

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



GAZETTE



Vol. XVI, No. 1 (XVI/3)

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

April 1992

A Note From Your President

Dear Members:

This has been a wonderful year. We have celebrated many events with food and song. I hope you participated in some of our Homestead parties; if not, please join us for the Annual Meeting in April, evening of the 23rd, for a visit and report on the year. The board has provided exceptional service to our membership and community. The evening will allow you to meet each member. Dorothy Smethers, one of our volunteer guides, will entertain us with miniature quilts and history given in her enjoyable way of entertaining by teaching about a subject. We will have refreshments, reports, elect board members and approve a new slate of officers. My personal thanks for two years of growth and rewards too numerous to mention as my term of office ends.

Bill, my husband, has joined me in finding quaint places where Victorian homes or restaurants specialize in the romance of a period we love. We offer two of these that we have discovered in Wisconsin for your pleasure. La Crosse is a lovely city. Houses painted in Victorian colors are centered in an eight block area. A park has been created where an old house or two were torn down. The drive to La Crosse is claimed to be one of the country's most beautiful, along the Mississippi. Prairie du Chien is the southern tip of the area. We also found a restored inn, The Audubon Inn, in Mayville, Wisconsin. The town is so small that one ponders the reason some fine man decided to restore the

Annual Meeting
April 23, 1992 - 7:30 p.m.
Reports • Entertainment • Refreshments

Eight Entertained at Tea Party

The Millikin Homestead is a charming and fascinating place to a certain young lady who celebrated her 9th birthday there on February 8.

Elizabeth Kail Shafter (Libby) having seen the home several times with her grandmother,

Activity for the afternoon was making Victorian valentines. Each girl, with talent and imagination, fashioned paper doilies, bits of ribbon, Victorian flower stickers and gold hearts into beautiful valentines to take home. Each was a masterpiece to behold.

MMM Days

The James Millikin Homestead will come alive the first week of May for Mr. & Mrs. Millikin Days May 4, 5-7, 8, when 1100 third grade students are invited to visit the Millikins' home. The story is that Mr. Millikin has invited the children for a visit, forgetting about the important dinner party to be held that evening. Mrs. Millikin is harried, one of the kitchen maids is sick, but the children and their teacher still come.

They are met by the outside maid who explains the important details of the exterior, the landscaping, and the carriage house. Once inside they sit on the floor and visit with Mr. Millikin. He speaks of his early life, his college days, and why he came to the midwest. He tells the children about the land he owns and his cattle. Next the children go to the South parlor where they sing and listen to the pump organ.

It is a very busy day at the house, but the maid takes time to show the children the hall, the library, the upstairs, and then brings them to Mrs. Millikin. She is a bit stern as she tells the children about the company coming for dinner. She asks Betsy, the maid, what is being served and admonishes her to make the biscuits light and fluffy. Mrs. Millikin rings for Sophie, the kitchen maid. The kitchen seems to be the children's favorite place in the house. Is it the cookie that they receive or is it Sophie (usually Brigitta Kapp) that they love?

This is a very fun week and the children are charming. They love our home, they ask lots of questions, and they write thank you letters. They give tips in their letters — they think Mrs. Millikin should get Sophie a washer and dryer (you can get them at Sears) or an elec-

of the country's most beautiful, along the Mississippi. Prairie du Chien is the southern tip of the area. We also found a restored inn, The Audubon Inn, in Mayville, Wisconsin. The town is so small that one ponders the reason some fine man decided to restore the hotel. The green, dark reds and flowered patterns inside will please you, I promise!

We close our doors on winter and open them to springtime, just as we do every year. Open houses begin in March, rentals seem to increase each year, making our members and other happy with the James Millikin Homestead "magic"!

Best regards,
Nancy Eichenauer
JMH President 1990-1992



fascinating place to a certain young lady who celebrated her 9th birthday there on February 8.

Elizabeth Kail Shafter (Libby) having seen the home several times with her grandmother, Homestead Scheduling Chairman Lois Wells, asked if she could have a tea party at the Homestead for her birthday. A memorable party it was, in deed.

Eight lovely young ladies arrived in their best party dresses, excited and a bit intrigued by the surroundings in which they found themselves. Libby greeted each guest and with great enthusiasm gave them her own personalized tour of the Homestead. She related facts she had heard from her grandmother, adding a few of her own. "You know," she told them, "Mrs. Millikin's maid slept right there under that stairway."

The dining room table was set for a Victorian tea party. An antique porcelain doll belonging to Libby's great grandmother decorated the table. Refreshments included pink and white petits fours, peppermint stick ice cream served in crystal sherbets with antique ice cream spoons, and hot raspberry tea. A few of the girls actually liked the tea.

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Tea parties are loved by all little girls and for Libby this was a very very special one.



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If you want to come to visit during the first week of May, please call Wyllene Griffy (422-8417) or Lyn Shimp (423-5912).



