

# THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



## GAZETTE

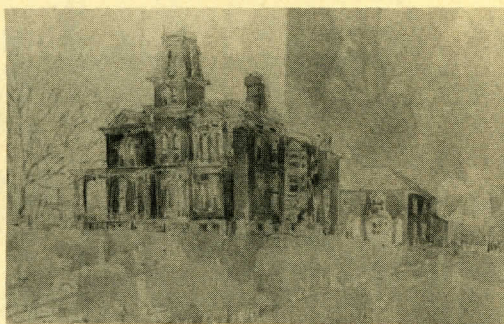


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JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

April, 1986

### To See Ourselves As Others See Us



Hanging on the wall in the elegant and sunny dining room of the Dr. Ron Gregory family is a framed and delicately-painted watercolor of the Homestead. Who was the artist, and how did the Gregorys come by this almost aetherial painting? Let Betty Gregory tell the story:

"Mr. Wendell Mohr of southeastern Missouri painted the watercolor. I had been enrolled in a class at Millikin University in silkscreen printmaking. Junior Welfare sponsored the class, and at the end of the session, there was a drawing for a painting by our instructor, Mr. Mohr. I won!

The print I had learned to do in class I gave Mrs. Judy Bear, at that time president of Junior Welfare. As you know, Judy's predecessor, Mrs. Jeannine Schaub, had been so instrumental in preserving the Millikin Homestead.

My watercolor has soft brick-red tones, blended with snow and winter whiteness. It is a joy to have a small part of the history of the Millikin Homestead, and there are

### BARTLETT BEGAT ASTON, ASTON BEGAT MILLIKIN

*(Editor's Note: The following is the second of a two-part series spotlighting recent discoveries in the family backgrounds of James and Anna Millikin.)*

A will, a diary, and a patriotic society—all led the Homestead along a trail this year to the very unexpected find of Anna Millikin's Bartlett family history.

The major new source is a massive volume (919 pages), entitled **Dawes-Gates Ancestral Lines** (Vol. II), which covers 83 interconnected families, including at least 12 lines of Anna's direct ancestors.

Nearly 40 years of research by Anna's own first cousin, Betsey (Shipman) Gates, who lived 1816-1895, went into the exhaustive work.

Betsey was the daughter of Joanna (Bartlett) Shipman, sister to Anna's mother, Hetty (Bartlett) Aston. Betsey's grandson, Rufus C. Dawes, had the history privately printed in Chicago in 1931, probably with the help of a professional compiler. The book as such was not known to Anna, who died in 1913; it was unknown to the Homestead until December of last year.

Homestead research on the Bartletts began in 1985 with an old clipping in the Millikin University Archives referring to a letter bearing the signature of George Washington and written to a "supposed" ancestor of Anna Millikin, Captain William Bartlett. This letter had been found in the Homestead attic in the 1920's (story in a previous **Homestead Gazette**).

Except for the names of Anna's parents and a simple probate list of her living relatives (relationships not clear in all cases), nothing more was known of her ancestry until this

even researched abroad on behalf of her cousin, Betsey Gates. (The Millikins, of course, are said to have traveled extensively.)

A letter written by Betsey in 1890 contains the following notation,

"I am going to write to Annie (Millikin) to write to me from Dorset County, England, so that I can preserve the letters with my family history of the Bartletts. I would like views of Frampton and Sherbourne and Dorchester and see with my own eyes the places our old ancestors have seen, and have her (Annie) go to the prison of my old rector or vicar or whatever he was. Now I will quit, for the minute anybody gets me started on the ancestor question I am all aglow."

Betsey's "glow" and research ultimately, as indicated, inspired the published family history. Like Anna Millikin, Betsey also maintained an interest in collecting antiques. Betsey's mania for both genealogy and antiques elicited affectionate amusement from her family. In 1882, her husband, Beman Gates, wrote to their daughter, "Your mother has a new attack of genealogy and I think it is a bad one."

