



# Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 1

Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

Jan/Feb/Mar 08

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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](http://www.geocities.com/mchs_61231)

## Winter on the Prairie

By Jim Runyon

Growing up on the open Illinois prairie where the wind could blow for miles without obstruction, winter could be cold and blustery. Our home was an uninsulated, two-story frame house heated by two coal-fired stoves—a cook stove in the kitchen and a heating stove in the living room.

When the temperature reached minus 10 degrees, an unwritten rule said it was time to move all activity into the living room around that heater. That included the beds which were dismantled and set up in the corners of the room. The wind



penetrated the brick foundation and raised the rug off the floor. Chairs sometimes had to hold the rug on the grooved pine floor. We kids looked forward to the adventure of camping in one room. Our parents did not share the excitement. Mother cooked one-dish meals on top of the heating stove. Dad maintained the coal supply as well as spending much time in the cold to care for the livestock. The beds became trampolines and playgrounds that kept us off the cold floor. The chairs surrounded the stove, the only really warm spot in the house. That's where the necessary chores took place, books were read and games played.

One snowy night this idyllic setting was invaded by four strangers. They were stranded by the wind-created barriers across the hard road near which our house sat. The two guys and two gals came to our door to escape the night's storm. Somehow, they squeezed into the crowded room, sharing what space and food we had until the snowplow opened the road the next afternoon. It was as exciting as the carnival which had come to town the previous summer. Winter could be adventurous.



## Family Photographs

Thank you to Kathy Nichols of Western Illinois University Archives and of the McDonough County Historical Society for help in assembling the following information.

With the holidays over and more time being spent indoors, it is now time to organize and preserve collections of photos. Many families have photographs dating to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and if these are not preserved, priceless family and historical documents will be lost to the ages. The following paragraphs deal with the identification of certain nineteenth-century photographs and their preservation.

### Identifying Types of Photographs:

**Three types of nineteenth-century family photographs that may be found in decorative cases are daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and tintypes.** Commonly, cases were made of wood, covered with tooled leather or embossed paper that simulated leather. Since all three types of cased photographs appear similar, what follows is a guide to distinguishing them without removing them from their cases and risking damage.

**Daguerreotypes** are one-of-a-kind photographs on silver-coated copper plates, packaged behind glass. They have a grayish, mirror-like quality and change from negative to positive, depending on the angle at which they are held. Images are often laterally reversed because they are direct positives, so lettering on signs may be reversed and wedding rings may appear on what seems to be right instead of left hands. Color was sometimes added by means of gilding or pigments applied with small brushes. Introduced in 1839 by Louis-Jacques-



Decorative Case Example

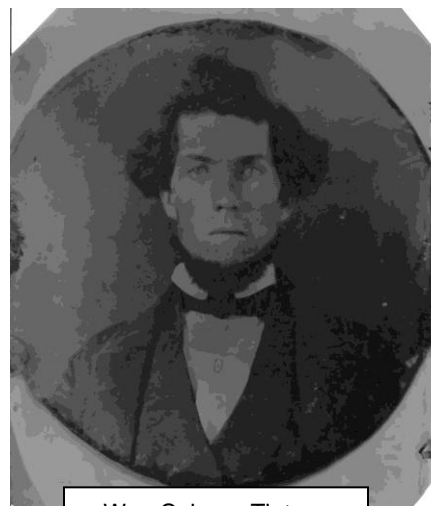
Mande Daguerre, this was the first commercially successful photographic process. Daguerreotypes

were popular through the 1840's and into the 1850's, but then were replaced by less expensive and more easily viewed ambrotypes and tintypes.

**Ambrotypes**, patented in 1854 by James Ambrose Cutting, are collodion on glass negatives that are intentionally underexposed so that the negative image appears as a positive when viewed against a dark background. They were typically turned over during framing to protect the emulsion side and to correct the lateral reversal. Sometimes they were produced on colored glass, eliminating the need for dark backings and were also at times hand colored.

**Tintypes** are non-reflective, one-of-a-kind photographs on a sheet of iron (not tin) coated with a dark enamel and at times were hand colored. Tintypes first appeared in 1856, but had pretty much stopped being made by the time of World War I. Soon, cases for tintypes were dispensed with since they were more expensive than the tintypes themselves. Because they were durable, many tintypes survive.

In summary, for identification purposes, look for the positive to negative image when viewing daguerreotypes at an angle. Tintypes can be distinguished from ambrotypes with a magnet. Also, tintypes have a duller appearance and are grayish black or brown.



