



# LaSalle County Historical Society

## August 2007 Newsletter

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### President's Message

In the good old summertime what is taking place at the LaSalle County Historical Society museum? The Aitken School? The barn and blacksmith shop?

This is the peak of tourist season and we are ideally located to attract visitors, in the Village of North Utica, the Gateway to Starved Rock. This excellent state park, the crown jewel in the state's park system, attracts more than 2 million visitors a year.

Just this past week the LaSalle County Historical Society hosted a group of teachers from the University of St. Francis, who are working on their Masters of Administration degree. They experienced attending a one-room school (the Aitken School) much as it was 100 years ago.

What fun we had as they carried in the cobs, coal, and wood for the stove, sat on the stool wearing the dunce hat (because they didn't do their assignment) and carried water in the bucket for drinking out of a common dipper! It was quite an enlightening session for these twenty-first century teachers.

On this busy Wednesday, a group of about 35 people from the Canal Society of Indiana also toured the complex.

Ana Koval of the Canal Corridor Association stopped by to review some plans for a project adjacent to our museum building and the canal.

On just that one day 97 visitors toured our museum. During July, they came from most of the states and many foreign countries including Belgium, Chile, Colombia, England, France, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, and Wales.

Robert (Bob) Navarro, Ph. D., President/CEO of the Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau, visited with us during the monthly board meeting.

"Tourism is big business in LaSalle County," he said. "The county generated more than \$132 million according to 2005 tourism statistics, the latest available," he added.

Bob described the bureau and outlined some of its activities. The Heritage Corridor was incorporated in 1984 to serve communities linked by the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Civic, business, and community leaders make up the Board of Directors. Counties covered are Will, Grundy, LaSalle, Putnam, and the Chicago Portage area, he said.

Each year the Heritage Corridor bureau promotes group tours, special events (such as our annual Burgoo Festival), distributes an annual visitors guide, advertises in selected tourism magazines, and posts information on its website, [www.heritagecorridorcvb.com](http://www.heritagecorridorcvb.com).

Have you been in to see us lately? Please drop by. There is always something happening here.

Mary G. Small, President

## Herb Guild Readies the Garden



Herb Guild members Jan Webster, Gene Stuart, Marilyn Koudelka, Eleanor Harrison, Lois Steil, Rose Zimmer, and Dorothy Debosik work on the Herb Garden located just east of the Museum.

## Rags to Riches

On September 16, the Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Kevin McMahon will give a concert that includes music written by former local residents. Among the selections performed will be compositions by Zez Confrey, Angelo Fontecchio, Edward Hayne and Josephine Boyle. CD's of the music will be available for purchase. Sheet music for these works was found in the Museum's collections. The concert will be held at Celebrations 150 in LaSalle.

## Thank You

A special thank to the latest donors to the Capital Building Fund, Lucille & Ray Hepner, Mary & Blair Vedder and Susan & Bruce Sack and family.

Our apologies to Mr. & Mrs. Richard Graff, Mr. & Mrs. John Gleim and Mr. & Mrs. Richard Garner whose names were inadvertently left off the donor list for the capital fund request. Sorry for the error!

## Memorials

Mr. & Mrs. J. Davis Small for Margaret Barnes.

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## Latest Ottawa Mural Commemorates Lincoln - Douglas Debate



The latest mural to be commissioned in Ottawa commemorates the first of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, held in Ottawa in August, 1858.



The late Jim Gayan is featured in the mural. Gayan taught at Ottawa High and portrayed Stephen Douglas in a debate reenactment.

## Oops

In last month's article on the Patriots Day celebration, we forgot to give credit to John Gleim and Ken Elliott, who were docents in the military exhibit and spoke with visitors about their war experiences.

Our sympathy goes to the family of life member Melvin Mathesius of rural Earlville, who recently passed away.

Our sympathy also to the family of long-time member Paul Gerding of Ottawa, who passed away recently.

Excerpts from a report: Inspection Trip  
Illinois & Michigan Canal  
July 23rd and 24th, 1912  
(note: spelling and punctuation are as written)

Arrived at Lock #13 at 4:58 P.M., 2 1/2 miles below Utica, and 2 1/2 miles to LaSalle, known as half-way lock. Water 7'8" on breast wall 6'7" on sill, level above this lock was 2" low when sounded.

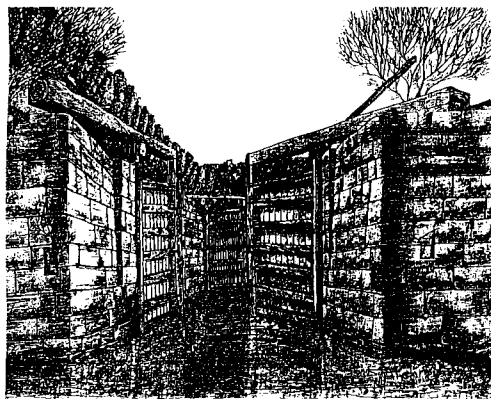
Left Lock #13 at 5:16 P.M. Arrived C.O. & P. trolley bridge at Split Rock at 5:22 P.M. This is a high bridge.

Passed first coal Mine High Bridge 5:34 P.M. water 6'-5'8" . Canal is narrow here and a lot of old piling is protruding from the bank on the R. R. Side.

Arrived Aqueduct over Little Vermillion River 5:40 P.M. Water good to this point; found 6' to 5'8" on the aqueduct.

Arrived I. C. R. R. high bridge 5:42 P.M. (numerous soundings) Arrived Lock #14 LaSalle at 5:48 P.M. and tied up. Water good from last Coal Bridge to this lock. (thus ends the inspection tour)

2007 Commentary: at the time of this inspection trip interest was growing in an expanded waterway. Twenty years later the present Illinois Waterway was almost completed with a lock and dam system on the Illinois River . Now, seventy four years after the Illinois Waterway was completed, there is need for modernization to accommodate the large tows in current use.



Lock 14 in LaSalle  
As drawn by Brian Nolan

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST 28 - SEPTEMBER 5 - LST 325 DOCKS AT HENRY

SEPTEMBER 16, 2007 - ILLINOIS VALLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - "Rags to Riches"

OCTOBER 7, 2007 - 38<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BURGEOO FESTIVAL

NOVEMBER 11, 2007 - ANNUAL MEETING - New Club House of Oak Ridge Golf Course

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### Membership

Do you need to renew your membership? If the mailing label on your newsletter has an 06 in the upper right corner, we have not received your membership renewal for 2007. Please help support the Historical Society by sending your dues today! Individual membership is \$20, Family membership is \$25 and an individual Life membership is a one-time charge of \$250. For-profit dues are \$100 and Not-for-profit cost is \$50. We appreciate your continued support.

### Our Membership Goal

