

G a z e t t e

Ogle County Historical Society

The Illinois Bicentennial is here! Find ways to celebrate the 200th anniversary of our Prairie State throughout the year. Choose an Illinois book to read. Find and read a historical marker. Check out a Farmer's Market. Discover a historic house of worship. Use the Illinois State Historical Society web site: www.historyillinois.org Below, the passage of time is outlined for Ogle County.

Ogle County Timeline

- 1829-30** First European settler John Phelps came to Ogle County, then known as Illinois Country and attached to the State of Virginia. But over time, it was reconstituted into many counties: St Clair, Madison, Pike, Fulton, Putnam, and Jo Davies County.
- 1836** It consisted of current-day Ogle and Lee Counties.
- 1839** It was finally partitioned into Ogle and Lee Counties. Eagle Point, Brookville, and part of Forreston Townships were also added to Ogle County.
- 1839** Mt. Morris Seminary was built and Mt. Morris was established.
- 1841** The first courthouse in Oregon was built and promptly burned down by the "Prairie Banditos" who were set to stand trial there.
- 1843** Margaret Fuller, a Transcendentalist, women's rights advocate, and journalist under Horace Greeley journeyed to visit her uncle in Oregon. She wrote the poem "Ganymede to his Eagle", claimed this God's country, and departed.
- 1853** First Ogle Co. fair was held on the courthouse square. 10 acres was purchased north of Oregon in 1856. It moved to North Lime Kiln Road, Oregon in the 1990's.
- 1853-54** Illinois Central tracks were laid through Forreston.

1870 Oregon was incorporated.

1871 First railroad came through Oregon, although chartered in 1857 by the Ogle Carroll County Railway. After 2 depots burned, the current structure was built in 1920 and is on the National Register of Historical Places. Passenger service ended in 1985.

1927 White Pines State Park, near Polo, Mt. Morris, & Oregon, was finally established after the efforts of Oregon's Illinois Women's Council which began in 1903. Not until added support from the Chicago Tribune, WGN Radio, and others, did the "White Pines Bill" pass.

1933-1939 During The Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) recruited 200 men to work on building projects at White Pines State Park. Completed were a lodge, restaurant and breezeway, 19 cabins, shelters, and foot bridges.

Notable People of Ogle County

1837 John Deere, Grand Detour, fashioned the first self-scouring steel plow from a Scottish steel saw blade.

1842-1846 Justice Thomas Ford of Ogle County became Illinois governor during a period of financial and civil chaos, saving Illinois credit. He is remembered for his dealings with the Illinois Mormon Expulsion.

1871-1878 A. G. Spaulding of Byron played major league baseball as a pitcher and later opened his sporting goods store. He organized the National League and wrote the first set of official baseball rules.

1898 Lorado Taft, sculptor, established the Eagle's Nest Art Colony on the bluffs of the Rock River, outside Oregon, as a summer retreat for fellow artists and members of the Chicago Art Institute. Oregon is the recipient of Taft's influence and generosity with four of his works, the largest being the Eternal Indian (Blackhawk), which can be viewed from Illinois Route 2

1908 Laura Fesler, Oregon and Rochelle, author and promoter of the bill designating the native oak as the State tree and the violet as the State flower.

1917-1921 Illinois Governor Frank O. Lowden, Oregon, reorganized State government, handled the Chicago Race Riots of 1919, and marshaled State resources in support of World War I.

Mid 1920's Actor, director, writer, and producer, Orson Welles spent his summers at the Sheffield Hotel, which was leased by his father in Grand Detour. It burned down in 1928 when he was 13. He called Grand Detour “a lost world like Eden” that he was thrown out of when his family left after the fire.

1948 Dubbed “Queen of Racing” by Life Magazine “Grandma” Neva Burright, mother of seven, was an avid horsewoman who spent her life training and driving trotting horses. She is remembered for stumping panelists on the 1950's television show “What's My Line”.

1970's Stan Hack, Cubs Manager resided in Grand Detour and managed Stan Hack's restaurant after he retired from baseball. He is buried in Grand Detour Cemetery.

ILLINOIS BICENTENNIAL TRIVIA

1. Which town would you visit to see the Super Museum and it's 15-foot tall Superman statue?
2. The first McDonald's opened in 1955 in what Chicago suburb?
3. Where was the capital prior to moving to Springfield?
4. Which president was born and raised in Illinois?

Answers on page 7.

Behind Every Successful Man Is a Great Woman

That certainly is the case of James and Laura Fesler of Oregon and Rochelle. James grew up in Rochelle. He worked in the grain market business from 1875-1886. He left his business to serve as Ogle County Treasurer for four years and then served as Ogle County Clerk for 12 years. In 1902, along with others, he formed the Peoples' Loan and Trust Co. of Rochelle.

James Fesler married Laura Sechler in 1879. Together they worked as a team when James was elected County Treasurer and later County Clerk. Laura's capable assistance and careful attention to detail engendered efficiency in his administrations. While Laura Fesler was always a faithful supporter of her husband's endeavors, she made her own name as a powerful influence throughout Illinois.

Mrs. Fesler was appointed by successive governors to serve on the Auxiliary State Board of Charities from Ogle County. One of her efforts was the establishment of the Ogle County Humane Society. Her legacy still stands. Through her prodding, the Society purchased in 1901, an Illinois Humane Drinking Fountain for Man and Beast. Now known affectionately as Iron Mike, it was designed to give a refreshing drink at four levels for humans and animals. Today it stands on the Courthouse lawn near Fourth and Washington Streets. A similar fountain was erected in Rochelle in 1915.

