

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY

GAZETTE

Vol. XVI, No. 6 (XVIII/2)

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

November 1993

A Note From Your President . . .

As the new president of the Homestead Board, I have a lot to learn. Therefore, one rainy evening not long ago, I sat down and read through all the old "Homestead Gazettes". What an entertaining evening! Many exciting things have taken place at the Homestead since 1976 when the restoration project began. However, what really struck me was the number and caliber of volunteers who have given freely of their time. The "Gazette" chronicles THOUSANDS of hours of time donated by these solid citizens. Their talents have encompassed everything from food, drama, and cleaning to finance, decorating, and marketing. How wonderful for the city of Decatur that these people persevered in their efforts to bring back to life the old Homestead — every one leaving their peculiar stamp on the mansion. Long after Junior Welfare turned the management and on-going restoration over to the James Millikin Homestead, Inc., the list of talented volunteers continues.

Thus far as President I have realized two things. The first is the tremendous debt of gratitude that is owed to all these volunteers who have contributed so much

to make possible the Millikin Homestead that exists today. The second realization is that the Homestead has a continuing attraction that draws quality people to serve. When one volunteer leaves another seems to magically arise to take his place. A case in point is the recent resignation of Lois Wells who was our outstanding scheduling chairman for several years. Lois did such a fantastic job that it was hard to believe that we could find anyone to fill the void she left. However, within a couple of months, we now have a very capable chairman in Donna Meinhold. Thank you, Lois. Thank you, Donna. And thank you to each person who has given of their time, talent, or money to make this historical attraction something for Decatur to be proud of.

It would be a wonderful experience for the present board of directors if all of you who have worked at the Homestead in previous years would join us this Christmas season for the Victorian Tea so we could personally thank you again for your efforts. We don't want to lose track of you, and we don't want you to lose track of us.

— Lynn Potter

VICTORIAN TEA

You are cordially invited
to the Annual Victorian Tea
which will be held on

Sunday, December 5, 1993

from one until three o'clock for the membership
and from three until five o'clock for the public.

This year's tea will feature the Homestead's beautiful
Christmas decorations, a Christmas boutique,
a delightful tea table laden with
delectable goodies and the lovely music of
members of the Opus 24 choral group.

This is a perfect way to begin your holiday season,
so mark your calendar now and plan to attend
this festive occasion!

History — Descendant Opens Hill House Door

At last, the door to the Hill house is open! Through the courtesy of a descendant of the Hill family, we are privileged to have a look inside the mansion that once adjoined the James Millikin Homestead on Pine Street.

Mrs. Anthony J. Cote of Bloomfield, Michigan, has stepped forward to share old family pictures and papers with the Homestead in response to a November, 1992, article in *The Homestead Family Gazette* about the home of "Hog Ringer" Hill, 19th century Decatur manufacturer, whose invention, the hog ring, launched an international business.

Mrs. Cote is the former Cynthia J. Mills of Decatur and a great great granddaughter of inventor High Wilson and Eliza Jane (Stevenson) Hill. She has spent some years tracing their genealogy and collecting material about them. When Mrs. Cote's step-mother, Mrs. Walker H. (Irene) Mills of Decatur, noticed the *Gazette* article, she sent it to Mrs. Cote, who began correspondence with the Homestead and, bringing her Hill family album to share, visited in Decatur in August.

Even now, the album provides only a brief glimpse into the house through two photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Hill, but these offer as much knowledge of the interior architecture as the family has. The number of rooms and further description may always remain hidden behind the partially opened door.

We are aware of at least one item of furniture that has survived from the Hill mansion. It is the settee on which Mrs. Hill and her great granddaughter Margaret are seated in the photograph accompanying this article. The settee still exists in the possession of Louis M. Walker, great great grandson of the Hills, son of Margaret, and cousin of Mrs. Cote.

From the family tree, it appears there are numerous Hill descendants scattered

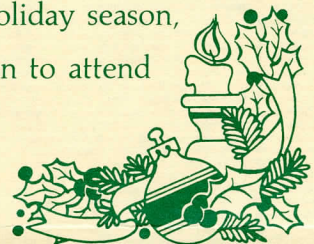
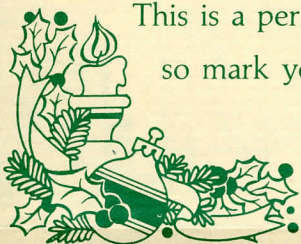
far and wide, but only a handful remain in Decatur. They include: Mrs. Ralph O. Metzler; her neice, Mrs. Everett Baldwin, and two of Mrs. Baldwin's children. Mrs. Metzler is the former Emily C. Johnson and a great granddaughter of Hugh Hill. Her grandmother has his third daughter, Catherine, who married Thomas A. Bone. The Bone family lived on West Prairie, close to the Hill mansion. Their daughter, Gussie married James D. Johnson. They were the parents of Mrs. Metzler.

