

Spring 2019



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It has been a long time since our last newsletter, because we had no news to provide. It has taken two years of frustrating construction problems to arrive at the completed museum building. It was built in the 1950s as the parsonage for the United Presbyterian Church at Belmont and Rt. 53, but not lived in for many years. Extra display cases that had been donated while we were closed needed to be added to the floor plan. We finally could begin to move from the storage units into the museum in December. This was a slow process with the boxes moved into the 2-car garage that is now our shed, then slowly moved again into the museum to be unpacked and organized. Since arranging all the furniture, we received several more large pieces. Irene Hassert's unique piano, a cross between a spinet and an upright, was donated by her daughter, facilitated by Debbie Hassert. Ken Hermansen's gas stove from the 1950s was in a house bought by Sally Guilbo's son, who had a newer stove. They decided to donate Ken's to the museum. Ken was the principal of the original grade 1-8 Valley View School in the 1950s and later a Social Studies teacher at Romeoville High.

Another new addition to the museum is a permanent American Legion display area, not yet completed, that will enhance our exhibit of uniforms and other military items.

I wish to thank all who helped pack and move the museum into two large storage units and then to the new location. Special thanks to Bruce Leinen, Art Arellano, Joe Wojcik, and Tom Rednour for moving most of the boxes. Many members helped pack and unpack. Romeoville Public Works moved the furniture out of the old building and into the new one for us.

While between buildings, Bruce and I worked on our computer in the corner of a staff room in the library. I used the time to create an index to the 3x5" card file of obituaries that fills 5 boxes. The cards are filed by name, but allowed no access to maiden names or previous marriages. The index, searchable by key word, allows us to find all the children of a family regardless of the name at time of death. We also recorded any references to military service, and notes about local connections such as work at Valley View schools or for the Village. Obituaries in the personal notebook of an early member and those too large for file cards are included in the index with a note about location. Current obituaries are added to the index and filed. A second set of boxes contains a history of Romeoville dating back hundreds of years, compiled by James Sczepaniak. It was useful if we knew the approximate date of an event. Now this is also on a spread sheet, updated to include our recent history, and accessible by key word. These databases are available for visitors to check.

**Our Grand Opening will be June 8 from 3-6 PM.** I hope that those of you living near Romeoville will be among the visitors then or at some other time in the near future. Extensive

displays of Technology and Toys, Games and Dolls can be seen until the end of July. The toy exhibit began as "What did children do before television?" but has expanded into some recent toys. Some items in both displays are on loan from local members. A copy of the bookmark we have distributed, with our schedule and the upcoming displays, is included.

I am happy to announce that we have been open to visitors since April 16 while we all get acquainted with the new locations of our artifacts and comfortable with providing tours for those who wish them. Two high school classes have already enjoyed tours, and those who came during our visiting hours were also pleased with the displays.

In the front yard is the beginning of our Memorial Garden. The surrounding wall can be moved to accommodate growth. The copy of the Alexander family stone presented to the Society in the 1980s also stands in the yard instead of in a corner of the room.

Girls can see a small ironing board and iron that warms up, doll house, tea set, and Pyrex oven dishes that can be used in Mommy's oven when filled with extra bits of the day's baking.

Stone blocks, Lincoln Logs, Tinkertoys, American Bricks, parts of an Erector Set, show the practical use of many toys in the mid-1900s. Boys learned to plan and build elaborate edifices. A chemistry set further shows the educational function of toys boys considered as only fun.

Outdoor items include marbles, both roller and ice skates that fastened directly the soles of shoes, a sled, scooter and even hula hoops that became popular in the 1950s.

In addition to the old wind-up Victrola that has been in the collection, there is a more recent record player that handles 78, 33 1/3, and 45 rpm records, audio tapes and the short-lived 8-track tapes. We have examples of an early Edison record that is a cylinder with the well-known grooves circling it and a music roll for a player piano. Although there is no stereopticon, we do have several of the picture cards for one displayed beside an early Viewmaster with its picture wheels.

The bassinet, used by three generations of the Breitwieser family of Bolingbrook, was donated by Shirley Breitwieser Nona.

# ROMEOVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Opening April 16

Grand Opening June 8 3-6

Museum hours are:

Tuesdays 6-8 PM

Wednesdays 1-4 PM

3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays 1-4 PM

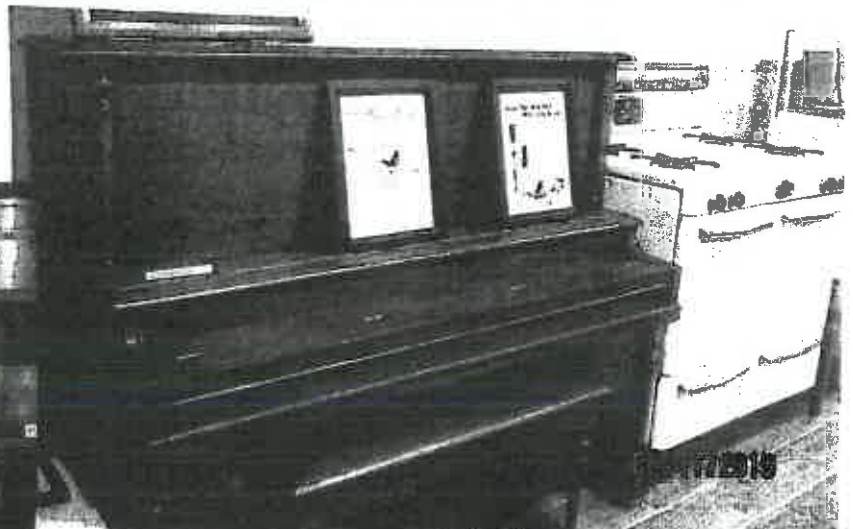
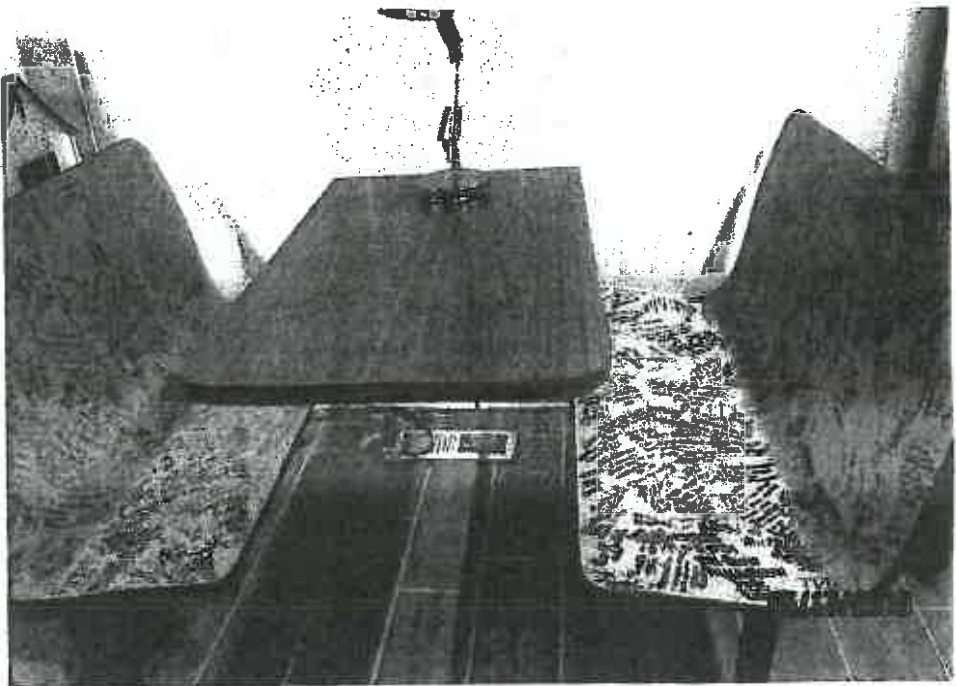
Or by appointment

