VOLUME 9 NUMBER 3 July - August - September 2026

Museum Newsletter

CANTON AREA HERITAGE CENTER

Chair's Report

We celebrated Canton's 200th birthday last year. As you know, this year we are celebrating our country's 250th birthday. It is remarkable that there were so many gifted individuals back in 1776 that were willing to give all to gain our freedom and form our great country.

Now, when we pause and think of the past 250 years, we are awed by the thousands and thousands of men and women who gave of their time, intellect, fame and fortune – yes even their lives – to make and maintain our country, the greatest democracy in the history of the world. May we never forget their gift.

We've had nearly 3400 visitors, to date. A review of recent guests provides varied reasons for their visits. One Friday, a young man and his wife were engrossed in the P&O/IHC Room. We learned they made the trip from Indiana for no other reason than to view the room. An interesting and well-written letter was received from them. It will be featured in our next issue.

One Saturday morning we had a group of five, well-groomed young men in their late teens visit the center. They had many questions and spent over an hour in and out of the displays. As they left, they indicated they would be back since it was so much more than they expected.

The last young man out the door raised his arms in the air, loudly saying "This is awesome." My wife Mary and I surely enjoyed the enthusiasm!

Jack Pollitt, Chairman

NOTE: **"The Founding Mothers," July 3, 2026, 4:30pm**, will be hosted by Parlin-Ingersoll Public Library and the museum Registration is required; call 309-647-0328 soon!

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When we talk among ourselves, all we get back are echoes.
But when we talk with others of a different mind, we are made to think.
And it is in thinking that we learn, and in learning that we grow.

--Romeo LeBlanc

New Acquisitions

Square Deal Dairy embossed bottle from Tony Kozelichki

Barnes & Noble "Barnzie" bear by anonymous donor

Heiress Garland Crazy Quilt donated by Janet Rae

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You're invited! Come visit us this summer!!

Orendorff family, descendants of William and UG, visited Canton. See page 3 for their story.

Museum Hours

Fridays, 10 am-12 noon
Saturdays, 10 am-2 pm
Sundays, 1 pm-3 pm

Other times by appointment
Call us and leave message,
(309) 647-2242

309-647-2242 cahcpo19@att.net www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center

Meet Kevin Stephenson

Editor's Note: We've benefited from this volunteer's penchant for reading and organizing the donated newspapers, notebooks, reports, letters and books. Kevin Stephenson's efforts have yielded an extensive research area. He was elected to the museum's Board of Directors this spring, and he introduces himself below.

I'm from Alexis, south of the Quad Cities. I attended Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg and Western Illinois University. My degree from WIU is in Broadcasting with a minor in Ag Science. Immediately after graduating from Western in 1977, I came to Canton to put my degree to use at WBYS. I was there through 2000, then moved on to MidAmerica National Bank and retired in 2017. I could not have asked for two better places to spend my career!

I met my wife, Debbie, in Canton. She's a Canton native and is retired from the Illinois Department of Human Services. It's hard to believe I've been in Canton for nearly a half-century.

Debbie and I have both been involved with the Heritage Center since before it opened. In answer to the question, "Why have a museum?," I said, Having a sustainable community museum is very important. It links the past with the present and the future. I often wonder what Canton area residents will think of our history 100 or more years from now. The museum will allow them to find out. It also never ceases to amaze me what historical items and information people have in their attics, closets, garages, drawers, etc. Those kinds of things are brought into the Heritage Center regularly.

Orendorff Museum Tour and Community Mural Painting

Members of the Orendorff family toured the museum and painted a section of the mural dedicated to P & O Plow Works, that their great-great grandfather William J. Orendorff co-founded.

Canton History & Arts Alliance / SRC Program

Another excellent event is planned for Canton...To help **Celebrate America's 250th Anniversary**, you are invited to an unforgettable evening of music and history! The Spoon River College Community Chorus and Canton History & Arts Alliance present ***WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS*** – a free staged musical performance – **on Sunday, June 28, 2026, 7:00 p.m., at the Opera House Plaza**.

Written and directed by Carol Davis, this unique production brings Presidents George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Abigail Adams to life as they reflect on the founding of the United States and discuss how America's story has unfolded 250 years later. Featuring music from the 1700s alongside contemporary American songs, this thought-provoking and engaging performance promises humor, inspiration, and powerful reflections on the American experience.

