

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY

GAZETTE

Vol. XI, No. 1 (X1 | 2)

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

November 1986

Company's Coming!

It's almost party time! Candlelight, lace, and crystal time! Fireglow and feasting time! Home(stead) for the holidays time! It's our special party of the year for you, our special members of the year, and the time is Sunday afternoon, December 7 from 1:30 to 4 p.m.

Your board members, plus Marie Bennett, Ruth Prust, and assorted other fantastic cooks are conjuring up confections even as we speak to tempt you at the tea table. Laura Faber, our decorations chair, is promising Christmas Victoriana in every nook; our organ keyboard players are already practicing the old favorite carols, and friends of yours are among those creating fantasia for sale at the Boutique: Ann Siedman, Sue Donovan, Bobbie Wolfe, Betty Braun, Sue Ann Cain, Marilyn Madden, Susan Wade, Sue Shade, Ardith Hubbard.

Now all we need is your special sparkle! See you soon? Kathy Green, Christmas Tea Chair

Conventions Cause Unconventional Schedules!

Our volunteers have learned that quilters love, not only quilts, but old houses as well! That's the conclusion arrived at by the guides who were JMH hostesses for the numerous visitors who toured the Homestead during the time of the National Quilters' Association which was meeting at the Holiday Inn for a week in July.

Tours for them were requested by the Decatur Convention and Visitors' Bureau, and on July 15 more than one hundred people were shown through the Homestead. The next day we had tours from Minier, Illinois and Terre Haute and Marion,

The Homestead is abuzz with plans for this year's Christmas Boutique. The Boutique is an important part of our Victorian Christmas Tea, upcoming Sunday afternoon, December 7. (You soon will be receiving your personal invitation.) For years, the Christmas boutique has been designated "Mrs. Millikin's Trunk", and the trunk never ceases to amaze.

The faithful workers for Mrs. Millikin's Trunk are busy. Some of the original slate roof tiles have been saved as the new roof is being installed and are being fashioned into trivets and decorator items. They will make marvelous mementos of the Homestead. You also will find small decorated grapevine wreaths, elaborate fan ornaments, cross-stitched items, stuffed muslin Victorian figures, needlepoint ornaments, Christmas napkin rings, lace hoops, crocheted cases for glasses, hand-finished

MRS. MILLIKIN'S MAGICAL TRUNK

wooden ornaments, Victorian cards, gilded walnuts, clothespin Homestead butlers and maids, paper roses, miniature stars, shaped antique doilies filled with flowers, and a unique tooled brass Noah's Ark complete with menagerie.

This year, Mrs. Millikin's Trunk will also have a new surprise: a small corner of select food items - Mrs. Millikin's Pantry with homemade jelly, candy, and other Christmas goodies to take home.

The Collector's Corner proved to be a very popular addition last year so, of course, we are offering it again. We will display a group of fine collectible items and sell them at silent auction. Bids can be placed until the close of the tea, and the highest bidder will be notified. If you are the winning bidder and have to leave early, we will deliver the item to your home. We already have many nice things on hand - a Lladro statue in mint condition,

depression glass, hand-painted cream and sugar set labeled Noritake-Japan, antique soup plates, small exquisite enameled pieces of brass, an antique shaving kit, hand-embroidered linens, and a six-piece hand-crocheted antimacassar set. We hope you will enjoy this grouping.

In addition to the items contributed by individuals, Barbara Hackel has organized a Boutique workshop that is meeting one afternoon a week at Marilyn Womeldorff's home. Barbara has designed the 1986 annual Homestead ornament - a splendid rendition of the Homestead done in brass tooling. She also has a number of other original projects planned.

We welcome you to the Boutique.

Nancy Talbott, Boutique Chair

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*denotes deceased member

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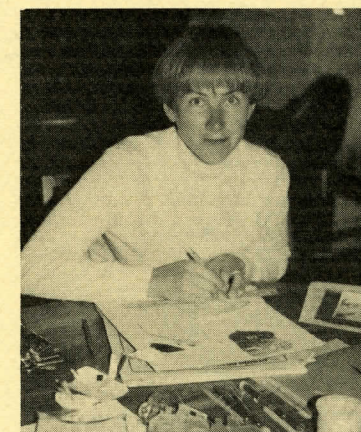
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They're Brass-Tooling, No Fooling



To Our 1986-1987 Homestead Members

the next day we had tours from Minier, Illinois and Terre Haute and Marion, Indiana totaling 101 persons. The tours from Terre Haute and Minier had been scheduled with us by the Convention Bureau, but the Marion tour was something else! The tour director on that bus saw the other tour buses at the Homestead and decided to queue up with them! We couldn't possibly have handled them at the same time as the others, so the Marion group decided to go have lunch early and begged us to schedule them in at 12:45 p.m. We had hoped for a tour break for our volunteers before the arrival of another large group at 2 p.m., those quilters who had not been able to get on the quilters' tour buses the day before. But somehow we worked Marion in and they turned out to be delightful people; we were glad we could accommodate them.

