

Spring 2009

# News & Views

2809 College Avenue, Alton, Illinois 62002 618-462-2763 altonmuseum@yahoo.com

**In Memoriam**

*Cyrus Johnson*

*Robert E. Meyer*

*Myrna Shaw*

## **MILES DAVIS JAZZ FESTIVAL**

The fourth annual Miles Davis Jazz Birthday Celebration

**Saturday, May 16, 2009**

at the Amphitheater on the Riverfront in Alton, Illinois at 12 Noon

*~Bring your lawn chairs~*

HEADLINERS: Willie Akins & Jim Manley

SPECIAL GUESTS: Michael Anthony Fitzgerald & Brian White

The Howard Neal Band will honor LUTHER INGRAM and his music

PROGRAM

12 Noon.....Entertainment by the Pitt Crew

1:00 pm.....Welcome: Tom Raglin, Chair of the Miles Davis Committee,  
Alton Museum of History & Art

1:10 pm.....Master of Ceremonies DeWayne Williams  
introduces lineup of Entertainers and Notables in audience

1:30 pm.....Jim Manley Quartet

2:45 pm.....Intermission/Entertainment by the Pitt Crew

3:00 pm.....Howard Neal Band with special performance  
by the Brothers Ingram....a salute to Luther Ingram

4:15 pm.....Intermission....Introduce the Miles Davis Committee

4:30 pm.....Michael Anthony Fitzgerald, Saxophonist/Brian White Guitar

5:45 pm.....Willie Akins Quartet

6:30 pm.....Conclusion

ADMISSION: Advance \$20.00 at Gate \$25.00

### **NEW EXHIBIT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY LOIS MITCHELL**

1. St. Louis Arch from Laclede's Landing (a photo that many folks take).
2. Sunrise on Spirit Lake in Spirit Lake, Iowa. This is up near the Minnesota border.
3. Big photo hanging on the wall is of St. Bartholomew Church on the Königsee near Berchtesgaden, Germany. A tourist photo of the whole building is attached.
- 4., 5., 6. All of these photos were taken in Elsah, IL about 4 or 5 years ago for the photo contest with the theme of "Elsah Magic".
7. This photo is of a sunset off the coast of Loutraki, GREECE. Attached is a city photo of the area from the sky.
8. A close-up of one of our Lantanas last year. It was taken in the morning (notice the dew) and it even had a bug stop by to check it out. Attached is a friend's photo showing a whole flower.
9. The Columbine on the desk (left) was in my garden last year.
10. The leaf on the rail was found on the path in Hawk's Nest State Park (WV) on a walk down towards the New River Gorge area.

Reminder:  
*AMHA*  
*Annual*  
*Membership*  
*Meeting*  
*April 8,*  
*2009*  
*7:30 p.m.*  
*Loomis Hall*

*Thank You*  
*Madison*  
*County Arts*  
*Council,*  
*Illinois Arts*  
*Council and*  
*The Alton*  
*Foundation*

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Membership Application

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ALTON MUSEUM OF HISTORY & ART, INC

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

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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

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DONATIONS

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$25 \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 \_\_\_\_\_

\$100 \_\_\_\_\_

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.altonmuseum.com

The Way We Were

The Illinois State Agricultural Society Fair was held in Alton in 1856 on Danforth Street, on what now are the grounds of the Ursuline Convent. It was the fourth annual state fair, the first to be held south of Springfield. Harness racing, steamboat races and a three-ring circus were included in the entertainment. Crowds of visitors came to the fair via steamer from St. Louis.

The city of Alton prepared for the 1856 State Fair by building new roads and adding gaslights from downtown. The fair was promoted by a huge banner hung above the Mississippi River bluffs on a 1600-foot cable. Erza Miller, contractor, constructed the banner and several buildings for the fair.

“BEET SUGAR”

Benjamin Godfrey and Gilman provided money so that David Lee Child, of Massachusetts, could travel to France and learn first-hand about sugar beets and beet sugar production. When the Alton venture went south, Child established a sugar beet farm and factory in Northhampton, Massachusetts.

EARLY ALTON HOMES

Wesley Beall, president of Beall Tool and Metal Products Co., built a late Victorian period home around 1890 on Liberty Street in Middleton. The gables, bays, porches and stoops, all ornamented with scrolls and brackets, made the home a classic. At one time the Beall family operated four factories in Alton.

