



# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

## "Preserving Mercer County History"

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Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

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### Mercer County Historical Society

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### Essley-Noble Museum

1406 - SE 2nd Avenue  
Aledo, IL 61231  
Phone: 309/582-2280

#### Hours

April – Oct: Thurs, Fri, Sat, 1-5:00pm  
Nov - March: Saturdays 12:00-4:00pm



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### For Genealogy Queries write to:

MCHS Genealogy Dept.  
PO Box 269  
Aledo IL 61231-2504  
Or: email the museum



**Memberships available for \$20/household or \$300  
for a lifetime membership**

*For correspondence, membership or change of  
address contact:*



Essley-Noble Museum  
Box 269  
Aledo, IL 61231



**Website:** mercercountyhistoricalsocietyil.org

**Email:** mcmuseum@frontier.com

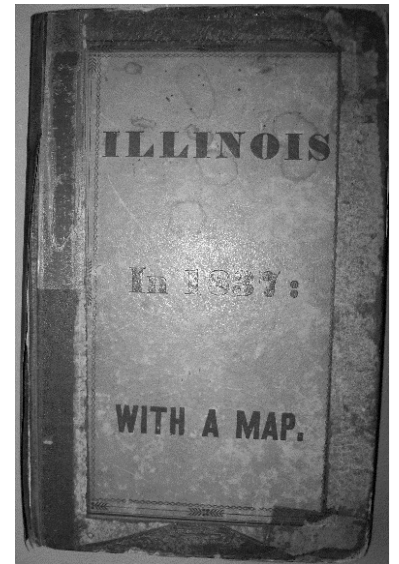
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## Mercer County 200 Years Ago, Arrival

By Bill Bertrand

Illinois became a state on December 3, 1818. One might wonder just what kind of land and life faced those original pioneers to this county almost 200 years ago. Except as where noted as another source, all of the following information, including quotes, are from a small book held at Essley-Noble Museum, entitled *Illinois in 1837* published by S. Augustus Mitchell of Philadelphia, which included a map of the state at that time.

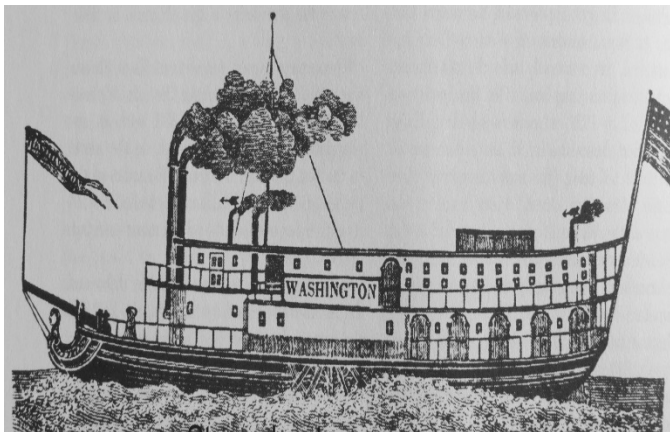
When we think of the pioneers moving into the state, we might envision the areas east of Mercer County being settled at or before the Mercer County area. Settlement in the county received a boost when land in the future Illinois was included in the bounty land set aside to be claimed as payment for volunteer soldiers in the War of 1812. Approximately 3.5 million acres situated west of the Illinois River in all or parts of 18 present counties in western Illinois were deemed fit for cultivation and thus set aside for bounties (1). To enable the award of warrants, this tract



of land was surveyed in 1815-1816 and then opened for settlement. Each Private who had suitable service during the war could receive 160 acres of land, but only a few soldiers actually received title to the bounty land or settled on it; most veterans sold or exchanged their warrants (4). A map of the state completed in 1818 (2) shows that outside of the southern part of the state, from about St. Louis on south, the only lands surveyed were in the "military tract." By the time of the 1837 map, the nine northernmost counties had still not been surveyed, and there were far fewer communities in the eastern half of the state than in the west. Thus land sales and settlement through much of the state lagged behind settlement in this area.

