

The panel consisted of Canton Area Heritage Center board member Jack Pollitt, the final plant manager at IH, and museum volunteer Kevin Stephenson. Stephenson was at WBYS at the time of the fire and provided live coverage of the event. Other panelists included Mike Elam, former Police Chief, who was involved with the fire and the years-long arson investigation that followed. Jim Campbell, Canton Fire Department Lieutenant in 1997, was among the early firefighters on the scene and was also involved with the subsequent investigation. Andrea Barbknecht, Spoon River College Community Outreach Director, coordinated the presentation and provided technical assistance throughout.

The two-and-a-half-hour program featured pictures from the fire and soundbites from the WBYS coverage. The lengthy investigation that led to the 2006 arson conviction of Jerry Sprabary was also detailed.

The presentation concluded with a look at developments at the IH site since the fire. A recurring positive theme of the program was how many different agencies, organizations, and volunteers worked together and collaborated to make the best of a difficult situation.

Kevin Stephenson, Museum Volunteer



Buildings totally engulfed in flames at the abandoned International Harvester Plant in Canton, August 6, 1997.



Graduates, go into the world and do well! But more importantly, go into the world and do good.

SKIRT & SHIRT SQUARE DANCE CLUB

We recently received photo albums and a history from the Skirt and Shirt Square Dance Club of Canton. The club was founded in late 1950 when Ralph Postin talked to an interested group of YMCA members about forming a square dance group sponsored by the "Y."

The donated "Club History" was written for their 25th Anniversary and Appreciation Night, on January 10, 1975. It contains the following records.

"By the first of the year, this group became organized and were meeting on the 2nd and 4th Friday nights learning to square dance under the direction of Steve Stevens from Peoria, Ill. Officers were elected in February of 1951. Leonard Henderson was the first President; Lee Cook, Vice-President; Anne Reffett, Secretary; Elmer Jacobs, Treasurer.

"...[W]e needed equipment of our own, so the club voted to borrow enough from the bank to purchase an amplifier, mike stand, single speed record player, microphone, and 2 speakers for which we paid the magnificent sum of \$316.05. The men of the club made nice wood cases for our speakers.

"The men who tried to learn to call were Elmer Jacobs, Leonard Henderson, Carl Simpson, Eugene Reffett, Clarence Homer and Garney Rupe. Also joining this group were Lee Maranville and Winston Boston. Later, some of the women tried their hand at it also or I should say their voice."

"During the summer of 1951 the Park Board rented our equipment and we held dances on the tennis court, open to the public, on the 2nd and 4th Fridays. We made enough to pay off our equipment at this time.... The club again held summer dances out-of-doors in conjunction with the Park Board during 1952 and 1953."

"January 23, 1953, the club put on an exhibition square dance during half-time of a home basketball game. Four squares performed; the girls in dresses styled alike in pinks, blues and greens and the men having matching shirts.

"Over the years, money made by the club was used to clean up and repair various parts of the YMCA. Our men and women both help[ed] to do the jobs they could to keep it in good shape..."

"The Club decided to take on an enormous task in April of 1954. We decided to sell brooms from the 'Lighthouse of the Blind' to

raise enough money to help Wallace Park put in a concrete floor at their building. We divided into teams and we...raised over \$800.00 to be used for the project. Later we found the whole project was much too expensive for our club, and when the Park Board released us from our commitment, we helped set up a Youth Center at the YMCA with this fund..."

"In 1956 a good many of the club felt we should move to the new Wallace Park for our dances in order to have better sound and dancing....We became strictly a social club -- our bylaws were changed -- and we were no longer affiliated with the YMCA..."

"When our town started having the Friendship Festival, the club helped put on a Friday night square dance...and made a good profit each year. We also entered several floats in the parade."

At their 25th Anniversary in 1975, the group honored Everett Howard in a Surprise Appreciation Night. Everett had been their caller for many years. When he was unable to attend due to illness, his wife Bonnie was presented a plaque with square dancers and a mic, in appreciation of their service. It was reported that 180 couples registered for the event, which was held at the high school. [Continued on p. 4]



CHARTER MEMBERS

Elmer & Wilma Jacobs
Leonard & Beulah Henderson
Eugene & Anne Reffett
Lee & Catherine Cook
Clarence & Lena Homer
Bob & Arlene Chapman
John & Gloria Fisher
Vic & Vada Kovachevich
Bob & Shirley Rockhold
Al & Edith Coons
Alfred & Helen Cook
William & Eileen O'Bryant

DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW...that a 1907 graduate from Lewistown High School was a co-founder of the *READERS DIGEST*. Lila Bell Acheson was that graduate. She was the daughter of the Rev. Thomas D. Acheson, pastor of the historic Presbyterian Church, downtown Lewistown.

Lila was introduced to her future husband, DeWitt Wallace, by a college friend and they were married in 1921. During the ensuing months they collaborated as co-founders and publishers of *Readers Digest*. Their first issue was published in February, 1922. *Readers Digest* soon became one of the most widely circulated periodicals in the world. This year the magazine is celebrating their 100th anniversary. The Wallaces were sole publishers of the *Digest* from 1922 until 1964 when it merged with another company. DeWitt and Lila Wallace were noted philanthropists and established several foundations for charitable causes during their lifetime. AND NOW YOU KNOW THEIR STORY!

Jim Morgan, Treasurer



Lila and DeWitt Wallace. While DeWitt was recovering from shrapnel wounds received in WW I, he had the idea to gather a sampling of favorite articles on many subjects from various monthly magazines, sometimes condensing and rewriting them, and to combine them into one magazine. Hence, the *Reader's Digest* was born!

DONORS AND MEMORIALS

We recognize major donors Ray and Emily Cleer of Canton. Their generous gifts this year put them at the Founders level (\$1000). Thank you!

We honor Gregory A. Campbell (12/1/1946-12/17/2021), former CEO of Spoon River Electric Cooperative in Canton, as his family has donated to the museum in his memory.

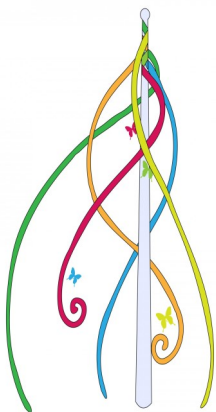
Preserving our history...

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Email: cahcpo19@att.net

We're on the Web:

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



The May Pole

Here are some streamers
Of green, red, yellow and blue.

A reminder of spring
And things that are new.

Together they make

A maypole for you

And a wish for

A happy May Day too!

Adapted from teacherspayteachers.com

SQUARE DANCE CLUB HISTORY (CONT.)

The Skirt and Shirt Square Dance Club conducted classes for others who wished to learn square dancing. Couples came from all around the area to participate. For example, in January, 1960, Everett and Bonnie Howard taught 23 couples. At the conclusion of a 12-week session, graduation diplomas were awarded along with a Skirt and Shirt Club badge. Eugene Reffett, Club President, described western square dancing as one of the oldest forms of dancing. "There are about 70 movements...and

they are taught to beginners before they join a square dance group," he said. Names of dances were unique -- *Neopolitan Waltz*; *Spaghetti Rag*; *Happy Trumpeter*; *Left-footers*; *Pickie, Pickie, Pickie*; and *Chop Suey Polka*. Another square dance group in Canton was the Saturday Nighters.



Above: Betty Ann and Russell Manock were square dance callers and teachers. Betty stated that she called for 28 years, and at one time, called for six different groups.

Left: For several years, square dancing took place in the streets of downtown Canton.

Cheryl Bielema, Newsletter Editor