One of Laura Fesler's pursuits in Illinois public schools was bearing the cost of a voting contest in 1907, to decide what tree and what flower should be adopted by the State. Her bill passed the Legislature on January 29, 1908, designating the Native Oak as the State tree and the Native Violet as the State Flower.

These actions are but a few of Mrs. Laura Fesler's accomplishments due to her untiring energy for good and the betterment of humanity.

Do You Know Other Illinois State Symbols?

Bird--cardinal, 1929

Reptile--painted turtle, 2004

Amphibian—eastern tiger salamander, 2005

Insect—monarch butterfly, 1975

Animal—white-tail deer, 1982

Prairie Grass—big bluestem, 1989

Snack Food—popcorn, 2003

Dance—square dance, 1990

Mineral—fluorite, 1965

Fish—bluegill, 1986

Fossil—Tully Monster, 1989

The Squire of Sinnissippi and the Lady Bountiful

Before Frank O. Lowden became Governor of Illinois in 1917, he served in the Congress. Still living on Sinnissippi Farms outside of Oregon, he felt a genuine concern for the welfare of the farming community. Farmers recognized the sincerity of his interest in agriculture.

Frank Lowden was part of the Ogle County and Lee County farmers' institutes, the Ogle County Soil Improvement Association, and the Rochelle and Polo poultry clubs. Every year he donated prizes and paid the expenses of an Ogle County boy and girl to attend a course in agriculture and domestic science at the University of Illinois. It was Frank who provided the medals for the winners of the Oregon High School oratorical contest. Scarf pins for the boys and brooches for the girls were given out at graduation.



Florence Lowden and her children.

Likewise, Florence Pullman Lowden, the “lady bountiful” had philanthropic interests as well. In an attempt to provide wholesome experiences in the country, she built two cottages and service buildings on a 10-acre tract of land. Located on a bluff overlooking the Rock River at Daysville, it adjoined the Sinnissippi Farm. She called it Hilltop. Beginning in 1913, she invited groups of 15 to 20 boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 12 from Chicago to stay for two weeks. The underprivileged children were recommended by the Visiting Nurses Association from several hospitals where Mrs. Lowden served on boards. Alternating all summer long, first boys and then girls, deemed as “crippled” or recuperating from illness, came to Hilltop.

The children were attended by two trained nurses, a kindergarten teacher, a cook, a houseman, and a handyman. The children were given freedom of the farm along with playground equipment of swings and merry-go-rounds. On occasion they were driven around in automobiles. Florence Lowden also rented the Oregon movie theater for an afternoon and evening. She had a movie photographer film the children at play and showed the captured images for the children to see themselves on the screen.

Hilltop operated for nearly 10 years. Two versions of its demise are given. Walt Spangler recalls seeing the fire where Hilltop burned in the 1920's. Alternately, when qualified nurses were not available to staff Hilltop, Mrs. Lowden closed Hilltop in 1922.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- A 1912 Ogle County Atlas was given by Celia and Dick Zimmerman of Oregon. Maps and Atlases are always beneficial when researching!
- Elim's Timeless Recipes 1892-2002 cookbook compiled for the 100th anniversary of the Elim Reformed Church in Kings, IL was donated by Pat Dennehey. A cookbook is a wonderful glimpse into the past.
- A 1953 Ogle County Plat book from the estate of Gene Medlar was donated by his daughter, Sharon Bocker.
- Slides of Ogle County taken in the 1940s and 1950s by Daniel Warren of Oregon. Mr. Warren was an extension agent for the Ogle County Farm Bureau. Donated by his nephew, Jon A. Peterson.
- Large brown glass bottle, approx. 3 quarts, presumably held some sort of medicinal ingredient, used by Dr. Lambertus Warmolts at his clinic in Oregon. From Gretchen Warmolts.
- Autumn on Parade memorabilia and other items:
1985 AOP/Livin' on the River program,
1986 AOP/Livin' on the River program,
Three commemorative coins from 1986 Sesquicentennial,
Three advertising pencils; 1 from Monahan's Grocery, 2 from Spangler Bros.
Donated by OCHS member George Bouska.

Thank You!

UPCOMING AREA EVENTS

Bald Hill / Swingley Family

Mary Rose Phillip will be sharing her knowledge on the Bald Hill property and the Swingley family, who previously owned it.

Thursday, May 31st, at the Byron Museum at 10:00.

Tuesday, June 12 at the Rock River Center at 10:30.

Sunday, August 26 at the Mt. Morris Library at 2:00.

Chana School Fundraiser Rummage Sale

Friday, June 1st and Saturday, June 2 at the Oregon Coliseum.

Concert in the Park Featuring The StingRays

Tuesday, June 5th at Oregon Park West at 7:00 p.m.

Then & Now Walking Tours, Historic Homes in Rochelle

Friday, June 8th beginning at the Flagg Township Museum at 5:30 p.m.

Rockin' River Fest

Saturday, June 16 on the Oregon riverfront at 2nd Street from 12:00 p.m. to 11:00. p.m. The Ruby Nash Museum will be open for tours during this time. We are also having a "Porch Sale" offering books, old typewriters, and other odds and ends from 12:00-4:00. Stop by and check it out!

Then & Now Walking Tours, Downtown Area in Rochelle

Friday, July 13th beginning at the Flagg Township Museum at 5:30 p.m.

ILLINOIS BICENTENNIAL TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Metropolis
2. Des Plaines
3. Kaskaskia and then Vandalia.
4. Ronald Reagan

The Ogle County Historical Society

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Oregon, Il. 61061

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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