

The Joiner Room Journal

Vol. 10 No. 2

June 2009

From the County Historian

On May 2 the J Room staff held an open house at the library to celebrate our 20th anniversary. Some of our photos, maps, old documents and newspapers were on display for visitors to enjoy. It was great to see so many old friends and to meet some who were there for the first time. People are amazed when they see how extensive the collection is, and how much has been accomplished by dedicated staff over the years.

We have welcomed close to 10,000 visitors representing all 50 states and several foreign countries. Our staff has logged over 34,000 hours.

Volunteers have been involved with making our history available to so many people. It took team effort and dedication to make the Joiner Room a success and I've been privileged to work with so many wonderful individuals for the past 20 years. And we aren't finished yet!

A few words about the new *Journal* format ... We hope you like the changes in our newsletter. Deadlines got to be a bit much; we still plan to publish three times a year, but not on set dates.

- Phyllis Kelley



Wendell Chestnut (l) and Dick and Mary Powell, all from Hinckley, enjoy searching through old plat maps during the May 2 open house.

Joiner Room Celebrates 20th Anniversary

On May 2, 2009, we celebrated a dream that started 20 years ago in the basement of the courthouse with two volunteers, four filing cabinets and a half dozen boxes of archival collections. We had a typewriter that didn't work, a copy machine given to us by a former courthouse employee who neglected to tell us he hadn't paid for it, and no telephone. Luck for us, the Rockford firm that sold the copier donated it to us, Mr. Danielson at Sycamore National Bank and Trust gave us money for a new typewriter and some archival supplies, and we were in business. Our first collection, Judge Poust's

scrapbooks, came to us from the third floor courtroom in a brown grocery sack. From that opening day, May 4, 1989, the archival collections continue to arrive almost weekly—sometimes by mail, sometimes delivered in shopping bags, shoe boxes or plastic grocery bags.

Nine years after our little basement dungeon (no windows) opened, we were floor-to-ceiling full. Thanks to an agreement between DeKalb County and the Sycamore Public Library Board, we transferred the archives to the west end of the Sycamore library in June 1998. A couple of pickup trucks moved the

heavy stuff and volunteers carried the smaller boxes across North Main. Thanks to all of those helpers we were in business in our new home.

Thanks also to the Roberts family, there was a security wall, carpeting and new furniture. The old library shelving was left in place for our use. It was, and continues to be, a very positive arrangement. Sycamore Library staff is very supportive and we love our home in the "west wing."

J Room Visitors

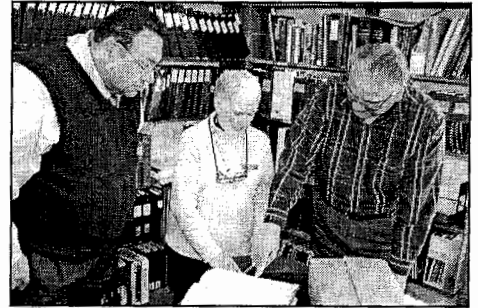
In March, members of the National Bank & Trust Company's Advantage Club came to visit. We enjoy showing people from the area how we collect, store, and make available for research the county records and photographs in the archives.

Former county clerk Terry Desmond was a recent visitor too. The Joiners were responsible for saving the old records and Terry was the one who helped make the history room dream come true. Thanks, Terry, for the valuable

collection you added to the archives.

Two members of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation of Mayetta, Kansas, visited in February. Steve Ortiz, Council Chairman, and James Potter, Tribal Council Secretary, came to see the maps, manuscripts and newspaper clippings on file. They brought with them a photographer and their public relations manager. Our staff agrees that it was one of the most interesting groups we've ever had tour the J Room. Thanks

to Denny Sands (Shabbona Lake Restaurant) for making arrangements for the visit.



Steve Ortiz and James Potter of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation review documents with Phyllis Kelley

Fran's Obit File

The horse which bore the gallant S.A. Hurbut over the bloody field of Shiloh died in Belvidere on Wed. last, at the age of twenty-seven years. "Dick" has been very tenderly cared for since his return from the war and his grave will be appropriately marked.

Sycamore True Republican, Feb. 23, 1878

Mrs. Mollie Caldwell, born to slave parents in 1860, near Louisville, Kentucky. She came to Illinois as a child. Two of her children, James Caldwell and Lucian Caldwell reside in Shabbona Grove community. She was 94 years old.

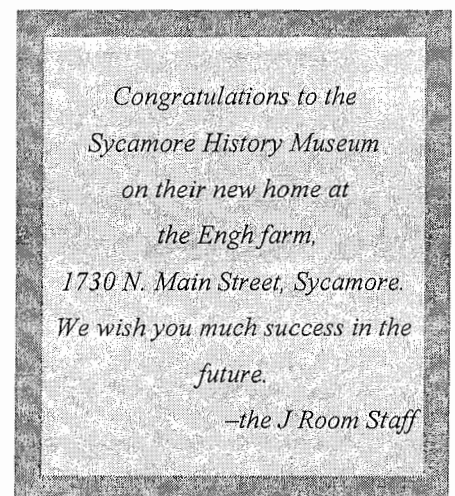
DeKalb Chronicle, July 7, 1955

The 8-year-old daughter of one of LaSalle's leading physicians has brought forth the following as her first school essay: "There was a little girl, and she was very sick. They sent for my papa, and she died very quick."

