

**Kendall
County
Historical
Society**



Established 1970
Yorkville, Illinois

Newsletter

Fall 2022



Lyon Farm's Fall Festival & Car Show Saturday & Sunday, Sept. 24 & 25

The Kendall County Historical Society's annual Fall Festival and Car Show is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 24 and 25, at Lyon Farm, 7935 Rt. 71, Yorkville.

Admission for the event is \$6 for adults and \$4 for children 3 to 10. Children 2 and under are free. Registration for the Car Show on Sunday is from 10 a.m. to noon, with a \$5 fee per vehicle. Sponsored by HETTS Auto Sales. Awards will be given.



The buildings and museum will be open both days. There will be a small engines exhibit, children's games, an ice cream social, craft fair, hay rides, a 50/50 raffle, and, on Saturday, Lyon Farm's first Founders Day celebration, live entertainment. For the times and listing of performances, see page 4.

Illinois Inland Railroad Author at Fall Fest

At just under two miles in length, serving the towns of Newark and Millington, the Illinois Midland Railroad was known as the "World's Shortest Railroad," with its rickety rails meandering through fields, forests and the backyards of folks who were living in Kendall County from 1914 to 1967.

Illinois Midland's No. 4 was a rare sight by the late 1950s, when other railroads had retired their steam engines, but it became a longtime favorite of history buffs and railfans who discovered the Illinois Midland's one-man-railroad operation to be a fascinating source of entertainment.

Local author and retired history teacher Jeff Kehoe has just published the only book written about the Illinois Midland Railroad. He will be discussing his book and selling and signing copies of it in the afternoon on Saturday, Sept. 24, at the Fall Fest.



Photo of Jeff Kehoe courtesy of Fern Dell Museum

Letter from our President:

Our Farm has been hard at work in this year. Thanks to Justin Prince and ABC Roofing, we were able to repair the flashing on the Oswego House, repairs were completed to the front of the Corrigan Store, and temporary roofing repairs were made to the Firehouse, and the Plano Station. According to old newsletters, the roofs were last replaced in 2000.

Thank you to the Landorf family for the landscaping work of the Town Hall and Oswego House. Another big thank you to Nancy and Dean Sommers for the cleaning of the Handouw Museum and Train Station this past summer. Thank you to Lisa Wolancevich for writing a winning grant for a \$5,300 air purification system in our museum.

Our Library began programs again this year. We hosted a book talk by Jeff Keyhoe, on "The Midland Railroad," a book he wrote and researched in part with help from our library staff. Mark Harrington came out to discuss Abraham Lincoln



Lee Hohmann

in Kendall county. Rhea Hunter from the Illinois Genealogical Society aided in a research discussion about finding family roots.

Our Library crew also hosted our first annual Easter egg hunt this year.

Lastly, Elmer Dickson passed away in 2018 and in his will he left Lyon Farm \$ 50,000. The Board is still in discussion on how best to use this money for Lyon Farm's future. The Board is planning a Sept. 24th Founders Day at the Farm to celebrate the life and contributions of Elmer Dickson and Bill Perkins, both early board members of the Kendall County Historical Society. We will have live Bluegrass performances and an ice cream social, along

with hayrides, children's games, craft show, educational programs, concessions.

Please come out to celebrate our founders.

The Kendall County Historical Society Membership Form

I want to initiate/renew my membership in the Kendall County Historical Society and help preserve the vital elements of American history for future generations.

Name (Last, First): _____

Spouse's Name: _____

Children's Names: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

I am willing to volunteer for:

_____ Lyon Farm Events

_____ Library/Archives/Museum

Please mail this form with your check made payable to:

The Kendall County Historical Society, P.O. Box 123, Yorkville, IL 60560

For more information on the Society, email lyonfarmkchs1@gmail.com or call 630-553-6777

or visit our website at www.lyonfarmkchs.org

New Member Renewal

Mark one box:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year Individual | \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year Family | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year Contributing | \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year Sustaining | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life - Individual | \$175 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life - Family | \$300 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Endowment | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$1,000 |

I wish to make an additional donation to the KCHS Fund of \$ _____

A History of Lyon Farm . . .

How did Lyon Farm get its name?



John Lyon



Sarah Riddle Lyon



Honest Abe

Lyon Farm, known for being the home of the Kendall County Historical Society, began as the family home of a man named John Lyon.

