

# THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY

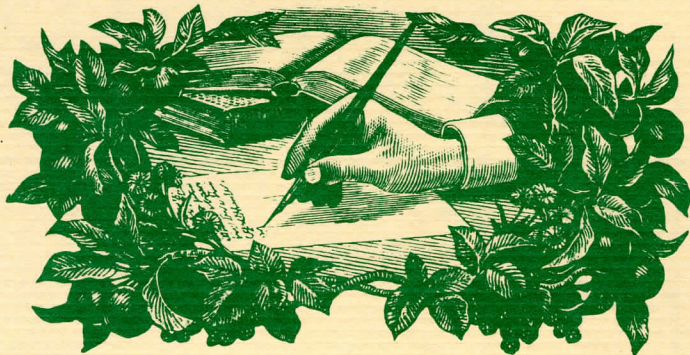
## GAZETTE

Vol. XIX, No.2

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

November 1994

### A Note From Your President . . .



When Junior Welfare Association began to renovate the Millikin Homestead in the 1970's, some of the original ceiling canvasses were removed because they were laden with many coats of crack paint and seemed beyond repair. These canvasses were carefully tucked away in the attic and basement in case they were needed for documentation in future restoration.

From time to time Lucien Kapp and other board members have attempted to scrape the layers of paint off portions of the canvasses to determine the design of the original stencilling. Hours of laborious scraping with a razor blade revealed only

design, stencil it on a new canvass and install the finished product in the Homestead.

Lucien has spent many hours over the summer discussing our needs with several experts and has found a firm that seems to have the right credentials to undertake our restoration. In September the Homestead Board authorized an expenditure of approximately \$16,000 to restore the ceiling in the dining room to its original splendor.

We, the board, are all very excited and hope that you will be also. Our Ways and Means Committee is swinging into high gear and you probably will be hearing a lot about raising funds for our restoration

### History: Telling It Like It Was



Dr. Albert R. Taylor

Dr. Albert R. Taylor, first president of Millikin University and friend of the Millikins, poses at his desk in this photograph from 1908 Millikin yearbook.

small samplings of the original design - just enough to spawn our dream of "putting the ceilings back exactly the way they were."

The board determined our members had neither the qualifications nor the time to remove the many layers of paint from the canvasses. Therefore, we asked Lucien to locate a firm who could reclaim the original

process. If you can contribute money or encouragement, we would be delighted to receive it. Our plan is to continue in the parlors as money will allow, then the front hall, then . . . I hope you all are dreamers too!

- Lynn Potter



## Victorian Christmas Tea

December 4, 1994

1-3 p.m. for Membership

3-5 p.m. for the Public

**W**e are planning our annual Christmas Tea at the Homestead, and we hope to see you there! As always the house will be decked out in seasonal trimmings; the large live tree in the north parlor will feature our collection of Victorian ornaments. The sounds of Christmas music and the wafting of Wassail will permeate the air! In the library we will offer an assortment of decorative and/or eatable goodies; so be sure to peruse through there! Let us help you get into the holiday spirit with this early December festivity! Put the Millikin Homestead Tea on your social calendar right now!

**F**or a portrait in words of both James and Anna Millikin, there is no single source better than Dr. Albert R. Taylor, the man who became their friend as first president of Millikin University. Taylor was engaged by James to organize the university, then stayed on to head it. His biography, The Life Story of James Millikin, was written after the deaths of the couple and is brimming with anecdotes taken from his own experience as well as from conversations with other friends and acquaintances.

In a chapter called, "Miscellany," Dr. Taylor put together a series of rapid-fire vignettes revealing much about the lives of the Millikins. He began: "These personal gleanings are added as throwing side lights on the character of our patron that may help a little further in visualizing him more fully." The following passages are excerpted:

"In 1903 James Millikin said of riches: Augur was right about it when he prayed give me neither riches nor poverty. Riches come too late in life to be enjoyed.

"A citizen who often went to Mr. Millikin begging for one thing or another had never been turned down. Approaching him [Mr. Millikin] with a worthy cause never met rebuff. He often said, 'What is for Decatur's good is for my good.'

"If a man understands his business it is safe to give him credit. I have loaned men five times what they were worth and never worried a minute about it. I have often ridden ten miles to see how a man fed his cattle, the condition of his lots and the way he put out the feed; and if that man understood the business of cattle feeding he got the money he wanted."

