

# *Batavia Historical Society*

*P. O. Box 15  
Batavia, Illinois 60510*

VOL. 22, No. 1

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

January 1981

## OUR ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Batavia Historical Society will be held on Sunday, January 11, 1981 at 2 p.m. at the Holmstad Retirement Center, 520 West Fabyan Parkway, in Batavia. The meeting will be held at the 3-story building on Fabyan Parkway across from the Campana plant parking lot. Members should use the main entrance to the complex which is found in about the center of the 3-story structure facing on Fabyan Parkway. The entrance doors should be very easy for members to use as a large roof overhang provides a canopy over a drive-up area.

Meeting agenda is as follows:

- A. A short business meeting which will include a report from the Nominating Committee for the Election of Officers for 1981.
- B. "Batavia Our Town" will be the title of a very special program. A number of slides will be shown of various Batavia places and things. Several members from the Society, and hopefully members from the audience, will offer comments and remembrances about the views to be shown. Members of the Holmstad Community are being invited to attend our meeting and to learn more about the community they now call home. We feel certain that many of the Holmstad residents, along with our own members, will enjoy the views of Batavia and the memories they bring. Several of the older photographs found in our Depot files have been copied onto slides for showing at the Sunday meeting.
- C. Refreshments (prepared by the Holmstad) and a social hour will conclude what promises to be an interesting meeting.

If you have never been to the Holmstad Retirement Center before we strongly urge you to attend Sunday's meeting and see one of the bright new attractions of Batavia Community Life firsthand.

As an added bonus to attending on Sunday, we have hopes that the new edition of HISTORIC BATAVIA may see it's first sales at Sunday's meeting. While we are not making any firm promises that we will have the book on Sunday, we are entertaining a strong glimmer of hope that Sunday may mark the debut of the book.

# Batavia Historical Society

## Batavia, Illinois



Vol. 22, No. 2

June 1981

The Batavia Historical Society will host its Spring/Summer meeting on Sunday, June 14th at 2 p.m. at the Calvary Episcopal Church, Main Street and Batavia Avenue. All members and guests of the Society are cordially invited to attend. The program will be as follows:

Welcome and Business Meeting . . . . .

Display of paintings, sketches and drawings  
which depict Batavia . . . . .

A short history of Batavia's Annual Fall Art  
Show on the Library Lawn by Marge  
Rundle.

We are assembling a number of works of art to show off during Sunday's program. Also to be featured will be a presentation to Rev. Green of Calvary Church of a 100 year plaque marking the anniversary of his Church's building construction in 1880. The Society, as was announced at our January session, has revived the Historic Plaque Program which for a number of years was in limbo. Applications for consideration by the board of this program are available at the Depot Museum.

Also at the Museum are a number of "Remembrance Sheets" for members and old-timers of town to write down their memories of life in the Batavia of past years. We recently received a nice remembrance from Mrs. Helen (Cliff) Anderson of her childhood memories of downtown Batavia and some of the faces and places she could recall. We are hoping to develop a storehouse of such tales as told from a personal side into the files of the Depot Museum and we strongly encourage other members to contribute their thoughts and memories. Again, our pre-printed form with ample room for writing out your Batavia memories are available at the Depot Museum.

Sales continue to be strong for the republished version of HISTORIC BATAVIA which the Society printed earlier this year. Copies sold so far have been sent worldwide (Bob Ducar bought several copies which found their way to mainland China to the hands of some scientists who had visited Fermilab and were taken with our community). The color reproduction of the John Falter painting of the "pond" skating scene seems to be a popular attraction for the many customers. The nicely reproduced woodcuts of John Gustafson also seem to be much in demand and help sell plenty of books. John's art work of the old stone bridge along Wilson Street seems to be a widespread attraction to many book buyers.

Speaking of John Gustafson, we have learned that he was recently honored by the American Legion for 62 years of continuous membership in that organization. We also might note as a side comment that the tree which the Society planted to honor John upon his reaching his 90th birthday last August is growing tall and strong along side the Depot Museum site at Houston Street. Chuck Kuhn and his park district maintenance crew have been providing the young tree with TLC (tender, loving, care) and it seems to be responding quite well to its new environment.

The coming summer months are offering a number of interesting community events for us all to part-take in. The 4th of July fireworks show will once more be held on the lawn of the Batavia High School Athletic Field on our nation's birthday (its 205th). The big show once more starts at dusk under the direction of the Batavia Park District with loads of cooperation from other city agencies and governments.

