

# **The Towner Tattler**

December 2010  
The Boone County Historical Museum Newsletter



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## **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**As we come to the end of the year, I reflect on all of the projects and events that have taken place in my second year as your President.**

**The Board of Directors gave permission in January for Mike Doyle to access our records to assist him in writing his book entitled, “Boone County Originals.” The book will be based on columns which he wrote in the Rockford Register Star. His book will be available for sale at Belvidere’s Hometown Christmas.**

**Judy Ernest, Marge Hindert, and Lonna Bentley are still doing oral history interviews and follow-up documentation. Praises to these three individuals who continue working with people from our community to preserve interesting life stories that make up a part of Boone County history.**

**Alpine Bank Trust Department representatives met again this year with the Board to review our portfolio of investments. This annual review has been helpful in keeping the Board advised of the security of our investments and of updating us on economic trends.**

**The Museum District has installed security cameras inside and outside of the property. This is a vital tool for monitoring our property and artifacts.**

**Some of the volunteers continued their work of reviewing minutes from previous Society board meetings to update the history of the Society. Our thanks to those individuals for this important and time consuming work.**

**Thanks to Events Chairperson, Ann Bennett for the Heritage Days parade float honoring our veterans and for her work in organizing volunteer events. Thanks also to Norma Schandelmeier and the display committee for their work with the wonderful displays throughout the year.**

**The Ice Cream Social took place in August serving the largest group in the history of this event. Each year this event gets bigger and better. The praises were plentiful for the delicious pies, ice cream, and sandwiches. Better yet, the people touring our museum are finding out what a treasure we have right here in Boone County.**

**Lonna Bentley has done an outstanding job with her classes on genealogy studies, and will continue to develop this program in the new year.**

**Our excellent programs in our lecture series have continued to bring people into our museum. The programs for 2011 look to be equally informative and interesting; please plan to attend these programs.**

**Compliments to our staff: Mary Hale, Lonna Bentley, and David Harbolt for their excellent and dedicated work in operating and maintaining our facility and developing programs.**

**The Board has recently directed the building of two new display cases that will soon be put in place in the Victorian Room for rotating displays. These cases will have sliding glass fronts that will make changing displays easier and safer. The older cases will be relocated and used in permanent display areas.**

**A new color copier has also been purchased for the main office. The black and white copier will then be moved into the Research Department to replace a copier that had been in use on a rental basis.**

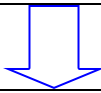
**As I leave office as your president, I wish to thank all of you who contribute your time and energy to help promote the museum in anyway. My remaining year on the board of directors will be served as past-president, and I will continue to work to fulfill the mission of the Boone County Historical Society.**

**Sincerely,  
Carol Rowe**

## **\*\* Boards and Staff \*\***

### District Board

Teri Keegan-President  
Patrick Murphy-Vice President  
Lois Ramon-Secretary  
Gail Bennett-Treasurer  
Jack Wolf-Trustee



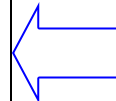
Our Board Meeting are held the third Monday of the month and are open to the public.

District meets at 4:30 pm  
Society at 5:30pm

*All meetings are held at the Museum.*

### Society Board

Carol Rowe-President  
Gary Turner-Vice President  
Judy Ernest-Secretary  
Dick Stegemann-Treasurer  
Ann Bennett  
Marge Hindert  
Frank Crawford  
Bob Lear  
Sam Larson  
Don Banks  
John Wolf  
Steve Anderson  
Andy Ward  
Judy Winter  
Dick Stegemann



### **Staff**

Mary Hale-Director  
Lonna Bentley-Registrar  
Dave Harbolt-Maintenance

### **Board Update**



Sam Larson will be leaving the Board as of December 31, 2010 and Norma Schandelmeier has been appointed to the board to fill the duration of Sam's term. We would like to thank Sam for her time on the Board-she will be missed. We would also like to welcome Norma.

### **Our Mission**

“The mission of the Boone County Historical Museum is to stimulate interest in Boone County history through education, research, and preservation of artifacts and archival materials”

### **A Visit to the “Scotch Settlement”**

The museum’s Thursday volunteers have been on the road again. This time they invited all regular volunteers, mostly ladies, to join them. This has become an annual tradition. Our current travel planner, Marge Hindert, had been a member of a group that visited the Mc Eachran Homestead north of Caledonia and she thought that we would enjoy a visit there.

