

Summer 2024
Newsletter #30

The Historical Society will be sponsoring a Cemetery Walk on Sunday, September 15th, 2024, at Precinct Cemetery, south of Earlville. The walk will highlight the lives of eight Earlville residents spanning from the late 1800s through 1998. If you've never been to a Cemetery Walk before, you can expect to travel to the gravesites of each of the honorees and observe an "actor" dressed in clothes appropriate for the time and telling the story of their life. Each presentation will last approximately 7 minutes. The entire walk will last around an hour and 15 minutes.

Tickets are on sale at First State Insurance, or at the Museum during weekend hours, for \$10 each and *should be purchased in advance of the event*. There will be two separate presentations (1pm and repeated at 2:30pm) and tickets will be purchased accordingly. Bus transportation will be provided from the Museum to and from the Cemetery. **The bus will load 30 min prior to each presentation.**

Attendees should wear comfortable shoes, clothing appropriate for the weather, and be prepared to walk between the grave sites. There will be a trailer with (limited) bench seating available for those who have difficulty walking.

Those who will be featured in this year's Cemetery Walk are the following:

Keith Eldred Harris	(1919-1980)	Military hero, popular bus driver
Robert Harry O'Brien Giles	(1890-1955)	Vaudeville actor with an unusual talent
Lewis Carter	(1879-1971)	Farmer with many interesting jobs, including policeman
James Wales Rowe	(1903-1998)	Longtime insurance businessman
Albert C. Tillman	(1870-1942)	Earlville's veterinarian in 1895
Loretta M. (Carter) Tillman	(1876-1965)	Albert's wife—notable artist
Alonzo J. Grover	(1828-1891)	Outspoken attorney and editor for human rights
Susan A. (Hoxie) Richardson	(1822-1901)	President of Illinois' first women's suffrage group

If you are from out-of-town and wish to purchase tickets, please send your check to Earlville Community Historical Society, PO Box 683, Earlville IL 60518. Please indicate the number of tickets and which presentation (1pm or 2:30pm) you wish to attend. We will hold your tickets at the Museum on the day of the event.

Any questions? Contact Anna 815-615-1192, Kris 815-252-9380 or by email earlville.history@yahoo.com

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

815-615-1192

815-252-9380

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

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

Check Calendar

2024 Officers

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

Directors:	Ann Newell Kent Sellers Jack Anderson
Building:	Dave Michelsen

...And Speaking of Cemeteries

The LaSalle County Genealogy Guild (115 W. Glover St, Ottawa, IL) is a great resource if you are doing research on your family. They put out a quarterly newsletter where they highlight something from each of the townships in LaSalle County. Their summer edition had an article about the Earl Township Cemeteries. We were very familiar with the Carter Cemetery, the Precinct Cemetery, and the St. Theresa's Catholic Cemetery, but were surprised to read about the "Philip's Cemetery." While many of the small family cemeteries are still listed in resources like "Find a Grave", this one is not. The source of the article is from *The First Cemeteries of Earl Township*; by Doris Hill, *Stories of Pioneer Days 1831-1931*. Keep in mind when you read the description of the location in the first sentence that this was all open prairie at the time, so it wasn't directly east of Precinct, but, instead, quite a ways to the north.

The oldest cemetery in Earl Township is believed to have been located east of the Precinct, south of the railroad. As this cemetery was originally owned by James Philips, it was known as the "Philip's Cemetery." When Mr. Philips died the land became the property of Marcus Wright. This cemetery was in a field, and as this man took no care of it, the tombs gradually sank into the ground and was then plowed over and nothing was done about the graves until Mr. Zander Harris bought it, after the death of Mr. Wright. He then had a few graves which remained there dug up and bodies removed to the Precinct. There were a total of 23 graves in this cemetery. The first grave was that of Mr. James Philips, buried in 1853. On his marker was inscribed this epitaph: "Remember me as you pass by. As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. Prepare for death and follow me."

At that time, people did not have much land cleared, and the wolves knew when a fresh mound was made; so unless the graves were fenced in, for many nights they would come and dig in the earth until they had reached the coffins. For this reason, people had a fence around each grave, besides the large fence, which enclosed the cemetery.