History — J. Millikin, Banker, Views Family Budget

It was 1907. At the prodding of a reporter, James Millikin and a fellow citizen, unnamed but also well-to-do, paused to reflect on the questions put to them: When does a man have enough money? When does a family have enough money to live comfortably in Decatur?

The answers of the two were juxtaposed in a Decatur Review article of May 26, headlined, "Five Thousand a Year — All a Family Can Spend in Decatur — If It Gets Its Money's Worth." With their answers, the curtain is pulled back for a fascinating glimpse of the lifestyle of the era and the personality of James Millikin.

Since James and his anonymous compatriot spoke for themselves as no paraphrase can, the article is presented here largely as printed, with only a few concessions to space. Imagine yourself settling in for a leisurely reading of the Sunday paper in May, 1907, as the article begins in a lofty tone:

"At what point should a wise man make up his mind that he has enough of this world's goods, cease his efforts at accumulation and enlargement of his fortune and begin to give

his time and talents to more spiritual matters? In other words, when should a man begin to enjoy life?

"This question was put to James Millikin of Decatur. It was plain he had thought about it, for he answered very promptly and in a way to indicate he was entirely familiar with the subject. He said:

"If a man will quit when he has \$50,000 he is safe enough and should be happy, for that will support him nicely. When he reaches the \$100,000 point he will quit short off if he is wise. If he allows himself to go beyond the \$100,000 and accumulate others, he cheats himself of all the enjoyment that could be his. The man with \$100,000 who is not trying to make more is altogether happier than the one with a million."

"Mr. Millikin argues that with \$100,000 and a home, a man can safely depend on an income of \$5,000 a year. He thinks that is as much money as 'any of us dunghills in Decatur' can spend and digest as we go along. He says that if you live in Chicago you may need to increase the \$100,000 to \$500,000,

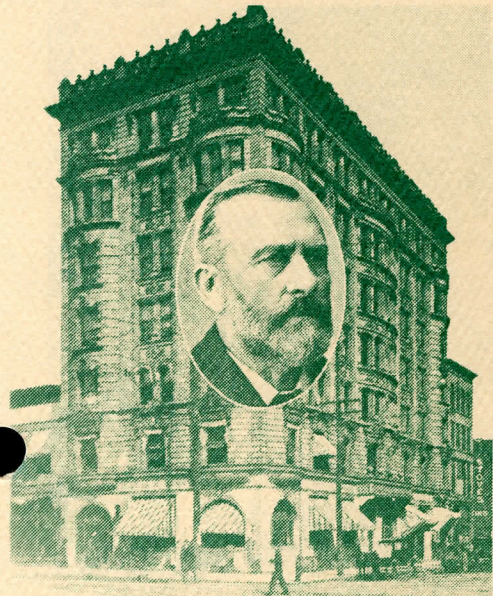
and if you live in New York you will need the income from a million to live at ease. But \$100,000 is all that is required in Decatur.

"Of course, this brought up the question of a family's living expenses in Decatur. How much is required for a family to live well for a year? The experts do not agree on this subject. Mr. Millikin gives it as his opinion that the best livers here do not exceed \$5,000 a year for the family, and there are mighty few who live at that rate.

"Mr. Millikin tells that they live quite well at his house, at least he thinks they do, and the expenses there do not exceed \$2,500 a year. This includes servants, food, fuel, clothing and incidental expenses.

"Mr. Millikin and his wife are away from home a few months every year. Even this is not as expensive as some think. A trip for him and his wife, including car fare, will not average as much as \$10 a day. This is true even though they stop at the best hotels. As he says, you can go to the best hotels in Florida resorts and inquire the rate for two for a single day

(continued)



James Millikin, Banker, this picture is from *The Life Story of James Millikin*, by Albert R. Taylor

History — Continued

or for a few days and learn it is \$12 to \$14 a day. Yet if they understand that you are to stop for three months they will be glad to make a rate that is not more than \$7 a day for the two.

"There are a few experts in Decatur who will tell you that several families live beyond \$5,000 a year. They will roll off names of a dozen such families, and then they will tell you that if you investigate you can easily find as many more.

"The head of one of the families that was reported as living beyond \$5000 a year was seen. The expert thought it sure this man paid more money than that for living, and it must be admitted that he has the reputation of going some. He and his family are well and stylishly dressed, they live well at home, often are at the opera house, they entertain their full share, and they take occasional trips . . . Two of the experts guessed this man's living expenses . . . could not be less than \$8,000 a year.

"The man himself was asked. He stated promptly that the figures were placed entirely too high . . . He says that it does not cost him to exceed \$3,500 a year to live. and then he adds there is nothing remarkable in that, for it is a good deal of money to spend in Decatur. In his family are six people, including a servant, sometimes . . . more than one servant. He goes into particulars and says:

"Grocery and meat bills I pay myself once a month and know what they are. The meat bill runs from \$12 to \$22 a month; the grocery bill runs from \$22 to \$27. To make it plenty say those two bills are \$50 a month.

