

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY

GAZETTE

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(XI/4)

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

April, 1987

From Your President

It's been a busy year! We've gotten a lot done though, and what isn't done is pretty well funded so there hasn't been a great drain on the treasury in spite of our rather high expenditures. The generosity of you, our members, has made this possible. We've had help from the University, the James Millikin Trust, and from city and state grants, but the beautiful way that the Association members responded to our pleas has made my job easy and satisfying.

What have we accomplished? First and foremost, a new slate roof - a real project. It cost about twice as much as the original cost of the whole house! The chandelier in the dining room has been replaced with a beautiful piece that is authentic if not original, through the persistence of Brigitta Kapp and Mr. Robert Moore's labor.

Although not yet started as we go to press, the exterior woodwork will be repainted in a color that is very close to the original. City and state grants will cover the major portion of this cost. There'll be some repairs to the exterior woodwork, where necessary, included in this job. With a little luck and a guarantee from the supplier, we'll have less of a pigeon problem than we've had in the past. Most of this work will come about after the painting. And, while it's not there yet, we will also soon have an iron fence around our garbage area, thanks to a donation from Bob Kopetz.

I can't end this without giving a round of applause to the Board members who have been very supportive in these endeavors. We all felt these things had to be done and usually committed to the project without regard to how it hurt our financial picture. Fortunately, our members solved those problems.

It's been a good year, and although I leave the Presidency and the Board, it will be impossible to leave this Old House. It is a real Decatur Advantage and must be preserved. See you at the annual meeting, Thursday, April 23 at 7:30.

Jack Langsdorf, President

Because it's a cemetery story, it need not be a "downer". As a tribute to Spring, we give you . . .

What's Up, Doc?

At the first hint of spring, a true genealogist's fancy turns to expeditions to add to family history, and so it was last season for two Homestead members and sisters, Naomi Edwards Buck and Ruth Edwards Ewing.

With a trip last spring to their birthplace in Hamilton, Butler County, Ohio, Naomi and Ruth added, happily, not only to their own family history but to the Homestead's trove of information concerning James Millikin.

Naomi and Ruth planned their trip to learn more about the family of their mother, Laura (Strattner) Edwards, whose line had lived in Butler County from the time her grandparents Weber emigrated there in 1853 from the Rhineland in Germany. Personal history coincided with local history; Naomi and Ruth found that Hamilton was a German settlement in the Miami River Valley, very reminiscent of the old country, and, therefore, attractive to the Germans.

Interviewing a cousin still living there, Ruth and Naomi had their curiosity piqued by a family tale that their Weber line, including their mother, had once lived on (and farmed) land near Trenton, Butler County, owned by "Old Doc Millikin."

Their search for data took them to the historic old burying ground of Hamilton, known as Greenwood Cemetery. There—noting a section marked "Millikin" on a map of the cemetery and recalling from a previous **Homestead Gazette** that James Millikin's father was buried in Butler County—they put two and two together and were rewarded by finding the graves of James Millikin's father and mother, Abel and Nancy (Van Dyke) Millikin, as well as of other Millikin family members.

As they discovered, Greenwood cemetery was found in 1848 by "a group of public-spirited citizens" headed by Col. John M. Millikin—none other than a first cousin of James—and two other gentlemen. The founders were further described as

James' brother, Dr. Samuel Millikin, physician, who died Nov. 18, 1856.

Naomi and Ruth had hoped to establish the identity of the "Old Doc Millikin" on whose farm their family had lived, and now they already had two doctors of that name. They then wrote for assistance to Millikin family researcher, Paul T. Millikin of Ohio (who has corresponded with the Homestead), and found there were more!



A Ticket To Nostalgia

And it's all free! One of your benefits of membership is the superior program we do seem to always come up with for our annual meeting of the James Millikin Homestead Associates. This year we feel we have scored a coup for you, as we are able to present an imminent local historian, published author and poet, sometime columnist for the **Herald & Review**, and avid advocate of old house preservation.

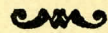
Our speaker will be Dr. Richard Ferry. He is revered for his 26 years of dynamic teaching in Millikin University's Dept. of Education, but he is perhaps equally famous for his depth of knowledge, and the sharing of same, on the magnificent old houses of Decatur. His presentation for us will include slides, collected anecdotes and personally-penned poetry relating to those lovely old mansions in the near west end - including his own splendid Cruikshank Ferry mansion.

