

THE HOMESTEAD FAMILY



GAZETTE



Vol. XVI, No. 2 (XVII/1)

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, INC., DECATUR, ILLINOIS

August 1992

A Note From Your President

History — Millikins “Entertain” Unwelcome Visitor



Scene of the crime in 1904.

Photo Courtesy of Paragon Graphics

How often do we yearn for the good old days — their peace, their calm, their freedom from crime? Yet James Millikin could attest that even in this time a man was not always safe in his own bed. James opened his eyes once to find a burglar confronting with a gun in his Homestead bedroom.

The Decatur Daily Herald reported the

covered with his gun and ordered him not to look closely at him but the banker was allowed to talk and his conversation with the burglar was quite interesting.

“Mrs. Millikin who was sleeping in an adjoining room was awakened and came to the door. She was asked by the burglar if she had any diamonds and she explained that they

he said . . . the burglar had the advantage and I thought he would not harm me if I let him alone. Besides there was nothing to steal in the house. The watch he took was not an extravagant one but it was a good watch. I thought I got off very easy.”

“Mr. Millikin says that he got only a fairly good view of the burglar. He is sure the man had light hair and complexion. He was dressed in dark clothes and was of medium height and wore a mask or handkerchief over the lower part of his face. Mr. Millikin is under the impression that he was a professional.

“When the call came to police headquarters Capt. Koeppel and a number of policemen made a hurried trip to the place. An examination revealed the fact that a burglar had gone through the house. Constable Roy Bendure was called and brought over one of his bloodhounds. The dog scented articles which had been handled by the burglar and followed a trail through the house and outside. The trail went back of the Hill residence and to the north fence. The dog went over the fence and lost the trail . . . The police have not secured any trace of the burglar.”

[Note: Faithful followers of Homestead lore will remember the name of Capt. Koeppel, later chief, from the 1988 Homestead Whodunit Mystery Night. The committee writing the script decided to include one real person from the era in the cast of otherwise fictitious characters. The person chosen was Decatur police chief for the time, Herman W. Koeppel. Now we find that Koeppel actually did help to investigate a crime at the Homestead!]

One additional bit of conversation between the burglar and James was brought to light by Dr. Albert R. Taylor in his biography, *The Life*

It's off to a grand beginning! The 1992-1993 year is well underway. The new officers are elected, and our two new board members have joined us with enthusiasm and helpfulness in the three projects we've had since April 1.

I wish more of you could have attended our Annual Meeting. Dorothy Smethers' program on quilts was extremely enjoyable, even to the men! Thank you Dorothy, we so appreciated your interesting program. We bid farewell to our retiring board members, Jane Welch and Wyllene Griffy. They served us so well. Jane has served as secretary, membership chairman, and, because of her height, was invaluable when it was time to decorate the top part of our Christmas tree. Her interest and enthusiasm for all Homestead projects was always "A-One". We are grateful to Wyllene for her time and efforts given to scheduling, restoration, ways and means, and Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days. We wish her success in her new endeavor, The Calliope Shop. The new board members, elected at this meeting, are Lynn Potter and Joanna Ploeger-Tsoulos. Lynn, who lives in the neighborhood of the Homestead, has been elected to be our new volunteer chairman. Joanna will exercise her expertise in assisting with the newsletter and decorating for the Victorian Tea.

Co-chairmen for Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days, Wyllene Griffy and Lyn Shimp, are to be complimented for their fine efforts given to this very worthwhile project. Thank you both, and another thank you to all the men and women who volunteered their time to make this a special experience for third graders all over the city.

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The constant search for ways to raise a little money gave us a new project in June. We prepared, put together, and sold sack lunches to those who participated in the "Arts on Main Street" held on the Homestead grounds. Wilma Sanner and Brigitta Kapp simply cannot be outdone as organizers of an affair such as this. A big "thank you" to them and all of the board members who worked and had fun getting it together — and bought the leftovers!

