



# White County Historian

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## **WHITE COUNTY HISTORICAL RECEIVES AWARD OF MERIT**

On October 2 the White County Historical Society received an award of merit from the Illinois Association of Museums for their exhibit entitled “Mr. Lincoln’s Friends in White County”. This is the first time that the society has been honored for an exhibit. Janet Pritchett and Marjorie Fechtig traveled to the IAM Conference in Bloomington, IL to receive this award.

Pritchett and Fechtig, along with Barry Cleveland, Cindy Conley, Cindy McNew and Loretta Vangamplor, were responsible for researching the material for the exhibit. The exhibit was constructed by Museum Consultants and Exhibit Development Firm from Murphysboro, IL. It is still on display at the Ratcliff Inn. The exhibit is also available in book form at the downtown offices of The Carmi Times. The price of the book is ten dollars.

*Do you know what a pirogue is? (pē rogue) Well, it isn't a type of dance, a sandwich, or a special kind of bridge. Read on to find out what it really is and why the White County Historical Society is fortunate to be the owner of one.*

**Definition:** A pirogue is a small, lightweight boat with a very shallow draft which makes it ideally suited to inland waterways and marshes. These boats are most closely associated with the Cajun community in Louisiana, certain areas of the American Midwest, and the fishermen of West Africa, although several cultures use similar boat designs for fishing and trade. Originally, pirogues were made from hollowed logs, with cypress being a very popular choice in the United States. The design is extremely simple, and the resulting boat is lightweight enough to be easily carried when there is no navigable water available.

Traditionally, the pirogue is rowed, and not paddled. Pirogues have also been known to move under the power of sail, and in marshes, they are often punted with a pole, since it can be difficult to row in marshlands. For inland waterways, the pirogue is hard to beat; the incredibly shallow draft allows it to navigate very shallow waters with ease, and the lightweight design makes it easy for people to carry the boat if they encounter an area of dry land.

We have always wondered about this dugout canoe, donated by Jack and Sue Emery, that has for so long been on display at the L. Haas Museum. So, in early September Marjorie Fechtig of the White County Historical Society contacted the Illinois State Museum to see if they had someone there who could evaluate it. The same day that the email was received at the state museum, it was sent to a man named Alan Harn at Dixon

Pirogue continued.....

Mounds State Historic Site. He immediately emailed back that he would like to see the canoe. The next week Alan Harn, an Illinois State Museum Assistant Curator of Anthropology stationed at Dickson Mounds Museum came to Carmi to examine our canoe. He spent about 2 and ½ hours examining the canoe and seemed very impressed.

He sent a preliminary on September 11 stating in part that: “The Carmi dugout presently is somewhat of an enigma, since our admittedly limited research has been unable to discover another reference to one in Illinois. At nearly 10 feet, it is large for a PIROGUE. Three or four people could comfortably fit into the vessel, or one or two persons with substantial cargo. It is just over two feet wide, about one foot deep, and has beautifully crafted flowing lines. It is not difficult to imagine it cutting through the local waterways with the grace of a modern canoe.”

He further stated that “it appears to have made from a bald cypress log. Its interior was hollowed out, first with a common axe, and finished using a curved adze with a slightly convex bit. The position of the adze marks suggests that the maker was right-handed. “

“The origin of the watercraft is presently unknown. Its age presently is also speculative. It is wonderfully preserved, perhaps in part because it has been housed inside buildings for decades. It seems doubtful that it is much older than perhaps the late 1800s, and may have been used into the early part of the last century. Continuing research hopefully will yield answers to questions about its origin and antiquity. As for now, the Carmi pirogue stands as one of the rarest of watercrafts to ever have been reported in Illinois.

The research on the pirogue is ongoing. Alan Harn has conducted archaeological research in Illinois for the past five decades, and has authored or coauthored more than 80 publications, technical reports, and papers on his work. We would like to have a paper published on our canoe so if anyone knows anything about where or when the canoe was found we would ask that they please contact Marjorie Fechtig at 384-7439.

## White County Historical Society Pirogue



### **Historical Society Going Green**

The Executive Committee of the White County Historical Society has made the decision to work toward going green. The first step is the plan to deliver the quarterly newsletter electronically for those who choose to receive it in that way. For those who still prefer the written form or who do not have computers, the newsletter will continued to be mailed.

This effort will not only save paper, printing, and postage costs, but will allow members to receive their newsletter as soon as it is completed. Money saved allows the Society to do more in preserving the museums.

To sign up for the electronic delivery of your newsletter simply send your email address to the library when you submit your membership renewal.

