

The  
**James Millikin  
Homestead Gazette**

Volume XLV, Issue III

125 N. Pine Street, Decatur, IL 62522

August 2020

## Upcoming Events

### Open Houses

Sunday, August 30

Sunday, September 27

Sunday, October 25

2:00 – 4:00 pm

Suggested Donation:

Adults \$2 Children \$.50

Saturday, October 3rd

Ice Cream Social for

Millikin University

Homecoming

All dates are subject to change due to COVID-19 directives. Check our Facebook page or contact us for the most up-to-date information.

### Taste of History

We deeply regret that, due to circumstances beyond our control, our annual Taste of History event will be canceled this year. We are hopeful to resume this community-favorite event next year! Thank-you for all of your support of Decatur's local history sites!



## History Room is Open!

While COVID-19 has scrambled all plans about celebrating events, we have quietly putted along with readying the History Room upstairs in the former caretaker's apartment. The original floor "glows" with the patina of old wood. The walls are painted a neutral color and new wooden mini blinds adorn the windows — as far as we know this space never had wooden shutters like the rest of the house.

A modern ceiling track light fixture lets us direct lighting onto the walls. Many of the historic black & white photos from the breakfast room downstairs have been moved into the new location. A 4ft. x 8 ft. cork board on the north wall allows us to exchange small exhibits frequently. For our first exhibit, we chose to feature the difficulties and uncertainties this building had experienced. We cover the time from the Millikins' death until 1981 when Junior Welfare turned over to the Homestead, Inc. the responsibility for the continuing upkeep and restoration of the interior.

We hope to obtain one or two display cases so that collections of small items can be showcased as well. We are looking forward to "post-COVID" times and hope you will come to explore the new history area.



## If the Walls Could Talk...

There are many untold stories and interesting facts about James and Anna's beloved home and its original occupants that the Board would like to share with YOU -- our generous supporters.

A new monthly feature, "If Our Walls Could Talk," has been launched and, courtesy of technology, you will experience these behind the scenes stories. "Mrs. Millikin's Favorite Things," "A Panoramic View from the Tower", and "The Homestead's Role in the Pandemic of 1918" are a sampling of the topics to be explored.

Be sure to like us on Facebook or visit our website to take advantage of upcoming oral history opportunities.

## Mission Statement

Through the preservation of the Homestead, we engage, educate, and entertain visitors with the stories of the Millikins and Decatur.



## President's Letter

Greetings from the Homestead! I hope this newsletter finds you all doing well in this time of COVID. Here at the Homestead, as at every other location, this is a time to reassess, refocus and think of new and innovative projects to further the cause of the Millikin Homestead. First, as a historic home dweller myself, I like to say that a house wears its dress on the inside. Over the years, the Board has spent many hours and dollars refurbishing and restoring the interior, working to make the Homestead's dress as attractive as possible. However, now it is time to look after the bones, the outside of the Homestead. In the coming months, you will be hearing more about our fundraising program to further this goal, Mrs. Millikin's Porch Party.

Secondly, the Board is in the process of developing a series of streaming events to take you "behind the scenes", oral history and many other special highlights. I'm looking forward to the new opportunities ahead for these difficult times. We will continue to bring your favorite features, as possible, but in addition, look for new things to come on Facebook!

Donna Williams



## Holiday Goodies

Fear not, loyal patrons of the Sweet Treats Bakery. Although the Homestead's annual Christmas Open House is contingent upon the state of the virus, the Sweet Treats Bakery

elves will offer cookie trays via curb-side-pickup. The trays will be available on a pre-order and pre-paid basis. Watch for further details in the next newsletter, on Facebook and on the website.

In the meantime, be sure to keep us in mind when planning your holiday gift-giving.



## Open Houses

Now that we are out and about again, are you looking for something fun, safe, and interesting to do on the last Sunday afternoon of the month? Well, grab your mask and visit the James Millikin Homestead from 2:00 pm until 4:00 pm. The Homestead will be open to the public with volunteers available to provide tours and answer questions. Masks and social distancing will be observed and sanitation stations available. Open Houses are held the last Sunday of each month through October from 2:00 pm until 4:00 pm. We hope to see you at one or more of the following dates: August 30<sup>th</sup>, September 27<sup>th</sup>, and October 25<sup>th</sup>. A suggested donation of \$2.00 for adults and \$0.50 for children will be gratefully accepted from Open House visitors. Homestead members are free.