Betsey kept a sense of humor about her own activities. She returned from one antiquing expedition and wrote her daughter,

"I came home and found your father wondering where I could have gone, but he knew the town crier would hunt me up if I was lost so he waited very patient-

### Notes from your President. . .

As the second year of serving as your president draws to a close, I want to thank everyone who helped make these past two years exciting and enjoyable. Your loyalty and support has made my job an easier one. My faithful board members all deserve a lot of credit. . . they work hard at whatever task is set before them. The Homesteaders (volunteers) who worked on all our special projects also deserve my accolades. I wish space permitted me to name each individual; yet obviously that can't be done. You are all wonderful!

Looking forward to 1986-87, we are fortunate to be welcoming three dynamic new board members: Laura (Mrs. William) Faber, Bettyrose (Mrs. Ben) Leader and Carolyn (Mrs. Zeke) Travis. This group consists of two neighbors to the Homestead and one gal who formerly grew up just across the street. They all realize how much work is required by the board members, and they still said "yes!" when asked to join us!

Speaking of enthusiastic board members, we welcomed Jack Langsdorf to the board last February. Jack is filling out an unexpired term and has jumped right into the thick of things! We are happy to have him "aboard."

The slate of officers presented by the nominating committee assures me that next year the Homestead will be in very capable hands. A special thank you to all who accepted the commitment of an office.

As happy as I am to welcome these new people, I am having a hard time saying goodbye to departing board members. We will miss

blended with snow and winter whiteness. It is a joy to have a small part of the history of the Millikin Homestead, and there are flashbacks I have from the picture, of the countless hours and priceless labor by so many to perpetuate a dream. Thanks for the opportunity to 'show and tell'."



## ANNUAL MEETING A "HALLMARK"

The annual meeting of the James Millikin Homestead, Inc. will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 24. During our brief business meeting, we will recap the various committee activities of this past year. The slate of officers for 1986-87 will be presented and voted on by the membership present. Following this, there will be a slide presentation program called "The End of the Gilded Age: 1876-1911 Furniture and Architectural Ideas and Reforms".

This period represents the time from when the Homestead was built to the period of Frank Lloyd Wright's famous "Prairie School" of architecture. This program is especially appropriate because the houses at #1, #2, and #4 Millikin Place fit into the Prairie School period. Since #2 is a Frank Lloyd Wright design, it is fitting that the program be given by someone closely connected with Wright's works. Our speaker, Dr. Donald Hallmark, is the Site Administrator of Springfield's most famous Wright structure, the Dana-Thomas house. Dr. Hallmark is a noted art historian with special interest in historical architecture and historic furniture. He holds degrees in art history from the University of Illinois, the University of Iowa, and St. Louis University. Everything you always wanted to know about Mission Oak furniture, about Prairie School architecture, about Frank Lloyd Wright, and more!

Come to the annual meeting to find out the details of these fascinating subjects, and stay afterwards to sample the refreshments prepared for your enjoyment. We look forward to seeing YOU then!



a simple probate list of her living relatives (relationships not clear in all cases), nothing more was known of her ancestry until this time. In view of Anna's possible Revolutionary ancestor, Decatur D.A.R. Librarian Jane Lee assisted in a search of that society's records. A Captain William Bartlett was found and a comparison of lineages with the probate list revealed that several of Anna's relatives had proved their descent from him to enroll in D.A.R. Captain Bartlett turned out to be Anna's great grandfather.

About this time Hetty Bartlett's diary arrived, to confirm some relationships and hint at others. Then, the D.A.R. Library moved from its long-time location in Mrs. Lee's home to the Decatur Genealogical Library. (Present Homestead board member and D.A.R., Marilyn Womeldorff, was chairman of the D.A.R. committee to decide on the library's new location. Oddly, in the 1920's, the D.A.R. office and library had once been in the Homestead, when it was the Art Institute.)

Fortunately for the Homestead, now the D.A.R. Library remained accessible. At this point Cheri Hunter, genealogist for the Decatur Genealogical Society (and research chairman) began to familiarize herself with some of the D.A.R. books. Before, there had been no reason to notice **Dawes-Gates Ancestral Lines** but, in the move, its sheer size drew attention.

The book's lengthy Bartlett section rang a bell for Cheri, who has a connection to the family of Anna Millikin's father, the Rev. Samuel M. Aston. (The Astons, thus far, remain largely untraceable.) Cheri and fellow research committee member, Marilyn Loofbourrow (alias Homestead historian), had discussed the Homestead history project and Hetty Bartlett's new-found diary. Cheri alerted Marilyn and the Bartlett family began to emerge in detail from the Dawes-Gates history—first in England, then Massachusetts, later in Ohio.