" ' Yes, Mr. Millikin was slow at times, but if you should bring as grind-stone into his room he could see further into it than any man I ever saw. His power of concentration and penetration was most unusual.'



"The Millikins often entertained distinguished guests in their home. Old-time residents often refer to the notable reunion of General Grant's former soldiers here in 1881, some forty thousand of them being present. The General was the guest of Senator and Mrs. Oglesby and the next most distinguished visitor, General, then Senator, John A. Logan, made his home with the Millikins.



" . . . As the contractor was putting the basement window frames in the wall for the Liberal Arts hall group of buildings, Mr. Millikin observed that they were lower than the specifications as he understood them provided for, they being scarcely above the main street level - making the buildings look squatty. I called the architect's attention to the matter, insisting that our understanding placed them higher though the blueprints might show differently. They insisted that the engineer building on the west was already higher than the contour permitted and should not be lifted further. The contractor was unwilling to make any change as the expense would be too great for him to bear. Mr. Millikin came to the rescue by proposing to the street commissioner to lower the bed of the street and he would bear the expense, some \$2,000 or more. This is the explanation of part of the elevation of the lots on the south side of West Main.

(Continued)

# History – Continued

“Mr. Millikin was not very enthusiastic over the idea of spending much money on athletics, and yet in conversation with me about our football plans he said: ‘If I did have a team, I would want it to be the best in the Mississippi valley.’ This he said with a Scotch snap and a smile that was easily understood. Tho seldom seen on the field, I am certain that he and Mrs. Millikin picked up their ears a bit every time the whistle blew after an athletic meet of any kind.



“He enjoyed many social games and in his later years usually went directly to the Decatur Club rooms after banking hours for a game of some kind. I often found him there alone playing solitaire at dusk, which he promptly relinquished to discuss some problem of mutual interest.



“ . . . The committee named to select the colors for Millikin was composed of Mesdames B. F. Stearnes, A. R. Taylor, Peter Loeb, and James Millikin. After considerable discussion it unanimously recommended Commodore Decatur’s pennant used on his flag staff, a rich blue with white. They were promptly approved and were first used in the decorations of the boxes in the auditorium on the day of the dedication of the first group of buildings. Since then they have gone into our college poetry and song and into all kinds of pennants, badges, pillows, etc. . . .



“Mrs. Millikin was very methodical in everything. As we were having our first printing done she asked me to be sure to use the expletive THE so that it would always be

a part of the institution’s name, as The James Millikin University, which I promised to do and noted that she followed us up to be sure that her request was observed.



MU Team

Not the football team to which James Millikin gave round-about support, but MU early basketball team posing for yearbook. Seated on floor is mascot, a teddy bear, probably in honor of U.S. President “Teddy” Roosevelt who dedicated Millikin University at opening. James was not a sports fan but, always a seeker of excellence, wanted the “best team” if he was going to have any.

“He was averse to giving his own name to the University, thinking it might prevent large givers from helping to increase its endowment, but tacitly acceded to the desire of the Board of Trustees and other friends to have their way about it. They thought to

give him a pleasant surprise, and without asking his consent instructed the architects to put it in the big stone slab over the main tower entrance. The stone cutter began the work one evening and was hard at it about 7 a.m. when Mr. Millikin appeared and ordered its discontinuance forthwith. That



ended it for good! and ‘Liberal Arts Hall’ took its place.

“ . . . I have been unable to discover any

particular case of romance in Mr. Millikin’s life, tho there may have been more than one. His first veridical photograph at about the age of thirty-five reveals a very attractive face as well as a wholesome physique and a kindly eye.



“ . . . After the new hall for women, now Aston Hall, was ready for the reception of students, the new matron and myself were invited to the Millikin home to discuss a system of regulations for its government. I found our patrons had already reached an understanding on a few rules modeled after those of the old time women’s seminaries, which were very exacting with reference to hours, visiting each other’s rooms, church attendance and elsewhere under charge of the matron or official chaperons, dates for company and kindred matters, etc.

We easily agreed upon most rules regarding other matters, but realizing that Mrs. Millikin was undoubtedly being prompted largely by her remembrances of those in vogue in her alma mater over a half-century before, it required considerable discussion to convince them that the better class of dormitories in these days were making as few rules as possible, depending upon the honor and good sense of the young women residing in them for the maintenance of an esprit de corps more desirable and more efficient in government and character building . . .