John Lyon came to Yorkville in 1860 and built a two-story home in downtown Yorkville that he turned into a hotel and saloon. He and his wife Sarah Riddle Lyon ran the business for 10 years, before deciding it was time to raise a family.

Because the Lyons believed that raising a family in the country was more suitable than at a hotel and saloon, they bought a farm south east of Yorkville and named it Woodland Farm.

The Lyons had three children: Elmer born in 1868, Della born in 1871, and Earl born in 1887. During the Lyon residency at Woodland Farm, it became known for horse breeding and had a reputation for excellence. It was so successful that the profits for one horse named “Honest Abe” enabled the Lyons to pay off the loan for their farm.



Elmer Lyon

After John Lyon’s death in 1900, his son Elmer Lyon inherited Woodland Farm. Elmer raised produce, kept bees, and started an orchard. He also was known for his grafting skills.

Elmer’s brother, Earl, graduated from Yorkville High School and the University of Illinois with a degree in

engineering. He moved to Pennsylvania, where he met and married Francis Armitage.

Elmer Lyon never married. Following Elmer Lyon’s death, Francis and Earl inherited Woodland Farm. Earl passed away in 1955, leaving the farm to his wife Francis. Francis, a historian, decided to donate the 39-acre farm to the Kendall County Historical Society in 1974. The Society, in its gratitude, changed Woodland Farm’s name to Lyon Farm to honor the Lyon Family.

Today Lyon Farm features 15 historic buildings that trace the history of Kendall County. These include an 1819 Chicago Burlington & Quincy caboose, a fully stocked general store, an 1840s schoolhouse, town hall, a working blacksmith shop, and more. There also is an extensive research library containing portrait, biographical, and genealogical materials, census and head of household records, cemetery records, veterans of all wars, and surname, obituary, and church files, and indexed scrapbooks.

Our mission is to preserve the past for the future.



Founder's Day Fall Festival Entertainment Line-Up

The first annual Founder's Day celebration, commemorating the men and women who created the Lyon Farm historical village and farm, will feature a line-up of Blues and Bluegrass music performed live at the Farm's Burlington Train Depot platform on Saturday, Sept. 24.

The afternoon's entertainment will kick off at 1:30 p.m. with music by the Blues Imperials. Michael Garrett and Kelly Littleton have been playing with



The Blues Imperials: 1:30 p.m.

Chicago Blues man Little Ed, and Alligator records recording artists, Lil Ed and the Blues Imperials, for more than 35 years. Scharf has played bass guitar with lead guitarist Garrett and drummer Littleton since the mid-80s in various bands and is the back-up for the group's regular bass guitarist, James Young. The Blues Imperials are known for their "guitar driven" R and B, and Blues music. For more information on The Blues Imperials, go to <https://www.liledblues.com/>.



The Templetons: 3 p.m.

The husband and wife team of Mike and Lisa Templeton are an American Roots duet playing banjo, fiddle, bass, ukulele and, occasionally, spoons.

Mike and Lisa, who are return entertainers to the Lyon Farm festival, describe themselves as an Americana Folk duet that play banjo, fiddle and bass and have their roots in traditional bluegrass and old-time music, but also play some folk and folk-rock covers from musicians such as John Denver, Tom Petty, Paul Simon and the Eagles.

Mike and Lisa played with their family bluegrass band, The Templetons, from 2007-2020.

For more information on Mike and Lisa Templeton, go to the YouTube channel Mike and Lisa Banjo and Fiddle, or their Facebook page The Templeton's.



Truman's Ridge: 4:30 p.m.

Well-dressed, fast paced, with all the excitement of the early days of Bluegrass, **Truman's Ridge** will take the Lyon Farm stage to finish the afternoon with harmonies that are varied, at times reminiscent of the early brother bands, and at other times showing a strong rural-gospel influence in the two, three, and four-part vocals.

Organized in 2008, Truman's Ridge is known for its classic style, high energy, and tight harmonies and instrumentation. Instrumentally the band continues to show the influence of Midwestern string band and Chicago jazz and blues on its interpretation of traditional bluegrass arrangements. The rock-solid beat of the guitar and bass compliment the driving rhythm of the banjo and the compelling mandolin lead breaks. Fiddle and harmonica are also featured on some songs.

More information on Truman's Ridge can be found at www.trumansridge.com.



