

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY

GAZETTE

Vol. XIII, No. 2 (XIV/1)

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

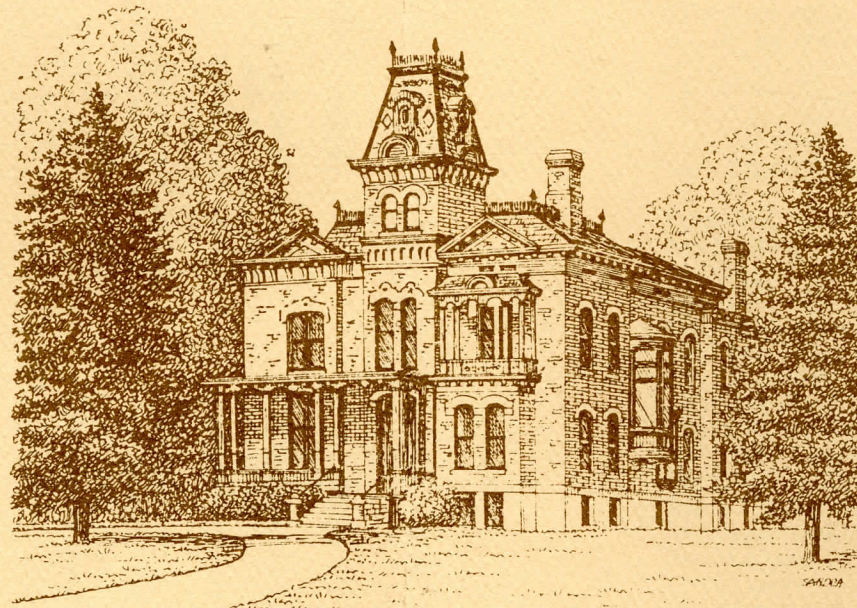
July 1989

A Note From Your President . . .

The year 1989-90 is well underway at the Homestead and promises to be just as exciting and rewarding as the last. Our new board members, elected in April, have been properly welcomed, oriented and initiated into our roster of committee and project chairmen. I feel privileged to preside over a board of such enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. We're looking forward together to a year of restoring, maintaining and enjoying the Homestead and we're hoping to entertain and enjoy our members—each and every one of you—at some point during the year.

As you'll see elsewhere in the Gazette, our relationship with the Garden Club of Decatur is growing and flourishing, much to our delight. Our cutting gardens are doing well in their second year and their flowers will decorate the Homestead thanks to the considerable talents and labors of these dedicated ladies. On our grounds also, I must note, Bill McGaughey has been a faithful and knowledgeable one-man flag squad. Ours was one of the few flags in the city which was properly lowered to half-mast until noon for the traditional observance of Memorial Day.

At this time, the Homestead has a fairly small, but growing core of very active and wonderfully dependable volunteers. On behalf of the board, I would like to invite anyone else who would like to become more



The Millikin's Invite Third Graders To Their Home

The Homestead's Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days will be held October 16, 17, 19 and 20. Decatur third graders take a step back in time when they visit the Homestead and meet the Millikins.

Mr. and Mrs. Millikin and their maids are played by volunteers dressed in period costumes. The children see the dining room set with Mrs. Millikin's best china. They listen and sing to a pump organ, watch the kitchen maid prepare dinner and hear about the history of the home, its owners and their lifestyle.

Anyone interested in volunteering in this most rewarding project please call co-chairmen Lois Wells 428-0805 or Wilma Sanner 422-7326.

Now Available—New Notes

Do you need a hostess gift, memento for out-of-town company, a bridge prize, birthday present? For any of these occasions — or just for yourself — we suggest a box of "informals" from the Homestead.

