

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY

GAZETTE



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JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

July, 1986

On To The Past!

It was an extremely successful "Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days", held April 28 and 29 and May 1 and 2 at the Homestead. Nearly 1200 students visited us, coming from 24 schools, both public and parochial. And to help make order out of all this chaos, we had several new volunteers helping by putting their hearts in their old-fashioned parts!

And the children were so precious and so well-behaved; third grade is really a lovable year! After their outing, the children were encouraged by their teachers to write a thank-you letter to Mr. and Mrs. Millikin for allowing them to visit. These letters were submitted to selected members of the board for judging and determining the 3 best, to receive recognition and a small gift from the Homestead. What a task! There were so many excellent entries!

The three winners selected were Jennifer Schiminski from South Shores School, Chad Corley from John Adams, and Andy Smith from Centennial. Accompanying Chad was his teacher, Mr. Moore, who has now "fielded a winner" two years in a row! At a special awards ceremony, hosted by the Millikin Homestead board, the children and their parents enjoyed lemonade and cookies, read their winning letters, and were gifted with a copy of **Ghosts I Have Been** by Decatur author, Richard Peck. (Mr. Peck said he wrote his mystery with the Millikin Homestead in mind as the setting.)

One part of the "Millikin Days" tour all the children like was getting a cookie from Sophie the kitchen maid as they exited the back door. We would like to thank these caring stores who donated one thousand, two hundred cookies: Eagle South Shores; Kennedy's Ma-Jac Mart; Van Zetti's Bakery; The Party Shop; and West Side Star Market.

HOMESTEAD TO GET NEW ROOF (Or: The State to Date of the Great Slate Debate!)



It's official. We're getting a new SLATE roof! No pun intended, but this problem has been hanging over us for a long time. The present roof dates from the time the house was built in 1875-86. This makes it 100-plus years old. I'd say it has held up pretty well!

Coming up with the money was a major obstacle. Fortunately, the James Millikin Estate and Millikin University have both come forward with help and, with Decatur's known generosity, we know we'll be able to pay for

protects the roof, has insulating value, and forms a cushion for the heavy, brittle slates. New copper valleys will be installed, and the gutters will be relined with tough modified asphalt roofing as they were originally. New copper trim will be installed around the perimeter of the gutter. All new Vermont slate (some from Buckingham Quarry) will be installed, and the original design will be reproduced.

The flat roof areas of the Homestead will

High Praises From Those Who Should Know

From all over Illinois about 120 members of the Illinois State Historical Society arrived to tour historic sites in Decatur, including the James Millikin Homestead, during the Society's annual meeting May 16, 17 and 18.

Three buses provided transportation for the group on May 17 when the visitors alternately toured the Homestead, the Governor Oglesby Mansion and the Birks Museum at Millikin University. They were welcomed at the Homestead by volunteers—our female representatives in long skirts and period blouses—who conducted them through the home and to a beautiful and tempting high tea table in the dining room.

Homestead volunteers felt well rewarded for their effort by the appreciative comments of the visiting historians, a very special group, constituting, as it were, a sort of jury of our peers.

A guest remarked that she felt that seeing the Homestead was better than seeing a castle in Europe! The new Homestead History Room drew definite approval from a number of persons. One visitor declared, "Every historic house needs a room like this!" The History Room album was described as "a nice way to display developments in the restoration of the house." The guests also showed their appreciation indirectly by their thoughtful questions about the Homestead and the Millikins.

There were innumerable compliments in praise of Homestead refreshments. Our dessert cookbooks were popular, and two historians left for their bus looking forward to exchanging other Homestead recipes just obtained.

A local history teacher in the group said he couldn't remember a better afternoon's entertainment and our chairman of volunteers.

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Kathy Green, Millikin Days Chair

MURPHY'S LAW* SOMETIMES PREVAILS

(*If something can go wrong, it will!)

