

Alton Museum of History and Art, Inc.

Fall 2009

News & Views

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New Exhibit!

- *THE WAY IT WAS* -

The museum's new exhibit designed by Steve Bollini, Master Taxidermist, portrays wildlife - that was once abundant in our Riverbend area. There is even a buffalo!

Taxidermy in the latter part of the twentieth century developed into a full-fledged form of wildlife art. Taxidermists of today should be considered fine artists in their own right.

Friday evening, October 6, an opening reception was held at Loomis Hall to introduce the exhibit. More than one hundred people were in attendance. Cathy Bagby, Museum Researcher and Board Member was hostess.

Mr. Bollini has been competing at the state and world levels since 1988. He has won numerous awards and ribbons consistently during this time. His top awards include:

Illinois Taxidermy Competitions:

2003 Award of Excellence

1992, 1997, 1998

Best of Category – Waterfowl
1999

Best of Category – Mixed Multiple
2000

Best of Category – Reproduction
2002, 2004

Best of Category – Upland Bird

World Taxidermy of Competitions:

1997

First Place – Waterfowl
2001

Third Place – Reproduction
(Master Level)

Thank you for a lovely exhibit, Steve!

Remembering

Ella Anscheutz

By Charlene Gill

It was July of 1971 and Mr. and Mrs. Anscheutz became charter members of the Alton Museum of History and Art. Among the artifacts they donated: the top hat of Lucas Pfeifferberger, the architect and a huge four foot tall 1904 St. Louis World's Fair Fern Planter (complete with a growing 50 year old fern).

Ella's mother was the first woman to be named outstanding during Women's History Month. Ella was a faithful Museum Board member.

One lingering memory of Ella is the day Ruth Means and I were her guests for a most enjoyable lunch... and later she played the harp for us.

The museum is grateful that Ella named the Alton Museum of History and Art as a memorial. Alton Museum members plan to attend her memorial service at First Presbyterian church October 24th at 1 p.m. The museum is closed that afternoon.

We miss her very much.



What Makes a Good Museum?

The children say it is having "lots of stuff" on display.

What Children Learn From Museums

History museums introduce children to the people, places, and things that have shaped major and minor events of our world and every day life. Children see how people lived in other civilizations throughout history. They can imagine what it must have been like to be a Pilgrim, a suffragette, or even a child traveling with the family in a covered wagon on the Oregon Trail.

Art museums are places where children look at the world through the eyes of an artist. Children are surrounded by light and color and sometimes the jarring images of reality portrayed by the artist's hand and eye.

Blind Children Discover Museum through Sound and Touch

Tours for the blind include much of the same historical information about objects that would be in any tour. They also cover information that sighted people take for granted.

Some parts of these tours go against museum convention.

Touching objects is usually the ultimate faux pas for museum-goers, but it is an essential part of education for the blind. Touching objects is very important because they have to imagine the information. How can they imagine without touch?

Museum Tours Interpreted into American Sign Language

Student Interpreters will be at the museum again this year interpreting tours for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. The students will be at the museum on Saturdays from January through March. Interpreted tours at other times can be arranged by appointment. Please e-mail or call the museum to arrange a time.

Why Art Education is Important

Art education is one of the best ways you can help your children develop skills to express themselves and help maintain healthy emotional well-being.

The key is to provide children with the tools and attention to deal with stress and by giving them a healthy outlet that sets them up with coping skills for life.

Art for kids should be all about originality and creativity. Turn off the TV and learn to turn on their own imaginations where a world of creative adventure awaits.

Art classes are another wonderful way to promote imaginative learning and developing technique and vocabulary.

Answer to "What Is It?"

Mystery device from Summer 2009 issue: Abraham Lincoln received patent #6,469 for "A Device for Buoying Vessels over Shoals:" on May 22, 1849

GIFT SHOP

Looking for that special gift for someone? Check out the Alton Museum gift shop at Loomis Hall on SIUE Dental School Campus. The gift shop is open from 10-4 PM, Wednesday through Saturday. All funds support the Alton Museum. Our favorite holiday ornaments are on sale Nov. - Dec., although there may be some available throughout the year!

