

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



GAZETTE



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

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

February 1988



Victorian Tea

The annual Victorian Tea for Homestead members was held December 6th in the home from 1:30 until 4:00 PM. The theme for the party was "Sounds of Christmas" presented with instruments and music throughout the halls and rooms. Board members added personal touches, as well as time, to make the house special. Lots of cookies were provided by many nice people. Christmas punch was served in our newly purchased punch bowl!

Early in the afternoon we were entertained by the lovely quartet "Elegance" from the Decatur Chapter of Sweet Adelines, with Joan Barr, Barb Wisner, Estaleen Davidson and Karole Johnson. Later, classical guitarist, Manly Mallard, played softly in the south parlour. Rain plagued the day; the warmth of friendly voices kept our spirits high as we visited and celebrated Christmas in the Homestead.

The annual ornament was beautiful and sold-out mid afternoon! Other very special ornaments and decorations were available in our boutique for special purchase by members. The Victorian Tea is truly a wonderful way to capture the spirit of Christmas on a December Sunday afternoon, you would have to agree!

Gazette Wins Award

"The Homestead Family Gazette" is the recipient of a Certificate of Excellence from the Congress of Illinois Historical Societies and



CHRISTMAS REVISITED



Oops. . .we goofed!

We forgot to list Helen (Mrs. Robert) Russell as a Life Member and Student Members Sabrina and Florian Kapp in our November newsletter. Hope we didn't miss anyone else as we treasure all of our members.

A special welcome and thanks to new Life Member Harrilee (Mrs. J. George) Armstrong.

The Inside . . . or Outside Story

The Homestead interior is famed for its beautiful bi-colored millwork, its individually distinct seven fireplaces, its oversized and dramatic chandeliers, and its art glass of many varieties, but, no doubt because of Mrs. Millikin's prim, "preacher's child" taste, the Homestead is not a place known for the "geegaws", the clutter, and the overblown decor we so often associate with the Victorian era. Mrs. Millikin, for instance, was not fond of the heavily trimmed, weighty, floor-sweeping drapes and overdrapes we expect to see in turn-of-the-century homes; her preference instead was for the beauty of polished wood, gleaming marble, and sunlight shining on same.

But she was also known for her gardening skills and her love of flowers, so it bothered some on the board that beautiful Victorian bouquets were absent from the parlor, the dining room, and such other places as she would have surely displayed them.

Where does one turn for a knowledge of authentic Victorian floral treatment? To a

Museums (CHISM).

The Gazette was recognized in the category of "promotion." Editor for the period judged was Joan Cordes. (Congratulations, Joan!)

CHISM is a statewide professional organization administered by the Illinois State Historical Society. It assists local museums and historical and cultural organizations in the collection and preservation of Illinois heritage.