Bring a lawn chair and join us for this special community event!

Alesia Shaw, CHAA Marketing

The Orendorff Family Legacy

Ulysses Grant (UG) Orendorff's father was William J. Orendorff, who became a partner with William Parlin in the Parlin and Orendorff Plow Works Company.

He graduated from Northwestern University in 1886. In 1889, he started the Canton Cigar Factory with John Blackadore. In 1890, he became Secretary of the P & O Plow Works Company; in 1895, he became its Treasurer and took over the company's 11 operations in St. Louis, Shreveport, Portland, Houston, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Dallas, and Winnipeg, Canada.

He married Daise Baughman in 1896, and they had one daughter, Helen. In 1900, he was involved with a group of notable citizens of Canton to raise money to build a new hospital. In 1902, Daise and UG contracted Robert Spencer, who was in the same office as Frank Lloyd Wright, to build Redcrest Mansion, on Elm Street, which is the big Prairie Tudor home with a red roof. It has 157 stained glass windows, each floor having a different window pattern; 53 radiators; 11,400 sq. ft. of living space; and a big letter 'S' on the backside of the chimney, which represents the architect, Robert Spencer. Behind the main house is the coach house, which at one time held the carriages and horses.

In 1903, W.D. Plattenburg and UG started the Illinois Central Electric Railway Company. He opened the Canton Daily Register, now known as our Daily Ledger. In 1911 he formed the First State Bank and was President of same. In 1918, he headed the Liberty Bond Drive during WWI, which produced $10 million dollars for the war effort.

UG was a small, 5'4", undistinguished-looking man from a small town. In 1919, he took the train to Chicago. He could have taken a cab to where he was going but decided to walk. Chicago was an exciting city back in the day. Streetcars rambled past and chaotic traffic told of deals being made, business being transacted, and commerce flowing. After a brisk walk, UG arrived at his destination and passed through the huge double glass and metal doors of the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust. It was Chicago's biggest bank at that time.

A receptionist asked if she could help Mr. Orendorff, and he told her he did not know exactly where his appointment was. He told her his name was UG Orendorff, from Canton, Illinois and he had an appointment with a certain implement company. She looked in her appointment book and seemed slightly puzzled. She looked around the lobby and then asked UG if he was here by himself. UG replied, "I am indeed."

She instructed UG to go right up to their executive boardroom on the twelfth floor where she told him they were all waiting on him to arrive. UG had to take the elevator marked, "Private Conveyance, Bank Officers Only."

While UG was waiting on the elevator, he saw the receptionist fumble with her intercom phone system. It clearly connected to the upper private boardroom of the bank president where the meeting was to take place. UG heard her say to the secretary, "He's coming right up there, Madge. You better alert the boss. He asked for fair warning;" then UG could barely make out what she said next as she was whispering, but it sounded as if she said, "I thought he'd be taller or handsomer or something, he's carrying a big, ol' suitcase, and he's all by himself, for heaven's sake. Anyway, here he comes. Get everybody ready."

UG opened the big double doors of the boardroom, and everyone got to their feet. Around the table were seven attorneys from the implement company and nine bank board members. The president of the implement company asked if UG had brought any attorneys with him. UG smiled at him and said, "I don't need any. I have everything that I need right here." He placed his suitcase on the polished oak table, opened the clasps, and passed the contracts around to the speechless executives and attorneys.

Four and a half hours later, UG walked out with a bank draft for $18,500,000 to be divided among the Ingersolls and the Orendorffs. He also left with the agreement that all the outstanding receivables remained in the partner's hands, and a promise in the contract that the current employees were to remain employed.

Fast forward to 2025. During our town's Bicentennial Celebration, UG's grandchildren tried to arrange a trip to Canton. However, they were unable to attend. This year the great-great-granddaughter reached out to the Walters family and informed them that the family wanted to make a family trip to Canton to see where their great-grandfather lived and was so successful. Nineteen members of the Orendorff family were in Canton early in May 2026, for a three-day trip. The visitors included Clark Roberts-Coleville, CA; Signa Pendegraft-Reno, NV; Oren Roberts and Tyler Becker-Traverse City, MI; Brad, Caroline, and Taniya Roberts-White Salmon, WA; Cindy and Richard Albrecht-Koloa, HI; Lindsay, Jace, JoAnne, and Harold Martin-Seattle, WA; Peter Albrecht-Santa Barbara, CA; Kathy and Tim Farrell-Denver, CO; and Don, Joan, and Ellerie Roberts-Seattle, WA.