The July Homestead Board meeting was held outdoors to comply with COVID-19 requirements. And while it has been a hot July, we were all quite comfortable in our lawn chairs, meeting in the shade of one of the lovely trees on the grounds!



## Around the House

We have had the Millikin University electricians looking at what is causing the “Up-Lighting”, which illuminates the building in the evenings, to trip the circuit breaker. This has been a grand puzzle. As of this writing, we do not have the riddle resolved. All lamps have been replaced with LED units. The photo-electric cell has been replaced. Now, we are testing underground electric lines for shorts. Thanks to Millikin University electricians for their help with this issue. We are confident a solution will be found.

The first-floor air conditioning units are one year old, and TICA, Inc. Heating and Cooling Company, ran a standard annual check on the units. All passed with solid performance. The new roof-mounted air conditioning units have also been running well. Two new dehumidifiers are running in the basement during these high humidity months to reduce mildew. In addition, the blowers are programmed, through the thermostats, to turn on for a minimum of 20 minutes per hour to move air around the home. All of these steps are intended to protect the interior of the Homestead and its contents from summer’s heat and humidity.



## America in Bloom

While there has been much less hoopla about America in Bloom this year, Decatur is once again participating in the national awards program. Due to COVID restrictions, the judges’ visit to our city was done virtually, and the Millikin Homestead was a participant in the Zoom meeting that focused on the Heritage work in our community. Through Zoom, we were able to show off the new History Room to the judges and they were duly impressed. In addition, the local AIB committee is writing a submission for special recognition for Decatur’s Heritage efforts. The James Millikin Homestead is proud to be a part of the effort to bring recognition and possible grant money to our community.

**Did you know?** 1876, the year the Millikins moved into the Homestead at 125 N. Pine, was also the year that: Baseball’s National League was formed, the first telephone call was made by Alexander Graham Bell, and an express train arrives in San Francisco from New York via the First Transcontinental Railroad in only 83 hours and 39 minutes.

## Around the Grounds

**TREES:** We are sad to report the loss a memorial tree planted in 2015; the Sugar Maple near the drive. The tree started the spring season looking healthy but turned and quickly so. Additionally, the Japanese Maple that was transplanted in 2015 to a spot south of the Carriage House to make space for the Sugar Maple, began to drop leaves and looked poorly. Former Board member and experienced grounds manager, David Bowman worked with us to attempt to save the trees with fertilizer and additional watering, but the trees were in severe tailspins. Both trees have been removed. Lucy Smith donated the Sugar Maple and we feel the loss. A meeting was held with Elwin Tree Farm to negotiate a replacement and, assuming all goes well, we will have a new tree in late fall.

**GROUNDHOGS:** A family of groundhogs have moved in around and under the Homestead porches with lots of tunnel digging. Traps were able to catch at least two. The young ones are called “kits” and they are rather rascally; whereas, Poppa seems to have taken up residence behind the Carriage House. Rumor has it that his “Man Cave” den has a color TV and a billiards room. We shall keep you posted.



**DOWNSPOUTS:** Following rainstorms, water drips over the mid-point of the southwest porch right on to the steps. The problem has been pinpointed to the gutter run-off of the side porch that is channeled into the four-inch downspout that comes from the roof. The piece that connects the side porch gutter has right-angle twists and is so compacted with debris that very little water can pass through. We are exploring the correct fix for this. The simple thought is to run a separate downspout for the side porch as the odd twisted pipe will always be susceptible to clogging. We shall keep you up to date.

**JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC.**



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Decatur, IL 62522

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Please consider making your support of the James Millikin Homestead a part of your legacy by including the Homestead in your estate planning.



Not a member of the James Millikin Homestead? Memberships are inexpensive and the support you provide through a membership is immeasurable. Please contact the Homestead for more information.



Stay in touch with the James Millikin Homestead:

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Please leave a message and your call will be returned.