One special pleasure of the book comes from its pictures, including those of Hetty Bartlett's parents and some of her sisters. (She was one of 12 children, as we learn.) Even more surprising, the book has portraits of her Revolutionary era ancestors, Capt. William and wife Joanna (Herrick) Bartlett. Hetty's ancestors in most lines are taken back into the 1600's.

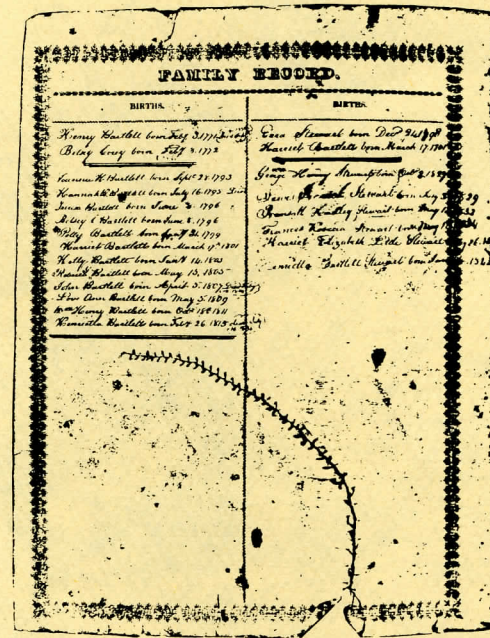
The nicest surprise of all is the reference to Anna Millikin herself! Although genealogical data stops with Hetty, Anna's name arises and there is strong indication that Anna may have

wondering where I could have gone, but he knew the town crier would hunt me up if I was lost so he waited very patiently to see if I came home all right before he started him out on his round with his bell and cry, "An old woman lost! An old woman lost! She dresses in black and goes about hunting up relics. An old woman lost!"

From such stories, it seems the Bartlett history will keep the Homestead supplied with insight into the character of the Bartletts as well as their statistics.

Wouldn't we love to know if Anna did write cousin Betsey from England, what she saw there, and whether her letters or postcards (views) still exist somewhere. We probably never will have our curiosity satisfied on these points, but with all that has been found so far, who can tell?

Marilyn Loofbourrow, Historian



Anna's Mother's Birth Record

Above is a carefully mended page from an old Bartlett family Bible once owned by Mrs. Dean Stickney of Athens, Ohio, which gives records of the births of Hetty (Bartlett) Aston, her brothers and sisters and parents.

A photograph of the page is contained in the recently-found Bartlett family history.

As happy as I am to welcome these new people, I am having a hard time saying goodbye to departing board members. We will miss Kathy Farrington, past treasurer and vice-president. Kathy has been on the board for six years, and was involved with the Homestead, through Junior Welfare Association, even before that. Her loyalty, hard work and dedication through the years is greatly appreciated. Saying goodbye to Maxine Kopetz isn't easy either. Maxine has been membership chairman and corresponding secretary. Her presence on many committees and devotion to the Homestead will be missed greatly. A thank you to Betty Braun who filled in a one year unexpired term this past year. We've enjoyed having her with us and hope she'll consider joining us again in the future. A very sincere thank you to these fine board members.

Since we are unsure what the Millikin Trust will decide, we are busy seeking other grants and funds for our roof and other projects. Leading the efforts are Jack Langsdorf with special grant writing assistance from Vern Talbott. We hope to have positive reports for you in the next issue of the **Gazette!**

I hope that many of you will take advantage of the special program we have planned for the annual meeting on April 24th. Put the date and time (7:30 p.m.) on your calendar now, and plan to join us. I'm looking forward to seeing you then!