# Corn Day Events



## Corn Tasting

The annual “Corn Days” corn tasting was held at the Ratcliff Inn and was a great success again this year. There were many different dishes made with corn for the tasting. A large number of people came into the Inn to enjoy the various dishes. Favorites were discussed and recipes were requested.

Some of the dishes brought in for the tasting were: Sausage Hominy Hot Dish, Janet’s Casserole, Corn Casserole, Cheesy Corn Muffins, Candy Corn, Spaghetti Corn, Corn Dip, Summer Garden Medley, Hominy, Corn Salad, Corn Broccoli, Scalloped Corn and Corn Muffins.

The Historical Society would like to thank all the people who brought in dishes to taste. They were Barbara Kearney, Margaret Garner, Kay Meriwether, Pat Lewis, Loretta Vangampller, Norman Fechtig, Marjorie Fechtig, Dorothy Garrett, Cindy Conley, Janet Pritchett, Parky Elliott, Lecta Hortin and Ludene Taylor. Thank you one and all. We would especially like to recognize Parky Elliott for her consistent support of the Corn Tasting.

# L. Haas Museum

The L. Haas Store Museum was very busy Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> for Carmi Corn Days. Over 300 people toured the museum and viewed the special Military Exhibit that was on display on the second floor. Military items from Kepi hat from the Civil War through WWI, WWII, Vietnam, and Iraq were on display. Most of the uniforms were from the museum's own collection and a few that were on loan. The exhibit was put up by Rose Kelly, Eldorado, IL and Loretta Vangampller, Carmi, IL. This display will continue through Veteran's Day, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>.

The L. Haas Store Museum is now preparing for the next Smithsonian Exhibit, "New Harmonies" that will be ready May 30<sup>th</sup> through July 7<sup>th</sup> 2010 which is all about music.

With special exhibits, gifts being donated, school students touring, and other scheduled tours, it has been a very busy year that this museum.

If you would like to schedule a tour, you may call 382-8425 or 384-3871 to make an appointment. Happy Holidays. Loretta Vangampller.



Left to right: Coat belonged to Dr. Charles H. Schanzle, U.S. Army; White Navy uniform – unknown; Navy – A.W. Atchley; White navy hat – W. B. Wilson, brother to Marge Brown



Left to right: Uniform belonged to William O. "Bill" Williams from Navy WWII; Belonged to Dr. Edwin Stocke, DDS; Belonged to Randy Harris who served in Vietnam





Left to right: Female uniform belonged to Lucy Calvert, WWII, medals and newspaper obituary; Belonged to Alfred Spencer, WWII uniform, newspaper account of he and his wife Alice's obituary.

Top Shelf: Picture, Hat and book from Desert Storm. Owner: Billy Taylor.  
Bottom shelf : hats, helmets and liners belong to the L. Hass Museum collection



Uniform of Alfred Spencer, Crossville, IL , uniform pants, shirt, tuie, gloves, belt, jacket and top coat all in pristine condition.



# Annual Pioneer Days Held

The White County Historical Society held their annual Pioneer Days event on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of October. It was a beautiful day on the 7<sup>th</sup> but had to be canceled on the 8<sup>th</sup> because of rain.

The students spent the day learning what it was like to live in the 1850's. They moved through six stations depicting six different types of activities that children of the 1850's would have encountered. They had a lesson in the one room school and when it was recess time, they played jump rope, pitched horseshoes, rolled hoops and walked on stilts. All of this was quite different than their regular school day.

Children in 1850 had chores to do when they got home from school such as shelling corn for the animals and grinding the corn into cornmeal to be used in the pioneer kitchen. Since all bread was made at home, they also ground wheat to make flour. Students had an opportunity to perform all of these chores as well as make some butter and scrub some clothes on the washboard.

After the chores were completed, the fifth graders went into the Matsel Cabin to learn about life in a log cabin. They learned that the dining room, the sitting room and the bedroom were all in the same room. They also learned that the early settlers had no electricity or running water and that they had to cook on a wood burning stove.

A visit was also made to the Old Graveyard where many of the early settlers are buried. Society members point the graves of early community leaders as well as the graves of the many men who fought in the early wars. This visit always seems to make an impression on the students.



