



Historical Happenings

Newsletter of the Kewanee Historical Society

Summer 2007



ANNUAL BAKE SALE FUNDRAISER SET FOR SATURDAY, JULY 21

It's that time again—for our annual newsletter, bake sale and appeal for financial assistance. It is in this newsletter that we announce the date of our **bake sale** and make an appeal for financial assistance. So here goes:

The Kewanee Historical Society will hold its annual **Bake Sale** at Wal-Mart on Saturday morning, **July 21**, from 8 to 11. Yes that is July, a month later than usual. This is the **main fundraiser for the society each year** and provides a considerable portion of the operating funds for the year.

We ask you to donate baked items and bring them to Wal-Mart by 8 a.m. A table will be set up outside the north front entrance. If you cannot bring them out, call 853-4572 or 853-8605, to make arrangements to have your baked goods picked up.

If you don't feel like baking, we will gladly accept money donations. Again, feel free to drop money donations off at the Bake Sale table. Or you can mail them to the society at 211 N. Chestnut St., Kewanee, IL 61443. Please make sure that your check (please do not mail cash) is made out to "Kewanee Historical Society."

Since the society once again qualifies for the matching grant from Wal-Mart's foundation, it is important to get a money donation to us prior to the July 21 Bake Sale. Needless to say, the more we raise from the Bake Sale and its related donations, the more money we will receive from Wal-Mart. The past several years Wal-Mart has been very generous by matching up to \$1,000. (Last year's Bake Sale netted \$2,600--\$1,600 from our generous members and \$1,000 from Wal-Mart.)

Once again, this is our only major fundraising event, so please support it with your generosity. Also, a reminder that our monthly meeting for July will be at 12:30 on July 21, the bake sale day. We usually meet at 8:30, but not this July. As usual all members are welcome to attend the monthly board of directors meetings.

Officers of the Kewanee Historical Society ~
Larry Lock, Pres. Steve Moon, Vice Pres.
Joan Herrick, Sec. Kathy Miller, Treas.

Directors of the Kewanee Historical Society ~
Greg Davis, Mary Ann DeSutter, Mark Hepner, Steve Hill,
Pat Lock, William McKee, Alma McLennan, Bob Miller,
Cathy Miller, Dave Van Niuwenhuysse

WHAT'S HAPPENING...

Here's a random list of happenings since last year's newsletter (May 2006).

- We sponsored a **bus trip to Springfield** in November to visit the Abraham Lincoln Museum. Board members Steve Moon and LeeAnn Bailleu organized the trip that was thoroughly enjoyed by 30-some members and guests who purchased tickets that covered the cost of the bus and museum.
 - A **raffle** in October of a Baker Park Golf Course 2007 season's pass and a \$100 gift certificate netted \$500. The season's pass was donated by Kewanee Park District in return for historical displays on the district's parks prepared by Larry and Pat Lock. Bob Miller was the leading raffle ticket seller and received a "big pat on the back" for his efforts. Sue Busenbark won the golf pass and Tom Pyle won the gift certificate.
 - **Hog Days** (Labor Day weekend) was again special for the museum. About 200 people visited during the three days we were open. Visitors the rest of the year are not nearly as numerous but are always welcome.
 - Some special group visits included the ladies of the **Parnassus Club** last June for a second time in two years and the **Kewanee Woman's Club** this April. Also visiting for a second time were descendants of Peter and Marguerite (Zang) **Fischer** organized by Kewanee's Nancy Mitchell. They brought with them a most interesting family from Germany, distant relatives whom some Fischers had visited in Germany the previous year.
 - Also visiting was **Ted Vlahos**, premier Kewanee booster and strong supporter of the society, and five high school **classmates** (class of 1945) who returned to Kewanee for a reunion. They included Jim Schmidt of San Diego, CA, Tom Briggs of Moberly, MO, Gene Behnke of Monmouth, Bill Jones of Toulon and Dick Hildreth, who recently moved back to Kewanee. Mr. Briggs donated an interesting memoir of his "growing up" days in Kewanee.
 - Board member LeeAnn **Bailleu** and husband Rob continued to help above and beyond the call of duty. They donated a small refrigerator for cold drinks and printing of last year's newsletter; and Rob set up our new computer to replace the old one that crashed.
 - Society member **Bea Clark** volunteered some Thursday afternoons last year to organize various pictures of old school classes into displays. She has resumed that work this summer.
 - Society president Larry Lock gave a talk about Kewanee in 1906 to the **Masons** at a special meeting at the Masonic Hall commemorating the 100th anniversary of both the
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Masonic temple and a special unit of the Masons, the Kewanee Commandery 71 Knights Templar.