The business portion of our annual meeting will be as brief as we can make it, and the rest of the evening will be turned over to Dr. Ferry. And the requisite refreshments that accompany post-program camaraderie. We look forward to seeing you all there, Thursday evening, April 23, at 7:30 p.m.

I SAVE, YOU SAVE, WE ALL SAVE

Are there 12 disciples of old house restoration among you? The prestigious **Old House Journal**, with which we are all familiar, has made us all an offer we can hardly refuse.

If you enter your subscription to this "how to, where to, why to" restoration magazine through us, the James Millikin Homestead Association, we can get you a discount of \$4 off the regular yearly subscription rate of \$18 (12 issues) and **Old House Journal** gives us a few \$\$ for our trouble. And they have a valued new subscriber on whom to lavish their state of the art features, their (on request) back-



Every Show Biz Star Started Somewhere!

It may not be Off Broadway, or even Off Off Broadway, but it's better than rigging a stage in your garage and hoping the world will beat a path there. We guarantee you a worshipful, courteous, loving audience for as many shows a week as you are up for!

If your legs are so great even Lloyd's won't insure them, we are happy for you, but that won't get you a leading role here. All our parts require modest covering. In fact, if you can bring along some of your own modest covering, so much the better!

We are starting to 'cast' our first-of-May "Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days", and if you can smile a lot, use old-fashioned words like "tuckered out" and "reckon" and "cantankerous", and handle improvisation dialogue, you are a natural for the role of parlor maid, kitchen maid or upstairs maid, all of whom guide the audience (did we mention they are all children?) through the rooms and the lives of the James Millikins, just as if it were a spring day in the house some 100 years ago.

When it's a beautiful spring day and your juices are flowing and you love the whole world, it may be hard to get into the role of Mrs. Millikin, for this part must impart frugality, tension over party preparations, and just a touch of nervousness around little children. But if you have a great Victorian blouse and a long skirt you've been dying to show off, who knows - the role may be yours.

For Mr. Millikin, we are looking for an older gent/dark suit/will travel/who can spin a short yarn well. This role is the children's first contact with what's inside this big old house, and the actor could say almost anything and the kids would believe, they are so awed. There is no script; just make up a short presentation of why he settled in Decatur, how he built the house, how he decided to become a banker, etc.

Board Member Carolyn Travis is casting this extravaganza. Players needed for a.m. or p.m. matinees, May 4, 5, 7, or 8. Call her at 428-3790 if you'd like to start your fling at fame.

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD
IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
THE LAST SUNDAY
OF EACH MONTH

MARCH - OCTOBER 2-4 P.M.

This coincides with the monthly open house of the Oglesby Mansion.

gentlemen. The founders were further described as "men prominent in the early development of the city (Hamilton), county (Butler), and state (Ohio)." John Millikin was a lawyer who came to Ohio in 1807; his law partner, a co-founder of the cemetery, became governor of the state.

In the peaceful old part of the cemetery dotted with trees, Ruth and Naomi came upon a tall obelisk, inscribed on four sides, marking the graves of Abel Millikin, his first wife, Nancy, and third wife, Joanna McFarland.

Ruth and Naomi copied the faded inscriptions and checked courthouse and cemetery records for more complete data for the Homestead. Some exact dates are still to be resolved, but they confirmed that Abel, who died at Centerville, Ind., April 9, 1865, was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Ohio, April 11, 1865. Wife Nancy died July 20, possibly 1845 (the years are faded). Third wife Joanna died Nov. 12, 1857.

Close by were the graves of James' sisters, Nancy Millikin, who died Sept. 8, 1854, and Annie Millikin Braden, died Dec. 17, 1856. In the same cemetery Naomi and Ruth located the graves of Samuel Millikin (d. 1870), an uncle of James, and of Dan Millikin, M.D. (d. 1914), another relative. In courthouse records, they found information on

Easy Hours, Lousy Pay

The season is upon us! Open House time at JMHS began again on the last Sunday of March - the 29th, to be exact. From 2 to 4 p.m. every last Sunday of the month through October, the public is invited to tour the Homestead free of charge. That means tour guides are needed for these tours and the many others that are scheduled by the Visitors' Bureau and by other organizations. We've lost several guides recently because of moves, etc., and we really need new volunteers. If you are interested, and/or have questions, please call me at 422-8896. JMHS will welcome you with open arms!

