



Spring 2022
Newsletter #23

MUSEUM BUILDING PROJECT!

The kitchenette/handicapped bathroom addition is done!! Your response to our donation drive for this project was overwhelming to the point that the building will be nearly paid for by your generosity. Every donation, large and small, helped to offset the costs., and we thank you for that! This project would not have been possible without the work of our Project Manager, Dave Michelsen. He coordinated every aspect and got it done in record time, not to mention doing much of the work himself. Many in our community donated their services, labor or materials to help control the costs of the project including: Kevin Bomstad, Bob Goodbred, Bud Fischer, Roy Weiman, Jerry Guelde, Jack Anderson, and, of course, our “members extraordinaire” - Larry Maly, Norm Peterson, Al Matison, Ron Goodbred and others who always show up when needed. Please stop in and check it out! We hope to put together a Public Open House sometime this fall.

MUSEUM

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

HOURS

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

Anytime by appointment

Call:

815-246-9778

815-985-3763

www.earlvillehistory.org
earlville.history@yahoo.com

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DUELING PIANOS FUNDRAISER



After 2 years of cancellations we were finally able to move forward with our Dueling Pianos fundraiser. The weather was perfect, the Fire Station was transformed into a wonderful venue, the entertainers were fun and engaging, and the crowd seemed to have a great time. To say that it was a success is an understatement! When all was said and done our profit from the event was over \$5,300! Many thanks to Rich Goodbred, Pam Moore and their committee, to our wonderful volunteer bartenders, to Earlville Schools, Pioneer State Bank, Earlville Boys Baseball Team, Jeff Pickert, Earlville Fire Protection Board, and to all who bought a ticket to attend.

Monthly Meetings are on
the 1st Sat. of the month
(April through December)
9a.m. at the Museum

2021 Officers

| | |
|---------|---------------|
| Pres | Rich Goodbred |
| VP | Stan Meloy |
| Sec | Karen Wold |
| Treas | Kris Goodbred |
| Curator | Anna Svendsen |

Directors:

Larry Maly
Sandi Engel
Kent Sellers



THE VILLAGE SMITHY



The poem, “The Village Blacksmith” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, speaks to the hard life of a blacksmith, yet they were certainly an essential business in the days before automobiles. Our records show that Earlville had at least 13 blacksmiths between 1845-1948 but none with more “longevity” than Harvey E. Schrecengost, Sr. who worked at his craft for nearly 60 years. His son, Harvey E. Schrecengost, Jr, joined him in the trade as well. The photo below shows him in his shop with 2 of his sons, Robert and Harvey Jr.(Eugene “Brute’s” dad).



In this article from the Earlville Leader (1/9/1946) the editor interviews Harvey Sr. about the changes he had seen over his career.

Forges Aren't Busy Much But Blacksmith Has 'Seen the day'

A part of village life, and a romantic one, the blacksmith shop used to be, but today in most towns the smithys have given way to farm machine and welding shops. Earlville has both a shop and a blacksmith, one of the few oldtimers left, and one of the few horseshoers in this part of the state—H.E. “Harve” Schrecengost.

“It used to be a fine business”, the blacksmith told the reporter, who found him in his shop even though there was no work to be done. “Twenty years ago my shop would have been busy all day and every day during this season, but times have changed.”

Mr. Schrecengost built his shop at the rear of his lot on East street some thirty years ago and before that was located in the E.W. Malley building. He tells that he began the trade at the age of 18 and is just rounding out 57 years.

“Twenty years ago both forges would have been glowing white hot. The smiths would be busy at the anvils, or perhaps using the trip hammer, or fitting shoes”. Famed in poetry is the blacksmith shop, and one who has seen on busy days will never forget the fascination of showering sparks from hammered shoes, the quick sizzle when the hot metal is dipped in the cooling tank. This writer remembers long hours spent watching a village blacksmith, remembers the queer shape of the horseshoe nails, the bellows on the forge, the strong, though

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not unpleasant, odors of the horses, fires and hot iron.

Harve's shop is neater than the one we recall, due probably to diminished business. He long ago replaced the forge bellows with powered blowers, and his cooling tanks are built into the forges, not the old wooden barrel we remember.

For "mean" horses, he had a frame stall, but didn't have to use it very much. There was a time when twenty horses at a time in the shop was nothing unusual. Now one has to know the countryside pretty well to find that many. There was a time he, "Young Harve", his son, and an assistant worked long hours every day, shoeing, fitting wagon and buggy rims, beating plowshares.

