

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



GAZETTE



Vol. IX, No. 2

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

November, 1984

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As the holiday season rapidly approaches, the Homestead is being dressed in its finest Christmas decor in anticipation of events to come. Following the Victorian tea, held for Homestead members on Sunday, December 2, the very next day, Junior Welfare will run a two-week session of "Santa House". This community service project involves opening both the Carriage House and the Homestead to preschool through second grade children for crafts, a puppet show, and, of course, a visit with Santa. Over 4,000 children are expected to attend. In addition to the scheduled visits of children, "Santa House" will be open to the general public from 4 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, December 5 and on Thursday, December 13. In the middle of "Santa House" will be our annual Christmas public open house on Sunday, December 9, from 2 to 4 p.m. As soon as Santa moves on, we begin our Christmas season rentals. It will be a busy month for our Homestead. Every year the house is lovelier than the previous year, and we want each of you to see this year's authentic Victorian decorations. We hope to see you at the Christmas tea! Happy holiday to all of you.

Barbara Hackel, President



*T'was the month before Christmas,
And all thru the house...*

...EVERY creature was stirring or taste-testing recipes, or polishing silver, or hanging greens, or whatever their task is to transform the Homestead into the spirit of Christmas Past.

The Victorian Christmas Tea, the appreciation party for our loyal members, is soon upon us - December 2 - and all must be perfect for your arrival and subsequent enjoyment. Somewhere there still grows a towering fir which will be transformed into everyone's version of the perfect Christmas tree; somewhere there are small musicians practicing their carols, to evoke our feelings of "God Bless Us, Everyone!"; somewhere there is chocolate melting and coconut chilling for fabulous table treats; somewhere there are ribbons waiting to be tied and recipes waiting to be tried. And by Sunday, December 2, somehow the Homestead's loyal volunteers will touch every Homestead corner with a magic Christmas wand, our aim to transfer you back to a time of innocence and joy and childlike wonder, the time of Christmas Past.

There is room in the parlor for every single one of you. There is punch and tea and veritable mounds of cookies

A NOTE ON NOTES

While enjoying tea at the Homestead on December 2, your musical talent could make the afternoon more enjoyable for other guests. Can you volunteer part of your visiting time to play several Christmas carols on the beautiful old pump organ?

Call me at 423-4800 and say you'll help, for we do need more organ players to fill the afternoon. Anyone who plays a piano will find it easy, and fun, to adapt to this instrument. Thanks so much!

