

The

NOW 'n' THEN

Preserving the ♥ of Romeoville

The official newsletter of the
Romeoville Area Historical Society

WINTER ISSUE 2015

The Society has been very busy since the last newsletter!

We held an Open House at the museum on January 2-3. About 45 people enjoyed the slide shows, refreshments and tour of the exhibits.

Also in January, we had our usual exhibit at the Rec Center's Open House. This year, they asked the agencies participating to prepare an activity that could be done to earn points in a contest they planned. Our activity was a Romeoville history quiz, with three levels to choose from. Children received the easiest quiz; recent arrivals tried to answer the medium level; long-time residents had the hardest one. Their points were based on the number of questions they answered correctly. Several people from the Hampton Park era contested the answers to questions that they found ambiguous. For example: 'How many colleges are in Romeoville?' They said 2, not three, as Lewis is now a university. However, if you use that description, there are about 8 colleges within the university, raising the total to 10.

You will see in the obituaries that we lost another of our founding members. Len Frost and his wife Gerri were among the first families to move into Hampton Park. They lived next door to Clarence and Joyce Kinder for about 60 years. Len was one of the early presidents of the Society and active in many of our events.

Jim Sczepaniak will also be missed. He was a history teacher at Lockport West and Romeoville High. He sent us many clippings with notes of the person's connection to Valley View, if it wasn't mentioned in the article. We were astonished to learn that the Society received a generous bequest from him.

The Historical Society is 35 years old this month. This issue includes some highlights in our history. We have been in our current location for five years.

Joe Miraglia provided the pictures of the Y Indian Guides, the band and mascot uniforms, and the opening of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library Romeoville Building.

A reminder from the Treasurer: Check the expiration date on your mailing label to see if you need to pay dues.

HAPPY MARCH BIRTHDAY!

3/3 Alexander, Ben
3/3 Eichorst Annette
3/5 Braasch, Robert
3/10 Miraglia, Joe
3/10 Ward, Bill
3/15 Sisto, Tom
3/20 Sczepaniak, Fran
3/24 Eipers, Rose
3/16 Belinski, Gigi
3/25 Eichorst, Kyle
3/25 Hassert, Paula
3/26 Alexander, Kay
3/27 Laibl, Brian
3/27 Lynch, Lisa
3/30 Lamb, John



HAPPY MARCH ANNIVERSARY!

3/19 Stucko, Elizabeth
3/25 Bingle, Jim/Marge
3/26 Alexander, Jack/Sally

HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAY!

4/3 Maskeri, Charles
4/6 Cordero, Ann
4/13 Irene Schindel
4/18 Lach, Carrie
4/20 Martinez, Catherine
4/28 Smith, Charles
4/30 Sanfilippo, Robert
4/30 Weck, Mitzi

HAPPY APRIL ANNIVERSARY!

4/1 Drdak, Bob/Millie
4/4 Lindstrom, Harold/Barbara
4/29 Miraglia, Joe

HAPPY MAY BIRTHDAY!

5/2 Scamardi, Joe
5/3 Dolores Wolfram
5/10 Clancy, Linda
5/10 Claudia Greenberg
5/13 Carol Stadelmaier
5/13 Velimer, Lois
5/18 Marge Bingle
5/19 Judy Bredeweg
5/25 Candy Hrpcha
5/26 Jean Durrer
5/27 Heeg, Howard
5/27 Drdak, Bob
5/28 Shirley Nona
5/28 Zdancewicz, Linda

HAPPY MAY ANNIVERSARY!

5/7 Zdancewicz, Sonny/Linda
5/9 Albert and Carol Stadelmaier
5/14 Bruce and Mary Ann Trent
5/17 Bouley, Cathy
5/23 Breyne, Ron/Peg

CALENDAR

2/25 Membership meeting
3/11 Fundraiser at Windy City Grill
→ 5/20 Membership meeting
5/25 Memorial Day program

FEBRUARY MEETING

The membership meeting will be at the Society's location, 10 Montrose Drive, from 2-4 PM. We will celebrate our 35th anniversary, with highlights from our history. Refreshments will be served.

Romeo Historical Society to get old school records

by Valerie Vondrak

On Feb. 22, the Romeoville Historical Society will be celebrating its fourth birthday. What better time for it to receive a gift from the Valley View School District?

The School District is considering loaning the Historical Society, on a permanent basis, a large fund of historical records which district personnel rediscovered during the rearranging of offices at the Valley View Administration Center three months ago. The records, all dealing with the DuPage Township No. 37, were found in a filing cabinet, where they had been put for safekeeping and then forgotten.

Dating back to 1845, the records contain township treasurer's accounts, daily school registers, and minutes of school meetings and financial transactions.

The District also has in its possession an old trunk containing school records, dat-

ing from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s, which were donated to the District by Romeoville resident Alice Spangler. Mrs. Spangler, who is 81, served as treasurer for many of the one-room school districts in the area. The trunk also will go to the Historical Society.

Joyce Kinder, president of the Romeoville Historical Society, says that the Society is looking forward to receiving these records.

"We are presently in the process of formulating and gathering information on the district," Mrs. Kinder said. "We have formed a committee, with Dorothy Hassert as its chairman, to work on this project. Eventually, we would like to have a display which would include information on the 11 one-room schools that were once in the area.

The School District's records give the names of students who attended these schools, the amounts of money paid for cleaning the school room and for supplies, such as coal for heating. According to the records, one teacher in 1901 taught an average of eight students a day for a wage of \$30 per month.

District Supt. Harry Hayes, in an information report to the Valley View School Board, stated that the records also show that township school treasurers in the 1800s loaned out excess school funds to individuals. The loans, ranging from \$10 to \$300, ran from six months to five years. Interest rates on the loans went as high as 12%.

In addition to compiling information on the school district, the Romeoville Historical Society also is collecting information on the old Village of Romeoville. Members hope to display this information at the Isle a la Cache Museum, which is operated by the Will County Forest Preserve.

"Most of what we have is mainly personal family pictures of people who lived here," Mrs. Kinder said. "We also have pictures of old buildings, including a hotel that was here in the early 1900s. We also recently discovered information on the man who built the first church on the island."

Mrs. Kinder said that the space at the museum would only be borrowed space. Some day, the Historical Society hopes to have a building of its own, she said, but right now, there are no prospects of such a thing happening.