Wm. Cabeen Tintype

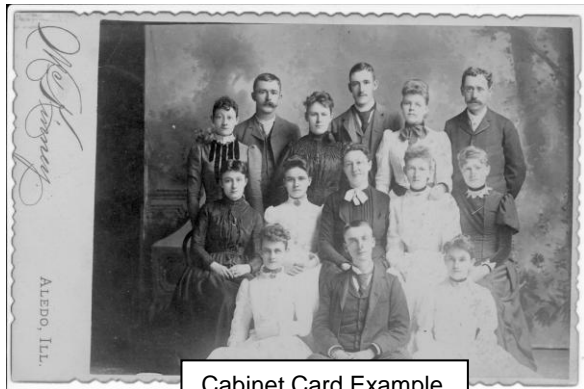
Other types of old photos:

**Albumen** prints were made by coating ordinary paper with an emulsion composed of light-sensitive silver salts suspended in albumen. (egg white). Since a negative was used, many prints could be made. Albumen was typically used for cartes-de-visite and cabinet cards. They are particularly prone to fading, and without protection the image may transfer to the back of another photo.

**Cartes-de-visite** were made on paper affixed to card stock 4 x 2 1/2 inch. Their name comes from the fact that in France, where they were developed, they were used as calling cards. In America, they were rarely used for that purpose but instead were traded with friends or placed in albums designed especially for them. Cartes-

de-visite became popular in the 1850's and were made until about 1900, when they were replaced in popularity by the larger cabinet card.

**Cabinet cards** were mounted on heavy card stock, measuring 4 1/2 X 6 1/2 inches, and were typically placed in a leaning fashion in curio cabinets or slipped into albums made like those designed to



Cabinet Card Example

hold cartes-de-visite. They were introduced in 1866 and lost much of their popularity after 1900.

More information on types of photos and a glossary may be found from a link from the [www.eastmanhouse.org](http://www.eastmanhouse.org) main page.

The next newsletter will deal more specifically with dating old photos.



## Preserving Your Treasured Photos

Light, humidity, and extreme temperatures are the main destroyers of photographs, as well as acid, adhesive, insects, rodents, and oil from fingers. Never store photos where there will be humidity or temperature extremes, such as in attics or basements.

Photos can be stored in plastic pocket pages in

albums, where they can be organized and safely viewed. Look for plastic enclosures made from pure polyethelene, polypropylene, or polyester. Avoid polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which generates acids which can fade the photographs, as well as stick to them or cause the image to transfer to the plastic. Definitely avoid magnetic photo album pages or ones with adhesive. Also, be wary of purchasing album pages and pockets from discount stores, as they carry products that say they are archival quality or acid-free, but may not be so.

Also, photos and negatives can be stored in archival folders, sleeves, and envelopes and stacked or stored vertically in boxes. Look for paper enclosures that are high-quality, non-acidic, and lignin-free. If using paper envelopes, avoid center seams since the adhesive from them causes fading or staining.

Framed photographs should be properly matted with spacers to keep photos from coming in contact with glass. They should never be displayed in direct sunlight, near heat sources, or in damp locations. Ultra violet light, such as florescent or natural daylight, is particularly damaging. A much safer option is to display a duplicate copy and keep the original safely stored for future generations.

A safe way to caption a photograph is to write with a soft lead pencil on the back and along the edge. Place the photo on a hard surface and write with light pressure. Felt tip film marking pens may be used on modern, slick paper, but be sure that the ink is dry before stacking photos.

To insure that photo images are never lost, make digital copies of them and burn them to high-quality archival CD's packaged in separate plastic cases. Distribute copies of the CD's to several family members and store them in a completely different location than the original photographs. *(cont. on top of page 4)*

### Your Support is Vital!

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2007. We count on dues and donations to provide necessary funds for our projects and for the maintenance of the Essley-Noble Museum complex. Thank you to all our patrons!

- ( ) Annual Membership - \$15.00 (one household)
- ( ) Lifetime Membership - \$300.00
- ( ) Corporate/Business Fee - \$100.00

Send to: Jim Runyon  
756 Hwy 94  
Aledo, IL 61231

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*(Preserving Your Treasured Photos cont:)* Images should be copied to new CDs frequently, as the materials CDs are made from is subject to physical damage and deteriorates rapidly.

Sources for safe archival storage material include Light Impressions 800-828-6216 (LightImpressionsDirect.com), Gaylord 800-448-6160 (gaylord.com), and Conservation Resources (conservationresources.com). For further information or questions about storing your photographs, check with the staff at the WIU Archives, 1-309-298-2717, or with other archival professionals.



### Cemetery Committee

The MCHS Board of Directors realizes the need for a comprehensive map showing Mercer County rural cemeteries, active and inactive. If you know of any cemeteries that may be a generation away of being lost or forgotten, please call Ronn Dillavou 592-2937. Also, community members are needed to serve on the cemetery committee for identifying locations or for constructing the map. Again, call Ronn.



#### Coming Events:

- April 2** Museum opens for the season
- April 21** Spring open meeting 7:00p.m. at the museum(Program TBA)

#### NOTICE:

Our membership rolls are being updated and this may be the last newsletter for those who have not responded for the past year. We need your support!



This newsletter issue sponsored by: