



Spring 2025  
Newsletter #32

## Mural Update!!

We've been talking about our desire to have a mural painted in Earlville for several years, and it's finally becoming a reality! A committee was formed last winter and interviews begun with several muralists in the area. In April we announced that the committee chose Eulogio (Joe) Ortega from Sandwich to help us with the design and eventually paint the mural. Joe is a very experienced and talented muralist and comes with many recommendations. He has ties to Earlville in that he is married to Jim and Jo Malley's, granddaughter, Jessica, so he knows about small-town culture. Jessica's mom, Crisanne (Malley) Forsythe and her siblings all graduated from EHS. His experience is with small and large scale murals with much of his work being done in the Chicago area.

The site of the mural will be the west side of the building located at 139 W. Railroad St. (east of the NuMark Credit Union parking lot). The building is owned by Tom Fox who has been excited about the project ever since we approached him. We've cleared the hurdles related to insurance and are currently working on contracts with him and the artist.

We have made our deposit and secured our spot on Joe's 2025 calendar with the plan to start the mural sometime late summer. Many of you provided ideas of subject matter after our Facebook post and newsletter asking for input. We compiled a list based on those ideas and those of the committee and our Board. Our only requirement is that it reflect the history of our community (after all, that IS what we are all about!)

The next step is for the artist to take our ideas, photographs, etc. and come back to us with some samples so that we can begin the process of tweaking them. Once the committee has agreed on 2-3 designs we will be looking to put together a larger group of people to get feedback before making the final decision. If you'd like to be part of that, please feel free to contact us by email - [earlville.history@yahoo.com](mailto:earlville.history@yahoo.com)

This is an expensive proposition, but we are confident that it will add interest and beauty to our community. We will be starting a fundraising campaign as soon as we have a final cost of the project. If you are interested in helping fund this project please send your donation to:

Earlville Community Historical Society  
Attn: Mural Project  
PO Box 683  
Earlville IL 60518

## MUSEUM

136 S. Ottawa St.  
P.O. Box 683  
Earlville, IL 60518

## HOURS

Saturday 10am-2pm  
Sunday 12pm-2pm

Anytime by appointment  
Call:

815-615-1192  
815-252-9380  
815-826-0630

[www.earlvillehistory.org](http://www.earlvillehistory.org)  
[earlville.history@yahoo.com](mailto:earlville.history@yahoo.com)

"Like" us on Facebook!



Board Meetings are on the 1st Sat. of the month (April through December) 8a.m. at the Museum

Presentations as announced

**Check Calendar**

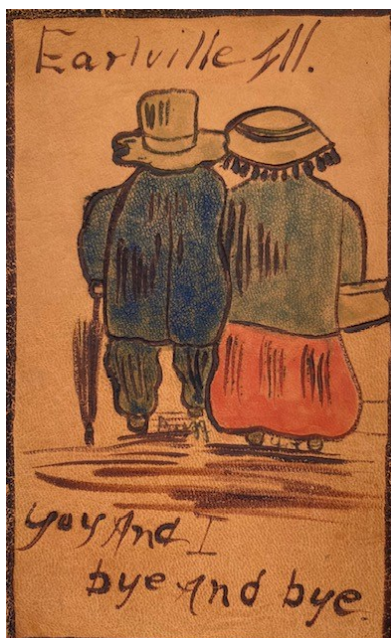
## 2025 Officers

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| Pres       | Karen Wold     |
| VP         | Jack Anderson  |
| Sec        | Julie Krzyzek  |
| Treas      | Kris Goodbred  |
| Curator    | Anna Svendsen  |
| Directors: | Ann Newell     |
|            | Kent Sellers   |
|            | Al Matison     |
| Building:  | Dave Michelsen |

## Leather Postcards

In the Museum we have a number of “leather postcards” all addressed to a Miss Josie Miller from Earlville. Paper postcards were created and allowed to be sent by mail as far back as the 1860s. Only government-issued postcards could call themselves “postal cards” and cost 1 cent to mail. Privately printed cards were also allowed, but the cost was 2 cents to mail. Most of the early postcards featured sketches or vignettes. With photography gaining popularity in the late 1800s photos became the most prominent subject for the cards. By 1900, publishers were looking for other ways to “stand out” against their competition and started experimenting with different materials. In 1903 leather postcards were created and decorated using pyrography or fire-writing. After the design was created, color was often applied. The leather used between 1907-1915 was very thin and soft. The postal service banned the mailing of leather postcards around 1909 as they were getting hung up in the newer sorting machines. Leather postcards were produced in large numbers. Some even came in a series where the receiver could put them together to complete a puzzle or story. Most of the cards that are at the Museum feature comic-like characters. We also have one that is die-cut in the shape of a shoe.

