

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



GAZETTE



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JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

April 1988

A Note From Your President...

Once again it is time for me to say good-bye as outgoing president. This time I am also leaving the board, as I have served the maximum board term allowed. It has been a wonderful experience serving as a board member for the past seven years. I have served as program chairman, scheduling chairman, Victorian Tea chairman, Victorian Tea Boutique chairman, long-range planning chairman, as well as served as your president for three terms. My hours spent working at or for the Homestead have been enjoyable, rewarding and productive. I feel fortunate to have made so many "Homestead" friends over the years! It is with regret that I must leave the board, but I plan on remaining an active Homestead member! I leave knowing the board is in good hands with incoming President Sid Shonkwiler. Sid's capabilities, energy and enthusiasm will insure another successful year for JMH. A very good slate of officers and board members will make her job pleasant and hopefully easy. Welcome to new board members Louise Wells, William McGaughey, and Charlotte Dipper. These three dynamic people will be a great asset to the continuing board members. A big "thank you" to all who accepted the commitment of an office or board position!! Extra special thanks to Marilyn Loofbourrow for accepting a second three-year term. Her knowledge and dedication as Homestead Historian can never be replaced! We are confident she will be coming

100 Years Under The Dome

The 12th annual meeting of the James Millikin Homestead, Incorporated, will be held Thursday, April 28, 1988. Starting at 7 pm, it will consist of a brief business meeting and then go on to feature our guest speaker Mark Sorensen.

Mr. Sorensen will be speaking on "The Illinois State Capitol: One Hundred Years Under the Dome." He will expand on the research and work that went into the current restoration of the Capitol, and show us the similarities between that work and the restoration of the Homestead.

Mark Sorensen is Assistant Director of the Illinois State Archives in Springfield. This office is under control of Secretary of State Jim Edgar. From 1982 to 1987, Mr. Sorensen supervised the inventorying of records for all state and local government agencies in Illinois. His

present position concerns outreach and educational programs in the State Archives. His responsibilities center on preparations for the observation of the Capitol Centennial during 1988 and researching the history of the current State House.

A former District #61 and Richland Community College instructor, Mr. Sorensen has a M.A. in history from Sangamon State University. He resides in Decatur with his wife and two daughters. He presently serves on the Decatur Leadership Institute Steering Committee and is President of the Decatur Public Library Board of Trustees.

Please come to the meeting for an evening of Illinois history, good refreshments and interesting companionship. Your presence will insure that it will be a special evening. See you then!

Art Class Coffee

Did you know that the Decatur Art Class founded over 100 years ago by a group of ladies that included Anna Millikin still exists today? It is a small but dedicated group of ladies that meet on a regular basis to expand their horizons in many fields of study. It was the pleasure of the Homestead Board to invite the Art Class to tea on March 15th.

Nine ladies joined the board for a morning of tea, fellowship and further expansion of their horizons. This time Barbara Hackel, a local authority on Oz, presented an entertaining and educational program about the wonderful world of Oz. Many of us never knew Oz existed beyond the original book and the 1939 movie, and we were surprised to discover over 40 Oz books have been published by more than six authors! And imagine our surprise to learn there were other Oz movies . . . and as early as 1910!

Everybody enjoyed learning and sharing Oz information. We found ourselves transported somewhere over the rainbow, and enjoyed the land of Oz we discovered.

Barbara was first introduced to the wonderful world of Oz by her father at the age of three. Over the years they explored Oz together and shared new finds. Together they collected the many volumes and Oz memorabilia that Barbara shared with the board and the Art Class members.

Hettie B. Aston's Household Hints



Bartlett Aston, we find a few clues to housewifery in the year of Anna's marriage. Since the publisher erred and printed a few pages upside down, these were easy to find and Hettie thriftily used them to record some favorite tips. On the flyleaf she also penned

Spring Rummage Sale

replaced! We are grateful she will be serving the next three years in that capacity.

As happy as we are to welcome the new members, it is still difficult to say good-bye to members who have served in the past. Marge Wollrab, who graciously filled in an unexpired term, is leaving. We appreciate her help in so many ways this past year! Kathy Green, forced to retire due to poor health, has served the past three years. Always a willing tour guide, Kathy made every Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days or potluck more fun. She could always be found helping in the kitchen or guiding people thru the Homestead, and will be missed! Saying good-bye to Joan Cordes is especially difficult. Joan has served the past six years, and has worked in so many capacities that she will be very hard to replace. Where will JMH find a superb newsletter editor/procurement chairman/rummage sale co-chairman/secretary/vice-president/corresponding secretary/tour guide/you-name-it, she-does-it person? Joan has always taken care of details, volunteered her husband countless times, decorated the Homestead for Christmas both inside and out, and generally done just about everything! Thanks, Joan! Everybody will miss you!

For any of you who missed picking up your annual ornament, they will be for sale at our annual meeting and at our regular monthly open houses.