The farm has been owned by the same family since 1857 when John Mc Eachran bought the land. Now, his great-great grandson, Herbert Greenlee, has transformed eleven acres of the 281-acre soybean and corn farm into truck gardening. A few of the products raised are grapes, raspberries, asparagus, pumpkins, squash and tomatoes. The grounds around the house and farm buildings are beautifully landscaped with floral gardens and plantings. The house and barns have been restored and it is truly a well-preserved historic site.

We arrived at the homestead at 10:30 A.M. on Thursday September, 23. About half of our group of 21 boarded a wagon with a long bench with cushions and pulled by a tractor driven by Mr. Greenlee’s son. We rode through the bean fields to a lovely grove of burr oak and hickory trees which had been transformed into a well maintained park. Such a beautiful site is unusual since many farmers remove trees in order to create more land for growing crops.

While the second group took the wagon ride, the others walked about the grounds and then went upstairs in the barn to the hay loft. There were featured about seven varieties of wine, all processed on the first floor of the barn from grapes grown on the farm. Wine tasting was encouraged and many purchases were made later along with freshly made red raspberry jam.

For lunch we were seated at a long table across the center of the loft. It was covered with a red tablecloth and was a lovely sight as we gathered for a salad luncheon and dessert, portions of which were from the farms gardens.

Following our meal, Mr. Greenlee told stories of the founding of the “Scotch Settlement,” Argyle, of which his farm is a part. At one time it was made up of 200 families from Scotland. He then showed slides and narrated his family’s history and the before-and-after of the house and barns.

It had been a very pleasant and informative day. Mr. Greenlee and his staff were very helpful and friendly hosts. The weather cooperated-a bit windy, warm but not hot and no rain! The Homestead can accommodate groups of six to fifty persons. Reservations must be made. The farm is located on Wyman School Road.

*Submitted by Anna Ralston*

*Photo: The group at the Mc Eachran Homestead.*





# Important News



## \*December General Membership Meeting\*



Our December General Membership Meeting will be Dec 14th at 6pm in the Research Center. As always, this will be a potluck dinner so bring a dish to pass and come join us for some good food and fellowship. Remember, we will be voting on new board members as well as showing the silent movie "Belvidere Hero." Hope to see you all there!

### *Program Series!*

We have had great programs this year but sadly, our 2010 Program Series has come to an end and we thank you for your support. The 2011 Programs looks to be very exciting.

### *Changes to Program Series*

To help us accommodate more guests and provide for better acoustics, our programs will now be held in the Research Center unless otherwise noted on schedule.



### *New Displays*

The Museum has been transformed into a winter wonderland. Many new themed trees have been decorated by volunteers and are spread throughout the museum and each room is adorned with Christmas decorations.

Hometown prints are on display and the Millinery Store has come down and was replaced by a Children's Toy Store.



## *A Sample of the Kishwaukee River*

Who is Kishwaukee Jack? Actually, his name is Jack Harmer, Belvidere's "good-will ambassador," a title he earned by boasting to radio celebrities of the happy days he spent along the banks of the Kishwaukee river. His fishing stories about the river and yarns about the "old sweetheart days" were interesting enough to be aired over a major radio station and columns of newsprint wherever "Kishwaukee Jack" hits town anywhere along his song plugging itinerary. Jack once said he "hit his element" when he came to Belvidere in the 1920's.

In 1937, Jack turned composer and incorporated favorite scenes of the city in his tunes "Old Kishwaukee River," "It was Cherry Blossom Time," "Sweeter Than Any Bouquet" and others. Kishwaukee Jack naturally fell into the song plugging business after his "Old Kishwaukee River" was published by Rossiter. With samples of the river to each prospect he lines up for a plug, Kishwaukee Jack recites his version of the old "5:45" train whistle as it was heard coming around Red Horse bend up stream. That's right, Jack would scoop up water from the river and put into little bottles and give to celebrities. The following article appeared in the BDR on Sept 4, 1946.

"Kishwaukee Jack" Harmer is back in Belvidere on an annual pilgrimage to the shrine of his favorite river and to visit old friends. A rugged individualist with glossy black hair, Jack is a song plugger for "Uncle Will" Rossiter, veteran Chicago publisher. Into a song that made "his river" known throughout the country, Harmer poured his affection and tender sentiments. The name of the song composed several years ago, of course, "Old Kishwaukee River."

