



History Matters!

**Newsletter of the Effingham County Cultural Center
and Museum**

Effingham, Illinois

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January - February - March 2020

Jefferson Avenue in winter circa 1890



Artwork created by Mr. David Landers & shared with his permission.

MISSION STATEMENT

The **Mission** of the Effingham County Museum is to preserve our Historic Register structure, to collect artifacts from county history, and to use them to educate our local and external communities, while immersed in the broader context of American history. Our **Vision** is that the 1872 Effingham County Courthouse remains as an architectural gem that instills a sense of community pride and provides a venue to educate and showcase the history, art, and transportation of Effingham County. The parent organization for the Effingham County Museum is the Effingham County Cultural Center and Museum Association, Inc, which is a 501(c) 3 organization.

Hours

Usual hours March-December: Tuesday & Saturday: 10 AM - 2 PM
Other hours by special arrangement
Closed to the general public January-February, except for special programming
or by appointment

Accessibility

The museum is wheelchair accessible from the east side entrance just off the parking lot. Toilet facilities that are wheelchair accessible can be found in the Gallery 1 of the first level and in the Northwest corner of Level 2.

Collection Building

The scope of the Museum's collection is directed by its Mission Statement. Donations are accepted of objects that relate directly to the Museum's mission of collecting materials and artifacts of cultural and/or historical interest.

Board and Officers

President	Delaine Donaldson
Vice President	Jane Ries
Secretary	LoElla Baker
Treasurer	Allen Westendorf
Members at Large	Jerry Katz
	Amy Gillespie
	Linda Ruholl
	Susan Hoelscher
	Dr. Ruben Boyajian, Emeritus

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Visit us on Facebook @:	Effingham County Courthouse Effingham Ill

Fourth QUARTER EVENTS 2019

November 14 Historic Lecture



Delaine Donaldson is shown above, introducing Linda Schmidt, who presented the first of the scheduled 2019-2020 Historic Lectures. Her topic is shown on the screen above.

Linda shared the rich heritage behind the Blue Point Lutheran Church, and placed it within the wider context of the lives of the Germans who immigrated to the Altamont area in the middle of the 19th century. Blue Point Lutheran was established in 1869.

Both their religion and their shared culture were important to these German pioneers. As most were farm families, it was essential that the church be nearby enough that they could walk or use a horse to get there. Hence, Blue Point Lutheran was the second of several Lutheran Churches situated fairly close together in rural settings around Altamont. Blue Point is located four miles north and two miles east of Altamont.

Their "native" German language was their shared means of communication and education. Blue Point Lutherans worshiped in German and had at least one service in that language until 1955. The church's records were written in German and the minutes of their meeting was written in German script until 1938.

Linda shared many photographs of the exterior and the interior of the church, as it evolved over the years. One of the most beautiful is of this inlaid wooden ceiling.

Blue Point Evangelical Lutheran Church is part of the Missouri Synod of Lutheran Churches. The church's web site URL is: www.stpaulbluepoint.org.

Fourth QUARTER EVENT 2019

December 12 Historic Lecture



A capacity crowd was on hand for Carl and Kurt Becker's talk about horse racing on December 12. They are natives of Altamont, and Kurt is Carl's son. Kurt led off with a power point presentation that provided a broad perspective on Effingham County's place in the bigger picture of harness racing in this country. He shared many photographs of horses, owners, and jockeys from the history of the sport locally. Kurt emphasized that some of them went on to achieve fame at the state and national level.

Carl Becker did the second part of the talk, during which he relayed amusing anecdotes from his long chronicle as an announcer of harness races at the Effingham County Fair, the state fair and other venues. One of the take home lessons he shared was about giving interviews - Be careful of sharing the limelight with a celebrity. The interviewer is likely to be so in awe of the celebrity that a 30 minute "shared" interview will be reduced to 29 minutes for the celebrity and one minute for the non-celebrity.

In Carl's case, the shared interview was with country-western singer Charlie Pride, and Carl's segment amounted to a one sentence limited mention of the upcoming harness racing event.

The "colors" of several well known and popular jockeys were on display, and a selection of free harness racing literature was available to the visiting public.

Scenes and Decor from the Museum's Annual Holiday Open House November 29 and December 1



The new "bear" on the Effingham Court House Museum grounds drew the attention of many visitors, especially the children. The Museum in the background was a helpful backdrop.



Guests at the open house enjoyed homemade cake, cookies and candy, summer sausage, with cheese and crackers and other seasonal treats.

The Gum Drop Tree is a Christmas decoration popular in the 1950s.



Jane Ries' annual Adopt a Veteran tree was a popular attraction again this year. Grade school children create these heart-shaped decorations in the classroom, and later come to see "their" veteran on the tree. The Veterans' tree is traditionally set up in Gallery 3.



The Altamont Community Choir entertained at the Sunday afternoon open house. They presented a rich mixture of religious and secular music, and discovered just how effective the second floor dome is in magnifying singing voices. A rendition of "O Holy Night" showcased the talents of the group sopranos. The final number called for audience to join in singing "The Twelve Songs of Christmas." Aided by handy song sheets, the audience started with "Deck the Halls", and jumped to their feet to finish with a rousing version of the Hallelujah chorus from Handel's *Messiah*.