Those two days in the middle of July proved to me that it's not possible to have too many docents! July being vacation time, many of our faithful volunteers were out of town. It was up to Dorothy Smethers, Joan Cordes, Marty Grohne, Bobbie Wolfe, Jack Langsdorf, and me to handle the whole crowd. Those were two busy, busy days!

At our regular Open House on July 27, 72 people were shown through the Homestead by Kathy Green, Jean Hendren, and Bobbie Wolfe. On July 28, Mary Lou Malone was our hostess for a group of English students from Richland Community College.

August and September weren't quite as busy, but Ruth Prust, Lucien Kapp, Dorothy Smethers, Estella Lantz, Bobbie Wolfe, Jean Hendren, and Phyllis McMinimy helped me then. I hope all these volunteers know how much I appreciate them!

We've already called on Mary Lou Malone and Estella Lantz to help in October. The Homestead was open Saturday, October 4 as a courtesy to Millikin University on its Parents' Weekend. About 75 students and their parents chose to then.

Shirley Kraft, Paula Scott, and Susie Szymczak have been recruited as new docents for the Homestead, and they're eager to go to work. We're so happy to have them join our volunteer force, and I feel confident they'll love showing the Homestead as much as I do. Welcome to JMH, Shirley, Paula and Susie!

Olive Langsdorf, Volunteer Chair

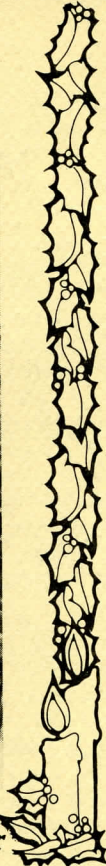
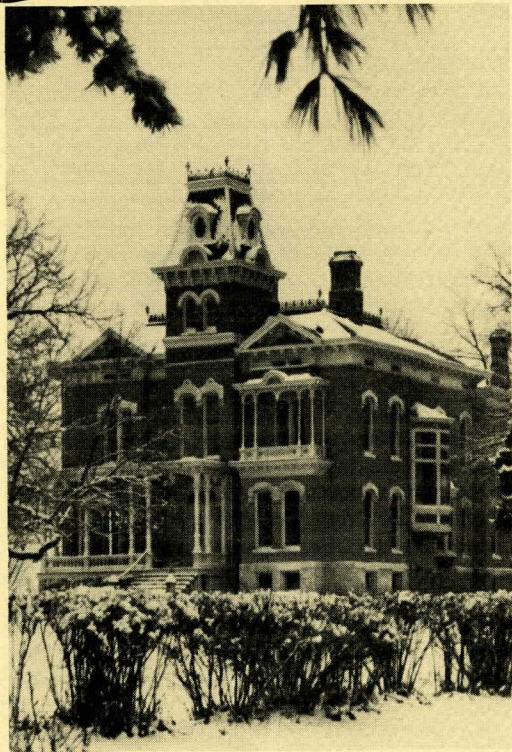
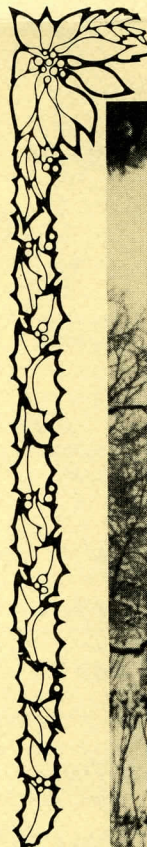
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Dr. and Mrs. Dale Jones



To Our 1986-1987 Homestead Members

Holiday Greetings and a Happy New Year

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Mrs. Anne Chumbley
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Mrs. Orville Eilers
Mrs. Neil Ewing
Miss Nepha Eyman
Mrs. Jean Foran
Mrs. Edwina Funk
Mrs. Joan Geoghegan