Promptly at 5:45 this afternoon, Jack plans to dip a quart of Kishwaukee water from near the State Street Bridge, carrying out a ritual that is always a part of his visits here. And he'll carry that water all the way back to his New York City headquarters and pour it into small vials to distribute among friends who include radio and stage celebrities from coast to coast. "The water wouldn't have its true good-luck charm if I didn't dip it out promptly at 5:45," Harmer laughed as he chatted Tuesday afternoon with the Daily Republican news staff. "You see that's the time the train used to whistle around red horse bend back in the old days when I fished or tramped along the stream. I always-well, nearly always-caught a bass just as that train whistled. It meant good luck for me. In fact I still believe in that whistle. It meant good luck for me and the visitor cut loose with a vocal blast that was a deluxe imitation. He's generally asked in his appearances on radio interview programs to "sound off."

"I only took a pint of water back with me last year and some of my friends who didn't receive a sample got peeved," Harmer continued. "That's the reason I'm taking back a quart this time. I stress the fact that if the recipients of this Kishwaukee water, use the bottles as part of their Christmas tree decorations it will bring them 10 years of good luck."

Countering to a remark about his hair being perhaps a little blacker than it should be for a guy who has been around quite a while, Jack grinned and did a bit of a comic "mugging." "Don't jump at conclusions, they don't jump at you," he replied. "To you, my black hair is a secret. But remember, it's the Kishwaukee river that's old, not Kishwaukee Jack. You know what I tell

my radio friends when they kid me about the absence of any signs of gray hair? I tell them there's a wishing spring out here that flows into "my river" and all I have to do to keep it black is stick my head in that spring just once every five years."

"I bet you can guess what I did just as soon as I got off the bus this afternoon," genial Jack ventured. "I ambled right down to my old Kishwaukee River and I admit, I cried like a baby when I saw it, I always do. Seeing my tears, I guess pedestrians thought I was going to jump in. they tried to pull me away. "Oh, that river does things to me. I'd rather have a one-mile stretch of it than the whole city of New York where crowds hustle and noise there are nerve wrecking. Radio City where I spend from three to six hours every day is a shambles but I have to eat, that's where duty called and that's where I go. But you can bet I'd never consider spending a vacation there."

"He's just like a father to me and the grandest guy in the song business or any other business," the tribute paid by Harmer to Rossiter, his employer who this year is observing his 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a music publisher. Esteem for "Uncle Will" continued to grow rapidly throughout the nation, Harmer claimed in declaring that Rossiter operates on the contact and merit system instead of the "pay-ola" plan, a policy of buying song plugs on radio and concert programs that is employed by some in the business.

Among the favorite friends of "Kishwaukee Jack" are orchestra leaders Perry Como and Fred Waring and that noted crooned and screen star, Bing Crosby. His work brings Harmer into contact with leading radio and movie entertainers, their managers, station and network executives and many others. During 15 years as a song plugger he has traveled in 49 states and spent considerable time in Hollywood.

But Harmer circulated in a big way before his "plugging" days began. For 18 years he was aboard ships serving in the varied role of crew member, clerk and entertainer. For some time he was in a minstrel troupe that appeared in productions aboard ocean liners and he also won fame as a "singing waiter." It's easier and much quicker for "Kishwaukee Jack" to be where he hasn't been than vice versa. He has circled the globe twice, lived on six continents, put his foot in seven eighths of the world and traveled by train and boat over 900,000 miles. The only state in America that he hasn't visited on business is South Dakota and he plans to add it to the list this year. New songs that Jack is pushing now include "Lazy Mary" and "Old Prairie Wagon." They're both soon to be smash hits, he predicts.

Part of his vacation, Jack spent at Lauderdale Lake near Elkhorn. He also visited friends briefly in Chicago before coming here. He plans to return to New York City, October 29<sup>th</sup>. His first bottle of river water is labeled for Milton Berle, famous comedian. According to Jack, Berle was offended when he didn't receive a sample of Harmer's last stock.

Continued on next page...

Just how much did Jack love Belvidere and the river? About as much as he loved Nell Louise Hill, as the song "Old Kishwaukee River" became their wedding march.

*"Old Kishwaukee River"*

*Chorus*

*On the old Kishwaukee River---  
Where the rippling waters flow  
In my mem'ry I'm returning  
To the one that I loved so  
On the old Kishwaukee River  
Once again we drift and dream  
And those happy days live  
On that old Kishwaukee stream  
On the stream*

*God Saw*

*God saw you were getting tired  
and a cure was not meant to be.  
So he put his arms around you  
and whispered "come with me.*

*With tearful eyes we watched you  
as we saw you pass away.  
Although we loved you deeply,  
we could not make you stay.*

*Your golden heart stopped beating,  
hard-working hands at rest.  
God broke our hearts to prove to us  
he only takes the best.*