“The register of the old McCormack House at Danville, Illinois, which Mr. Millikin afterwards used for a scrap book, contains the name of Abel Millikin, Pennsylvania, [father of James], under date  
(Continued)

# History – Continued

of Aug. 12, 1853. Among the clippings pasted in the book were the announcements of the Millikin wedding; a very interesting and appreciative obituary of his sister, Nancy Vandyke Millikin, who died Sept. 5, 1854, in her twenty-first year; excerpts of Democratic party platform, 1849, and Republican, 1856; and other political literature . . . all revealing his keen interest in current political affairs. This last slip also contained a statement showing the condition of the Decatur Railroad Bank at that time but which failed soon afterwards, Mr. Millikin occupying its office with his new bank in 1860."

With this picture of James' second-hand scrapbook – long since lost – we bring to a close quotations from Dr. Taylor's "Miscellany." Many other pages in his book are equally illustrative, but for supporters of the James Millikin Homestead one more excerpt holds special interest:

"She [Anna Millikin] and Mr. Millikin became pretty good comrades, and traveled much in this country and abroad, improving every opportunity to inspect notable

buildings and to become acquainted with the best in art, both in private collections and in worth-while museums. The finish and furnishings of this new home were unexcelled in artistry in the entire city for long years afterward . . . The Millikins were good livers and great readers as well as great travellers and spent much time in their cozy library where their penates really resided. Both of them loved their home, and until their later years were generous entertainers – brilliant lawn fetes, as well as indoor receptions being still recalled with pleasure by their old time friends."

Oddly, Dr. Taylor's account of the Millikins as generous entertainers differ from other reports handed down that they seldom did entertain. Since their activities slowed with the years, later acquaintances may not have known of this aspect of their lives, but there is no doubt that the Millikins' love for their home remained constant.

– Marilyn Loofbourrow  
Historian

# Exterior Painting Program

The much needed exterior painting is finally getting started. After any financial help from the Illinois Historic Preservation people proved fruitless, help from HUD and the City of Decatur Block Grant Program together with 25% of the cost supplied by Millikin University. The project should start this fall. Completion will probably be into next spring but I am sure we can put up with the blotchy appearance in the meantime (actually the same colors are being used as in previous paint job so it should not be too disturbing).

Probably the most interesting and troublesome aspect of the project showed up at the beginning. We all became suddenly aware of heavy restrictions for the removal of old paint which has a lead content of 5.0 mg/l (milligrams per liter). Needless to say tests of particulate showed lead content of 71 mg/l which put this old paint well over the "hazardous" classification. The EPA requires that their particulate be collected and disposed of by directions covering probably 50 pages. Several prospective bidders turned down the job because of such requirements.

As you drive by you might well see plastic sheeting nets hoping to catch the flying chips generated from hydro power nozzles, hand scraping and sanding, awaiting to be collected into a 30 gallon bright red barrel marked "Hazardous Material". Such is the result of civilization's mistake in putting lead in paint for so many years.

So the paint will go on and we will again have the "alligator skin" appearance as so many old homes have until a major project is undertaken to get all paint down to the bare wood then properly finished. Along with such an undertaking would be replacement of much of the old deteriorated wood trim. Donations around \$50,000 would be gladly accepted. Meantime we can be happy with fresh paint and an overall nice look that says "we care".

The University is now in process of replacing the entire front porch deck with new fir tongue and groove material. Our thanks to them for their work.

– Bill McGaughey  
Grounds

# Two Receive Awards in History

Floreene Scott White and Martha Montgomery were honored by the Decatur Historical and Architectural Sites Commission and the Heritage Network of Decatur-Macon County at a reception May in Powers-Jarvis Mansion.

The Arthur Ploeger award, given by HASC for work in historical preservation, went to Miss Montgomery. She was credited for her service to both the Macon County Historical Society and the

Governor Oglesby Mansion. Betty Ploeger and Mark Sorenson presented the award to Norma Jones, who accepted for Miss Montgomery.

Mrs. White received an award from the Heritage Network for contributions in history through her service at the Macon County Historical Society and her publication of a history of Macon County schools. Joe Houston, network president, made the presentation.