We needed notes for Homestead correspondence—thank yous and the like—so we commissioned Hometown Prints of Hayward, Wisconsin to render the Homestead (shown above). On tan paper with brown ink, we think they are very nice. With 15 notes and envelopes to a box, they are available in the Homestead library (or by calling any board

Who Does What At The Homestead — 1989

So that you might know who to call with a question or problem:

President - Sid Shonkwiler

Vice President - Dave Robertson

Secretary - Jane Welch

Treasurer - Bill McGaughey

Scheduling Chairmen - Nancy Eichenauer and Wilma Sanner

Grounds - Dave Robertson

Other board members who would be happy to help you:

Charlotte Dipper

Marilyn Loofbourrow

Sonja Rathje

Gerald Redford

Jane Welch

Lois Wells

At this time, the Homestead has a fairly small, but growing core of very active and wonderfully dependable volunteers. On behalf of the board, I would like to invite anyone else who would like to become more involved at the Homestead to volunteer—your ideas and time could be put to good use tour guiding, Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days “acting”, gardening, silver polishing or weed pulling. Please call Jane Lawson, our volunteer chairman (1-767-2761) or me (423-5912) to let us know you’re interested.

Since the time of the annual meeting, we are sorry to inform you that a board member has resigned. Due to schedule conflicts and the demands of her job at the Y.W.C.A., Shirley Kraft has left the board, but will continue to volunteer as a tour guide. Shirley as well as her husband, Burnell, have been great supporters of Homestead projects such as the Whodunit and Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days. Thanks, Shirley!

As you’ll notice, I’m sure, we’ve changed our policy a bit and have included a listing of current Homestead members in this issue of the Gazette. It is our hope that this will give you a little more timely feedback as to your membership status. If you haven’t yet sent your 1989-90 membership (tax deductible) donation, we are still near the beginning of our April through March membership year so there’s plenty of time to join. We’ll publish a supplementary list in our next issue. Watch for it in November. Remember, it’s important for you to “belong” to the Homestead because the Homestead “belongs” to us all . . . and needs us each and every one!

Sid Shonkwiler, President

THE JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD
IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
THE LAST SUNDAY
OF EACH MONTH
(MARCH THROUGH OCTOBER)
2 TO 4 P.M.

Hayward, Wisconsin to render the Homestead (shown above). On tan paper with brown ink, we think they are very nice. With 15 notes and envelopes to a box, they are available in the Homestead library (or by calling any board member) for \$4.00 a box. Also available are Zonta’s postcards and notes featuring a likeness of their Decatur quilt, and Homestead ornament suncatchers in brass or glass.

Historic Decatur

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency has kindly given us an abundance of copies of the December, 1988 issue of their publication, “Historic Illinois”. This issue is quite interesting to Decaturites and Homestead supporters because it contains articles about the Homestead and the homes on adjacent Millikin Place. These are available for the asking at the Homestead.

“New” Addition

The history room is graced by a beautiful mahogany table which was left to the James Millikin Homestead by Mrs. Edith M. Metham McNabb.

Mrs. McNabb and her husband were long-time Decatur residents. The McNabbs lived at 746 West Harrison, which is reported to be the oldest residence in Macon County. Mr. and Mrs. McNabb were professors at Millikin University for many years. Mrs. McNabb was a professor of speech emeritus. After retiring from Millikin, she had an active second and even third career with the library system and senior citizen services at Richland and in the community. She was reportedly a remarkable woman.

The table is very interesting! It is in a very good condition and is being used as a display area in the history room. Closed, its top measures 17½”x35½”. The top will lift up to resemble a writing table. If more space is needed the top opens completely and rotates to provide a 35½” square surface. We are not sure if this would be classed as a tilt-top table, library table, writing table or pedestal table, but it is very nice.

Wyllene Griffy,
House/Restoration

Treasurer - Bill McGaughey

Scheduling Chairmen - Nancy Eichenauer and Wilma Sanner

Grounds - Dave Robertson

House - Wyllene Griffy

Membership Chairman - Betsy Empen

Volunteers - Jane Lawson

Gerald Redford

Jane Welch

Lois Wells



History—

The Tale of George Washington At The Homestead

One of the curious tales to be told of the Millikin Homestead is of the finding in it of a letter signed by George Washington, no less than the father of our country. We can’t boast that he slept here as many old Colonial homes in the East do, but his signature did repose in the Homestead on a letter to Anna Millikin’s Revolutionary War ancestor, Captain William Bartlett, ship owner, privateer and patriot. The captain was Anna’s great grandfather. It seems appropriate in July to relate the story of this Revolutionary hero and Anna’s Bartlett ancestry.

