



Lockport Area Genealogical & Historical Society

Issue No. 22

NEWSLETTER

May 2003

Sports—Share & Tell

Members shared their recollections about sports at the April 26 meeting at the Gladys Fox Museum. The names of notables such as Lindbergh, Ward and Mikan were invoked. Many individuals and teams were remembered. Some teams recalled were those sponsored by Texaco, Drake Lumber, Lockport Merchants, American Legion and many others. Several members brought posters and photographs of grade school, high school, and community leagues. ~

"Lockport has a rich history in sports."
—Gary Ward

Romeoville Aces

by Mabel Hrpcha

From 1933 to 1937, there was an organized girl's baseball team in Romeoville, Illinois. It was open to girls who were 12 years and older. Mr. Neal Murphy and Lester Lindbergh coached the team. Les went on to be an All American football player at the University of Illinois at Champaign. I once had my thumb dislocated on a catch and Les pushed it back in. The "emergency room" was on the field. I think that it was Les that gave me the nickname "Gabby." I was the catcher and kept up the talk on the field. I think I can say that I have always and still live up to that nickname.

Opportunity for travel

This gave the girls from the small town of Romeoville (150 people at the time) a real chance to travel throughout the area. The team traveled to Lisle, Downers Grove, Berwyn, Troy, Manhattan, Blue Island, Lemont, Chicago, Joliet and Lockport for games. Joliet had six teams, the Bruins, West Park, St. Anthony, Central Court, Highland Park, and Ingalls Park. In Chicago we played at Shewbridge Field, Harlem and Harrison, 60th and Langley. The Chicago teams usually carried the name of their sponsors, like Hydrox and Peachy Bloomers. The Chicago teams would charge \$.25 for entrance to the game. But locally we would pass the hat and split the take between the two teams. The Romeo Aces would



Front row, left to right: Audrey Morris, Marge Startz, Evelyn Murphy, Gladys Startz, Adeline Moelhausen, Marie Peirce. Back row, left to right: Mary Pounovich, Mabel Fracaro, Jenny and Helen Pounovich, Marge Pierce, Martha Pounovich.

also hold a dance at the old Gleaner's Hall on Route 53 every spring to help cover expenses for the year.

The most exciting time was the tournament season. The St. Anthony team in 1936 had won the Joliet Park District Tournament. The Romeo Aces had won 15 straight games. The playoff between the two teams was at Rivals Club in the Gold Medal Tournament.

I still have the scorecard from that

1936 game. In the first four innings the girls on both teams were hot. The score was Romeo Aces 10 and St. Anthony 8 at the top of the fifth inning. The crowd went wild in the fifth when St. Anthony scored three runs to tie it up at 12 each. The Romeo team was able to score two more runs. In their last time at bat St. Anthony scored one more run and the game ended with a Romeo victory of 14 to 13. However, this victory was short lived because the Aces lost to Central Court in the finals. ~

Inside this Issue: "LTHS Cheerleaders" by Mabel H.

Mabel Hrpcha is a lifelong resident of Romeoville, author of a history of Romeoville and other papers on local history, treasurer of the Romeoville Area Historical Society and a member of LAGHS.

We bring the people of the Lockport area together to preserve and share our family histories and our local heritage.

Since May 12, 2001 ~ Incorporated January 26, 2002

M

essage from the President

Our focus this month is on Romeoville, its early history and development. We will meet at the Fountaindale Library at 9:00 a.m. for a tour of the Romeoville Historical Society Museum. The library is located at Route 53 and Normantown Road.

Early maps label the area between Lockport and Athens (Lemont) as "Romeo." Its western bluffs look down on the Des Plaines River and the future site of the Illinois & Michigan Canal. There is an air of Shakespearean romance about the name in connection with a neighboring pioneer settlement called Juliet. Juliet was changed to Joliet, a reference to map maker-explorer Louis Jolliet, who traveled the Des Plaines in 1673.



Dr. Reno G. Caneva

Romeo extended eastward from the river which was dotted with many islands. On 135th Street between Route 53 and the I & M Canal is Isle a la Cache, literally "island of the hidden." In the 18th century the French stored their cache of furs on the island and held a rendezvous after the winter's trading season. Today the site is managed by the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

Many Society members may remember the island for the food served at a restaurant located there. For years Murphy's Restaurant was one of the best-known eateries in the area with local regulars and other patrons that included many of Cook County's politicians. The establishment was owned by Neil Murphy, whose genius guided Romeoville from its beginning as a backwater community to an emerging economic community of business and industry. As mayor, Neil consolidated Hampton Park and the offices of Citgo Refinery into the village of Romeoville. Do you remember Sarsfield's, Romeo Beach, farmer's Du Page Elevator, ComEd, Material Service and the coup of all times, obtaining Lewis University from Lockport?