YPAC Performance: 11:30 a.m.

Students and staff from the Yorkville Performing Arts Center (YPAC) will be presenting musical scenes from YPAC Theatre’s summer production of Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka Jr. beginning at 11:30 a.m. on the Burlington Train Depot platform.

As Kendall County’s leading child development center, YPAC prides itself on teaching great technique in dance, music, and theatre, as it simultaneously teaches kids to lead balanced and successful lives in the arts, academics, and community. Located at 216 Rt. 47 and 222 S. Bridge St. in Yorkville, YPAC is a founding member of More Than Just Great Dancing™, a licensed dance studio affiliation program that has a positive impact on over 120,000 dance students around the globe each week. As a Youth Protection Advocates in Dance™ (YPAD) certified center, all our employees are background checked, CPR and first aid trained, and educated in following a trauma-informed approach from evidence based research to lead classes with best practices. The result is happy, healthy kids with lifelong confidence, friendships, and life skills.

For more information on YPAC, go to ypacarts.com.

What’s in a name?

The Kendall County Township Name Quiz

by Johanna Byram

When Kendall County was formed on April 5, 1841, from portions of LaSalle and Kane Counties, the townships and some villages had different name than we know them by today. It wasn’t until 1850 when the county government changed from a three (3) man commission to a nine (9) member board of supervisors that the townships were officially named.*

Do you know the former names of Kendall County’s townships and villages? Match the current names to the former names. *Answers on page 7.*

Current Names

1. Village of Oswego
2. Kendall Township
3. Big Grove and Fox Township
4. Village of Newark
5. Bristol Township
6. Seward Township
7. Oswego Township
8. Little Rock Township

Former Names

- A. Franklin
- B. Washington
- C. Gerry
- D. Hudson
- E. Ellery
- F. Stockton
- G. Sherman
- H. Georgetown

*Kendall County Bicentennial Commission (1976). A Bicentennial History of Kendall County, Illinois. Naperville, Illinois: The Naperville Sun, page 83.



Aerial photo of today's Lyon Farm, which includes 22 buildings. The horse barn, machine shed, dairy barn, corn crib and workshop are to the left, the village with the city hall/firehouse, train depot, Oswego House and schoolhouse are to the right. The roof top to the right, front, is the agricultural building. Drone photo by Paul Burd

Historical Society's New Founder's Day Celebration Created to Honor KCHS's Founding Members

The idea to dedicate Saturday, Sept. 24, as Founder's Day at Lyon Farm came from many sources. In June, the Kendall County Historical Society received a large donation from the Elmer Dickson estate. Elmer, the son of founders Homer and Alice Dickson, did extensive research and documentation of Kendall County's history, and it is arguably



Homer and Alice Dickson

the most significant work done in the last 100 years. His daughter, Kim Polizo, contacted the Historical Society, wanting to donate his research to Lyon Farm. In doing so, she also asked if the Society could hold an ice-cream social in memory of her parents. She also requested live music and that KCHS invite all of the historical societies in the county.

While KCHS board members were planning the event, the Society was notified of the death of another founder and long-time supporter of the Historical Society, William (Bill) Perkins. In light of this news, the KCHS board made the decision to have this first Founders Day to specifically honor the Dicksons and Bill Perkins for their support, and the other men and women who had



Sydney and Elmer Dickson

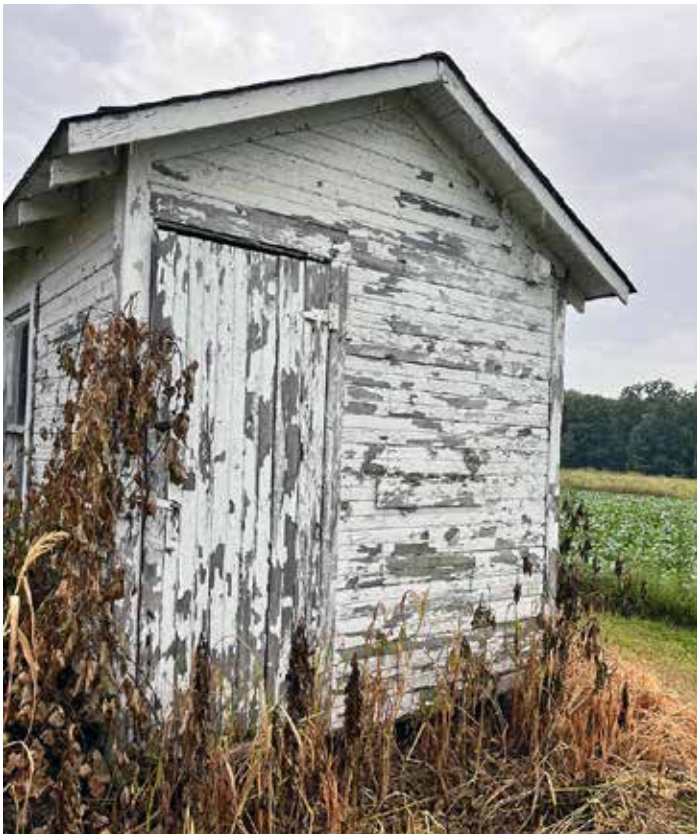
the vision for Kendall County to have a Historical Society.

