

Kendall  
County  
Historical  
Society



Established 1970  
Yorkville, Illinois

# Newsletter

Fall 2023



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. 23 and 24, 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, a craft fair, hay rides, a 50/50 raffle, and a bake sale.





# Letter from our President:

Lyon Farm has undergone a face lift in 2023. Repair and replace was our motto.

Leading the charge in this endeavor were our brick-and-mortar team members Jack Jenkins, Pam Watts, Bob Watts, Jim Berland, and Dan Tilts. They began first identifying the needed repairs, then prioritizing by most needed. Repairs included new decking on the train station and Corrigan Store, and a new roof on the blacksmith shop.

Thank you to Pam Watts for beautifying our landscaping this summer. A big thanks to our history team, Lisa Wolancevich, Christian Landorf, Johanna Byram, Caleb Landorf, Scott Stevens, Michael Wolancevich, and Mark Anderson, who spent months researching techniques for monument repair and cleaning, then up-righted stones and cleaned them after completing the first phase of our unofficial Graveyard restoration.

Sadly, we lost our sign and row of Persian lilacs due



**Lee Hohmann**

to I.D.O.T expanding Rt. 71. Don't worry. Once I.D.O.T is done widening Route 71, we have a plan for a new sign and landscaping.

2023 also welcomed in our new blacksmith, Steven Helis. Steve is not the only artist to join us this year. We are proud to announce that Michael Nolan from a Gathering of Woodcarvers will be hosting classes in woodcarving during our Fall Fest. There are still some spots available, call the farm for details.

The library is still looking for old Kendall Phone books, Kendall Year Books, Boy Scout, Girl Scout memorabilia, and any historic items from Kendall County History.

Call The Farm for details.

As a reminder, our library historians are available on Saturdays between 10:30-2:30 pm or by appointment to help you find your Kendall history. Call the farm for details.

*Lee Hohmann*

## The Kendall County Historical Society Membership Form

**The Kendall County Historical Society has some exciting plans for the future.**

**Why not take out a membership for yourself or a friend or relative who has an interest in Kendall County's fascinating history? Benefits include: three newsletters a year, interesting guest speakers, invitation to the Annual Dinner each April, and voting rights in new board elections each April.**

**For more information on the KCHS, check out our website at [www.lyonfarmKchs.org](http://www.lyonfarmKchs.org).**

**Please support our mission to save Kendall County history by becoming a member.**

**Just fill out this form and mail it in to the address on the bottom of this page.**

**Name (Last, First):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_

**State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to receive my newsletters electronically: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Annual Membership:**

Individual: \$20 per person: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \$30 per family (per household) \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor: \$40 per person: \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Institution: \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

### **Lifetime Membership:**

Lifetime Individual Membership: \$175 \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime Family Membership: \$300 \_\_\_\_\_

Business partner Patron: \$500 \_\_\_\_\_

Benefactor: \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to the Kendall County Historical Society and mail to:

**KCHS Membership, P.O. Box 123, Yorkville, IL 60560**

# Some Fall Festival Attractions . . .



*Blacksmith Steven Helis*

## Blacksmithing

Joliet resident Steven Helis says he first started blacksmithing over 40 years ago.

“When I was in Boy Scouts, I used to volunteer at the Will County Historical Society in Lockport. We were rebuilding old buildings from around Will County. . . I started helping in the blacksmith’s shop and I got kind of hooked that way.”

He also has participated in re-enactments for Black Powder events, and is well-versed in the history of blacksmithing. He said he heard about events going on at Lyon Farm, and that they had a blacksmith shop and finally swung by. He was shown the blacksmith shop - “And everything went from there,” he says.

“Everything was kind of in working order.”

During the Fall Festival, he will demonstrate various aspects of forging iron into useful implements, tools and works of art at the Village’s blacksmith shop. He will have various hand forged items for sale. In addition, souvenir horseshoes will be available for purchase. Helis will punch a name, business or message on a custom horseshoe.

“We also are going to have an activity where people can punch their names on a medallion they’ve purchased for \$3,” Helis says. “We can string it for them and make a necklace or whatever.”

Steve can be contacted via his facebook site Steve’s Signature Horseshoes.

## Three days of woodcarving classes scheduled



*Michael Nolan*

Returning for his second year, Boulder Hill resident Michael Nolan, owner of Studio Carvings, will be once again offer three days of woodcarving classes from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, Sept. 22, 23, and 24, during this year’s annual Fall Festival.