*Therese Williamson*

**In Memoriam**



Thomas F. Schoepski  
21-Jun-1927 to 15-Sept-2010



Agnes Ruth O'Connell  
7-Mar-1918 to 19-Sep-2010



William Cummings  
29-Sep-1922 to 19-Sep-2010

## *Meet the Nominees for the Society Board*

Currently we have five seats available and voting will take place at our December General Membership Potluck Meeting on Dec 14th at 6pm in the Research Center. A Board Member is eligible to serve two consecutive three year terms. After the first term, they are asked if they want to run for their second term. According to the Boone County Historical Society By-Laws Article III Section 1a, to be a board member, you must be a member of the Boone County Historical Society and currently reside in Boone County or have a vested interest in preserving the history of Boone County. The following persons have been nominated to sit on the Society Board and have submitted a brief introduction about themselves so that our members can get acquainted with them.

### **Dale A. Drake, DDS**

Born and raised in Belvidere, I returned after graduate school to practice general dentistry with my father, Douglas Drake in 1977. Three years later my wife, Elaine Drake, graduated from dental school to also join us in practice. We have practiced here for our entire professional life and expect to do so for several more years. We raised three children that all graduated from Belvidere High School. Our second daughter graduated from the University of Iowa and all of the rest graduated from the University of Illinois, just like Elaine and I did. We, Elaine and I, have always enjoyed living, working and raising our family here in Belvidere. While living in Belvidere I have been a member of The Belvidere Rotary, the Belvidere Y'Mens Club, and have been an Elder in The First Presbyterian Church. These last three years I have been quite involved with our churches' building program. While we have not started construction, we hope to in the early spring of 2011. I have always been quite interested in our county's past and I look forward to serving on the Boone County Historical Society board.

### **Grant Michaud**

Hi, my name is Grant Michaud, and I am a lifelong resident of Boone County. Currently, I am a senior at Northern Illinois University working on my Bachelors of Liberal Arts in History. I have been working in close relations with the Boone County Historical Research Center for my senior thesis on the National Sewing Machine Company. This project has opened my eyes to the interesting history of Belvidere and Boone Country. I feel the history of Boone County is filled with important people and places, and their memories need to be preserved for future generations. This is why I would like your vote to sit on the Boone County Museum Board. Thank you.

### **Jeff Spradling**

My name is Jeff Spradling. I am Belvidere born and raised. My wife Dara and I, along with our two teenagers, Luke and Lisa are lifetime members of the BCHM. Dara and I

Have operated our own business for nearly 25 years. I am a past BCHM Board Member. I have a passion for Boone County history and historic artifacts in general and would look forward to serving on the BCHM Board again.

**Marilyn Clanin**

My name is Marilyn Clanin. Married to Bill Clanin for 54 years and have a daughter Kathleen who lives in Springfield and works for the state of Illinois. After retiring from Boone County Government, I started volunteering. I am an active member in my church, First Presbyterian, the Keenage Center, Chamber of Commerce, Northern Illinois Tourism and the Boone County Historical Museum. I am a member of Ida Public Library, Eastern Star and Daughter of the Nile.

**Shannon Hansen**

Born and raised in Belvidere, Shannon Hansen is the Communications Coordinator for the Belvidere School District. Employed by the district for 8½ years, Shannon has served in her current role since the position was created in 2008. She is responsible for internal and external communications as well as community relations. Shannon serves as the Regional Director (northern region) for the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association and is a member of the Community Impact Committee of Next Rockford. Shannon and her husband Jeff have an 11 year old daughter Peyton and an 8 year old son Ruger.

*The following are running for their second three year term:*

**Ann Bennett & Andy Ward.**

*Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!*

*We would like to thank the following Board Members who will be leaving on Dec 31st. Their service to the Museum has been invaluable and all three will continue to be an active and vital part of the Museum.*

*Frank Crawford, Marge Hindert, Peggy Wolf.*

*We would also like to thank Carol Rowe for her two years as President.*

**~ New in Gift Shop ~**

**Boone County Originals by Mike Doyle.**



## Hometown Christmas



Hometown Christmas will be action packed at the Boone County Historical Museum this year. Highlights of the evening include a book signing, demonstrations, music, food, and even shopping.

Take a walk through the Museum and check out the many different themed trees decorated by volunteers and while you're there, have your picture taken in front of a beautiful Christmas scene and in 10 minutes Colored Rock Tees will have it printed on a commemorative t-shirt with the words *Boone County Historical Museum Hometown Christmas 2010* for \$14.95 (2x & 3x \$16.95)

Need a stocking stuffer? Purchase a raffle ticket for your chance to win a wedding dress (\$1000 value) or \$300 cash (\$1 ea or 6 for \$5). The drawing to be held at our Fashion Show and Luncheon Fundraiser on March 19, 2011. Tickets for the event will also be on sale (\$25).