Olive Langsdorf, Chair of Volunteers, contributes faithfully to every issue a sweet little article (What? You've never heard of a sweet Olive?) about what fun it is to be a Homestead volunteer. And she's sincere! We who haul and bake and type and polish and guide, we who sometimes cuss when there seems too much to do at and for the Homestead, we also are the ones who cherish our dear friends from associations there and love the memories we are collecting to recollect in our golden years. And, too, there's that unexplainable feeling of accomplishing something for one's community that keeps us around.

"But can it be all that great to be a volunteer," you ask? In fairness, our answer to that question will come this month from Marty Grohne, one of Olive's most faithful volunteers, who recounts how it was on "just one of those days" when, in spite of all her knowhow and poise, the volunteer scene just sort of fell apart. There was to be a bus of super-bright kids from one of the outlying communities coming in to tour the Homestead. Marty and Mary Lou Malone were to be on hand to guide them around, and as an added bonus, they all were to view a slide presentation by Dr. Ferry on architectural sites, and then (even grander!) walk a block to his Italianate mansion to see inside and get a ride on the staircase 'lift'.

Murphy's Law #1: Arrive a half hour early. The tour will already be there, wondering if they have the wrong day.

Law #2: The police don't like it when you set off the silent burglar alarm by mistake.

Law #3: Huge key to front door is hung in a most obvious place. But you will not be able to find it, and group will have to enter through a side door.

Law #4: Guest speaker leaves his valuable slides and projector behind as all walk to his house. Bus driver picks up and starts driving away with speaker's property.

Law #5: Sponsors of children's tour will guarantee adequate chaperones. Expect one chaperone per thousand children.

We forgot to ask Marty; maybe it was a Friday, the 13th.

obstacle. Fortunately, the James Millikin Estate and Millikin University have both come forward with help and, with Decatur's known generosity, we know we'll be able to pay for our new roof.

Why SLATE? For many reasons. Probably the first and foremost is that the Homestead is registered as a National Historic building and consequently must be kept, as nearly as possible, in its original form. So the existing slate roof must be replaced with a slate roof.

Another good reason is the slate itself. There are benefits, both practical and aesthetic, in replacing with slate. Slate is a cost-efficient material over the long term. It will outlast many asphalt roofs, all the while giving beautiful, low maintenance service. The passing of time only enhances its beauty.

Slate was popular for roofing until the late 1920's. The same traditional methods are used today for quarrying and milling slate. Not all slate quarries still produce roofing slate, but some still fill orders for restoration projects.

Slate samples from our roof were sent to an expert in Vermont, and he identified the two tones of grey slate as being regular "Vermont" (the darker grey) and "Buckingham Quarry" (the lighter color). The colored slate in the design can be matched "almost exactly".

We have one other special feature on our roof. Our slates are all the same size. This takes some special milling. Most roofs were installed (and still are) with random widths. For this reason we will have to wait until late in July for delivery.

What has to be done? First, all of the existing slate roofing must be removed. When this is done, a layer of #43 coated base sheet will be installed over the entire area. This base coat does not have long-term waterproofing value if left exposed to the elements, but it

(some from Buckingham Quarry) will be installed, and the original design will be reproduced.

The flat roof areas of the Homestead will also be replaced while the slate job is being done. This will be done with traditional modified asphalt roofing. This is not the same product used when the house was built, but it is an improved roofing product that will be installed in the traditional way.

Our roof will take 3200 square feet of slate. The only quote I've found on slate prices dates from 1980, and Vermont slate ranges from \$200 to \$260 per square (a square is 100 square feet). Buckingham Quarry runs to \$350 a square, and colored slate can go as high as \$1200 per square.

We are fortunate to have a local company, Craftmasters, taking on this job. They come highly recommended by Mr. Eddy, who is in charge of the physical plant at Millikin University. Mr. C. M. Randles of Craftmasters tells us he has two young craftsmen who are experts in slate and tile roofing and really enjoy the challenge of a job like the Homestead.

It will be great to see the work started and to watch it progress. Mr. Eddy has agreed to supervise the job so we'll have the advantage of an expert overseeing the operation. This is a real relief as there is a good bit of money going into this job and it has to be done RIGHT!