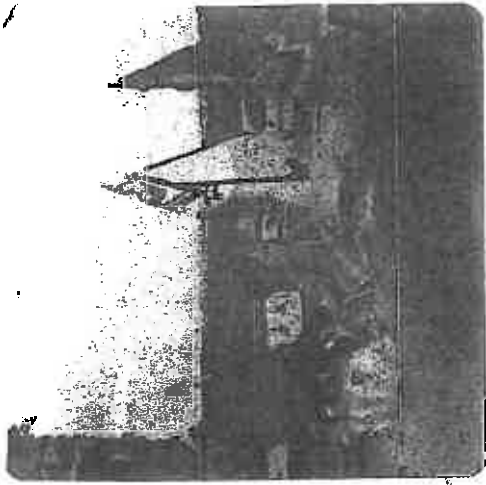
Started in 1980 by Mrs. Kinder and her next-door neighbor, Mark Frost, the Society has grown to have a membership of 75 people. Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at the Fountaindale Library in Romeoville.

"The Society is open to anyone interested in helping preserve the history of Romeoville," Mrs. Kinder said. "We are trying in every way we can not to lose what is slipping through our fingers — our heritage. If you let things slide by you, there will come a day when you look back and say, 'if only we had saved that.'"

*Down on the canal,
the barges and industry
that came with the
waterway, which also gave
birth to Romeoville.
That's the heart of
"old Romeo." But in town,
there's one last piece
of history from
"old Romeo" left, and
the Historical Society
is fighting to preserve it.
On pages 3 and 18,
the latest in the effort
to give the Phelps-Spangler
homestead historic
landmark status, and the
heartfelt appeals of
concerned Society members
and citizens to save
the past for the future.*

Beacon/Sun Feb. 22, 1984

Met Jan. 29, 2987



Y Indian Guides visit the Isle a la Cache Museum



4

Historical group forming

The Romeoville Historical Society took its first step toward formation Thursday night with its first meeting.

The meeting designed to drum up interest and membership brought more than the ten persons needed to start the society. The society was officially declared at the meeting and a committee was formed to draw up its bylaws so it could petition the state for a charter.

Presiding over the meeting were Mark Frost, Joyce Kinder and Carol Stadlmaier and Barb Cline who will draw up the bylaws. Frost is a junior at Joliet Catholic High School who said his interest in a

historical society was spurred by the Lockport Bicentennial celebration when he realized Romeoville should have a sense of history too.

"I just wanted to find out about Romeoville and the people of the town," said Frost. "Basically, I'd like to preserve what was old Romeoville and preserve the farm heritage that came before it."

Joyce Kinder said she'd like to provide her children with a sense of history.

"50 years from now Romeoville is going to be my children's history," said Kinder. Kinder noted that her family was one of the first to move into Hampton Park in 1958.

The society is presently at its most primal stage, said Kinder and now must be recognized by the Illinois State Historical Society. Soon, Kinder added, the society would like to establish historical markers to preserve buildings and sites and eventually would like to use an old farm house for a museum.

"All of what we know so far is hearsay," said Kinder. Some of that hearsay includes a house located on Illinois 53 one-quarter mile south of Lewis University that was supposedly a stop along the 19th century "underground railroad" used by slaves escaping from the south.

Romeo Beach is



Joyce Kinder

another potential historical site for sports fans since Chicago White Sox players were allowed to use the beach by themselves for a day.

Barb Cline is currently a member of the Will County Historical Society. Carolyn Stadlmaier, the wife of Albert Stadlmaier, historic chief of the Romeoville Fire Department, was a member of the 1976 Will County Bicentennial Committee.

By Don Grigas

dgrigas@libertysuburban.com

If one looks carefully at the inside left panel of the wooden closet on display in the basement of the Romeoville branch of the Fountaindale Public Library, one will notice a hand-written list done in neat, cursive pencil writing.

The list details the clothing that was stored in the closet just before Howard Hassert went off to serve in the military in the 1940s.

"He wrote the list as an inventory of all the clothing he had in the closet so his brothers wouldn't take them while he was away at war during World War II," said Nancy Hackett, president of the Fountaindale Historical Society.

The closet, filled with World War II vintage clothing, is one of several artifacts on display in three rooms in the lower level of the facility dedicated to the historical society.

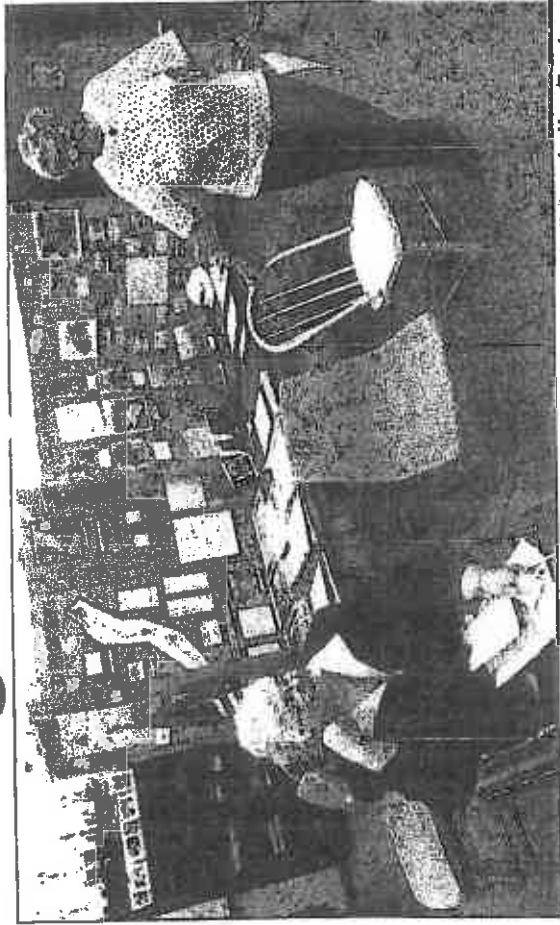
Over the years several Romeoville area residents, many of them with family names tied to original settlers in the DuPage and Lockport Township areas, have come together to form the society, which began as the Romeoville Historical Society in 1983.

Three years ago the society became the Fountaindale Historical Society, and is dedicated to preserving the heritage of an area that began as farmland and is now one of the fastest growing residential areas in the state.

On Sunday, the society conducted tours of the collection as part of National Library Week.

"It's important to preserve our heritage, so young people can understand the origins of our community," said Dorothy Hassert, society member who authored "From One-Room Schools to District 365-U," a history of the evolution of local schools.

Hassert, a Romeoville native who now lives in Lemont, has been documenting local history for decades, and the display



photos:chicago suburb news.com/258893

Staff photo by Kate Dougherty
Dorothy Hassert (left) and Mabel Hrpcha of the Romeoville Historical Society tell a visitor April 21 about the village's history to a backdrop of photos and memorabilia dating back to the 1800s. The Historical Museum is located in the basement of the Romeoville Branch of the Fountaindale Public Library and featured tours as part of National Library Week.

rooms are now jammed with artifacts of period clothing, American Indian artifacts, maps, ledger books and utensils used by early settlers.