As most of you know, I know alot more about, or let's say, I'm more comfortable with T-times, foursomes, bogies and whiffs, than with writing a President's Message. My Tuesday foursome still cannot understand, after four years, why I prefer to go to the Homestead on the 2nd Tuesday of every month. Well, there's a little tug there, a sense of pride, and a great deal of satisfaction in serving on the Homestead Board. The board members we have now are an absolutely outstanding group. Ann and Bill have made the grounds look lovely. Lois is getting that very time consuming job of scheduling organized down to the last detail. Lucien and Brigitta, Marilyn and Betty have so much background knowledge to share that I'm sure we will stay on the right track as far as preservation and use of the Homestead. Then, there are the two past Presidents, Sid and Nancy, whose experience in the last four years is invaluable to us. Charlotte will be very capable as treasurer, as she does her husband's books and has her own business. I could go on and on about this board, and the projects we look forward to the rest of the year. I hope you, too, will come often and join us in our enjoyment of the Homestead.

Jane Lawson
President



How often do we yearn for the good old days — their peace, their calm, their freedom from crime? Yet James Millikin could attest that even in this time a man was not always safe in his own bed. James opened his eyes once to find a burglar confronting with a gun in his Homestead bedroom.

The Decatur Daily Herald reported the story on July 10, 1904:

"James Millikin awoke about 3 o'clock Saturday morning to discover that he was looking down the muzzle of a revolver and the first words he heard were, 'I want your money.'

"A burglar had entered the house, gone through everything, and not finding valuables of a portable kind, awakened Mr. Millikin and stood over him with a lighted candle in one hand and a revolver in the other.

"Mr. Millikin says now that he does not think he was very much excited. He told the burglar that all the money he had was in his trouser pocket. The man went through the pockets and found only 45 cents. He was disgusted. Mr. Millikin explained that he had \$5 but had paid a man for some work and bought street car tickets and cigars. He suggested to the burglar that his watch was on the mantel and that he might take that. The burglar said he had already taken it and produced it from his pocket. He said it would not be much use to him and threw it back on the bed.

"Later the man said he had made a 'water haul' and he thought he had better take the watch so it was handed over by Mr. Millikin. All the time the burglar kept Mr. Millikin

covered with his gun and ordered him not to look closely at him but the banker was allowed to talk and his conversation with the burglar was quite interesting.

"Mrs. Millikin who was sleeping in an adjoining room was awakened and came to the door. She was asked by the burglar if she had any diamonds and she explained that they were all in the safe at the bank. She was politely ordered to go back to bed. The burglar told Mr. Millikin not to call the police after he left and said that if the banker did anything that caused his arrest his friends would make it bad for Mr. Millikin.

"Mr. Millikin told the burglar that he had been foolish. He said he had recently bought a new safe for the bank and kept all his money there and never drew out more than \$5 at a time. Like most rich men he carries but little money with him. A man who owns a bank does not need to carry cash as he can always cash a check when he wants to. The burglar told Mr. Millikin to stay in bed after he left. He came back twice and found Mr. Millikin still in bed both times and finally left the house. The police were then notified by Mr. Millikin over the telephone.

"In speaking of the experience, Mr. Millikin said:

"I was quite pliable and when the robber said he had changed his mind and would take the watch I let him take it. I minded him very well. It was not pleasant to have a revolver held in front of one's face . . . I really think the man did not intend or want to harm me any but as I was unarmed I thought it best to do what

Homestead Hosts History Awards

The Arthur Ploeger Award in historic preservation was presented posthumously to O. T. (Jack) Banton in a ceremony May 13 at the James Millikin Homestead.

The award was presented on behalf of the Decatur Historical and Architectural Sites Commission by the first recipient, Lucien Kapp. Banton was the author of a number of invaluable area histories, including *History of Macon County 1976* and *Eighty Years of Banking*, which concerned the Millikin National Bank and its founder James Millikin. Banton often enacted the role of James Millikin during the Homestead's "Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days."