"House service, including the laundry work, will not exceed \$7 a day . . . Taxes on the home, repairs and fuel, to estimate them high, will call for another \$200 a year. Then we come to clothing. My wife will have two good party dresses a year, costing from \$60 to \$80 each, say the two cost \$150. As for myself, I get two suits a year, paying \$60 each for them. Then there is other clothing for us, and call it another \$530 . . . There we have \$2,165 for the total of those items, and that is practically the living.

"That leaves a margin of nearly \$1,440 for the luxuries and amusements. Say that my wife and I go to the opera house twice a week for forty weeks of the year, which is more than we go, and say tickets are \$1.50 a seat. That is but \$240 for the year. My folks are church members, and perhaps that is another \$100 a year.

"And still that leaves a margin for dissipation. Well, I have one, the Country Club . . . I may spend as much as \$125 a year at the Country Club but as I say it is a dissipation with me.

At this point the speaker included \$50 annually for doctor's bills, commenting. "Yes, it was all right to put in that item for doctor's bills, for it is an honorable profession and must be supported. It does not cost me that much to date, but that may be the average if we take in the next thirty years.

"There you see, we have a total of \$2,480. That still leaves a margin of \$820 . . . I do not know what it is I get for that \$820 but it must be something, for a total of \$3,500 is expended. It provides for a trip or two in the year and also for a few presents. Then there is the expense of keeping up the automobile which must be figured in. Anyway, the \$3,500 goes somewhere. But you will see it is a good deal of money to spend for living in Decatur and it will get much.

"The man who gave the above details says he feels reasonably sure that it takes more money than that to keep some Decatur families a year. In some instances they are out to spend money; in others the head of the house gets rid of considerable money for which he gets nothing in return. 'He is a sucker and they bump him.'

"To get back to Mr. Millikin, he says that a great deal depends on how one was raised. As for himself, he had to develop the turn of spending money after he got well along in years. He tells an interesting story of his younger days on the farm down in Pennsylvania.

"He was raised in Washington county, Pennsylvania. In that county were four rich men, and Mr. Millikin's father was one of them. He

was worth as much as \$25,000. Two others of the the rich men had about the same sum of worldly goods. The fourth man had \$50,000, and he was the real Croesus. Carnegie today does not begin to enjoy the reputation for wealth that was had by that \$50,000 man in Washington county, Pennsylvania, when James was a lad.

"The time came when James Millikin was to go to Washington college. He was fitted out at home with clothing and candles. The father took him to the college and paid tuition and board and bought books, paper and pencils for the year. Then the father remarked to James that everything he could need had been provided. But an unforeseen emergency might arise, and to meet this, and also as pin money, the father left him \$5 in cash to last during the nine months of the school year. The father told James that any part of the \$5 he did not spend he could bring home with him.

"And how much of it did you take back at the end of the year?' was asked of Mr. Millikin.

"I think it was very little, if anything,' he answered. 'The fact is that I was something of a spender even then and I believe that I could have used up the most of \$10 in those nine months.'

"The point that Mr. Millikin makes is that take a boy raised in that fashion and it will always be a difficult matter for him to spend as much as \$5,000 a year on living in a city like Decatur. It was only a few years since, that he brought himself to the point where he could spend the money that he now does, and he is a man who had had plenty of money nearly all the time since he came to Illinois a young fellow to make his fortune.

"That expenditure of \$5,000 a year . . . ought to get something handsome. If you will figure, . . . the fit is \$13.70 a day, Sunday included. A boy who had held down to \$5 for nine months in college needs to practice industriously a long time before he can bring himself to spend \$5,000 a year as a man on his living.

"Yet some of them have done it and then added a million or two. Take the men who

made their many millions in iron about Pittsburgh; we know that some of them have set a new pace for the world in personal expenditures. They had to be very economical as boys. The explanation is that afterward they accumulate so much money that it ceased to have any appreciable value to them except when expressed in hundreds of thousands. Even the Pennsylvania boy can learn to spend more than \$5,000 a year, but likely he has to get out of Decatur to do it," Mr. Millikin concluded.

—Marilyn Loofbourrow
Historian

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William and Water.

Taken from *The Decatur Review*, Friday Evening, August 4, 1916.

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BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- Participation in preservation of the historic heritage of Decatur.
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- Subscription to The Homestead Gazette.
- Invitation to the Annual Victorian Christmas party.
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Attention, Members and Friends

Once again, as spring arrives, so does our annual membership drive. Our fiscal year runs from April through March, so it is time to renew your memberships for 1992-1993.

Your greatly needed membership dues are our primary source for the ongoing maintenance and preservation of the Homestead. As you know, by being honored members of the James Millikin Homestead, you help to preserve one of Decatur's finest examples of the past.

Won't you please send your tax deductible check today?
 Thank you for your generous support.

Jane Welch, Membership Chairman

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