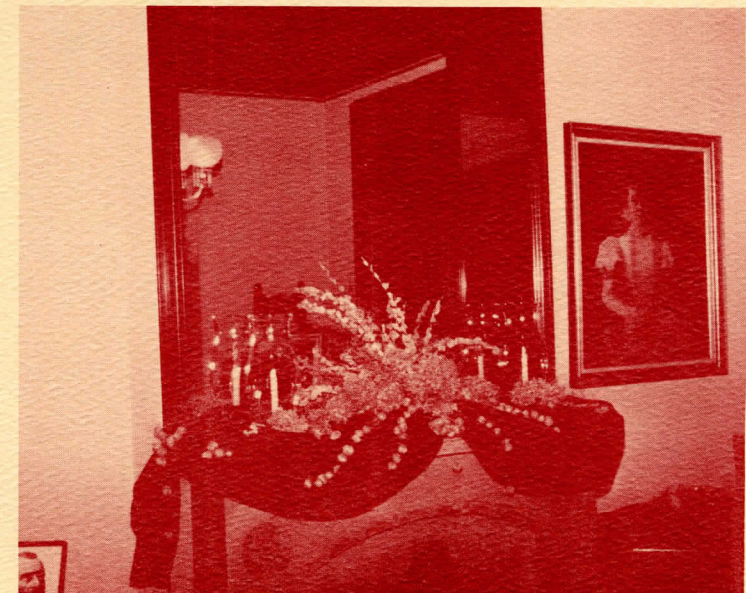
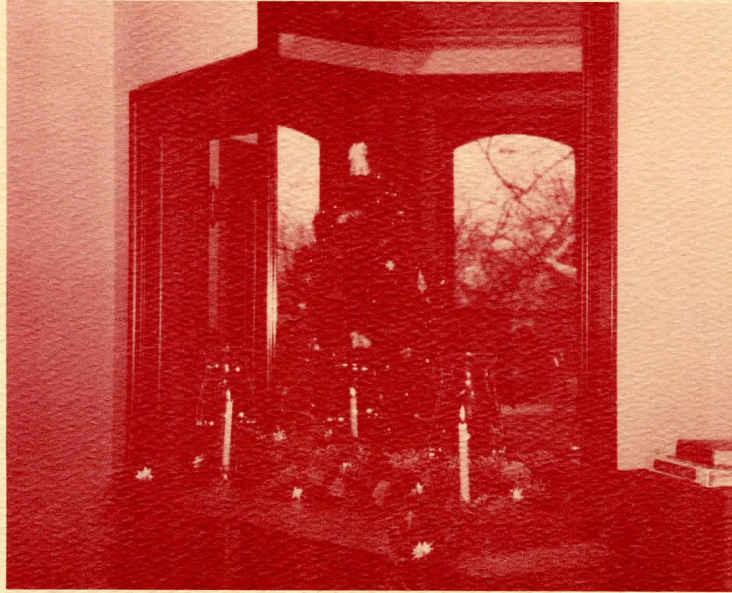
The award to the Millikin Homestead was announced at CHISM's annual meeting at Mt. Vernon in November.



elaborate Victorian floral treatment to a Garden Club member, of course. Within one day of a call to member Helen Dalton, the Homestead had the loan of two oversized floral Victorian centerpieces that are so terrific we wish we had several more.

The board is thinking of putting in a large sunny garden such as Mrs. Millikin once had, for the purpose of cutting flowers for the Homestead. If you have gardening skills and would be interested in grow-your-own (and grow-our-own) floral arrangements, we would like to hear from you this spring.

Joan Cordes, Procurement — 428-9092



A Note From Your President . . .

Now that the hustle and bustle of another busy holiday season is behind us, it's time to reflect on the past year and the year ahead of us. 1987 was a good year for the Homestead. With our new roof in place and the fresh paint on the building, we look and feel like we are ready to face the next 112 years! Actually, we are only facing 1988 right now. The other 111 years will be taken one at a time.

I am privileged to preside over a board of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. When one of those individuals has to leave the board, it is always hard to let them go. In December

we had two resignations, Laura Faber and BettyRose Leader. Laura has served on the board for the past two years, serving as Volunteer Chairman and Victorian Christmas Tea Chairman. She has resigned due to a change in her employment position. BettyRose has served nearly three years, and has been Scheduling Chairman for the past two years. Her enthusiasm for her job has spread good will to all those who came in contact with the Homestead through her. Her resignation was forced by health problems, and we all wish her quick and positive resolutions to those pro-

blems. The board isn't the same without you BettyRose!

What lies ahead for the Homestead? We are entering a period of reorganization. The new slate of officers and new board members are being sought. Jobs are being reassigned to board members and other volunteers. A tour guide training session is being planned to increase the number of qualified guides. Some fun and exciting plans are being considered for the Homestead membership. . .but I can't tell you about that yet. What do you hope the Homestead will do this year? What great idea do you have that would be perfect for the Homestead? Who do you know that would be an ideal board member or volunteer? Who

do you recommend for a specific job? (Positions such as scheduling, volunteers, Christmas Tea Chairman do not have to be held by a board member!) Would you like to get involved? We'd love to have you join us!!!

