

The Joiner Room Journal

Vol. 8 No. 3

The Joiner History Room
103 East State St. • Sycamore, IL 60178 • 815-895-7271
Hours: T, Th 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

September 2007



Joiner Room staff watch as Sheri Baker checks over an electronic preview of Arcadia's *Sycamore*.

It is finished . . .

Images of America— Sycamore

The pictorial history written by Phyllis Kelley and the Joiner History Room staff was completed and the final proofs were sent to Arcadia Publishing in June. The release date of the 128-page, soft cover book was set for October 1, 2007. Many previously unpublished and unusual photos are included. The book sells for \$19.99.

For people living in the Sycamore-DeKalb area, the book will be available in Sycamore shops and area bookstores. For people out of the area, it can be ordered from www.arcadia.com, www.amazon.com, or any Borders or Barnes and Noble bookstore.

A big THANK YOU to all who contributed photos and information and to those who spent hours researching and editing the final pages. A special thanks to Patsy Lundberg for all the hours spent editing and proof reading. You always make us look good.

We hope you enjoy reading about "our town."

As described by Arcadia Publishing: The attractions of Sycamore include its majestic 1904 county courthouse, domed Carnegie library, well-appointed Victorian homes and tree-lined streets, and flourishing central business located on a broad main street, first laid out in the mid-19th century. The penny parking meters are a nice touch too. This DeKalb County seat retains the charming appearance of a fictional Midwestern "small-town USA." Now known far and wide for its annual pumpkin festival in October, Sycamore has a rich historical past. In Sycamore, readers will discover people, businesses, organizations, and events that contributed to this community, becoming a place where the slogan "Life Offers More in Sycamore" was a natural.

News to Amuse

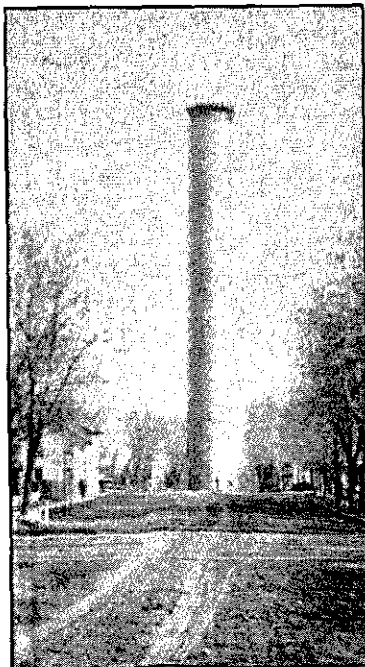
Gems from the O.T. Willard Scrapbook

O.T. remembered . . .

- The weather vane on the C&NW station in the form of a locomotive six feet in length.
- The old street lamps scattered about the city, and the activities of George Cooley, who—carrying a short ladder—filled and lighted them and kept them clear of moths and June bugs.
- The wooden Indian standing in front of Bollinger's barber shop.
- The old stand pipe at the intersection of State and Main, and the excitement caused by the report one day that a tramp's body had been found in the water supply reservoir. That was one day when the superintendent of water works aged perceptibly.
- The interest aroused in the neighborhood when Judge Kellum purchased a contraption

called a lawn mower, a cylindrical iron roller geared to the cutting apparatus in front that pushed as easily as a wheelbarrow load of bricks.

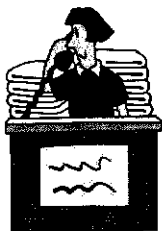
- The driving park (race track) south of town where the fine horses of Dr. Nesbitt, Jacob Haisch, Ferd Rettig and others competed in the trotting races. The grandstand faced the track towards the west with the judges' stand (which the starting and timing officials occupied) across the track. There were a score or more stables at the south end, and the face of trainer John Salter, one of Sycamore's most expert horsemen, was a familiar sight.



Note: The driving park was located on the south end of Sycamore just over the line into Cortland township. It appears on the 1892 plat map on land originally owned by David DeGraff. The DeGraff house still stands at 925 Somonauk Street. ♦

Joiner Room News

Recent visitors have come from the following states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Louisiana, Michigan, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin, and from the countries of Australia and Sweden.



What fun it is to meet so many fascinating people, to share our records and photos and to hear their family stories. There is never a dull day at the JHR!

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Sue Breese and husband Bob Myers have finished updating Fairview Cemetery tombstone inscriptions. For information, contact Sue at

[joinerhistoryroom@dekalbcounty.org](mailto:joinerhistoryroom@dekalbcounty.org)

or write to Joiner History Room, 103 E. State St., Sycamore, IL 60178.

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Our volunteers have been busy. Sue Breese and Bud Burgin are on the DeKalb County Historical-Genealogical Society committee revising the 2003 booklet *DeKalb County Historical Resources Guide*. Information is included on all of the museums and historical groups in the county. ♦



DeKalb County GenWeb

www.rootsweb.com/~ildekalb

The USGenWeb Project has celebrated its ten year anniversary. It was begun by a group of volunteers who realized that the Internet could change the way genealogy research is done. They became dedicated to providing free genealogy websites for research in every county and every state in the United States.

DeKalb County was fortunate to have had a dedicated volunteers coordinator, Jim Niewold, who established our website in 1999. He designed the look of the site and provided the structure. It is amazingly easy to negotiate and provides researchers access to a great deal of information about the area.

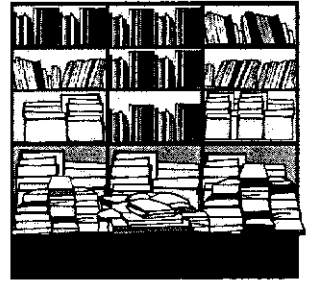
In 2006 Sheri Baker of Sycamore became the county GenWeb coordinator. Working with users, it is her plan to keep the site informative and current. She is always looking for information that can be shared with others who have a historical or genealogical connection to our county.