Barbara Hackel, President

### Nominating Committee Report, Spring 1986

The following board members and officers are submitted for your approval:

President: Jack Langsdorf  
Vice-President: Betsy Empen  
Secretary: Dorothy Smethers  
Treasurer: Nancy Talbott

Three year board term: Laura Faber  
Bettyrose Leader  
Dorothy Smethers  
Carolyn Travis  
Marilyn Womeldorff

Homestead Nominating Committee:  
Maxine Kopetz, chairman  
Marilyn Loofbourrow  
Dorothy Smethers  
Barbara Hackel



### The Love Affair Goes On

As part of the tenth (and 110th) anniversary celebrations of the Homestead, our beloved trees were again labeled. The first labeling is believed to have occurred nearly 50 years ago in 1936, when this **Herald & Review** photograph was taken of the ceremony. Although no one in this picture has been identified, the participants are possibly members of the board of the Art Institute which then occupied the Homestead.

Just for fun, our 1985 Homestead board tried a similar but less formal pose. Look closely and you will see familiar faces, including President Barbara Hackel, second from right. Dave Robertson was chief of labeling for the project and is the daring young man up on the ladder.



### At the Millikin Home (July 6, 1897)

"Monday afternoon and evening, Mrs. James Millikin gave a very charming lawn party at the Millikin lawn, entertaining the members of the art class, their husbands and children, and the employees of the Millikin bank and their wives. There were fifty people present, and from 2:30 until 9:00 they had a most enjoyable time. While the guests were seated at tables on the lawn eating supper they were entertained for a time by four balloons gathering above the Millikin place and hovering for a while before they passed on and out of sight.

The evening was a perfect one for a lawn fete and the young, and middle-aged folks as well enjoyed it greatly. Music and games helped to make the hours pass pleasantly."

*The (Decatur) Evening Republican*

### It Seems Like the Docent Thing To Do

Spring has arrived and, along with it, the new season for Open House days at JMH! When the last Sunday of each month (from March through October) arrives, it means that the Homestead needs three or four docents to guide people through the house and tell them about it, its furnishings, and a little bit about the couple who lived in its big, beautiful rooms.

Our list of faithful docents this past year has included Charlotte Ballance, Mary Ann Clark, Dave Erlanson, Kathy Green, Martha Grohne, Jean Hendren, Bev Koucky, Estella Launtz, Phyllis McMinimy, Mary Ann Malone, Ginny Pegg, Dorothy Smethers, Gert Wagner and Barbara Wolfe. We cannot thank each of these willing volunteers enough for the time they've given the Homestead. Do we appreciate them?

We most certainly do!

It would be great if we could enlarge this group. We need tour guides for more than just Open House week ends. People are especially needed who are free to guide on other days of the week when money-making tours often come through the Homestead. We'll gladly train you, and once you've got the hang of it you'll discover what a fun job you've volunteered to do.

So, if any of you among our membership feel that this might be just the thing you've always wanted to do, please call Olive Langsdorf at 422-8896. We'll be glad you did, but — what is more important — you'll glad you did! It's really

true — the closer you get to the Homestead the more you learn to love this old house and appreciate the real treasure it is.

Olive Langsdorf, Chmn. Volunteers

### Historic Preservation Week May 11-17

The Homestead is pleased to be included in plans at both the beginning and the end of this upcoming week. On Sunday, May 11, the Homestead will be open for tours in conjunction with other historic tours planned by the

Historic Architectural Sites Commission. Closing the week, the Homestead will be included in tours planned for persons coming from all over to attend the annual meeting of the Illinois Historical Society. We are proud to be included in both organizations' plans as we salute preservation throughout the nation.

"Preservationists are the only people in the world who are **invariably** confirmed in their wisdom after the fact."

—John Kenneth Galbraith,  
Professor, economics  
Harvard University, 1981.



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*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 tax deduction to feel good about!

**LET'S RAISE THE ROOF**

It is April again, which means the April showers will fall, the spring flowers will bloom, and Homestead dues are due. The dues are special this year in that they will help us prepare for one of our biggest projects ever, replacing and replicating our 110 year old slate roof. (It really must be done before too many more of those April showers!) Of course, the dues are important for underwriting our budget and providing our ongoing programs, also.

Since the dues are such a major part of our income, we hope that each and every one of you will renew, or maybe upgrade your membership. The statements have been mailed and, hopefully, many of you have already renewed by now. But if it has not been done, don't wait another minute. Please help us "raise the roof"!

If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Marilyn Womeldorff (423-5178), Membership.

Please make check payable to

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