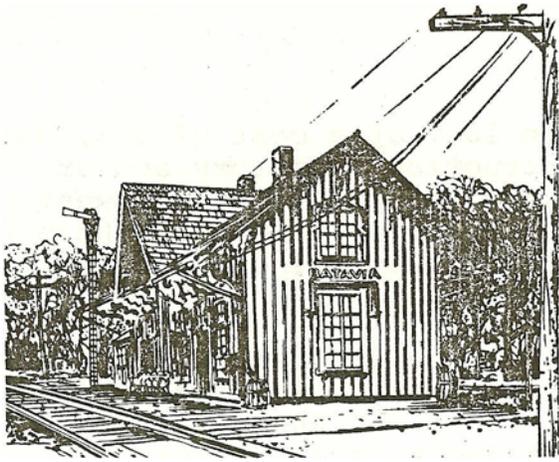
On July 24, 25, 26, the Windmill City Festival will be held in downtown Batavia and the new retail outlets in town should offer plenty of new attractions for all to enjoy. We hear of plans to have an art show on the lawn of the Batavia Junior High School, Wilson St. and Batavia Avenue, the days of the Festival which should add yet more community atmosphere to the celebration.

Saturday, September 12th is the big date for the Annual Outdoor Art Show on the lawn of the Batavia Public Library. This year with the construction of the new library building up the street the appearance of the event may take on some changes but we're sure the spirit and talent of the day will once more be quite apparent. The city has decided to block off West Wilson Street between Batavia Avenue and Lincoln Street to allow for the expansion of the show into the roadway area (and also to take care of the space needs due to the fact that the show lost much of its growing room with the new library). City officials also feel that blocking off this one block of Wilson Street will also add to the safety of the event. At any rate, we'd like to see the Society present and showing off its wares at the Outdoor Art Show in September and hope to secure a display table for just that purpose. Do we have some volunteers who are willing to man our sales and display booth for the Outdoor Show on September 12th?

On Sunday, July 26th, the First Annual Windmill City Family Picnic is being sponsored by the Batavia Chamber of Commerce. A city-wide family picnic is something which our town has long needed and we hope that many organizations will join with the Chamber in making the event an annual one of community fellowship. Does anyone have a suggestions of what the Society could do on the day of the city wide picnic to help promote fun and interest in the event.

Beyond all of this, the city's 150th birthday as a community is just around the corner in 1983. Plans are now being formulated to start the wheels turning to make this a very special event in the history of the city. Look for the appointment of a city-backed commission in the near future to start the whole show into motion.

Lastly, we still need volunteers to help man the Depot Museum on weekends. Those who could volunteer are urged to contact either Georgene Kauth or Jean Conde. We continue to attract a wide variety of visitors to the Depot and want to keep our good record of hospitality in tack.



## *Batavia Historical Society*

*P. O. Box 15  
Batavia, Illinois 60510*

VOL. 22, No. 3

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

October 1981

The fall meeting of the Batavia Historical Society is slated for Sunday, November 8th starting at 2 p.m. in the lower level of the Depot Museum, corner of Houston and Water Streets. All members and guests of the Society are cordially invited-to attend what promises to be a most interesting meeting. The planned agenda is as follows:

- (A) Regular Business Meeting
- (B) Report & Visual Review of the "ELAINE CANNON DISPLAY"
- (C) Presentation by Don Murphy of "Devils Cave Research"
- (D) Refreshments and Social Hour

As many of you already know, the Society has recently been very fortunate to acquire some very valuable creations of Batavia's beloved Elaine Cannon. A legend in her own time for her talented and artistic world of miniature detail, the Society is most thankful that it now has some coveted Elaine Cannon work to enhance our local collection.

Thanks to the generosity of Eunice Shumway and The Chicago Historical Society, the masterful work of Elaine Cannon is now on display for all Depot visitors to enjoy and appreciate. The first viewing of the display was on October 24th and the Society has been receiving nothing but compliments ever since. The display came about after our Society was approached by Sharon Darling, curator for the Chicago Historical Society, who revealed that her organization had several Elaine Cannon miniature scenes which they wished to donate to our museum. We could not agree to accept such a gift fast enough. Hearing of the Chicago gift, Eunice Shumway announced her intention to donate her highly regarded collection of Elaine Cannon work to the Society. Much of this terrific generosity is now being shown at the Depot in a temporary display case and the Historical Society Board of Directors is taking steps to bring about a permanent display case for the items.

Carla Hill, Depot curator, will tell more about the Elaine Cannon display on Sunday. Those members who have yet to have an opportunity to see the Elaine Cannon display are encouraged to come Sunday

## THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

PAGE 2

Also on the agenda for Sunday is a presentation by Don Murphy of Batavia detailing his research into the legendary "Devils Cave" found just south of Batavia along the east bank of the Fox River. Don, a resident of the 14th Colony subdivision on the city's east side, has spent an active summer researching various historical sites and legends around the Batavia area. A teacher by profession, his interest and findings should be of genuine appreciation to all our members. Interestingly, there are probably very few "oldtimers" who have not personally inspected Devils Cave or at least known of all the legends which surround its centuries of existence.