Lockport's roots intermingle at many points on the timeline of history, for instance, since Lockport West High School became Romeoville High. Society member Mabel Hrpcha wrote about earlier connections in the February 2002 issue of our newsletter: "Romeoville emerged due to the building of the Illinois & Michigan Canal. Some of the early settlers had a connection to the canal." Mabel tells us that Romeo residents, Colonel George Martin and Charles Boyer, moved to Lockport and became leaders in business and canal related operations.

Mabel will join us along with other members of the Romeoville Historical Society. Come and enjoy the extensive collection and reminisce with us.

See you on May 24,
Dr. Reno G. Caneva

*Preserving the
Past is our
Present
to the Future.*



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Membership news

with Bonnie Packley

New Member

John M. Lamb of Lockport



Welcome



John will lend his professional expertise as historian by serving on the 175th anniversary book committee.

Lockport Community Expo— Outreach

Our outreach team for this event was Reno Caneva, Betty Shin and Nancy Wilda, who spoke with over 100 visitors to the annual expo.

We still need many more volunteers if we are to fulfill our education mission: Old Canal Days on June 21 and 22; Dellwood Park Civil War Days on September 5, 6 and 7; Christmas Crossroads on November 22 and 23.

Committee Help

Check the flyer in the February 2003 newsletter for a description of the committees.

Contact Bonnie: (815) 838-9388 or blpackley@att.net.

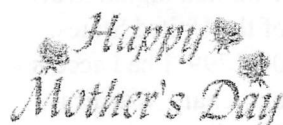
Board Members and Officers Sought

Election, June 14, 2003

Would you like to be nominated for office? Please consult the new bylaws' revision for a description of responsibilities. Bonnie Carlson, Candy Hrpcha and Rich Ramos will serve on the nominating committee which will provide a slate of nominees to be announced in the June newsletter.

New Bylaws Adopted

The bylaw's revision was adopted at the general membership meeting of April 26. Copies were enclosed in the newsletter of April 2003.



Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia who is credited with bringing about the official observance of

Mother's Day. Her campaign to establish such a holiday began as a remembrance of her mother, who died in 1905 and who had, in the late 19th century, tried to establish "Mother's Friendship Days" as a way to heal the scars of the Civil War.

Minutes of the General Membership Meeting

The regular general membership meeting of the Lockport Area Genealogical & Historical Society was called to order by President Caneva on Saturday, April 26, 2003, at 8:33 a.m. at the Gladys Fox Museum. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1. The minutes of Saturday, March 22, 2003, were approved as read.
2. The Treasurer reported a balance of \$1009.28 and the addition of one new membership, John M. Lamb.
3. Executive Board, President Caneva: Laghs was represented at the Lockport Community Expo. The Executive Board is seeking members to serve on the Nominating Committee.
4. Committee Report, Jacqueline Munch: The Archive Committee continues to collect and record acquisitions.
5. Open Forum: The President invited members to send cards to Steve Potter, who has been in treatment for cancer for some time now.
6. Share & Tell / Program: The topic was local sports.
7. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Contact: Charlene Giardina, Secretary at (815) 838-5662.

Books for Grandparents

Books designed for use by grandparents provide a way to organize memories for future generations. Call local bookstores to see if they stock the following:

⇒ *A Grandparent's Book* by Milton Kamin, 143 pages, 4-5 questions per page.

⇒ *A Grandmother's Treasures* by Lois Wyse, 57 pages, 3-4 questions per page.

⇒ *Grandmother Remembers and Grandfather Remembers* by Levy & Pelikan, 59 and 60 pages.

Church Bulleting Bloopers

☺ Don't let worry kill you. Let the church help. ☺ Thursday night potluck supper with prayer and medication to follow. ☺ Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.

This Month in Local History

In Lockport, on May 16, 1839, Isaac Merritt Singer, took out a patent on a rock drilling machine. It is speculated that it may have been used during the construction of the I & M Canal.

Chasing Your Tale

by Jacqueline Munch

New Scrapbooks

Thanks to Marge Haack, we have been able to copy four scrapbooks put together by the PTA of Lockport Grade and Kelvin Grove Schools from 1945 through 1956.

The first pages list the thirty-five chapter members in 1945 along with the PTA officers: President-Mrs. J. Roberts, Vice President-Mrs. C. E. Hosbach, Secretary-Mrs. M. G. Cannon, Treasurer-Miss Betty Murray. Included are many newspaper articles, pictures, PTA programs, school events and school newspapers. They will provide a walk down memory lane for many of us.



Revolutionary War Pensioners

Thanks to volunteer Kathy Leigh, the names of Revolutionary War Pensioners (veterans or their widows) can now be searched online at usgennet.org/usa/topic/colonial/census/index.html - from Federation of Genealogical Societies FORUM, V14, No. 2.