And, speaking of money-----. If you haven't sent in your donation for roof replacement, won't you please put your check in the mail soon? It's going to be great to have a beautiful, non-leaking roof, but it has to be paid for, and we need your help. Thanks!

Jack Langsdorf, President
James Millikin Homestead Board

ing other Homestead recipes just obtained. A local history teacher in the group said he couldn't remember a better afternoon's entertainment and our chairman of volunteers, Olive Langsdorf, proclaimed the event, "A nice day with a nice bunch of people."

There truly was pleasure in hosting a group who could so well comprehend the previous ten years of work to restore the Homestead and the on-going effort to preserve the house and its history.

Marilyn Loofbourrow, Historian



High Time for A High Tea?

Would you like to give a Victorian 'high tea' for special friends? You have our permission to duplicate this menu, which was served to over 100 Homestead guests from the Illinois Historical Society - and which drew not only raves but also many trips to the kitchen for recipes.

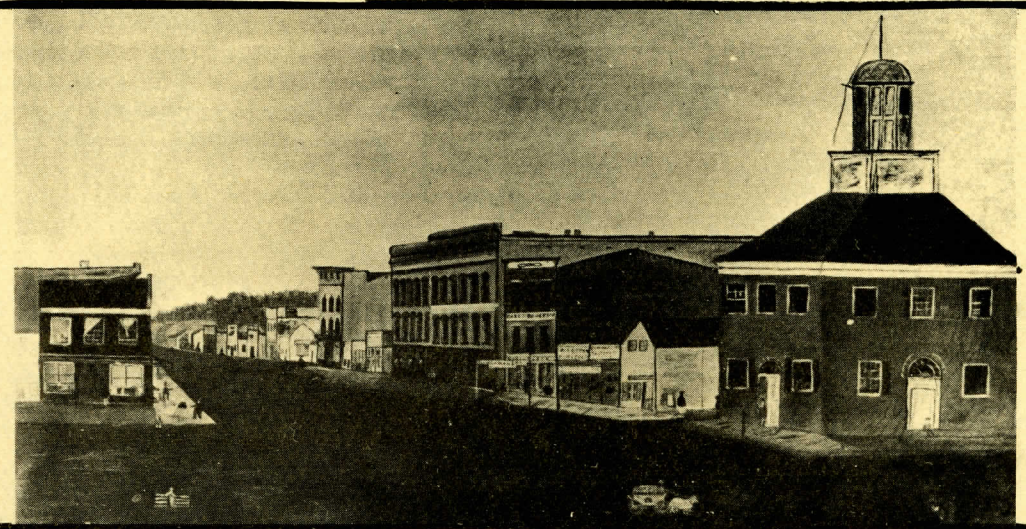
Small cheese balls and crackers
Brigitta's cucumber dip and meat balls
Fannie Bassett's finger sandwiches
with homemade mayonnaise
Fruit and melon balls
Whole strawberries (charmingly arranged)
in glass basket
White wine
Tea punch (non-alcoholic)
Assorted cookies and sweets

Brigitta Kapp & Nancy Talbott,
Tea Chairmen

We Didn't Say It Was The Great White Way!

This is how the heart of Decatur must have appeared to James and Anna Millikin when they arrived in Decatur and Macon County in the 1850's: An early artist drew this scene looking east on Main from Lincoln Square. At right is Macon County's second courthouse, which stood in one corner of the Square. It was preceded only by the familiar log court house frequented by Abraham Lincoln.

This photograph was one of those obtained in the 1985 Anniversary Project.



"NEW GIRL ON THE BOARD" GETS BUDDY

In our last newsletter, Dave Robertson expressed his trepidations of being the only man on the Homestead board. Although Dave broke the ice, I know his feelings. After attending one meeting as a replacement for a board member who had to resign for health reasons, I was handed the gavel as your new president.

Needless to say, Barbara Hackel left things in excellent order. Her two terms were topped off with success in getting commitments that allowed us to go ahead on a much needed new roof. You've had enough of that project in a separate letter, but through the good work of Barb and her board, a good portion of that expense has been covered.

