

The Henry County Historian



The Newsletter of the Henry County Historical Society

The Henry County Historical Society – Bishop Hill, IL
61419 – 309-927-3528

Spring 2017

BARN QUILT PROGRAM BEING OFFERED

Valerie Jensen, one of the chairmen of the Barn Quilts of Bureau County, will present a program about their project on Tuesday night, June 13, 2017, at the Henry County Historical Society Museum in Bishop Hill at 7 PM. All interested parties are encouraged to attend.

Valerie, of rural Tiskilwa, has worked on the Bureau County project since its inception in 2014. From the original 5 quilts at their inception, the organization now has 70 painted quilts displayed on agricultural buildings throughout the county. Their goal is to have barn quilts in all 25 townships in the county.



The nation-wide interest in barn quilts was born in 2001 in Adams County, Ohio, when Donna Sue Groves made a promise to her mother to paint her a quilt block. Her mother was an accomplished quilter and she thought this would brighten their colorless grey barn. This barn quilt painted for her mother has sparked the Barn Quilt movement throughout the United States and Canada. It has become one of the fastest growing grassroots public art movement.

The Bureau County project paints their quilts on a special type of plywood called MDO board. The blocks are usually either 4x4 feet or 8x8 feet. No fabric is used in the design, it all comes from paint. There are painted with exterior paint and each displays a colorful quilt block, either one chosen from a traditional quilt design or from something personal to that farmer.

Valerie will tell about the project, how designs are selected and painted, and show a power point presentation with photos of the finished quilts. There is no charge for the program, but a donation to the museum will be greatly appreciated.

HENRY COUNTY'S FEATURED CITY GENESEO, IL. THEN AND NOW

FACTS:

City Population – 6,569 more or less
County Population – 49,569 more or less
Climate – average winter temperature 24.
average summer temperature 73.2

HISTORY:

The name Geneseo came from Genesee County, New York was the original home of Henry County's first settlers. In Native American language it means "Pleasant Valley." These settlers arrived 175 years ago.

- 1) Our first settlers were motivated by a religious revival in the 1830's which urged Christians to go west and evangelize.
- 2) They traveled in horse-drawn covered wagons.
- 3) They built cabins out of unpeeled logs and mud.
- 4) Pottawatomie Indians inhabited the land. They were peaceful.
- 5) The first store/home was built in the 1840's.
- 6) Run-away slaves were hidden in homes in Geneseo.
- 7) The graded school system began in 1856.
- 8) The railroad came to Geneseo in 1853.
- 9) Geneseo was incorporated as a town in 1855 and became a city in 1865 with a population of 3,000.



W.C. Sheppard Mansion, 1895 in Geneseo, Illinois.
This lot was the location of Deacon Cone's house that was used for the Underground Railroad

“More than 175 years have come and gone since the first settlers planted their dreams and values here. Dreams and values that have grown, flourished, and prospered with succeeding generations so that, today, Geneseo offers the best of the 21st century while laced with the best of its founders.”

Geneseo Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Center Annual Publication

HENRY COUNTY EARLY EDUCATION

WITH AN EMPHASIS ON GENESEO

Thomas Jefferson, our 3rd President, said, “The diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty.” Through the years all of our Presidents and statesmen realized the

importance and value of education. Our founding fathers made sure there would be a good system of schools that would be available for all individuals. As stated in *Corn, Commerce, and Country Living*, the ordinance of 1787 said in Section two, “Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and education shall forever be encouraged.”

The early settlers of Henry County also saw this same need to educate their children. Their cabins were used for the first schools. Eventually log school houses were built. The following poem from *Corn, Commerce, and County Living* provides us with a realistic view of the earliest Henry County schools:

**A wood colored shack was erected,
In the midst of a shady grove.
With an old pine desk and some benches
Surrounding a big drum stove.
With some willow sprouts in the corner.
The youngsters did more than play;
They not only learned how to read and write,
They learned how to live each day.**

In the earliest situations, students were taught by wandering teachers. These individuals “boarded around” staying in the cabin homes of their patrons. “Since there was little or no money in the new country, he, the teacher, took his pay in produce, wheat, tallow, skins, wool, or young cattle.” This was how public education continued during the Henry County early days.

