

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY

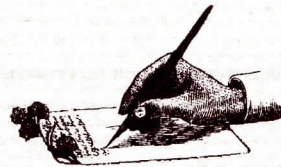
GAZETTE

Vol. XXII, No.1

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

July 1997

A Note From Your President...



Dear Homestead Members,

The adjustments have been made and your new Officers and Board Members have jumped into a new year.

This will be a year of rolling up our sleeves. During our past year an eight page listing of items which are needed to maintain and improve the Homestead was compiled by Lucien and Brigitta Kapp. A special committee has begun work on this list. At our first meeting each item on page 1 was considered and individuals from the committee were eager to indicate what should be done and willing to do it. Your expertise will be needed too. In the very near future we will be calling you to share decisions which have been made and how we plan to implement them. We will be happy to send you a special report which will include all of the items and the action plan which we will be using.

We know in some cases additional monies may be needed, but I feel if a person knows their money will be directed to a particular improvement they will be more willing to contribute.

Our window shutters are in need of being refurbished. The sun light has taken its toll over the years. This is just one of the items from our 8 page list.

Thanks for reading our newsletter. I'm looking forward to becoming better acquainted with all of you Please call me with suggestions or concerns which you may have.

Sincerely,
Jim Williams, President



Victorian Doll Tea

History – Greenwood Cemetery Tour Millikin-Aston Mausoleum

Editor's Note: Lynn Potter was the Homestead's representative to the Greenwood Cemetery Tour held in June. The Homestead is a member of the Heritage Network of Decatur and Macon County, who sponsored the tour. Following is her account of the Millikin's generosity to the Decatur Community.

James and Anna Millikin had no children or close family to leave their considerable estate to. James admitted that his biggest disappointment in life was not having any children. To ease his loneliness he adopted a large family - the people of Decatur. Like a good father would, he left his fortune to his adopted family requesting that they use it for the things he considered most important in life - mainly educational, cultural, and charitable activities. James was the wealthiest man in Macon County when he died, so the community of Decatur owes him a great debt of gratitude.

His greatest contribution to us and the one of which James was most proud was the project that began as a dream when he was

come from the same place in Pennsylvania and Anna had gone to school with James' sisters. They were soon married and set up housekeeping in a cottage on the corner of William and Edward.

In 1860 several members of the business community came to James and asked if he'd be willing to start a bank. Between 1857 and 1860 several banks in Decatur had failed and they felt the need of starting another one. Although he knew nothing of banking, James decided to give it a try. For 20 years he really didn't make a lot of money, but in the end the Millikin Bank was known as the soundest small bank in Illinois.

James was notorious for being frugal. One night he awoke to discover a strange

Victorian Doll Tea



The third Victorian Doll Tea was held on Saturday, May 31st at the Homestead. Each of the three sittings was well attended. A lovely "sit down" tea was served and enjoyed by all. Members of the Garden Club of Decatur graciously supplied flowers and the lovely miniature arrangements in the tea cups which graced each table.

Guests were invited to bring their dolls and Susan Phillips, a Decatur doll collector, strolled among the tea tables delighting owners with the history and value of their dolls. The displays of dolls included a collection of antique dolls owned by Susan Phillips; a collection of Madam Alexander Storybook dolls owned by Aretha Wiley of Sullivan; a large Georgian Colonial doll house made for the Moultrie County Historical Society and decorated by Marnie Elliot of Lovington; and a beautiful period miniature room exhibited by Helen's Country Collectibles of Decatur. Rounding out the displays was a collection of tea and demi-tasse cups and saucers on loan from Betty Ploeger and Mary Lou Snelson.

Door prizes were generously donated by Haines & Essick, The Red Geranium and Jane Jurgens. JBJ Collectors Mall in

Champaign donated a Victorian doll from the Bradley Co. which was auctioned off in a silent auction.

The tea was a great success in more than monetary ways. Many attending were first time visitors to the Homestead and expressed their interest in becoming members of the Homestead. One young lady, a 3rd grader, took great delight in showing her mother around the Homestead, saying, "I've been here before." She had - with her class for Mr. & Mrs. Millikin Days!



Chairman Betty Ploeger with Tea Party guests.

one of which James was most proud was the project that began as a dream when he was a young man. Having left college to go to work, he always said that if he became rich, he wanted to start a school where all young men and women could go and learn a vocation of their own choosing. He did get rich, he did start a school; and thousands of young men and women have indeed learned a vocation at Millikin University.

In 1899 James started the ball rolling to establish the Decatur School of Industrial Arts (later known as Millikin University) by sitting down and writing a check for \$100,000. In present day terms that would be like writing a check for over two and a half million dollars. Before the college became a reality, he personally had written checks for over \$400,000.

He was a relatively reserved man who, by most accounts, sought to avoid the publicity that comes with being a prominent citizen. The story is told that while passing by the college buildings under construction on West Main Street, he saw the workmen chiseling his name in stone across the front of the middle building. James made them remove his name and put "Liberal Arts Hall" in its place.

Keeping close tabs on the construction, he discovered that the building did not have a majestic appearance when viewed from the street because they were lower than the level of the street and looked as though they were in a hole. James' solution - he had West Main Street lowered so the buildings would look more prominent. Drive by Millikin and notice how high the elevation of the south side of the street is compared to the north side.

