

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



GAZETTE



Vol. VII, No.2

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

December, 1982

It Just So Happened . . .

. . .that we had a beautiful fall weekend October 2 and 3 and were thus able to treat our visitors to some golden weather along with their golden memories. October 2 was Fall Family Weekend and many parents of Millikin students took advantage of our open house to tour the home and enjoy cider and donut refreshments. The next day, October 3, was our annual Harvest at the Homestead, for which we once again offered refreshments, a home tour, a display of Bobby Wolfe's family needlework heirlooms, and the music of a German band oompah-ing on the lawn.

Other dates in the fall have been filled with many organization meetings, wedding receptions, and tours by school children studying turn-of-the-century architecture, history, or sociology.

Santa has moved in by the time you read this and will remain through December 10. Do you know about Santa House? Junior Welfare "elves" decorate the Carriage House for Christmas, help in the Homestead decoration, and invite thousands of primary graders in town to come by school bus for a visit.

The children go first to a quick and easy little craft class, where each makes an ornament to take home, then into the Homestead parlour for a puppet show about Christmas, a storytime with Rag-



James Millikin's Birthplace, Ten Mile, Pennsylvania

RUTH GOES TO THE ROOTS

by Ruth Prust

Little did I realize, almost 30 years ago as I crossed the threshold of the Decatur Art Institute, that this old home and its original owner would become a source of

years ago. The College Public Relations Office was most gracious and was well aware of their former student and the university he had founded in the midwest.

described on page 19 of Albert Taylor's book, the same home Taylor himself had visited on first searching for the Millikin birthplace. And he, too, had found the

Deck the Halls

We will be looking for you at the annual Victorian Christmas party. Possibly your first party of the season—and certainly the prettiest you will attend—we will swing wide the front doors for you on Sunday, December 5, from 1:30 to 4 p.m. You have received your beautiful calligraphic invitation by now (done for us by John Frankovich); if we have erred and missed you, go directly to your calendar and write down the date!

This year's general chairman is Barbara Hackel, with help from the following members: Ruth Prust and Peg Luy (refreshment table), Jeanette Bradley (staffing of hosts and hostesses), Barbara Dunn (Christmas music), and Priscilla Snelson, Kathy Farrington, Marilyn Loofbourrow, Mary Lou Snelson, Dorothy Smethers, and Marilyn Womeldorff (angels in charge of everything else!).

Putting the Homestead in her Victorian "Christmas dress" is our way of saying thank you and Merry Christmas to you, our faithful supporters. Decoration chairman is Marilyn Loofbourrow. She will be assisted by the entire Loofbourrow family, the Sande Hackel family, and the Roger Snelson family. Come prepared to "ooh" and "aah".

Come also to share in the delights of the tea table, and to venture upstairs for the opening of Mrs. Millikin's Trunk. As you know from past Christmases, the trunk brims with unique and old-

home, then into the Homestead parlour for a puppet show about Christmas, a storytime with Raggedy Ann, a talk with Santa, and, before departing, a trip into the kitchen where Mrs. Santa gives each a homemade cookie.

Proceeds from Santa House this year will go to support the work of the Candelighters, parents of children with cancer.

December 12 is the date of the Christmas Open House tour for the general public. If you miss our December 5 member open house, do plan to come then.

After Santa leaves, every night before Christmas (right up to Christmas Eve!) has been reserved for Christmas parties. Leading off the merriment is the party for the Alumni Board of Millikin U., scheduled for December 13. A full house is a happy house!

If you are looking for an unusual and romantic place to have a winter or spring party, contact the board's Scheduling Chairman, Joanne Chiligris at 877-5771.

hold of the Decatur Art Institute, that this old home and its original owner would become a source of many volunteer hours in my life, and that a search for facts regarding Millikin (man and home) would take me to southwestern Pennsylvania!

That first night in the old Art Institute, as babysitter for the Jarold Talbot family who lived on the second floor, was anything but pleasant. Wind rattled the old windows and sent chills through the high-ceilinged rooms. Dim lights failed to more than outline the modernistic furniture in their living room—the modernity so foreign to the long narrow windows, ceiling moldings, antique fireplace, and other appointments of the former master bedroom. I was truly convinced that ghosts inhabited the dark halls! Would anyone blame a poor college freshman for pleading previous plans when asked to babysit again?