Eventually schools evolved. Better schools were built with better drinking water, stoves, more windows, better lighting, blackboards, maps, dictionaries, globes, encyclopedias, and other books and supplies. They also experienced better qualified teachers who sometimes had a janitor to start stoves and clean the room.

An added plus for the early Henry County schools were the mottoes that were written on the blackboards for student enrichment. A few of these instructional nuggets are as follows:

**Punctuality is a cardinal virtue
General knowledge is desirable**

**The school room is our workshop
The faithful worker is rewarded
God will help him who helps himself**

It is easy to grasp the Henry County educational systems early experience by checking out the following statistics from *Henry County, Illinois Rural Schools – 1857 – 1869 – gone but not forgotten:*

EDUCATIONAL EVOLUTION OF GENESEO TOWNSHIP

1858 – District No. 3, J. P. Stewart, teacher at \$22.50 per month, 37 scholars.

District No. 2, Miss Martha Wright, teacher at \$20.00 and board, 16 scholars.

1867 – District No. 6, Miss Clemmil Rockwell, teacher, wages \$20.00 per month with 37 scholars.

These schools were cutting edge for their time and place, and during that time corporal punishment prevailed. Students could endure a paddling with a ruler, standing in a corner, or holding a book at arm's length till relieved.

These humble beginnings have led to the consolidated schools of our era! Much has changed but the commitment remains. Quoting James Monroe, "In a government founded on the sovereignty of the people, the education of youth is an object of the first importance."

FASHION EVER CHANGING

Fashion is ever changing just as are our lives. In the 20th century we experienced a move away from restrictions and discomfort. Bustles and crinolines gave way to simplicity and naturalness. Boned corsets tortured women before the 1900's. The tight fitting corset relinquished to a more relaxed look as did fabrics. They went toward supple, flowing materials.

Accessories also evolved and changed with time, Parasols and hats gave way to current trends.

Hemlines also fluctuated. They started at the ankle and moved up. Of course, then they moved back down! Necklines followed the hemline's instability. We have seen flappers flapping and the mini rising!

Ever changing fashion can easily be seen by examining the materials needed to make a dress:



AFTERNOON DRESS IN 1888

**15 yards wide silk
5 yards skirt lining
3 yards horsehair
cloth to stiffen skirt
4 yards silk for dust
ruffle
5 yards velveteen
for skirt binding
24 in skirt belting
1 1/2 yards sleeve
lining
1 yard crinoline to
stiffen skirt
12 inches buckram
for collar stiffening
4 dozen fancy
buttons
1 card large hooks
and eyes**

**2 cards medium hooks and eyes
1 card invisible hooks and eyes
5 spools silk thread
20 yards of feather boning for the waist
1 yard small boning for collar
1 bolt seam binding**

AFTERNOON DRESS IN 1927

**4 yards silk
2 spools of silk thread**

The Trident

If you would like to step back in time and view vintage clothing and accessories then make the Henry County Museum in Bishop Hill, Il your next stop! Hats, gloves, dresses, and uniforms can be seen and enjoyed on your next day trip. The late 1880's dress that is shown above is on display at the Henry County Historical Society Museum. We hope you will enhance your summer and visit soon.

HENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Be a part of history. . .

SUPPORT THE HENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Henry County Historical Society and its museum exist solely through memberships, donations, and the support of its volunteers. We hope you'll join us in supporting our efforts to preserve and promote the history of Henry County. Memberships are due starting March 1 of each year. **Remember to Visit: www.historichenrycounty.com**

SINGLE: \$20

FAMILY: \$25

SPONSOR: \$50

PATRON: \$100

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