



Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

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Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

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Mercer County Historical Society & Essley-Noble Museum

1406 - SE 2nd Avenue
Aledo, IL 61231
Phone: 309/582-2280

Hours: 1:00 - 5:00 PM
Wed., Sat., & Sunday
April through the end of October.



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For Genealogy Queries write to:

Cheryl McCaw/Shirley Crawford
MCHS Genealogy Dept.
1406 - SE 2nd Avenue
Aledo IL 61231-2504



Memberships available for \$15/household

For membership or change of address contact:

Jim Runyon
756 State Hwy 94
Aledo, IL 61231
309-582-7762



Website:

http://www.geocities.com/mchs_61231

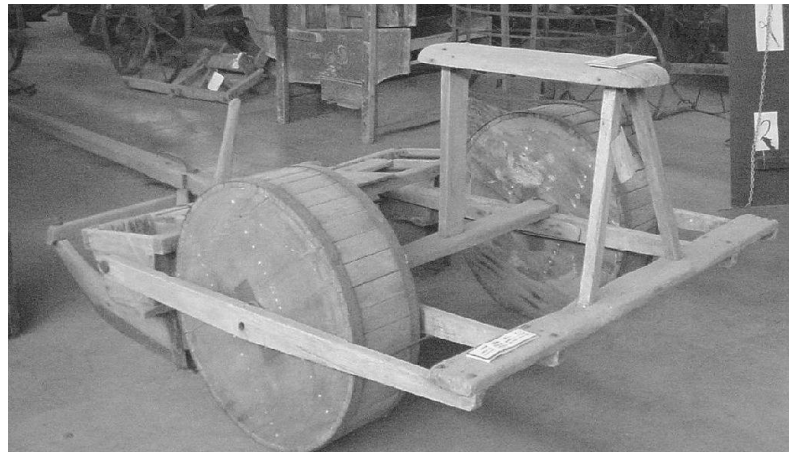
BROWN CORN PLANTER

"The first successful horse-drawn planter"

By Bill Bertrand

The Essley-Noble Museum is fortunate to have one of the few remaining Brown Corn Planters. They were constructed almost entirely of wood and few survive!

In the 1850s, George Brown, Tylerville, (*aka Utah, Warren County*) Illinois, patented a series of innovative corn planter patents: "Furrows that open with edged runners; corn precisely placed, under the control of an operator; and a closing wheel that covers the seed automatically and in check to allow for cultivating in both directions." Brown's is

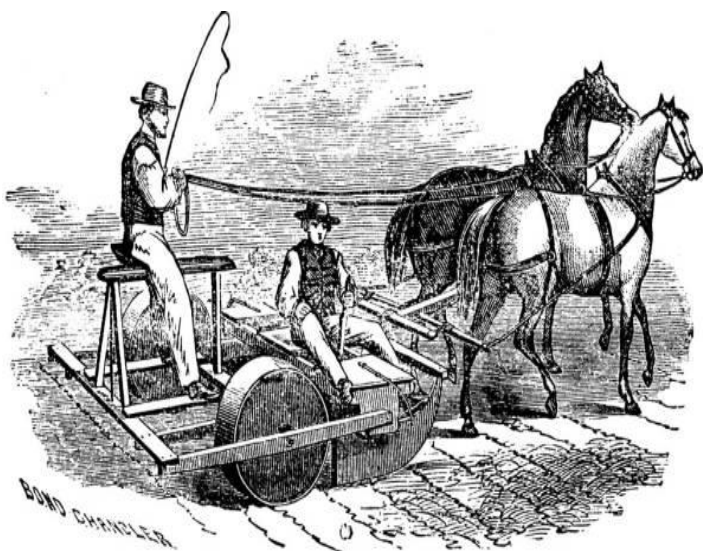


the **first** successful horse-drawn, two-row pull-type planter, with manual stick-type metering. (1)

George W. Brown was a farmer and carpenter by trade. In 1848 he conceived the idea of turning a cultivator into a corn-planter. After several years of experimenting with different designs, he used his invention in 1852 to plant 16 acres of corn for himself and 8 acres for a neighbor. Brown sold everything he had to secure patents for his invention and started building planters by hand. In 1853, he completed 12 machines, one that planted 300 acres of corn that season. His business grew rapidly, with 100 machines made in 1854 and 300 in 1855. (2)

Brown moved his business to Galesburg, where by 1878, he was manufacturing 8,000 machines per year. As others tried to infringe on his patents, he filed suit and in May 1874, the Supreme Court of the United States declared him the inventor of the corn-planter. This gave him the right to collect royalties on all machines manufactured and in July 1878 he won \$200,000 in a suit against Keystone Manufacturing Company in Rock Island, Illinois. Brown corn planters were sold throughout the United States and some were even sold to buyers from Europe, Brazil, Argentina and Japan (2).

Two people were required to work the planter. The driver would steer the apparatus while a second person, often a boy, was seated crosswise with the job of pulling a lever whenever the planter crossed one of the intersections of the marked grid and depositing several seeds into the hill. (3)



Operating Brown Corn Planter (3)

In 1857 a planter was invented that dropped seeds automatically using an anchored chain, thus eliminating the need for a second person as lever operator. The farmer would stake a chain at either end of a field and follow it across the field while evenly spaced metal buttons on the chain activated the seeding mechanism.

