

Since 2015

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## THE CHAIR'S REPORT



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

Greetings! It doesn't seem possible that half of the year 2024 is past. CAHC Executive Board members are all busy on both short and long-term objectives. Some have been detailed in previous quarterly newsletters.

Presently, historic farms are being identified and their owners interviewed. These reviews will be part of the heritage center's work on a "Sesquicentennial Farms" project. It is anticipated that there will be a large volume of materials gathered. Since our facility is in need of space already, outside space will be needed. As this time, contact to use the old Burlington Northern (CB&Q) Depot for displaying these items has been met favorably. This tribute to historic farming in Fulton County will be unveiled during Canton's Bicentennial, June 20-29, 2025.

Another Bicentennial project that is progressing favorably is a bus tour of the area with several stops and knowledgeable narrators detailing historical facts about sites in and around Canton. Potential sites are being reviewed at this time along with time constraints, equipment needs, etc.

Our notebooks continue to grow in number and subject as donations and research findings are assembled to provide a library of historic events and prominent persons. For example, this research provided background on Olympian Gold Medal winner, Harold Osborn, the Lewistown teacher and coach, who participated in the 1924 Olympics. Now, 100 years later, the Olympics return to Paris, France. TV Channel 25, Peoria, plans to do a story on Harold Osborn. Watch for it; tell your friends. Read more below.

We currently have 198 members who paid annual dues or donated to the museum so far this year. This quarterly newsletter is mailed to 335-350; it's picked up or emailed to 65 more – 400+ total contacts. We're growing and you can help us. We'd like to

## Olympian Harold Osborn



Fulton County has a special connection to the Olympic athletes who have competed throughout history. This year marks a return to Paris, where 100 years ago the 1924 Olympics included a competitor from Lewistown, Illinois.

There, an agriculture teacher and track coach from Lewistown High School competed in track and achieved two gold medals for Team USA. Here's more to his amazing accomplishments:

open the museum to you and your family at a time most convenient to you. Is your high school class planning a reunion, your church group or social organization needing a speaker for an event or wishing to set up a tour of the museum? We'll open special for you and provide staff to inform and to answer questions. Call the museum and leave a message, 309-647-2242, or call me, 309-647-2747.

We will soon reach 2500 visitors at the museum. It would be great to have 200-300 more by this fall. Help us reach a coveted total of 3000 in the near future. We're told there is so much to see, remember, learn and understand here. Have a great summer, everyone.

**Jack Pollitt, Board 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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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.

"At the 1924 Paris Olympics, Harold Osborn, the world record holder in the high jump, cleared every height on his first attempt until he finally jumped 1.98 metres to earn the gold medal and set an Olympic record that would last for twelve years.

"Four days after his high jump triumph, Osborn began competing in the decathlon. On the second day of the decathlon, he overcame fellow American Emerson Norton in the final two events to win by 360 points. [Harold] Osborn's total of 7,711 points beat the existing world record by 229 points.

"His high jump/decathlon double is unique in Olympic history."

Source: The Olympics, <https://olympics.com/en/athletes/harold-marion-osborn>

# The Museum Newsletter

## DID YOU KNOW? CALLANS CIGARS

This article is a continuing story of cigar manufacturing in Fulton County. Canton was well known for cigar production into the 1920s. Another lesser known cigar company was operating in Astoria, Illinois. It was located in the eastern half of the former Koffee Kup Restaurant building in downtown Astoria.

In 1910 Joseph E. Callans, 23 years old, and his older brother William came to Astoria from Winchester, IL, to open "Callans Brothers Cigar Store." The brothers made their own brand of cigars to sell throughout the county, and like the Canton factories, they hired many women to do the stripping of tobacco leaves and also rolling the cigars.

A few years later, William left Astoria and Joseph became the sole owner of the store. Cigars were no longer manufactured at that time, and Joseph added a pool and billiards room, soft drinks and other tobacco products. A "Cigar Store Indian" "was purchased and became a symbol for Joe's cigar store.

The unique thing about the statue, it was not wooden but made from molded bronze and painted in multiple colors. Later research by Mr. Callans determined that the Indian was about 100 years old and the only one known to be made of bronze in the state at the time. People passing through Astoria stopped to take pictures and many wanted to buy it for big sums, but Mr. Callans would not sell it.

The picture below is a rare photo of the cigar store in the early days. The people shown below, left to right, are Carl Talbolt, Joseph Callans, Glenn Brown, George Talbolt, and William Callans. After 42 years in business Joseph Callans retired due to ill health and sold the business. He had sold the bronze Indian statue to a collector prior to his business sale. I would suspect that today it is standing proud in a museum somewhere in the country. Mr. Callans passed away in 1955.

Reference: 1987 Sesquicentennial Booklet of Astoria, Illinois

**Jim Morgan**, Treasurer



## GEAR JAMMERS CELEBRATE 75 YEARS



An early photo. Can you help us identify these guys?

The Gear Jammers Hot Rod Club of Canton is celebrating its 75th year and has set up a special exhibit at the museum. Memorabilia include photos of members, car shows, and individual hot rods. Also, the June, 1960, issue of *Hot Rod Magazine* recognizing the Gear Jammers as their "Club of the Month," is displayed.

Canton was the first hot rod club to receive charter in Illinois in 1949 with seven members. As the *Hot Rod Magazine* article stated, "Early public recognition was built up by the club's program of safety drives, distribution of novel safety stickers and their aid in organizing the Fulton County Safety Council. They were able to acquire space at the former Camp Ellis grounds setting up a 1/4-mile drag strip in 1955."