Miss Josie Miller (1879-1963) was 84 years old when she passed away. She attended Earlville High School and graduated from Dixon Business College. For many years she was a secretary for the poultry firm of George. W. Fry. She was the daughter of Cornelius and Ellen (Bristol) Miller. She had 3 brothers, Roy, Lee, and Murray, and a sister, Jennie Roads. Josie and several other family members are buried in Precinct Cemetery.



### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

|          |                                                                                    |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 24   | EBA Cruise Night                                                                   |
| June 6,7 | Earlville Lions Fest                                                               |
| June 7   | ECHS Board Meeting<br>Earlville Alumni Meeting<br>EHS Hall of Fame Induct-<br>ions |
| July 5   | ECHS Board Meeting                                                                 |
| Aug 2    | ECHS Board Meeting                                                                 |

## Museum Happenings

- A big WELCOME to our new Board members—Julie (Stremlau) Krzyzek (Sec.) and Al Matison (Dir). Board members Karen Wold took over as President and Jack Anderson as V.P.
- All of the old fluorescent lighting has been replaced utilizing the ComEd LED upgrade plan. Thanks to Jack Anderson for researching and coordinating the project with ComEd.
- We have made the decision to take a hiatus from the monthly presentations during 2025. It doesn't mean that there won't be any, but the presentations take a lot of time and planning that we feel would be better spent returning to our research on people, businesses and houses right now. With the mural project we also need time to work on fundraising. Our Board will continue to meet monthly through Dec. and members are always welcome to join us.
- Recently we made a major move taking all of the Earlville Gazettes/Leaders to the second floor to free up some much-needed space downstairs. Originally we used an office area on 2nd floor as our work room, but as technology changed HOW we work, we have transitioned to the first floor so that the laptops and printer are available to our guests, too. Thanks to the crew that showed up to help with this big task—Dave Michelsen, Kent Sellers, Ron Goodbred, Bill Landers, Terry Bronk, Steve Tuftie along with Karen, Anna and Kris. The newspapers are still available for viewing. Just ask a volunteer!
- And, speaking of VOLUNTEERS!!! We could REALLY use some help staffing our weekend schedules at the Museum. We've lost some people recently to illness, surgeries, vacations, or other obligations. If you could spare a couple hours on a weekend day once a month, we'd sure love to have you join us. You would always be assigned with another person. If you want to just "try it out" please give Kris or Anna a call or email us at [earlville.history@yahoo.com](mailto:earlville.history@yahoo.com)!!
- And finally, last but not least—thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers who show up when we need them! A special thanks to Dave Michelsen who always steps up to help us out—even when we don't call him!

## Earlville Leader April 1950

*"Daylight Savings Time went into affect, but the manager of the Earlville CB&Q Railroad station announced that the clocks in the depot would continue to operate on standard time. Earlville was served by two passenger trains each way Monday through Saturday and one each way on Sunday"*

## EARLVILLE ALUMNI JUNE 7, 2025

**3:00 ALUMNI AT SCHOOL**  
**4:30 DINNER AT DODGE PARK**  
**6:00 HALL OF FAME EVENT**

DINNER TICKETS CAN BE PURCHASED AT FIRST STATE  
INSURANCE OR THE LOUNGE  
\$20 KNOTTY PINE CHICKEN DINNERS  
DINNER TICKETS TO BE PURCHASED BY 5/23

JENNIE SMITH - (815)712-6679  
SANDY COX - (815)481-3656

## Earlville Lions Fest, EHS Alumni, and EHS Hall of Fame Inductions!

Last year the Earlville Lions Fest and the EHS Alumni joined together to coordinate both events during the same weekend. It was also the first year of inductions into the new EHS Hall of Fame. It was SO successful that they are doing it again. Please notice the date. Ordinarily this would occur on the second Saturday of the month of June, however, since it lands on Father's Day this year, it has been moved to the earlier weekend. This year the menu for dinner will feature fried chicken from the Knotty Pine at the park, so you'll want to get your tickets now! It was so good to see so many people in town last year and we know that it will be equally successful this year! Make sure that you include a stop in at the museum when you are in town!!