Mary Ann Clark, Chair
of Victorian Tea

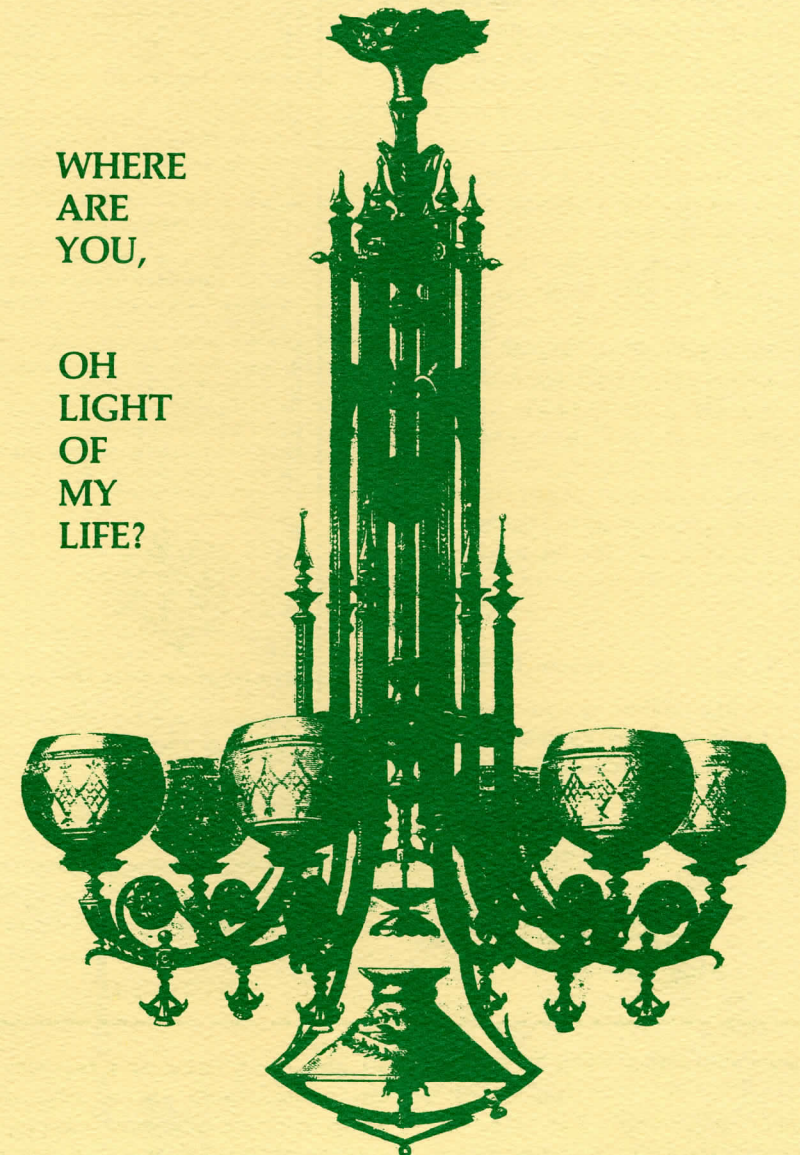
OLD DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

Preservation is a never-ending job. Although the major restoration/preservation work is completed at the Homestead, your board members are working on some less glamorous aspects of preservation. As is to be expected in any structure over 100 years old, our roof and our foundation are badly in need of repairs. Both are MAJOR (translation: expensive) projects, but both are critical.

Our roof has been patched, re-patched and re-re-patched until the slate is actually missing or broken, making further patching impossible. Presently the board is investigating the cost of replacing the old slate roof with a new slate roof with the same colors, shapes, and slate sizes that Anna and James originally had installed. As of this writing, the board is still

WHERE
ARE
YOU,

OH
LIGHT
OF
MY
LIFE?



We are still hunting for just the right chandelier for the dining room. Do you have a clue as to where to look for

would like to start the new year with such a lovely old fixture. It would more properly illumine the dining

OUR
VOLUNTEERS:
STERLING
SERVICE



SERVICE

Let's take a minute to talk about volunteers. In this 'giving' time of the year, perhaps a salute to our large and giving volunteer group is in order. As you all know, every member of the Homestead is a volunteer - working for the love of it, the feeling of accomplishment of it, and - true - occasionally the feeling of despair of it when there is so much to do.

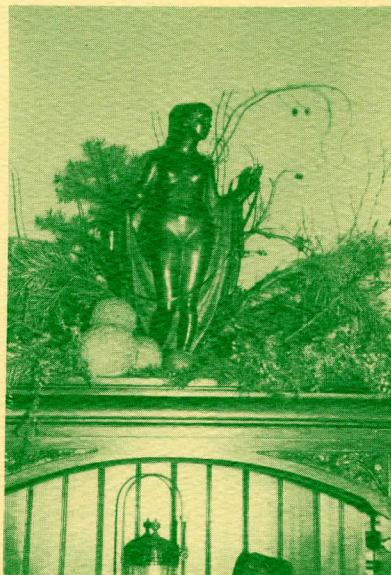
Millikin University asked the Homestead to schedule a Sunday brunch on October 21, to tie in with its Homecoming events, and this call, naturally, resulted in many Homesteaders being asked to forego their own personal plans in order to create a beautiful 2-seating, 5-course brunch for 70-some "guests". See Chair of Volunteers Olive Langsdorf's note below on how this all worked. Olive, who managed to organize, bake, serve, and also attend with a large table of her friends, says, "If Mrs. Millikin could have seen her kitchen, dining room, and parlors on Sunday, October 21, before, during, and after the two brunches served that day, she would not have believed her eyes. We had Homesteaders busy at everything!