Nolan, who has been carving since 2012, says four instructors from around the U.S. will be teaching the classes on different types of woodcarving in the Exhibit Building at Lyon Farm.

Cost for the three classes is \$250. Pre-registration, which costs \$30, is required and can be done online at [www.gatheringofwoodcarvers.com](http://www.gatheringofwoodcarvers.com).

T-shirts will be available for \$25 and there will be an awards picnic following the classes on Saturday. Tickets for the picnic cost \$16.



KCHS member Paul Burd will once again be out at the Fall Festival cooking up his Cowboy Beans in a kettle over an open fire. A Festival favorite, the beans are sold by the bowlful.



# A Very Hairy Donation . . .

by Johanna Byram

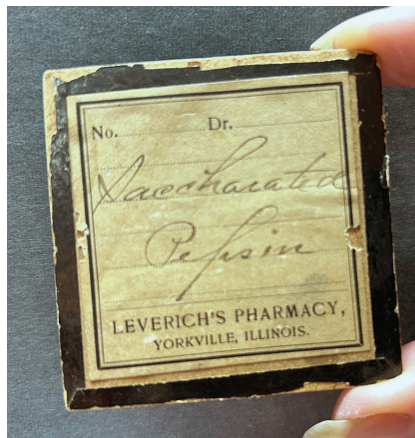
For centuries prior to the invention of photography, people used jewelry and other mementos made from human hair to remember and honor distant or departed friends and loved ones. Warriors wore bracelets made from their sweetheart's hair into battle for good luck. Resin made from tree sap was frequently used to preserve curls to create necklaces and brooches. Wire was used to twist locks of hair into elaborate floral bouquets. The popularity of hair jewelry reached it's peak in the Victorian era when in 1888 Kodak made film cameras available to the average consumer. According to the Smithsonian Institute, the custom of creating mementos from human hair all but disappeared around 1925.

This July the library and museum staff of Lyon Farm received a package from Jerry and Patricia Lanford of Moundridge, Kansas. The couple cleaned out a home in Inman, Kansas owned by a man named George Osborn. The package contained a medicine label from Leverich's Pharmacy in Yorkville and three "forget-me-not" bouquets made of human hair and wire. The three hair bouquets each have a paper label attached with the name of an individual. They read as follows: Grandma Harkness, Janetta Harkness and Emma Anderson. The box also contained a note saying that George Osborn was the grandson of Janette Bridgens.

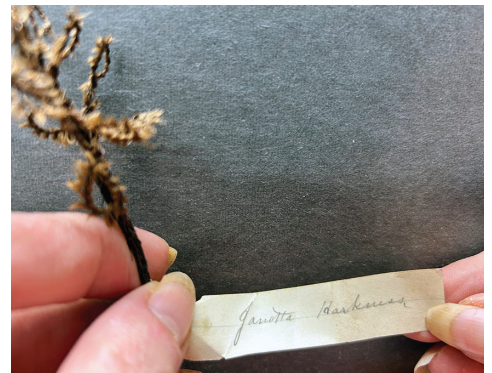
The Library at Lyon Farm has a large archive of the Harkness family and genealogical records that follow the family from their origins in Scotland. The family first settled in Essex County, New York when they immigrated to America, before settling in Yorkville. The Harkness family history has two Janetta (or Janette) Harkness's. The first was Janette Penman Harkness born November 29, 1801, in Scotland. She had nine children and died February 26, 1891, at the age of 89. She is buried in Aux Sable Grove, NaAuSay Cemetery. She had a daughter named Janette born May 15, 1838, in Scotland and died September 20, 1847, at the age of nine. The younger Janette is buried in Crown Point, Essex County, New York along side her younger brother, Robert, who died at age three of the same illness.

Emma Jannette Anderson was born on a farm south of Yorkville on February 1, 1858. She was the daughter of Narvey and Margaret Harkness Anderson. Emma never married and spent her adult life caring for invalid and disabled residents of Yorkville. Today we would call her a home healthcare professional. She passed away in April of 1937.

The identity of Grandma Harkness remains a mystery. We do, however, know how the hair bouquets found their way to Kansas. The eldest daughter of Janette Penman Harkness married a man named Newton Wells Bridgens. In 1876 the couple purchased land in the Arkansas River Valley and settled near Inman, Kansas. Janette Bridgens was George Osborn's grandmother.