The letter from Washington, dated November 4, 1775, was found when the Homestead attic was being cleaned in 1924. It is now in a small but special collection of Presidential autographs preserved by the Birks Museum of Millikin University. Framed between two pieces of glass, the letter is browned and torn at the folds, but still ranks highly as a collector’s item, both for the fact that the Washington signature is intact and because the content is so relevant to the Revolution. The letter seems to have passed down in the Bartlett family to Anna’s mother, Hettie Bartlett Aston, who came to live at the Homestead with the Millikins. Hettie did not automatically receive the letter as the eldest in her family, for she was the seventh of twelve children. But her 1857 diary, now in possession of the Homestead, reveals that Hettie went to stay with her mother, Betsey Corey Bartlett, in Ohio in Betsey’s last illness, closing the old family home at her mother’s death. Even if Hettie were not fully aware of the historical value of the Washington letter, it

would have been natural for her to keep what were her grandfather’s papers and bring them back to Illinois.

Captain Bartlett (1741-1794) was the fourth generation of the Bartletts in America, the descendant of a sea-faring family of Massachusetts. The Bartlett family saga is told in *Dawes-Gates Ancestral Lines, Gates and Allied Families, Vol. II*, privately printed by a family member in 1931.

The emigrant of the line was John Bartlett, son of William and Edith Bartlett of Frampton, co. Dorset, England. About 1660 he settled at Marblehead, Mass., as a cod fisherman and shared the hard life of most of the men of the town. He married Bethia Devereaux, daughter of another fisherman. The youngest of their three children, William, married yet another fisherman’s daughter, Mary Andrews. William broke the mold, however, as a tallow-candler and tanner. The eldest of the eight children of William and Mary, also William, returned to the occupation of mariner and was called captain. He married Anna Ober and purchased for their home one built by her father at Beverly, Mass., on a street that came to be known as Bartlett Street. Two more generations of the family were born in this house. Captain Bartlett died about 1760 in Quebec while it was under siege by the British against the French. It is presumed that he died in the service of the British.

The only child of William and Anna was Captain William Bartlett who would serve his new country in the Revolution. William, born 1741, married Joanna Herrick, the daughter of another Revolutionary War figure, Col., Henry

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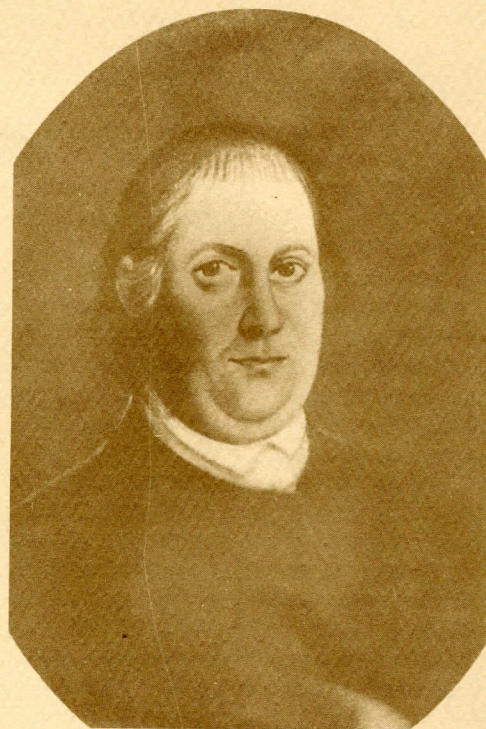
Herrick, and lived at Beverly. William was a mariner and merchant, co-owner of at least four known ships. He had an interest in the East India trade. With other shipmasters he formed an association, "The Marine Society at Salem in New England," to share navigational information and aid needy member families. He was one of the first officers of the Society, which lasted over 100 years. He seems to have prospered, for in 1774 his was one of three homes that were robbed of money and "a large amount of silver."