"When the area was first settled in the 1830s, it was once nothing but farmland here," said Hassert, whose family was among the first settlers of land along what is now Joliet Road and Route 53.

"Over the years I made sure whenever one of our farming neighbors sold their property and were having a sale, I would go there and get many of the items that are in here now," Hassert said.

Among the collection is platted maps of the area dating back to the mid-1800s, school records, clothing, kitchen utensils, farm implements and a replica of a farm.

"I really liked the platted maps that show the owners of farms back into the 1800s," said Janice Magee, a Bolingbrook resident who toured the museum Sunday.

Magee, who conducts family genealogy research, said the maps have helped her

series of one-room school houses in a 19-school unit district educating more than 17,000 students.

A book written by Hassert and Candace Hrpcha details the development of rural schools to modern day facilities.

The district's first school — Old Hickory — was located on Royce Road near where the First Presbyterian Church of DuPage was built around 1840.

Records show students often attended school from November — after harvest — until mid-March — when farm land was tilled.

In fiscal year 1862-1863, the book reports, \$92.66 was spent on "all school purposes," including \$671.16 for teacher salaries.

The museum gives insight into the growth of Romeoville from the 1800s when the center of town — "Old Romeoville" — was located east of Route 53 on 135th Street near the Des Plaines River.

The spot became a local tourist attraction, and many Chicago-area residents traveled there to bathe at Romeo Beach, and picnic on the grounds once occupied by Potawatamie Indians.

Photographs and old newspaper clippings detail the growth of the area, which began to flourish when the Illinois & Michigan Canal was built in the 1830s and 1840s. The canal opened in 1848, about 50 years before the Sanitary Ship Canal opened, paving the way for rapid industrial development along both waterways.

In the early 1900s the canal became a site for oil refineries, which continue to operate today.

Old Romeoville was established along the Des Plaines River east of Route 53 near Isle A La Cache, which was once a meeting place for French fur traders in the 1700s.

The island now houses the Isle A La Cache Museum, operated by the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

The museum is open every Monday morning from 9 a.m. to noon, and tours are available by appointment.

Reporter Apr. 27, 2007

Romeoville Y Indian Guides soap box derby and float in a Founders' Day Parade

the BEACON May 13, 1981

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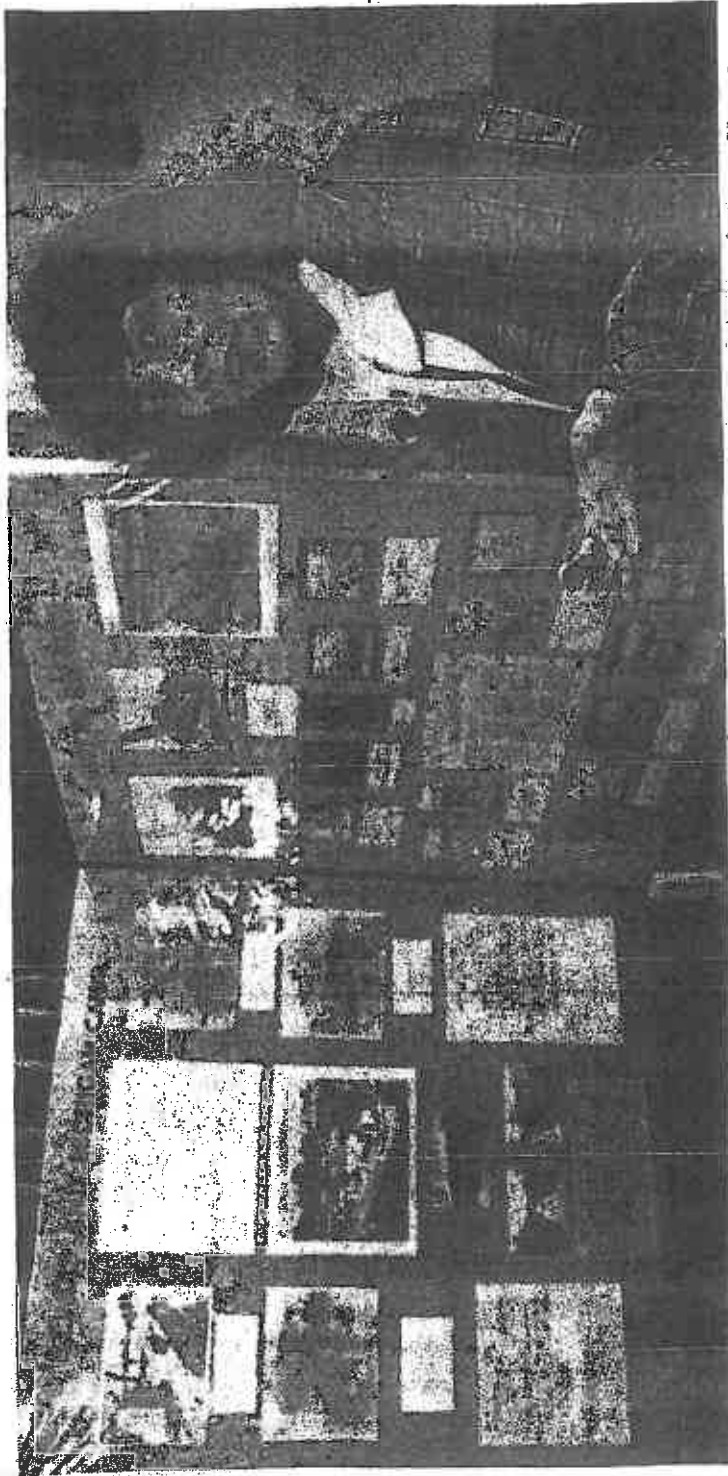
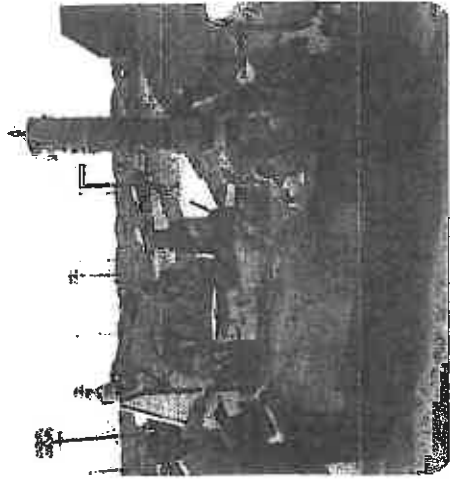
Historical Society honored on 'Romeoville Sunday'

This Sunday has been proclaimed Romeoville Sunday at the Romeoville Historical Society Portable Museum, currently on exhibit until the end of June at the Lemont Area Historical Society's Old Stone Church Museum.

A special presentation will be given at 2 p.m. on Sunday when members of the Romeoville Historical Society will conduct a program describing early life in Romeoville.