For settlers or for travelers interested in scouting out the land before making a purchase, "the most convenient sure, economical and independent mode, is on horseback" but "Stage fare is usually 6 cts. a mile" and "Meals at stage-houses, 37 ½ cts.." The closest stage route ran from Canton through Monmouth and over to Oquawka. The closest railroad ran from Warsaw to Peoria, passing through Macomb. It was either horseback or walking from there into Mercer County. Two main roads ran through the county from Little York to Rock Island, south to north, and from New Boston to Andover, west to east, through the "town of Mercer ... located in the exact geographical center ... with the express view of becoming the county

seat." In April, 1823 the small steam packet Virginia backed out into the channel of the Mississippi from the St. Louis levee to become the first boat to ascend into what would later become Minnesota, and a Kentucky family en route to southern Wisconsin on board the 118-foot vessel represented the first trickle of what would soon become a deluge of immigrants traveling the



Mississippi (3). Many immigrant families traveled in virtual squalor and suffered hardship as deck passengers on board the early packets, but for children it was safer and easier than overland routes, making it feasible for families to move together, rather than for a father to have to leave loved ones behind while he ventured ahead through wilderness with the hopes of returning for them much later (3). Prior to the invention of steamboats, commerce and people could travel much more slowly on the river by keelboat, and some of the early settlers may have arrived in this manner.

Detailed instructions were given for the conduct of the new settlers. "Upon emigrating to this country, it would be well for an eastern farmer to throw off and forget many of his former habits." and "his first object will be to provide cabins for his family." "Let a man and family go into any of the frontier settlements, get a shelter, or even encamp out, call upon the people to aid him, and in three days from the start he will have a comfortable cabin, and become identified as a settler. No matter how poor he may be, or how much an entire stranger, if he makes no apologies, does not show a niggardly spirit by contending about trifles, and especially if he does not begin to dole out complaints about the country, and the manners and habits of the people, and tell them the difference and superiority of these things in the place whence he came, he will be received with blunt frankness and unaffected hospitality." "Enter whatever house or cabin you may, if it is the time of meals, you are invited to share a portion; but you must eat what is set before

you, asking no questions, and making no invidious comparisons". This latter instruction may well cause you to speculate that some of the food offered would be rejected if its origin was known. It is apparent that people already living in the area were more than willing - even eager - to help gain new neighbors, but they would not put up with any airs of superiority.

(1) Genealogy Trails - genealogytrails.com, (2) Illinois State Archives, (3) Early Steamboats - Winona County Historical Society, (4) Family Search - United States Military Bounty Land Warrants



### Curator's Corner

Welcome to MCHS winter hours of Saturday only -12:00 - 4:00 pm. This will be my last Curators Corner. I am resigning at the end of March and will be moving to be closer to family. I want to thank all the volunteers and members that have supported the museum and myself for the past 10 years. Thanks again!

*Veda Meriwether, Curator*

*Editor's note: Veda will be missed dearly. We hope that she can remain a bit longer to visit, but be sure to wish her well whenever you see her. Our own Tarah Sipes Anderson has agreed to take over the curator duties, guaranteeing a smooth transition.*

*Tarah may have an uncertain and certainly a busy schedule so we are looking for volunteers to serve as museum host on days that the museum will be open to the public. The duties of the host will include greeting visitors, answering the phone, taking messages, assisting patrons with basic questions, and opening and closing the museum. These activities will help free the curator for more specific duties. Interested parties are asked to contact the museum at [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com) or call and a volunteer training will be held in the spring.*



### At Last!

The contract is signed and ground breaking for the new addition took place Dec. 21, 2018. Pictured at the contract



signing is Jim Holmes, Building and Grounds Superintendent; MCHS President Ronn Dillavou; and

Eric Pulford, branch manager of Cleary Building Corporation of Galesburg, IL. Also pictured are MCHS Board members breaking ground north of the school house and east of the machine shed. The new 36-by-60-foot building, although not climate-controlled, will bring needed display room for items from Mercer County. It is hoped that the new building will be ready for the beginning of summer hours April 4, 1-5:00 Thur, Fri, Sat.