Olive Langsdorf, Volunteer Chair

Exact Examples Of What James Would Have Liked

Our thanks go to Helen Scherer for her contribution of the following early Illinois books for the Homestead library:

Personal Recollections (1849-1865), published in 1912 by Jane Martin Johns, an invaluable record of old Decatur.

Society Blue Book of Decatur (1917), interesting cross between a City Directory and the "Who's Who" of its day.

Bold Water, Comet Press, 1954, a novel by Davida McCaslin, a local author who taught English at Millikin University.

Illinois in 1818, rare resource published by the Illinois Centennial Commission, 1917.



According to Mr. Paul Millikin, "There were Docs in each generation in the 1800's—lawyers too—and drug store Docs. There was a Millikin farm on the south side of Millikin Road, east of Hamilton. My great grandfather Samuel owned one about where the airport is, but he was a sheriff and a drug store Doc! Also, when the Miami River flooded and changed course, there was a Millikin farm on the island (then) formed. Two possible Docs in your time frame were: Dr. Daniel [son of the cemetery founder] and his son, Dr. Mark."

With more detail about the Weber family, Paul Millikin hoped to pinpoint Ruth and Naomi's old Doc Millikin. Maybe by now, they have their answer, but this part of the story is fun as is, so we'll leave it unresolved—expressing, however, our appreciation to Naomi and Ruth for their contribution to Millikin genealogy.

Marilyn Loofbourrow,
Historian

We've Slated the Roof; Now It's Time To Slate the Board!

The following board members and officers will be submitted for your approval at the upcoming annual meeting. We hope you can be in attendance to vote for:

President: Barbara Hackel
Vice-President: Joan Cordes
Secretary: Marilyn Womeldorff
Treasurer: Betsy Empen

And the following incoming board members:

Marje Wollrab
Nancy Eichenauer
Terrie Potter
Sonja Rathje
Sid Shonkwiler

You will also want to be on hand to express personal thank-you's to the following outgoing board members, who through astute financial management, uncounted hours of volunteer time, and a good measure of sweat and tears preserved and made significant additions to our old (Victorian) glory:

Jack Langsdorf
Olive Langsdorf
Dorothy Smethers
Nancy Talbott
Brigitta Kapp

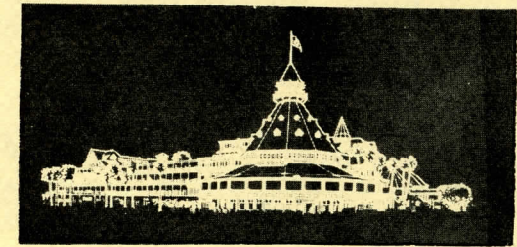
Homestead Nominating Committee:
Brigitta Kapp, chairman
Nancy Talbott
Olive Langsdorf
Marilyn Womeldorff

state of the art features, their 'yellow pages' catalog telling where you can buy over 10,000 hard-to-find items for pre-1939 homes.

No near west-end historic home should be without the **Journal**, and the same is true for all you newer home owners striving to decorate a room or a whole house in the pure sense of an authentic era.

Contact us through our message service, 422-9003, or use Homestead, P.O. Box 1501, if you'd like to be one of the (at least) 12 we need to make this offer.

A Note from a Distant Victorian Sister



On beautiful lavender and (no, not old lace but) gold-embossed stationery, the grande dame of Victorian buildings contacted us recently, to ask us to ask **you** to drop her a line! When we say "Hotel del Coronado", we know there are many, many from this erudite area who have visited there and fallen in love with this glorious old girl who holds court off San Diego's waters and who had bedded princes, presidents, and potentates for years with never a hint of scandal!

The hotel's stature is best summed up by Rand McNally: "It enjoys more fame and historical significance than perhaps any other hotel in North America. A century of history is yours to marvel at in this textbook example of Victorian architecture, one of the largest wooden structures ever built." The "Del" has received numerous acknowledgments including designation as a National Historic Landmark (just as James Millikin's home), a listing in the National Register of Historic Places (just as James Millikin's home), and a designation as a California Historic Landmark. (Well, she has us there!)

Now the Hotel del Coronado is getting ready to celebrate her hundredth birthday in 1988, and she invites you to participate in the following manner — by helping to locate any artifacts, stories, or personnel associated with the hotel.