The Goulding home on Prospect Street was a Victorian frame house with a mansard roof. The home had nine-foot floor-length living room windows, transoms above the doors and a separate addition used as a law office from the 1920's. The original owner came to Alton in 1850 and opened Goulding's Jewelry.

### UPPER ALTON

Upper Alton was founded in 1816 by Joseph Meachman. Because of the high ground it had an advantage over Alton. Upper Alton had further advantage of being located on the roads from Edwardsville and Vandalia over Oakland Avenue to present day North Alton, and then down Hop Hollow to Smeltzer's Ferry. Pioneers going into the Louisiana Territory by land took this route.

Upper Alton had the largest population of all the settlements, but both Upper Alton and Alton suffered from the fact that land titles were not clear. This caused a decline in population.

The first post office established in Upper Alton was in 1818. The office received a mail delivery once a week. The Upper post office, on Salu Street, was on the route between Carlyle, Illinois and St. Charles, Missouri. The route crossed the Mississippi River at Alton by ferry.

H. N. Kendall and John Bostwick, Sr. played an important part in the early development of Upper Alton. The Bostwicks came to Alton from St. Louis in a houseboat in 1837. They tied their boat at the foot of Henry Street where they lived for a short time. John Bostwick, Jr. use to tell about the children of his family carrying fresh water from a spring in town located at the corner of Broadway and Spring Streets.

John Bostwick, Sr. bought eight acres of

grounds in Upper Alton, which later became Western Military Academy. He began to build a large house for his family on the west side of Seminary Street, but it was destroyed by fire. Bostwick started a second house across the street. In 1838, Edward Wyman visiting Alton on a business trip, saw the house and like it very much. Wyman, years later, traded land in St. Louis for an eight acre piece of land in Upper Alton and founded a school.

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The Western Military Academy closed with the June 5, 1971, commencement exercises, when it had an enrollment of 160 cadets. In addition to stables, Western Military Academy had two gymnasiums, an indoor swimming pool, rifle range, bowling alley, tennis courts, athletic fields and a 400-seat chapel.

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Col. George D. Eaton and A. M. Jackson made Western Military Academy, an obscure little school into one of the outstanding academies of the country.

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Paul Tibbets entered Western Military Academy in 1928. The B-29 Superfortress, Enola Gay, commanded by Paul Tibbets, dropped first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

### JOHN MASON PECK

John Mason Peck was born in Litchfield, Connecticut October 31, 1789. He married Sarah Paine. He died March 15, 1858 and was buried in Rock Spring Cemetery. He was reburied in Bellefontaine Cemetery, 29 years after his death.

Reverend John Mason Peck, D.D., first arrived in Alton in 1817, sent by the Baptist Triennial Convention to the St. Louis area as a Missionary. He decided a theological school was needed in Illinois. Peck then established a school, He moved the school to Upper Alton in 1832 and named it the Alton Seminary. Loomis Hall, a two-story structure, was built and originally housed the entire college. It was used as an academic hall, administration building, and the college library. John Russell, L.L.D. was the first principal, followed by Rev. Hubbell Loomis, Principal defacto Loomis Hall also served as a meeting place for Upper Alton Baptist

Congregations for several years before their church was completed. The hall got its name from the Reverend Hubbell Loomis, one of the first instructors at the school. He taught theology and mathematics. Loomis also served as the first principal to the Alton Seminary. Loomis Hall has the distinction of being the oldest education buildings in Illinois in continued use.

On January 12, 1836, the Alton Seminary's name was changed to Shurtleff College.

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WE ARE  
GRATEFUL TO  
RUSS SMITH

~ BOSSANOVA~  
RESTAURANT &  
LOUNGE

112 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
in downtown  
Alton, Illinois

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT – Mabel Charlene Gill

The Ninian Edwards Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, Alton, Illinois nominated Charlene Gill for the National Society of DAR Historic Preservation Medal. Alton Museum has been notified that Charlene Gill will be awarded the medal. This is a prestigious award.