Again a reminder, the next meeting of the Society will be Sunday, November 8, 1981 at 2 p.m. in the lower level of the Depot Museum. Please plan to attend and bring a friend or two with you.

### NOTES FROM DR. LUCILE GUSTAFSON . . . . .

Being your historian is really lots of fun. A Mr. Colson from Barrington phoned and wrote about a research project he is directing relative to thirteen octagon houses in Illinois, one of which is on Forest Avenue here in Batavia. The present owner of the Batavia home has come to a property that has been altered somewhat by previous owners. Such improvements included changes (?) in the exterior look and added appendages (bumps) such as a kitchen. Each of the eight sides is eleven feet long complicating the placement of furniture and modernization. It seems Orson Fowler's highly advertised efficient house style wasn't as efficient as touted, and perhaps he should have kept to his major career as a phrenologist, head bumps interpreter. He apparently believed that exterior phenomena are an indication of interior attributes, which is certainly not true in this house.

History of the Batavia house? It was built by Harold Blair's great grandfather, on his mother's side--name spelled "Harrold." Some of you will know doubt recall Carl Harrold who was a paper hanger and amateur artist -- he would sketch murals on the walls that he was soon to cover with fresh new wall paper. According to the 1867 census, William Harrold lived on the corner of Washington Ave. and Lathem Street. It is thought that he or one of his two sons may well have built the Forest (Forrest then) Avenue home. One local legend says that an Irish man built the house so his wife couldn't corner him.

Many members of the Society will recall that Harold Blair was one time president of the Historical Society and was a well respected local vocal talent. His wife, Ione, has often served as a volunteer at the Depot Museum.

On Friday and Saturday, November 13-14 North Central College in Naperville will present at Pfeiffer Hall a play entitled WITHOUT DISCRETION. Authored by Mrs. Doris Porter, actress and playwright of Glen Ellyn, the plot centers around Mary Todd Lincoln's stay at Bellvue Place in Batavia in the summer of 1875. Mrs. Porter, of

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

course, has referred to Rod Ross' definitive research study of Mrs. Lincoln's stay in Batavia. Interestingly, Mrs. Porter's is taking a different approach to the Mary Todd Lincoln story in town stressing the spiritualism angle. She talked on this subject with many people in the area, including myself (Dr. Lucile), as a representative of the Historical Society. Mrs. Porter believes that Blanche Patterson, daughter of Dr. R. J. Patterson of Bellvue, often acted as a companion to Mrs. Lincoln. Following up the spiritualism idea, it seems logical that Mrs. Lincoln may have taken walks to the nearby West Side Cemetery during her stay in town. While near the old part of the cemetery, it is quite logical to assume Mrs. Lincoln may have heard the tapping out of quarry stone from our now Quarry Park as stone masons of the day (1875) busied themselves with the task of mining stone for the rebuilding of Chicago after the fire in 1871. Across the street from the cemetery, Mrs. Lincoln could have looked upon the home of Judge Lockwood, the man who admitted her husband to the Illinois bar. Unfortunately, Mrs. Lockwood has died just several months before Mrs. Lincoln came to stay in Batavia.

Members of the Society are encouraged to attend the performance of Without Discretion on November 13-14 starting at 7:30 p.m. in Pfeiffer Hall at North Central College in Naperville. Tickets are priced at \$2.50 per person.

Mentioned above of Batavia's own Dr. Rod Ross reminds us of correspondence we had from this local historian earlier in the year. Dr. Rod, who now calls Washington D.C. his address, took on the task of working to put the papers of Vice President Walter Mondale into the National Archives with the change of administrations this year. Needless to say, this must have been an interesting task for a talented local name.

There are a good number of changes in the air around the old town of Batavia these days. News of \$50,000,000 energy research centers to be built here remind us that that our town has long held a historical role in solving the energy concerns of America and the world. Who says that history does not repeat itself?

In closing, we send along a special thanks to all those who continue to volunteer and serve the Society in many ways from goodwill ambassadors to resource persons. The continued crowd we find waiting to see the exhibits at the Depot is good news for the betterment of all in Batavia.

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1982 DUES ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

TO: THE BATAVIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 15, BATAVIA, Ill. 60510

I wish to (start) (continue) my yearning of curiosity in Batavia's past. My (Our) membership dues for 1982 are enclosed.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE ..... ZIP .....

RATES: Single, \$3.00 -- Tandem, \$5.00 -- Sustaining, \$10.00 -- Life, \$50.00