



O'Fallon Historical Society
O'Fallon, Illinois

NEWSLETTER

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Brian Keller	President
Ruth Grandcolas	Vice-president
Dorothy Falk	Secretary
Maurice Hesse	Treasurer
Fred Wiechert	Director (2006)
Bill Peach	Director (2007)
Barb Nute	Director (2008)

Newsletter Staff

Brian Keller	Editor
Dorothy Falk	Mailing

Member—Illinois Association of Museums

President's Message

It has been quite an eventful past six months. Our long delayed but much anticipated Sesquicentennial History of O'Fallon arrived back safely from the printers. With 352 pages, over 300 photos and a full color cover, it is certainly one of the larger "anniversary" histories to be published and has received warm reviews from those who have bought copies. Thanks again to all who made it happen—but especially to Dorothy Falk whose persistent dedication kept the project moving. Books are still available—\$25 if picked up, \$29 postpaid if mailed.

With the book project over, it was time to turn our attention to sprucing up the museum. To that end, Joyce Lurtz with the help of husband Ralph and Carol Souza spent many hours "decluttering" the museum. The results are simply amazing. Lines of sight and traffic paths are greatly improved as is the general appearance of the displays. Ralph Keller and Jerry Worms also helped by removing excess wood from the first and second floors and, with the help of Dorothy Falk, re-arranging the south wall displays. Many thanks to everyone who assisted in this much needed "make-over."

On January 11, we held our first book signing at the museum. Carl R. Weinberg, Visiting Professor of History at Butler University, visited the museum that evening to talk about his book, *Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners & World War I*. He spoke over an hour to a very attentive group of 17 and signed copies of his book at the end—he actually ran out of books and made arrangements to mail ones to those who still wanted them. It was a terrific evening.

We also have entered the computer age. We now have a new computer with Office software and scan/print capabilities. Plus, thanks to Ruth Grandcolas, we have an older computer which we plan to make accessible to museum patrons.

2006 marks the 10th anniversary of the museum and the restoration of Rock Spring Cemetery. It also marks the 5th anniversary of the moving and restoration of the Scale House. These are three projects of which we are all very proud and a testament to the hard work and dedication of our Society volunteers over the years.

Brian Keller

Exhibits and Collections

We have had many interesting items contributed since last June. Donors include: Gary Ahle, Bank of O'Fallon, Eric Bugger, Bob Canterbury, Dorothy Falk, Friends of the O'Fallon Library, Paul Garrett, Gary Graham, Helen Grandcolas, Virginia & Zigmas Grybinas, Ben Hamm, Jim Hertzler, Maurice Hesse, Brian Keller, Ralph Keller, Betty Klingelhofer, Shirley Mullet, O'Fallon Township High School, O'Fallon Township High School Student Council, Bill Peach, Lorraine Poelker, Florence Reibold, Kim & Jim Sabella, Carol Scheibel, Barb Schneider, Edna Songer Estate, Jan Stein, Fred Wiechert, Sue Witter and Joyce Zimmerman.

A sampling of the items received: original die for the O'Fallon Sesquicentennial coin, 20 gallon crock, WW II uniforms and scrapbooks, Boy Scout memorabilia, potbelly stove for Scale House, Miss O'Fallon pageant videos, old-fashioned curtain stretchers, early (1952) Bernie Fuchs pencil sketch and much more. Of particular note was the donation of a Howe Scale acquired by David Wiechert from Venedy. Presented to the Society by Fred Wiechert, it is very similar to the original scale mechanism in the Scale House. It was moved from Fred's garage to the Scale House by Bill Peach. It's a beauty. Also, thanks to Ron Anheuser who engineered it and Bill Peach who arranged its delivery, we now have the old Post Office time capsule display and cornerstone which had previously been in the lobby of the new Post Office but was moved to due limited space. It is a wonderful addition to the museum. Finally, we've reorganized our Bernie Fuchs display and included some new additions. Thanks to Ralph Keller who has spent a lot of time constructing frames for them and other items around the museum.

Membership Report — Barb Nute

As of December 31, 2005, we had 104 memberships. We lost one member, Dorothea Canterbury—our thoughts and prayers are with her family at this time. New members that we are pleased to welcome to our group include: Joan Houston and Joyce Zimmerman.

Don't forget to renew your membership! Please send in the renewal form enclosed. Thank you! (Please disregard if you are a life member.)