Fond memories of his are the days when there were two livery stables in Earlville, when Dr. A.C. Tillman had a racing stable. He is not at all bitter about the changing times. "It was a good business for me—I liked the work and liked horses—still do. Everyone likes a good horse", he said.

Harvey E. Schrecengost, Sr., died in 1955. Several years ago the Schrecengost Family donated the photo and many artifacts from Harvey's shop including the tool box and tools seen in the picture. Stop in at our Agricultural shed and take a look!

CONDOLENCES

We offer our deepest condolences to the family of Carol (Hughes) Wiley. Carol always enjoyed taking part in our meetings and stopping by to share her wonderful (and often very humorous) memories of Earlville before her health began to fail. ECHS thanks her and her family for directing her memorials to our organization. Rest in Peace, Carol.

THANKS!!

...TO LARRY SIMPSON AND WILMA STILLWELL who spoke at our May meeting sharing their memories of working at Marathon Electric. Marathon employed over 500 people from Earlville and the surrounding community at the height of their operation. Marathon opened in 1948 and closed in 1981, employing hundreds in the community over a 33 year span.

CONGRATS TO KEEGAN!

Keegan Bottom, our student volunteer for the past 3 years, is a 2022 graduate from EHS. He graduates as co-valedictorian and class president. We know he is going to do great things! Congratulations from all of us at ECHS!



UPCOMING SPEAKERS!

We're excited to share that we have some interesting and entertaining speakers coming up at our next few meetings.

June 11th (note the different date!)

Dale Harris is going to join us to discuss the military career of his dad, Keith. Many remember Keith as a longtime resident and funloving bus driver, but he also served his country during WWII.

July 2nd

Bill and Jim Feld are going to take us on a trip down Memory Lane as they tell about their long-time Paper Route and the interesting folks that they met along the way.

August 6th

Greg Kaleel will be with us to speak about the history of the Kaleel Department Store here and in the surrounding areas, and how his generation kept the clothing business alive for years after the store closed here.

Come and join us and bring a friend! Feel free to share your memories, too!

DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS

“The Union Block”

A devastating fire in March of 1867 severely damaged much of the downtown area of Earlville, especially the stores located on the north side of Railroad Street. This block of stores was referred to as the Union Block. At the time, homes and stores had no street address so the stores were given numbers that related to the building. For example, “No. 1 Union Block.” There were eight storefronts in the Union Block, but there were also businesses in the basements and the second floors of the main business. The numbering started on the east end with No. 1 being on the NW corner of Ottawa and Railroad (where the current Laundromat is located) and ended with No. 8 at the west end of the block (known to many of us as Cramers’s). Many of the businessmen stepped up to build or rebuild the stores. Dr. F.A. Wiley rebuilt No. 1 & 2 Union Block. His office was always located on the second floor of No. 1. No. 3 & 4 Union Block was rebuilt by wealthy businessman, D.A. Town, along with a Robinson and Kincaid who both owned businesses on that block. Union Block #5 was erected by Dr. Vosburgh who had previously owned a pharmacy as well as his office in that building. A.B. Breese, owner of a Dry Goods store rebuilt No. 6. We’ve not been able to locate the name of the person responsible for the rebuild of No.7. And, finally, No. 8 was built by C.B. Clark.

In this article we will review a some of the businesses which occupied a few of the Union Block stores over the years.

Union Block No.1

In the late 1800s and early 1900s this store was occupied by several clothing stores. Goldschmidt’s Clothing and Colson’s Clothing had businesses here prior to WWI. During wartime when there were very few stores open, this building was used to as a spot to weigh babies and provide storage for Red Cross supplies. Following the war, Frank Genter opened a grocery and meat market which he eventually moved across the street. Bill and Miriam Steinke operated their barber/salon here briefly before a franchised hardware store, Gambles Store, opened and conducted business there from 1933-1949 when George Cole purchased the store and operated Cole’s Hardware until 1959. It was converted into a Laundromat by Mr. and Mrs. Ed Moritz at that time. The Laundromat was sold and the new owners razed the building in 1972 to erect a new one that still stands today.



Union Block No. 2

Several grocery stores (Goss & Conklin, Estes Groceries) along with Bremer’s Clothing occupied this storefront until 1903 when the U.S Postal Service opened their Earlville office in this location. The Post Office moved to their new location on Winthrop Street in 1970. That building and the corner building (No.1 Union Block) would eventually be torn down in 1972 to make way for the new coin wash. *The large stone slab located out front of the museum was once the front step to the old post office.