"It was a beehive of organized activity, and we'd like to thank each and every one of the volunteers who helped so willingly with all the baking, serving and dishwashing that was so necessary. Others who deserve our thanks are those who baked all the luscious goodies ahead of time, our shoppers, those who set up tables and chairs before, and cleaned up after, the festivities, and our silver-polishing ladies who made every piece of silver in the house sparkle!

"Volunteers are wonderful people, and if any more of you would like to join those listed below, we'd welcome you as a Homesteader with open arms. Just call me at 422-8896, or Barbara Hackel at 423-4122, and say, 'I would like to be a Homesteader.'"

Brunch workers: Bob and Lucy Smith, Betsy Empen, Marilyn Womeldorff, Barb Hackel, Brigitta Kapp, Mary Ann Clark, Mary Lou Malone, Joan Chiligiris, Dave and Debby Erlanson, Jane Shade, Claudia Curry, Connie Long, Marie Bennett, Kathy Farrington, Olive Langsdorf.

single one of you. There is punch and tea and veritable mounds of cookies and candies for each of you. There is music and candlelight and nostalgia to share with good friends. Come any time between 1:30 and 4 p.m., but do come, all ye faithful members!



Deck the halls with Boston Charlie*

They don't LOOK like elves - these attractive, busy wives and mothers. With their own homes to decorate and their own holiday plans to finish, they have, nevertheless, volunteered precious time and precocious talent to the challenge of beautifying the Homestead for Christmas. (We've been halfway promised an article in the national magazine, *Victorian Homes*, if we send them some really outstanding Christmas pictures of the Homestead, and these gals are excited by the challenge, so look for some fabulous decorating!)

These energetic elves include Charlotte Ballance, Mary Ann Clark, Linda Ferry, Mitzy Granzow, Lynda Hill, Maxine Kopetz, Deb Kurz, Deanna Murphy, Nancy Oakes, and Susan Wade. If you would like to join the elf brigade and have some fun (and it IS fun!), come to the Homestead Thursday, November 29, stick your head in the door and holler for

Joan Cordes, Decorations Chair
Victorian Tea

(*As sung by Pogo and his friends in the cartoon)

shapes, and slate sizes that Anna and James originally had installed. As of this writing, there is a problem locating the octagonal shaped slates needed for the decorative banding found on the main roof.

The foundation problems are severe but more easily solved. Through years of moisture and natural aging, the mortar between the bricks has become crumbly and is disintegrating. In several places the bricks are actually bulging out as if to duplicate the famous walls of Jericho. Your board has gotten an estimate on tuckpointing, repair and replacement of damaged foundation bricks.

Both repairs will involve spending a lot of money. But let's look at the facts. Without roof and foundation repairs, it is just a matter of time before serious problems will threaten the already restored interior. Since in excess of \$100,000 has been spent thus far in restoration, it would be foolish not to go ahead with the repairs before something more serious happens. With this in mind, the Homestead board is working on finding a solution to the problem.

Barbara Hackel, President

Remembrance of Things Past

(from *The Christmas Tree Book*, by P. Snyder)

"Indeed, the idea of a great floor-to-ceiling Christmas tree is uniquely American, as also was the custom that flourished in America in the last century - but one that has all but disappeared in the early years of this one - the placing of gifts on the tree itself. In 1901, it was reported that, while spruces were better-looking Christmas trees, balsam firs were generally preferred because their branches did not grow quite so close together and thus gave more room for the presents upon them.