The portable museum, consisting of several folding placards with pictures and details depicting the historical roots of the Romeoville area, is on display from 1 to 3 p.m. every Sunday in May and June.

The Old Stone Church is located in Lemont on Lemont Street, one-half block south of Illinois St.



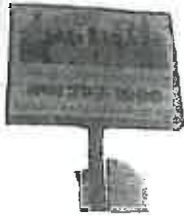
P. J. Fitzgerald, Director of the Romeoville Historical Society, explains in detail the history of the village. The Romeoville Society's portable museum is on display in

Lemont until the end of June at the Old Stone Church on Lemont Street.

(Photo by Mike Voss)

Please Help Us
Romeoville Area
Historical Society
Fundraiser

@



Windy City Grill
300 N. Independence Blvd.

Wednesday, March 11

11:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M.

Dine in or Carry out
and delivery too!!!

10% of your food order
will help the
Romeoville Area
Historical Society
Grow!!!

... eventually to the
completion of the Hampton Park subdivi-
sion in 1958.

Frost and Dorothy Hassert, the historical society's secretary, recently gave the Herald-News a preview of the museum.

Upon entering, one is greeted by a room cluttered with boxes of old records, ancient photographs, clothing, plaques, trophies and a variety of knick-knacks, odds and ends and other treasures. Frost said the historical society is still organizing many of these items for display.

An adjoining room houses the museum's display area. Here one will find items such as a large iron, mechanical device used by farmers to split potatoes which were then planted in the earth and fossils that Frost said were found in the area and have been estimated to be 60 million years old.

As they walked through the museum, Frost and Hassert collaborated on their own account of the historical society's history. The organization was formed in 1980 by Frost's son Mark, currently the assistant to the village manager.

In 1980, Mark and Romeoville resident Joyce Kinder began researching the historical societies in the surrounding area. They also began inquiring within the village to see who

This incomplete article was written soon after the Society moved into their first museum in the lower level of the Fountaindale Public Library in Romeoville. *Joliet Herald News* Apr. 5, 1989



Photo by Chuck Pelkie
Dorothy Hassert, historical society secretary, and Len Frost, president, hold some of the items on display at the organization's museum. Hassert is holding a picture of the late Thomas Williams, a long-time Romeoville resident, and his sister, Alice Williams Boucher. The picture was donated by Williams' wife, Hazel. Frost is holding an election handbill for the Republican Party when Abraham Lincoln was running for president.

might be interested in forming such an organization for Romeoville. The historical society began with 30 members. Today, Hassert estimates that about 200 people in the area are involved.

During the past eight years, the group has collected an assortment of items, ranging from old pairs of shoes to a manual, push carpet sweeper. Sometimes village residents offer the artifacts to the society. Other times, some detective work must be done, Frost said.

One never can tell where one might find an authentic piece of village history, Hassert added. She told the story of how teachers in the old, one-room school houses used to get paid by the town treasurer. A member of the school board would write a note indicating to the treasurer how much the teacher should be paid.

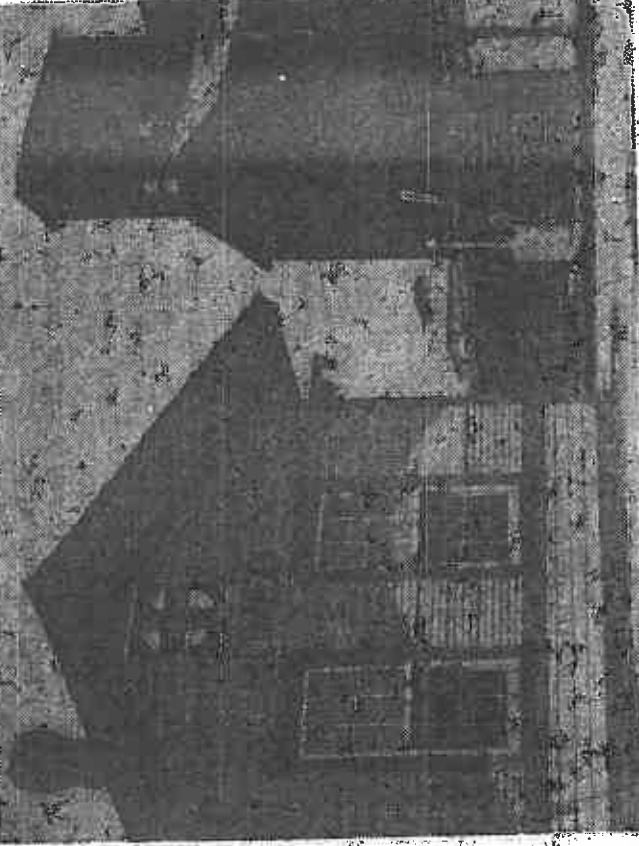
When one of those notes was discovered, it was considered a treasure in itself. However when the note was turned over, the historical society found it was an election handbill for the Republican Party — when Abraham Lincoln was running for president.

One of the historical society's main projects these days is the preservation of the old Spangler-Phelps Homestead on Route 53 and Normantown Road. Frost and Hassert recently appeared before the village board to seek help in possibly purchasing the homestead. The board is looking into what can be done to preserve the 100-year-old building.

The museum will be open from 1 to 4 p.m. on April 16. After the open house, Frost said the historical society will decide on what days the museum will open its doors regularly.

Dorothy Cryder

Person-to-person



It's a different kind of reunion. Most of the people aren't even related. But they share a common bond -- love of "Old Romeo" where they all grew up.

You've heard, I'm sure, the story of Romeo and Juliet?

The young community of Romeo was begun along the Des Plaines River in the mid-19th century as a twin to "Juliet" 10 miles to the south.

With its numerous limestone quarries, the tiny village acquired the designation of the "Stones City" even before its neighbor, which was rechristened Joliet, had moved ahead in other areas of industry.

Although Romeo was changed to Romeoville when it became incorporated on Jan. 21, 1886, the name never has changed in the hearts of the old-timers, and many spots within the village still bear that name.

"For years we kept saying we should have a reunion of the residents who used to live in the old section, and four years ago I got around Mrs. Herman

Eleven members of the original softball team were present at the fourth annual "Old Romeo Reunion" a few weeks ago, and one member, Marie (Pierce) Carter came in her old uniform.

"We were all jealous," laughed Mrs. Hakey. I'm sure she is the only one that still can get into hers."

Mrs. Hakey said she

youngsters enrolled in the school. Now there are many subdivisions and the population stands at well over 17,000.

Besides Mrs. Hakey, there were two other daughters in the Anchor Starts family. One, Mrs. Robert Drdak, Millie, still lives on Belmont Avenue in Romeoville, and the other, Marge Allison lives in Chicago.

Mrs. Hakey resides on Weber Road in Lockport Township.