# Homestead Seeks Early Millikin University Yearbooks

The James Millikin Homestead would like to add to its collection of early Millikin University yearbooks. If you have any to donate, they would be gratefully accepted.

Currently the Homestead has books only for: 1906, 1907 and 1908. We are seeking any others from the beginning of the university in 1903 through 1913, the last year of Anna Millikin's life. The yearbooks will

provide sidelights to the later years of the Millikins.

We also welcome the donation of other historical books, papers and photographs pertaining to the Millikins and their times. Please call Homestead historian Marilyn Loofbourrow at 428-1328 or present an item for donation to any board member.



## James Millikin Homestead, Inc.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Member – \$5.00     | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron – \$100.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Member – \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business – \$200.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member – \$25.00     | <input type="checkbox"/> Life – \$1,000.00 (May be paid in four annual installments) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend – \$50.00            |  |

Make checks payable to:

James Millikin Homestead, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1501  
Decatur, Illinois 62525

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

(Membership is tax deductible)

## Annual Treasurer's Report

April 1, 1993 - March 31, 1994

### Fund Balances - April 1, 1993

Checking	\$ 4898.31	
Investments		
Magna Savings	2581.37	
Putnam Hi Income Gov't	22256.00	
A.G. Edwards Cash	7831.69	
1st National CD (3 @ 10,000)	30000.00	
Vanguard Securities	20000.00	
Petty Cash	25.00	
		\$ 87592.37

### Receipts

Interest	4698.55	
Membership	9800.00	
Donations/Memorials	336.13	
Fund Raising	5642.49	
Transfer of Funds	20000.00	\$ 40477.17

### Disbursements

Transfer of Funds	20000.00	
Newsletter	1465.52	
Dues	30.00	
Legal/Ins./Audit	1907.00	
Postage	413.70	
Office Supplies	147.11	
Telephone	383.36	
Utilities	5988.64	
Christmas Boutique	1034.63	
Victorian Tea	608.80	
M/M Millikin Days	165.23	
Art-On-Main Lunch Expense	283.75	
Grounds	603.73	
Cleaning	1930.35	
Repairs & Maintenance	368.43	
Annual Meeting	123.78	
Procurement	758.39	
Refund of Rentals	40.00	
Misc.	268.81	
		36521.23
		3955.94

### Fund Balances - March 31, 1994

Checking	7143.29	
Magna Savings	2657.75	
Putnam	22256.00	
A.G. Edwards	9466.27	
Vanguard	30000.00	
Strong	10000.00	
1st National	10000.00	
Petty Cash	25.00	
		91548.31

Charlotte Dipper – Treasurer

Non-Profit  
Organization  
Bulk Rate  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Decatur, IL 62521  
Permit 226

Decatur, Illinois 62525

P.O. Box 1501

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC.

## Restoration of the Dining Room Ceiling in Progress!

For the last couple of years the board had been exploring the possibility of restoring the dining room ceiling in the Homestead to its original splendor! A generous bequest from the estate of Richard Wood gave us the wherewithal to consider such an expensive project.

While the bequest will cover the major portion of the needed

funds; we gladly welcome additional donations for this exciting undertaking!

Let us bring you up-to-date on the progress made: In last November's newsletter you read about Bob Furhoff and his firm, Restoration of Interiors, of Chicago. Mr. Furhoff's "sleuthing" encouraged the Homestead board to proceed with the recreation of the dining room ceiling decoration. After analyzing core samples of wall and ceiling surfaces Mr. Furhoff submitted a written report of his findings together with a suggested course of action and a specific notation of craftsmen able to carry out the restoration. The

Thomas Melvin Studio in Chicago was subsequently contracted. This summer Lucien Kapp made a trip

to the studio to see samples of completed

projects involving

painting and/or stenciling skills. He was very favorably impressed, and the Homestead board decided to invite Mr. Melvin to Decatur to size up our project and to give us an estimate. We accepted his proposal in September and at our October board meeting examined a full scale oil sketch portraying one fourth of the ceiling's arbor like format. He and his assistants will recreate the original decorative motifs on canvas at their Chicago studio and then apply the painted canvas to our dining room ceiling. There is a good possibility that the project will be done by December 4, the Sunday of our Victorian Christmas Tea!!