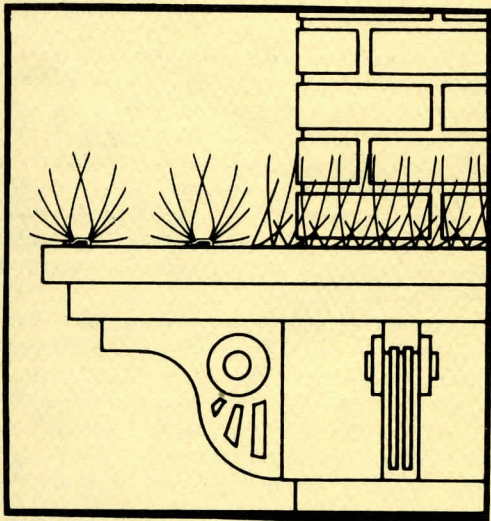
Contact the Centennial Coordinator, Patricia Anderson, at the hotel, if you have any ideas. Patricia's address is Hotel del Coronado, 1500 Orange Ave., Coronado, CA 92118.

Outside Insight

With the arrival of Spring, there is a lot of activity at the Homestead. The new roof was completed in early March, and bids will be out shortly for painting the exterior wood trim, thanks to grants from the City of Decatur and the State of Illinois Historical Society.

As soon as weather permits, Jordan's Nursery will be bringing in black dirt to fill in next to the basement walls so water will drain away from the building. At the proper time, they will be laying sod runways out from the downspouts and seeding the area. We will also be planting ivy and myrtle at both entrances.

Another major improvement is the pigeon-control system we are having installed to rid ourselves of these pests. As the manufacturer puts it, "We eliminate the problem, not the bird." The system consists of a metal base strip to which are attached from 60-to-120-to-the-inch stainless steel spindles 4" long, each about the size of a needle, and spread to fill up about a 4" space. (See manufacturer's illustration.) These strips are attached to clips that are permanently attached and can be removed for any kind of maintenance. Where larger areas



are to be treated, several rows of these are put down. This system has been used on buildings all over the world. Two places where they are in use that are familiar are the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles and Sea World in San Diego.

Looking way down the road, we are trying to figure out some way to make some additional parking available. When you drive by this spring, look for all these improvements.

Dave Robertson, Grounds Chair

Barber Clippings (not what you think!)

Thanks to an unknown donor, the Millikin Homestead has received another useful set of historical papers. They were deposited in the mail slot at the Homestead, and it was a happy surprise to find them.

Included in the sheaf are Homestead-related newspaper clippings and articles, dated 1972, as well as a complete copy of a master's thesis written about the Homestead in the same year and entitled, **The Historian's Contribution to Preservation and Development—The Millikin Homestead, Decatur, Illinois**, by Leslie M. Barber, then of Decatur.

The thesis was completed in August, 1972, as a class requirement for a public affairs course. It has been available to the Homestead in the Local History Room of the Decatur Public Library. With other priorities established for history funds, we have delayed copying the 60-page thesis, and now that work will not be necessary.

The 1972 papers remind us what a long way the Homestead has come! At that time a page from a Millikin University bulletin announced that the Decatur community—individuals and agencies—had been asked to suggest ways to preserve the former Art Center, no longer in use. Letters had gone out to community leaders and groups requesting advice and support.

Accompanying newspaper clipping show that the community did respond with suggestions; among them were the possibility of converting the house for a university conference center or purchase of the home by the Chamber of Commerce for its quarters.

This community-wide brain-storming eventually inspired the offer of the Junior Welfare Association of Decatur to undertake interior restoration with a plan formulated for a volunteer organization eventually to operate the building. Millikin University committed to exterior work and maintenance of the grounds. Zonta Club and numerous individuals made generous contributions.

Preservation of the Homestead, indeed, became a magnificent community effort in which we can all take great pride.

In 1972 Leslie Barber's thesis, covering the Homestead's history and architectural significance, also asked many questions about its future. For now, and we hope for another century to come, we have a satisfactory answer.

A Brief Musing on Why We Have A "Preservation Week"

"The modern era has been called an 'age of anxiety' . . . It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Americans seek order in a time of disorder. We (turn) to our past for reassurance, and to our museums and historic sites in search of an orderly past."

Michael Kammen,
Professor, American history and culture,
Cornell University, 1980.

