

Historical Happenings

Newsletter of the Kewanee Historical Society

Summer 2012



ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

It's that time again—for our annual newsletter and an appeal for financial assistance. This year as last year we are going to forego the bake sale but still ask you, one of the 350 on our membership list, to make a donation to help with the expenses of maintaining your museum.

Last year's "Annual Fundraiser Without a Bake Sale" was a great success thanks to the generosity of many of the lifetime members of the Kewanee Historical Society. We received \$6,000 thanks to contributions from 60 members. That is a great help in meeting our annual expenses of about \$10,000.

Extraordinary gifts came from William and Ronelle Spiegel, \$1,000; Charles Gray, \$400; William McKee III, \$300; and Michael Fischer, \$250. **Thanks to all who contributed.**

This is our only special fundraising event each year. Please support it if you can and send your check to Kewanee Historical Society, 211 N. Chestnut St., Kewanee, IL 61443.

We are still "hurting" for volunteers. If you can help for just a couple hours a week or even a month, let us know. If you know of someone you can recommend, refer that person to us. Please call President Larry Lock at 853-4572 or contact any of the board members whose names are listed in this newsletter.



Where Am I?

WALDOGS ARE COMING!

In July of 2013 some 150 artists from all over the country, including Kewanee, will volunteer their talents to come to Kewanee for five days and paint some 15 murals on walls of downtown businesses. They will create pictures of historic interest under the auspices of an organization based in Pontiac, Illinois known as the Walldogs.

Larry and Pat Lock met with a local committee headed by retired Kewanee High School art teacher Sue Blake to provide scans of numerous pictures for ideas for mural topics. The committee has narrowed the many possibilities to 15 tentative topics. The overall project is being planned by a committee headed by Dennis and Diane Packee. The mural selection committee is one of several subcommittees.

For more information simply "google" Kewanee Walldogs to locate various items about the event. (See the picture above for one example of a possible mural topic.)

WHAT'S HAPPENING...

We continue to be **open on Thursday and Saturday afternoons from 1:30 to 4:00.** Pat and Larry Lock cover Thursday afternoons and they and other board members alternate on Saturdays.

As usual we will be open for **extended hours during Hog Days**—10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sunday and Monday of Labor Day weekend. This is easily the time for the greatest attendance at the museum—in 2011 we had over 200 visitors.

Joan Herrick, a charter member since her parents Bob and Marcella Richards started the Kewanee Historical Society in 1976, recently resigned as secretary after many years of service in that capacity. Her always-thorough minutes provide a great source for society history of the recent past. Happily, she will remain a member of the board of directors. Taking her place as secretary will be board member **Marci Carlson**.

Maintaining and improving our building is an ongoing process. Fortunately we incurred no major problems in 2011. However, we did do some renovating. The backroom east wall was repainted and new display boards attached to the wall. Also part of the backroom and the upstairs hallways were re-carpeted. The old carpet removal, tile removal, painting, carpenter work and furniture moving were

done mainly by **Steve Moon and William McKee** with help from Larry Lock, Greg Davis, Matt Paxton and Mark Tudder. Also, some minor roof patching was needed last year and some small patches were made to the exterior south wall last spring and more will be needed this spring.

Thanks to four local concerns that continue to make in-kind contributions to the society: **B&B Printing, Ed's Heating and Plumbing, Jerry Lippens ABC Signs and Network Business Systems of Geneseo (internet provider).**

Also, special thanks to the **Henry County Independent Insurance Agents** for another major donation (\$750). Another \$750 was given by **Illinois Tool Works** as a triple match for an employee who is a regular donor.

Larry Lock continues to do power-point programs. Programs available include Kewanee Streetcars, Walworth and Its Predecessors, Kewanee Parks, Kewanee Scenes in Late 1800s, and Kewanee in 1859. **A new program is scheduled for the Henry County Genealogical Society on the founding of Kewanee in 1854 and its founders—**Sylvester Blish, Henry Little, Ralph Tenney, Sullivan Howard and Nelson Lay. It will be on Monday, July 23 at 1:30 in the

Kewanee Public Library meeting room. The public is invited. **Any group wanting a program is welcome to contact Larry at 853-4572.**

Groups are always welcome to schedule a visit to the museum. This past year we had visits from several Girl Scout and Boy Scout groups, Central School summer classes, ABCD after school program and several adult groups.