*Grandma Harkness bouquet*



*Janetta Harkness bouquet*



*Emma Harkness bouquet*

We also did some research on the medicine label included in the package we received. Leverich's Pharmacy was in the first commercial building in downtown Yorkville at 201 South Bridge St. Today that building. is gone, replaced with the parking lot on the southwest corner of Hydraulic and Bridge Street, next to Crusade Burger Bar.





*Medals were awarded in 1919 to Kendall County World War I veterans during a special picnic in front of the Courthouse.*

## Kendall County unclaimed World War I medals becomes a project for KCHS librarians, volunteers

In January 2023 Kendall County Circuit Clerk Matthew Prochaska announced that he had found a box of unclaimed World War I medals that had been issued by the Kendall County Board in 1919 to all Kendall County veterans who had served from 1917 to 1919.

Mr. Prochaska provided a list of names of the veterans whose medals remained unclaimed: Capt. Andrew Birkland, Paul Canniff, Harold R. Heap, Harry Holverson, William B. Johnson, Harvey L. Nelson, Chauncey I Pecoy, 2nd Lt. Louis A. Sears, Louis P. Schultz, Arthur Sebby, and 2nd Lt. Lewis Steward.

The announcement inspired Lisa Wolancevich and Johanna Byran, KCHS board members and historians at the Elmer Dickson Memorial Library at Lyon Farm, to organize a search to find the families of these soldiers to give them the medals that commemorate their sacrifice for the nation. They did it in collaboration with students in a social studies class from Grace Holistic Center for Education in Yorkville, which scheduled classes at the Farm.

Cynthia P. Shevokas, math and social studies teacher for 5th-12th grades and AP coordinator at Grace, explains that the Kendal Country Historical Society at Lyon Farms is an excellent resource for students to grow their knowledge and skills in social studies.

"The students at GHCFE spent time researching the families of those awarded World War 1 Metals," Shevokas says. "While exploring, students had the opportunity to examine their family trees. Overall, the research project touched the students' hearts and changed their lives forever. Breakthroughs of understanding how to go back into the past and learn more about the history of WWI and the families have touched our hearts, and we are forever grateful for Lyon

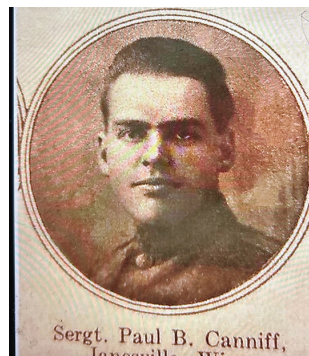


*Three of the students from Grace Holistic Center for Education listen as Lisa Wolancevich explains methods for searching for the families of lost soldiers using genealogy resources. Farm and their passions!"*

The students' research discovered that two of the soldiers on the medals list, Paul Canniff and Harry Holverson, had died during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in France and are buried in a U.S. veterans' cemetery in that country. Three other soldiers, Louis Sears, Arthur Sebby and Harold Heap, were also tracked down by other researchers on the project, allowing five medals to be given to their descendants. That leaves six men still unaccounted for.

The search goes on Wolancevich says. She is optimistic that all will eventually be found.

"It's just going to take time."



*Paul Canniff*



*Harry Holverson*



# Prominent Kendall County citizen Arthur Lord's history discovered at a local garage sale

by Johanna Byram

When you drive past a garage sale, do you stop to see if there are treasures to be discovered? Maybe you're the type that doesn't stop because you figure that every garage sale has the same old junk.

Well, this story may make you change your mind.

A few years ago, Jack Jenkins, vice president and farm manager at the Kendall County Historical Society, found a treasure at a local garage sale. The treasure he found came in a little blue box with the words “Bailey, Banks and Bittle, Philadelphia” embossed in gold lettering on the side. Inside the box were 11 military medals and four brass buttons from a military uniform.

The largest medal in the box was star shaped and mounted on a red, white and blue ribbon. Engraved on the back of the medal was the name Arthur E. Lord. Who was Arthur E. Lord, and what did he do to earn the Silver Star Medal, our nation's third highest military decoration?

Jack turned to the research team in the library at Lyon Farm to answer the question of who Arthur E. Lord was. We began our search at the website for the National Archives ([Archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov)), but quickly discovered that there are thousands of records for individuals named Arthur Lord. More details than just a name were needed to narrow down the search.

