

# James Millikin Homestead Gazette

VOLUME XLVI ISSUE IV 125 N. PINE STREET DECATUR, IL 62522

NOVEMBER 2021

## Upcoming Events

### Regular Open Houses

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Sunday, October 31, 2021

(last regular one until Spring)

Remember you can always

schedule a private tour

by contacting the Homestead at

217-422-9003 24-48 hours prior

of the desired time

### December 5

12:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Christmas Open House

### December 12

12 noon- 4pm

Sweet Treat Bakery

Drive-Through Pick Up

Pre-order & Pre-paid only

Order information in this

newsletter

### January 9

1-5pm

Nativity Display

\$10/person: children 10 and under

free

## It's that time of year...

The Board is excited to host several events to help you celebrate the holidays. The annual James Millikin Homestead Christmas Open House returns this season, the “Sweet Treats Bakery” will offer cookie trays, cashew brittle, and baklava for preorder and purchase, and “No Room at the Inn”, a wonderful exhibit of nativity sets, will be displayed at the Homestead. Due to COVID restrictions, a number of modifications have been made to maintain a safe, healthy, and enjoyable time for all. James & Anna’s home will be open to visitors for the Christmas Open House on Sunday, December 5 from 12:30 – 4 p.m. The Homestead will be lavishly decorated for the holidays, and our famous warm cider will be served. Plan to come by before or after Vespers or anytime in between to get in the holiday spirit.

The “Sweet Treats Bakery” will continue with the same format as last year—preorder and prepaid only with pickup on Sunday, December 12 from noon-4 p.m. Orders will be taken beginning November 1 and accepted thru December 1 (or until sold out). We encourage you to place your orders early, as all items are popular and available in limited quantities. An order form is included with this newsletter or may be downloaded from our website: [jamesmillikinhomestead.com](http://jamesmillikinhomestead.com)

And...back by popular demand is the event “No Room at the Inn.” Mark your calendars for January 9, 2022, as a collection of Nativity sets will be on display throughout the Homestead. If you are interested in displaying your Nativity set, please let us know and a board member will contact you. Watch for more details! We have missed you and look forward to celebrating the holidays with our members and friends.

## Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

Dr. Jim Reynolds and his wife Susan, the president and first lady of Millikin University, and Board members Brigitta Kapp and Joanne Kerper cut the ribbon and officially opened the Millikin Homestead History Room! A small reception was held to celebrate this event.

Here is a brief history of how this project came about:

In early 2020 the idea was born to create a history room/ exhibit space in the upstairs west bedroom, which had been part of the caretaker's apartment since renovations began in the 1970s.

Until then the small breakfast room, adjacent to the kitchen, was used to display historic photographs pertinent to the Millikins and their time.

Right on the heels of this decision to create the history room came Covid with all its restrictions.

Even though all public events/meetings were canceled we decided to go ahead with our plans. Covid rules were followed; workmen involved were masked and worked alone or in pairs. By August 2020 the room was finished, historic photos were hung, and the first small exhibit of newspaper articles told of the Homestead's fate from the death of the Millikins to 1975 when Junior Welfare committed to the restoration of the building. Currently, we have an exhibit of bookplates/ex libris which were popular through the centuries up until the 1930s. Interest revived in the 1950s and even now groups of collectors from all over the world exchange information and trade bookplates. This ex libris exhibit will make room for a display of antique Christmas ornaments and Victorian decorations in December.

## From the President's Desk

Fall is slowly getting a foothold in central Illinois these days: farmers harvesting in the fields, students returning to school, and birds migrating south (even our resident Cooper's Hawk pair and their brood have moved on). By the time this reaches you, we will have had the ribbon cutting on our new history room. If you haven't seen it already, be sure to stop by and check out the new exhibit on bookplates.

The return of the Millikin students to in-person classes on campus was a welcome sight this fall. The Millikin freshman volunteer day on August 20 was quite exciting, with 27 eager volunteers arriving at the Homestead!

Millikin Homecoming at the Homestead was slightly subdued, due to the rainy forecast (no carriage ride for Mr. and Mrs. Millikin, sob), but Mr. and Mrs. Millikin still welcomed a number of returning alumni to the Homestead for ice cream and tours.

We mailed out our annual appeals letter. Millikin Homestead memberships only cover about half of the basic operating costs for the Homestead, on an annual basis. We do not receive any money from Millikin University for basic operating costs at the Homestead and are dependent on your generosity to close the gap. Thanks to Hickory Point Bank for helping us with this project this year. And thank you, dear reader, for your consideration of this effort. See you at the holidays!