A huge thank you to all who have contributed to the new addition. MCHS does not receive tax funding, but relies on dues, donations and memorial gifts. All donations are very much appreciated and more funds are needed since we have had to dip into savings and use from funds needed for the continuing operation of the Essley-Noble Museum.



### Duncan Retires

Dave Duncan has retired from the Board of Directors. We will miss you, Dave, but we'll still be seeing you and look forward to your input."



## Coming Events

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Jan. 1</b>   | Memberships due. Thank you!  |
| <b>Apr. 4</b>   | Start of regular hours   |
| <b>April 15</b> | Thur/Fri/Sat 1:00 - 5:00pm<br>Tentative date of spring program TBA |

## What is It?

The item in the past newsletter is called a violin seeder. The bow disperses seed from the bag. This item is 17" high and 12" wide. It is made of wood with a metal attachment at the bottom. What is it?



## Your Support is Vital!

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2018. Membership starts on Jan. 1. We count on dues and donations to provide necessary funds for our projects and for the maintenance of the Essley-Noble Museum complex. Thank you to all our patrons for your contributions!

- ( ) **Annual Membership - \$20.00** (one household)
- ( ) **Lifetime Membership - \$300.00**
- ( ) **Corporate/Business Fee - \$100.00**

Send to:Essley-Noble Museum  
Box 269  
Aledo, IL 61231

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Accessions for Sept. - Nov. 2018

Thank you to all who have donated. Come to the museum to view any of the items. Since some may be in the storeroom awaiting display, ask to see them. There is always something new.

Wooden BB gun owned by Boyd Blaine, walking stick and photo from Greer family  
Wm & Vashti College scrapbook  
WWI James Henderson dog tags, Teddy Roosevelt campaign pin, Patrick Riley papers  
1906 Aledo Fair pitcher  
RMA Class of 1964 photo  
C.J. Nelson family history and some history of New Windsor...  
Gail Laverne Fisher military papers and portrait  
Joy letter sweater, Korean War uniform, 1964 sale bill  
RMA time capsule items  
Dr. Anton Knutson photos & clippings  
Book *Lew Jinks' WWII Story on Iwo Jima*  
NRA pinball game circa 1933  
1903 *The Verduette*, 1927 Joy graduation booklet, Mercer Co. Postcards, Pictures from Mercer Co. photographers with names, M.C. plat book, various objects from M.C. banks, various other items  
McKown Family History binder, New Boston HS items from 1930's  
7 early 1900's Alexis telephone directories  
Green Bower Grade School picture  
Binder of RMS demolition pictures  
15 pictures of the E.L. Essley family 1868-1952  
Table top wooden wringer/washer  
30"x6" picture of Mercer Co. men to Camp Grant, June 1918  
Skim Gerard papers, Pearl Harbor book, 1987 *Yankee Magazine*  
'71, '72, '73 limited editions of mounted painted ceramic plates made by Pearl & Leona Barnes  
Iron-shaped small vase made of MC clay by the Barnes Sisters

Barbara Greer Sawin  
Nancy Livingston  
Dennis Henderson  
Julia Raiser  
William Miller  
Neil Johnson  
Elaine Peterson  
Todd & Scott Lincoln  
City of Aledo (Tarah Sipes)  
Orin Rockhold  
Bill Wright  
Richard & Joyce Whitehall

Gary Morrow  
Pat Gustafson  
Bruce Reynolds  
Barb Myers  
Jim Holmes  
E.L. Essley family  
James Nelson  
Henry Franson Family  
Pam Long  
Linda Hall  
Lois Retherford

*Mainly books and some items not related to Mercer Co. have been de-accessed*

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