

published by the Batavia Historical Society

Dedicated men and women, convinced that a people must know its heritage to be strong, fight to preserve America's historic landmarks in the midst of modernization.

-Ford Times

Next Meeting

Sunday, Feb. 11, at 3 P.M.

Bartholomew Civic Center

\*\*\*\*\* Program \*\*\*\*\*

Dr. Roland Ely, Prof. at Northern Illinois University, who will speak on "A. L. A. S. – Wings - Bilingual: Bilingual Culture for Spanish Speaking Prisoners in Illinois."

Dr. Ely is a resident of Batavia and a member of the local Historical Society.

Vocal Solo - William B. Benson. Accompanied by Mrs. Walter Evert.

Refreshments - Mrs. Svea Erd, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Micholson.

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Everyone enjoyed the program of music given by the Junior High at the December meeting.

Report of the Nominating Committee. The following slate of officers is proposed:

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| President         | - Mrs. Judd         |
| Vice President    | - Phil Talbot       |
| Secretary         | - Mrs. Walter Evert |
| Treasurer         | - Neal Conde        |
| Trustee (2 years) | - William Maddox    |
| Trustee (1 year)  | - Richard Lavoy     |

We thank the outgoing officers for their sincere interest and concern for the Society during their term of office.

One Hundred Years Ago

1873

The Batavia Library was made a free library and moved to the Buck Block. F. H. Buck was chosen librarian, which position he held for fifteen years. The library had 384 volumes.

The Island Mills became the property of the Batavia Paper Mfg. Co., who leased it to H. Cogger.

Newton and Co. Incorporated with Levi Newton as president, Don Carlos Newton as vice president and H. K. Wolcott as secretary.

The C. & N.W. Ry. laid tracks from Geneva to Batavia. They wished to use Batavia stone for building shops at West Chicago and at Crawford Avenue in Chicago.

1873 was known as the panic year - caused by overexpansion.

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One of America's angry writers, Eric Sevareid, recently predicted that our last frontiers of serenity and space will disappear unless we learn, as the English have, that progress has to be defined to mean preserving and cherishing as well as changing and improving.

Stewart Udall

Next Meeting

Sunday, April 29th, at 3 P. M.

Bartholomew Civic Center

\* \* \* Program \* \* \*

John Glenn will speak on his "Hobby of Raising Orchids." A member of the Batavia Plain Dirt Garden Club, Mr. Glenn is well known for his friendly service at our local post office.

Refreshments will be served by Mrs. Joseph Burnham, Mrs. Arthur Adams and Mrs. Glen Nelson.

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At the February meeting, Dr. Roland Ely described his experiences with presenting an educational program to men in Illinois prisons. He says it is gratifying to see improvement in morals and personal ambitions as men meet the academic challenges.

Bill Benson sang several numbers. The Society always knows it is a special treat to hear him.

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Ed Hampton gave the Historical Society a Batavia Code Book.

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The Society extends its sympathy to the family of Alfred Bergeson and to Mr. Axel Burkwist.

\* \* \* \* \*

One purpose of a historical society is to preserve all historical items about Batavia and Kane County. We clip the Herald and the Beacon News but items in other papers about Batavia we may overlook. If you see any such item, will you please mail them to us. We will file them until the Museum is established. (J. G.)

\* \* \* \* \*

The Batavia Public Library had its 100th Anniversary on April 8, 1973. In all that time there have only been four head librarians: Mr. Buck, Margaret Twinning, Cassie Stephens and Miriam Johnson.

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

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Therefore when we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for the present delight, nor for present use alone. Let it be for such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have, touched them, and that men will say as they look upon our labors ---- "See, this our fathers did for us".

Ruskin in Bridges and their Builders

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Next Meeting

Sunday, Sept. 23, at 3 P.M.

Bartholomew Civic Center

"Early Batavia People in stories and photographs" With three of our members on the panel.

Members, friends and new-comers welcome.

Refreshment committee: Mrs. V. Anderson, Mrs. Neal Conde, Sr. and Mrs. Earl Judd.

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The May meeting was well attended and members enjoyed John Glenn's talk on "Orchids". His pictures and comments made all want to start raising the lovely plants.

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We extend our sympathy to the family of Elva Micholson who died June 2nd.

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The Society has received many pictures since the last meeting. You may have seen some of these in the Herald in past weeks. Mrs. James Hall sent seven pictures of groups of Batavia people. She also sent a copy of the Herald dated 6-23-1904. Miss Eunice Shumway brought 109 small pictures from Mr. Schacht, mostly for the NAL area. Mr. Orville Sandvick gave the society two large photos of the Challenge Co. office about 1898. Mrs. Harry Duffy gave us four pictures of the East Side School classes. Many artifacts have come from the library - too numerous to list here.

## BLACKSMITH'S

I have just finished listening to an album in the talking books titled "The Village Blacksmith" by Ivatson.

He gave the history of iron after its discovery about 2000 B.C. Three kinds of iron resulted; cast, steel and wrought. The latter was a carbon free iron that could be easily bent and welded. Hooves of draft animals were continually being injured and in time wrought iron shoes proved to be the best protection.

After many years the trade of shoers, especially horse shoers, sprang up. They had many problems to solve. Later shoers took upon themselves other work, making irons, fences, wagons, carriages and sleighs.