Among Mrs. Metzler's recollections is one of her mother relating how, as a child, she loved to ice skate on the lawn of the Hill house in winter. Apparently sufficient rain or snow froze to provide the opportunity. There was no pond on the grounds, Mrs. Metzler said.

The other Hill line in Decatur begins with Mrs. Baldwin, the former Emily Jane Johnson, daughter of Mrs. Metzler's brother, Thomas D., and his wife Esther (nee Klinghammer). She has four children: Lance Carey of Spaden, Germany; Curtis and Bartley Carey of Decatur, and Christine Shoot of Overland Park, Kansas, and three grandchildren.

After publication of the Hill house article, the Homestead received a note of appreciation from one more descendant of the Hills' daughter Catherine (Mrs. Thomas A. Bone). She is Mrs. Susan (Dyer) Johnson of Corpus Christi, Texas, a great granddaughter of Catherine (Hill) Bone. The Bones' son Hugh married Fanny Lovell. Their daughter Catherine became the wife of Isadore Dyer and the mother of Susan.

The compiler of the Hill family papers, Cynthia (Mills) Cote is a descendant of the Hills' first daughter Margaret (called Clara), who married James M. Biddle. Their only child, Anna, married Louis A. Mills, and they had three children: Margaret (Mrs. Frank H. Walker), Anna Louise, and Walker H., who married, first,



HUGH W. HILL relaxes in a room of his mansion adjoining Millikin Homestead, ca. turn-of-the-century. He rocks atop an oriental rug; a period wicker rocker adjoins him, and a ghostly lamp is reflected in mirror above. Note detail of woodwork in comparison to Homestead.

Rebecca McCredie. Walker and Rebecca had three children, Cynthia (Cote), David, and Nancy (Mrs. Robert Riley), who grew up in Decatur. Cynthia has four children: David of Las Vegas, Nevada; Michael, Rye, New York; Stephen, Brighton, Michigan; and Thomas, New York City. She has seven grandchildren. Her brother David, of Louisville, Kentucky, has four children — Barbara, James, Richard, and Carol — and six Hill grandchildren. Sister Nancy Riley, of Urbana, Illinois, has two children.

The Hill family has, indeed, branched out far and wide. And those listed here are by no means all the descendants known.

Despite Hugh Hill's great financial success, the couple knew tragedy as well. Having a daughter Virginia die in early childhood, the couple lost two young married daughters less than a month apart. Later, they would suffer the death of their youngest daughter in early womanhood.

(continued)

History — Continued

When first daughter Clara (Hill) Biddle was to give birth to her only child in 1870, there was a scarlet fever epidemic raging in Macon County. The doctor came directly from a scarlet fever case to deliver the baby. Clara contracted the illness and died five days after the birth of her child, Clara Anna. Her sister Alice (Mrs. Jonathon Guess), a bride of only three weeks, had come to help with the new

baby. She, too, succumbed to scarlet fever and died soon after Clara.

The Hills took the baby, Anna, to raise, and she became known as "Anna Biddle Hill." Some of her growing years were spent in the Hill mansion, built in 1878. It was a happy time for the Hills and a grand occasion for the house when she married Decatur attorney Louis A. Mills in 1889. A newspaper clipping described

the event:

"The wedding of Mrs. Louis A. Mills and Miss Anna Hill was celebrated in the presence of a large company in the splendid home of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh W. Hill, grandparents of the bride, on Pine Street. The large parlors of the mansion were charmingly decorated with flowers and plants and brightly illuminated. Among the striking ornaments . . . were the significant letters 'M and H' in carnations and smilax over the bay window where the couple stood . . . The wedding march was played by the Grand Opera House orchestra while the bridal party descended from the upper rooms . . . Then came the wedding repast . . . During the evening the orchestra filled the house with entrancing music." For a time the young couple made their home with the Hills on Pine Street. And it was Anna, who died in 1960, who kept family papers and genealogy that were the foundation for granddaughter Cynthia's work.

The youngest daughter of the Hills was Augusta, described as "charming, full of fun, short and cute, with red hair and lots of pretty clothes." She lived in the mansion and was engaged to be married when, very sadly, she died of an unexpected illness in 1883. All of the couples children who lived to marry had done so before the Pine Street house was built, and only their son John would survive them.

Genealogy of the Hills goes back for several generations beyond Hugh and Eliza. A family history, written by an uncle of Hugh in 1837, indicates that the Hills were descended from David Hill of near Belfast, Antrim Co., Ireland. Among his six sons was James, who came to America in 1740 and settled in Pennsylvania, where he died in 1756. In Ireland he had married Elizabeth (Stephenson) Sloan. They had six children.

In 1768 James' widow came to North

Carolina where at least two sons migrated from Pennsylvania. One of them, John, married Margaret Logan, and also had six children, including a son John, who married Assenette Andrews, to become the father of Hugh Hill (1822-1906). Hugh's mother died two years after his birth, and the family, with seven children, moved to Missouri, where Hugh and his father farmed, before Hugh married and came to Illinois.

Staunchly Presbyterian in the earliest generations, the Hill family was probably Scotch-Irish in origin, as was that of Hugh's next-door neighbor, James Millikin.

Genealogy of Hugh's wife, the former Eliza Stevenson, begins with a captain in the Revolutionary War, James Stevenson (1750-1820), who married Sarah, surname unknown, in Roan Co., North Carolina. James was probably born in Pennsylvania. He served in the North Carolina Militia 1780-81. Mrs. Cote has been able to prove her line of descent and Captain Stevenson's patriotic service for Daughters of the American Revolution.

Among the children of James and Sarah was James (1781-1820), who married Jane Fleming. They had ten children, including Eliza Jane (1819-1902), who would marry Hugh Hill. Eliza is said to have been brought as an infant by her family over the Cherokee Trail from North Carolina to Missouri in a large party of pioneers who pushed west together.

Even more tales of the Hills — and several rare anecdotes about the James Millikins — are contained in Cynthia Cote's family album, but they must wait for another issue of *The Homestead Family Gazette*.

— Marilyn Loofbourrow
Historian



MARGARET MILLS poses with great grandmother, ELIZA HILL, in Hill family home on Pine Street. Settee in picture still exists today in home of Margaret's son, Louis Walker. Notice lace curtains, typical of time, in comparison to shutters preferred by neighbor, Anna Millikin. Also compare similarity of floral design rug to reproduction rugs now in use in Homestead. Ornate radiator, at right, was probably recent addition to house at time of photograph, when modern heating was installed.

Restoration Update

For most of October 4th the Homestead was literally under microscopic scrutiny by Robert A. Furhoff of Chicago. Mr. Furhoff and his firm, Restoration of Interiors, were recommended by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency for competency in the documentation and scientific analysis of interior surface, decoration and color.

The Homestead as we know it today is the sum total of two distinct modifications to its original plan and decorative scheme of 1876. Circa 1883 and again shortly after the turn of the century major changes in both floor plan and decor were made. While these spatial adjustments remain, nearly all painted or stenciled wall and ceiling adornment was heavily overpainted and lost to view sometime during the Art Institute-Art Center years of 1920 onward. One notable exception is the stairwell ceiling mural of flowers and cherubs in proximity to the oriel window.

In 1976 the canvases upon which these embellishments were created came down from walls and ceilings. Once stored in the attic they are now laid out on tables in the basement awaiting careful liberation of their decorative secrets. Clusters of roses and tendrils from North and South Parlor ceilings and coves, geometric and floral pattern from the dining room are all there. Small sections of each motif can be seen after fracturing away multiple layers of wall paint from the original ground. Another large parcel of canvas could divulge the stencil layout of hallways and library. The backside of a South Parlor canvas may even yield information about the artist or group of artisans employed by James and Anna Millikin. There are several lines of skillful calligraphic nota-

tions to be cleansed of an obscuring adhesive glaze.

During his Decatur visit, Bob Furhoff probed and organized our random piles of canvas. He took core samples of moldings, ceilings and walls in the dining room and front hall while methodically labeling each specimen of painted plaster for further study and classification. These small chips of material will reveal the coloration sequence of each room and ornament when viewed under stong magnification. Indeed, Bob did a cursory scan of select core samples on locatioin using the Homestead kitchen as his makeshift microscopy lab.

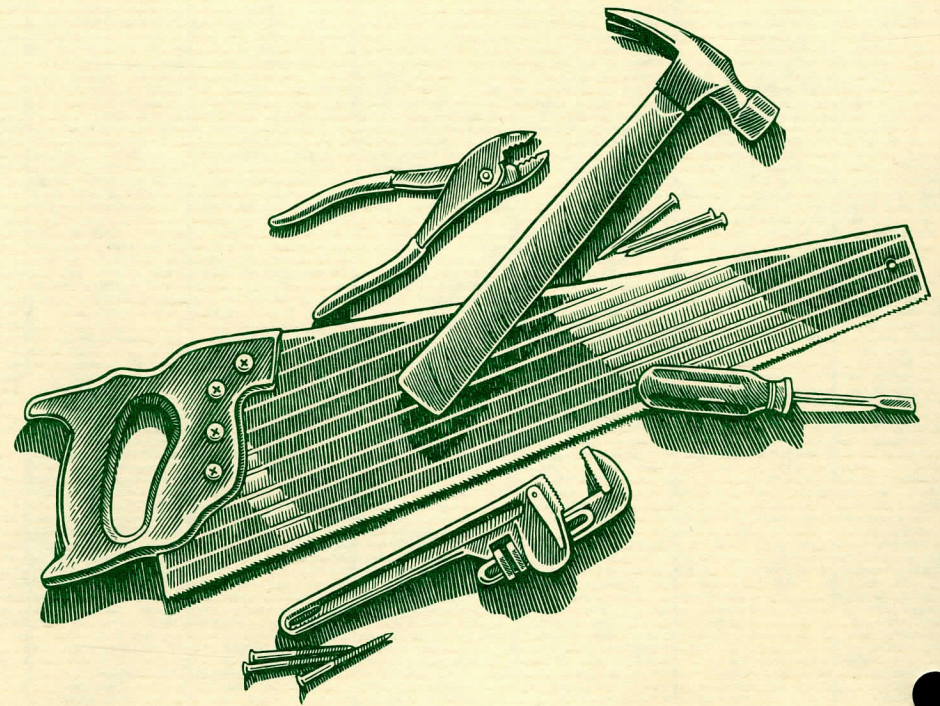
Perhaps the most exciting revelations of his visit came with a minimum of technical sleuthing. Only a tall ladder and scalpel were needed to find potentially original gold pigment in the lions head panel above the great fireplace of the entrance hall. This area which includes bas-relief garland swirls in plaster may yet reclaim its rightful colors and accents. Just across the way in a wall niche housing our statue of Columbia is an underlying painted or stenciled pattern still affixed to its concave plane. This discovery was made with the simple expedient of oblique lighting from a flashlight.

Several technical and esthetic realities have also come to light. It is doubtful that the original canvases can be acceptably reclaimed for re-attachment and repair. They should, however, be freed of opaque wall paint to the extent that their decorative plan can be studied and recorded. Archival samples of each distinctive motif might well be mounted on masonite for future reference with several examples being displayed in the history room. These salvaged panels together with ear-

ly interior photos of the Homestead will facilitate the preparation of working drawings of the highest possible accuracy.

Mr. Furhoff's on site day in Decatur was a scholarly indispensable first step back in time. Recreating interiors that James and Anna Millikin would readily recognize might well become our most rewarding and costly enterprise to date. It presup-

poses meticulous research leading to full specifications and the contracting of gifted craftsmen. Robert Furhoff's talent has been well used in the stunning restoration of the David Davis Mansion in Bloomington and at other landmarks across the country. We will anxiously await his findings upon which to base recovery of the Homestead's splendid interior detail.



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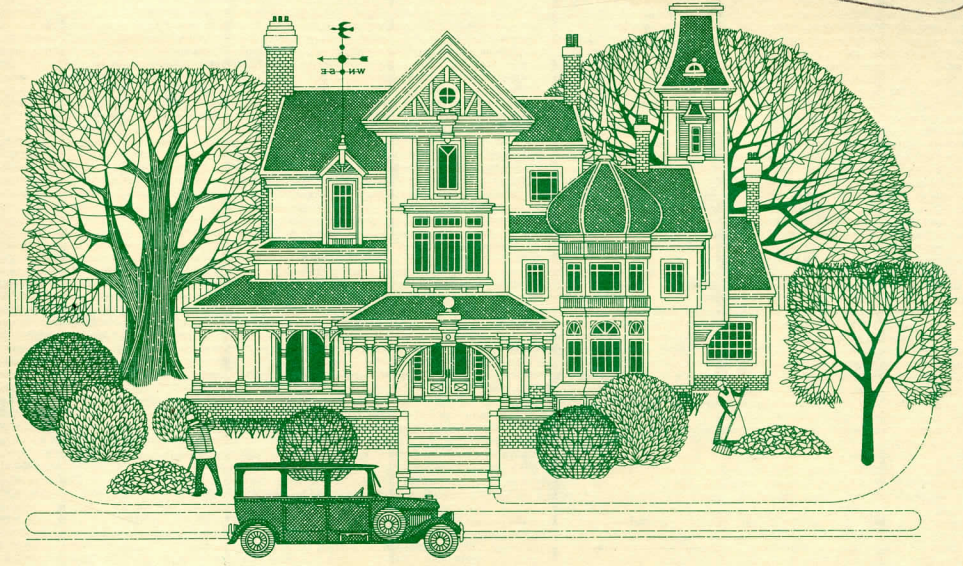
Heritage and Holly Tour of Homes Set