Mike and Susan Walters planned a bus tour for the family to see the Orendorff buildings and the historical donations the Orendorff family has made to Canton over the years. While here, the family also helped paint a mural dedicated to the P & O business.

Without UG's business acumen making P & O Plow Works so successful, Parlin and Ingersoll would not have been able to endow the City of Canton with their many Trusts. We are forever grateful for the love and philanthropic spirit of Ulysses Grant Orendorff.

Susan Walters, Fundraising/Programs Committees

CANTON AREA HERITAGE CENTER
...preserving our history

111 South Main Street, PO Box 526
Canton, Illinois 61520

Leave a message: (309) 647-2242

/canton-area-heritage-center

www.cantonillinois.org/heritage-center

YouTube.com/cantonareaheritagecenter

My Canton Memories

Capitol and Garden Theaters, WBYS, Canton Daily Ledger, S.S. Kresge, the Square Deal Market and more...Read these memories shared by three of our readers.

The Movie Theaters. In 1962-1963 my future husband Larry and I helped clean the **Capitol and Garden Theaters** – Capitol on east side of Canton Square; Garden on the west side. The Capitol was part of the old Opera House. It had a stage with curtains; exit door off stage right. Don't remember which had hard seats or soft fold-up seats for audience. The building was a meeting place for the Free Masons.

Val Portwood was manager of both theaters. He employed Danny and Sharon Bishop as assistant managers. They were responsible for running the film on the projectors. They also took care of concession stands, changing the marquee letters which entailed climbing ladders, putting movie posters in the billboards, and cleaning the theaters. The tasks included checking seats for items left behind, vacuuming, and cleaning up popcorn, candy and gum. Removing gum meant scraping it off the seats and floor.

We provided extra help for the Bishops along with Ron and Clela Taylor, mainly on Saturdays. We didn't get paid for helping clean up unless it was receiving free passes!

Bids for the Kids. I remember being at the Capitol Theater when **WBYS** hosted "Bids for the Kids," in late 1950s – I was 10-12 years old. We kids would save the bottle caps of **Producers Milk** for points to bid on toys. I remember "winning" a couple of times, one being a doll that could walk. Charlie Wright was the WBYS assistant manager who ran the bidding. The first time I was on microphone, the feedback on my voice actually scared me.

Connie Smith Ludlum, Canton

My First Jobs. I started to pedal papers for the ***Canton Daily Ledger*** in the 4th grade and had a route close to where I lived on West Maple, around the hospital. I had my route until the 9th grade.

In high school I went to work for the **S.S. Kresge** store on the Canton Square. I was a stock boy who would unload delivery trucks and place new stock on the shelves. I also swept and mopped floors after the store closed. Most of the other employees were women. I remember we had a food counter that you could have a lunch or coffee and donuts. I worked through high school. My boss liked me and helped me get a job at Kmart in Peoria. I was a department manager for a year before coming back to Canton to work at the International Harvester Plant in 1970.

Phil Gregory, Canton

Our Neighborhood Market. **Square Deal Market** on the northwest corner of South Main and West Pine Streets was our mother's go-to grocery store. This was likely because they offered free delivery, though I don't know if this was a general policy or just a favor to Mom.

Dad worked seven days a week in a local coal mine to feed our large family and Mom was unable to go grocery shopping since we had just the one car.

Occasionally, I was sent on my bicycle to get one or two items Mom needed right away. She didn't need to send a check or cash with me because purchases were entered in a ledger behind the counter, then added to a monthly bill.

Returning from the market, I always looked forward to the thrill of coasting down that big hill on Martin Ave. next to Graham Hospital. Over time, I crashed into a telephone pole at the bottom of the hill and woke up in the hospital with a big knot on my head. After that, I always avoided the hill and returned home a different way.

Square Deal Market had a motto on their calendars that read "The Best of Everything." Although the store was small compared to today's supermarkets, to me they had everything you could ever want, but most of all I remember they had the best bubble gum, and Mom would let me get a piece as a reward.

David Gregory, Peoria