But, as with any old house, there are always things to do. Preparation of the budget was one of the first, and our new treasurer, Nancy Talbott, presented good figures for us to work with on this. Heating and cooling the Homestead is always a major expense, for example.

Dave Robertson and his volunteer, Jim Cordes, have started working on the grounds. With all the rain, his major projects have been delayed, but you will see improvements soon.

The Victorian Christmas Tea for members is well in the planning stage with Kathy Green and Carolyn Travis co-chairing the party.

Marilyn Womeldorff, our Membership Chairman, has succeeded in getting quite a number of memberships in early, which helps us keep our financial planning in line. You could help, too, by asking a friend to join. We'd really appreciate your help.

If you haven't visited the Homestead for awhile, you're missing an excellent addition in our new History Room. Marilyn Loofbourrow has put together an interesting history of the Homestead and the Millikins.

Picking up the gavel for this board was certainly easy. Everyone else knows what has to be done and who does it best. There is no problem getting volunteers from the board. My goal is to get these overworked gals (and Dave) some help by getting more of our members involved. We've got a lot of things that need doing and many of you would enjoy helping. You've been asked. Why not call me at 422-8896 and tell me what you'd like to do?

Jack Langsdorf, President

Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot

With the arrival this spring of the Millikin family history, there are a variety of new stories to share. Perhaps chronology should be maintained, but it's hard to resist turning immediately to the quaint passages concerning James Millikin's grandfather, also a James, the first of the family to emigrate to America.

Here is the tale told of Grandfather James by the Millikin family historian, the Rev. Gideon T. Ridlon, in his 1907 book, **History of the Families Millangas and Millanges** (Millikin):

"James Millikin, son of James and Martha Hemphill, was b. in . . . Ireland, Jan. 5, 1752; m. Mar. 30, 1778, Dolly McFarland, daughter of Daniel and Sarah (Barber) McFarland, b. in . . . Mass., June 6, 1762, and was at the time of her marriage but sixteen years of age. This was the union of a young, adventurous Protestant Irishman to a Massachusetts Yankee which resulted in a prosperous and happy life.

"Mr. Millikin did what was, at the time of his emigration, a very unusual thing. He separated from his parents, his home, and his friends, and came to the American Colonies under the ardent impulse of an adventurous spirit to seek a home in the wilderness. He was not impelled to this act by the importunities of relatives who had preceded him. His example, however, was followed, later, by his brothers, William and Robert.

"He settled on Tenmile Creek, Amwell Township, Washington Co., Pa., in 1771, just before the breaking out of the Revolution. From a letter written by one who remembered him, we learn that he was a small man . . . weighing not more than 150 pounds; a very quiet, inoffensive Protestant, and a weaver by trade. His grandson and namesake used to pass many pleasant hours as a lad in the loom shop, filling quills for his grandfather's shuttles, while the weaver sang songs and told stories of the 'auld country'. He always claimed to be of pure Scotch (sic) blood and protested against being called an Irishman.

"The home of James Millikin was located on a hill, or moderate elevation, not distant from and facing Tenmile Creek, and overlooking the valley through which that stream flowed. His house was of hewed logs, two storied, and contained but two rooms, one over the other. An addition was built by one of the sons for his family after his marriage.

"It is related that the mother sometimes placed a large bowl filled with corn mush

upon the kitchen floor, from which her children, seated around it, satisfied their hunger. When the son Robert had returned home after some years' absence, he was so overjoyed at beholding his parents and familiar scenes that he wished to be a child again. He asked his mother to hang the kettle on the crane once more and make it full of mush. He then had the great bowl filled and placed on the floor, and while the family was gathered around it and began to use their spoons, 'Bob would hunch first over one and then another as he'd used to do in boyhood days, and shout, 'Get away there! Get away there!'

"James Millikin died July 30, 1821. His family consisted of eleven children, nine of whom, eight sons and one daughter, attained to manhood and womanhood, and their posterity is now almost as numerous as leaves on a forest tree."

