



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

Lockport Area Genealogical & Historical Society

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

Issue No. 18

NEWSLETTER

January 2003

Since May 12, 2001 ~ Incorporated January 26th, 2002

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Message from the President

As the year 2002 becomes an historical interlude, all sorts of memories linger. At the same time, we are very much aware that it is one year closer to our society's main goal: A perceptive book on the history of the Lockport area. Year 2005 marks the 175th Anniversary of the first permanent settler, Armstead Runyon, in 1830. We have a lot of stories to tell!

In 1836 Runyontown and the surrounding area were platted and named "Lockport." Maps were drawn and lots were sold. Chief Engineer William Gooding (once a resident of Lockport, New York and the canal commissioners chose the area to be the headquarters for the I & M Canal.

Our town, in its earliest days, became well known to pioneers, who traveled here by wagon in anticipation of the opening of the canal and the prosperity it would bring. Over the years many of the changes in Lockport have reflected the changes in the use of the waterway. We'll explore that topic and many others in our anniversary book, including community organizations and businesses, and most important, families.

Our society is enjoying the changes we are going through as a new organization. We are growing in stature as we complete our second year of programming and proceed with planning for the future. Our scope is broadening to include many projects designed to fulfill stated mission.

Among our goals this year is to increase membership. Let your friends and relatives know the work we are doing and invite them to join in the fun at our monthly meetings. Invite them also, to participate in our many activities which are carried out through our committees.

Preparing for our monthly programs and collecting, preserving, and recording all the wonderful family genealogies and memorabilia as well as the history of Lockport and this organization, takes a lot of time. The work is fun and rewarding.

Don't miss out on all the fun things we do for our society at our next meeting.

Join us for 2002, Year in Review on January 25th, 2003!
We'll have a cup of coffee for you. Bring a treat and a guest, too!

—Dr. Reno G. Caneva

History In Our Own Backyard

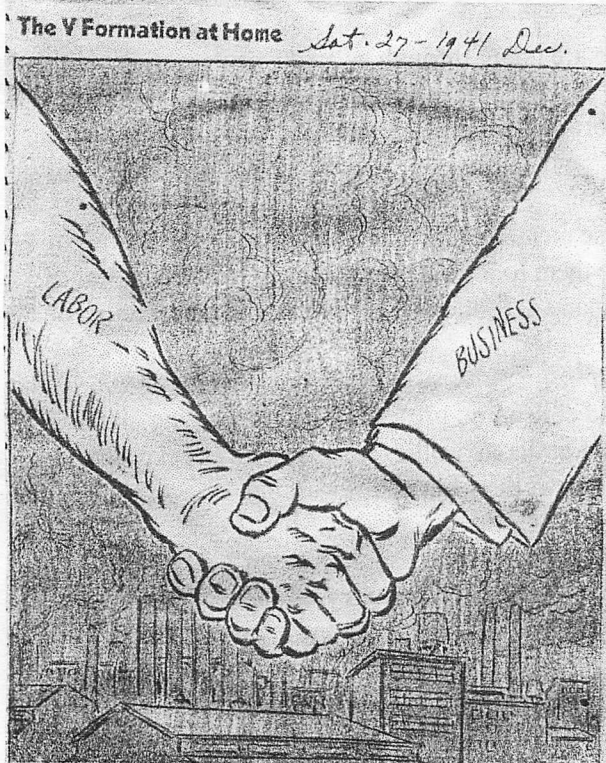
by Georgene Bankroff

Time Freeze Snapshots

Of invaluable interest is the scrapbook of Rev. Gilbert Bengtson who organized and served as the head of the United Service Association, USA, during World War II. A short biography of Rev. Bengtson will be finished soon and published here. This is the only book of WW II Veterans which contains an index, an immense help for checking genealogy. Rev. Bengtson's book is in safe keeping in the Lockport Public Library.

This tome was compiled and indexed by Ronald Pesavento assisted by a fellow veteran, Charles Dimmick, in 1999. Pictures, articles, and letters from and about Lockport men in service were clipped from the Joliet Herald-News and preserved by Rev. Bengtson during the war. There are 170 pages jammed with information about our brothers, fathers, uncles, cousins, and neighbors.

It appears that a large percentage of Lockport boys were killed or wounded during the war's battles. Most of us can remember hearing about these young men as we grew up. We all lived in neighborhoods that lost some boys for our



This image is from Luella Pesavento's scrapbook. The date is Saturday, December 27th, 1941.

Thank You

LAGHS would like to thank everyone who has made donations since our society began. In an upcoming issue of the newsletter we will list everyone who has made a donation.

For now, I would like to mention just a couple of recent acquisitions that I have been working on and will have ready to share with you soon. Mr. Joseph McCarthy has loaned us a scrapbook compiled by his aunt, Louella Pesavento. The book contains articles which range from December 7, 1941 forward some six years. The articles start with Pearl Harbor and move on to pictures of Lockport's fighting men and women, post cards, letterheads, arm patches of Robert Allard and John Hanus. Many of the important battles fought by the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy are covered by a multitude of Joliet Herald-News articles. A must for anyone old enough to remember WW II.

Also, the scrapbook of Mary Fracaro Ambrosini donated by her daughter Delores (Lori) Anderson starts in 1935. The many newspaper clippings include an article about the Lockport Fire of 1895. Marriages, disasters, dances, sports team are all covered. Not only the Lockport High School sports teams but also Sacred Heart School, now known as St. Dennis Grade School. Other interesting aspects are obituaries, a fuel oil ration coupon, rebuilding of Lockport locks, school graduation programs, personal greeting cards and invitations to parties, weddings, showers, etc. Lockporters LAGHS members, you can lose yourself for hours in this book.

I'll share more of what we have been acquiring in the next issue.

Continued from column 1

country. Try to keep a tear from your eye as you read their obituaries! How different life would have been for many people if they had been allowed to live a normal life in a normal town, Small Town, USA, Lockport, Illinois. Even at this late date, we salute them.

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# Lockport Woman's Club Celebrates 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

A History of the Lockport Woman's Club - On the 100th Anniversary Presented by Carol Coverdill, President

In the fall of 1902, a group of women met in the home of Mrs. Leon McDonald. The Lockport Woman's Club (LWC) was born. The first president was Mrs. L.R. Gardner. Yearly dues were 25 cents, and the ladies met twice a month from October to May.

## Affiliation

LWC became a member of the Illinois Federation in 1905 and the General Federation in 1923.

## Purpose

The group was organized to promote the interests of its members in literacy, music, history, and other topics of interest. The club also was interested in the cultural and cordial relations among its members. Of great importance to these women was the desire to contribute to the welfare of the community.

## Establish Library in Lockport

LWC President Sager in 1916, made a proposal for a library before the Township, but it was defeated. In the summer of 1921, the Board of Directors of the LWC voted to bring before the club, a project to establish a library in Lockport. A committee was formed to contact other organizations asking for financial aid. If the money were raised, the women of the club would do all of the work. This plan was a success. Pilgrim Hall (now Cool Creations at 10<sup>th</sup> & Hamilton) was the location for the new library. The rent was \$25 per month. People were then asked to donate books; the first person to donate was Mrs. J.L. Norton, who gave 50 books. Following her donation, residents came and generously dumped books on the



Lockport Woman's Club members (left to right) Sugie Rigoni, Rosemary Gaspar, and Carol Coverdill pose in front of the Christmas Tree at the Gladys Fox Museum on Saturday, December 28th.

floor, since there was no furniture. Pastor Schlaretski from the First Congregational Church loaned the library a kitchen table and some chairs from the church hall, also two cracker boxes. It was 1921 and a Miss Lillian Freeman was the club President. In 1932 the Boyer home at 8th and State streets was purchased for \$19,000 and remodeled for \$15,000. In 1966 building was begun on the present library [where the Boyer home stood]. Our support of the library continues today.

## Social Event of the Year

The Annual Charity Ball was the social event of the year in Lockport until the late 1950s. Other activities included: progressive luncheons, various parties, a birthday party for all members, a 25-member chorus and a quartet, flower & garden shows.

