

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



GAZETTE



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JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

November 1989

A Note From Your President . . .



Garden Club Sprites Bring Holiday Spirit

Season's Greetings! As the autumn season blends into the holiday season at the Homestead, we have had many wonderful opportunities to greet our members and community friends. The spectacle of October's gorgeous foliage formed a beautiful backdrop for our annual Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days. Board members Lois Wells and Wilma Sanner did a superb job of coordinating this great project. You'll find their report elsewhere in the "Gazette". Thank you Lois and Wilma!

It is my pleasure to report that we have welcomed a new member to the Homestead board. We came to know Ann Yackel through our association with the Garden Club. Instrumental in planning and planting the Homestead's gardens, we could see that she was an interested and capable individual - a great addition to our board. Ann has already helped Bill McGaughey and Dave Robertson do a little "grounds" work, and is being pressed into service to help Marilyn Loofbourrow in coordinating our Christmas decorating efforts. Welcome aboard, Ann!

Many of you have already seen and commented on the many beautiful flower arrangements made for the Homestead by the Garden Club. (Be sure to read Marilyn Loofbourrow's article elsewhere in the "Gazette" for a complete description of this project.) Their season culminated with a two day flower



Marilyn Loofbourrow and Vivian Kurtz

It seemed that a band of forest sprites had magically materialized out of the night into the Millikin Homestead, transformed it into a wonderland of ethereal flowers of exquisite other-world hues, then disappeared into the mists once again. Their legacy: over 70 dried flower arrangements all through the house, bringing new insight into the innate beauty of the Homestead, with its special materials of burnished wood, polished marble and the rest.

These glorious new flower arrangements will form the focal point of this year's Victorian Christmas Tea on Sunday, Dec. 3, and we hope that Homestead members and visitors will experience the delight that board members felt at first sight. Actually, of course, the flower arrangements are the work of the Garden Club of Decatur and by no means did they just "appear" overnight.

Seventeen Garden Club volunteers took part in a workshop for two weeks in August to create floral masterpieces of infinite sizes, shapes and purposes, from swags to centerpieces. Their work was under the direction of Garden Club member Shirley Renshaw, project coordinator, assisted by Vivian Kurtz, civic committee chairman. Other participating designers were:

Betty Bonness	Mary Grace Graham
Mildred Brown	Karen Madvig
Gayle Bruckner	Frankye Morgan
Ruth Diehl	Ethel Snell
Helen Dalton	Mildred Thompson
Anita Elliott	Trudy Taylor
Jeanne Holderby	Joanne Williams
Elvira Kelm	

In the dark of this December, spring and summer will still be aglow in the Homestead, thanks to the Christmas gift of the Garden Club of Decatur.

—Marilyn Loofbourrow

rangements made for the Homestead by the Garden Club. (Be sure to read Marilyn Loofbourrow's article elsewhere in the "Gazette" for a complete description of this project.) Their season culminated with a two day flower show held at the Homestead in early November. As usual, it was a delight to work with these ladies, and we thank them for the wonderful contributions they have made. In decorating the Homestead for the holidays we will feature the new flower arrangements, adding greenery and candles to give that holiday feeling. Marilyn Loofbourrow, Betsy Empen and Jane Welch have also committed themselves to revitalizing our collection of Christmas tree ornaments, so you won't want to miss seeing the Homestead this holiday season.

The board is, of course, making preparations and looking forward to hosting the annual Victorian Christmas Reception on the afternoon of Sunday, December 3rd. Members will soon be receiving invitations to come between 1:30 and 3:30 to partake of punch, cookies and holiday good cheer. "Mrs. Millikin's Trunk", our holiday boutique, will once again be open with some beautiful handmade items to purchase for yourself or for gifts. Please plan to join us on the third - it's a wonderful way to greet the holiday season. See you then.

—Sid Shonkwiler, President



Dorothy Smethers



Marilyn Loofbourrow and Vivian Kurtz

Thank You, Dorothy Smethers

Two years ago, when I became Volunteer Chairman, I didn't even know Dorothy Smethers. That's because I had never been involved in the activities, tours, and open houses held at the James Millikin Homestead. Had I been, I certainly would have known Dorothy! Since then I have talked to her three or four times a month in regard to conducting tours. She is a very dedicated volunteer who gives freely of her time and knowledge so that others can enjoy and learn about "the big old place" that she loves.

Dorothy started her volunteer work at the Homestead the year the first floor was opened for tours. She says that she literally followed Ruth Prust around to learn the history and facts about Mr. and Mrs. Millikin and the Homestead. Through the years she has conducted a lot of tours and does an excellent job. She can readily answer most any question that a tourist may have. If she can't, she finds out the answer before she conducts another tour. Besides giving her time to lead training sessions for new volunteers, to participate in Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days, and to make gift items for the boutique at the Victorian Tea, she served as a member of the Board of Directors for four years.