Mrs. Sam Loeb
Mrs. Roger Mauterer
Mrs. John McKeown
Mrs. Samuel Meadows
Mrs. Jack Melnik
Mrs. Mary Messmore
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Miss Elsie Svendsen
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Mrs. Jeanne Tyrolt
Mrs. Robert Uhl
Mrs. G. Lewis Veech
Miss Dorothy Waddell
Mrs. James Waller
Meredith Watts
Mrs. Meredith Weck
Mrs. J.T. Whitley
Mrs. Jerry Whitney
Mr. Dale Willets
Mrs. Eloise Williams
Mrs. Olan Wine
Mrs. Jerry Wittenauer
Mrs. Virgil Womeldorff
Mr. Richard Wood
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Mrs. Floyd Zimmer
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Mrs. H.R. Hartman
Mrs. Frederick Kuny
Debra Kurz
Mrs. Robert Murphey
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Florian Kapp
Mike Womeldorff
John Womeldorff



RE: RE-ROOFING

The only way to start this letter is to say, "THANK YOU" to all of those generous members and friends who quickly answered our appeal for help on the new roof at the Homestead.

Work is progressing nicely as this is written - in spite of the rain. The new slate that's in place looks good, and the original design has been followed to bring the roof back to its original condition.

Financially, we've been in the clouds and then dashed to the ground. Generous member contributions brought us to within \$5,000 of our \$40,000 goal, and an appearance before the Decatur City Council got us a promise of the \$5,000 from "block grant" money that was available for improvements in the city. The council members were very supportive.

Then the federal "headaches" started. Because the work on our roof project was already started when our application was made, we were not eligible for the block grant!

As this is written, we are trying to explain that our bid was divided into four separate parts: the slate roof, the flat roof, the gutters, and the copper trim. Our contract was for the slate roof and the flat roof only. The remaining work was "decorative but necessary", to follow the design of the original roof. It would be put off until we had the money. That was our intention. Using this approach, we asked the bureaucrats to reconsider. As this writing, it appears their answer will be "no".

So, we're between \$4,000 and \$5,000 short of a complete new roof.

Those of you who have made a donation, if you can afford more, it will be appreciated and welcomed. If you have misplaced our request for roof money, forgot it, or just didn't send it, we would please ask you to reconsider. We'll be forever grateful.

Jack Langsdorf, President
James Millikin Homestead

Dave Robertson, Grounds Chair

Yes, Santa, There Is a Virginia. . .

. . . a Virginia landscape architect, named Mr. Charles Schroll, who has kindly sent a duplicate of the set of landscape plans he did for the Homestead back in 1978 and which were subsequently misplaced. His plans are very beautiful, but also very extensive, and they will take a long time to implement. Due to other more pressing needs outside,

the landscaping must be put on "hold".

As soon as the roof is completed and the weather allows, we will be filling in around the foundation, to solve a standing water problem, and planting, seeding, and sodding. We will also be putting in some myrtle on either side of the back steps.

Wanted
If you have any items suitable for the silent auction at the Christmas Boutique, please call Nancy Talbott at 428-9488. I will pick up and furnish a tax deduction form.
Places To Go
If you have to miss our Invitation-Only Christmas tea on Sunday, Dec. 7, keep in mind that there will be an open house for the general public the following Sunday, December 14 from 2 to 4 p.m. It won't be quite as grand but better than missing the Homestead Christmas completely!
Personal
My name is Green and I'm your Christmas Tea Chairman. I am friendly, humorous, a good cook, a willing worker, and I have a cute dimple. I am in search of new friends who would like to share a recipe, take a turn pouring tea at our party, or otherwise help me out in dining room or kitchen the day of our Victorian Tea, Sunday, December 7. I promise to give you time off, for good behavior, to also be a guest. Call me at 428-3194 if you have a free hour to help.

Miss Victoria H. Bear

Our Christmas boutique, which we call "Mrs. Millikin's Trunk," is going to have a very special visitor at the Victorian Christmas Tea this year. Her name is Miss Victoria H. Bear. (The H. is for Homestead, on her mother's side of the family.)

Miss Bear, a good-sized stuffed "teddy" bear, presents a very dignified appearance as becomes a prim and proper Victorian lady. She is planning to wear her best gown with a high lace collar and leg-of-mutton sleeves. You must realize she is a single lady of refined temperament and unparalleled family background. She is endowed with many social graces and looks especially well presiding at a tea table. At the present time, Miss Victoria H. Bear is looking for a new home.