## WWII Tree Memorial

When World War I ended, the club voted to have a memorial highway to honor Lockport men who had served in the military. Four hundred trees were planted, from the North to the South of the Township Route 4A (Rt.171).

## Crossroads

Gladys Daley, in 1947, had the idea of forming a Past Presidents Club, which has met in the summer every year since. Originally, this group led our primary fund raiser, Christmas Crossroads, begun in 1971.

## Projects

The standing clock downtown, the fountain on State Street; furnished a room in the I & M

Museum and the community house in Pioneer Settlement; donated trees to the Park District; life-like babies to the parenting classes at the high school; and most recently the emergency signal at Rt.7 (9th street) and State.

## Scholarships

The program began in 1959. We currently give 6, \$2000 college scholarships to graduating seniors; 6, \$1000 scholarships to a junior college /technical school; summer scholarships in art, music, writing, and theater. The Sally Korst scholarship honors a past president and is awarded to a displaced homemaker. A 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Scholarship was initiated by Bob Carr, scholarship winner 1963-64, and Jill Carr, who gave \$100,000 for the program.

## Outreach

LWC also contributes to many local and national charities, such as HOSPICE, FISH, and Habit for Humanity.

**Motto.** ~ With malice toward none, with charity for all ~

## 90-99 Club!



Madolin Cannon and her daughter, Jacqueline Cannon Munch, are all smiles because they are celebrating Madolin's 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday with society members at the December 28<sup>th</sup> membership meeting.

At the General Membership Meeting on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the Society resolved to establish the 90-99 Club. This new initiative recognizes our members between the ages of 90 and 99 with a birthday cake at our general membership meetings.

LAGHS also recognizes those 100 years of age and older with membership in the Century Club. So far this is a membership of one, Dr. Jack Roberts.

At upcoming meetings we will be asking everyone who would like to participate in the birthday clubs to let us know their birth dates.

### Membership News

by Bonnie Packley

#### Welcome New Member



Mrs. Leroy  
(Sugie) Rigoni  
of Lockport.

#### Get Well Soon

LAGHS sends get well wishes to those who have been ailing..

#### Tell a Friend

Tell a friend about our Society.  
Invite them to join us at a meeting.  
We will have membership brochures

### HAVE FUN!

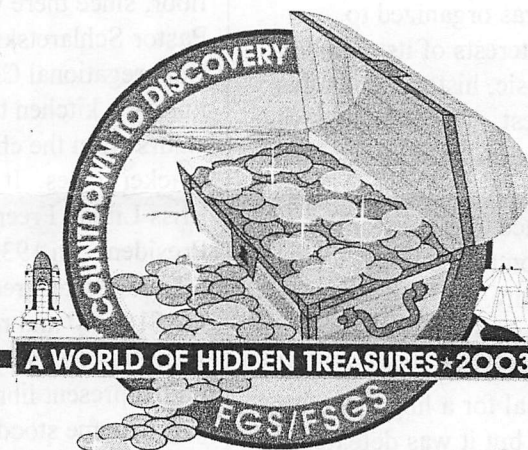
#### Be a "Hospitality Helper"

Here's how you can help with our monthly meetings:

- ☺ Greet members and guests. Say "see you next month."
- ☺ Plan, set up, and clean-up food and beverages

Contact Char Giardina about how to join the Hospitality Helpers.  
work: (815) 838.4830 (Tu.-Sa.)  
home: 815.352.5662

## UPCOMING CONFERENCE



### Find Your Genealogical Treasure

at the  
Federation of Genealogical Societies  
and  
Florida State Genealogical Society  
2003 Conference

3 – 6 September 2003

Renaissance Orlando Resort at SeaWorld  
Orlando, Florida

For Information: Contact FGS toll-free at 888-FGS-1500 or  
visit our web site at [www.fgs.org](http://www.fgs.org)  
Subscribe to the Conference ezine at  
[fgs2003-announce-on@lists.csc.cc.il.us](mailto:fgs2003-announce-on@lists.csc.cc.il.us)

# Chasing Your Tale

Genealogy by Jacqueline Munch

## Connecting with the Internet

### THE HYLAND FAMILY OF LOCKPORT

One of the special pleasures of doing genealogy research on the internet is making contact with people from other parts of our country and even across the ocean. Genealogical forums and mailing lists can yield surprising and wonderful results through people willing to help others. Meeting new people, sometimes even distant cousins, has been an exciting by-product of my genealogy research.

