

Ogle County Historical Society

2015 RECAP

Last year the Historical Society was open 50 Thursday mornings, 22 Sunday afternoons, and 4 Saturdays. Due to a lack of volunteers, our scheduled opening on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend was cancelled, and our time to receive guests on the Saturday of Autumn on Parade weekend was shortened by two hours. Our visitor count was down from the previous year, with only about 700 people touring the museum. One positive of the year was Candlelight Walk on November 28. We had 40-50 visitors, and 3 or 4 of the family groups that came through included either a 4th grader or 7th grader who had toured with their class and insisted that their parents bring them back for that evening.

As usual, we hosted the Oregon Park District day campers in August, the OES 4th graders in September, and the DLR 7th graders in late October. On October 1 we were visited by the Thursday morning roundtable discussion group from the Byron Museum. In early December the staff from Lorado Taft Field Campus of NIU toured the museum.

In late July the Ogle County Genealogical Society moved in with us after losing their room in the basement of the Oregon Public Library. As a result of this, we have added four 3 hour periods per month in which we are open for research only, with the house not open for tours except by pre-arrangement. These hours include the first three Wednesday afternoons of the month and the morning of the fourth Saturday. Please see our website for exact times. By the end of March the two Societies will be starting formal merger talks.

Our Junior Docent program continues, but as its members get older, school activities and summer jobs keep eating away at the time they have available to help out here. They did help quite a bit at the Oregon Park District's Community Bike Night in early June, where we not only manned one of the stations on the bike safety course, but also had a literature table. Our adult volunteers gave out 65 copies of a coloring page from a 1950's era bike safety book which is in our collection. The total hours the Junior Docents gave last year were only about half of the nearly 600 hours given in 2014.

Last year the Oregon Park District continued its program of historic tours which they started in 2014, and Historical Society members Tim O'Rourke, John Barnhart, and Bill Bailey led all but one of them. The highlight of the season was probably John Barnhart's tour of the Ogle County Courthouse cupola, with 38 people participating, including Historical Society member Lyle Death, who made it all the way to the top even though he's over 90.

Thanks to the fund raising campaign begun in December of 2014, a new roof was put on the Nash house in April, and enough money was left over to purchase a new lawn mower, an additional dehumidifier for the annex, and to have both buildings power washed.

Forty different individuals and organizations donated documents and artifacts last year, from advertising for now-defunct area businesses to 13 large boxes of county school records and a desk from Nash School.

Our number of Facebook friends keeps growing, but we still need to do a better job of converting some of them into volunteers and dues-paying members. Let's make that one of our goals for 2016.



Above and right: photos of 7th grade field trips of previous years.

ANNUAL INVASION OF THE 7TH GRADERS

On October 29 the seventh graders from David L. Rahn Junior High made their annual field trip to downtown Oregon. The Historical Society hosted groups of 12-15 students every 45 minutes from 9am to 2pm. Even though time constraints prevented them from touring the second floor of the Nash home, they had a good time. A post-trip email from trip coordinator and 7th grade social studies teacher Matt Martin indicated that the Historical Society was the student's favorite of the places visited, the others being the Ogle County Courthouse, Ogle County Judicial Center, and the Oregon Public Library. A special thanks goes out to the society members who volunteered as docents for the day: Ray Brod, Janet McMillan, George Bouska, Judy McNett, Diane Wenck, Joanne Pennock, Arlene Sangmeister, Ron Colson, and Bill Bailey.

A MEMORY FROM THE 7TH GRADE FIELD TRIP OF 2010:

Bill Bailey: (to a 7th grader with his hand on the knob of the basement door)
“No, don't go down there.”

7th grader: “Why? Are there bodies down there?”

Bill: “Yes, 7th graders who didn't follow the rules last year.”



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

As is usually the case, donations of documents and artifacts declined in the last months of the year. Four individuals and one organization donated items before the end of the year, and we have already received a couple of things in 2016.

The Oregon Area Historical Society, just to our north in Oregon WI, sent us two early photo postcards of the Eternal Indian, or “Blackhawk” Statue. These were found among items donated to them from the estate of Florice Primson. The cards are now in our file on the statue, and have also been scanned into our computer so images can be printed out. From Tuesday Morris-Finkle of Mesa AZ we received photos and genealogical material on the Webster and Cooper families of central Ogle County and the Shaver family of Eagle Point Township. These families were relatives of Kenneth Gearhart and his sister, Mary Gearhart Colson, whose son Ron serves on our board.

In late October we received another watercolor painted by Oregon artist Marjorie Lippert. The subject is the iron statue of a Civil War soldier which was originally atop a fountain in front of the Winnebago County courthouse in Rockford. The statue itself has traveled to various locations over the years and also into and out of storage, but Marjorie’s painting shows it as it looked originally. The painting had been owned for many years by Tim and Madge Whitney of Oregon, and was donated to the Historical Society by their granddaughter Bridget Bodoh.

Society member and docent George Bouska gave us a complete set of the Oregon Chamber of Commerce Christmas ornaments, issued from 1989-2015. These found a prominent place in our decorations for Candlelight Walk, and also got us included in the Chamber’s “Hilarious Holiday Hunt.” George also gave us a 7 oz. soft drink bottle from Harter & Son Bottlers, a soft drink company which used to exist in Rochelle. It probably dates from the late 1920’s, and George remembered that he had it after reading in a previous Recent Acquisitions column about Harter family items which had been donated to us. It pays to read your newsletter, whether you get a hard copy or read it on our website.

