

Since 2015

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April - May - June 2024

THE CHAIR'S REPORT



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

I want to complete my past employment history, started in the last issue of the newsletter.

You can see my connections to Canton and why I think this museum is so vital to keep strong and moving forward.

It became necessary to leave Canton after the closing of the IH Plant, and I accepted the Production Controller position with AMG building Army trucks and Humvees in South Bend, Indiana. While there, I received a call from the Illinois Governor's Office asking if I would like to move back home and assist in opening a correctional facility in Canton. I was glad we had not physically moved yet. After successfully opening the facility in 1989, I remained at the Illinois River Correctional Center as Business Administrator and Facilities Maintenance Manager, and also at the Work Camp in Hanna City. I did special audits at other facilities for the State of Illinois until my retirement after 10 years.

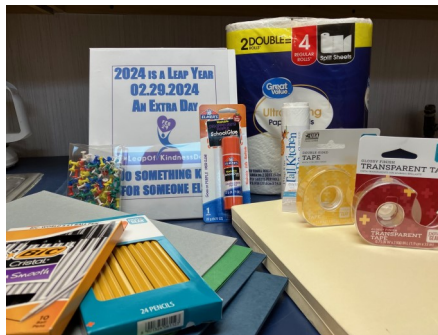
The museum has been a challenge as well as a learning experience for Mary and me. More of our efforts have been toward the gathering and

display of IHC items, but we have helped in all the center's programs. We have enjoyed renewing or creating friendships with our fellow board members as well as showing visitors the staff's efforts and gathering the community's input.

In my role as Chair, I hope we can make the community more aware of our museum and increase visitor attendance. We will need to review our abilities to enlarge the facility if at all possible, yet not over-burden the Center's income and assets.

One event that we are beginning to plan how and where to help is our involvement in the City's Bicentennial celebration in 2025. While we may not be able to execute an activity by ourselves, we can support and participate as requested by the Bicentennial Committee.

One area we can initiate is to identify those happenings that are important points (those that punctuate and distinguish Canton) in our 200-year history. They may be highs or lows but need to be identified to illustrate the courage that the community has exhibited. Describing important events and people who have led us to where we are today is part of our mission.



Leap Day of Kindness brought donations of office and cleaning supplies to the museum from several of our generous members. We thank everyone who participated in this community-wide event.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Canton Area Heritage Center (CAHC) is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Canton's and surrounding area's history, culture, and industry.

To accomplish its mission, CAHC will collect, preserve, research, interpret and exhibit history and artifacts of Canton, IL, and the surrounding area.

*Have a
wonderful
Spring!*

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

Inside this issue

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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

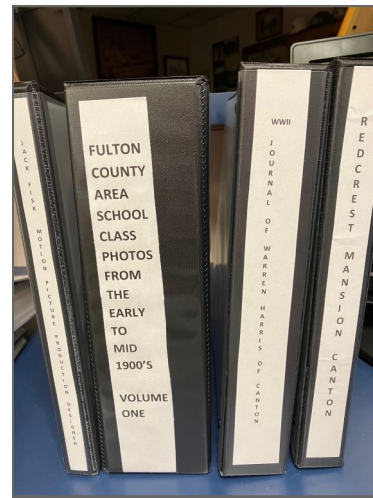
WHO INVENTED THE 3-RING BINDER?

When German entrepreneur Friedrich Soenneken invented the 3-ring binder in 1886, he probably had no idea how useful they would still be 138 years later.

They've certainly found a home at the Canton Area Heritage Center! The Center preserves the past and three-ring binders have helped us do it. Center volunteers have compiled area history of all types into 64 binders...and the number continues to grow. We're now in the digital age and all of its marvelous technology, but binders have never gone out of style. We hope that for maybe even the *next* 138 years, our citizens will find the history of people, places, and events contained in them interesting, informative...and maybe even thought provoking!

[Editor's Note] Find the following 3-ring binders, full of excellent research materials, thanks mostly to Kevin Stephenson. He provided the list below. There are 64 3-ring binders and Kevin continues to compile others as new artifacts and information come to our attention.