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Union Block No. 3

Some of the same businesses that were originally in No. 2 moved to Union Block No. 3 in the late 1800s. Bremer's moved their business next door after the Post Office moved in. In 1906 Fred Mueller opened his Redwood Billiard & Pool Hall here, and from that point on, it remained a pool hall. Bill Dolder established his barber shop and pool hall in 1921. George and Ed Wolf purchased the business in 1939, followed by Kuntz & Johnson. In 1952 Marv Masterson took over the shop and continued to operate it for 20 years. This photo was taken at the beginning of demolition in 1974. Union Block No. 3 & 4 were razed to make way for the new Miller-Rowe Insurance building (now First State Insurance).



Union Block No. 4

This is where it gets tricky. Because in the changes in the façade and removal of some of the buildings Union Blocks No. 4 & 5 get a little blurry. We know that in the early days (late 1800s and early 1900s) there were several restaurants that operated out of No. 4 (owned by a VanDeVenter and then Burnidge) as well as a fruit stand and grocer in the basement. In 1928 Gottlieb Maly had his shoe repair shop here prior to moving to the Malley building. This building was the home of the Earlville Café in the late 1940s and 1950s. The building was razed in 1974 (along with No. 3) to make way for a new drive-through for the bank. We can remember that this was the spot that we also paid our city water bills. The drive-through area was eventually filled in with an addition to the restaurants that later occupied the Earlville Leader building (Union No. 5).

Union Block No. 5



Between 1868-1910 this building was a drug store operated under many different names (HP Wattles, Ashton, Snow Cuppy, Sheridan, Carnahan, Fritz and Cope). The Earlville Leader Office was located on the second floor before relocating in 1933. In 1910 J.W. Robinson purchased the store and became a longtime resident and active community member for 30+ years before selling his drug store to Leonard Streed in 1946. Streed's moved their business to Ottawa Street and, in 1953, the National Bank of Earlville purchased the building, remodeled it, and it became the new home for the Earlville Leader. After some changes in ownership at the Leader a number of restaurants opened in this location. In 1999, Nancy Sprowls opened Nancy's Prairie Bar and Grill followed by four or five other restaurants. The last restaurant opened in 2017 (Beaver Den) and closed in 2020.

Photo from late 1800s. Cope and Co. Drug Store. Leader office on 2nd floor

(We will cover the rest of the Union Block in future is-



Did you know?

- In the late 1800s there was a small Irish settlement in Earlville referred to as “Paddy’s Lane”? One of the last houses that remained in the settlement was torn down to build the “new” fire station on the corner of East and Water St. in 1946.
- During the Great Depression live chickens were thrown off of the roof of the Wallace Hotel, and if you were lucky to capture one, you had dinner that night. P.R. Hughes recalls that they threw a rooster off not realizing that they can’t fly , and it went right through the awning of Robinsons Drug Store.
- In 1915 E.E. Ellis built and operated a roller rink “just east of the elevator”



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sat, Jun. 11* ECHS Mtg at 9am

Speaker: Dale Harris

Topic: Keith Harris Military Career

ALUMNI WEEKEND

Sat, Jul. 2 ECHS Mtg at 9am

Speakers: Bill and Jim Feld

Topic: Our Paper Route in the 1950s

Sat. Aug. 6th ECHS Mtg at 9am

Speaker: Greg Kaleel

Topic: History of Kaleel Stores

***Note change in meeting date for June.**

Public is always invited to attend our meetings!

EARLVILLE RECREATION CENTER

Thanks to Van Morcken we finally have located some early photos of the Bowling Alley! There was actually a plan and some work done to build a 2 lane bowling alley in 1926 by John Beale in the same location on Ottawa Street, but before it was completed it had to be torn down due to a lawsuit. In 1943 Louis Michelini built the 4 lane business that we now know and called it Earlville Recreation Bowling. The photos are blurry, but you can see that name on the windows. Over the years there have been many owners including Van’s parents who purchased the alleys in 1954. The men’s, women’s and kid’s bowling leagues were very active over the years. In 1967 Sonny Stegmann purchased the business and added a room on to the south to accommodate their food business, “Ma’s Pizza”. The bowling alley is currently closed.



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

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