Volunteer work is not a new thing for Dorothy. During the years her four children attended St. Thomas and St. Theresa, she gave her time generously to school affairs, booster clubs, and fund raisers. Dorothy's husband, Joe, died ten years ago. Her four children have chosen to settle in various parts of the country other than Decatur. Anne lives in St. Louis, David is in law school in Idaho, Phillip is a pharmacist in St. Louis, and Elizabeth lives in Bloomington. Aside from her work and the Homestead, she enjoys quilting and gives quilting lectures. Her other interests are crocheting, tole painting, and touring other Victorian homes.

Thank you, Dorothy, for giving all those hours. We appreciate your loyalty and dedication to the Homestead.

—Jane Lawson
Volunteer Chairman

In the dark of this December, spring and summer will still be aglow in the Homestead, thanks to the Christmas gift of the Garden Club of Decatur.

—Marilyn Loofbourrow
Liaison to Garden Club

History—

C.G. Dawes House: All in the Family to Anna



Charles Dawes House

Just when we thought we had said it all about Charles Gates Dawes—Anna Millikin's cousin who rose to the Vice Presidency of the United States—we learn there is more!

Dawes was the grandson of Anna's first cousin, Betsey Gates Dawes, and served as Vice President under Calvin Coolidge. A man of great talent and determination, he earned the sobriquet, "Hell and Maria Dawes," and a reputation for excellence in numerous fields from politics to music. He is known to have visited the Homestead in 1901.

The Homestead Family Gazette carried an article about Dawes in July, 1988. Much to our surprise, the Decatur Tribune ran an article of its own about his home in April of this year which also furnished additional details of his life.

The story of the Dawes home at Evanston, Ill., on Lake Michigan's North Shore, will sound familiar to Homestead members. The house is now a house-museum open to the public. It is listed as a Landmark on the National Register of Historic Places. The Junior League of Evanston assisted in its early development as a museum and now has its headquarters there. Since, 1960, however, the house has also served as the headquarters of the Evanston Historical Society.

The French chateau-style mansion, at 225 Greenwood St., was home to the Dawes family from 1909 to 1957. It was built in 1894 for Dr. and Mrs. Robert Sheppard and purchased by Dawes in 1909. Dawes himself died in the house in 1951 at age 85. Intending it for use

(continued on back page)

by the Evanston Historical Society, Dawes deeded the home to Northwestern University in 1942, but the University did not take possession until the death of Dawes' wife Caro in 1957.

The first and part of the second floor of the mansion have been opened to the public. But the third floor, containing servants' quarters and an unfinished ballroom, and the carriage house located on the grounds are closed. A center for historical research with its archives and library, the mansion is the repository for the extensive collection of documents, costumes and artifacts belonging to the Evanston Historical Society, the largest historical society in Illinois outside Chicago. Most of the furnishings of the house belong to the Dawes.

The Great Hall of the home leads to a massive main staircase and is ornamented by a collection of bronze busts by sculptor Jo Davidson depicting fellow generals with whom Dawes, also a general, served in World War I, including Gen. Jack Pershing, a former guest in the house.

The library, restored in 1983, contains many family possessions, including Oriental rugs, art objects, family portraits, four Tiffany lamps, a sofa presented to Mrs. Dawes by the wife of U.S. President William McKinley, and a bust of Napoleon that Dawes purchased at the French exhibit of the Columbian Exposition in 1893. A substitute piano now stands in the place of Dawes' own, which is being restored.

The English Tudor dining room boasts a large oak fireplace, a vaulted molded plaster ceiling, another Tiffany lamp and something more: a musicians' gallery. In the days before high fidelity, Dawes hired live musicians to play inobtrusively in the gallery to entertain his guests at dinner. Another outstanding feature of the home has succumbed to age: It once had a conservatory highlighted by two fountains and a pool, but the peaked steel and glass roof was deteriorating and the conservatory was removed.

While we had written of Dawes' avocation as musician and composer earlier, it took the Tribune article to point out that one of his compositions became a "hit" song, still known today. Composed in 1911, his "Melody in A Minor", was included in the repertory of famed violinist Fritz Kreisler, who played it in

some of his concerts. Later Carl Sigman added lyrics and the song appeared under the title, "It's All in the Game." It begins, "Many a tear had to fall, but it's all in the game." Dawes' own ability as a performer on piano and flute was significant and he appeared as a guest in the flute section of the Chicago Symphony during its special Christmas concerts.

