

## Illinois State Genealogical Society honors Elmer Dickson with Hall of Fame Award

Yorkville native Elmer Dickson, who died on Sept. 16, 2018, has been posthumously awarded the Illinois State Genealogical Society's (ISGS) Hall of Fame Award.

In a ceremony at the Kendall County Historical Society's Lyon Farm on Wednesday, Oct. 13, Candace Marx from the ISGS and Gail Ryan from the Fox Valley Genealogical Society (FVGS) made the presentation to Elmer's brother, Fred Dickson. Elmer was nominated by the FVGS.

"The award is given posthumously in odd numbered years to the person who has done significant contributions to genealogy," Marx explained. "It's our most distinguished award."

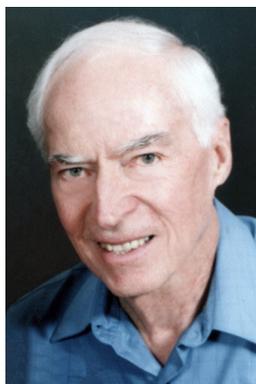
Marx said Elmer had put in several decades doing research on Kendall County families and had compiled indexes. He created a GenWeb site that is now available on KendallKin.org for genealogy research.

"He did a terrific job promoting genealogy," she said.

"He did hours and hours of work," Ryan added. "He compiled over 50 history and genealogy books, some of them available in the Abraham Lincoln Library in Springfield, and some are here in the Dickson Library (named for Elmer) at Lyon Farm."

Elmer, who was born to Homer G. and Alice (Harkness) Dickson in 1931, grew up on the family farm north of Yorkville, and graduated from Yorkville High School in 1949. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1950, married wife Sydney in 1955, and had two children, Kim and Clay.

"He was in the Air Force for four years," remembers his brother Fred. "He got out about 1954 and went back to farming for five or six years, then decided he wanted to go to college."



*Elmer Dickson*



*Gail Ryan, president of the FVGS, and Candace Marx, then ISGS president, present Fred Dickson with his brother Elmer's Hall of Fame Award in the Elmer Dickson Library at Lyon Farm.*

Fred said Elmer sold the family farm, and with some of the money from the sale enrolled at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. When he finished his four years, the University recruited Elmer to stay on as a grad student, giving him a scholarship, Fred said.

After he received a PhD in finance, Elmer and his family moved to California, where he taught Business Administration at California State University, Chico, from 1970 to 1990, and was the chairperson of the



*KSHS Vice President Jack Jemkins affixes a sign naming the Library at Lyon Farm the Elmer Dickson Library.*

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# Letter from our President:



**Lee Hohmann**

Happy New Year from all of us at Lyon Farm!

2022 has begun. With 2021 behind us, I will take a moment to reflect back. We began the year much as it ended, in the grips of a pandemic. Unsure of how the pandemic would effect our ability to reopen the farm, our group started looking for ways to do so in the safest way possible for both our volunteers and our guests. In May of 2021 we officially reopened after a hiatus of 14 months, opening first our library on Saturdays, and then the entire farm for visitors and photographers. September brought our 50th year celebration with our annual Fall Fest. Lyon Farm was excited to play host to more than 700 guests during our two day celebration. In October, we hosted Halloween on the Farm. Due to uncooperative weather, our numbers were down from Fall Fest, but all the hardy ghosts and goblins that came out were treated to trick or treat at all of our historic buildings and then taken on a hayride through the “haunted barn,” courtesy of the Boy Scouts. To round off our year, we celebrated with Christmas on the Farm with visits from Santa, Lionel train displays, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, craft making for children, and vendors with hand-crafted items for that last minute holiday gift. It was by all accounts the busiest holiday show in our history. Many happy guests. Even a mask couldn't hide the smiles when Santa walked through the door for his visit. We are excited about our 2022 schedule of events included in this newsletter. As a reminder, annual Membership dues are due April 1, 2022.

Thank you for all your continued support for the Kendall County Historical Society at Lyon Farm.

## 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

	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal
<b>Mark one box:</b>		
<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 \$ _____		

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](mailto:lyonfarmkchs1@gmail.com) or call 630-553-6777

or visit our website at [www.lyonfarmkchs.org](http://www.lyonfarmkchs.org)

# Lyon Farm Beekeeper Bill Novicki shares some tips on the art of keeping hives, collecting honey



*Beekeeper Bill Novicki suited up in his protective gear with daughter, left, and with one of his hives out at Lyon Farm, right.*



Bill Novicki of Sheraton, IL took over bee keeping at Lyon Farm three years ago, after buying out the business of the previous beekeeper, his friend Dan Hoyt.

Novicki, who is the executive director of the Sandwich Park District and has a degree in parks and recreation management, with a minor in forestry, says he did it because “nature is my thing.”

“Any way I can be an environmentalist, anyway I can do that is interesting to me,” he says.