If you have any suggestions or want to get involved, just call me at 423-1154, or talk to any board member. 1988 promises to be a good year for the Homestead with your help. Just remember that it takes all of us working together to make another 112 years of JMHS history. Won't you join me?!

I hope 1988 brings all of you health, happiness and peace.

Barbara Hackel, President

New Book Gives Art Class and Anna Millikin Niche In Education History

The Decatur Art Class did not set out to make history — perhaps to study it more like — but it has earned a permanent niche nationally in the story of women's self-education brought together in a book just published, The Sound of Our Own Voices, by Theodora Penny Martin.

The Art Class and Author Martin were introduced to each other at just the right moment by Dr. Martin's friend and colleague, Dr. Frances McClelland Mayfarth of Decatur. The Art Class became a microcosm for Dr. Martin's exploration of the place of the women's study club in the history of women's education, which she wrote as a doctoral dissertation at Harvard University in 1985.

Developing as a warm and personable history, her dissertation won further publication as a hard-back book by Beacon Press in 1987. Its original title, "Women's Study Clubs, 1860-1900: The Sound of Our Own Voices," lent itself easily to shortening.

The book is all that Decatur might hope for. Just for the pleasure of seeing "our" names in print, we could hardly anticipate more coverage. Nor could we ask for more perceptive or endearing description than Dr. Martin has accorded the Decatur Art Class, Anna and James Millikin and the Millikin Homestead. All were inextricably bound together, and lest we forget, the relationship is emphasized once again.

What we may not realize is that the Decatur Women's Club, of which Anna Millikin was also a charter member, represented another developing step for women so that it, too, has a part in Author Martin's vivid study. We find Decatur very much keeping pace with the times.

Beyond our city limits, "The Sound of Our Own Voices," will be valued for its special look at how and why women began to educate themselves by means of the study club and the influence these women had on the thousands of women who would go to college at the turn-of-the-century.

Based on human experience rather than on massive statistics, the book, well-organized and beautifully written, is laced with gentle, affectionate anecdotes. Beacon Press targeted the book for the "Christmas Trade." Advance publicity called it "an elegant gift for the discerning reader," and so it is.

The book began as Penny Martin, long interested in women's education, considered pursuing a doctorate and was encouraged to this end by friend and mentor, Dr. Mayfarth. The realization came that the women's study club movement had not been fully evaluated, and just when it was most needed, Dr. Mayfarth was able to assist Dr. Martin in access to an amazing wealth of pertinent material available in Decatur, the century-old files of the Decatur Art Class.

Not only were its files extant, but as we well know, the Art Class, from its beginning in 1880 in the Millikin Homestead, has continued to meet to this day. Dr. Martin traveled to Decatur, met with its members and was made privy to their individual recollections and oral traditions for a very personal historical perspective.

The Decatur Art Class, provided unusual depth, and another major source, The History of the Women's Club Movement in America, published in 1898 by Jane C. Croly, furnished the broad framework Dr. Martin needed: accounts by members of their experiences in other women's study clubs across the country.

After these two primary sources, it was "foot-slogging work," as Dr. Martin has written, to find and combine the many other pieces of supportive information.

When Dr. Martin's manuscript was accepted for book publication, she sought help again in Decatur to locate pictures. For those who assisted, it was a pleasure to open the book to five local photographs: of Anna Millikin, the Millikin Homestead, the Art Class Anniversary dinner, member Elizabeth Bering, and one more, of three Art Class members about to depart for Europe in 1895. The latter picture, an "electrified" pose of the three leaning forward in eager anticipation of the future, would have been Dr. Martin's choice for the book's dust cover, but her editors chose another.

The book devotes an entire chapter, entitled "The Magic Circle," to the Art Class; another concerns the Decatur Women's Club. Anna Millikin so delighted Dr. Martin that she singled her out for several pages in tribute to her intriguing personality and "ardent desire for and pride in learning and her fine sparkling intelligence."