Romeo was a very sports-minded town and the three Starts girls were members of the "Romeo Aces" girls' softball team. Marge and Gladys went on to play professional softball in Chicago.

A whistle stop on the Santa Fe -- that was Old Romeo. Residents of the old section of Romeoville gather annually for a reunion.

Each family brings old picture albums and, "we know what he is hiding with sore throats from all the talk we do," Mrs. Drdak organized for children said.

She remembers the population was only 125 when they were girls growing up in the old Romeo."

'Old Romeo' lives in residents' hearts

Joliet Herald News Aug. 15, 1976

...ants on the telephone
... who had moved away.

She was assisted by
Mabel (Fracaro) Hrpchus,
who is one of eight child-
ren of another old-time
Romeo family.

"We weren't very well
organized at that first
picnic, but we still had
over 200 attend from all
over Illinois and border-
ing states," Mrs. Hakey
said.

Like a steamroller,
plans have accelerated a
little more each year for
the reunion.

Now five of the men
arise at the crack of
dawn and go out to Mes-
senger Woods to start
the barbeque. This year
a 100-pound pig and a
40-pound lamb turned on
the spit. Each family
brings its own special
dishes to pass and there
is food in abundance.

Each family also
brings a brightly
wrapped package to do-
nate to the white ele-
phant sale so there will
be funds for the meat,
postage and game prizes.

"We have more fun
auctioning off the white
cows than we do any other
annual event."

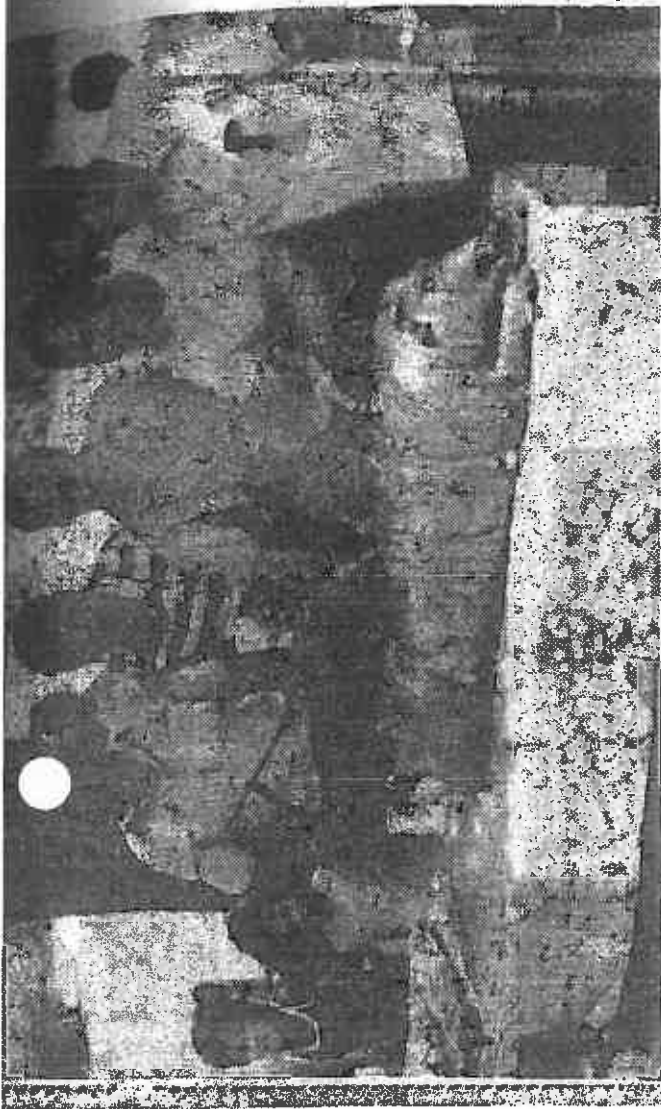
The first Startz set-
tlers came to Romeo in
1898 and lived in a build-
ing that stood between
the two bridges on Ro-
meo Island, which is be-
tween the division of the
Des Plaines River. Quite
a few homes were con-
structed there for the ce-
ntral workers, officers and
personnel.

Anthony Startz, father
of Mrs. Hakey, ran Ro-
meo Tavern and was
Justice of the Peace until
his death.

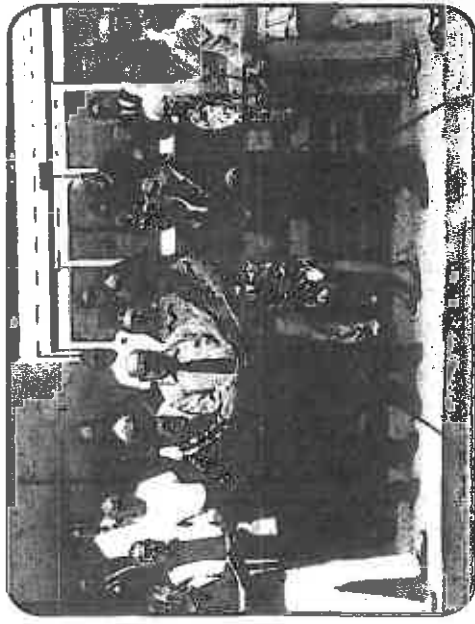
"The tavern has a new
name and different own-
ership, but it always will
be called 'Romeo Tav-
ern' by the old-timers,"
Mrs. Hakey said.

Romeoville remained a
sleepy farming town with
a cluster of homes near
New Avenue until the
development of the
Hampton Park subdivi-
sion by Alexander Con-
struction Co.

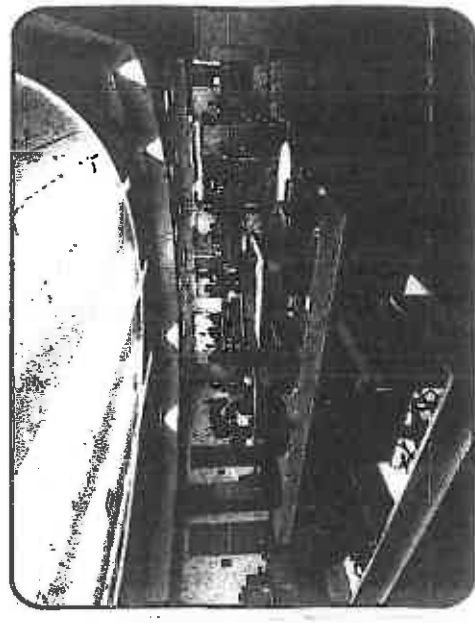
In 1959, when the first
families moved out to
the subdivision from Chi-
cago, there were only 200



The barbequing committee, from left, Herman Hakey, Ed Pavlok, Ed Pyslewski and Emil Fracaro arise at daybreak to get a pig and lamb ready for the reunion picnic.