The third annual Heritage and Holly Tour of historical homes will be Friday, November 26, and Saturday, Nov. 27, in the vicinity of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 350 W. Wood St. In conjunction, a craft fair and bake sale is scheduled Saturday at the church where lunch also will be available.

The events are sponsored by the Near Westside Restoration and Preservation Society and proceeds will benefit the area. A candlelight tour is planned for Friday 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday's events will be

from 10 to 4 p.m. Seven historic homes will be open, including the Powers-Jarvis Mansion, Gallery 510 and the Linn House. Pre-sale tickets are \$7.00 (\$8.00 at the door).

Tickets may be obtained from NWRAPS members or from: The Crafty Designer, 125 E. Main St., Mt. Zion; The Farmer's Wife, 101 E. Prairie, or Bloomers Florist, 4184 N. Water. They may be purchased at the door of the Powers-Jarvis mansion Friday or at the church Saturday.



Heritage Network Elects Officers

The Heritage Network of Decatur-Macon County elected officers at its meeting November 1. They are as follows:

- President — Joe Houston (representing Near Westside Restoration and Preservation Society)
- Vice President — Kathy Miller (representing City of Decatur)
- Secretary — Gerry Hearn (representing Moweaqua Coal Mine Museum)
- Treasurer — Lee Slider (representing

Macon County Conservation District) The Network's Summer Passport program was reported to be a success and will be repeated next year. It encourages school children to visit participating museums and sites, including the James Millikin Homestead, a member organization. Marilyn Loofbourrow is the Homestead representative to the Network.



1994 James Millikin Homestead Calendar Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

I wish to order _____ 1994 Homestead Calendars at \$7.50 each: TOTAL: _____
 Check or Money Order enclosed

Calendars will be available for pick up at the Homestead in the Christmas Boutique the day of the Victorian Tea, December 5. If you are unable to pick yours up at that time please give us instructions for delivery.

Send Orders To: Mrs. D. Loofbourrow
825 W. William Street
Decatur, Illinois 62522

Delivery Instructions: _____

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Organization
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Permit 226

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

Homestead Board Announces Publication of Historic Calendars

Are you already recording dates for 1994 commitments? If so, you'll want to purchase the 1994 James Millikin Homestead Historic Calendar.

This lovely calendar is being published as a fund raising project for the Homestead. Printed on heavy ivory paper the 8 1/2" x 11" calendar will feature historic photos of the Homestead, the Millikins and events and people in their lives. At the back of the calendar you will find a record keeper for recording names and phone numbers of friends and family.

We're sure you'll want to purchase one or more of these lovely calendars. They will be available in the Christmas boutique at the Victorian Tea. You may purchase them in advance by calling any board member. The price is \$7.50.

Please reserve your copy as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. A limited supply will be printed.

The calendar will make a perfect Christmas gift . . . and don't forget to buy one for yourself!

1993-94 Homestead Officers and Board Members

The James Millikin Homestead Board wishes to announce its new officers and board members.

Officers

President: Lynn Potter
Vice President: Jane Lawson
Secretary: Joanna Ploeger-Tsoulos
Treasurer: Charlotte Dipper

Board Members

Bill McGaughey
Jim Williams
Bob Hantel
Betty Ploeger
Wilma Sanner
Rachel Cunningham
Lucien Kapp
Brigetta Kapp
Donna Meinhold
Anne Hostetler
Martha Schrodt

Christmas Boutique

Mrs. Millikin's Christmas Trunk will again be open at the Christmas Tea with unique gifts, decorations and a selection of baked goodies (Mrs. Millikin cooks!). We invite any of our members to help us out by donating homemade items, anti-

ques or baked goods. Please call and let me know I can count on your contribution. I'll be glad to pick up items the week before the tea. Please bring baked goods to the Homestead on the day of the Tea. Jim Williams — 428-3807.