- Maintaining the building is a constant concern and seems like we make at least one major improvement each year. Last fall we decided on **new windows** for the front of the building second floor. They were installed this spring by Spets Brothers and look and work great.
- **Finally, as usual the museum is always open to any group that would like to visit for a special program or simply to tour the museum. And Larry is prepared to talk at any group's meeting about the historical society and museum and/or some aspect of Kewanee's history.**

New Old Stuff

Many donated items have been received since last spring. We appreciate them all but will tell of just several in this newsletter.

The most historically significant relates to the Civil War and consists of a **diary and letters** written by **General John Howe**, a Kewanee attorney who helped recruit two companies of Kewanee area men in 1862. The companies became part of the 124th Regiment of Illinois Volunteers and Howe soon became a lieutenant colonel and commanding officer of the regiment. By war's end the regiment had distinguished itself in combat, especially at Vicksburg, and Howe was promoted to brevet general.

The Howe collection, which was **donated by Howe descendants** including Nancy Burnett of Phoenix, AZ, the general's great-great granddaughter, consists of a diary that he kept from January 1, 1865 to August 17, 1865 (the latter the date that he arrived home), 11 letters that he wrote to his wife Julia from April 1863 to December 1864, and six letters that Julia sent to their children in Kewanee while she was visiting her husband at Vicksburg during the winter of 1864-65.

Copies of the documents are on display in the museum, but the originals are being kept in a bank safe deposit box. On special occasions we will display some of the originals. Society member Greg Davis is in the midst of transcribing the hand-written documents.

The donation also includes a copy of the **history of the 124th Regiment**, written in the 1880's by the regimental chaplain. The rare book is one that the chaplain gave to Mrs. Howe, her husband having died in 1873. He is buried in the Old Kewanee Cemetery.

The museum has a good deal of information about General Howe, including several articles written in recent years by Dave "Around Town" Clarke of the Star Courier. We also have copies of pictures of the General, three of his children and the family home on Park Avenue.

Another important military donation is a **photo collage** featuring the names of the 89 Kewanee area men killed during World War II. Created by **Col. Duane Lempke**, a retired Army officer now professional photographer in the Washington D.C. area, the collage also features one large gold star that is representative of the nearly 100 Kewanee fatalities. The World War II Memorial in Washington contains 4000 gold stars, one for each 100 killed in WWII. Thus Kewanee is entitled to one gold star according to Duane, who is a 1957 graduate of Kewanee High School.

Several years ago he presented us with a collage honoring the 11 Kewaneeans killed in Vietnam and he is currently working on a piece to remember the six local men killed in the Korean War.

On a lighter side is the donation of a **golf bag** used by Kewanee golfer **Edmund "Zimbo" Wysowski** when he competed on the PGA Tour in 1941 and again in 1945 after service in World War II. Filling the bag are unique golf clubs with extra long shafts and putters with unusually shaped heads that he crafted during his years as a club professional at Midland Country Club, Baker Park and a Galesburg golf course. The interesting contribution was made by Zimbo's widow, Mary Schwerbrock Wysowski, and their children, one of whom (Michael) is a club professional at the renowned Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles.

Finally, among the many donations the past year is a very recent one—a collection of high quality **photographs** made by **Milo "Mike" Ballentine**, an early 1920's Wethersfield High School graduate who learned his photographic skills working for Kewanee photographer John T. Brady. The collection includes family and friends, Kewanee scenes, Wethersfield High School activities, several airplanes and aerial photos. The donation was made by society member Sally Schwab-Davis of East Peoria. She received the photos from her cousin Jerry Waldorf, former Kewaneean who now lives in California. The collection was left to Jerry by his stepfather—Mike Ballentine.



Portrait of Jessie Fremont Howe, daughter of General and Mrs. Howe, born in 1862. Jessie is the great grandmother of Nancy Burnett of Phoenix, AZ, who donated the Howe memorabilia. The portrait is believed to have been painted by Junius Sloan, prominent Chicago artist whose parents lived near Kewanee until 1867. Other Examples of Sloan's work are on display in the museum.

NEW TREASURER

Kathryn "Kathy" Miller has become the treasurer for the society, replacing **Mark Hepner**. Kathy and husband Bob have become very active members the past several years. They came to Kewanee about 15 years ago when Bob became a sales rep for Good's Furniture. He retired two years ago after a career in the retail furniture business. Along with raising a family Kathy worked as a bookkeeper for several companies; thus our financial concerns will be in good hands.

Mark's job as principal at a Rock Island junior high school continues to be increasingly demanding and he has accordingly reduced some civic activities. Mark was president for a year after Bob Richards' long tenure and then treasurer for several years. An active member of the society for many years, he will continue as a member of the board of directors. Thanks Mark for your past service.

Kewanee Historical Society

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309-854-9701

Open Thurs. & Sat.
May 1 - Oct. 1
1:30pm - 4:00pm

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