## EARLVILLE'S SUPPER CLUBS

### The Century House



The Century House, located east on Rt. 34 on the south side of the road, was built in 1949 by Dan & Delta McCray as a small cheese shop and tearoom. The business was sold to Ray Leifheit in the early 1950's where it evolved into a tavern and supper club. Hank and Annie Orr took over in 1957. Hank even provided musical entertainment for the diners. The Orrs ran a successful business until health issues forced them to sell to Stanley Myers out of Aurora in 1972. Myers turned around and sold it a year later to Bruce and Maxine Songer. Songers operated the business for 12 yrs. before selling to Joe Tucker in 1984. The restaurant burned down in 1985.

### Jer-Bars

Located next to the Drive-In, this building was built by Karl Bader and named the **West Casino Café** in 1947. In 1949 he sold to Bill Swayze & Sam Thompson who operated it as **Bill & Sam's Tavern**. In 1955 it became the **L&M Tap** owned by Lloyd & Millie Randall. Cookie Erickson took over the business as **Cookie's Cottage** in 1961, and 2 yrs later sold to Walter Kohry (**Kohry's Restaurant**). In 1968 Bud Anderson purchased the business and opened **Anderson's Steak House**. After 4 yrs, Anderson sold to Mike & Marti Serrano and named it **Serrano Foods**. In 1975 it was operated as

**The Coachlight** under Ron & Toni Domke but returned to Serrano's possession a year later. The new business under Serrano was called **The Farmer's Inn**. Jerry & Barb Leifheit bought from Serrano in 1978 and had a successful business as **Jer-Bar's** until it burned in 1985. During the 70's and 80's the restaurant provided live band entertainment and dancing on the weekends.



### Manor Steak House

The **Manor Steak House** was built in 1961 by Dick & Harriet Larson. It was located on the south side of Rt. 34 across from the current Amoco. Jerry & Josie Jeffries operated the business from 1965-1971 until Ken & Lucille Page took over and continued its success for 14 years before retiring and selling to Bob & Paula Goodbred in 1985. Goodbreds operated the Manor for another 12 yrs. You may remember Lee Colby who played the organ for many years. The business was sold to Claude & Carl Thompson in 1997. Within 2 years the Manor was shuttered. The building still remains.



## THE FOUNTAIN CREAMERY

Asa Conklin came to Earlville in 1866 and entered into the grocery business. His store was located on Railroad St. but was burnt out during the downtown fire of 1867. After the fire he purchased 200 acres of land north of town to start farming (north on Main Street and west on 47th Rd) . At the time, many farmers were emigrating to this area and buying up land in hopes of making money on crops like wheat, corn or oats. Unfortunately what they found was that the land was full of bogs and flat land that flooded often and did not produce the bountiful crops they expected. Without the income they couldn't pay their mortgages and other expenses, so they sold out and moved in search of drier ground. But Asa Conklin's experience was much different. On his property was discovered the first flowing well in this area. This made the perfect setting for a creamery. Conklin H.C. Doane and others proceeded to organize the Fountain Creamery, a Co-Operative that would draw dairy farmers from miles around. Those farmers who were looking to sell their land now had another option with dairy cattle.

The building was erected by its patrons at a cost of nearly \$2,000, and the machinery was put in by a group from Elgin. The floor was made four feet below the natural level, and the water flowed readily through pipes eight feet above the floor. The water from the "Fountain" (hence the name of the business) maintained a temperature of 50 degrees even in the dog days of summer. The churn was described as "a stoutly-framed pine box, 3 feet deep, 3 feet wide and 7 feet long, hung on a gudgeon at center of each end so as to revolve inches clear of the cement-bottomed brook." There were no paddles or inner fixtures of any kind in the churn. The tubs of butter stood in the pool room waiting for the cool of the evening to be taken down to the refrigerator train car and sent to St. Louis. Before it was loaded onto the wagon box the floor boards were drenched with cold water so as not to warm the butter during transport. It was then packed snug with buffalo robes and loaded quickly onto the train cars. The creamery was very successful producing over a ton of butter each week, not to mention the milk and cheese produced. In 1883 Asa Conklin purchased the creamery from the Co-operative, but production started to decline. More and more of the farmers were learning about "tiling" their fields to control the water and were returning to farming crops. In 1888, Conklin sold the business to James and E.L. McCredie. The business was burned out in a fire in 1902. The Creamery was credited with saving many farmers from bankruptcy at the time that it was built. Many of Asa Conklin's (1833-1903) family still have ties to Earlville.