At the same reception, the Heritage Network of Decatur and Macon County—which includes the Millikin Homestead—honored

two others for their contributions in preserving historical materials and creating historical awareness. Recipients of Heritage Network awards were Cheri Hunter and Ed Huntley.

Mrs. Hunter has held many positions in the Decatur Genealogical Society and was instrumental in the acquisition and renovation of the Society's downtown library building. As head of the DGS research committee, she located the history of Anna Millikin's maternal family line, the Bartletts, and alerted the Homestead to its existence.

The late Mr. Huntley was a representative to the Heritage Network from the Civil War Roundtable and was active in other historical groups. His particular interest in recent years was the preservation of the Lincoln Courthouse.

person from the era in the cast of otherwise fictitious characters. The person chosen was Decatur police chief for the time, Herman W. Koeppel. Now we find that Koeppel actually did help to investigate a crime at the Homestead!]

One additional bit of conversation between the burglar and James was brought to light by Dr. Albert R. Taylor in his biography, *The Life Story of James Millikin*: "There was further talk with the burglar about the silverware in the house. He (James) told the man he thought there was no solid silver there. 'Few people buy sterling these days,' said Millikin, 'and if they did it would scarcely be worth the efforts of a high-class burglar.'"

The Decatur Herald continued its coverage in a story datelined: "July 11, Taylorville." A man had entered several jewelry and second-hand stores there with a solid gold watch trying to raise a loan on it for \$30. The watch was appraised at from \$75 to \$100 in value. One clerk saw the name of James Millikin, Decatur, Illinois" engraved inside but assumed the bearer was Millikin. Another, more suspicious, asked the man if had stolen the watch. He answered "No," but, dissatisfied, she telephoned police, who, in turn called Decatur and learned of the theft. The man was then sought in Taylorville to no avail.

Triumphantly, on July 26, the Herald reported that the man who had burglarized the Millikin's home was in jail, and Mr. Millikin's watch had been returned to him. The news report continued:

(continued)



We are encouraged and excited in the interest in conducted tours at the Homestead. This heightened interest in tours has created a need for additional docents. If you are interested in telling others about the history of the Homestead please contact Lynn Potter at 428-5759. A training session for new (and old) volunteers will be held in September.

We're looking forward to adding your name to our list of dedicated volunteers!

History — Continued

"F. H. Faber, alias William Bills . . . undoubtedly the man who committed the theft, is in jail in Clinton and will be brought back to Decatur. He has been identified as the man who stole the watch and has confessed to the whole thing, and it is believed that he is a professional burglar. The man's real name has not yet been found out. It is known that Faber and Bills are assumed names. . .

"There was a woman in the case and she was the one who caused the arrest and to a great extent . . . recovery of the watch. Faber was in Clinton recently and it was a hot day. He pulled off his coat and accidentally exposed a revolver in his hip pocket. The police arrested him for carrying concealed weapons. Faber wrote a letter to a woman in Decatur. The letter furnished a clue to the woman . . . The woman belongs to the sporting element and a charge was made against her and she was in jail for several days. Finally she got tired and told all she knew. The woman admitted that Faber . . . told her he robbed Mr. Millikin's home."

The jeweler and his assistant from Taylorville were brought to Decatur to confront Faber, who then confessed. He had finally managed to sell the gold watch for \$10 to a respectable citizen of Clinton, who, on learning it was stolen, made a trip to Decatur to return it personally to its rightful owner.

Subsequently, a Macon Co. sheriff's deputy called on James to ask for custody of the watch so that it might serve as evidence. The deputy apologized that so far the department had been unable to get back the forty-five cents and feared it never could be found.

"Mr. Millikin responded, 'That is all right. One friend has given me five cents to help me out on the loss and I think that by the end of the week through the kindness of my friends the entire sum will be made up so I will be nothing out.'"

The watch was taken to Frank Curtis jewelry store in Decatur where James had purchased it in 1896. Curtis identified it and found that the engraving had been altered, albeit poorly, so that it read, "Mittikin" instead of "Millikin". In closing, the Herald news story mentioned that "Faber says the candles he burned while

he robbed the Millikin residence were of a patent kind invented by himself and when burning, drug persons who are asleep so they cannot awaken."