Museum artifacts on display for the Holidays

From the Museum's collections:

German language Bible in Gallery 1



Vintage doll house in Gallery 2



**The 1st floor entry way
←---Victorian style tree**



↑Steven's Hardware Toy Land sign in Gallery 2



The rail in Gallery 3

HISTORIC LECTURE SERIES

Coordinated by LoElla Baker



All lectures are scheduled for 7:00 PM on the second Thursday of the Month

Second level of the Museum

Doors open at 6:30 PM

Lecture 3: January 9, 2020

TOPIC: Montrose-150 Years

Speakers: Kelly Thoele & Chris Overbeck

Lecture 4: February 13, 2020

TOPIC: Austin College

Speaker: Delaine Donaldson

Lecture 5: March 12, 2020

TOPIC: The Old St. Anthony's - Before the Fire

Speaker: Linda Ruholl

"StEPs" at the ECM

Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations
A Program of the



AASLH
American Association
for State and Local History

The Effingham County Museum (ECM) is an organizational member of a professional organization for small museums, the **American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)**. As an active member of AASLH, the Museum is enrolled in, and actively participates in, AASLH's **Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs)**.

The StEPs program guides small museums to meet national standards of excellence in six areas: *Mission, Audience, Interpretation, Collections, Structures, and Management*. Progress is incremental, and a museum can reach for three levels of attainment in each of the six areas. The three levels are Bronze (basic), Silver (good), and Gold (better). In all, there is a potential for a total of 18 certificates.

There is a set of specific standards, along with a set of associated criteria for each of the certificates. Some certificates require that more criteria be met than others. For example, the Bronze (basic) Mission certificate has six standards and 35 criteria, while the Gold (better) Collections certificate has six standards, but 45 criteria.

To date, the Museum has earned two StEPs certificates:

Mission/Vision/Governance BRONZE September 2019
Audience BRONZE October 2019

Work on the third StEPs certificate, **Interpretation BRONZE** has been completed and the application has been submitted to AASLH. One of the criteria for the Interpretation Bronze required evaluation processes for museum exhibits and programs. The Museum completed two formal evaluation processes in November and December.

The first written evaluation was conducted after the November 10 Celebration of Veterans of the 1960s and 1970s. Fifty (n=50) participants completed this simple one-half page Likert scale form. An incentive was offered for anonymous completion, in the form of a 2020 patriotic calendar. Sixty percent (60%) of the participants entered that drawing.

Here is a summary of the findings from the survey:

Areas assessed	1 to 3 Scale	Range	Mean
First floor exhibits	Not interesting to Very interesting	2 - 3	2.88
Second floor exhibits	Not interesting to very interesting	2 -3	2.88
Comfort of setting	Uncomfortable to very comfortable	2-3	2.66
Degree of perceived welcome	Unwelcome to very welcome	2-3	2.96
Overall perceived interest of event	Not interesting to very interesting	2-3	2.96

One suggestion for improvement called for a portable mike to be available when an audience member was speaking; this respondent could not hear the veterans when they described their service.

The second evaluation was conducted during the November 29 and December 1 Open House events. This written evaluation was a full page and required at least 5 minutes to complete. Twenty-six people completed the survey. Of that number, 81% entered the associated incentive drawing. What follows is a synopsis of what the museum volunteers learned from the participants' responses.

Number of programs/events attended over the course of the year:

About 1/2 (54%) attended one event. As the Open House was one of the events on the list, it was logical to conclude that many of these individuals came to the Museum as a result of the Home Town Christmas events, and had not been in the Museum before. Twenty-seven percent (27%) had attended between two and five events, and fifteen percent (15%) reported coming to somewhere between 6 and 10 activities.

Reasons for not attending events:

The most common reason was a conflict with other things on their schedule (41%). The second most common reason was they hadn't heard about it (22% gave that reason).

How people heard about programs:

Facebook was the number one means of keeping informed (23%), with the Effingham Daily News (20%) as the second most common method. Word of mouth was third (18%) and radio news was fourth (14%). Flyers were the least effective means of communicating with this group; not one respondent mentioned them.

Exhibits viewed over the prior year:

On the first floor, Galley 1 was the most popular (81% viewed it). Gallery 5 and the central hall were second (73% had viewed them). On the second level, the hospital fire exhibit was the most commonly visited (80%).

One recommendation from this survey was for improved lighting in some of the exhibit areas during night-time events.

Linda Ruholl, StEPs coordinator, and the Museum volunteers say Thank You to those who took the time to complete our surveys. We will use the information to improve our exhibits and lectures.

Winner of the Open House incentive, a Vermont Country Store basket of goodies, was Jane Mellendorf of Altamont. The basket was delivered to her on December 2.



Advance Notice!

An Opportunity to Conserve and Treasure a Tangible Piece of National Road History



This paver was once part of East Jefferson Avenue, near the Effingham Courthouse Museum. During the recent renovation of Jefferson, Historian Phil Lewis salvaged a portion of the 100+ year old pavers. The plan is to add a plaque indicating the date when they were removed & their original source in Indiana. Then the Museum will offer them to the public.

Cost of paver with plaque will be \$25.00.

More details available soon...

Effingham is on the old National Road (AKA Cumberland Road), which was constructed after Thomas Jefferson signed the bill for federal funding in 1806. Starting in Cumberland, Maryland, the National Road opened this part of Illinois to settlement.

**There are 23 communities along the National Road in the state of Illinois.
Very few of them have these unique pavers.**



If your ancestors came to Illinois in the 19th century, at some point they traveled on the Cumberland Road. A Jefferson Street paver will provide you, your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren with a significant and tangible link to the past.