With maturity I became interested in architecture and preservation, and I came to realize what a marvelous structure Decatur had at 125 North Pine Street. I was delighted that Junior Welfare undertook the challenge of restoration and most pleased to be asked to serve on the Board of Directors of the James Millikin Homestead many years later. As Chairman of Volunteers for the Homestead, I have searched dusty books, squinted at microfilmed newspapers, and talked with knowledgeable Decaturites, always in search of more information about the retiring James and Anna Millikin. Albert Taylor's book, *The Life of James Millikin*, has been read and re-read to the point that when I found myself studying a U.S. map for a trip to Washington, D.C. this summer, my eye caught the name of Ten Mile, Pennsylvania, and I was delighted it was so close to my route!

Thus, on a lovely summer day in late August this year, I pulled off Interstate 70 into Washington, Pennsylvania to find Washington & Jefferson College, which James Millikin had attended so many

years. Taylor himself had visited on first searching for the Millikin birthplace. And he, too, had found the occupants of the red brick house gracious and friendly.

From here I drove through the beautiful rolling hills and across the quiet streams of southwestern Pennsylvania to the quaint village of Ten Mile, some 15 miles from the college. Nestled on the bank of Ten Mile Creek, the town has no doubt changed greatly in the past hundred years, for now there are no stores, no businesses, and possibly no more than 50 homes. As I drove along the one main street, I noted that all the homes were far too new to have been here when James Millikin walked these streets. However, at the edge of town, on the narrow country road leading from Ten Mile to Marianna, I discovered a beautiful old red brick home that was surely well over 150 years old. Passing this home, about a mile further, I came to a small country church with a keystone reading "Pleasant Hill". Again, this was a name I remembered from Albert Taylor's book. (Unfortunately, the present building is a replacement for the original church, as its cornerstone is dated 1882.) A search of the adjoining graveyard yielded two Millikin names, William I. Millikin and Ruth Millikin, "consort of Wm. I. Millikin".

Driving back toward the village of Ten Mile, I saw a lady walking out of the old red brick house, so I stopped my car, got out, introduced myself, and explained why I was in Ten Mile . . . i.e. looking for the birthplace of Decatur, Illinois' largest philanthropist. Jane Dineen was most friendly and kind; she invited me in to her home, gave me a complete tour of their beautifully restored and furnished residence, prepared lunch and let me look through some papers she had on the history of Ten Mile and the Pleasant Hill Church. When her husband, Hayward, arrived, he kindly called some people who had lived in the area longer than the twelve or so years that they had resided in the area.

The local history buffs confirmed that I was in the house

Taylor himself had visited on first searching for the Millikin birthplace. And he, too, had found the occupants of the red brick house gracious and friendly.

I was informed the actual Millikin home was on an adjoining farm, just across Ten Mile Creek. Its original red brick is now covered with white stucco.

Armed now with the name of the current tenants, I approached the Millikin home from the back (barnyard) driveway and found the family sitting in rockers on the rear porch. Again my explanation of who I was and why I was calling (plus handing out brochures of the Decatur Millikin Homestead) was sufficient for me to be invited in the house. Since this has been rental property for many years, it is not in the exquisite condition of the Dineen home, but I feel that little has been changed in the years since James sat beside the fireplace at his grandmother's knee.

The front door has been nailed closed, but the lovely fanlight window above is still intact. Paint now covers all the woodwork, and the fireplaces have been boarded over with heating stoves set in front of each and vented into their chimneys. Of particular interest was the fireplace Taylor described (page 20) as being in the south parlor. Here were the columns that Taylor said reminded him of the hallway fireplace in the Decatur Homestead, which James built so many decades after leaving Pennsylvania. The columns were approximately three inches in diameter, with a single rather than double support as JMH has, on each side of the mantel. These, too, have been painted over, so I have no idea whether they were the burlwood such as is used in "our" fireplace.