Come say hi to our "conductor" Ernie Wilson and watch our train donated by Mary Mohlman as it takes a journey around the tracks while passing by a beautiful hand painted scenic background.

Enjoy Christmas music as Bev Gibson plays on our own Chickering piano nestled beside a 12 foot Christmas tree and watch a Bobbin Lace demonstration by Gwen Wylie.

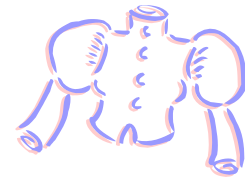
For you Norman Rockwell & Paddington Bear fans-Bob Lear will be selling Rockwell Ornaments, Paddington Bear Ornaments and Sterling Silver Kirk Musical Bells (starting at \$2).

In the Research Center, Mike Doyle will be conducting a book signing for his newly released Boone County Originals book (\$20). Mike will be on hand from 6-9 pm. There will also be a WWII display that will include weapons, uniforms, & personal artifacts. WWII re-enactors will also be on hand to answer any questions.

Cookies and Wassail or Coffee will be available for your enjoyment so, be sure to stop by and take a look around, grab a unique gift or two, and continue to enjoy all of the events Hometown Christmas has to offer.



Boone County Historical Museum  
presents



*\* Fashions through the years \**

Fashion Show & Luncheon Fundraiser

March 19, 2011 at the Community Building

Doors open at 11-Lunch 11:45-Show 12:45

Menu:

Signature Sandwich from Marshall Fields, Lemon Pie & beverage

Tickets: \$25 and are on sale now

*Proceeds to benefit the Wardrobe Department*

As we prepared for this event, our goal was to stay local and while there is still work to do, here's what we know : Pat Lavelle will be making the Marshall Field's Sandwich, Buchanan Pie Co. will be making the Lemon Pie, music during the show will be provided by Lorraine Carmichael and decorations for the lobby and stage will be provided by The Flower Bin and Teri's Gifts will be assisting with the "Today's Look."

The Fashion Show will consist of clothing that is in the Museum's collection and will begin with the late 1880's and end with "Today's Look." We will be showing the clothing by decades and each decade will have a few different looks.

We are currently looking for models ages 3 and up. If you or someone you know would like to take part in the fashion show please call the Museum at 815-544-8391 and leave your name and phone number.

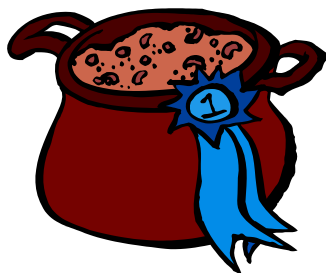
Keep checking our website and Facebook for updates!

Don't know what to do with all that left over turkey? The following recipe was found in an old edition of the BDR

### White Turkey Chili

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1/4 c. chopped onions
- 1 c. chopped celery
- 4 c. chopped cooked turkey
- 2 cans (15.5) Northern beans, drained
- 2 cans (11oz) corn, undrained
- 1 can (4oz) chopped green chilies
- 4 c. turkey or chicken broth
- 1 tsp ground cumin

Heat oil in skillet over medium heat. Add onion and celery, cook and stir 2-3 minutes. Place all ingredients in a large saucepan (at least 4 qt). Stir well. Cover and cook about 15 minutes over medium heat stirring occasionally until thoroughly heated. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese on top if desired.



## Upcoming Events

November 25-26th  
Closed for Thanksgiving

December 3rd  
Hometown Christmas 6-9 PM

December 14th  
General Membership Potluck  
6pm at Research Center

December 20th  
Board Meeting  
District at 4:30 Society at 5:30

December 24-25th  
Closed for Christmas

**Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year  
Everyone!**

January 17th  
Board Meeting  
District at 4:30 Society at 5:30

Words for thought as we go into  
the New Year~~

Don't count every hour in the  
day-make every day count

-United Way Commercial

## Our Business Members

*Alpine Bank*  
*Belvidere Funeral Home*  
*Boone County Auto*  
*Buck-Wheeler-Hyland Funeral Home*  
*Belvidere Cemetery Association*  
*Eagles Club*  
*Edwards Apple Orchard, Inc*

*Ollmann Ernest Architects*  
*Poplar Grove State Bank*  
*Steam Plant Family Restaurant*  
*Vintage Wings & Wheels*  
*Belvidere School District #100*  
*Jerry Butitta Automotive*  
*Doc's Upholstry& Refinishing*

Boone County Historical Museum  
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