DAR Patriot Index

Do you have ancestors who may have fought in the Revolutionary War? The DAR Patriot Index contains names of Revolutionary patriots, both men and women, whose service (between 1775 and 1783) has been established by the National Society of the DAR. Additional information available may include dates and places of birth and death, name(s) of wife (wives) or husband(s), rank, type of service, and the state where the patriot lived or served. If pension papers are known to exist, that fact will be included.

Volunteers will check the index for your ancestor. Go to their website at dar.org, click on "Patriot Lookup Request Form," fill out the form and submit it. You will be contacted by e-mail after your patriot has been researched. I used this service and was delighted to get the confirmation that my ancestor was indeed listed in their records.

Also on this website you will find information on their search service, record copies, membership and local chapters. There you can link to the website for the local Louis Joliet Chapter, which meets the first Saturday of each month, September through June.

History in Our Own Back Yard

by Georgene Bankroff

Why was the Des Plaines River Valley chosen as the site of the Illinois & Michigan Canal?

It certainly couldn't be because of its moderate climate or a resort-like area in this part of Illinois. Maybe the politicians of that era could anticipate the clunk and clank of slot machines in their dreams and decided that Lockport and Joliet could be the site of Illinois casinos along a river. Nothing quite so romantic. The ice age was the real culprit.



Snapshots in Time— Ice Age

The choice of Lockport as a canal town was due to the topography of the area, which consists of the high bluffs and the Des Plaines River to the west and the valley that extends a mile to the east. This topography was the aftermath of the last glacial retreat. The last major ice sheet extended into Illinois approximately 10,000 years ago.

As the ice melted, new hills were formed. The channels cut by the ice were much larger than the rivers that remain today. The Fox, Illinois, and Des Plaines Rivers flow in valleys that were cut by that meltwater.

The Great Lakes Basin drained to the Illinois River, but over a period of 4,000 years this drainage changed. No more water flowed to the Illinois Valley from that area until the Illinois and Michigan Canal was finished in 1848. The canal cuts through a continental divide west of Chicago and parallels the Des Plaines and Illinois Rivers to the city of Peru in LaSalle County.

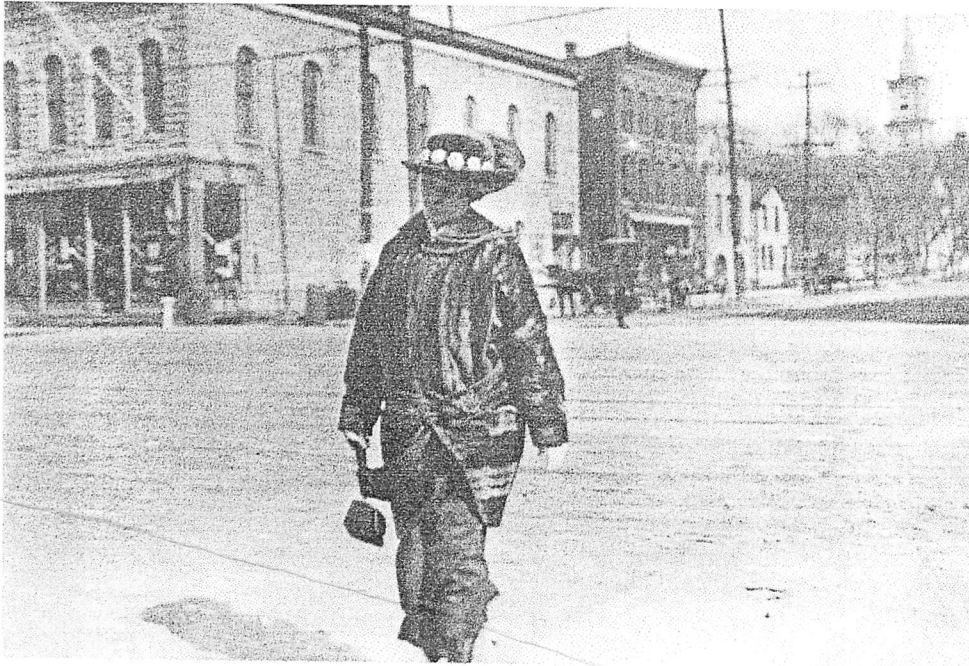
Contact: Georgene (815) 838.1862 or KG1990@aol.com

Revolutionary Era History

Historical documents in the Library of Congress can be viewed online at their website, loc.gov. Click on "American Memory" and you will have access to an incredible collection of more than 7 million digital items relating to the history and culture of the United States. By clicking on the time period: 1700-1799, I had access to many collections including Revolutionary War Era Maps, Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention Documents, Thomas Jefferson Papers, and George Washington Papers. If you love history, you'll enjoy this National Digital Library!