This charming creation is a gift of Maxine Talbott. Grandmother Talbott is 81 years old and famous for her well-constructed, imaginatively-dressed bears. She has won many blue ribbons over the years for her handiwork, and in 1985 she was a purple rosette winner at the Illinois State Fair for a very handsome bear, indeed.

The Boutique will be offering chances on Miss Bear, the afternoon of the tea only, for \$1 a chance. The drawing will be held immediately after the tea, but you don't have to be present to win.

Nancy Talbott, Boutique Chair

A Chandelier At Last?

For years we have hunted for an appropriate light fixture for the Homestead dining room. An old photograph of the room shows the original fixture, so we knew what we were looking for. The fixture over James' heavy Westlake dining table was a massive, Victorian, gas chandelier with a center-slide. (This term refers to the pull-down feature of the center of the fixture, to afford better lighting.)

We have not been able to duplicate the exact fixture, but we did find an exceptional chandelier in the "Eastlake" style, befitting the period. It was purchased this spring for \$250 from Mr. John Ballog.

It needs major restoration! The metal parts need to be reworked; the fixture must be wired for electricity; shades must be found, etc. This work is being done by Mr. Robert Moore of Mt. Zion, who has been an excellent source for solving all kinds of "lighting related problems." Whether hunting for

authentic fixtures for the Homestead, repairing, restoring, rewiring, rehanging, you name it and invaluable Mr. Moore has done it!

Mr. Moore has given us special prices and has done most of the labor without charge. This chandelier is quite a time-consuming restoration project, which, naturally, we expect to pay for. It won't be cheap, but we know, when you see it, you will agree it was worth every penny!

Massive, authentic fixtures of the Victorian period are hard to come by, and the price is usually in the \$5,000 and up range, depending on quality, condition, original shades, etc. We hope to have this fixture hanging for the Victorian tea, but there are no guarantees. It will depend on 'wiring obstacles', availability of suitable shades, etc. We will try our best!

Brigitta Kapp, Restoration Chair

Keeping Christmas with James and Anna

If only we had a time machine to catch a glimpse of Christmas past at the Homestead! Wouldn't it be satisfying to come caroling and glance through a frosted window to see whether the Millikins had a Christmas tree or other greenery, cranberry garlands or a bowl of popcorn by the fire?

Sometimes, old clippings, books or letters serve to transport us briefly into the past, but nothing in Homestead files seems to tell us how the Millikins kept Christmas. (Has anyone an anecdote to share?)

We may suppose that Christmas was a private family affair for James and Anna, not for newspaper comment. Without children themselves, the Millikins, nevertheless, had a multitude of uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews and cousins of every degree. With this throng James and Anna seem to have stayed in good touch.

One of their most distinguished family visitors was "the Hon." Charles Gates Dawes, United States Comptroller of the Currency under President William McKinley. Mr. Dawes was a grandson of Anna's first cousin, Betsy Shipman Gates. Dawes' visit to Decatur was a social and political highlight of the city in summertime, June, 1904.

Another family member of some repute who flitted in and out of the pages of Decatur newspapers was Miss Dollie Millikin, described as a cousin of James and a "pianist with a bright future." In 1882 James was reported to have received a "dispatch" confirming Dollie's arrival at Le Havre, France, en route to Germany where she would continue her musical studies. Later, we learn that Dollie "was selected out of a large class to appear before the great composer and pianist," Franz Liszt.

It was actually Dollie's father, James Hunter Millikin, who was a first cousin of the Homestead's James, and James Hunter Millikin also lived in Decatur. He was grain dealer and considered a fine violinist. He and his wife Emily had six children

of whom Dollie was just one. Perhaps James Hunter Millikin and daughter Dollie and maybe even others of this apparently musical family may have lent their talents to James' and Anna's festivities.

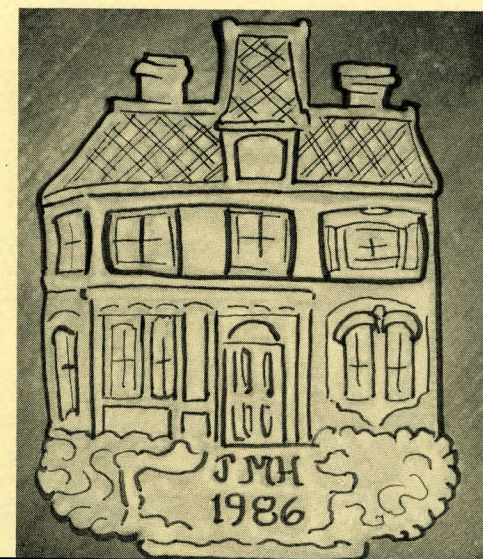
Did Children Visit?