In 1864 John Ramsey and John Thompson of Aledo, Illinois, developed a knotted wire to activate the seeding mechanism, which was a more successful planter than the chain-activated planter. (1)

Sources: (1) *Planting Revolution 1 - Kinze Manufacturing*; (2) *History of Knox County, Illinois 1878*; (3) *University of Illinois Library Collection*



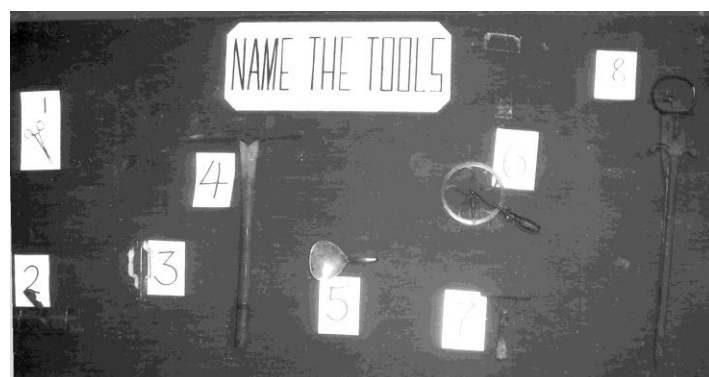
Mercer County Fair

We hope that you stopped by MCHS booth at the Mercer County Fair this year. Thank you to Jim Runyon for preparing the "Name the Tool" game and to Ronn Dillavou for setting up the antique farm equipment display. These were just a few of the many items on display at the Essley - Noble Museum.

The 2007 answers for the "Name the Tool" game are:

1. Surgical forceps
2. Wood plane
3. Rug hook
4. Miner's pick
5. Butter paddle
6. Felly gauge (For measuring the circumference of a wheel)
7. Curry comb
8. Hay fork

Evonne Bishop of Joy got the most correct answers and Mary Rillie of Aledo won the Random drawing. Congratulations!





Underground Railroad Topic for Fall Meeting

Owen Muelder, director of the new Underground Railroad Freedom Center at Knox College, will speak about the Underground Railroad at the Mercer County Historical Society Fall open meeting Monday, October 15 at 7:00 p.m. at the United Methodist Church, 301 N. College Ave, Aledo. (Since this should be a well-attended meeting, note the change in location.) This will be a very interesting and informative program and the public is welcome. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

The Underground Railroad was an informal network of people who helped thousands of African-American slaves escape to freedom prior to 1865, when slavery in the U.S. was abolished by the 13th Amendment. One branch of the Underground Railroad ran through Mercer County, aided by residents sympathetic to the cause. According to part of a paper written by Gertrude Morris, "Three stations in the western part of Green Township, Mercer County, were the homes of David, John, and William Carnahan, who were cousins of my grandmother. These families were Wesleyan Methodists and established a church of their faith near their homes. All that remains today is an old cemetery where some of the markers still show the Carnahan name."



Museum Closing for the Season

The last day of the 2007 season will be Oct. 31. Winter tours are available for groups over 10 persons by calling Shirley Crawford at her home 309-584-4820. Members doing genealogical research may come in after hours on days that Shirley is working (Call to find out when she plans to be there.) By a motion from the Board, nonmembers wishing to do research will be charged a \$15 fee.



New Windsor Parade

Thank you to Matt Frieden for the loan of his wagon and to Dave Frieden, Jr. for bringing his fine team of Percheron horses, Andy & Rose, for New Windsor's sesquicentennial parade. The photo shows Dave Frieden, Jr. driving with board member Dave Frieden riding up



front. The "antiques" riding in the wagon are Bob and Donna Armstrong in front and Mary Jane Sticklen and Harriett Reynolds behind.



CURATOR'S CORNER

By Shirley Crawford

The museum has in its possession an interesting undated contract between Lowell Wright and Carl G. Stephens.

Lowell Wright is to work for Carl G. Stephens by the month for the following \$55.00 per mo(nth) with a raise of (\$)5.00 (per month) if the price of corn goes to (\$)1.00 per bu(shel) and Hogs to 11 or 12 ¢ per pound in Chicago.**

- *To get 2 bu. of corn for chicken feed up to June then 3 bu. up to corn picking.*
- *One cow to milk. Potatoes patch large enough for his own use (over)*
- *Also 300 lbs. of meat on foot.*
- *Holidays – Decoration day – July 4 & one day for Mercer Co. Fair.*
- **To work by month up until corn picking and pick corn by the bu.*
- *Also he is to have a shed for car or buggy.*

(signed) Lowell A. Wright

(signed) Carl G. Stephens



Antique Days

Thank you to MCHS Board members and friends who helped with Aledo's Antique Days. Dave Frieden demonstrated rope making and Ronn Dillavou brought his corn sheller. Jim Runyon provided historical information for the downtown tour led by Will Hall and helped with the historical homes slide show. Bev Gray, Bill Bertrand, and Mary Jane Sticklen sold root beer floats and brownie sundaes and many baked the delicious brownies. Thank you, too, to all of those who patronized our booths.



Coming Events

Oct. 15:

- Fall Open meeting, 7:00 p.m. at the United Methodist Church, 301 N. College Ave.
- The Underground Railroad by Owen Muelder

Nov. 1

- Museum closed for the season



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