Most early trees were decorated entirely with simple things like cookies, cranberries, candy, pine cones, dried seed pods, and strings of popcorn. A small yellow apple with shiny red cheeks called a "ladies apple" was a popular tree decoration, and some Pennsylvania Dutch farmers' trees were decorated only with homemade

chandelier for the dining room. Do you have a clue as to where to look for one similar to the one in this drawing? Based on an old photograph of Mrs. Millikin entertaining the 'girls' of the art club in her dining room, this chandelier is extremely similar, and we

would like to start the new year with such a lovely old fixture. It would more properly illumine the dining room than the graceful but too small one that is mounted there now. Call if you have any ideas that might en"lighten" me.

Brigitta Kapp, Restoration Chair

TINY NOTICE

The membership list is enclosed. If your name does not appear, perhaps you have misplaced your renewal slip. You may still join the Homestead, as our membership year is April-to-April. If you join before this year is out, of course, you maintain your tax deduction. Just contact Maxine Kopetz (Mrs. Bob), our Membership Chair.



doughnuts and strings of dried apple slices. The arrival in America of German-made glass balls brought about a major change in the way the American tree was decorated, by introducing the universal Christmas ornament of the twentieth century and triggering the revolutionary shift from homemade to store-bought decorations. The first glass ornaments, which were glass icicles and heavy glass balls, probably reached America around 1860...but for the next 20 years they were rare in American parlors. At first, glass ornaments were sold on street corners in German communities, but by the early 1880's a few toy and variety stores were selling Christmas tree "dressings".

Imagine the splendor we could have on our trees today if we could still buy at these prices (taken from *Ehrich's Fashion Quarterly, Winter, 1882*):

Fancy silver and gilt ornaments, representing hearts, shields, globes, crosses, etc. Priced per dozen, 10c

Embossed gold and silver fish, seven inches long, each, 5c

Embossed gold and silver dogs, four inches long, each, 5c

Dressed paper dolls for the tree, six inches long, each, 5c

Larger and finer ornaments, embracing stars, gondolas, slippers, tea pots, lamps, lanterns, angels, etc. Price each, 10c

Choice brackets to hold tree candles, price per dozen, 4c



And a big thanks to Jack Langsdorf for his ongoing voluntary services as our "resident repairman, woodworking division". Without his expertise, many of our chairs "wouldn't have a leg to stand on!"

LOOKING AT BOOKING

Since May first of this year, the Homestead has been used 41 times by special arrangement (tours, rentals, Millikin University, Jr. Welfare, workshops, etc.), and this is not counting our monthly open houses, our 4-day program for school children in May, or our Homestead-sponsored brunches.

Except for the Christmas tea for the general public on December 7, there will be no open houses scheduled from November through next February. The weather just makes it too chancy for volunteers and visitors alike.

Brigitta Kapp, Scheduling Chair

NEW APPOINTMENT TO BOARD

Marilyn (Mrs. Porter) Womeldorff joined the James Millikin Homestead board last month. She was selected by the nominating committee to fill the unexpired term of Marilyn Madden, who had to tender her resignation because of other commitments. Mrs. Womeldorff will fill the remaining 1½ years of Mrs. Madden's board term. Marilyn Madden, as well as her husband and her brother, have given many, many years of dedicated and artistic service to JMH, and their collective input will be sorely missed. Our new Marilyn, however, is jumping right in with the proper enthusiasm and help.

THE HOMESTEAD AS OTHERS SEE HER

When she isn't running to the Homestead to lead tours of visitors, or working in some other volunteer capacity, our star board member, Dorothy Smethers, is involved in unabashed witchery with her stichery! Seems she always has something in her lap, crocheting, knitting, tatting, etc. The latest finished project she brought to board meeting recently to show. It was so special, we want you all to see it, so it will be displayed at the Christmas tea. It is a miniature quilt; signed and numbered, this is the 18th little quilt Dorothy has made, and it is a depiction, in quilting and applique, of the front of the Homestead...trees, shrubbery, even the iron trim on the parapet. We wanted to show you a picture here, but it came out too dark for you to appreciate the detail, so be sure to look for it hanging 'mongst the greens at the tea.