Interior view of the library



Ribbon Cutting at the remodeled Des Plaines Public Library in Romeoville on June 29, 2012. Cutting the ribbon are Jerry Capps, President of the Friends of the Library; Library Director Scott Pointon; Library Trustee Adam Sulivich; and Board President Ann Lopez-Caneva. On the right is Mayor John Noak. Others present were Friends of the Library, and Village department heads in the back row.



Grand Marshall's float in the Sept. 21, 2008 Founders' Day Parade
 From left to right are Society officers: Nancy Hackett, Kelby Briddick, Mabel Hrpcha, Shirlee Pergler, Dorothy Hassert.

To Whom It May Concern:

I never knew there was a news letter about Romeoville.

My friend Sue Hayes (Rock Lake) told me about it. I read some of your news letters.

I really enjoyed them.

Brought back a lot of happy memories.

My husband (Harry) was a charter member of the S. A. C 's. He was also a president of the S. A. C. That was the good old days. I loved Hampton Pk. It was a great place to raise children.

Thanks for the letters. I've learned a lot about Romeo. Great Place.

Letter by Virginia Oldham

LEONARD J. FROST



Leonard J. Frost, age 87, peacefully went to his Lord on Thursday, December 4, 2014, at Presence Saint Joseph

Medical Center in Joliet. A 56 year resident of Romeoville, formerly of Chicago.

Leonard is survived by his loving wife, Geraldine Frost, with whom he shared 67 years filled with cherished memories; children, John "Jack" (Kathryn), Steven (Colleen), Jacalyn, and Mark (David Luecht) Frost; grandchildren, Anne, Michael, Wendy, Charles, Lorelei, Amanda, Genevieve, Kelly Lynn, Christopher, Stefanie, Michelle, Matthew, Melissa, Michael, Brian, Ronnie, Danny, Kelli Marie, Lauren and Morgan; 43 great grandchildren; brother-in-law, George (the late Elaine Mager); and numerous nieces and nephews.

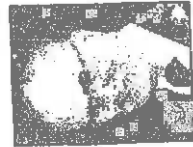
Also, he is preceded in death by his parents, Felix and Johanna Frost; siblings, Delores Frost, Francis (Jacqueline) Frost and Lorraine (Elmer) Sager.

A WWII Veteran serving US Navy 1945 to 1946, Leonard was a Mechanical Design Engineer for Argonne National Laboratory. He retired in 1995 with 28 years of service. A member of the Good Shepherd Plainfield Council 5573 and a 4th degree member of the Joliet Assembly 204; Past Exalted Ruler B.P.O.E. Joliet Lodge 296; Joliet Moose Lodge 300; and a charter, lifetime member and Past President (1985-1990) of the Romeoville Historical Society. A Democratic election judge for 40 years. He also coached basketball for St. Andrew School from 1973 to 1977.

Visitation Monday, 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Anderson Memorial Home, 21131 W. Renwick Rd., Crest Hill, IL 60403. Funeral Tuesday, December 9, 2014, 10:45 a.m. from the funeral home chapel to St. Andrew Catholic Church in Romeoville for an 11:30 a.m. Mass. Military Honors to follow at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood. www.AndersonMemorialHomes.com (815) 577-5250

JAMES P. SCZEPANIAK

Born: Dec. 1, 1935
Died: Nov. 9, 2014



James Paul Sczepaniak, age 78, passed away peacefully Sunday, November 9, 2014, at Presence Saint Joseph Medical Center following complications from prostate cancer.



Born December 1, 1935, in Joliet to the late Stanley and Rose (nee Petan), he was a lifetime resident. James

graduated from St. Joseph Catholic Grade School, Joliet Township High School Class of 1953 and Joliet Junior College. Jim received a bachelor's degree from Lewis University and a master's degree from Northern Illinois University. He retired after 33 years teaching social studies at Lockport Township High School Dist. #205 and Valley View School Dist. #365-U (Romeoville High School).

Jim served in the U.S. Army. He took great pride in his civic involvement and proudly served on the Joliet Public Library Board of Trustees for more than 30 years, most recently as President of the Board. Active member of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Joliet, the Holy Name Society of St. Joseph Church,

the St. Joseph Church Seniors, Oakwood Estates Homeowners Association, and the Illinois Retired Teachers Association.

Beloved husband of 5 years to Frances H. Naal Sczepaniak (nee Tures); loving brother of Lois M. Geary; brother-in-law of James (Joann) Gordon of Springfield, VA; dear uncle of Kim Ann (Wayne) Meirhofer and Steven P. (Shirley Boatman) Geary. Survived by Fran's children, Meg (Dale) Underwood Jr., John (Mick) Naal and Colette Naal. Many dear nieces, nephews, cousins, grandchildren, beloved students and friends also survive.

Preceded in death by his first wife of 44 years, Mary Clare (nee Gordon) in 2007; and his parents, Stanley and Rose (nee Petan).

home chapel at 9:20 a.m. then driving in procession to St. Joseph Catholic Church in Joliet for a Mass of Christian Burial to be held at 10:00 a.m. Interment to follow at St. Joseph Cemetery. Visitation will be Wednesday, November 12, 2014, at Tezak Funeral Home, 1211 Plainfield Rd, Joliet, IL 60435 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. St. Joseph Holy Name Society will conduct a Prayer Service at 4:30 p.m. Obituary and Tribute Wall James T. Sczepaniak at www.tezakfuneralhome.com or for information, 815-722-0524.



Jim was very devoted to his hobbies of stamp and coin collecting. He also greatly enjoyed taking pictures and sending them on to his many relatives, friends and acquaintances.

The family wishes to express their sincere thank you to the doctors, nurses and staff at both Presence St. Joseph Medical Center and Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home for the excellent care provided to Jim. In lieu of flowers, memorials in Jim's name to Lewis University, University of St. Francis or Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home would be greatly appreciated.

A Celebration of James' life will begin on Thursday, November 13, 2014, with prayers in the funeral

James Sczepaniak, longtime Joliet library trustee, dies

By BOB OKON
bokon@shawmedia.com

JOLIET — James Sczepaniak was the longest-serving active trustee on the Joliet Public Library board, and it may be difficult to find anyone who served on a board longer.

Sczepaniak, 78, who died Sunday, joined the library board in 1979. That gave him 85 years, and he was board president until he stepped down from the leadership position just two weeks ago

because of ill health.

He not only had longevity on the board but passion, fellow Trustee Nancy Henrickson said.

"In so many ways, he's been the face of our library," Henrickson said Tuesday. "Anybody who knew him felt the passion that he had for the library."

That passion was evident

until the end, Henrickson said.

"I spent a couple of hours with him on Friday, and even then he wanted to talk about the library," she said. Sczepaniak was asking about the strategic plan that trustees would soon be developing for the library.