Marge Lindenmeier, who attended 7th and 8th grade at Nash School in the late 1960's, donated a desk found in the school's attic shortly before the building was torn down.

So far this year we have received two items. Robert Sykes of Ionia MI sent us the August and September 1926 issues of The Kablegram, published by Kable Brothers Printing of Mt. Morris. They contain news briefs about all sorts of unions, fraternal organizations, and business associations from all over the country as well as news of the Kable business "family". Dave Bucher, whose parents attended Mt. Morris College, brought in student body group photos from 1927 and 1929. His mother had numbered all of the people in the photos and written their names on the back. This makes these objects much more useful for research purposes than unidentified photos.

As important as all these documents, photos, and artifacts are, and as glad as receiving them makes us, we are just as glad, if not more so, to see a new or current member OFFERING TO VOLUNTEER SOME OF THEIR TIME.



This is one of the photo postcards given to us by the Oregon Area Historical Society of Oregon WI. Notice how short the trees behind the statue were at that time and how bare the slope down to the river was.

OGLE COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR

by Bill Bailey

#22—Company I, 14th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry

The 14th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry was organized at Peoria in the fall and early winter of 1862. The first 8 companies were mustered into Federal service on January 7, 1863 and the other 4 on February 6. The men came from all parts of the state, from Chicago and Freeport to Metropolis and Anna. Company I was officially recruited from Stephenson County, but 14 men from Ogle County served in its ranks along with others from as far south as Shawneetown. The Ogle County contingent represented 9 different townships, mostly in the central and eastern parts of the county.

The regiment left Peoria on March 28 and arrived at Glasgow KY on April 17. From then on they were almost continually in the saddle, scouting, patrolling, and chasing Confederate raiders. After chasing an enemy force into Tennessee in June and capturing prisoners, cannons, a wagon train, and the commanding officer's papers, the 14th, along with other regiments, spent most of July chasing notorious Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan and his men on their raid into southern Indiana and Ohio. The regiment played a conspicuous role at the Battle of Buffington Island on July 19 and was in on the capture of Morgan a week later.

From mid-August to mid-October the 14th Cavalry participated in Gen. Burnside's east Tennessee campaign and after that in the Knoxville campaign. Private James Dunn of Oregon was one of the troopers declared missing in action and presumed dead during this time.

In February of 1864 the 14th defeated Thompson's Legion at Deep Creek NC. This Confederate unit was partially made up of descendants of the "Overhill Cherokees" who had fled to the mountains years before to avoid being sent to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) over the infamous "Trail of Tears". The regiment was then on duty in Kentucky until mid-June.

After joining Sherman's army for the Atlanta campaign, the 14th Illinois Cavalry was part of Gen. George Stoneman's large raid to Macon GA. Unfortunately, this raid was even more unsuccessful than his raid in Virginia 15 months earlier. Stoneman's command was continually hounded by Confederate cavalry, and after a battle at Sunshine Church on July 31, he decided to surrender. Colonel Horace Capron of the 14th received permission to attempt to escape with his regiment, and they did so with some losses; however a large portion of the remainder of the 14th was captured three days later due to extreme exhaustion and the treachery of a locally obtained guide.

Of the 15 men of Company I who were reported captured or missing during the raid, 4 of them were from Ogle County. Joshua Cross of Mt. Morris died at Andersonville prison in September. Cassius Bemis of Nashua Twp., who was transferred from Andersonville, escaped from a prison in Raleigh NC and was shot upon being recaptured. The fates of Elihu Butterfield of Pine Creek and Oliver Douglass of Byron were never known.

The 14th was refitting at Louisville KY until November. They then took part in the battles of Franklin, Nov. 30, and Nashville, Dec. 15-16, and the pursuit of Gen. Hood's defeated Confederate army. The regiment was on duty at Pulaski TN until being mustered out on July 31, 1865.

A few of the Ogle County boys in Co. I did well for themselves. Moses Hascoll of Byron went from Private to 2nd Lieutenant in just over 2 years and Riley Kilbourne of Pine Rock, the company's original 2nd Lt., was promoted to 1st Lt. before resigning his commission during the regiment's refitting at Louisville. First Sergeant Isaac Allen of Mt. Morris was promoted to Sergeant-Major, the senior enlisted rank in the regiment, and then to 2nd Lt. of Company D. Washington Sanford of Taylor Twp. made it all the way from Private to 1st Lieutenant. Although Co. I had only a few men from Ogle County, they certainly made their mark.

THANKS

THE TOURS AND PROGRAMS COMMITTEE THANKS ALL THE MEMBERS WHO SERVED AS DOCENTS LAST YEAR: Bill Bailey, Judy McNett, Diane Wenck, Dotti Bowers, Arlene Sangmeister, Susan Davis, Skip Johnson, Ron Colson, George Bouska, Dave Head, Joanne Pennock, Bruce & Janet Mcmillan, Ray Brod, and Beth Simeone.

We encourage all of our members who are able to do so to become more active in our operations, whether as docents or doing "behind the scenes" things, and we ask our Facebook friends to consider becoming members. AFTER ALL, FACEBOOK IS BASICALLY A SPECTATOR SPORT, AND WITHOUT PARTICIPANTS THERE WOULDN'T BE ANYTHING FOR YOU TO LOOK AT.

The Ogle County Historical Society
PO Box 183
Oregon, Il. 61061

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Application for Membership

_____ \$35 per household per year

___ \$5 per year for hard copy of Gazette

Renewals due in November for following year

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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oglecohistory@frontier.com

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