Also in 1774 Bartlett became a member of the "committee of correspondence and safety" to take steps to protect the port of Beverly from the British. Soon after, he put his own ships to use for the benefit of the Colonies, as a privateer. With no navy of its own, the Continental Congress commissioned private merchant ships, which continued to carry cargo but, outfitted with guns, also sailed under letters of "marque" to attack and bring in British ships. The captured ships and cargos were sold for "prize money" which went to the owners or "privateers." Nevertheless, privateering was not particularly lucrative for most; too many ships were lost in the conflict.

In 1775 General Washington arranged for the appointment of suitable prize or naval agents in all the leading Massachusetts ports. William Bartlett was selected for Beverly. He wrote his thanks to Washington and informed him of the capture of a vessel. In reply, Washington instructed his officer Stephen Moylan to write the following message later to be found in the Homestead, which Washington counter-signed for emphasis:

"I am commanded by his Excellency to acknowledge your favor of yesterday . . . which brings an account of a sloop from Boston . . . having fallen into our hands . . . get an accurate inventory of all the goods on board . . . He desires me, sir, to assure you he approves much of your conduct in this affair . . . As to the people found on board . . . giving the best security they can that they will not act against America, they be discharged . . . except the Captain and owner who you will please to send to headqrs for examination . . ."

Beverly earned the reputation for taking in more captured vessels than any other port and was called the headquarters for the infant Col-



Captain William Bartlett
1741-1794

onial navy. But the service that Bartlett and others rendered to their country as privateers brought financial disaster to them at the end of the war. Many of their best ships were captured or lost, and the remaining, in poor repair. In addition, it was those persons with the greatest patriotism who most willingly accepted in payment the Continental paper currency which became virtually worthless with no treasury or taxation to back it.

Captain Bartlett was among the multitude who faced financial failure. He signed most of his property over to his creditors and made plans to emigrate to the new "country," the



Joanna (Herrick) Bartlett
1745-1810

"Ohio." He bought one share in the Ohio Company which represented about 1200 acres. In 1789 George Washington, according to his own diary, toured New England and made a special detour to Beverly to call on "his friends," ship owners George Cabot and William Bartlett. But the Bartlett family had already left for the West on May 25, 1788. They sailed from the Bartlett wharf to Philadelphia, then traveled over land by wagon to Westmoreland Co., Pa. Here, because of Indian unrest in Ohio, they made what was intended as a temporary stop, but, for whatever reason, they stayed on and Pennsylvania

became their home. They lived near Sumrell's Ferry, where Captain Bartlett died in 1794.

Bartlett had brought with him to Pennsylvania a letter of recommendation from a Massachusetts colleague which reveals something of his circumstances:

"This will be handed to you by our friend, William Bartlett, Esq., with whom we have been long . . . acquainted and for whom we have great esteem. He has been in affluent circumstances, but unfortunately confiding too much in public credit and suffering greatly in navigation, he is reduced to the alternative of leading this place . . . to seek a subsistence on the banks of the Ohio, or to remain here in a situation so much below those of his connections and acquaintances as to be truly humiliating to a person of sensibility. However, he goes under pretty good advantage in point of property. He was ever considered as a gentleman of probity and strictly honest in his dealings. His circumstances in life have always been such, till now, as to preclude the necessity of manual labor, and his character, education and capacity entitle him to any place of trust that his friends can bestow . . . Mrs. Bartlett is a woman of excellent character and a most amiable disposition."

Joanna Bartlett's disposition was evidenced in a letter of 1789 to a sister in Massachusetts, when she wrote, "I don't intend to go to the 'Back woods,' as they call it here, till the spring, when I hope to see the beautiful banks of the Ohio. Then I hope to have a house once more for now I am like a bird of passage. (Though) I can't say I once wished myself back again (in Massachusetts)."

William and Joanna had eight children. Son Henry married Betsey Cory in Pennsylvania. In 1797 Henry and Betsey settled in Athens Co., Ohio, on land where his parents had intended to live. A school teacher, Henry also served as a county official and mayor of the town of Athens. To shelter his twelve children, he built one of the first brick residences erected at Athens. From this house the Washington letter to Captain Bartlett, must have traveled with Henry's daughter Hettie to its resting place in Illinois.