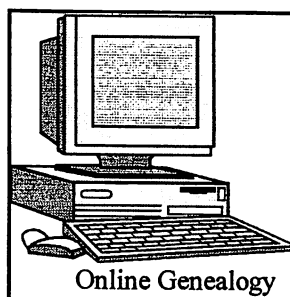
As a result of my posting on a Will County forum, I was contacted by a wonderful gentleman named Bill Hyland, an Irishman living in Cambridgeshire, England. He was hoping to trace his great-grandfather's brothers, James and Michael Hyland, who left Ireland about 1850 and were found on the 1880 census in Lockport, IL. James was a blacksmith and Michael was a laborer. On the census, James and his wife Dora had two sons, Patrick and Joseph. He was grateful for the information I gave him on Hyland burials in our Lockport Cemetery. This helped him to do further research which determined the wives of Patrick (Alice O'Connor) and Joseph (Katie Monke) and also that Dora's maiden name was Bannon. I told him about the Hyland Plumbing Co. that was once in downtown Lockport.

Then, one of our members, Virginia Bailey, kindly offered to share with him her memories and photos of the Hylands, which opened doors for him to another branch of the family and gave him the names of Joseph's two daughters.

Bill asked me to point out that "present day Irish people are somewhat reluctant to search their family history. Those who went to America took with them a great knowledge of family history which they lovingly passed on to their children and so created a great reservoir into which guys like me are searching and learning more than we can find in Ireland."

Bill would love to hear from anyone regarding the Hyland family. His e-mail address is Bill.Hyland04@btopenworld.com

### TRY ROOTSWEB MAILING LISTS!



I highly recommend trying the mailing lists on the internet to help in your research. Go to rootsweb.com, scroll down to Mailing Lists and click on Index. There you will have a choice of General Interest, Surname,

USA, or International lists. Clicking on USA takes you to State and County lists.

The Surname and County lists are my favorites. I subscribe to the Will Co. IL list in order to give help to people researching Lockport ancestors, and that gives me an opportunity to tell them about our organization. Happy hunting!

\_\_If you have information to share with LAGHS, please contact me at [jlunch@earthlink.net](mailto:jlunch@earthlink.net), 815-838-3795, or mail to me at our society's address.

### Pioneer Certificate

The South Suburban Genealogical and Historical Society will issue a Pioneer Certificate to direct descendants of those early residents of Cook or Will County, Illinois.

To qualify for a Pioneer Certificate, your direct ancestor must have settled in Cook or Will County, Illinois before 1880. For many years these early settlers have gone unrecognized. We hope that this certificate will be a source of pride for you and your family. Please request a Pioneer Certificate for yourself or your children or grandchildren in their name.

The certificate is printed on parchment paper, has a gold seal and is suitable for framing.

Please submit copies of evidence of residency and lineage. **Do not send original documents.** A check for \$10.00 for each certificate payable to SSGHS must accompany your application.

Mail application to S.S.G.H.S., P.O. Box 96 South Holland, IL. 60473



## Lockport Area Genealogical & Historical Society

c/o Bonnie Packley  
1016 Maitland Drive  
Lockport, IL 60441



### Vintage Reproduction

#### Postcards

~Dellwood Park~  
~Downtown Lockport~  
\$39.95 (each set of 12)

Membership Expires 06/03

My Carol Giardina

309 East 4th Street

Lockport, IL 60441

### Inside

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### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 a.m.  
at *The House In The Park*

### MEMBERSHIP MEETING

January 25<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 am

Gladys Fox Museum  
Corner of 9<sup>th</sup> & Washington

Program: 2002 in Review



### Share & Tell

#### Valentine's Day Memories

Bring your memories  
and memorabilia.

Bring treat for the snack table,  
if you like..

This is just one of the many  
wonderful and interesting  
images found in Luella M.  
Pesavento's scrapbook  
(see *History in our own  
Backyard*).