It was not unusual at this time to "steal" graves; that is, if some member of the family died, they would bury them at night in a neighbor's private burial ground without their knowledge, so that the graves would be fenced in and be protected, rather than just bury them in the open.

On the location of this old cemetery, the first site for the City of Leland was planned. The site was laid out by Squire Haight. Probably because of the CB&Q railway went through north of this, the site was later changed to the present location of this city.

It is believed, that if this site had not been changed, neither Earlville nor Leland would have been founded, but that larger city would have been located where the first site for Leland was made.

There is no trace whatever left of this cemetery, and many people have forgotten or never have heard of it's existence.

The LaSalle County Genealogy Guild is open on Mondays and Saturdays from 9a-4p. They can be reached by phone at 815-433-5261 or by email at lscgg@sbcglobal.net. Their website is: lscgg.org



Welcome to Resource Bank!

ECHS extends a warm welcome to the newest business in town, the Earlville branch of Resource Bank. The new business is located on the NE corner of Ottawa and Union Streets. The bank contacted us prior to opening and asked for some old photos of Earlville. They've made them in to canvas prints and placed in their lobby and offices. Stop in and check them out!

The Early Churches of the Town of Earl

We had a low turnout for our presentation on the Earlville Churches so we decided to include that discussion within this newsletter. We won't have room for all of the photos within the presentation, but you can still see those if you check out our YouTube channel.

After the Black Hawk War ended in 1832, people from the east felt more comfortable moving west. Within 2 years (1834) Charles Sutphen and John R. Dow settled here. In 1839 Sutphen purchased 1000 acres and shortly after sold a portion to S.T. Stilson. Stilson is credited with laying out the plan for our city. Others joined in the settlement, and in 1841 the Carter Family donated land to provide a cemetery. Three years later a schoolhouse was built in the NE corner of the cemetery. It was called the Precinct Schoolhouse (and the Cemetery became known as Precinct Cemetery) since all voting occurred there. The schoolhouse was also the center for town meetings and church services early on. There were 7 Christian churches built in the town within 23 years of each other in the mid-1800s.

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Presbyterians were organized by Rev. John Fleming in 1852 at the home of Joseph McGregor with just 10 members. The first services occurred in that Precinct Schoolhouse. They were the first to erect a church building in town. The church was completed in 1855 at the NW corner of Ottawa and Union Streets. In 1862 the church was changed and enlarged. Part of the current sanctuary is still located in part of this building. All of the early churches had barns or stables behind the building for the pastor and congregants to park their horse and buggies. When the church was built it was located in the "center" of the original town as laid out by S.T. Stilson. After the CB&Q Railroad came through the town was moved north for easier access for transportation as well as sending and receiving goods and services.

Rev. Fleming served until Rev. John Ustick was hired as permanent pastor. He was the longest serving pastor of the church (28 years). The first parsonage was owned by Rev. Ustick and was located west of the church. There was a tiny spring in the



cellar of the house that

had been boxed in to form a refrigeration pool. A large produce garden and fruit trees often supplied food for the poor families in town. Later on the parsonage was located at the SE corner of Church and East Streets, and, finally, in 1948, a home was purchased on Ottawa St. north of the church. The home, although no longer owned by the church, is still standing. A Christian education center was added on the west side of the church in 1958. The Earlville Presbyterian Mariners organized in 1964, and started selling their famous lemonade 2 years later. They also served the Alumni dinners in the school cafeteria for years. The Congregation continues to celebrate their "birthday" every year with a dinner and program.



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UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. George Briggs, a circuit rider, brought Methodism to Earlville in 1844. Organizational meetings were held in that same Precinct Schoolhouse. Rev. Wesley Batcheller was the first minister. Although they actually “gathered” as a group earlier than the Presbyterians, they waited until the CB&Q Railroad came through before they built their first church on Stilson St. The wooden structure was completed in 1857, and there were 70 members registered. They were known as the Earlville Methodist Episcopal Church. The first parsonage was built by Rev. Gage on the south side of the church and later sold for \$500. In 1891 the church purchased the home just north of the church for a parsonage.



M. E. Church, Earlville, Ill.

Pub. by Schmidt's Pharmacy

In 1904 volunteers removed the old wooden structure and a new brick building was erected. The congregation met in the Presbyterian church on Sunday afternoon during the construction. The new building cost \$7,500 and the stained glass windows were donated in memory of family members or as gifts to the church. The dedication occurred on Jan. 29, 1905, and all of the money was raised before the end of the day leaving them debt-free. In 1967 they purchased the house to the south and moved it down the street to make room for a parking lot. Shortly after their name was changed to United Methodist.