## Millikin Freshman Volunteer Day

August 20, bright and early, 27 Millikin University freshmen arrived for a day of community volunteer action. A big acknowledgment to the Millikin University Office of Engagement and Student Affairs for assembling an excellent group. The first-year seminar course that worked at the Homestead was Dr. Eric Roark's class, and the student leaders that mentored the group were Page Shields and Madelyn Alvarado. The students participated in a variety of projects at the Homestead, ranging from window and shutter cleaning on the inside to weeding and trimming outside in the garden, with Deb Scheiter leading the charge out there. It was a hot day, but their enthusiasm and energy were boundless! It's always interesting to get to know what brings new students to Millikin and where they come from. The answers were amazingly diverse. The interest ranges from pursuing careers in theatrical production to cybersecurity and they hail from all over the US and some foreign lands.

During breaks, Brigitta Kapp provided the students with insights into the life of James Millikin, his home, and the founding of the university. Of course, every old house must have a ghost story, which led to discussions of the Homestead's role as a hospital during the Spanish Flu epidemic. The adventurous few took a tour of the basement to check for any remaining ghosts! The Homestead would like to thank Donna Williams, our board president, for coordinating this work day. WAND TV and the Herald & Review interviewed the students. What a great bunch of young people!

Thanks for Supporting the Homestead  
as an Organizational Member!



**HICKORY**  
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## Around the House - Humidity Control

Your James Millikin Homestead is an institution that cares for a collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, or historical importance and makes them available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary.

One of the main problems that museums like ours can face is how to exhibit in a way that no deterioration or other negative effects the Homestead's art, furniture, and all things organic including quilts, fabrics, letters, photos, and so much more.

The effective safekeeping of our collection is a prime objective of your Board of Directors. By providing the best environmental conditions possible we protect against the decline of unreplaceable items.

The major agents of deterioration are:

- **Relative humidity (RH) – Light**
- **Temperature – Air pollution**

We will focus here on relative humidity.

### Relative Humidity

Relative humidity will cause structure change or a physical deterioration to the object.

### High Humidity:

- Will promote the chemical reactions as chemical reactions require water.
- Can encourage mold and other biological threats.
- Rust and other corrosion occur at high humidity levels.

### Low Humidity:

- Can cause organics artifacts to crack.
- Embrittlement of fibers.
- Doll pins to shrink.
- Plaster dries below tolerance with micro fissures.

- Varnish and paint dehydrate and micro-cracks form.

### Fluctuating Humidity:

- Can crush or fracture organic materials.
- Cause for layered organic materials to delaminate.
- Promotes the loosening of joints.

"Generally, it is accepted that a humidity level of between 40% and 65% is suitable for a museum environment. Low Relative Humidity (RH) causes materials to dry out and contract. Glues and repairs may dry out become brittle and break, this includes veneers on wooden objects which may lift, doll pinned furniture, art frames. It becomes clear that stability is a crucial factor in RH management..."<sup>1</sup>

**Our largest concern at the Homestead is winter days when RH often falls below 20% and we have found RH below 10% on occasions. With the cost of utilities rising, we set the thermostats to 62° F when no one is in the Home, as cooler air holds less moisture the RH falls naturally. Additionally, there is no daily bathing or showers, no laundry washed, and no cooking.**

**We have been in contact with heating contractors for the best ideas to increase humidity levels in the homestead for wintertime. We are applying for grant funds to address the dry winter conditions in the Homestead.**

**Look for this to be a multi-phase project that may carry over more than one fiscal year.**

<sup>1</sup> Preservationist Equipment,  
<https://www.preservationequipment.com/Blog/Blog-Posts/Managing-Relative-Humidity-and-Temperature-in-Museums-and-Galleries>

**Flag Pole Project - Update** We had hoped to celebrate the History Room opening and the completion of Flag Pole project at the same time, but due to delays the flag pole project has been divided into 2 phases. This fall the area was delineated, excavated and filled with gravel. Next spring landscaping will take place.

We are looking forward to the finished product which will be well worth the wait.



James Millikin Homestead, Inc.

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Please consider making your support of the James Millikin Homestead a part of your legacy by including the Homestead in your estate planning.



Not a member of the James Millikin Homestead?

Memberships are inexpensive and the support you provide through a membership is immeasurable. Please contact the Homestead for more information.



Stay in touch with the James Millikin Homestead:

Facebook: James Millikin Homestead

Instagram: @jamesmillikinhomestead

Website: jamesmillikinhomestead.com

Email: jamesmillikin1876@gmail.com

Phone: 217-422-9003

Please leave a message and your call will be returned.

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**Mission  
Statement**

Through the preservation of the Homestead, we engage, educate, and entertain visitors with the stories of the Millikins and Decatur.  
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