James was not misguided in anticipating a little help from his friends. A Herald headline July 27 proclaimed, "Friends Come to Relief/Mt. Zion Farmers Make Up a Purse to Reimburse James Millikin's Loss." The article began thus:

"The bread cast upon the water 25 years ago has returned to him. A quarter of a century ago John R. Scott, a well known resident of Mt. Zion, was the object of solicitous care on the part of James Millikin and others with whom he was associated in a stock venture. They replaced a hat which he had lost. That kindness was never forgotten and yesterday Mr. Scott was the means of raising a subscription whereby Mr. Millikin will be fully reimbursed for the loss he recently suffered at the hands of a burglar.

"Mr. Millikin, John Scott, A. C. Traugher and J. R. Race were concerned in a cattle deal. Mr. Scott was one of the men who went to Chicago to look after the disposition of the cattle . . . Snow was on the ground and the thermometer was about zero. Coming home, he has the misfortune to lose his hat. When the friends and business partners heard of this . . . they could not bear the thought of Mr. Scott wandering the streets of Decatur bearheaded so they go together and by raising a penny collection, managed to make up a purse of about 25 cents . . . and Mr. Scott was taken to Race's store where they bought him a straw hat. The hat was fitted and he was sent home rejoicing."

In view of James' recent loss, Scott called on neighboring farmers and together they made up the necessary forty cents which they "dispatched" to the banker.

"Through the efforts of his old and tried friends Mr. Millikin has again been made whole financially," the tongue-in-cheek article came to its dramatic end.

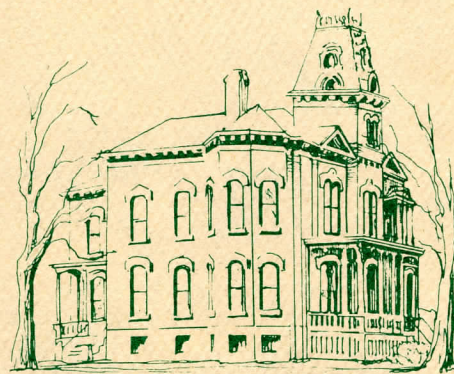
Marilyn Loofbourrow
Historian

Art On Main Street: Feasting Your Eyes & Satisfying Your Tummy

The Homestead tried a new fundraiser this year. We prepared sack lunches for sale and tours through the Homestead during the 2-day art show on the Homestead lawn on June 6 & 7.

The show is an annual event which is sponsored by the Decatur Area Arts Council and the Barn Colony Artists. 43 artists exhibited and sold their works, including stoneware, watercolors, oils, jewelry, and photography. Glass blowing demonstrations were given. Children (12 and under) could buy original art work for \$3-\$5. For people of all ages who felt like enjoying some "old" art and local history, tours of the Homestead were offered!

The artists and visitors were delighted that the Homestead had prepared delicious and nutritious sack lunches which sold for \$5.00. Attractively packed in small white shopping bags, this lunch was plentiful enough to keep one nibbling all through the day. Many expressed the hope that the Homestead will consider a repeat "performance" next year! We certainly plan to do that! Remember to visit the show next year and bring your appetite!



art on main st.

Landscaping: Update

Two additional areas have been landscaped on the Homestead grounds and are well on their way to adding visual interest.

The circular drive bed features a curving line of shrubs which accents the American Beech tree and memorial plaque. The shrubs include: Willowood Viburnums, Lilacs of different colors, Snowmound Spirea and Inkberry Hollies. These selections will add both flower beauty and fruits later in the season. Daylilies or mixed colors will be planted next year to complete this bed.

The planting bed incorporating the south lawn flagpole has a sweeping S-curve of upright Junipers to lessen the pole's strong vertical line. Additional shrubs include Mohican

Viburnums and Serviceberries. Masses of perennial Blue Salvia fill the open spaces.