Dawes was also a philanthropist on a large scale. In memory of his son Rufus, who was active in social work and who drowned in a boating accident on Lake Geneva, Wis., in 1912, Dawes opened the Rufus Dawes Hotel in Chicago "for men who are down but not out." It was intended to lift the spirits of residents and help them re-gain self-respect. They were called, "Sir," and signed their names in a guest book. But they also were encouraged to look for work each day. In Boston Dawes opened another such hotel for men as well as one for women and even gave thought to a chain of similar endeavors. He also gave support to struggling young artists and musicians.

All this was but a sideline to Dawes, who made his mark in the world as lawyer, banker, economist, general, international planner, Nobel Prize winner, author, ambassador to Britain, and, of course, Vice President. With Dawes' relationship to Anna Millikin, it is intriguing to note the parallels in the fate of their homes. At the behest of Dawes and his kinswomen Anna, both fine dwellings were put to use for the benefit of their communities.

For those dedicated to Homestead history of the "collector" of old houses to tour, here is another outstanding residence just beckoning you to visit. Amidst the family portraits one may even catch a glimpse of Anna Millikin's own ancestors.

For the collector of odd facts, here is one more: In 1989 the Charles Gates Dawes House was the scene of the opening reception for the ninth annual Illinois Preservation Conference held in Evanston. In 1990 (early summer) Decatur will host the tenth annual Illinois Preservation Conference and it is anticipated that the James Millikin Homestead will play its part as a locale in this year's gathering of preservationists, both amateurs and professionals.

—Marilyn Loofbourrow
Historian



VOLUNTEERS MAINTAIN GARDEN

The Everlasting Garden planted on Homestead grounds by the Garden Club of Decatur has been maintained this year by the following Garden Club members: Vivian Kurtz, civic committee chairman, Karen Madvig, Sue Ann Gibson and Ann Yackel. Bill McGaughey, Millikin Homestead board member, serves as liaison for the project.

LOST BROOCH

A lovely silver brooch was found at the Homestead following the Garden Club Flower Show Nov. 3 & 4. The owner should please call Ann Yackel at 692-2926.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

After our special Christmas Reception for members, the Homestead will be open to the public from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 3rd. Please urge your friends and neighbors to come and enjoy the Homestead with us.

HOLIDAY PARTIES

Many dates are still available for holiday parties at the Homestead. Please call scheduling chairman Nancy Eichenauer at 429-6402 for rental and scheduling details.

CHRISTMAS TRADITION

There is a romantic story told of how Victorians would pick a late rosebud, roll it in tissue, store it in a dark place until Christmas, then place it in water to bloom but for one day in a brief remembrance of summer.

J. MILLIKIN & CO., BANKERS

A thank-you is in order for Mrs. Bessie Bell of Ft. Worth, Texas. Through her thoughtfulness a donation came to the Millikin Homestead of a Millikin Bank check dating to the 1870's.

A former Decatur resident and Homestead neighbor when she resided in the 800 block of West William, Mrs. Bell found her grandfather's checkbook when going through his papers recently. On impulse she tore out one check and sent it to Joan Jack of Decatur who realized it might be of interest to the Millikin Homestead.

The unused check bears the mark, "J. Millikin & Co., Bankers, Decatur, Ills." The month and day are left blank but the year of 187___ was printed as part of the check.

Mrs. Bell's grandfather was David L. Foster. In the 1870's Mr. Foster resided in Mt. Zion but in 1883 he brought his family to Decatur and built a house at 467 S. Boyd which served the family for three generations until 1973.

The check may be viewed in the album in the History Room of the Homestead.

MR. AND MRS. MILLIKIN DAYS

On October 16, 17, 19 and 20, 1,067 Decatur third grade students enjoyed the annual Mr. & Mrs. Millikin Days. Volunteers dressed in period costumes brought the Homestead to life. The children were given the unique experience of seeing life recreated as it was 100 years ago in the beautiful Victorian mansion. Highlights for the children were visiting with Mr. & Mrs. Millikin, hearing and seeing the pump organ being played, and receiving a cookie from Sophie, "the kitchen maid".

A special thank you to the fifty volunteers who gave their time and talent, and to Mr. John Eckert and Nabisco Brands, Inc. who supplied Sophie's "freshly baked" cookies.

—Lois Wells
Wilma Sanner

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A sincere thank you for your support of the Homestead to all those listed below who are new or renewed Homestead members since the July issue of the "Gazette". —E.W.E.

PATRON MEMBERS
 Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Flint

FRIEND MEMBERS
 Mrs. Sonja Rathje

HONORARY MEMBERS
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