

Since 2015

Volume 9, Issue 1

### THE CHAIR'S REPORT



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

2025 was a productive and very busy year. Besides working hard on the Bicentennial program presented by the center, we were able, with Graham Hospital's aid, to increase our area space by 50%.

This expansion involved eliminating entry doors, knocking out walls, putting up new ones, scraping floors, constructing entry cabinetry, closing in old reception areas, redoing ceiling tiles, adding electrical outlets and a power pole at the entry desk. All this resulted in dedicated rooms for mining and agriculture and an enlarged entry room as well as a separate room for reading and research materials. While all this was going on the board was not idle in its efforts to better display items.

We had nearly 40 individuals donate items this year. While not going into detail or naming the donor or lender, a listing would include the following: an 1840 Land Grant Deed, *Canton Magazine* issues, a 1905 marriage certificate, a P & O

steel single bottom plow, painting of the Canton Square by Ralph Thompson, books and Canton historic data, period dress and farm tools, spoons and dishes related to historic sites, as well as a two-wheeled P & O wagon that dates back at least 135 years ago.

Mainly through the efforts of Mike Walters, Acquisitions Committee Chair, several large glass cabinets were obtained and now display the contents of the 1925 Time Capsule. There are a variety of items including letters, books, buttons, Centennial programs, newspapers, articles, photos and more. Copies of the items are available for reading and viewing. It is possible to arrange a copy be made for personal ownership.

While 2025 was more than just eventful, we will not sit back in the New Year. Instead, we will look for opportunities; we will seek new or innovative presentation devices and displays. More items will be sought for the mining and agriculture rooms, as well as for all our exhibits -- hoping to recall events, activities, businesses, buildings or endeavors of the past.

Speaking of things of the past, which is what we do as a museum, we often think of things or events that no longer exist, or things that amused us or have changed dramatically over the years. I've recalled car dealerships and furniture stores in previous newsletters. Do you remember how many drug stores were located on the square, or women's clothing outlets, or hardware stores? Do you recall all the grocery stores and gas stations? Can you name the places selling ice cream? Is there a place with special meaning to you?

Write us and tell us the stories... special memories, something that has changed, or you found amusing, or a place that no longer exists.

Send your remembrance to me at Canton Area Heritage Center, P.O. Box 526, Canton, IL 61520. We might publish your remembrance in a separate column. Please include your maiden name and current city. We reserve the right to edit or modify the remembrance to fit our space requirements.

And, we'll hope to see you at the museum in 2026!

**Jack Pollitt, Chair**

**NOTE: The museum will be closed for month of January**

**Guided Tours.** If your visiting family or community organization would like to tour the museum during January, you may contact us to set a specific date and time. Our phone and email address are listed in next column.

**Membership Drive** is still active. The nominal fee of \$20 (individual) or \$35 (family) membership entitles you to four Museum Newsletters and special announcements. Find a short form on page 4.

**WHY HISTORY?** "History shows us how to behave. History teaches, reinforces what we believe in, what we stand for...History is -- or should be -- the bedrock of patriotism, not the chest-pounding kind of patriotism, but the real thing, love of country."  
David McCullough, Historian & Author

Jan. - Feb. - Mar. 2026

### Special points of interest

BICENTENNIAL PHOTOS ON FACEBOOK, [Canton Illinois Bicentennial 2025](#)

• CONTACT MUSEUM, PHONE (309) 647-2242 OR EMAIL CAHCPO19@ATT.NET

• ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE CONTINUES FOR 2026 -- SEE FORM ON PAGE 4. JOIN US, WON'T YOU?



### Inside this issue

2025 ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS	2
DID YOU KNOW?	2
NEW BOARD MEMBERS	3
HOLIDAY DISPLAY & MERRY MINGLE	3
EFFORTS TO PROMOTE CIGARS IN 1924	4
NEED A SPECIAL GIFT?	4
2026 MEMBERSHIP FORM	4

Our hours are  
Fridays, 10am-12 noon  
Saturdays, 10am-2pm  
Sundays, 1pm-3pm  
Come see us!

## 2025 ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

## DID YOU KNOW?



2026-2027 Officers: l-r Jim Morgan, Treasurer; Jack Pollitt, Chairman; Kathy Myers, Secretary; and Phil Gregory, Vice Chairman

There were many interesting “characters” who arrived in Bernadotte Township in the early 1800s. One of those people was a man named William Walters, the first settler to arrive in this area along the Spoon River.