Just as Albert Taylor noted some 60 years ago, the panels below the windows in this same parlor are very much like the panels below the windows in the bay of the south parlor of our Decatur Millikin home. I would like

(Continued on Reverse)

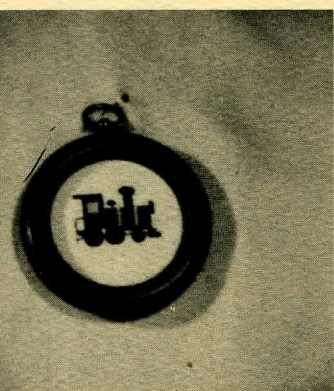
Mrs. Millikin's Trunk. As you know from past Christmases, the trunk brims with unique and old-fashioned handmade articles and ornaments, just right for your tree, your mantel or door, or for those little gift exchanges with friends. Each item is so pretty, words cannot describe, but perhaps we can pique your interest. Look for Betsy Empin's fabric mouse ornaments, Linda May's needlework rose wreath ornaments, Dorothy Smether's and Mary Lou Snelson's wooden Santas, and wooden angel ornaments done with unique charm by Smethers and Snelson, plus Barbara Hackel and Lisa Mannweiler. The annual Homestead ornament this year is of clay, a silhouette of the Homestead.

There are also gorgeous glass and spun wire globe ornaments, lithographed Santa ornaments, old-fashioned furry Santa dolls, cross-stitched pillows of a Victorian Santa, six patterns of ornaments depicting old Victorian toys in either cross-stitch or needlepoint (handiwork of Sally Tyler and Darlene Wittenauer), quaint baskets holding your choice of two sizes of gingerbread men, Victorian potpourri ornaments, and, of course, Brigitta Kapps' famous spiced or sherried nuts, packaged this year in attractive little baskets.

Whether your Christmas shopping is done or just begun, this is a "must" stop. We hope to see you all around the tea table, the organ, or the upstairs cashbox!



1982 Commemorative Ornament



Victorian Toy Ornament

The Last Pull

We are all sorry to see the Bell Pull shop has closed. Those remarkable Junior Welfare girls put in many remarkable hours. A thank you to all for the years of support—and the resultant income that made possible many beautiful acquisitions for the Homestead. The site of the shop, the original library, has been restored to its former splendor, and it, too, will be decorated for Christmas.

Junior Welfare group to rescue their treasure and restore it! But old homes are more abundant in the east, and James' name not so prominent there, so we can be thankful, at least, that a photograph is available to give us a clue to his past.

And we can be even more thankful that Millikin University and Junior Welfare Association undertook the herculean task of preserving a bit of Decatur history through the restoration of the 1876 Victorian home.

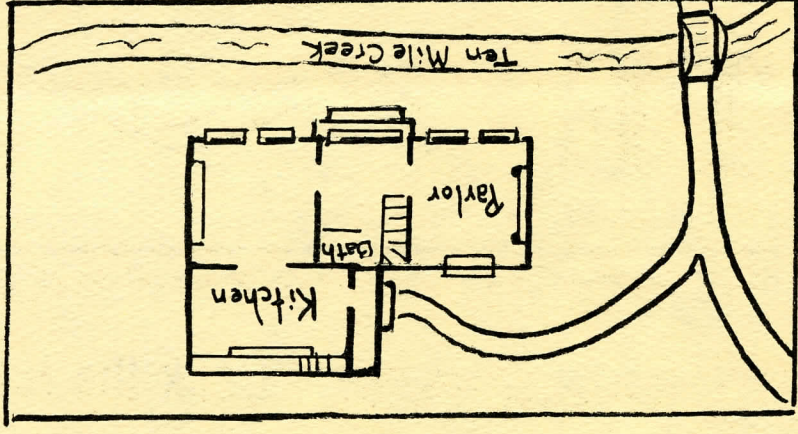
So here I am, no longer a college student, but rather the mother of two college students, finding myself excited and fulfilled in my quest into the past of dear James. That first impression, 30 years ago, of the house with resident ghosts was totally wrong. My apologies, James, how grateful we are to have this beautiful monument to a man who gave so much of his worldly goods to the community he adopted as his home. James, we hope you are pleased with what we have done.

to think that James remembered little things from his birthplace that he later incorporated into the only home he ever built.

by Ruth Prust (continued)

A bathroom has been added at the back of the central hallway, thus eliminating direct passage to the kitchen from the entry hall. The other front room affords an opening into the rear kitchen which once had a huge fireplace for cooking and heating. This also had been boarded over, though it is still evident. A gas range is now used for cooking and is placed against the former cooking fireplace. A small back stairway was behind a door next to the fireplace. Though I did not tour the second floor, I am sure it has the same floorplan as the first floor, with three large rooms. (The Dineen home, also built in the 1790's, has an identical floorplan and has been only slightly changed for convenience in living. It is a beautiful restoration.)

How marvelous to find that the home built by William Millikin about 1792 is still standing! Oh, how I wish that Ten Mile had a



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