- Behind the scenes with *Almost Anything Goes*, 1975
- International Harvester power house
- Ag equipment manufacturing in Canton timeline
- P & O bandstand in Jones Park
- A golden age of Canton High School basketball, 1911-1954
- Canton Community College's inaugural season of men's basketball, 1960-1961
- A variety of Fulton County history, short stories
- Camp Ellis photos and postcards
- Wee-Ma-Tuk history
- WBYS history...volumes one and two
- Bicycle racing in Canton, 1890's
- Famous musicians in Canton, 1964-1976
- Research notes for the 1967 book *Reflections of Canton* by Ed Lewis... volumes one and two
- Canton Community Concert Association history, 1955 to present... volumes one, two, three, and four
- The Whiskey War of Canton, 1856
- Fulton County aviation history, 1913 to present
- St. David Prohibition, 1917-1933
- Battle of the Hitching Posts in Canton, 1882-1910
- Fulton County area school class pictures, early to mid 1900s...volumes one, two, and three
- A variety of International Harvester photos
- Canton Area Heritage Center newsletters and annual reports, 2018 to present
- Redcrest Mansion history
- The Herald Collection*, early 1900s
- The first Canton Friendship Festival pageant, 1955
- Canton High School Pennant newspapers starting in 1909...volumes one and two
- Local matchbook covers over the years...volumes one, two, and three
- Canton High School student reflections of the 2020-2021 pandemic
- Natural gas explosion in downtown Canton, November 16, 2016
- Canton Cemetery Walk history
- Area high school class reunion photos
- Red Miller, football coach
- Skeeter Bonn, entertainer
- Lizzie Magie, Monopoly game inventor
- Dorothy Fennell, penicillin scientist...volumes one and two



- Elizabeth Kovachevich and Fred Mercer, federal judges
- Harold Ronk, circus ringmaster
- Kay Ragsdale, flutist
- Boomer Grigsby, football player
- Letter from a Canton resident, 1850
- Ethan Blackaby, baseball player
- Warren Harris, World War II journal
- J. Howard Wood, Tribune newspapers executive
- Fay Rawley disappearance, 1953
- Janice May murder, 1955
- Dave Downey, basketball player
- Lila Acheson Wallace and Dewitt Wallace, *Reader's Digest*
- Harry Jacobs, football player
- Steve Nagel, astronaut
- Rich Johnson, football player
- Jack Fisk, motion picture production designer
- Smiley Burnette, entertainer
- Bill Tuttle, baseball player
- 44 other notable people from Fulton County, 1800s to present

We encourage your donations for the Canton Area Heritage Center library. 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



2024 Major Donors, to-date

FOUNDERS (\$1000+)

CFC Properties Inc.,
Bloomington, IN

Kathleen Myers, Canton

Dr. Roland Pettit, Canton

BENEFACTORS (\$500+)

David & Paula Grigsby,
Canton

Elizabeth Hubbs Nausler,
San Francisco, CA

Kevin & Terry Meade, Canton

**GERTRUDE SCHOON, RN,
THE NURSE'S NURSE**



Gertrude Geier Schoon, RN
Graham School of Nursing Graduation,
1953

Editor's Note. Gertrude Schoon's family will be donating several artifacts to the museum. Your Editor wanted to hear more about this talented nursing leader, who grew up in a German farm family in Glasford, IL. We're pleased to honor her legacy at the museum.

A Nurse's Nurse. Here's Gertrude Schoon's life, as told by her daughter, Celia Schoon Yeo. She was the oldest girl (with two older brothers) in a family of nine children, born June 9, 1930. She graduated from Canton High School in 1950, and then, the Graham School of Nursing in 1953. Her daughter Celia said she and her siblings learned to work hard on the farm, and from the beginning, her mother Gert had compassion for others. She took care of her sisters and helped care for her grandmother who moved into their home. She also witnessed people in the close-knit community take care of each other.

She married Maurice E. Schoon, November 20, 1954, and raised four children (Celia, Diane, Dave and Bob) while working at Graham. In response to question about living with a mom who worked outside the home, Celia said, "Even with the demands of working the second shift, 3:30 p.m.-12:00 midnight, and every weekend, Mom was always up fixing our breakfast and preparing our lunches. We knew her priority and her most important role was as our mother, attending to us and our needs. In a house on Locust

Street, she also gardened and canned foods, without air-conditioning in our house."

In another example of her compassion, daughter Celia recalled being involved in sprucing up a doll house and a doll of theirs when her mother wanted to give a Christmas gift to a gravely-ill girl whose family was poor. When the girl later died, her mother bought a dress for her burial.