He was an Indian fighter, and he found the area occupied by Indians. Wanting to own a piece of ground for himself, he bought the site from the Indians for 50 deer skins. Other settlers soon came but the Indians were a menace to them. Mr. Walters organized all the men and boys who could carry a gun and rounded up the Indians in the arm of the river known as the Great Bend. He took their guns and ammunition, drove them across the Spoon River, on across the State and across the Mississippi River, near where the town of Oquawka is now located, and told them to never return.



People recognized during the business meeting were (l) Bob Senneff, outgoing CEO of Graham Health System. Senneff was recognized for his valuable contributions to both the establishment and expansion of the Heritage Center, 2015-2025.

Board members recognized for service were (r) Mary Lou Kuchan who has completed her term as board secretary and John Froehling (not pictured) for his promotion of the museum. He has stepped away from service on the board of directors. Elected to the board were Ken Long and Susan Walters.

The museum’s 2025 Annual Report is available on our webpage, [www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center](http://www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center).



Some time later, Mr. Walters sold his land holdings to Isaac Stewart and moved to Farmers Township, where he made his home, until his death.

Stay tuned for more Bernadotte Stories later in 2026.

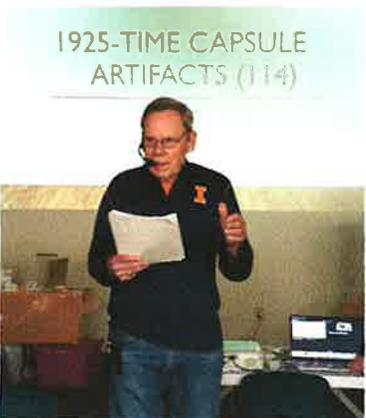
Source: Derry, Elsie Mae (Cameron). 1969. *Through The Years In An Early Pioneer Town, Bernadotte*.

**Jim Morgan, Treasurer**



The Annual Meeting Program showcased several of the artifacts from the 1925 Time Capsule, which was opened during Canton’s Bicentennial in June, 2025. The Bicentennial Chairman and his wife, Mike and Susan Walters, described the variety of items encased for the past 100 years, including a film of the Centennial Parade. Part of the film was shown to those attending.

All of the 114 items retrieved from the Time Capsule can now be seen at the museum.



## NEW BOARD MEMBERS



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**Editor's Note:** I've asked our newest board members, Susan Walters and Ken Long, to introduce themselves. Susan has been volunteering with us for eight years, along with her husband Mike, as they research and produce our annual Cemetery Walks. Ken Long's volunteering has been more recent, working on displays and Canton's Bicentennial museum events and helping staff the museum since 2024.

### Meet Susan Walters

Susan Walters, an active community figure, has been passionately involved in various local organizations since 1975. Currently, she serves as the President of the **Canton Park District**, where she has been a board member for 30 years. Alongside her husband, **Mike Walters**, they owned the magnificent Orendorff Mansion and are dedicated to preserving Canton's rich local history. Their family includes two sons, Chris and Cade Walters, along with four charming granddaughters: Olivia and Jaiden Walters, Kelsey Longknecker, and Addie Emmons.

After nurturing her family, Susan decided to pursue further education as a non-traditional student. She graduated from Spoon River College and Western Illinois University, where she earned a secondary teaching degree in History, Magna Cum Laude, in 1999.

Susan has been the bookkeeper at Canton Automotive Parts/ Napa since 1989 and at Walters Law Office, Ltd. since 1999.

Organizations benefiting from her leadership are **Fulton County Master Gardener Program**; since 2008 she has dedicated over 2500 hours (e.g., Jones Park Renovation and the Lakeland Veterans Memorial); the **First Christian Church** as Sunday School teacher, Vacation Bible School Director, Deacon, member of the Property Committee, and Church Board Secretary, 2003 to 2015. Walters has also been on the **YWCA Board** and served as its president.

Susan has been an active member of the **Little Giant Booster Club** since 1975, serving as President for two stints, 1989-2001 and 2004-2005. Susan's community awards include **Little Giant Booster of the Year** in 1977 and the **Canton Citizen of the Year** award in 1994. She was presented the **State Master Gardener Award for Sustained Excellence** in 2020.

Last summer, Susan played a pivotal role in documenting and displaying the treasures from the 1925 time capsule. Her efforts made it possible to showcase these historical artifacts at the Canton Heritage Center.

### Meet Ken Long

I was born and raised in Canton and attended Canton schools. My grandfathers and father were employed at International Harvester. My mother also worked there until I was born. Upon completing my education, I embarked on a career at The National Bank of Canton/ MidAmerica National Bank that was completed with retirement in 2017 from my position as Executive Vice President/CFO.