Programs—July 2005 to January 2006

July—DVD show: dirigibles and balloons at Scott Field, 1920's

August—DVD show: Graf Zeppelin and Puritan airships, 1920's

September—old-time sing-a-long with Carol Souza, keyboard, and Ruth Grandcolas, leading

October—DVD show: September 10 Memorial Corner flag raising in honor of Harry Fitzgerald

November—Ralph Wiechert, Superintendent of Soldiers Memorial, St. Louis displayed and described some of the items found at the Memorial

December—annual Christmas party

January—DVD show: Era of Hometown Banking,—Higgins Money Museum, Okoboji, Iowa.

Special Thanks to Carol Souza who is retiring from the Society after 18 years. She was a co-founder of the Society, past President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chairman, member of numerous committees and most recently, Newsletter Editor. Thanks Carol! It is not an exaggeration to say that without your help, the Society would not be here today!

Upcoming Society Events

April 22—William F. Beedle, Jr., better known as actor William Holden, was born April 17, 1918. We will celebrate his birthday with a special exhibit of posters from his many films and a viewing of his biography. The posters will also be on display throughout the month of April. 2006 marks the 25th anniversary of the O'Fallon native's untimely death November 16, 1981.

May 13—Pioneer Certificates presentation at 2 pm at the museum. Punch and cookies will be served.

Volunteers Needed

The most pressing need is for someone to continue Doris Johnson's business notebooks. We also need to transcribe our collection of oral histories as well as to record new ones. We need to have 1900 and 1920 city and township censuses transcribed and city directories to be added to a database. We also need someone to dust down the exhibits every month or so. Contact Dorothy Falk at the museum office for more info. Linda Potter, Pamela Weir and Dolly Tamoria are working on other years of the censuses and directories. Ruth Grandcolas has taken over the Progress obit index. Thank you all!

Main Street O'Fallon Landmark Plaques

At the 10th annual O'Fallon Main Street Community Ball on February 11, Main Street unveiled their first 6 of a series of Landmark Award plaques that are being issued to historic commercial buildings in downtown O'Fallon. The engraved metal plaques, measuring 16 by 12 inches, feature a short narrative about the building's history and a historic picture of the building. The photos and narratives were provided by Brian Keller and the O'Fallon Historical Society. Here are those 6 along with the text actually engraved on the plaques.

101 W State Street—Built in 1903/04, this building was home to the First National Bank, 1904-1960. It was remodeled in 1922 to its present appearance which included the addition of a distinctive outdoor clock. This was the first home of the O'Fallon Public Library (upstairs, 1930-1945) as well as its third home (downstairs, 1962-1995). Upstairs also housed Smiley Bros. Telephone Exchange, 1904-1952, as well as various businesses, professionals and city offices. It became the O'Fallon Historical Museum in 1996.

220 E State Street—When it was built in 1908 by Joseph Taylor, this building, known as the Opera House, was considered "the wonder of the area." From its opening in 1909 until 1940, O'Fallonites were treated to public events, motion pictures and live shows—traveling and home-grown—within its walls. Saloons, restaurants and soft drink parlors also were here. Many remember its later transformation into the O'Fallon Locker, 1945-1984.

119 E First Street—Built in 1914 by Budina Bros. for O'Fallon physician Herman T. Bechtold, this building housed various businesses over the years including Dr. Bechtold's office. Its best known tenants, however, were the U.S. Post Office for which it was built, 1914-1938, and the O'Fallon Public Library, 1945-1962.

102 W State Street—The oldest still intact building in downtown O'Fallon was erected in 1863 by Levi Simmons to replace an earlier one destroyed by fire on this site. Originally a general store, over the years it has seen use as a saloon, hotel, post office, grocery, bus station, restaurant and more. John "Jack" Shinton opened O'Fallon's first theater on the second floor ca. 1877.

225 W First Street—This building is home to O'Fallon's oldest existing business, established in 1894 by Mathias Schwarz as Schwarz Furniture and Undertaking. A hearse and carriage barn was built in the rear in 1909, and a funeral chapel was located next door to the east. The funeral business was sold in 1946, but the furniture store continued to be operated by the Schwarz Family—a genuine O'Fallon institution.

2 S Lincoln Avenue—This building was erected in 1873 for early O'Fallon physician and pharmacist Bernhard Krause. It was best known as a corner drugstore, operating from 1873 to 1954 under names such as Krause, Mutschmann, Smiley, Nold and Bittles. O'Fallon's first telephone exchange, Smiley Bros. in 1901, and first commercial bank, First National Bank in 1903, were originally located here.

The plaques are expected to be installed in the near future on the exterior of the buildings so the public can view them and learn something about O'Fallon history in the progress. Hats off to Main Street for spearheading the project. Proceeds from the annual Balls helped fund the cost of the plaques.