It takes many volunteers to put on an event like this and the historical society certainly had many wonderful volunteers. The presenters were: in the house—Trish Pringle; making butter and washing clothes---Linda Bryant and Loretta Vangampller; shelling corn and grinding meal---Norman Fechtig, Glen Vangampller and Judy Peyton; school teacher—Judith Williams, and in charge of games-- Thys Bax, Mary Ann Bax, Dale O’Dell, Mary McRoy, and Cheryl Sutton; Marjorie Brown and Janet Pritchett were in the Old Graveyard. Those who helped to move the students from one activity to another were—Henry Lewis, Don Garrett, Ludene Taylor, and Harriet Burtt. Other helpers were Dorothy Garrett, Barbara Kearny, and John Bryant. Larry Beck furnished the corn and John Bryant provided colorful animals for the students to see. Coordinator for the event was Marjorie Fechtig.

The White County Historical Society would like to express our thanks to all of these people. We would also like to thank the Farm Bureau for the use of their basement as a gathering place. Without all this great help we would not be able to give the students of White County this wonderful learning experience.

Thanks again everybody.

## **Annual Fall Meeting Held at Christian Church**

This was the first year the dinner was held at the Christian Church. The Green Onion of Crossville catered the dinner. Doors prizes were won by Connie Saunders and Jan Cleveland. Vice President Barbara Kearney shared the following remarks at the November 2, 2009 meeting.

I’d like to share with you a little about how the Historical Society has been doing. We have had another outstanding year, thanks to the members of the Board and our many faithful volunteers. Membership is up and our finances are

in good shape, with the help of our dues structure and the gift from the Mertice Pyle estate.

This year we have made improvements to all the buildings. Roofing, guttering and paint have made a difference in them all. Work was also done to the Robinson-Stewart yard. The yard was extended to the west property line and fenced. Low spots are being filled and lighting is improved.

Again, we have had an emphasis on the children of our county. We conducted Pioneer Days for all the fifth graders and held Tea parties at the Robinson-Stewart house for second graders.

Corn Day was a great success with many visitors to the Ratcliff Inn, the Robinson Stewart House, L. Haas Store and the Matsel Cabin. An exhibit of military uniforms from local servicemen was enjoyed by many of the 300 visitors.

The Trail of Tears exhibit was held at the L. Haas Store last May with over 400 visitors. It was a very moving and informative exhibit. The Lincoln Exhibit at the Ratcliff Inn in April also drew many folks. In fact, this exhibit "Mr. Lincoln's Friends in White County" received a special award from the Illinois Associations of Museums. This year, the museums welcomed class reunions, clubs, and visitors from many other towns.

The Society will participate again this year in The White County Christmas, sponsored by the Carmi Chamber and Commerce, which will be held November 20 and 21<sup>st</sup>.

We will be privileged to have a traveling Smithsonian exhibit next year, May 29 to July 10. The exhibit is entitled New Harmonies and it details the musical

traditions of southern Illinois. A preview of this Smithsonian exhibit which you see here tonight, will be in the L. Haas store during the White County Christmas.

The success of our programs and projects would not be possible without the hard work of our many volunteers. Their efforts are truly appreciated. The White County Historical Society is alive and well, thanks to all of you.

### **Mr. Kent Takes Time to “Visit” with Historical Society**

Long noted for his extensive research on the historical houses in White County, “Mr Kent” Boeger shared a different side of himself with the society members at the Annual Fall Meeting. He recalled the days when folks just stopped by for a visit with neighbors and friends.

He reminisced about his return to Carmi after living in New York. He recalled his interest in joining the newly formed White County Historical Society. He went on to serve as president and remained as director. He guided the audience as they relived a day gone by.



F.P. Kent Boeger

Picture courtesy of the Carmi Times

## Membership for 2010

It is membership time at the White County Historical Society. Your membership will support the activities of the society, help to maintain our museums and includes a subscription to the society's quarterly newsletter, The White County Historian.

We appreciate your support in preserving our past whether you are a new or renewing member.

Please complete the form below and return it to the Mary Smith Fay Library, P.O. Box 121, 203 North Church Street, Carmi, Illinois 62821.

2010 Membership  
White County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 121  
Carmi, IL 62821

Please accept my membership in the White County Historical Society. My check is enclosed for:

( ) Life.....\$1000      ( ) Patron.....\$100      ( ) Family.....\$35  
( ) Contributing....\$500      ( ) Sustaining.....\$50      ( ) Individual.....\$25

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618-382-8425

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## Museum and Library Hours

The museums, located in Carmi, Illinois, are open on advertised dates or by appointment only:

Ratcliff Inn, 218 E. Main Street  
The L. Haas Museum, 219 E. Main Street  
Robinson-Stewart House, 11- S. Main Cross Street  
Matsel Cabin, East Robinson Street

The Mary Smith Fay Genealogy Library is located at 203 N. Church Street in Carmi, Illinois.

Hours are 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. Phone number is **618-382-8425**.