Please mark your calendar for April 28th. At 7 pm the 12th Annual Meeting will be called to order. After a brief report on the past year by committee chairmen, we will have a special program called "The Illinois State Capitol: One Hundred Years Under the Dome." It will be given by Mark Sorensen. While many of you may know Mark as a past history teacher for the Decatur Public School, he is currently Assistant Director of the Illinois State Archives. Given his love of history and exceptional resources, we can count on an interesting and informative evening. Afterwards, you can enjoy refreshments and chatting with friends. It promises to be an enjoyable evening, and I hope YOU will join us then!

Barbara Hackel, President



At the sight of the first robin, the mid-nineteenth century housewife fortified herself with a tonic, armed herself with a carpet beater and set about a ritual we still know well: spring cleaning. But what a difference then and now!

When James and Anna Millikin were married in 1857 and for long after, elbow grease supplied the energy to do the work and the general store and drug store, the raw ingredients for most cleaning compounds, which the housewife concocted herself.

No electrical appliances, running water or professional cleaners eased the task. Nor were there a myriad of commercial cleaning solutions, forever "new and improved," from which to choose. Ingenuity, word-of-mouth and carefully saved newspaper clippings and handwritten notes long preserved the hard-earned knowledge of how to clean or repair all sorts of household necessities.

In the latter part of the century every home boasted at least one hefty volume with a title like *Dr. Chase's Receipt Book and Household Physician*, containing a wealth of every kind of advice from the preparation of culinary delicacies through recipes for glue and furniture polish to health care and instructions on raising crops and livestock. Whether for man or beast, the book had an answer.

Between its pages the householder would tuck his or her prized "how-to" notes and clippings and perhaps even a four-leaf clover to press.

No such book survives for us from the household of James and Anna Millikin. But we do know that Anna did not like the heavy, dusty drapes usual for her time and preferred, instead, the shutters that shade the Homestead today. The Millikins were inclined to save their pennies and were not lavish in hiring household help. At least in the twenty years the Millikins spent in a cottage before moving to the Homestead, we can imagine Anna herself leading the charge to disperse the dirt and grime of winter. The daughter of a Presbyterian minister of modest means, she was no stranger to rolling up her sleeves to work.

In the 1857 diary of Anna's mother, Hettie

the recommendation for a tonic, "Williams Root & Fir Balsam, Spring Oil for dyspepsia."

She took her home-making suggestions seriously enough to write in a proper title, "Sundry Useful Receipts," and in her own words, here are her household hints, vintage 1857:

"Sundry Useful Receipts

- A hot shovel held over varnished furniture will take out white spots.
- A bit of glue dissolved in skim milk and water will restore old crape [crepe, a fabric].
- Ribbons of any kind should be washed in cold soap suds and not rinsed.
- If your flat irons are rough, rub them well with fine salt.
- If you are buying a carpet for durability, choose small figures.
- Wood ashes and clay and common salt wet with water will stop the cracks of a stove and prevent the smoke from escaping.
- Half a cranberry bound on a corn will soon kill it.
- Black varnish—Lac (sic) dissolved in alcohol and colored with lamp black. Use with a brush.
- To cure distemper in horses: Give a desert (sic) spoonful of powdered gum myrrh once a day for a week in bran or meal.
- To cure hoarseness: The whites of two eggs beaten with two spoonfuls of white sugar, a little nutmeg; and a pint of warm water. Stir well & drink often. It will cure.
- To bore a hole through glass with a common drill: Keeping one or two drops of spirits of turpentine on the glass at the point of the drill.
- No manure so well worth saving as fallen leaves."

Hettie's very short aphorisms were probably shaped by her tiny diary, barely large enough to accommodate a four-leaf clover itself. She probably accumulated numerous other "Sundry Useful Receipts" in a more commodious tome. And, undoubtedly, she passed along just such hints as those above and many more to the young bride, "Annie."

Marilyn Loofbourrow, Historian

It's that time of year again . . . you know . . . Spring! The flowers are starting to bloom, the robins have returned, it has finally gotten warmer and you know what that means! It's time to air out the house and do some spring cleaning. While you are cleaning out boxes, drawers and shelves, please think of the Homestead. We are planning another rummage sale on May 14th, and could use your castaways. Our only restriction is no clothing—unless it is vintage or a costume. Other than that, anything goes. This year's co-chairmen have set the date of Monday, May 9th, as drop-off day. That means from 9 am until 5 pm they will be at the Homestead to receive your treasures and help you unload. Please come to the basement entrance. If you need to arrange another time to deliver your items or need help in transporting items, please call Sid (423-5912) or Joan (428-9092). We appreciate your support of this annual event both in contributions and patronage at the sale. So mark the 9th and 14th on your calendar . . . see you then!

