



# 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

April – Oct: Wed, Sat, Sun 1-5:00pm  
Nov - March: Saturdays 12:00-4:00pm



### Officers & Board of Directors

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Harriett Reynolds  
Sandi Sharer

Veda Meriwether, Curator  
Dennis Henderson, Sunday Host



### For Genealogy Queries write to:

MCHS Genealogy Dept.  
PO Box 269  
Aledo IL 61231-2504



Please address all correspondence to:  
PO Box 269

"Mail is no longer delivered to the museum  
building."

### Memberships available for \$15/household

For membership or change of address contact:

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



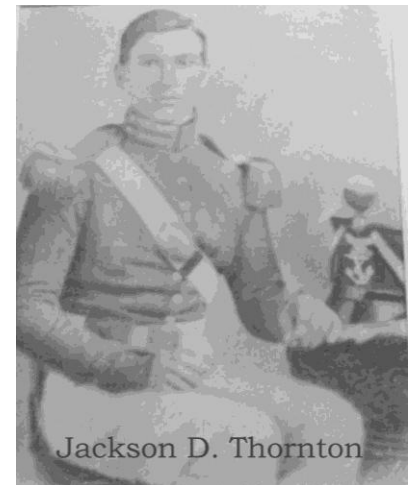
Website: [www.mchsil.org](http://www.mchsil.org)  
Email: [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com)

## JACKSON D. THORNTON SERVED HIS COUNTRY WELL

The earliest portrait of a Mercer County resident that we have at the museum hangs on the wall near the files. It portrays Jackson D. Thornton during his service as a Marine, 1850 – 1853.

Jackson Thornton was born in Pennsylvania in 1828 and at the age of 19 enlisted for service in the Mexican War, 1847 – 1848, and was stationed at Vera Cruz.

Less than two years after he served in the Mexican War, Jackson was in Washington, D. C. ready to join Perry's expedition to open trade with Japan. But one of the military commanders advised him to instead join the expedition being organized to oppress the slave trade coming from Africa. Jackson traveled across the country to San Francisco and October 15, 1850 enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He served three years on the U.S.

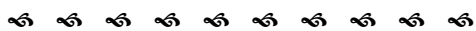


Jackson D. Thornton

Frigate Savannah, two of which were on the west coast of Africa. Jackson was discharged in September, 1853, in Brooklyn, New York.

After his service in the Marines, Jackson moved west to Illinois where an older brother Hiram was living in Mercer Co. In May of 1856 Jackson wed Lucy Wharton in Rock Island County. But when the Civil War began, Jackson once again volunteered for service for his country. He enlisted from Mercer County on August 2, 1862, as a private in Co. G, 124<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry. From his Civil War muster roll, we learn that he was a 5' 4" tall, red-haired, hazel-eyed, blacksmith when he enlisted at New Boston to serve for three years. His Civil War service was in Alabama and Mississippi, where he took part in the Siege of Vicksburg. During his tour of service, the 124<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry marched over 7,000 miles, and "engaged in two sieges and twenty four pitched battles and skirmishes". He had been promoted to sergeant before his discharge in 1865 after the close of the war.

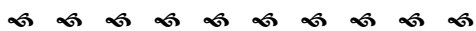
Jackson Thornton died at the age of 83 in 1911, and is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery at Millersburg.



## Curator's Corner

By Veda Meriwether

We had a visit from the Essley Noble Burger family in November. Rose Marie Essley Burger brought her family in to review our displays. I enjoyed meeting Rose, son Jeff and daughter-in-law Tammy as well as their children Addison Noble Burger and Kendall all the way from North Carolina. Conversation with Rose's daughter Lark Burger from Lansing, MI, was also enjoyable. We appreciate the Poker Chip set that Rose donated that belonged to E. L. Essley, her Great Uncle. Thanks again, Rose, for introducing your lovely family



### MERCER COUNTY CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

When visiting the museum, take a look at the booklet, *A Collection of Civil War Letters Written by Mercer County Soldiers*, compiled by Gene Kelly of Aledo, who some years ago researched old issues of Mercer County newspapers for letters written by Civil War soldiers to the editors telling of their experiences in the war. They told of their experiences on the marches from one battle to another, the hardships, the ambushes of Rebel forces, the bridges that had been destroyed, and how the soldiers crossed the many rivers. After reading these letters, one has a greater appreciation of what our "boys" went through.

Marilyn Nelson of Joy first loaned the book to board member Sandra Sharer to view and copy. Finding that a good number of the pages were extremely faint and hard to read, Sandi retyped the book, making it available for reading at the museum. After doing that, she received a phone call from Keith Chandler of Aledo, who had a copy of the same booklet that he donated it to the museum. We thank both Keith and Marilyn for adding to our Mercer County Civil War Soldiers records.

Sandi says, "As a volunteer at the museum, I have been studying Microfilm records, looking for obituaries of Civil War Soldiers of Mercer County. When this project was started, I thought perhaps there might be 1,000 soldiers who fought in the Civil War. As my list grew, from Honor Roll books, Adj. Generals Reports, obituary books, cemetery records, etc, I now have 2,215 names on my list to research, with more being added each time. Who knows how many will be on the list by the time my research is coming even close to an end, which I assume will be sometime in the next 5 to 10 years!

I thought when starting this project that I might have one 4" ring binder of information, but that one book has now grown into 5 binders and two more on their way.