Calling her a "paradigmatic leader of strong personal character," Martin suggests that

although Anna has been described as "quiet and unostentatious," the Art Class records "reveal another side as she inspired the club with her witty rhymed minutes, searching curiosity and exuberantly creative devices for making learning fun." As Anna takes part in the activities of this group of long acquaintance with whom she felt so much at home, here is a more vivacious spirit than we have formerly known!

In fact, we learn from Dr. Martin's book that not just the Art Class but most study clubs did usually meet in the privacy of members' homes where women were accustomed to spend most of their time. Members were not attention-seekers nor especially suffragettes: they simply wanted to learn and to do so unobtrusively.

The clubs generally kept membership small from the constraint of space and for the purpose of allowing each member time to present the results of her topic of individual study to which she would devote many hours of research and writing. Each club kept to one or two branches of learning: in the instance of the Art Class it was primarily literature.

As Dr. Martin examined the study club movement, she found that members were not usually the "idle rich," but more often middle class women, frequently middle-aged, who had gained some leisure from women's work and who sought the education to which they had not had access. Before the Civil War it was not customary to educate women and many colleges were slow to open their doors to them.

Anna Millikin, who graduated from a seminary in Pennsylvania and who was probably the best educated member among the founders of the Art Class, still yearned for additional learning. No wonder that she and husband James had so much in common in his dream of establishing a college — which did open to both men and women.

Just at the stage of development to attract women to study clubs, the Midwest is well represented in Dr. Martin's book. Her title, taken from the words of another Illinoisan, a member of "Friends in Council" at Quincy, Illinois, is part of a witty description by one woman of her experience at entering the brand new awesome world of the 19th century study club.

Readers will surely enjoy this and many

other bits that enliven Dr. Martin's look at another era so little-known to us now: when women, for the most part, felt it incumbent upon them to stay demurely in their homes, but began to venture through their minds into the boundless world of learning.

When Dr. Martin's dissertation was published in 1985, she presented a copy to the Decatur Art Class in gratitude for the assistance of its members.

In December, the Millikin Homestead was very honored when, in turn, the Decatur Art Class decided to make the Homestead the permanent repository for its copy of the thesis, and, there upon, presented it to our President.

Just a short time before, we were also very pleased to receive from Dr. Martin a complimentary copy of her book. Together, the dissertation and the book make a treasured addition to the Homestead History Collection. We hope to find a suitable means of displaying these two related publications which remind us of the unique relationship of the Decatur Art Class and the James Millikin Homestead and of Decatur's place in history.

Marilyn Loofbourrow, Historian



Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days winning letter writers were honored at the Homestead. They are Katie Riley from Holy Family School, Lora D. Cook from Parsons School and Natalie Tanzyas from Baum School.

Bulk Rate
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Decatur, Ill. 62521
 Permit 226

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

Valentine Greetings

- 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)

Please make checks payable to
 James Millikin Homestead, Inc.
 P.O. Box 1501
 Decatur, Illinois 62525

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Telephone _____ Zip Code _____

_____ Student Member

_____ Individual Member

_____ Family Member

_____ Patron

_____ Life Member



(Membership is tax deductible)

1987 Annual Ornament

Most of you remember reading about the 1987 Annual Ornament in the November issue of The Gazette or in the Herald and Review. We ordered 75 of the delicate brass disks that featured the front view of the Homestead designed by Lee Ross. These ornaments were so popular that they sold out in the first one and half hours of the Victorian Tea. Since many people were interested in the ornament, we voted to reorder 100 more. Orders have been taken by the phone and at the public Christmas open house. We expect delivery of those ornaments around the end of January. If you haven't acquired or ordered your ornament yet, fill out the attached order form and drop it in the mail. Ornaments are not dated, and look beautiful hanging in a window. They make nice gifts for friends and relatives that used to live in Decatur.

Ornament Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Telephone _____ Zip Code _____

Quantity Ordered _____ Cost \$5.00 each

Total enclosed \$ _____

Ornaments can be picked up at the Homestead (we will call you and tell you when) or they can be sent to you by mail. Please add 75¢ per order for postage and handling.

Make checks payable to the James Millikin Homestead, Inc.