Work is progressing rapidly on the O'Fallon Veterans' Monument at 737 E. Wesley Dr. Dedication is scheduled for Memorial Day, May 29, 2006. For more information, check out their website at www.ofallonveteransmonument.org

Bernie Fuchs News

Illustration Magazine has devoted its entire latest issue to O'Fallon native and famed illustrator Bernie Fuchs. The 80-page full color magazine features "The Art of Bernie Fuchs." The O'Fallon Historical Society provided a copy of what the magazine said is his first published work, the cover of the O'Fallon Centennial book from 1954. There are also many full color reproductions of his works and vintage photographs of him throughout his life. The issue (Vol. 4, Issue 15) can be purchased for \$9.00 postpaid from Illustration Magazine, 3640 Russell Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63110 or through their website, www.illustration-magazine.com.

Bernie and his wife, Anna Lee "Babe," visited the museum on October 21, 2005 when they were in town. We were very glad to have them drop in.

O'Fallon Historic Preservation Commission News

The Historic Preservation Commission is planning a public hearing at the museum/Main Street meeting room on Tues. March 7, 2006 at 7 pm for consideration of five proposed O'Fallon landmarks. (The Planning & Zoning conference room where they have been held in the past was considered too small.) The public, of course, is invited. The following buildings are being considered:

505 N Lincoln Ave—Marie Schaefer home (built in 1913)

207 W Second St—Art & Lucille (Funk) Schroeder home (built in 1887)

109 Betty Ln—Edward & Bernice Funk home (built in 1914)

106 E Monroe St—Cora Lee Porter home (built in 1923)

Amelia Carriel Fountain at 5th & Cherry (erected in 1927)

If approved by the Commission, these properties will then be considered by the Community Development Committee and then by the full City Council for final approval. Plaques would be presented to the property owners at the annual landmark plaque presentation in May. Wolfersberger Funeral Home, 102 W Washington St, was previously designated a landmark in December 2005 and would be included in the May presentation.

Coal Mining History

For those who would like copies Carl Weinberg's book, *Labor, Loyalty & Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners & World War I*, they can be purchased through local bookstores and Amazon.com. Published through Southern Illinois University Press, they cost \$28.50, but can be purchased for less through some booksellers. The O'Fallon Historical Society provided two photos for the book, including a group photo of miners at Taylor Mine which was used for the cover.

Would you be interested in receiving the newsletter and other Society news via email? If so, we'd like to hear from you. We are considering making the newsletter available as a pdf file and sending out periodic notices of Society events and news. If interested, please send an email to Brian Keller at brianjkeller@gmail.com.

News from Mascoutah

The Mascoutah Historical Society is host to a traveling Smithsonian Exhibition, *Key Ingredients: America by Food*, from February 25 through April 7, 2006. Included are wall displays and Power-Point presentations plus—

Exhibits

Old flour mills of Southern Illinois

Gray Graniteware

Family Farm—butchering and butter-making

Upper Level

Aprons—lots of aprons on display

Lower Level

Anvil Display—variety of sizes

Schedule of Events

Sat. Feb. 25 at 7 pm—opening with talk by Dr. Bruce Kraig, professor and culinary historian

Sun. Feb. 26 at 2 pm—"The Cycle of the Seasons" presented by Dan Hechenberger as French trader Michael Accault

Sat. Mar. 4, 11 am-1 pm—Renate Gray will make spaetzle and speak on Family Traditions

Tues. Mar. 7—Penelope Bingham talks on integration of immigrants as reflected in cookbooks

Sat. Mar. 11 at 10:30 am—Jan Tribbetts speaks on Horseradish, a St. Clair County Delicacy

Sun. Mar. 12 at 2 pm—Miriam Huelsmann gives a slide presentation about collection and processing of maple syrup: Here's How It Is Done in Clinton County

Sat. Mar. 18, 10:30 am-12 noon—Mary Lu Bretsch, storyteller, entertains children with tales concerning the major focus of the exhibit.

Sat. Mar. 25 at 7:30 am—Kaffee Klatsch for Men Only. Come for kaffee and kuchen and join others to reminisce about Mascoutah

Sun. Apr. 2 at 2 pm—Carol Jean Stumpf will remind everyone Spring is Herb Time with her talk on starting, growing and using herbs

Mon. Apr. 3 at 7 pm—Carol Schlitt talks on Flavors of Southern Illinois, discussing food of area early Native Americans and continuing to 1950's.

Sundays in March—Carmett "Corky" Helms discusses role of blacksmiths and their anvils in early distribution of foods

Admission and events are free. The Museum is located at 306 W Main St. in Mascoutah. Hours are Monday, closed; Tues., Wed., Thurs., Fri, 12 to 4 pm; Sat., 10 am to 4 pm, Sun. 12 to 4 pm.