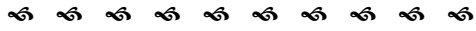
"My ancestors were in Company E of the 102nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, and lived in Suez Township, which is now Norwood. (During the 1860's that community was called North Henderson. The railroad wanted towns and settlements about every 8 miles, and wanted to name a settlement somewhere else "North Henderson", so the people of Old North Henderson voted to let the railroad take that name, and renamed themselves "Norwood.") As I learned more about my great Uncles and their military records, I grew to want to know more about all of the Mercer County Civil War soldiers, thus this project began. When I learned that the boys and men from Norwood enlisted in Company E of the 102nd



On the steps at the far right are believed to be Matthew B. Kennedy second from the end in the darker suit, and his brother Leander Kennedy on the very end in the light suit. Let us know if someone has further information about the photo.

Ill. Infantry at Knoxville, IL, I assumed that they took wagons and horses to enlist. But most of them walked from the Norwood area to Knoxville. In reading the letters to local newspaper, one begins to realize just how many miles these men marched and walked during the war. We know what winter conditions are in our area, but I learned that for the most part these men wore the same pair of shoes or boots during the whole war. There were many men who during winter walked and marched in bare feet, as their boots and shoes wore out before they could get new pairs. A great many of our Mercer County "Boys" were in Sherman's March to the sea, and later the March to Washington, D.C. and participated in

the Grand Review. With every one of those soldiers returning from war, came stories of their adventures. Also, besides the obituaries of those men, I find interesting happenings of Mercer County, which adds to my enthusiasm for this project. As I gather this information and as these stories come to light, I will be adding them to future MCHS newsletters."



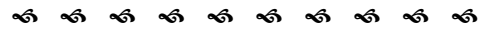
### Farewell and Welcome

There have been several changes in the membership of our Board of Directors. First, a huge **Thank you to Cheryl McCaw and Alyce Robinson** who have retired. Both have dedicated countless hours to the Mercer County Historical Society and will be missed, but they both have promised to still help us out. A hearty **welcome to our newest members Stephanie Braucht and Roger Kiddoo.**

Stephanie has lived in Mercer County except for the first three years of her life. Her family came when her father took his first administrative and teaching position at Keithsburg Grade School. She and her husband Blaine live on the family farm in Duncan Township. Blaine's great great grandfather, John Braucht, Sr., came to Mercer County in 1851, and settled on this farm the following year. Blaine's Gilmore and Willits ancestors already had been in Mercer County for many years before that. Blaine and Stephanie have two grown sons, Morgan in Jacksonville, IL and Jared in Rock Island. Stephanie is in her third year of retirement, having taught English at Rockridge High School, then being a school counselor at Westmer and then at Rockridge. She enjoys spending time reading and doing genealogy. She and Blaine share a love of antiques, geology, and trains (both collecting and riding). Stephanie has been a regular in the genealogy department at the museum and she says that she is quite pleased to become a member of the Board of Directors, feeling that this is a

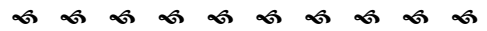
worthwhile way of pursuing her interests.

Roger Kiddoo of Joy claims he is being "recycled" because he had served on the board earlier, but we welcome his experience and talents. The Kiddoo family came to Mercer County from Pennsylvania in the 1840's, settling in the Joy area. They have traditionally been farmers, which Roger continues in partnership with his son Doug in Duncan Township. Roger and his wife Carol are also parents to a daughter, Kay. Roger is active in the Joy United Methodist Church, the Farm Bureau at county and state levels and has served on school boards and Joy State Bank.



### New Website

Check out our new website [www.mchsil.org](http://www.mchsil.org) It is in its infancy, but more will be added and updated. We are most appreciative of Alicia Ives who built and maintained our previous site, but the server was discontinued and we had to change. Thank you Alicia for all of your work! Our new site is being designed by PC Works from Aledo and will feature news about events at the museum and MCHS, have photos, links, and will give you a link to contact us. You can also email us [mcmuseum@frontier.com](mailto:mcmuseum@frontier.com)



### Bountiful Harvest

In the September 23, 1881 Aledo Democrat, and under the Sunbeam community news was this bit on a day's corn harvest: "One man by the name of Garrett husked and weighed 102 bushels. A man by the name of Brown husked, weighed and cribbed on the same farm, the same day 118 bushels. We hear of a man by the name of Vance who husked and cribbed 150 bushels in Abington Township". Imagine what these men might have thought if they had been told that 120 years later on that same ground, a machine could harvest an average 2,000 bushels of shelled corn in an hour.

#### Your Support is Vital!

Annual memberships expired December 31, 2009. 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 \_\_\_\_\_

The Essley-Noble Museum would appreciate a donation of an old, solid bookcase, preferable wood that would blend in. If you have one, call or email the museum. Thank you



## *Thank you ...*

...to our corporate members, who give us needed financial and community support!

**Country Bank...Farmers State Bank of Western IL...Ford & Maynard Agency...Freedom Bank...Joy State Bank... Midwest Bank of Western IL.** Also, thank you to **Farmers State Bank of Western IL, Aledo Walmart, Lou Sutton/Tracy Bigham Country Companies** and **Joy State Bank** for sponsoring MCHS newsletters for 2009.

\*\*\*\*\*Reminder\*\*\*\*\*

**New Winter hours Saturdays 12:00-4:00**

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Thank you to Rich Luxmore who has digitally, and diligently, kept our membership list for the last 25 years. Until we recently put the records on the museum's computer we did not realize the extent of Rich's work. Forgive us if there have been mistakes in the transfer and let us know of any changes.



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## Coming Events

**April 3, 2010** Begin regular hours W., Sat., Sun. 1:00-5:00

**April 19, 2010** Spring open meeting 7:00 pm About and at the restored Graham Lee barn 135th Ave, 1 mile west of Hwy. 94 (More details next letter)

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This newsletter sponsored by:

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