If you have information or suggestions to be included on the website you can e-mail her at DKGenWebSheri@aol.com.

Sheri also volunteers at the JHR and for the Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness website (www.raogk.com). ♦



Hidden in the Stacks



In the late 1970s the Community Education division of Kishwaukee College along with several local historical groups combined efforts to interview and tape over 30 oral histories. Among the interviewers were Tom Woodstrup, Vance Barrie, Ruth Pollock, Sam Riippi, and James Jarvis. Those tapes are now part of the JHR collection.

Thanks to Barry Schrader, the project has been revived and several DeKalb County residents have been interviewed in the past few months. They include Dr. John Ovitz, Bud Burgin, and Ralph Joiner. More are planned.

Thanks, Barry, for taking the time to record all of those wonderful stories and memories.

We Share

Files and photos we have recently been able to share include:

⇒ With a descendant of David West, our files on his life and his connection with the Underground Railroad. A copy of the photo of the

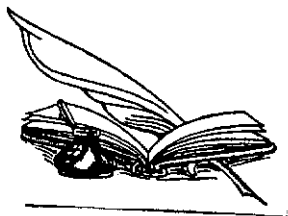
buggy used to transport runaway slaves was sent to a proud family in the state of Oregon who now know a whole lot more about their roots.

⇒ With Kirkland veterans, the list of names published in a local paper in 1992. It contained the names on the Kirkland Park monument.

⇒ With a visitor, images in old photographs she wanted to use for a lecture on photography. She found what she needed and more than she expected.

⇒ Kirkland history and photos from the Louise Witherell collection came just in time to add to the Kirkland "Then and Now" stage production written by Peggy Stuntz. the play was performed at the Hiawatha High School auditorium by local talent. Congratulations, Peggy! It was a fun show.

⇒ Obituary files furnished the Sycamore Historical Society for their annual cemetery walk in Elmwood Cemetery. ♦



Recollections

Ralph Joiner, County Clerk, 1954-1974

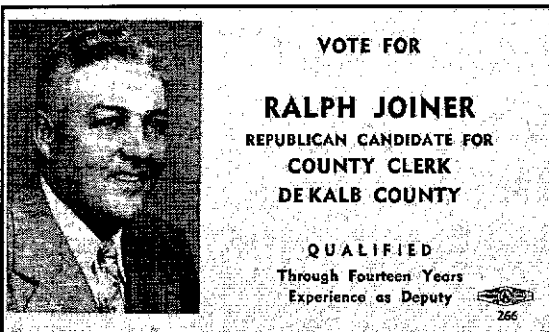
A Tribute to Ralph Joiner

by Phyllis Kelley

Many of you have called or written to tell us how much you enjoy Ralph Joiner's "Recollections." We are sorry to report that Ralph has been ill and didn't feel up to writing his usual column. Mr. Joiner has been a good friend and an inspiration to all of us who work at the history room, named in his honor over 18 years ago.

Ralph Joiner was born in Sycamore 93 years ago, the son of Earle W. and Gladys Joiner. Earle Joiner served as county clerk from 1926 to 1954, and Ralph was appointed to finish out the term when his father died.

The Joiner Room files contain the resolution adopted by the county on September 14, 1954, appointing Ralph to fill the vacancy caused by his father's death on September 8, to be effective until December 6, 1954, or "until a successor was duly elected and qualified." The vote count written in pencil on the back of the resolu-



tion gave the count at: Yes—25; No—none.

At the time, Earl Baie also read a resolution commemorating Mr. Earle Joiner's services as county clerk.

Ralph married his high school sweetheart, Bertha Cain, in 1935 and for many years she assisted him in the county clerk's office at the courthouse. It is thanks to the Joiners, who were great savers, that we have such a wonderful collection of yearly records in our county achieves.

Ralph, we miss you and hope you are better soon!

New Resources

- Civil War Regimental History of 95th Illinois Infantry from Peggy Stuntz
- Barshingers in America, a family genealogy
- Photo album, civil war papers, family letters from Louise Rowan Witherell—a Kirkland area treasure trove
- Collection of DeKalb County books and memorabilia from the daughter of the late Richard Wiltberger
- "Maplehurst the Life and Times of Leonard Carmichael" from Pat & Leonard Carmichael
- Genealogy of the Buhr, Joslyn and Clausen family from Carol Click
- A History of the Malta Methodist church 1856-1951 from Carol Woodin
- "Shoot only at the Red Airplane" by Bill Coons from Tom Cleveland
- A computer CD containing early births, deaths and marriage records of Winnebago County from Martin Johnson
- 3-volume set of family history records on Finley, McConaghil, Osborn & Linden families from Larry Linden
- CD titled "1632 Pleasant Street," a video documentary for NIU class project by D. Barton, E. Coleman-Cruz, W. Haun, L. Mussmann.

We Appreciate You!

§ Thank you for your support! §

Jenny Davis

Kathryn Hall

Judy Lasswell

Sandy and John Lyon

No. Illinois Antique Dealers Assoc.

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Thanks also to

Phyllis Franzene for a bag full of office supplies

Chip Pruzik for the "Cyclone" Johnny Thompson photos and the well-worn valise Johnny carried on his trips around the world in pursuit of his boxing title.

We sincerely thank you all!

The Joiner Room Journal is produced three times a year, in the months of January, May and September. Current editorial and production staff are Phyllis Kelley, Patsy Lundberg and Marcia Wilson. For information about making donations of photos, publications, etc. call 815-895-7271.