Marilyn Loofbourrow,
Historian

Garden Club to "Say It With Flowers"

Our grande old lady, the Millikin Homestead, is going to be all decked out his year in her "Sunday best," perhaps as we have never seen her before!

The success of last year's cooperative effort between the Garden Club of Decatur and the Homestead board to raise and preserve flowers for use in the Homestead has brought a new offer by the Garden Club to provide Victorian-style dried floral arrangements for decoration throughout the house this fall.

Shirley Renshaw and Vivian Kurtz will chair a committee of about 15 Garden Club members who have volunteered to share their talents in arranging appropriate floral pieces for the Homestead. Homestead board member Marilyn Loofbourrow will act as liaison to the club to assist in procurement of materials and placement of arrangements. Board member Bill McGaughey will also serve as liaison to coordinate care of the flower bed planted by the Garden Club for the Homestead.

Shirley and Vivian were among Garden Club members who contributed a number of floral arrangements last year. Vivian has been involved with the planting and care of the flower bed this year and last. Shirley created and contributed the spectacular dried flower centerpiece presently in use in the dining room. She also worked with Marilyn Loofbourrow to decorate the remainder of the dining room for the Victorian Christmas tea.

The work of Shirley, Vivian and other Garden Club members has brought many comments of approval and we know, with their contributions, we will have a real treat in store for Homestead supporters and visitors again this season.

Arrangements will not necessarily be reproductions of period pieces but in the spirit of the Victorian era. Shirley believes that most arrangements will last two to three years. Besides the flowers available from the Homestead bed, the committee foresees the need for a larger quantity and more varieties to assist in their best efforts. Donations from Homestead members of the following, and other, hang-dried flowers will be very much appreciated:



A bug's eye view of the Homestead garden.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Amaranthus | goldenrod |
| Artemisia & Dusty Miller | herbs |
| dried artichoke | Money Plant |
| astilbe | hydrangea |
| Baby's Breath | lavender |
| Bells of Ireland | Pampas grass |
| cockscomb | pomegranate |
| chrysanthemum | roses |
| delphinium | rose hips |
| globe amaranth | teasel |
| statice | wood roses |
| strawflowers | yarrow |
| globe thistle | |

So, as your garden grows—silver bells, cockle shells and all—keep in mind flowers to preserve for the Homestead. Most will dry quite well by having their stems fastened together and hung in a location with low humidity and low exposure to light. For many varieties, the removal of leaves before drying helps reduce shattering.

The Garden Club and Homestead also will welcome the donation to the Homestead of appropriate containers and other materials to assist in the decorating project. The Garden Club suggests:

- Containers that are Victorian-looking: pressed glass, epergnes, five-finger vases, filigree or ornate types, etc.
- Domes or candy dishes that would hold small arrangements
- Antique or antique-appearing baskets
- Fancy bottles for lavender, oils, etc.
- Old hats, old hat boxes, plume feathers
- Old fans, hand or fireplace size
- Picture frames for pressed flower pictures
- Antique dresser mirrors
- Lace edging, doilies, materials for sachets, etc.
- Any other items that would work into suitable arrangements.

Containers with chips or cracks are acceptable. Garden Club designers are very clever at adapting arrangements to the flaws. In fact, a lovely old flawed container may inspire a masterpiece! Several of this year's favorite arrangements are in containers showing signs of their age—but we won't tell which. Any containers which cannot be used will be returned if the contributor desires (if marked).

If you have dried flowers, containers or other materials to donate to the Homestead for this project, please call Marilyn Loofbourrow, 428-1328. Dried flowers can be accepted as they become available. The Carriage House Learning Center is generously providing space for them to hang until needed. Containers and other materials may be donated immediately, too.

With volunteers like those from the Garden Club and your help as well, we can look forward to seeing the Homestead a-bloom, inside and out, throughout the year. We already know from recent experience how much the subtle hues of preserved flowers enhance the patina of old wood, antique carpets and other Homestead embellishments! And with her own love of flowers, we feel sure Anna Millikin would approve.

