

Since 2015

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THE CHAIR'S REPORT



Jack Pollitt, Chairman
Canton Area Heritage Center
Executive Board
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In the last Chair's Report, I wrote of the flying past year. Nothing has changed. The first quarter of 2025 is almost gone, and the executive board remains busy in committee work and the Center's efforts to provide assistance with Canton's Bicentennial Celebration. It's only three months away.

We will be providing **bus tours** to point out historic buildings and sites. Narrators will be on hand to relate the significance of the sites and their current status.

Historic farms will be presented on descriptive posters, with the farm's origins, traditions and ancestry, at the Historic Train Depot. These farms have been in the same family for at least 150 years. Original art by David Gregory, formerly of Canton, will be on display. A recognition dinner will be held for the opening. Later, the exhibit will be put on permanent display in our newly created agriculture room.

Meetings are being held to plan our **Cemetery Walk, Revisited**. There have been 78 individuals profiled in the walks at Greenwood Cemetery.

We've selected seven notable persons to portray again on stage, but in the museum parking lot, Sat., June 21, 4:00 p.m. The museum will be open before and after the presentation.

A great Bicentennial Celebration is being planned, and the museum is happy to play a part in it.

Reflections. Bicentennial denotes 200 years. I have lived only 44% of that time, but I've lived 88% of the last century, so I can remember a lot of changes – good, bad and indifferent. Any time I think of the past, Canton's City Square comes to mind. I remember all the parking spaces being full on Friday evenings. We were there and watched people walking by. It was the night that many farmers came to town, since the stores stayed open until 8:00 p.m. There was the ever-present string of cars full of teenagers circling the square after a collection for gasoline (20-25 cents per gallon).

I remember the businesses around the square. Do you remember there were five furniture stores on or a half block from the square...how about Turl's, one of the harder names to remember. How many drug stores were on the square? Variety stores all in a row included Woolworth's, J.J. Newberry's and Kresge's. Kresge's was on the northwest corner of the square. They had a side entrance on Chestnut, and we used to check the birds that they kept in that corner of the store. Sometimes, employees asked us not to upset the birds. We thought they sang better when we were there!

What about auto dealers? Today, we have two new car dealers. When I was in high school, there were six in the downtown, three at short distances: (1) IHC-Chrysler; (2) Ford; (3) Kaiser-Frazer; (4) Buick; (5) Chevrolet; (6) Nash; (7) Olds-Cadillac; (8) Pontiac;

and (9) Studebaker. There would be ten if you count Dillman's Chrysler on 5th Avenue.

I'll close and save some recollections for the next quarterly newsletter. Hope to see you soon at your museum!

Jack Pollitt, Chair

HISTORIC FARMS

We're pleased to introduce nine (9) Sesquicentennial Farm Families in this issue. Farming was (and still is) a major industry in Fulton County. Janice Dare Bruster, project director, and I grew up on farms and are proud our families are still involved – Jan's is one of the historic farms showcased here and my family's farm is located in Morrison, IL.

As we began, 18 Sesquicentennial Farms were listed on Illinois Dept. of Agriculture's web page. Jan discovered several more as she researched and contacted families. Six families had sold their farms and several more weren't able to participate in our project. We think you'll be intrigued by these nine family stories and impressed with their fortitude and commitment.

During Canton's Bicentennial, the Train Depot will be open every day of the celebration, June 20-29. Hours are listed on Canton's Bicentennial page, cantonillinois.org/canton-bicentennial-information. Visit and learn more about these exceptional pioneering families.

Cheryl Bielema, Newsletter Editor



Special points of interest

- CANTON'S BICENTENNIAL-2025
- PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ABOUT GROWING UP IN CANTON
- SALUTE TO HISTORIC FULTON COUNTY FARMS AND FAMILIES
- LOCAL HISTORY PROGRAM ON A SNAPPER BUS
- HOW TO CONTACT MUSEUM, PH (309) 647-2242 OR EM CAHCPO19@ATT.NET

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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

INTRODUCTION TO HISTORIC FULTON COUNTY FARMS AND FAMILIES

Blout Family Farm, Ellisville

7/22/1851

Barkley Blout purchased 80 acres. The original house was shaded by trees planted at either side of front door--trees still stand today. The family members who followed diversified, established saw mill and lumber yard on the farm. Being raised a "city girl," current co-trustee Clarice described how she was taken under the wing of father-in-law Floyd to learn about farming. He also championed Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive. The Bloutville farm was a major stop...additional vendors sold food and crafts, demonstrated broom- and sorghum syrup- making.