Next, we turned to [Kendallkin.org](http://Kendallkin.org), the data base of Kendall County history built by the late Elmer Dickson. (The library at Lyon Farm was named in his honor). This was a far more productive search. We discovered that Arthur's full name was Arthur Evarts Lord and that he was a physician from Plano who served in the U. S. Army in World War I. The database also gave us his date of birth, October 5, 1883, and his date

of death, September 13, 1947. We now had the key pieces of data to continue our search.

The third website we searched was Familysearch.org because of their extensive military database, and because they are a lot more user friendly than government websites. There we found a wealth of information in the form of Arthur's obituary, first printed in the Aurora Beacon Newspaper in 1947.

*“Arthur Evans Lord. Plano, Ill. born in Plano, Oct. 5, 1883; Rush Medical College, Chicago 1908; health officer; past President of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States: served in the medical corps of the U.S. Army during the Mexican border campaign and overseas during World War I; for many years surgeon general of the Illinois National Guard, retiring in 1946 with the rank of Brigadier General; president of the Plano High School board; for many years deputy coroner and coroner of Kendall County; director of Plano Bank; on the staff of St. Charles Hospital in Aurora; died in Sandwich, September 13, 1947, aged 63, of coronary heart disease.”*



The search for more information was turned over to another researcher, Beverly Casey, who grew up in Plano and knows all the old families. Beverly found a photograph of Arthur along with the name of his wife, Ruth Margarite Sears, and his four daughters: Ruth Marie, Sara Frances, Marilyn Jane and Emily. Beverly is continuing to research Arthur and his military service. If you would like to see his medals, they are currently on loan to the Millington History Museum, 206 West Walnut St., Millington, IL. 60537.  
Email 252bcrazy@gmail.com





## *Lyon Farm sign post commemorates Mae Dunbar's early donation*

Did you ever wonder about the Dunbar sign post at Lyon Farm and Village?

On either end of the little street that runs in front of the Farm's historic buildings there is a signpost, and it reads, "Dunbar Lane". The post worn with time, and almost forgotten, still stands as a little-known tribute to the woman who gifted a large amount of money to the Kendall County Historical Society, which greatly helped it to become the historical setting it is today.

Founded in 1971, the Kendall County Historical Society's early supporters had the vision that the Historical Society share education and

preserve history for the residents of Kendall County. A very early supporter was Mrs. Mae Dunbar. Born Mae Compton, she was the only daughter of Albert Compton and Mary Pratt. The Compton's came West in a covered wagon, first settling in Wayne, which is near St. Charles IL, but soon they moved by covered wagon to Platteville, invited there by Albert's friend Robert Plat (founder of Platteville).

In Platteville Albert Compton purchased land from the government for \$1.25 per acre..

Mr. Compton passed away while visiting relatives in Michigan in 1877. His wife continued to reside in the farmhouse they built and died on November 18, 1900, leaving sole possession of the farm to their daughter Mae. During her life, in addition to growing up on the farm in Platteville, Mae Dunbar taught school in rural Newark in Kendall County. Prior to her marriage to Orrie Dunbar, the Newark postmaster, in 1918, she was also a correspondent to the newspaper and a bookkeeper for Warden Jones in Aurora.

The couple lived in Yorkville for a time, and in Newark, but then moved out to her farm in Platteville. She passed away on April 15, 1973, and in her will she left \$79,437, which in today's dollars would equal about \$448,877, to the Society. She left her beloved farm for sale to benefit the Kendall County Historical Society. At the time of the gift, Lyon Farm and Village had just begun moving the historic buildings to the Farm. Her gift helped complete the restoration of the Village. As a fitting tribute, The Kendall County Historical Society dedicated a street in the Village in her honor.

Ms. Dunbar never saw the completion of the preservation of the buildings on Dunbar Lane, but her legacy lives on.

Mae Compton wrote about her beloved farm:

*"This place is holy ground where my forefathers trod, sacred were abound, for which I thank God,"*

**Mae Compton Dunbar**



*Mae Dunbar*



*Dunbar farmhouse*



## *Upcoming Events . . .*

### Halloween at the Farm

Sundays, Oct. 15 & 22

1 to 4 p.m.



### Christmas at the Farm

Saturday

and

Sunday,

Dec. 16

&

Dec. 17

1 to 4 p.m.



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