Founder's Day commemorates the chartering of the KCHS in 1970 with the goals of preserving the history of Kendall County and providing historical education for the county's residents. Those present on April 29, 1970 at its first Directors meeting were: Ronald Clark, Parkie Emmons, Home Dickson, Donald Dirst, Gudrun Findlay, Mauric Grimwood, Agnes Henning, Paul Leifheit, Francis McCaulley, Mae Nade, William Perkins, Ralph Smith, Helen Thurow, Ruth Wildermuth and Myron Wormley. Helen Thurow was elected as the Society's first president. Ronald Clark was first vice president and William Perkins was second vice president.

Now, 52 years later, KCHS is celebrating its continuance as an educational and cultural institution dedicated to preserving historical collections and extensive archives. It connects the past to the future. Founder's Day is a way of saying thank you to all those who established and worked hard to make the Society what it is today.

New Donation to the Historical Society

The Family of Ron Clarke (deceased) of Yorkville donated these wooden wheel roller skates and a leather carrying case to the Kendall County Historical Society. The brass plaque on the leather carrying case is engraved with the name Mamie Hopkins. A note in the leather case said, "Yorkville Dearborn's New Skating Rink 1884". Per the 1886 Sanborn Map of Yorkville, the Roller-Skating Rink was located on Van Emmon Street, where the city's municipal parking lot is located today. By the 1892 Sanborn Map the building had been converted to R. W. Willett's Carriages and Agricultural Implements.



Historic Ticket Booth Resurrected at Lyon Farm

A small wooden building at Lyon Farm that most recently had been used to hold cut firewood has been identified as an historic structure after newly donated records to Lyon Farm showed the building's past history.

A newspaper article in records donated by the family of Ron Clark identified the building as the former ticket booth at the Kendall County Fairgrounds on Game Farm Road. The site was the fairgrounds from the 1850s until the early 1900s.

The newspaper article relates how the Yorkville School District 115 purchased the Game Farm Road property and planned to build a new high school on the site. The fairgrounds moved to a new site off of Rt. 71, leaving behind the ticket booth. The School District, having no use for the small building, donated the ticket booth to the Kendall County Historical Society and helped facilitate the move to Lyon Farm.

KCHS members and volunteers are planning to oversee the ticket booth's renovation. The perimeter of the building has been cleared of vegetation and work will soon get underway. The building needs to be sanded, scraped and painted. Although a person has come forward and offered to pay for all of the paint, the Society is still looking for donations of paint brushes and rollers, and people willing to spend time painting and repairing the building.

With the help of volunteers, the Society members hope to have the ticket booth ready for the Fall Festival.

Anyone who would like to volunteer to help restore the old ticket booth should call the Farm at 630-553-6777.

Answers to Kendall County Township Name Quiz from Page 5

1. D. The Village of Oswego was Hudson
2. F. Kendall Township was Stockton
3. G. Big Grove and Fox Townships were Sherman
4. H. The Village of Newark was Georgetown
5. E. Bristol Township was Ellery
6. A. Seward Township was Franklin
7. C. Oswego Township was Gerry
8. B. Little Rock Township was Washington

Upcoming Events . . .

Halloween at the Farm

Sundays, Oct. 23 & 30



Christmas at the Farm

Sundays, Dec. 11 & 18



Kendall County Historical Society
P.O. Box 123
Yorkville, IL 60560