Secretary Teresa Lane reported on this year's activities. "With our 75th, we've created a calendar full of past and present pictures of club members and their autos, we created an anniversary t-shirt, fun auto stickers, a special dash plaque for the club's Cruise Show that was held at NAPA, treats at a couple of the meetings, and a special hat is being designed."

Officers are President Tim Gilmore, Vice President Robert Canevit, Secretary Teresa Lane, Treasurer Kerry Veara, and Trustees John Pasko, Gary Vaultonburg and Ed Dray.

We wish Canton's hot rod club many more years of activity. Come enjoy the Gear Jammers exhibit with us, won't you.

**Cheryl Bielema**, Newsletter Editor



## 2024 Major Donors, to-Date

Joining our **Founders** group (donations of \$1000 and above) is **George Mills**, Bellingham, WA, who is an annual donor.

Recognized earlier: **CFC Properties Inc., Bloomington, IN, Kathy Myers, and Dr. Roland Pettit, both of Canton.**

Thank you to each of our donors; every amount you give is important to achieving the goal of "preserving our history."

## SPoon RIVER DRIVE AND BLoutVILLE

Editor's Note. As I discovered, Bloutville is a name ascribed to the family farm of Floyd Blout. He and his family were involved in the Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive, in fact all-in, from its start in 1968 through the 1980s. Floyd was active as promoter, participant and leader. He chaired the SRVSD group for several years, too. My thanks to his granddaughter Sheila Blout for help with these photos and descriptions of the Blout farm, which is located near Ellisville.



Floyd Blout, included in the March, 1940, "Directory of Fulton County Folks Prominent In Various Phases of Community Life," by the **Canton Daily Ledger**. He was described as a "...well-known farmer, lumberman, stockman, and custom machine worker;" also township chair, Farm Bureau and church member.

Floyd Blout diversified the farming business with an on-site sawmill and lumberyard in addition to crops, a large hog operation and cattle herd his family helped to maintain.

Bloutville, the family farm, was a main stop on the Spoon River Drive, in spite of its remoteness! People drove to the farm for sorghum, popcorn,



foods from the early days, and demonstrations of pressing sorghum into syrup, operating sawmill equipment, broom-making and more.

Blout shaped the dried sugar canes into letters on a hillside using tractor and manure spreader to lead visitors to the farm. See "Bloutville" spelled out in this aerial view.



Growing up on a Family Farm. Shelia Blout shares her own memories of working with her family on the farm: "Farming has been a family effort. At meals, Dad talked to Mom about his plans for the day and year whether what seed to buy, what pigs to move to which lot, upcoming boar sales, what he wanted in the next boar to improve their herd, pig food he needed to mix and grind for which lots of pigs, whether mineral needed to be ordered for the cattle or what lot of pigs or cattle are nearing market weight, etc. Mom and Dad had a true partnership. As usual, Dad had the final say as to what occurred. When all of us were in school, Mom was on a tractor in the fields working with Dad and her father-in-law Floyd. There was one time Mom recalls Dad was plowing, she followed with the disc, and Grandpa Floyd followed with the planter. All in the same large field on the same day. There was minimal subsoil moisture lost!

"My siblings and I learned to drive the one-ton livestock truck in the pasture while Dad threw hay bales off to the cattle. Initially, our feet couldn't touch the peddles, let alone depressing them. Dad shifted the truck into low and stepped out as one of us slid over to steer the truck. Fortunately, he was finished long before we were close to any trees! As we grew up and could fully depress the peddles, he taught us how to shift and drive in the pasture while he threw bale off the back of the truck. In time, we were allowed to drive the few miles between the farms."

P.S. The Blout Homestead, with Clarice Blout as its co-trustee, is one of 11 designated as a **Sesquicentennial Farm** in Fulton County. That means that the farm has been owned by members of the Blout family for over 150 years. Clarice's father-in-law was Floyd Blout; her husband was his son, Allen Blout.

You'll learn more about the Sesquicentennial Farms and Families as we display some of their history and tell stories of homesteading, survival and progress, as part of Canton's Bicentennial Celebration, June 20-29, 2025. Watch for more details.



Set up to east side of Little John Shed



Set up west side of home, birthplace of Floyd Blout

**Cheryl Bielema**, Newsletter Editor, and **Sheila Blout**, Contributor



**SAVE THE DATE :**  
**2024 Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive**  
 ⇒ **October 5-6**  
 ⇒ **October 12-13**

Preserving our history...

Address:  
111 South Main Street  
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Canton, Illinois 61520

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



We're on the Web:

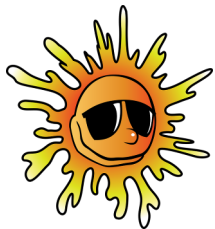
[www.cantonillinois.org/  
heritage-center](http://www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center)

## VINTAGE CLOTHING FOR THE BICENTENNIAL

Vintage clothing and accessories have recently been received by the museum, and you will see pieces on display during **Canton's Bicentennial Celebration** next year. Members of the Programs Committee logged in these items and selected ones to showcase.

Children's and adults' clothing, hats, gloves and other accessories were donated by Myra Bruketta. These well-preserved pieces originally belonged to Helen Clemens Danner in the late 1800s-1920s.

Cheryl Scott donated the Sesquicentennial dresses she had sewn for herself and her daughter, Mindy Scott Keigher, in 1975 for the celebration in Canton.



Stay Cool, Everyone!