This work of folk art by Dorothy got us thinking about all the other ways the Homestead has been represented down through the years. So next month we'll start a little feature on "The Homestead As Others See Her." If you have worked up something of your own, either by brush or needle or pen or clay or, who knows, maybe even welding torch, give us a call, for we would like to show it in the newsletter.

So You'll Know Whom To Thank...

...the following are the special chairmen for the Victorian tea:

Co-chairs for food: Sally Tyler and Betsy Empen

Chair for "greeters": Marie Bennett

Chair for "young greeters": Kathy Farrington

Chair for invitations: Linda May

Chair of decorations: Joan Cordes

Chair for ornament/boutique sales: Marilyn Womeldorff

General Chair/Music Chair: Mary Ann Clark

If you see here a slot you could easily slip into, we'd love to get your offer to assist. (We will make sure you still get 'pampered guest' status, too!)

CLASSIFIED SECTION

LOST AND FOUND

The Homestead finds itself with a silver "mystery" tray. In the hustle and bustle of the last few weeks, a silver tray was left with no clue as to whose it is. Did Santa bring us an early Christmas present? Was it left as a generous (and tax deductible) gift? Or did it come in under a mound of delicious cookies and its owner is desperately searching for it? If you can solve the Case of the Tantalizing Tray, call a board member and do your Sherlock number for us.

YARD SALE

Come spring, we'll set up shop on the lawn for a dandy big sale. Start saving your odds n' ends of "early attic", or if you must get it out of your house immediately, we can store it in the Homestead basement until sale date. You pass it to us for a tax deduction form, and we'll pass it on to a happy buyer for a profit for the Homestead. Three happy folks: you, we, and the as-yet-unidentifiable they!

WANTED

Do you own a cranberry bog? We need tons of cranberries for garlanding the Homestead! Do you own Orville Redenbacher stock? We need bushels of popcorn for same! Do you own a 12-foot spruce or balsam tree you are thinking of cutting down because it's gotten too big for its ditches? We're searching for just such a beauty for our 1984 Yule tree! Do you own an old-fashioned magnolia tree? Landsake, Miss Scahlet, we'd be mighty pleased to have some magnolia leaves for decorating! Call Joan Cordes at 428-9092 if you can help fulfill our trimming needs.

PERSONAL

Thanks to Dorothy Sellers and the P.J. Womeldorff family for getting us off to such a nice start on our tree plaque fund! Just a few \$\$ goes a long way here, as we strive to place identifying plaques on the house and trees, just as James M. himself had done so long ago.

And thanks to Millikin U.'s paint crew who gave our porch floors a new grey coat last month. Miss Liberty isn't the ONLY old lady who needs sprucing up.



Homestead Board (For when you need to know whom to call)

Barbara Hackel	President	423-4122
Joan Chiligiris	Vice president	877-5771
Betsy Empen	Treasurer	877-2664
Marie Bennett	Recording secretary	429-5735
Mary Ann Clark	Program chair	423-4800
Joan Cordes	Newsletter	428-9092
David Erlanson	Maintenance restoration	429-2728
Kathy Farrington	Fund raising,	
	long-range planning	423-4697
Brigitta Kapp	Scheduling, restoration,	
	documentation, maintenance	428-9527
Maxine Kopetz	Corresponding secretary,	
	membership	864-3296
Olive Langsdorf	Volunteers chair	422-8896
Marilyn Womeldorff	New volunteer	423-5178
Dorothy Smethers	Documentation, star volunteer	877-6143
Debby Staley	Grounds & landscaping,	
	documentation	422-5942
Sally Tyler	Publicity	423-4690

(Homestead phone number, to leave a message: 422-9003)

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage Paid
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Permit 226

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC.
P.O. 1501
Decatur, Illinois 62525

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.
- A tax deduction to feel good about!

Please make check payable to
James Millikin Homestead, Inc.
P. O. Box 1501
Decatur, Illinois 62525

Student Member Family Member
 Individual Member Patron
 Life Member

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Telephone _____ Zip Code _____

*If you have not yet paid your 1984 membership,
now is the time to do so.
Membership is tax deductible.*