These plant species were chosen to complement the Homestead foundation plantings and thus create a unified appearance of the grounds.



Christmas is Coming

When autumn leaves fall . . .
And turkey gobblers call . . .

Can the Victorian Christmas Reception at the Homestead be far behind? Of course not!

We're looking forward to receiving Homestead members on Sunday, December 4, from 1:30 - 4 p.m., at the annual Christmas tea.

What a perfect way to get into the holiday spirit! Please plan to join us for wassail and confections, to see the new look of the Christmas Boutique, to purchase the 1988 Homestead annual ornament and to enjoy the wonderful atmosphere of the Homestead dressed in its Holiday finery.

Hope to see you on December 4.

— JMH Board



Christmas Boutique Workshop

The plans for our annual boutique during the Victorian Tea at Christmas are pretty exciting because we hope to display French Victorian gifts for the ladies!

Workshops will be held at the Red Barn, 1099 W. Wood Street on every Tuesday starting October 11th. We will welcome contributions of lace, ribbon and pretty fabrics from our many members at a "drop box" provided at the barn during open hours 10 to 4 Tuesday — Saturday.

Please help in our desire to raise funds for the James Millikin Homestead by participating in the workshops, donating special supplies and purchasing a particularly elegant gift for the "lady" in your life! We will "raffle" a special Christmas surprise!

Co-chairmen Nancy Eichenaur
Jane Lawson

You Can't Keep A Good Flag Down

Just because some small demented minds decided four days was long enough for our beautiful new American Flag to fly doesn't mean it won't fly again. Those who did such a nasty act do not understand the determination of the people who appreciate our heritage — whether it be the preservation of a historic homestead or the reflying of our country's Stars and Stripes.

The story begins a number of years ago when a flag pole was erected on the Homestead lawn. When that exact year that was or what happened to the rather delapidated, bent pole in the years until now is not important. The fact that the D.A.R. gave the Homestead a new flag inspired the refurbishing project undertaken this September.

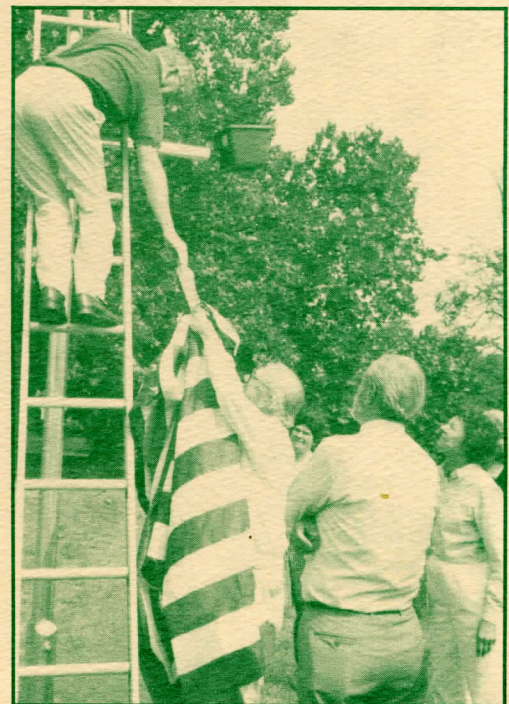
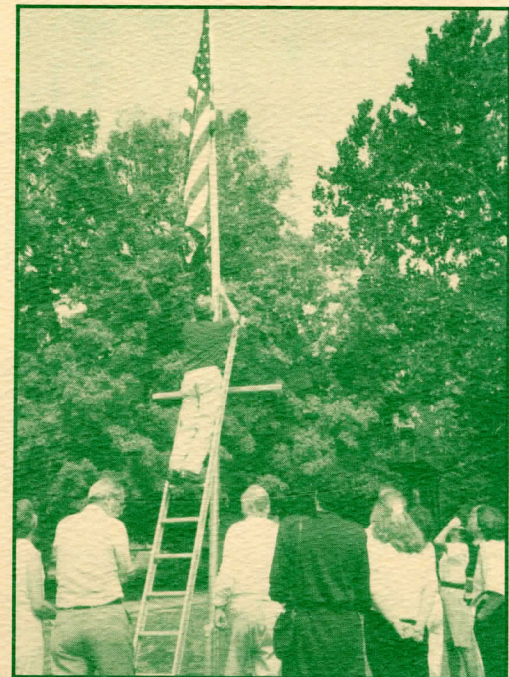
Since we do not have the manpower to raise and lower the flag each day, the ensign must be lighted. The Homestead board authorized the money to provide underground power to the pole and Dave and Sonja Rathje benevolently supplied the super lights for the project. No excuse now, so electrician Kelsheimer and crew performed well, Millikin University physical plant staff lowered the pole, the top section was replaced, the pole was straightened, painted, rerigged, and again raised in place.