Sid Shonkwiler and Joan Cordes



Nominating Committee 1988 Report

The 1988 Nominating Committee would like to submit the following slate of officers and board members for your approval:

President - Sid Shonkwiler
Vice President - Dave Robertson
Secretary - Jane Welch
Treasurer - Betsy Empen

Three-year board terms:
Louise Wells
William McGaughey
Charlotte Dipper

Second three-year board term:
Marilyn Loofbourrow

Betsy Empen, Nominating Chairman
Nancy Eichenauer
Terrie Potter
Joan Cordes



Don't Neglect to Sweep Your Serge

Despite the inventions of Thomas Edison and others, the latter years of the 19th century hardly became "hi-tech" for the housewife. She was still the power behind her few appliances and dependent on books like *Dr. Chase's Receipt Book and Household Physician*, published in several editions from the 1860's-1880's.

Just one of the housewife's many concerns was the care of clothing. A good example of the state of the art in this realm is found in a section by Dr. Chase on "The Care and Manner of Doing Over Black Silk, Cashmere, Alpaca, Serge and Lawn Dresses," which he acknowledged to have taken from no less an authority than *Harper's Bazaar* magazine.

Black was a fashion favorite with which Hettie B. Aston, mother of Anna Millikin, was well acquainted, as Hettie's 1857 diary would indicate. The diary also suggests that Hettie spent a fair amount of time sewing for herself and Anna.

In February, 1857, Hettie wrote, "Made black baste [basting]. Tired and blind." In March she commenced sewing a "bask." Later she commented, "Working on bask. Not done. Do not like it." By Mar. 17, things were worse. "Bask not done. Fixing and fixing until tis spoilt."

Come May, Hettie noted, "Cut out black silk dress. Don't know when I will get it made," and several days later, "Trying to make my dress. Make poor progress for many reasons and a very great difficulty, poor sight." Whether the dress turned out better than the "bask," she never said.

After all the trouble in sewing a dress, black especially, Hettie and Anna could look forward to caring for it in the manner suggested by Dr. Chase as recommended in *Harper's Bazaar*:

"No lady should ever don alpaca, cashmere or serge without giving it a thorough dusting with broom or brush. Dust permitted to settle in the folds of pleat or shirring will soon be impossible to remove entirely and give the whole gown that untidy air so much to be deprecated in everything pertaining to a lady's person.

"But after constant use for months or maybe a year, the most carefully kept black dress will begin to show the effect in a certain rustiness of hue and general dinginess of aspect, if no place is actually rubbed or worn.

"Now is the time to expend a little skill and ingenuity in its renovation, when the economist may be rewarded by coming out in an old dress made new, sure of eliciting the admiration of at least all those who are in the secret.



"For the undertaking, provide yourself with ten cents' worth of soap bark, procurable at an herb or drug store, and boil it in 1 qt. hot water. Let it steep awhile, then strain into a basin for use. If the job is to be a perfect and thorough one, take the body and sleeves apart and to pieces; rip off the trimming from skirt and over-skirt. Brush off all loose dust first; then with a sponge dipped in the soap decoction, wipe over each piece thoroughly, folding

up as you proceed. Smooth over every piece on the wrong side, even silk trimmings. When you have once more put it together, you will be amazed to see the results of the simple process.

"One advantage of taking the whole dress apart is that, by putting the trimming on in some style a little different from what it was at first, the attraction of novelty is added to make the effect more pleasing.

I have seen a cashmere, worn two whole winters, taken apart and treated this way, and the closest observer would have supposed the dress put on for the first time, such was its soft fresh look and the vividness of the black.

"When a black lawn has become limp, tumbled and generally forlorn-looking, the best mode of treatment is, first, a submersion in a pan of warm water colored highly with indigo, then exposure to the sun until just dampness enough is left to press it to advantage with a hot iron; and if this is carefully done, the lawn will come forth quite fresh, stiff and renovated from its blue bath and again do good service.

"Every particle of dust should be removed from a black silk or poplin every time it is worn for nothing cuts either up so soon as these often imperceptible little gritty motes with which the air of a city is filled where coal is in such universal use."

In another section Dr. Chase proffered this additional tip, "A most satisfactory way to renovate old silks is to boil an old kid glove in 1 pt. of soft water until the glove shrinks to the size of a 4-year-old child's hand. The liquor will then be glutinous; when cold, having brushed out every particle of dust, sponge the silk thoroughly."

After one more complex receipt for touching up spots that had faded, that was it for black.

Now, if the housewife were planning to clean brown linen, scarlet flannels, brocade shawls, lace veils, white lawn or a variety of other fabrics and colors, she found herself launched on separate new adventures for each.

Marilyn Loofbourrow, Historian

A Ticklish Business

"Old feather beds may be renovated or cleaned very satisfactorily by putting them out during a heavy shower, turning, to give both sides a good soaking. And the author can't see, if it does not rain when and as hard or as long as it is desired for this purpose, why a woman can't get up a good 'heavy shower' of her own by means of plenty of warm water and the ordinary house or garden sprinkler; she certainly could and I think be better than the natural cold shower. Dry thoroughly in the sun, beating with a stick to loosen up the feathers as you do a carpet to get out the dust. The bed may lay upon the ground to receive the water, but should be placed upon slats or sticks across chairs, or something of this character, while drying."

—*Dr. Chase's Receipt Book and Household Physician*,
ca. 1885



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