True Republican, Feb. 23, 1878

Images of Sycamore Update

Another royalty check was received from Arcadia Publishers in March. The Sycamore book is still selling well. On page 26 there is a photo of Ric Lahti's mens store. The unidentified man in the picture now has a name. A gentleman who purchased the book called to tell us it is Jean DeShon.



What's Your Question?

Question: One of my ancestors married in DeKalb County in 1849. Would there have been any local newspapers of that era?

Answer: The first newspaper published in DeKalb County was the *Republican Sentinel*, dated May 31, 1854. However, marriage records for the county go back to 1837. They are on file in the DeKalb County Clerk's office in Sycamore.

Question: Where was Pierce Hall and what was it?

Answer: Pierce Hall was the name given to the third floor of the 1904 Pierce Building on the southwest corner of State and Somonauk streets. It was originally a ballroom and meeting place in the downtown Sycamore bank building erected by Daniel Pierce. The building was later the home of Henderson's Department Store and today is owned by the City of Sycamore and is used by city administrators.

Question: An old diary reference sparked this query: Where in Sycamore was The Sweet Shop?

Answer: It was a restaurant on State Street next to the Fargo Theater. It was later called The Pantry. Ask any old timer in Sycamore and they will tell you, "the food was delicious."

Question: The director and curator of the National Museum of Roller Skating in Lincoln, Nebraska, requested information on a type of roller skate made in DeKalb with the imprint of KDS Co. What does K.D.S. stand for?

Answer: Kohler Die and Specialty made roller skates in DeKalb from 1924-1956. Bob Rozycki, owner of the Sycamore Coin Gallery, gave us the answer. He just happens to have a pair of those old skates!

Many Thanks!

Thank you to all our friends who continue to support the Joiner History Room with your donations, cards, and notes.

The Douglas C. and Lynn M. Roberts Foundation donated funds to purchase a new microfilm reader printer to be used jointly by the Sycamore Library and the J Room to read newspapers. What a wonderful gift!

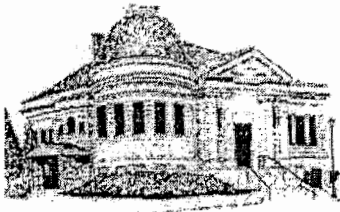
Thank you also to all who have contributed to the Joiner History Room Endowment Fund at the DeKalb County Community Foundation. A special thanks to Dan Templin and Jerry Smith for helping get this fund established and for all the publicity they gave us.

Send contributions for the Joiner History Room Endowment Fund to:

DeKalb Co. Community Foundation
2600 DeKalb Ave.
Sycamore, IL 60178
815-748-5383
www.dekalbcountyfoundation.org

Joiner Room in a Nutshell

A County-operated archive
Housed in the Sycamore Library
Staffed by the county historian and volunteers
Used by
* genealogists
* historians
* authors
* reporters
* film makers
* and students of all ages



JOINER HISTORY ROOM

At the Sycamore Public Library
103 East State Street
Sycamore, IL 60178

Phone: 815-895-7271

E-MAIL:
JOINERHISTORYROOM@DEKALBCOUNTY.ORG

Now is a good time to:

- *Write on the back of those family photos. You may be the only one who can identify grandmaw and grandpaw!*
- *Have scanned copies made of those important documents to share with family, and consider putting originals in an archives.*
- *Visit family burial sties and take photos of those old tombstones while they are still readable.*
- *Start researching your family history. Don't wait until older members are gone and then wish you'd asked those important questions.*



Every death is like burning a library.

- Carrie A. Meyer, *Days on the Family Farm*

New Resources

- The index to the Burdean Wagner obituary collection is now complete. Jackie, Fran and Sheri put in a lot of hours on this project. This collection includes 3,600 obituaries from southern DeKalb County newspapers, with scattered dates ranging from the 19th century to more recent years.
- 1912 ledger of the Rural Letter Carriers of DeKalb County from Marvin Masterson of Bonita Springs, Florida
- *Days on the Family Farm* by Carrie A Meyer. This book is a fascinating study of the Great Depression.
- Collection of WWI documents, photos and memorabilia of Ernest E. Van Deusen who served from DeKalb County in 1918-1919 donated by Ronald Van Deusen of California. It is seldom we see such a complete set of records from this historic time period.
- *The Saga of John McCormick, WWII* written by John R. McCormick.
- Several more DeKalb-Sycamore city directories, thanks to the DeKalb Public Library.

Ralph Joiner Display

Currently we have a special display of Ralph Joiner's memorabilia in the outer west wing wall case. It contains all of the items needed on the desk of a busy county clerk some fifty years ago. Stop by and check it out.