## Special Exhibits: 2019

Apr-July Technology  
Toys and Games

Aug-Sept Schools

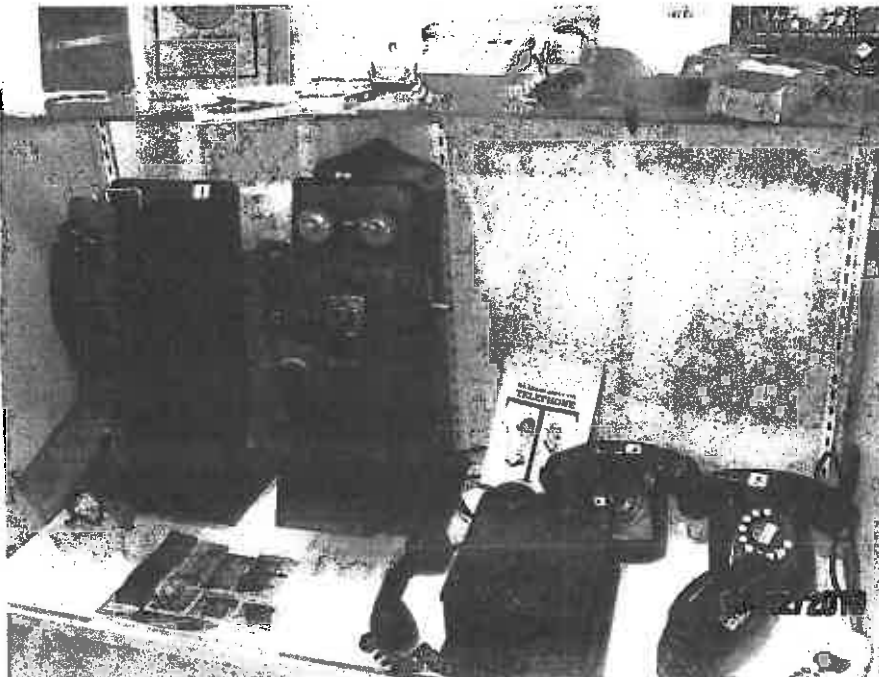
Oct-Nov Early Romeoville



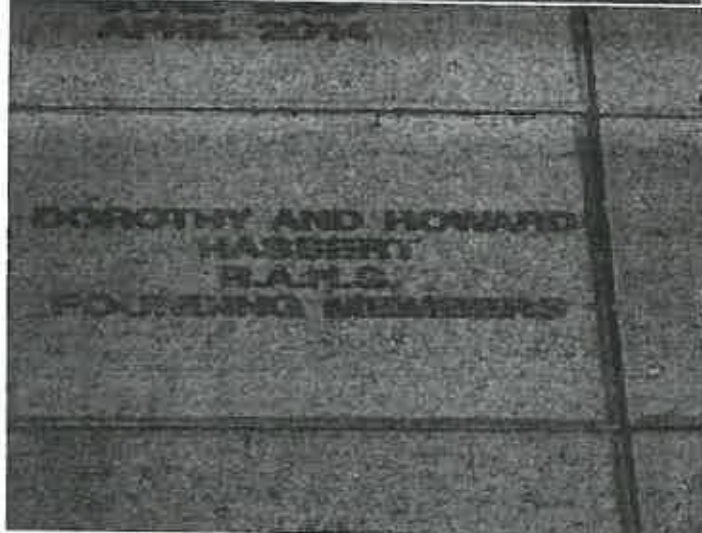
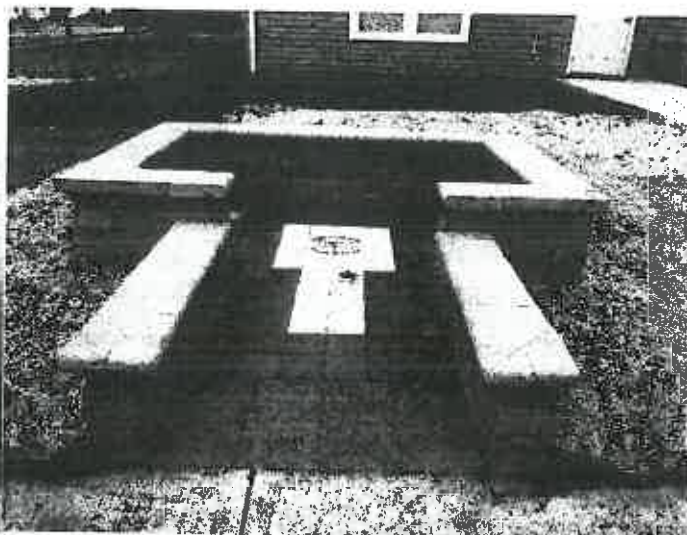
The doll display starts with early china and bisque-headed dolls to Barbie and Ken. Of course, Raggedy Ann and Andy and Curious George are there. Cloth dolls for toddlers and stuffed animals have their places also. On the bottom shelf is a wicker doll carriage from the early 1900s. Near it is a replica cast iron doll stove complete with a coal bucket and pots.

Telephones range from the old ones with separate mouth and ear pieces, through other operator assisted versions to dial and push button styles. A cell phone brings the exhibit up to date.

Included in Technology are items that have been part of the museum through our various moves: the wash tub with clothes stomper, rug beater, horn from the 135<sup>th</sup> street bridge, first telephone switchboard from Village Hall, various fans, and the ornate cash register and bird seed scale from the Lockport DuPage Grain Elevator. An old flat iron that had to be heated on the stove and a gas iron highlight the row of irons.







top left is our brick logo for our commemorative brick garden

top right is our commemorative brick garden

left middle is an 8" by 8" engraved brick for the garden

right middle is the James P Szczepaniak Museum

bottom left is our sign for the James P. Szczepaniak museum

bottom right is a partial interior view of the museum



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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please use this form to become a member of the Romeoville Area Historical Society. We are in our new museum located at 14 Belmont Avenue, Romeoville, Illinois. It is named after the late James Sczepaniak, a long time faculty member of Valley View School, Lockport West High School, and Romeoville High School. He was also a member and contributor to the Romeoville Area Historical Society.

The present cost of membership is \$15.00 for one year or \$25.00 for two years which includes free access to the museum and four quarterly newsletters. Please mail your check and membership form to Romeoville Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 7814, Romeoville, IL 60446.

**Please print.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

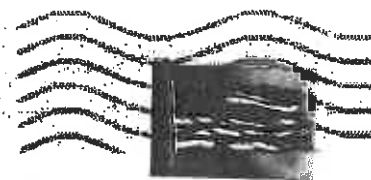
CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIPCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

DUES ENCLOSED: [ ☐ ] 1 year \$15 or [ ☐ ] 2 years \$25. DONATION (OPTIONAL) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

CAROL STREAM IL 601

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FOREVER / USA

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