James was 31 when he came to Decatur in 1856. He had already amassed a small fortune of \$75,000 as a successful buyer and seller of livestock. He met a young woman named Anna Aston whose father was a minister in Mt. Zion. Even though they had not met until they came to Illinois, they had

James was notorious for being frugal. One night he awoke to discover a strange man in his bedroom and inquired what the man was doing there. The man responded that he had come to rob him as he no doubt had a lot of money since he owned a bank. But all that the robber found was 32 cents and a cheap pocket watch. James replied that he took just \$5 per week for "pocket money" and that was all he had left for that week. Also, the watch kept good time so he didn't need a more expensive one. The following week some men in Mt. Zion took up a collection and presented James with a "purse" of 32 cents to replace what he had lost.

His frugality is also shown by the fact he rode the street car to the bank every day rather than use his horse and carriage. One woman remembers that when she was a young girl he showed her how to stand sideways, down wind, next to the utility pole to ward off the cold wind while waiting for the streetcar. The Millikins never owned a car. It was too expensive and besides Anna didn't like the noise Mr. Mueller's automobile made. It scared their horses "Morning Star" and "Evening Star".

James seems to have been a very generous man who derived pleasure from helping other people. Performing his work to make whatever he did the best was very important to him. Anna was an educated rather independent woman. While James worked at the bank, she did more than her share of social work. During the Civil War she was one of the dedicated women who met the trains loaded with wounded soldiers passing through Decatur and gave them food and clothing. Anna established the Anna B. Millikin Home for widows and orphans. Being an artist at heart, she was a founder of the Decatur Art Club.

The Millikins were very generous to their adopted family - the community of Decatur. We owe you, James and Anna!

- Lynn Potter

Mr. & Mrs. Millikin Days

It always seems to me like spring has truly arrived when we conduct our special week for all the 3rd graders.

What a terrific time to see all of the smiling faces and all of our eager volunteers so willing to make a special day for the young people.

Our week began on April 28 and concluded on May 2. We had 38 classes come through which provided us with over 900 students for the week. At our Board Meeting in June we read all of the thank you notes which were mailed to us following the children's visit. We will pick out three thank you letters and award prizes to those students at our Christmas Tea.

Special thanks to the 33 volunteers who all showed up ready to perform in Oscar fashion. It was also great to have Jim Gresham from LSB provide a meal each day for our all day volunteers.

– Marilyn Shroyer
Jim Williams
Co-Chairman



Jeanette Bradley greeting the students as the door maid.



Warrensburg-Latham 3rd graders with Jane Lawson.

Thank You! Thank You!

My deepest thanks to my co-chairman Mrs. Mary Lou Snelson, and all those who so generously donated their time and their culinary talents for the Victorian Doll Tea. The tea would not have been possible without the efforts of all those who worked and contributed food. We all owe them a great debt of gratitude for their devotion to the Homestead.

Thank you so very much for all you've done!

Betty Ploeger, Chairman
Ways and Mean Committee

Scheduling

The total revenue from usage of the Homestead from May, 1996 to April, 1997 totaled \$4,628.54.

This amount included 23 rentals and 9 paid tours. This total was about \$900.00 higher than the previous year. Total number of events for this time period was 74. Approximately 3,515 people enjoyed the Homestead during the year.

Millikin's usage numbered 12 scheduled events. These events included New Parents' Receptions, Class Orientations, Faculty Department Meetings, and Family Weekend.

The number of people attending the 8 Public Tours which are held the last Sunday of the months of March through October was 192. Two dinners were held as donations to the March of Dimes and the Medical Alliance.

Several weddings were held at the Homestead this past year; the people involved in these affairs are always pleased with their choice of using the Homestead for their special days.

In addition to the rentals and paid tours, there were 24 no charge events.

– Donna Meinhold
Scheduling Chairman

Millikin Homestead 1997-1998

Board of Directors

Sue Beer
Jeannette Bradley
Dorothy Coutant
Ginger Fombelle
Robert Hantel
Mary Hill
Anne Hostetler
Lucien Kapp
John Krigbaum
Donna Meinhold
Betty Ploeger
Lynn Potter
Marilyn Shroyer
Lou Snelson
Jim Williams

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President – Jim Williams
Vice President – Bob Hantel
Secretary – Marilyn Shroyer
Treasurer – John Krigbaum

Non-Profit
Organization
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Decatur, IL 62521
Permit 226

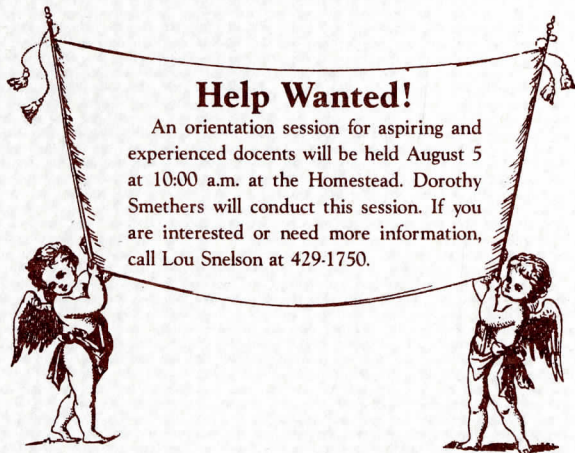
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JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC.
P.O. Box 1501
Decatur, Illinois 62525

Membership

Thanks to all of you who have renewed your yearly membership to the Homestead. Please look at the address label on the front of your newsletter. I have now placed the year above your name. If you have 1997-1998 on the label, your membership has been paid until May 1 of 1998. We do have some lag time between printing of the newsletter and the mailing, but if there is a problem please feel free to contact me at 422-7587. Membership forms are published in each newsletter for your convenience. Again, we appreciate the support of all of our members. Your membership fee helps us to maintain and improve the Homestead. We couldn't do it without you!

Anne Hostetler, Chairman



James Millikin Homestead, Inc.

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|--|--|
| <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)