NSDAR, Washington, DC, received a dossier of Mrs. Gill's 40 years of work in the Alton area and several letters of recommendations from those who have worked with Charlene Gill on her vast array of projects and efforts over the years. The National Vice Chairman, Historic Preservation, Terry Price Arnold, noted Mrs. Gill's "passion and advocacy for historic preservation are beautifully expressed in Mrs. Gill's forty years of volunteer service, which are especially evident on behalf of the Alton Museum of History and Art." Charlene Gill's "dedication and commitment are further demonstrated in her efforts with the National Register of Historic Places and with civic and governmental leaders in keeping historic preservation alive in the Alton Community and state of Illinois. The supporting letter from another preservationist, Mr. Phil Poehner, memorably expressed Mrs. Gill's many contributions." Other letters submitted were from Don Boswell, Charlene Johnson, Everett Loy, Mayor Donald Sandidge and Bret Stawar.

Lunch and presentation of the award is by invitation, Saturday, May 9, 2009 at the United Methodist Village.

### RECOMMENDATION

January 7, 2008

Alton Museum of History & Art, Inc. was founded and incorporated in 1971 by Charlene Gill, Margaret Davis Weber and four others.

For 38 years the Alton Museum of History and Art has protected, treasured and shared many objects,

documents and pictures that evidence the wonderfully rich history and art heritage of this special area. The museum currently maintains three historic buildings on the SIUE Dental School campus—Loomis Hall [1832], the Cole—Clark Carriage House [largest native stone carriage house in the state], the Robert Pershing Wadlow Birth Home, and two historic homes in downtown Alton, the Wilhelm House and the Koenig House, [German-American Victorian Home.]

The major function of this corporation is to discover, collect and provide for the preservation of any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area and to conduct an education program stimulating public interest in local history and art.

Co-founder, President Emeritus, Executive Committee member-at-large, and Collection Committee Chair, Charlene Gill has preserved the Wood River Massacre stones (2), Monticello Seminary memorabilia and Shurtleff College memorabilia. Mrs. Gill is hands on working with the collection, preservation and storage of artifacts.

A historical writer, Charlene Gill donates all funds from her books to the Alton Museum. She raises capital through letter campaigns, dinner parties and other entertainment events. Presently, Mrs. Gill is writing a book LINCOLN IN ALTON.

Preserving Alton's historic buildings has long been a focus for Mrs. Gill. She has been involved in efforts to put many local buildings on the National Register of Historic Places as well as Illinois State Register of Historic Places. Alton has not designated any local historic districts.

Charlene Gill, a former employee of the Defense Mapping Agency, is a graduate of Washington University. She belongs to many organizations: Alton's Women Council, Riverbend

History Network, Alton Area Historical Society and the Illinois State Historical Society.

Sincerely,  
Charlene Johnson - Past President

### MORE ABOUT CHARLENE

We are the descendants of Philip Meisenheimer (The seventh son's-children's children) Philip Meisenheimer, Born 6/2/1803 Darmstadt Germany Died 5/11/1871Fosterburg, Il. He, with his wife and five children left Darmstadt, Germany, sailing on the brig 'Florence' (the ship wrecked off the coast of Newfoundland on August 9, 1840) Philip was the only member of his family who escaped death in the icy waters. From Canada, he journeyed to the United States to a community then called Coal Branch. He married Marguerite Rausch in 1845. Their daughter Marguerite died when 10 days old in 1847, and daughter Christine died when 10 days old in 1848. Five weeks later, her mother died. Philip had settled land west of Fosterburg along the West Fork of Wood River and he married a third time, (Elizabeth nee Jost) and from this union seven sons were born. Phillip, John, William, Jacob, Henry, Christian and Charles. These sons became the great grandparents of all the Meisenheimers populating the Riverbend area today, and their descendents have inherited a great sense of history. -- By Charlene Gill (The only living child of devoted parents who told her of the emigration of her great grandfather Philip Meisenheimer.) *Copied from her book: BRIDGING THE MILLENNIUM: 'HIGHLIGHTING THE ALTON AREA AND ITS MAYOR*

**REMEMBER YOUR MUSEUM**

Remember your Museum with Life Memberships, Donations, Memorials and Bequests. Our long-term financial stability depends on our biggest goal to get an endowment fund so we can pay for general operation. With rising fuel, insurance, and upkeep costs, it is vital that we provide financial planning that will enable us to preserve our history for future generations. Nobody wants to give money to pay the power bill, yet the power bill has to be paid.

Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Alton Museum of History & Art, Inc.  
2809 College Avenue  
Alton, Illinois 62002

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***DON'T FORGET TO USE YOUR e-SCRIP CARD***

All of our loyal members who shop at Schnuck's Grocery Stores will be able to participate in Schnuck's Community Card Program. This will help raise money to support the museum.

Simply pick up the registration form at any of the local Schnuck's Stores, fill out the requested information on the form. You will then be given a Schnuck's e-Scrip Community Card. In order to activate the card you must either call 1-800-931-6258 or visit [www.escrip.com/schnucks.jsp](http://www.escrip.com/schnucks.jsp)

Be sure to show your card at the checkout each time your purchase anything at Schnuck's. We will receive up to 3% of your purchase amount. There is no additional cost to you.

Thank you for helping the Museum as you shop. We appreciate Schnuck's for helping us to raise money for repairs, purchases and other items the Museum may need.

We are a tax-exempt – 501©(3) – organizations. We need your support.

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**Charitable giving...**

If you are interested in giving a gift of stocks, bonds or mutual funds to Alton Museum of History & Art, Inc., contact us or Joshua Farley with Edward Jones Investments here in Alton.

Yes, Alton Museum of History & Art, Inc. accepts cash donations as well as gifts of stocks, bonds or mutual funds. By giving a gift of stocks, bonds or mutual funds, you are parting with dominion and control of the stock to Alton Museum of History & Art, Inc. thus eliminating the capital gains taxes you would have owed if you sold it.

A stock is said to be highly appreciated if it is valued at a higher rate now than when you originally purchased it. By giving a gift of stock to Alton Museum of History & Art, Inc., you generally receive a full deduction of the entire value of the asset, while avoiding the capital gains tax which would have been due had you sold it.

For more information, contact Josh Farley at (619)462-4465

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## EXHIBITS

Photographs by LOIS MITCHELL, Museum Treasurer, are featured in the Grace Monroe Classroom in celebration of Women's History Month.

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Benjamin Godfrey founded Monticello College in 1838 to educate women.

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*"History outlives those who would destroy it."*  
...anonymous

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.altonmuseum.com](http://www.altonmuseum.com)

## **CONTEMPORARY PAINTING DONATED**

David Culp donated a contemporary painting Landscape #4 by Catherine E. Milovich. Catherine Estelle (Ehrmann) Milovich was born in 1910 and died in 1991 in St. Louis, Missouri. She was recognized for her art work in textiles and enamels and was invited to participate in exhibits by the State Department, the St. Louis Art Museum and the Yugoslavia Galleries in Belgrade, Mostar and Sarajevo. **THANK YOU DAVID**

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Rates to advertise in the Museum Newsletter:

FULL PAGE (7.5" x 10").....\$300.00

HALF PAGE - VERTICAL (3.75" X 10") OR HORIZONTAL (7.5" X 5").....\$150.00

QUARTER PAGE (3.75 X 5").....\$75.00

EIGHTH PAGE (3.75" X 2.5").....\$40.00

2009 AD COPY DEADLINES

JANUARY/FEBRUARY.....DECEMBER 14

MARCH/APRIL.....FEBRUARY 1

JUNE/JULY.....MAY 1

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER.....AUGUST 1

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## **LINCOLN**

On April 9, 1840, Abraham Lincoln came to Alton to deliver a speech in support of Harrison's election to the presidency. The Telegraph commented, "his speech, which, although highly argumentative and logical, and was enlivened by numerous anecdotes, was received with unbounded applause and left a very favorable impression on the minds of his auditors." Lincoln spoke in the Riley building at Second and Alby streets, later known as the Ryder building.

When the news of President Lincoln's assassination reached Alton, the cannons located on the hill above the prison boomed all day long.

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## **EARLY HOTEL**

The Franklin House was a popular hotel managed by Mr. Bliss and Mr. Lesure. Abraham Lincoln visited the hotel prior to his debate with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858.



**Photo by Brian Combs**

Board member Aidan Combs, in order to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Lincoln, dressed as the 16<sup>th</sup> President and stood beside the photo "Smiling Lincoln" by Conant. Combs and his brother Brian, who dressed as a Civil War officer, visited various businesses around Alton in costume to promote the Museum.