A very touching ceremony took place September 13 with most of the board members present as the beautiful flag was raised to the impromptu strains of "America the Beautiful."

Though the securing cleat was placed 12 feet in the air, the light bar was too tempting a high step for the naughty people who perpetrated the theft of our flag only four days after its raising.

Now a heavy welded chain replaces much of the nylon rope, a padlock and an eyebolt secure the rigging and Old Glory flies again (a replacement of course).

If you want to see an impressive sight, take a look, day or night, at our Stars and Stripes flying proudly over the lawn in front of the Homestead. We are dedicated to keep it flying!



Third Graders Meet the Millikins

Mr. and Mrs. Millikin Days was held the third week of October as 1200 third graders from Decatur Public and Parochial schools toured the homestead.

Our "Hats off" to the fifty-six volunteers who acted out their roles as Mr. and Mrs. Millikin and the guides that portrayed Mrs. Millikin's maids. We sincerely appreciate these gracious and dedicated volunteers whose superb acting made this annual event a success.

Our thanks also go to Mr. and Mrs. John Eckert who donated the cookies from Nabisco. Each child receives a cookie from Sophie, the kitchen maid, before leaving the homestead.

Co-chairmen Sonja Rathje,
Lois Wells





LIFE MEMBERS

Anonymous
 Mrs. J. George Armstrong
 Miss Charlotte Ballance
 Mr. and Mrs. Gansel Bennett
 Jeane Best
 Mr. and Mrs. Tom Dickes
 Mr. Leonard Edwards
 Mr. Leiby Hall
 Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hostetler
 Mr. and Mrs. Harold Irish
 Mr. and Mrs. Lucien Kapp
 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kopetz
 Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Langsdorf
 Mr. and Mrs. Merrill Lindsay
 Mr. and Mrs. Dean Madden
 C. Hanks and T. Malenshek
 Miss Virginia May
 Dr. Frances McClelland Mayfarth
 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moore
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 Mrs. Robert R. Russell
 Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Schaub, Jr.
 Mr. Robert C. Schaub, Sr.
 Mrs. Clinton Shearer*
 Mrs. Purvis Tabor
 Mrs. J. T. Whitley, Sr.*
 *denotes deceased member

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 Ann Shellabarger
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Holiday Greetings and a Happy New Year!

To Our 1988-1989 Homestead Members

Mrs. William L. Zeaman

HONORARY MEMBER

Susie Stefferman

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 Mr. and Mrs. Porter J. Womeldorff

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 Mrs. Lola Smith
 Mrs. Robert E. Smith
 Pauline Smith
 Mrs. Lena Stone
 Elsie Svendsen
 Jean Toney
 Jeanne Tyrold
 Mrs. Robert Uhl
 Mrs. G. Lewis Veech
 Miss Dorothy Waddell
 Esther B. Waller
 Mrs. Meredith Weck
 Jane Welch
 Marjorie P. Whitley
 Mr. Dale Willets
 Eloise H. Williams
 Mr. Ralph Williams
 Mrs. Olan Wine
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 Mrs. Marian Woyna
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