Contact: Jacquie Munch at (815) 838-3795 or jlmunch@earthlink.com

Who's that lady walking down the street?



The first town hall

Lockport incorporated as a village in 1853 and a city in 1904. The first official meeting place is pictured here in a 1915 photograph. The hall is the third building from the corner. The arch likely accommodated one of the first fire trucks.

To the left was the *Lockport Phoenix* newspaper, infamous as the origin's site of the great fire of 1895. Using the offices of the *Advertiser*, an issue appeared two days after the fire and remarked that:

"The town hall has been patched up so it can be used as a calaboose at least until cold weather sets in."

The building on the corner was built by Hiram Norton as a general store; many today remember it as Miller's Ace Hardware. Currently, it is Thimbles, and upstairs is Heritage Hall used by Main Street Lockport, Inc. for community events. The Whelan and O'Brien houses are next, then the Baptist Church, currently Cool Creations ice cream store. ~

The picture above is part of a collection taken in 1915 by H.H. Carter, a Lockport pharmacist. Several pictures are featured in *Hail and Farewell, 1935 -1980*, a booklet that commemorates Lockport's Sesquicentennial and forty-five years of service by the Civic and Commerce Association. The association saved the Public Square, now called Central Square, from being demolished.



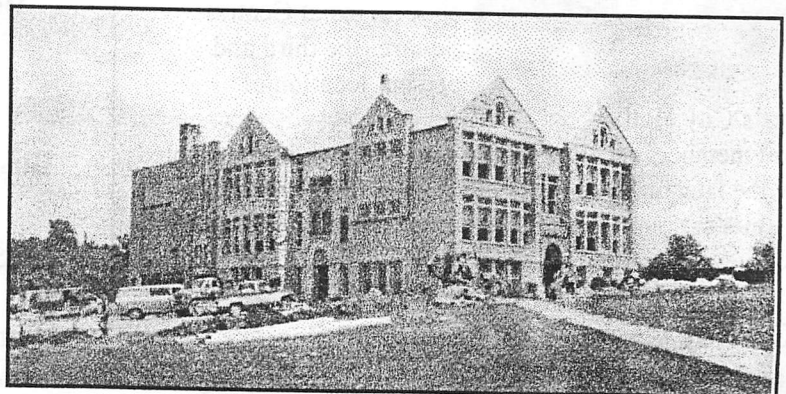
H.H. Carter

Perhaps not famous in his own time, Carter is becoming well known locally for his contribution to the history of Lockport through his street-scene photographs, taken in 1915. Some of the pictures are featured in celebration booklets and in the 1st floor exhibit at the Gaylord Building.

Today's City Hall - Central Square

The photograph below is from *Hail and Farewell, 1980*, with the description:

"Old Central Square building, July 20, 1980, undergoing \$1 million renovation and repartition, with an elevator, to accommodate separate offices for the City of Lockport, Township Board, and Township Park District. North section auditorium-gymnasium to remain . . . for park District use but providing downtown meeting facility. . . ."



Lockport Area Genealogical & Historical Society

c/o Bonnie Packley
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Lockport, IL 60441



Vintage Reproduction

Postcards

~Dellwood Park~

~Downtown Lockport~

\$39.95 (each set of 12)

INSIDE

City Hall history

I & H research tips

Membership news

Easter Sunday 1918

Membership Expires: 06/03

Ms. Carol Giardina

309 East 4th Street

Lockport, IL 60441

Tell a friend about Laghs.

Invite them to join us at a meeting.

They'll tell two friends,

and they'll tell two friends.

And so on, and so on.

60441+2521



Share & Tell at Meeting at Old City Hall

March 22, 2003



Don Neal and Sugie Rigoni hold photographs of Lockport Township High School. Don donated the vintage picture of the school, which opened in 1910. It replaced the classrooms at Central Square (the third and present location of

Lockport's City Hall).

Several members recalled that in the old days, if you wanted to know the latest happenings, you'd drop by City Hall, where the fire chief sat outside and chatted with the town folk.

LAGHS MEMBERSHIPS MEETING

Saturday, April 26, 2003

8:30 a.m. Sharp!

Gladys Fox Museum

Share & Tell: Amateur/professional/school sports.

Lockport Chamber of Commerce
Business & Community EXPO, April 12

12-4 p.m.

Look for the Laghs's Table

Business-After-Hours-- Gladys Fox Museum
April 23, 5-7 p.m.

Laghs' Members are encouraged to attend

Will/Grundy Counties Genealogical Society, April 26, 1 p.m.

Meet at the Coal City Library for a special program with John Lynn who will talk about his walking tour of Illinois. Diane Ippel will play the dulcimer.