What a Sesquicentennial designation means: "We are very proud of it. This means five generations who enjoyed working on the land and raising livestock, wanted to be their own boss, were not risk adverse. They changed their row cropping process to increase yields that increased income and improved the quality of the livestock to achieve what the buyer wanted [and] that increased income," wrote Sheila Blout.



Son Darrell, granddaughter Emily, mom Clarice, and daughter Shelia Blout



Chatterton Family Farm, Avon

Fall, 1836

Ancestors traveled from New York through the Great Lakes and down the Illinois River in 1836. They purchased 160 acres, at \$1.25 per acre, from War of 1812 veteran. The "Centennial History of Avon" (1937) indicates the Chattertons were the second family to settle in Avon. Records dating from the Civil War, books, clothes and photos that hadn't been disturbed remained in the farmhouse; children were advised not to touch! Current resident Dick appreciates living in the house his grandfather built. "I've roamed the woods and traveled throughout the property--it's a special place." As to what Sesquicentennial designation means, "Our family takes pride in knowing our ancestors provided this home and we still own it. It's a sentimental connection to them."

What I would tell my grandchildren about farming: "It's hard to relate what farming means to our children and grandchildren, because they haven't been raised or involved on the farm.... The greatest business on earth is farming. The last of us will always need to eat!"



Siblings Robin Chatterton DeAtly, Robert, Rodney, and Richard Chatterton

Everly-Buchen Family Farm, Avon >>>

2/5/1836

George Everly fought in the War of 1812 and was given four 80-acre tracks of land in Deerfield Township. This land was sold as the family found better "land with prairie grass as tall as a horse" and settled there. In 1926 Denis Buchen's grandfather Arch Buchen married Grace Everly. Family traditions include hard work and raising Speckle Park Cattle (breed known for quality meat and milk and developed in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan).

Advice to future generations? Denis Buchen's reply, "Never sell the farm; [remember] the hard work it took to keep the farm."



Buchen family: Sara, Denis, Becky, Patrick, mom Mary Jane, dad Phillip, Janice, Mike, and Mary Ann

HISTORIC FARMS (CONT.)

Dare Family Farm, Canton

9/15/1863

Abraham Hershey, Lancaster, PA, purchased 80 acres in Sec.13 Canton Township. The farm now consists of 1845 family-owned acres. In September, 2025, it will have been in the family, representing eight generations, for 162 years. Each field is named to make locations easy to find.

Family traditions include community service, education and faith--supporting Canton Friendship Festival and Ag Council, a graduate of the University of Illinois, and serving on Spoon River College Board for 20 years. The family has served as State FFA officers, church members and leaders. "We frequently had Sunday dinner at Great Grandma's apartment and cream style corn was always served." What does the Sesquicentennial designation mean? "The farm has been in the family for nearly 162 years. Our family defied the odds of ownership for 8 generations. The plan is to continue this Dare farm for another 162 years!"



Grandson Isaac, dad Henry and son Philip Dare

Randolph Family Farm, Canton

A sister of the Rawalt family married into the Randolph family, coming from PA in 1830. They lived in a tent until they could build a house in



Grandson Grayson, Phil and son Rye Randolph

1832. Their 160 acres were part of a War of 1812 land grant, and sold at \$1.25/acre. The family has supported education by serving on CUSD Board of Education and as members of Farm Bureau. They attend church and family reunions. Note: Their name started out as Fitzrandolph in Great Britain, where they were school teachers. Fitz was dropped, but became a middle name for some. Ancestors had first name, Louis or Lewis, used in alternating generations. The meaning of Sesquicentennial Farm to me? Phil replied,

"The designation proves direct lineage, that a family followed in the same footprints. [Farming] is a life, not a job." Page 3

Marbil-Stephens Family Farm, Astoria

James and Margaret Stephens came in 1832 from KY in a horse-drawn wagon with an ox in tow. They lived in a lean-to while James worked for another farmer to earn money to buy farm land. At that time, they bought 200 acres. Family traditions include showing cattle at county and state fairs. It was also tradition to have Sunday dinner at Grandma's house. Marbil was chosen by William and Ethel Mae (below), combining their daughter's and son's names for the farm and the Shorthorn cattle herd. As for what the Sesquicentennial Farm designation means, Marcia Stephens Breeden replied, "Recognition of courage, hard work; the determination of ancestors to keep the land, and the ability of a family to maintain ownership."