He was a Joliet native, having grown up with the library and graduated from Joliet Township High School. Sczepaniak went on to teach social studies at Lockport and Romeoville high schools. He

was an active member of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Joliet.

In a Monday morning message, library Director Kevin Medows informed staff of Sczepaniak's death and described "his belief that libraries are truly essential to cultivating a community with high ideals and high achievements."

"He was a good leader and very dedicated," Medows said Tuesday. "I learned a great deal about the library and the big-picture issues from him."

Medows said he believed Sczepaniak stayed on the board so many years "out of sheer devotion and commitment to what the library meant to him."

Visitation for Sczepaniak will be Wednesday at Tezak Funeral Home, 1211 Plainfield Road, Joliet. The funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Thursday at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Joliet. More details on services are in Sczepaniak's obituary on Page 18 in The Herald-News.

Joe James Kovach 11/30/1919 - 11/28/2011. It was two days before his 92nd birthday. He was born (and died) in Budapest, Hungary to Ernest Paul Feldman and Margaret Weiss Feldman. Joe's father was the equivalent to the Secretary of State in the first Communist takeover of Hungary. Quickly over thrown, Joe's father was incarcerated and Joe and his mother fled to Vienna. Five years later his Father escaped and took the sir name of Kovach. Joe's beloved sister Anne was born in Vienna. The family moved to and became citizens of the US. Joe married Leona and had a son; Eric. While in service to the US Army and stationed in India, Joe & Leona divorced and Joe lost contact with his son. Years later he married Barbara Crockett. They had four daughters. Their eldest, Kitt died in 1965 from Leukemia. Joe & Barbara divorced 21 years later. Joe was the editor of the Beacon Newspapers of Bolingbrook and Romeoville IL. As a progressive citizen he earned many awards and titles including; Citizen of the Year, Horary Girl Scout, etc. He cared about his community in which his children grew up. With his wife Barbara, they fought for great schools, libraries, park districts and youth clubs. He was an avid and sought after Bridge player. He loved the theatre, both participating in and observing. He was a voracious reader and did the crosswords in ink. For those who knew him and whose lives he helped, please remember him kindly. For those he hurt, please know that he did ask forgiveness and apologized for harm and hurt caused. I will always miss you Dad. Thank you for all the lessons, no matter how hard they were to find and follow. Survived by his children; Eric Bagai, Karen Kovach, Kim Kovach, Kandi Osborne, grandchildren; Jeremy Bagai, Samantha Kovach, Danielle Osborne, Bernadette Osborne, son-in-law Jim Owens, soon to be Great Granddaughter; Brook Osborne, nieces; Anita Garey, Margot Garey & Shaaron Garey, all their children and spouses & his (former) devoted wife of many years; Barbara A Kovach. A special thank you to his dear friend Anna Viragvolgyi, who took care of Joe for the past several years, thru to his last days. Go in Peace Dad, Go in Peace.

Kovach, Barbara A.



Barbara A. Kovach, 83, passed away Dec. 29, 2013, in Sun City after a brief illness due to pancreatic cancer. Barbara was born April 19, 1930, in Everett, Mass., the only child of William and Bernice Crockett. She graduated from Melrose (Mass.) High School and the Massachusetts School of Physiotherapy and married Joseph J. Kovach in 1952. The Kovaches had four daughters and eventually settled in Bolingbrook, Ill. They acquired the Beacon, a weekly newspaper in their new hometown, in 1963 and became co-publishers. Devoted to children and sports, Barbara was most proud of leading efforts to establish the Bolingbrook Park District and

serving as its board president in 1972-73. The Kovaches sold the Beacon in the early 1980s and traveled the United States in an RV before settling near Lake Chapala, Mexico. The couple divorced in 1989, and in 1991 Barbara left another community she loved to care for her mother and stepfather Earl Smith in Maine. Barbara moved to Arizona in 1994 to be near her daughters. She loved cooking, entertaining, gardening and music, and she showed a daredevil side with parasailing and hot-air balloon rides. A longtime Unitarian, Barbara also served as board president of the West Valley Unitarian Universalist Church. She will be remembered by family and friends for her smile, kindness and stunning blue eyes, as well as her leadership and quiet strength. Barbara was preceded in death by her mother, stepfather, ex-husband, daughter Kitt and sister-in-law Anne Garey. She is survived by daughters Karen Kovach, Kandi Kovach, Kim Kovach and son-in-law Jim Owens; stepson Eric Bagai; nieces Anita, Margo and Sharon Garey; granddaughters Samantha Kovach, Danielle Osborne and Bernadette Osborne; and great-granddaughter Brooke Weedhurn. Memorial services will be held at 11 a.m. Feb. 1, 2014, at West Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, 5904 W. Cholla St., Glendale. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to CureSearch for Children's Cancer, Bethesda, Md.

It is with great sadness that I must let you know that my Mother, Barbara Kovach has died. Attached is her obituary. Also, You may not know that my Father, Joe Kovach, died a couple years ago as well. So I will also attach his obituary.

Kim Kovach

Thanks to Kim for sharing these with us. She is taking over her mother's membership. We hope she will share her memories of the family and the *Beacon* for our upcoming book.

Nancy Hackett

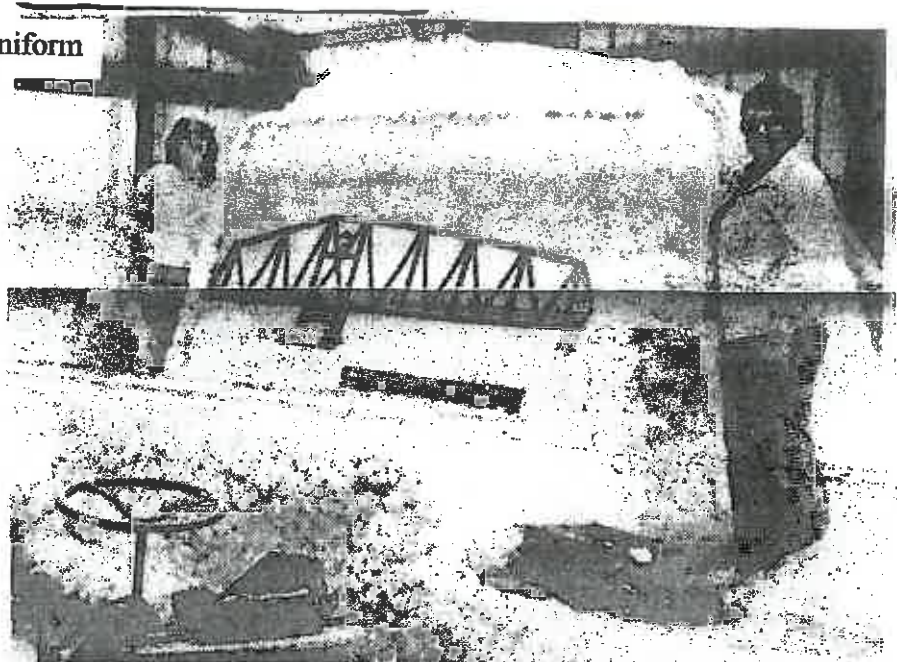
Karen Miraglia in the West View band uniform



Tony Miraglia wears A. Vito Martinez Middle School band uniform



Joe Miraglia is the West View Viking mascot



Romeoville's history is moving around. Last week, though, it got rained out, as the float entered in the Bollingbrook parade fell victim to drenching rains. But historical society members renewed the new club's efforts and will strike out again to other towns soon. Weather has always been a problem with Romeoville's history. You should have seen the winter of 1830!