To See Ourselves As Others See Us

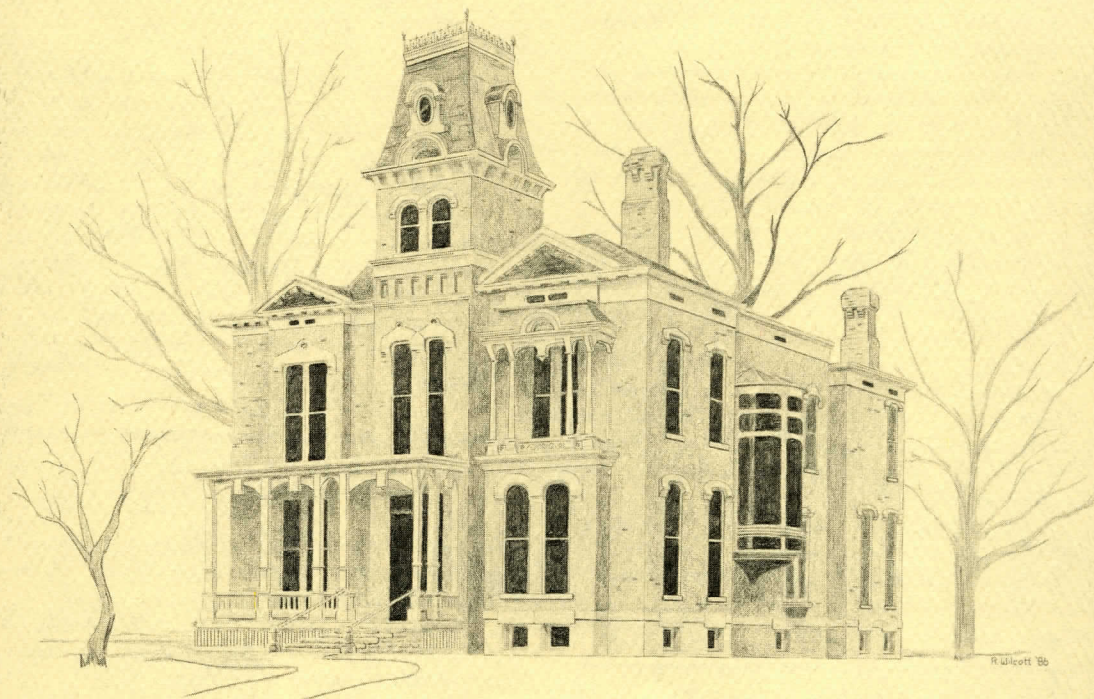
If you were lucky enough to be on Wood Printing's Christmas card list, you would have received this lovely drawing of the Homestead on their Christmas greeting this past year.

The rendering was a surprise to your Homestead board, none of whom had ever seen this starkly beautiful version of our old house before.

After some checking around, we found something on the talented artist. It seems Wood Printing commissions original art for its card every year, and the company is especially fond of using local landmarks. Cards in the past have featured such sites as the Transfer House and the Lincoln cabin in Fairview Park.

The Director of Promotion for WAND-TV, Bob Wilcott by name, is also a free-lance artist for Wood Printing, and it was he who submitted to Wood that the Homestead should be featured. Working in pencil in a style that would blend with the previous year's artist (as an enlightened courtesy to those who have been framing the series of cards), Mr. Wilcott, who is a perfectionist for detail, first shot 20 or 30 pictures at the Homestead, both wide and tight shots, and, working from these, was able to achieve the flow of technique from artist to artist that he was seeking.

A "modern" rendering of an old-fashioned theme; we love it!



Dwight & Lucien Koss
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JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC.

- Student Membership\$5.00 per year
- Individual Membership\$15.00 per year
- Family Membership\$25.00 per year
- Patron Membership\$100.00 per year
- Life Membership\$1000.00
(payable over four years)



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- Participation in preservation of the historic heritage of Decatur.
- Advance notice of Homestead-sponsored tours and programs.
- Subscription to The Homestead Gazette.
- Invitation to the Annual Victorian Christmas party.
- tax deduction to feel good about!

MY FAIR HOMESTEAD

You did it! You did it! By jove, you did it! Last year about this time, I challenged you to "raise the roof" and YOU DID IT! As of this writing, the roof has been completed, and all the thanks and credit goes to YOU who supported us with your memberships and extra contributions.

You have been so terrific that I hesitate to mention that it is... "that time of year" again. We have a fiscal year that runs from April to April, so it is time to renew your memberships for 1987-1988. Remember that your membership dues are our primary source of income and really keep us going. Thank you all for everything and please keep up the good work.

Professor Womeldorff Higgins, Membership

Please make check payable to

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 Decatur, Illinois 62525

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Membership is tax deductible.