Among this progeny was Abel Millikin, father of the Homestead's James, and youngest of the eleven. The others included Dr. Daniel, Mary, Col. James, John, Samuel, William, Dolly, Dr. Robert and Andrew. The sons became physicians, farmers, druggists and merchants. Our James, himself born in Washington Co., Pa., in 1827, missed the opportunity of knowing his grandfather James, who died, as indicated, in 1821.

To the above, it is interesting to add information provided to the Homestead by a current Millikin family researcher, Paul T. Millikin of Columbus, OH.

Mr. Millikin tells us that James Millikin, the immigrant is chronicled as having built a "fort" in Washington Co., Pa., by 1772 to protect against Indian raids. Also, according to Paul Millikin, this James — grandfather to ours — has been proven as a patriot for Daughters of the American Revolution, and Paul himself did the necessary work to register him as an ancestor for Sons of the American Revolution. Additionally, proof of descent from the immigrant James qualifies his line for membership in a new organization, "Descendants of the First Settlers of Washington Co., Pa."

This quiet Scottish weaver, simply going about his business—settling himself in the wilderness and protecting his home and new country—has left a name handed down many times among his descendants and recorded in numerous historical records.

Marilyn Loofbourrow, Historian

CHRISTMAS IS A'COMING!

It may seem unbelievable in the middle of summer but Santa's workers are already planning their production line activities for the creation of the Christmas items to be sold from "Mrs. Millikin's Trunk". This boutique, a time-honored tradition of the Victorian Christmas Tea, will be held this year on the tea date, Sunday, December 7 at the Homestead.

We are again asking the help of our members (and their friends) in making the ornaments and other items we sell. Please mark your calendars to come to my house at 505 Fielding Court for coffee on Tuesday, September 23, from 9:30 through noon for a "Kick-Off" drive on Christmas ornaments. I will be making a personal call in early September to all of those wonderfully creative and enormously talented people who filled "Mrs. Millikin's Trunk" last year. But I am hoping that there are other gifted needleworkers and artisans out there just waiting to be discovered.

It would be nice to see Fielding Court and South Monroe Street lined with cars the morning of the 23rd. And please, men, since many of you have woodworking and artistic skills, won't you join us?

A silent auction was a new feature of the Boutique last year. We displayed, for bids, nice pieces of brass, antique plates and spoons, a cameo and a miniature portrait, among other items. If you find any treasures in your fall housecleaning that you would like to donate for this Connoisseur's Corner, please call me at 428-9488. We will, of course, supply an income tax deduction form.

Nancy Talbott

LOOKING AT THE BOOKING

During May and June, the Homestead has opened its doors to Millikin University for 3 free uses, to Junior Welfare for 5, to 2 private parties (though - couldn't you just cry for her? - one was to be a beautiful outdoor wedding which the bride had to cancel when it looked as if all of Decatur was in need of an ark!), and for tour groups. Our volunteers did food and floral magic to welcome large groups from the Historical & Architectural Sites Commission and from the Illinois State Historical Society convention.

Bettyrose Leader, Scheduling Chair

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JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC.

PUT ON A HAPPY FACE!

- 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)

I'm delighted to report that currently we show: 20 Life members, 16 Patrons, 110 Family, 106 Individual, and 4 Student memberships, for a total of 256 so far for 1986-87.

We still have quite a few people in the file who have not renewed their memberships. I want to take this opportunity to remind you, as we undertake the challenge for a new roof, we need all of our old members plus any new persons whom you think might be interested in helping us. You will find a membership application below if you would like to renew or pass the form on to a friend.

I guess this is as good a time as any to admit that your membership "thank you's" will be in the mail shortly. I had TWO computer discs go bad on me, but I hope we have that fixed now so that you will have your acknowledgments soon.



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 deduction to feel good about!

Marilyn Womeldorff, Membership Chairman

Please make check payable to
 James Millikin Homestead, Inc.
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Membership is tax deductible.