My wife Nina is also a Canton native with family ties to the coal mining industry. We raised our two children in Canton. In retirement, I keep busy fishing, especially up north. We have four active grandkids who have many activities to follow.

I became involved with the museum to learn more about Canton's history and to assist with the museum's support.

## HOLIDAY DISPLAY & MERRY MINGLE EVENT

We participated in Canton Main Street's Merry Mingle. Specifically, the museum was a stop on the 40 & 8 Trolley route. Visitors saw antique ornaments and vintage decorations along with our permanent displays.



(Left) Antique jewelry tree and glove boxes decorated with poinsettia. Two visitors to the museum during Main Street's Merry Mingle were Logan Fry and Lily Abernathy of Canton. (Right) P & O Flow Works cart, on loan by Kevin and Austin Tarter, was just right to display collectibles, Santa book and hand-made table runner

Preserving our history...

Address:  
111 South Main Street  
P.O. Box 526  
Canton, Illinois 61520

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



We're on the Web:  
[www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center](http://www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center)

## What Happened to the Cigar Market?

**Cigarettes assumed more of the tobacco market and the local cigar-making boom, unfortunately, was over by the late 1920s.**

**Cheryl Bielema, Editor**

## EFFORTS TO PROMOTE CIGARS

We all learn from the review of old newspapers and other publications donated to the museum. Volunteer Kevin Stephenson has taken on this task, and we have an extensive series of 3-ring binders about events, places and notable people of the Canton area.

Kevin recently found an article devoted to promoting local brand cigars in the Tuesday, January 8, 1924, edition of the *Canton Daily Ledger*. Noting that local cigar factories were not as successful as those in Decatur, Springfield, East St. Louis, Bloomington and Quincy, the Community Club planned to include local cigars as part of its "Made-in-Canton-Home-Products" exhibit.

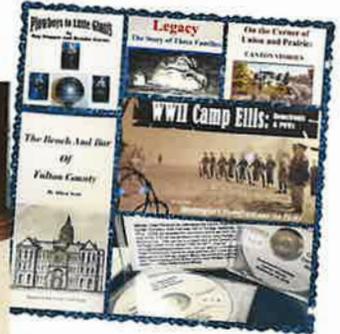
Per the article: "Several fortunes were made in the 80s and 90s from the cigar industry, but men now have had to seek other fields on account of lack of demand. 'This is a sad condition,' points out the Community club, whose efforts will be directed toward rejuvenating the flourishing trade of the past.

"The factories are here but with no outlet for their goods, they cannot contribute the maximum to the city's prosperity. With a greater demand, they could employ more men and leave a greater revenue in the city's coffers..."

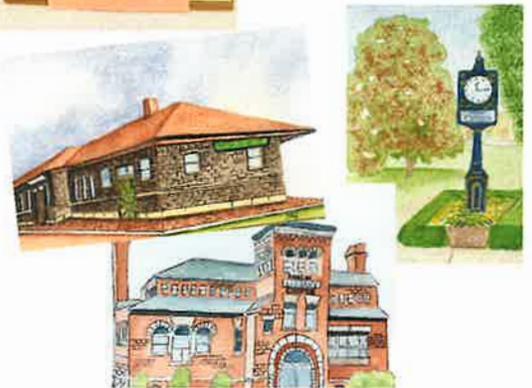
Listed were twelve local factories: Lair & Lair; W. H. Eyerly Brother; McCreary & Trites; Beam-Dean; Beaver Cigar; Edward Haffner; W. M. Myers; Patrick O'Conner; Stoddard brothers; Lanson P. Seward; Wm. L. Vaas; and, J. C. Whitmore.

## NEED A SPECIAL GIFT?

Books by local historians Brooks Carver, Roy Hopper, Ed Lewis, Judge Albert Scott & Mike Walters - \$10-\$20. Check titles and prices on our webpage.



"Cemetery Walk Revisited" DVD - \$15 + postage



Local artist Mary Ellen Carver note cards/postcards - @\$1 suggested donation

## 2026 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Check the appropriate category:

\_\_\_ Student/Senior - \$15 \_\_\_ Individual - \$20 \_\_\_ Family - \$35

\_\_\_ Community Organization - \$50. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Business/Commercial - \$100. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Donation amount: \_\_\_\_\_. Mail form and check to CAHC, P.O. Box 526, Canton, IL 61520.

Thank You!