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH



In 1868 eleven families of German descent organized what became known as the German Lutheran Church. Their first services, like the others, were held in the Precinct Schoolhouse. Within a year they built a church on East St. and dedicated it in 1869. The cost of building was \$1,850, and each family was asked to pay \$100 toward the building fund. William Weidner mortgaged his farm to pay off the remaining debt. Other names associated with that original church include Kaminky, Grey, Weidner, Budach, and Gast, many of whom are still members today. At the time that the church was built, East St. ended in front of the church.

It was not extended north to Union St. until many years later. Emil Knappe was the first resident pastor. The first parsonage was located somewhere on Union St. and later built next to the church.

A new church was erected in 1904 at the cost of \$9000 which included the lot, the building, the furniture, equipment and the bell. In 1913 it was further rebuilt and enlarged. It wasn't until 1917 that English was introduced into their services, nearly 50 years after the church was built. That church was razed in 1970, and a new wing and sanctuary built. Rev. Otto Kreiter was the longest serving pastor for 24 years.

In 1992 the church started a preschool. Cliff Imel made and donated much of the furniture for the program. The preschool just announced their closure after 32 years.



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UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF EARLVILLE

The first organizational meeting of the Universalist Church was held at the home of Charles S. Munson in 1867. Their first services were held in Robinson hall located above the businesses on the north side of Railroad St. Some of their early members included names like Munson, Powers, Perdieu, Burlingame, Cain, Todd Stilson, and Norton. S.T. Stilson donated a lot of the NE corner of Ottawa and Church Streets along with \$100 toward the building of the church with the stipulation that \$4,900 be raised by the members.



In 1870 a double-spired house of worship was completed and dedicated with a cost of \$15,000. There was a debt of \$8,000 which was raised and paid 5 years later. 200 members contributed to that fund.

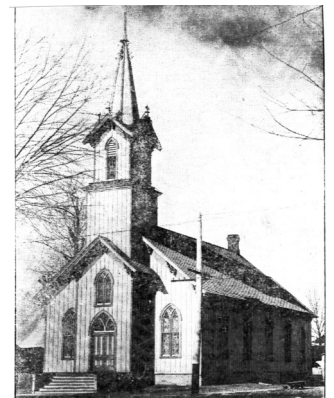
The first preacher was Rev. W.S. Ralph followed by 13 other pastors including Earlville's first woman pastor, Mary Graves. The Universalists were considered a progressive religious society believing in equality toward woman. Unlike other religious groups at the time, they promoted women to responsible positions in the church and actively supported the women's suffrage movement. Their Ladies' societies within the church were known to sponsor fairs, dramatic entertainment, and annual flower shows bringing together all denominations.

By 1908 they were unable to secure a minister and their membership was declining. The church was put up for sale in 1913. Adam Weis (known to many of you as Mary Feld's father) purchased the bell and donated it to the Catholic church. Robert Strong Sr purchased the house, tore it down and used the bricks to build a home on that same property. The house still stands and is occupied by the McWade family.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

In 1867 the Congregational Church was organized with 10 members at a meeting in the Dupee Hall (above the businesses on the south side of Railroad St.). Their first pastor was Rev. C.S. Harrison, a very outspoken man who wrote many articles or rebuttals against the women's suffrage movement.

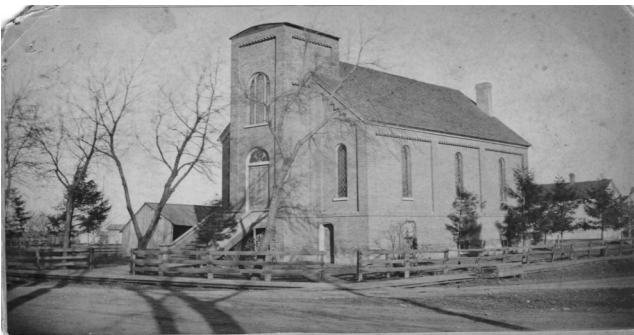
Their new church was built in 1870 on the NW corner of North and 3rd Street. It was described as a 40x60 frame building with stone foundation, gothic stained glass windows and a graceful spire. William Mann financed much of the project. The church was dissolved after 59 years due to lack of membership and the property turned over to the church organization. Lumber from the church was purchased by John Latimer and used to build his new farm house.



EARLVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

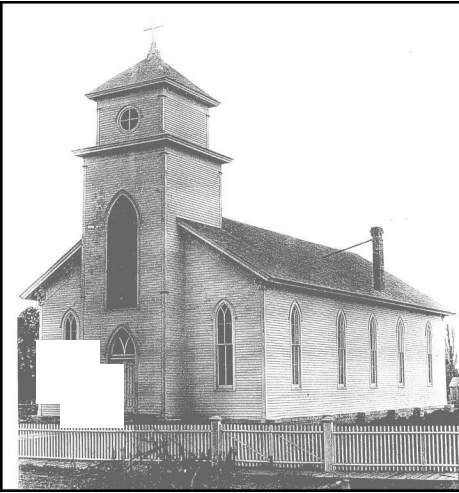
The Baptist organized in 1859 by a Rev. J. Higby and early services were held in the Precinct Schoolhouse. In 1871 they erected a building on the NE corner of Main and Browns streets. Some of you might recall this corner as the location of the "Masterson" house.

In 1912 the church was dissolved and the building razed. Jim Rowe's grandparents purchased the lot and built their new home on the foundation of the church.



ST. THERESA CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic community may have been one of the first groups to gather as there were missions and out-missions as early as the 1840s. In 1857 Fr. Murphy was assigned by the diocese to establish a Catholic parish here. The majority of the members would be from Ophir township. Early on, Mass was offered in the homes of parishioners and later in an abandoned foundry located just to the east of the church's current location. Rev. Thomas O'Farrell purchased the lot west of the foundry in 1863 and dug a foundation in anticipation of a new church. However, because of financial difficulties the church itself was not completed until 1878. A storm severely damaged the church in 1892, and it had to be rebuilt. The new structure was dedicated in 1903 complete with a pipe organ and 11 stained glass windows. The cost of the rebuild was \$2,600. St. Theresa's was officially proclaimed a parish in 1904 with Fr. Patrick Sheridan as the first resident pastor. Fr. Henry Hahn took over in 1923 when Fr. Sheridan died and would remain pastor for 40 years.



In 2013 storms again caused severe damage to the church. Mass was held in the church basement until the renovations were completed in 2014. Today, St. Theresa is merged with Holy Cross in Mendota and St. Peter and Paul Parish in Peterstown. Two priests serve the 3 churches.

Editors Note: We are so fortunate to have 4 of the 7 original churches still active in our community. They have stood the test of time, but like the Congregational, Universalist and Baptist, they have seen their attendance decline and are faced with the same financial burdens. It's only for the dedication and financial support of the members of these congregations that they remain today. We must not forget the valuable contributions that they continue to provide our community

Did you know.....

- A Cub Scout pack was being formed in Earlville in June of 1940. They were being recruited to help direct traffic and assign parking spaces on Wednesday and Saturday nights because of the large crowds downtown
- The Ku Klux Klan had a meeting about 5 miles NW of town that attracted between 300-400 men in June of 1923. They ran a full-page ad in the Earlville Leader in August that same year.
- In 1888 there was a roller skating rink located in the basement of Jackson's Clothing Store on the south side of Railroad Street, 3 stores down from the hotel corner.
- The Earlville Recreation and Bowling Lanes was first built by Louis (Mickey) Michelini in 1943. It was to be done in 1940, but the War slowed the project. Since that time there has been at least 10 different owners. It's been closed for a number of years.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sat. Sep. 7 **NO MEMBERSHIP MTG**
- Sun. Sep. 15 **PRECINCT CEMETERY WALK**
- Sat. Oct. 6 (to be determined)
- Sat. Nov. 2 (to be determined)

MURAL UPDATE

Once the Cemetery Walk is behind us we will be moving ahead with our plans to investigate a wall mural on the building adjacent to the bank parking lot. We are still looking for your ideas! What pictures, businesses, historical events, items, etc. do you feel would represent the town of Earlville? What makes us unique? Send us your ideas at earlville.history@yahoo.com.



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