WHAT MY TEACHER TOLD ME ABOUT ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By Charlene Gill

It was 1931, and my teacher was Martha Bentley. She was what we called, at the time, a maiden lady – and she made us behave like little ladies and gentlemen.

One of my favorite stories that she told was about Abraham Lincoln and the railroad workers. A group of Germans came to Brighton, Illinois in 1855 looking for land on which to settle. They spoke little English. The Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railway had laid their tracks several years before. Their engines burned wood and the Germans got contracts to supply this fuel. They cut, hauled and stacked the wood along the tracks. When the engine ran out of fuel, the engineer and fireman would pitch on a supply of wood. The cost was 75 cents for a cord of wood.

When the panic of 1857 tied up finances in the East where the railroad owners were located, the wood cutters began to go unpaid. Their credit was cut off at the stores because the Germans could not pay their bills. It became a quarrel between the workers and the railroad interests.

The wood cutters laid plans to take care of the situation. The woodmen laid the wood perpendicular across the tracks (instead of along side). A train came

along and stopped. The angry trainmen and the German wood cutters did not speak each others' languages.

The station agent took advantage of them by saying that he had a telegram that the president of the railroad company was going to pay them at once. They removed the wood and the train moved on – no money came, and the Germans realized that they had been fooled.

So they stopped another train the same way...only this one was a U.S. mail train. Too late the Germans found out that they had broken the law. U.S. Marshalls arrived in Brighton with warrants for the arrest of the immigrants. The offenders hid in the woods, in the Presbyterian Church steeple, in one of the coffins of the undertaker, and another in a cistern. Some were caught and taken to Springfield and put in jail.

A morning or two later, the Germans received a visitor. He was tall and wore a stovepipe hat and introduced himself as Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln said to the men in the cell, "I'll take your case." A German named Lippoldt understood a little English and they were overjoyed. They were told by others "Mr. Lincoln will take a poor man's part every time."

Lincoln arranged bail and sent them back to Brighton saying "Leave it in my hands."

The Brighton men were cleared. They wanted to show their appreciation to Lincoln but he would accept nothing.

When the Civil War started, and Lincoln was president, the Brighton Germans enlisted because they were so grateful to him.

(As it happened, a girl with whom I went to high school in Brighton married a descendant of Lippoldt).



Upper Alton was laid out in 1816, by Joseph Meacham. However; he was unable to give clear title to the purchasers of the building lots. Salu was platted just north of Meacham's land and by 1819, there were more than 30, families living there (more than Lower Alton) ...in 1911, Upper Alton was annexed by Alton, and they became one incorporated city.

The name Pie-Town came into use during The Mexican War in 1846. Rock Springs, the City Cemetery at the end of 5th Street and the woods near Lincoln School were being used by ALL of the Illinois Regiments to bivouac. The ladies of Upper Alton baked pies and gave them to the soldiers and/or sent them

to the camps. The cherries used in many of the pies were grown on the Megowen Land near the Upper Alton Cemetery, on Humbert Road.

The ladies also baked pies for the soldiers of the Civil War. In 1925, the Alton Telegraph obituary of Elizabeth Megowen, age 86, stated that "She was one of the last Upper Alton women who baked pies for The Civil War Soldiers encamped near the city."

Histories of both wars indicate that Alton was a rendezvous for The Mexican War, Illinois Regiments and also for Regiment 7, in May 1861, under Col. Cooke. So the nickname of Pie-Town has been given to Upper Alton, since 1846, (Mexican

War) and then was reactivated during the Civil War.



Jazz Committee

Next year's 5th annual Jazz Festival will be held in August at The Commons at Lewis and Clark Community College. More details to follow...

Tom Raglin has resigned as Jazz Committee Chairperson due to ill health. Abe Barham was elected by the Jazz Committee as the new chair. As a result, Mr. Barham will also become a Museum Board Member.