New historic group displays town heritage

Romeoville residents and visitors who attended the recent Founders Day festivities caught a glimpse of the village's past as well as its present, as the Romeoville Historical Society's portable museum made its public debut.

The portable museum consists of six display panels covering the village's history from the days when the Potawatomie Indians lived and hunted here to the development of the Hampton Park subdivision, which was started in 1958.

The display panel depicting the life style of local Indian tribes was prepared by Mark Frost.

Gladys Hakey and Carol Stadelmaier prepared the panel displaying pictures of "Old Romeo."

Two panels, prepared by Jim Martin, follow the construction of the Illinois-Michigan and Sanitary Ship canals.

"P.J." Fitzgerald was responsible for the display covering the construction of Hampton Park Subdivision Unit One, together with the origin of street names in the neighborhood.

The first historical society float, which was designed by Len Frost, was awarded a second place at Lemont's Keespaw Days parade. The society has been asked to enter the float in the October Festival on Sept. 21 in Shorewood. It contains two permanent panels, constructed in a wood collage for permanent display. The depict the "185th Street swing bridge," and the "Old Romeoville Village Hall."

Although the historical society is only six months old, it turned out many workers, ranging in age from 8 to 78 to work on this first major project. The float was built at the farm of charter members Dorothy and Howard Hassert.

Both the portable museum and the historical panels are intended to be ongoing projects, say society officials. Because of their portability, the museum panels can be used by schools or local organizations interested in teaching or explaining Romeoville's history.

The entire museum will be on display in Romeoville's Fountaindale Library community room during the historical society's regular monthly meeting at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 25.

The historical society holds its regular monthly meetings at the Fountaindale Library in Romeoville on the fourth Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. Anyone interested in joining the group, or obtaining further information about the portable historical museum, are welcome to attend the meetings, or they may call Ellen Polly at 815/886-1568.

Sept. 18, 1980

The two panels described are displayed in the museum.

What a difference a few years make Romeoville turns 97 this week, much to everyone's surprise

Sun. Jan. 22, 1992

by Suzanne Tojase

What is the correct incorporation date for the Village of Romeoville? 1895 or 1901?

According to state records, the Village of Romeoville was incorporated on Jan. 21, 1895, which means in three more years, Romeoville residents will celebrate the 100th anniversary of incorporation, just four years after the Village celebrated its 90th anniversary.

"I was surprised. I thought incorporation (in 1901) would have been what we were celebrating," said Dick Murray, president of Romeoville Historical Society. Last year, Romeoville residents celebrated the anniversary with a dinner dance in May and RomeoFest in July. Murray notes that memorabilia from the dance might be collectors' pieces someday.

Several years ago, before Murray became president of the historical society, someone questioned the incorporation date, he said. According to Murray, historical society member Dorothy Hassert let village officials know about the discrepancy, but no one followed up on the matter.

A framed certificate with an incorporation date of Oct. 2, 1901, is on display in the historical society's room in the lower level of the Fountains Library. "When it came time for the dinner dance last May, everything was 1901," Murray said.

But then Jim Bingle, historical society member and DuPage Township assessor, raised the question once

more, and Village President John Strobbe asked Murray to do some research.

Murray said he made a few phone calls to state offices and in a matter of days received verification from the Secretary of State's office that Romeoville's incorporation date was 1895.

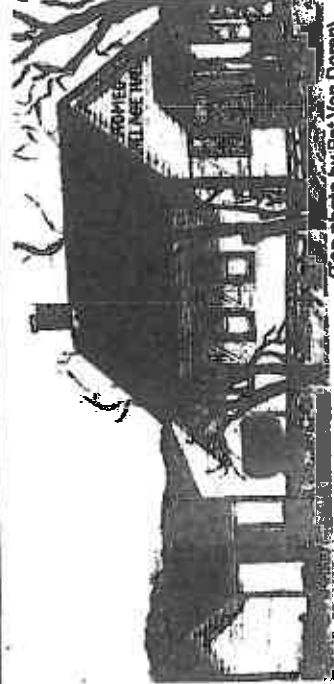
"We received a letter stating that the state recognized Jan. 21, 1895, as the correct and only date," Murray said. According to Murray, the discrepancy was found in Will County records.

"At that time the mail was slow," he said. In addition, all records were kept in long-hand. Having been an archives worker in the past, Murray said it is not uncommon to find such discrepancies in written records.

In 1984, historical society member Gladys Hakey wrote to the Secretary of State's office seeking information about the correct date. She included copies of records from the Will County courthouse. "They sent my papers back and told me to go to my courthouse," she said. Hakey said while she was growing up in Romeoville she was told by her parents and relatives that the incorporation date was 1895.

The vote for incorporation took place at Miller's Barber Shop on Jan. 19, 1895, Hakey said. According to historical records, 42 people voted in favor of incorporation and 20 people voted against it.

Murray's recent search for the correct date was simplified thanks to modern tech-



(Top photo by Pat Van Doren)

nology. "Everything was on computer and that made it so much easier," he said.

Plans are not yet in the works for the 100th anniversary celebration, but the Historical Society hopes to get started soon.

"Right now, we are involved in the Spangler House. After that is straightened out, we will start delving into it and work with the Village," Murray said. "We thought we would have had about ten years to plan."

The Romeoville area was settled in 1835 and remained primarily a farming community until the 1950s.

In the top photo, Beverly and Dick Murray and Gladys Hakey of the Romeoville Historical Society review six papers that show the village was incorporated six years earlier than previously believed. Above, Old Romeo Village Hall, which served as the village's official meeting place for 65 years.



Arbor Day planting

Friday, in celebration of Arbor Day, the village of Romeoville and the Romeoville Historical Society planted a crimson maple on the village

April 24, 1987

hall property. The tree is in memory of Dewey "Red" Chambers, former village president, who died last September.

Herald-News/John Patsch



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