Blacksmiths came with the first settlers to this country. John Gregg settled two miles east of the Fox River. His first shop was in the open air, his anvil on a tree stump and his forge and bellows nearby.

Those early settlers needed many things made of wrought iron. One thing especially needed was nails for the new buildings. Many farmers in the east, during the slack time of winter, set up a forge in the kitchen, brought home iron rods and with heat from the forge, cut the rods into nail lengths, hammered one end to a point and upset the other end to form a head. These were shipped to Boston, Philadelphia and other cities. Making nails by hand was a job for all the men and boys in the farm family.

Batavia in the early days, must have had 65 or 75 blacksmiths. Our four major industries must have used an average of 12 blacksmiths, other industries used some and the four or five independent shops had as least two smiths each. Blacksmithing was a skilled craft. In the 1800's and early 1900's nothing was thrown away that could be repaired. Anything of iron was taken to the smith to be repaired. Some smiths even made wagons and carriages. Smiths also sharpened the drills used in drilling the holes in the stone in our several quarries.

I remember as a youngster, looking wide eyed through the open double door of a blacksmith shop. It was full of mystery and smells. A huge horse was standing quietly, and the blacksmith had one of his hind hooves between his knees fitting the new shoe to the hoof. Other horses were tied to the rings on the wall. Farmers and other men were standing around or sitting on nail kegs, gossiping about politics or the farm crops. The air was filled with the peculiar pungent odor of smoking hooves. The shop was an intriguing place for young boys. The list of blacksmiths in Batavia history would be too long so I will mention just a few.

1834 - John Gregg

1860 - C. B. Conde - A carriage shop on River Street.

1850 - There were 14 shops according to our records.

1867 - The Gazeteer lists 12 smiths (one was Hennick & Co.).

1898 - Charlie Pomp joined the Peterson Shop.

- Charles and James Bird - shop on River Street.

And today? Where are the horses and blacksmiths? Mrs. Osborne of the Osborne Stables on Main Street Road answered my questions. She said today the blacksmith has his forge in a van or truck and goes to shoe the horses when he is called. A smith in North Aurora even flies to shoe fancy horses at race tracks and horse shows. The smith has a supply of shoes made at home and fastens the forged shoes when needed. Mrs. Osborne said it might be interesting to note that there are more horses in the 50 mile radius of Chicago than in any other 50 mile radius in our country.

J. G.

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If you have built castles in the air your work need not be lost; that is where they should be built; now put foundations under them.

Thoreau

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NEXT MEETING

Sunday, December 2, 1973 at 3 P.M.

Bartholomew Civic Center

Christmas Musical Program by the Junior High School  
arranged by Mike Scardino and Mr. Rotolo

Refreshment committee: Mrs. Morris Larson, Mrs. Wm. Maddox, and Mrs. Martin Goers

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Nominating Committee for Officers for 1974: Mary Snow, Phil Carlson and Jeff Schielke.

A flag and alderman badges were given by the Mayor when city offices were moved recently. Mrs. Hoover and Mrs. Barkdoll gave the society several interesting items to add to the museum materials.

Report on the moving of the Burlington Depot to its new location.

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The society was sorry to learn of the death of Miss Viola McDowell and Carl Harrold.

\* \* \* \* \*

The following article was written by Elsie Hunt, who now lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She graduated from West Batavia High School in 1907 with Ruth Redborg Huxtable, William Davis, Brayton Weaver, Dr. Merrideth Mallory and nine others. Most of her life spent teaching in Evanston Schools.

VIEWS FROM OVER THE PICKET FENCE ON NORTH BATAVIA AVENUE

In the early days Batavia Avenue was not paved, and so during the spring thaw and rains, mudholes made crossing difficult. No street cars, no automobiles, truly a country town. Huge wagons piled high with barrels and others with window and door frames from the Hartsburg and Hawksly Sash Factory in North Aurora rumbled past our gate. I never knew where the Cooper Shop was. Upon rare occasions a horse breeder led a beautiful dappled gray stallion along the road. I knew nothing about studs or horse breeding, but I admired that sleek, fat, prancy horse. Years later I paid money to see the famous Lipizzaners do their stuff. They too, were beautiful.

Once or twice a threshing machine thundered up the street, terrifying me almost to bits, lest that huge behemoth would run wild. With the coming of the paving, the street cars and the automobiles, the passing was a little dull. We did make scissors with pins on the street car tracks.

We fished in the river. Never knew until a few years ago that our bull heads were a kind of catfish. Good eating they were. Skating and coasting were fun in the winter. I didn't have skates of my own. A neighbor boy lent me a pair of his and made small blocks of wood so that the clamps would hold, because heels on girls' shoes were smaller. Word went around in school after the first really cold snap in December, "The ice is safe. Goody!".

The music hall on the island furnished entertainment of various kinds from time to time, some from outside, and some home talent and church sponsored. The best shows were the basketball games in the Methodist Gym, back of the Church. The rules have changed somewhat, but it still is a good game. Now some of the players are giants, and the scores over 100. That's progress!

The first library I remember was a large room on the second floor of the bank building. Was slightly annoyed that my mother wouldn't let me read the Elsie Dinsmore books. When I finally did read some of them, I recognized them for the trash they really were. There were better stories in the Bible, even the bloody part of the Old Testament.

E.M.H.