Descendants of Rufus Easton visit the Alton Museum

Mr. & Mrs. George Halsey visited the Alton Museum early this fall. They were pleased to see that their Great-Great Grandfather Rufus Easton was on exhibit and the story of his having owned downtown Alton having Lippincott plot the area from the river to 9th st and from Market St. to Henry.

Halsey's grandfather, John Perry Walker, was married to Medora Easton, whose father was Langdon Easton, the son of Rufus Easton. Five of Alton's major streets - Alby, Alton, George, Henry and Langdon - were named after Easton's children. Mr. and Mrs. George Halsey live on Beacon street in Boston and it was wonderful having the opportunity to meet them. The museum is looking for a larger portrayal in color of Rufus Easton for our exhibit.

Membership Application



ALTON MUSEUM OF HISTORY & ART, INC

2809 College Avenue, Alton, IL 62002
(618) 462-2763

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

- Youth\$5
- Senior.....\$20
- Active (Single).....\$25
- Family.....\$30
- History Lover.....\$40
- Patron of the Arts.....\$50
- Business.....\$100
- Life.....\$1,000
- Benefactor.....\$5,000

Donation _____

Willing to work as a volunteer

Have a special interest, knowledge

Historical items in possession

“History outlives those who would destroy it.”
...anonymous

Ever wonder what your donations are used for?

These items will be purchased or completed as donations come in... Every dollar helps us preserve our history!

Upgrade building security features

Plant ground cover and lilies for the Koenig House

Organize Loomis Hall Secure Room 2

Replace 60 year old bathrooms in Loomis Hall

Complete decoration of the Koenig House second floor

New Electric Wiring for the Koenig House

Doors and windows for the Cole-Clarke Carriage house

Foundation repair and paint for the Wadlow House

WISH LIST OFFICE SUPPLIES

- Newsletter Sponsor / Printer
- Newsletter Size White Envelopes Size 5 ½ “ X 8 ½ “
- Printer Cartridge 78 – 45 Color & Black Ink
- Cannon Toner Cartridge PC 850
- Postage Stamps – 44 Cents
- Labels for Address
- Letter Size Long & Short Envelopes
- Manila Office Folders
- Packing Boxes –copy paper size

Other:

Small Shade Tent, for outdoor venues

War of 1812

One of three districts created to meet the warrants given in the War of 1812, "The Tract" was within a triangle of the Illinois Territory between the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. This area eventually became part of the state of Illinois in 1818 (Illinois statehood).

Squatters settled upon the lands, ignoring titles and rights. Many speculators were unable to realize a quick profit and, faced with ever-increasing taxation, lost their titles or sold their lands at a loss.

The Tract was surveyed in 1815-1816 and opened to settlement. Then warrants for land were issued by the government. Many of these land grants can be found by searching Illinois Public Land Sales.

The General Land Office issues over 17,000 patents in the Illinois Military Tract between October 1817 and January 1819. No one has determined the number of War of 1812 veterans who actually moved to their free land in the Illinois, Arkansas or Missouri military tracts. Over 60% of these patents were issued in the Illinois Military Tract.

The Archives and Special Collections Unit at Western Illinois University Libraries is the primary public archive for information relating to the history and development of the Illinois Military Tract.

Friday Night at the Museum

The above program was well received during the summer. Some even attended every Friday. New members were gained & notable artifacts were donated.

At the last meeting of summer the Board of Directors voted that the museum continue the program on the 2nd Friday during the fall and winter months. The 2nd Friday in November will be devoted to Elijah Lovejoy.

New museum members include: Christopher Alexander, Dustyn Alexander, Michael Alexander, Nancy Alexander, Berry Gaskill and Andy and Nancy Batchelor.



We use the side door at Loomis Hall as our main point of entrance. It is wheel chair accessible.



**Mystery Artifact - What is it?
(Answer in next newsletter)**

We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.altonmuseum.com