## COMMERCIAL HOTEL & LIVERY

Originally known as The City Hotel, The Commercial Hotel & Livery was built around 1854 by a man named Bosley on the SE corner of South Ottawa and Park St. (current location of Whittaker Excavating). It was known as the Commercial Hotel (also called the Browne Hotel) when George M. Browne purchased it in 1893. During the hay day of horse racing the hotel was crowded with horsemen on race days. As automobiles started to replace horses for work and transportation this building was sold to F.V. Dolder who opened the Earlville Garage (1908) for car repair and the sales of Studebakers. The building was demolished in 1920 following a fire there.



## Where did that BOULDER come from in front of the school?

According to an article in the Earlville Leader (1971) - "Former Earlville resident Frank Donagh says he started school in the fall of 1905 along with Hub Crisler and others and recalls vividly Joe Prentice and his Percherons moving the big boulder from Indian Creek to its present location (at that time in front of the old grade school on Stilson Street). He believes that it was a gift from the graduating class of 1906, hence its inscription."

The boulder was moved to the front of the Community Building (now referred to as the OLD gym) when the school on Stilson St. was torn down in 1981. In the photos below you can see the boulder as it sat at the old school in its original location and then in its new location as of 1981.

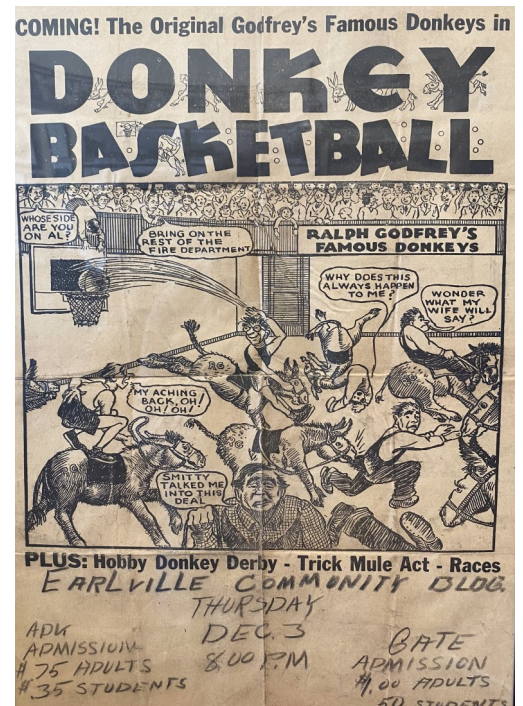


### TRANSFORMING GLASS AND LANTERN SLIDES INTO THE DIGITAL WORLD!!

Terry Bronk has been working all winter using his skills to develop and transfer all of our old glass and lantern slides, as well as all of our videos, into digital versions that can be viewed by anyone who has internet access. You may or may not know that the Earlville Community Historical Society has a channel on YouTube. You can get there by going to YouTube.com and searching for us by our name. All of our media, including membership meeting presentations are located there. We are working on adding names to the glass negatives as people are able to identify them. Our future plans include videotaping our different displays for those of you who are not able to visit the museum due to distance or disability. None of this would be possible if Terry had not stepped forward and offered his knowledge and services. We had so many pictures and other information that just sat stored in the museum and inaccessible. We are so grateful for the time and effort that Terry has given (and continues to give) to our group!!

### Donkey Basketball!

How many of you remember this during your years at EHS? This was from 1935 and occurred intermittently into the 2000's.



# Earlville Community Historical Society

A Not-For-Profit 501(c)3 Organization

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

### Membership Type/Dues (after initial payment, dues are collected each Nov/Dec for following year)

☐ Individual (\$15.00 **per person** - annually)

☐ Business/Institution (\$50.00 annually)

☐ Family (\$30.00 annually)

☐ Individual Lifetime (\$150 **per person** - one-time payment; no annual dues)

☐ Business/Institution Lifetime (\$300 – one-time payment; no annual dues)

### Member Information

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address\* \_\_\_\_\_

*\*To avoid postage costs we would like to send newsletters to your email account.*

**Do you have a Facebook Account?** Yes/No

If yes, please “like” our Facebook page by searching for:

***Earlville Community Historical Society***

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Send this form and your dues to the following address:

**Earlville Community Historical Society**

**Attn: Membership**

**136 S Ottawa St.**

**PO Box 683**

**Earlville IL 60518**

Eff. 11/11/2016