Requests for research are welcome. We get them in person, by phone, by mail and more often these days by email. People anywhere in the world can find us by “googling” Kewanee or Kewanee history. Our website, which is provided by Rob Bailleu, is **kewaneehistory.com**.

Finally, we still have about 20 copies of “**Streetcars in Kewanee and Galva,**” from the 350 that were printed in 2009. Written by the late Fred Rozum and published by us, the 100-page book with about 50 illustrations is available for \$16 including tax, plus \$3 if it is sent by mail.

New Old Stuff

We have received artifact and document donations from nearly 50 different individuals since our last newsletter. The museum is full, but we can always make room for more. Following are just some of the donated items.

The “**Our Heroes**” display boards from Veterans Park listing the names of Kewanee military personnel from 2001 to 2011 will be housed in the museum courtesy of Kathy Werderman, who originated and maintained the tribute to veterans.

Kathy also donated leather chaps and white overalls that were worn by her late father **Marshall Heene** in the 1940s when he was a wing walker in the Cole Brothers Air Show. They are part of a new display about the Kewanee-based air show started by Marion and Duane Cole.

A **Civil War diary** of Francis Marion Beightel, member of Henry County’s 112th Illinois Volunteers, was given by great-nephew Charles McMahon.

A **World War I uniform** worn by James M. Elliott, a lifelong Kewanee resident who was employed by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, was donated by his family.

A **World War II scrapbook** compiled by Daisy McIntire, which adds to our collection of World War II and Korean War scrapbooks, was gifted by Bill Page of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Record books from the **Kewanee Fire Department** with hand-written lists of fires from 1905 to 1912 and 1918-1921 and photos of early 1900s firefighters and equipment came our way from the Kewanee Fire Department.

A baseball team shirt from the 1930s when Kewanee in 1931 became one of the first towns to have **night baseball** was donated by Pat Keane. The Kewanee park district asserted that its lighted field at Northeast Park was the “first non-commercial lighted baseball park in the United States.”

Diane Houser donated plaques and a signed basketball honoring the late **Bob “Mr. Sportsland” Westlund** upon his retirement from the Kewanee Star Courier.

Jerry Westefer donated a two-sided ceremonial/memorial ribbon badge worn by members of Kewanee’s “**Belgian Sick Fund Society,**” with printing in the Belgian or Flemish language—“Belgische Ziekenbond De-Leeuw, Kewanee, Ill. 1909.” The museum has several similar ribbon badges used by labor unions and fraternal or social organizations with one side in black for a funeral and other in color for ceremonial occasions.

Pictures showing the elaborate interior of the **E.E. Baker Villa**, circa 1920s, located on the northwest corner of Prospect and Chestnut were given by Mark VanHyfte

A scrapbook of Star Courier articles from the spring and summer of 1926 detailing the stranger-than-fiction saga of what became known as the **Cooper Hoax** was donated by Lori Christiansen. The hoax was perpetrated by John Cooper, a Kewanee ironworker and father of four, who claimed that a grandmother had left him \$9 million to be received in the near future. He promised money to his church and Kewanee Public Hospital, among others, and purchased things on credit. A dubious Kewanee Star Courier eventually exposed the fraud and Cooper and family left town. **For the rest of the story visit the museum this summer.**

Please keep us in mind if you have Kewanee memorabilia you would like to donate. If you have interesting old photos that you do not want to part with, they can be scanned and emailed to us. Also, we have a laptop computer and portable scanner and can come to you to scan pictures.

Where Am I? Answer:

Standing in the 200 block of North Main looking at the Dreamland Theatre on the west side of the street. It featured live vaudeville productions and silent motion pictures. It was one of Kewanee’s early theatres, opening in 1907. The building still stands and today is part of Good’s Furniture complex. The theatre moved about 1914 to the 100 block of West Third St. and closed about 1920. (This picture might provide the idea for a Walldog mural in 2013.)



200 block of North Main, west side—This photo shows the location of the Dreamland Theatre relative to the rest of the block. By the time of this photo, it would appear that the Dreamland had left Main Street for Third Street, even though “Dreamland” is still on the building. The partial building showing on the left is Kresge’s 5 and 10, which was built between 1905 and 1910 on the Northwest corner of 2nd and Main.

Kewanee Historical Society

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Open Thurs. & Sat.

May 1 - Oct. 1 • 1:30pm - 4:00pm

or by Appointment call:

309-853-4572 • 309-853-8605

Officers of the Kewanee Historical Society ~

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Steve Moon, Vice Pres.

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William McKee, Treas.

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