Perhaps the closest other "kin" that James and Anna had in the immediate area—besides Anna's mother who came to live at the Homestead—was the family of Robert F. Machan of Argenta. Robert was a step-brother to James; in 1861 Robert married Sarah Winthrode and they had six children.

We often think of the Homestead without children at Christmas, but the children of Robert Machan may have been more or less frequent visitors, and Anna may have kept presents tucked away for them for the holiday.

In the search for Christmas time stories about the Millikins, it seemed that Anna's mother, Hetty Bartlett Aston, might tell us something about James' and Anna's first Christmas together in her 1857 diary, which began the day of their marriage, but her notations are a disappointment. Hetty wrote faithfully through most of the year, but December's pages are sometimes blank and many blotted together to become unreadable. After a few unhappy entries about her husband's death the year before, other legible scattered phrases suggest Hetty probably spent Christmas with a presumed relative, Betsey Baker et al. at Paris, Ill. Hetty's diary entry for Christmas itself is still bright and clear, "Had turkey and lots of nice things today," but she made no mention of the holiday activities of James and Anna.

With their strong Presbyterian allegiance, the couple would probably have attended whatever religious services there were on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day at First Presbyterian Church. They also would likely have found some charitable works



to do before the holiday. There is newspaper mention of Anna's donation of a turkey to the Anna B. Millikin Home at Thanksgiving, 1902.

Did They Decorate?

For comparison with our celebration today, we wonder, most of all, did Anna and James decorate their home for Christmas? Their backgrounds suggest they might have been so inclined. James was born and bred in Pennsylvania where Christmas observance was at its strongest because of the influence of the large German population. The Germans, of course, are credited with originating many of our most beloved Christmas customs, including the decorated tree.

What the Germans did not supply toward Christmas traditions, the Victorian English did. Anna's family was English in descent, and Anna is thought to have traveled in England ca. 1890. With her interest in art and decoration, she would have been apt to absorb new ideas from her surroundings.

In the *Decatur Review* of Feb. 16, 1896, we find mention of a luncheon given by Anna for the Decatur Art Class and are told that "the house was beautifully decorated with carnations and smilax." Dr. W.H. Penhallegon, the Millikins' pastor and friend, said of Anna, "She was a lover of nature, was interested in 'God's out of doors.' The flowers, foliage and trees were to her a lure and a joy."

It is not hard to imagine that Anna would have followed Victorian fashion and brought at least a bit of this "nature" inside in order to decorate for Christmas and perhaps the bleak January ahead as we are wont to do at the Homestead now.

We hope that, at least to some extent, we are following in Anna's footsteps and that our decorations today would win her approval.

Marilyn Loofbourrow, Historian

Mr. Horace Kopp
 % # 5 William Race
 Decatur, Ill. 62522

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 P. O. Box 1501
 Decatur, Illinois 62525

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- Individual Membership \$15.00 per year
- Family Membership \$25.00 per year
- Patron Membership \$100.00 per year
- Life Membership \$1000.00
 (payable over four years)



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- Participation in preservation of the historic heritage of Decatur.
- Advance notice of Homestead-sponsored tours and programs.
- Subscription to The Homestead Gazette.
- Invitation to the Annual Victorian Christmas party.
- A deduction to feel good about!

Membership Note:

We wish to thank all of you for your continued support of the Homestead. This edition of the newsletter contains our membership list as of October 1, 1986. If your name is not on the list, or if there is a green dot on your mailing label, our records indicate that you have not paid for 1986-87. There is still time to renew, however, using the application form below. If you think you have paid but are not listed, please contact me: 919 W. William, or 423-5178. Many of you responded to our recent appeal for extra funds by upgrading your membership or by paying for more than one membership. Many of you responded by making an extra donation. These are extra levels of support and very heartening when one is over a hundred years old and needs that extra support! Thank you all! As you review your tax circumstances before year end, some of you may wish to prepay 1987-88 membership. You can do this by using the application form below and checking the '87-88 line.

Marilyn Womeldorff, Membership Chair

Please make check payable to
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