Ethel Mae and William Stephens holding Jenna Stephens. (Back) daughter Marcia Stephens Clark, Jaimee Clark, Cindy and son William Alan Stephens

Roberts Family Farm, Bryant

10/22/1835

William Hummel bought 68.9 acres in his move from KY. His son-in-law, Onslow Gaines Roberts, assumed ownership in 1874. Current farmer Kevin Roberts took a job off the farm in order to continue prospering on the farm. "Hard work to keep the farm in the family is one of our traditions," said wife Nancy. Asked what he'd like his family to remember about farming, Kevin wrote, "Being given the knowledge to farm in your mind, the strength in your arms and the love to farm in your heart must start and end where we all will and that is with GOD our creator and sustainer." Kevin also shared guiding scripture, Proverbs 3:9 and Philippians 4:4-8.



Son-in-law Isaac Teel and dad Kevin Roberts. (Back) daughters Jennifer Roberts Teel, Aimee, Kaitlin and mom Nancy Roberts

Preserving our history...

HISTORIC FARMS (CONT.)

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Find us on:
facebook

We're on the Web:
www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center



Sons Garrett and Jeremy, Holly and Joseph Thum

Thum Family Farm, Smithfield

Great Great Grandfather Frederick Thum emigrated in 1857 from Germany. He and his wife Mercy purchased 80 acres in the beginning. The Thum family has included an FFA State Farmer, a longtime Farm Bureau member, and a baker who exhibited her baked goods at the Fulton County Fair for many years. The farm is currently rented to a neighbor. Asked what Sesquicentennial designation means, Joe Thum stated, "We are proud the farm has stayed in the family this long and we want it to stay that way. It's the hope that the grandchildren will remember their roots in this farm and the hard work it took to get to this point."



Dad Richard, son Dan and grandson Daniel Williams

Williams Family Farm, Smithfield

Moving from Adams County, OH, in 1847, John Williams bought 148 acres. Dan, current farmer, replied to a question about traditions, "Hard work! That's what we're known for." He is a Township Trustee; his great grandfather was a Township Supervisor in the 1880s, and both his father Richard and he have served on the Mid-Century Telephone board. His advice for future farmers, "Make good financial decisions. I'd tell them to do the best job they can, and stay current with the times."

BICENTENNIAL BUS TOURS



Canton Area Heritage Center and Spoon River College are collaborating to offer historic bus tours as part of *Canton's Bicentennial Celebration*. Board member Kathy Myers was inspired by history-themed bus tours she had taken in other cities and thought Canton has a rich history that could be told through a similar bus tour. She approached Spoon River College's Community Outreach Director Andrea Barbknecht about the idea. Andrea "got on board" immediately and got approval for SRC to partner with the Heritage Center to develop and implement the tours. In the air-conditioned comfort of SRC Snapper buses, the tour will drive by historic buildings and sites in the Canton area accompanied by a knowledgeable, local historian, lasting approximately 60 minutes. The tour will start at the Alice Ingersoll Gymnasium with a short tour of the gym and the Little Giant Hall of Fame. Roy Hopper, sports history buff, author and board member will be on hand to answer all your sports trivia questions! After an informative and entertaining journey around the city, the bus will stop at the Old Train Depot and riders get off for a brief visit to the museum's *Historic Farms* exhibit before returning to disembark at "The Alice."

Tours will be available:

Saturday June 21 @ 1 p.m., Sunday June 22 @ 1 p.m., Wednesday June 25 @ 6 p.m.

Saturday June 28 @ 1 p.m., Sunday June 29 @ 1 p.m.

For tickets @\$5.00, visit: <https://src.augusoft.com> or call 309-649-6260. Interested people may stop at the museum, too. For additional information, email cahcpo19@att.net.

Kathy Myers, Programs Committee/Bus Tour Chair