What were Gertrude Schoon's contributions to our community? "She was an icon in my days as a student in Graham's School of Nursing," stated Janice Dare Bruster. "She was kind, smart and an advocate for us students -- the complete package of a nurse, as she should be." Celia added that people she met on the street would tell her about her mother's nursing prowess and how they trusted her to take the best care of their loved ones. She and her siblings would be asked whether they wished to become nurses like their mother.

She was also dedicated to her nursing staff, but expected a lot of them. She held high standards -- she was both demanding and clinically sound in her work, yet would help her staff through problems they were facing.

One of Gert's points of pride was the fact that she was the first nurse to be accredited as a Critical Care Nurse in the area, beating out even Peoria! In order to achieve the certification, she had taken the train to Kansas City, KS, for special training, away from her family from Sunday through Thursday.

She started the Intensive Care Department at Graham, believing from her own personal life, that if there had been an ICU setup at the time her father Vincent Geier suffered a heart attack at age 67, he could have survived. The 8-bed, 3-shift ICU opened in 1969. Schoon supervised 11 nurses trained in critical care.

"She and Hospital Administrator Ken Etcheson (a.k.a., Mr. E.) were partners in the venture. Throughout their careers, they shared a friendship and collaborative relationship. They looked to each other for wisdom, trusting one another to do the right thing for our community," concluded her daughter.

Among the awards Gertrude received was the YWCA Woman of the Year Award. She retired as Department Head of the ICU/PCU in March, 1994. Gertrude Schoon died on June 15, 2020, at the age of 90. *Well done, Nurse Schoon!*

Cheryl Bielema, Newsletter Editor



Pictured, Judy Helle, Director of Nursing, Gert Schoon, ICU Department Head, and Kenneth Etcheson, Hospital Administrator, on Gert's 35th service anniversary. She worked a total of 40 years at Graham.

Month of May

May is a month of happy sounds,
The hum of buzzing bees,
The chirp of baby birds,
And the song of a gentle breeze.



**COMING UP:
COMMUNITY WORK DAY,
APRIL 27**

Canton's Community Work Day is scheduled for April 27, and we will host our own work day to clean and to re-organize museum exhibits. If you'd like to help us, call, 309-647-2242, and leave your name and phone number. We'll give you instructions and time frames for the tasks you'd like to help us do. Last year's work crew included First Christian Church members, above.

Preserving our history...

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Email: cahcpo19@att.net

Find us on:
facebook

We're on the Web:

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

DID YOU KNOW?



“Women of Illinois have contributed equally to the quality of life in many ways. Some have independently trailblazed, while others have shared daring new paths with [neighbors, family or like-minded people].” Illinois men, women, boys and girls sought to be useful and to find enjoyment in living.

—Collins, D. R. & Witter, E. (1982). **Notable Illinois Women**

(Recent addition to our library)

Cigars and cigar boxes manufacturing were major enterprises in Canton during the 1880s and into the 1900s. Twenty million cigars were produced annually by the several small and large factories around the square or down one of the streets off the square.

Most of the small producers were on the second and third stories of downtown buildings and usually employed from 10 to 25 people.

The largest factory that was not on the square was the W. O. Dean Company on East Chestnut. At its peak, this factory employed 225 people. A little known or publicized fact is that women played an important role in cigar production. They were hired as “strippers” (explained later), and many women also hand-rolled the cigars. The large leaf tobacco was imported from the island of Cuba. It was shipped across the gulf, up the Mississippi River to the Illinois River, and on to Liverpool in Fulton County.

Tobacco leaves have a large stem running up from the bottom to the tip of the leaf. This stem had to be stripped from the leaf leaving the remaining leaf to be cut and rolled into small cigars. Women were the ones who completed this task and thus became known

as “strippers.” The photo here, from the W. O. Dean factory, is evidence that many women were hired to work in the cigar factories in Canton. There are more women in this picture than men.

Cigar-making in Canton came to an end in the 1920s, when cigarettes became popular during the Roaring Twenties. The W. O. Dean building was eventually sold in 1936 to the Canton Works Club, a social and recreational organization of International Harvester employees. It was destroyed by fire on February 20, 1948.

Source: Edward R. Lewis Jr. 1967. *Reflections of Canton in a Pharmacist's Show Globe*.

Jim Morgan
Treasurer