He not only cares for two bee hives at Lyon Farm, but also another two at Confirmation Park in Sandwich and one at his home. Before buying the equipment, he says he bought and read numerous books, learned from local mentors, and watched numerous videos online. Learning the ins and outs of his new hobby was definitely a learning experience, he says, but he thinks it went very smoothly.

“So, the biggest thing is in spring you have to install new bees. You have to purchase a packet of bees and introduce them to their new queen,” he says. “Illinois winters are very rough and its a common occurrence that all the bees will die. In 2021, I had to have new bees for the hives because they didn’t make it through the winter.”



*A standard hive with three boxes. The top two boxes are called the supers.*

In summertime, he said the main duty is checking on the hives and making sure larvae are being produced, and putting in more frames to give them more space. He says he goes out, usually by himself, once a week to check the hives. The best time to check the hives is at noon, he recommends, when many of the bees are away. Also, it’s best when the weather isn’t too hot or too cold. Although Novicki says he does wear a full protective suit with head gear when working with his bees, his Italian bees are more docile than average bees, but he says bees usually won’t bother you unless you bother them.

“They won’t fill that first box until late summer. They are producing honey until there are no more flowers. As long as everything looks good, you harvest the honey from the supers beginning in mid-summer to late fall,” he says.

The supers are the frames that hold the beekeeper’s honey. A hive has three boxes, he explained. The bottom box is called the deep box, where the bees’ honey is, and the upper two are supers for harvesting. The bees need the bottom frames to feed on, he explained. Without them, all the bees die. He doesn’t touch them, he said. A typical hive will have anywhere from 30,000 to 40,000 bees and if it is very productive, will fill up a super every two weeks. Although the average bee only lives 30 days, the queen can live from 3 to 5 years and hatches larvae every day.

“This is a fun hobby,” he says. “I absolutely want to keep doing it as long as I can.”

# Elmer Dickson, con't. . .

Department of Finance and Marketing for 10 years. On his retirement, Elmer made numerous trips back to Kendall County and even made journeys to Europe, principally to the British Isles, to research family trees.

“It always was a puzzle to me,” his brother Fred said. “He was never particularly close to family as we grew up. He just had a curiosity about it and it kept growing and growing.”

Fred, who is a lawyer, told his retired brother that he could make a lot of money as a financial expert in the law, but Elmer wasn't interested.

“It wasn't his thing,” Fred said. “He just had a great love of learning about people. When he came back, he would stay

with me or he and his wife would stay in a hotel, but during the day he would spend most of his time scrounging through records and going through cemeteries. He started with our mother's family. He found out a lot of things I wouldn't have known if not for his research.”

After doing his own family tree and his wife's, Elmer branched out, Fred said. He garnered a lot of facts about a lot of people that nobody had known previously.

“He could tell you how many Civil War veterans there were, and where they were buried,” Fred said. “He even found some Revolutionary War veterans.

“It was his undying love.”



*Left photo, Fred Dickson and KCHS Board vice president Jack Jenkins look over the Case steam engine tractor Fred's father, Homer Dickson, donated to the Society in the 1970s. Right, KCHS board members Lisa Wolancevich and Johanna Byram, left, and Jack Jenkins and Beverly Casey, far right, join Fred Dickson, Candace Marx of the Illinois State Genealogical Society, and Gail Ryan of the Fox Valley Genealogical Society in front of the Case steam engine on display at Lyon Farm.*

*Photos by Paul E. Burd Photography*

## Case Steam Engine . . .

Kendall County Historical Society Board Vice President Jack Jenkins has a love of antique tractors - large ones and small. He admits he once owned 54 gas tractors, but now has whittled his collection down to 12. So it is no wonder he is fascinated with the Case steam engine tractor on display at Lyon Farm.

The Case tractor, donated to the Society in the early 1970s by Yorkville resident Homer Dickson, was built in the early 1900s. It's a 65-horse-power model that was adaptable for almost any heavy-duty farming, according to staff at South Dakota State University, who renovated one of the engines. The University internet site added that the steam engines, developed in the late 1800s, originally were brought out to the Midwest to break up sod and easily handled a 6 to 8 bottom plow.

“They use almost 100 gallons of water a day,” Jack says. “They burn wood or coal. They used them in thrashing rings. Farmers got together and all pitched in, with one guy capable of running them. They used them for power on the thrashing machines after harvest.”

Jack said he put a new boiler into it, and had the water tank rebuilt six years ago.

“We rebuilt it with better steel,” Jack says, “so it actually can run at a higher steam power. It's completely restored. Until Covid caused us to shut down for a time, we did demonstrations at Lyon Farm. It's in perfect shape.”

For more information on Kendall County thrashing rings, books are available for research at the Elmer Dickson Library.



Above, the Dickson building dated 1953 located on the south side of the Fox River on the west side of Rt. 47, once home to the Dickson farm implement business and “Old Abe.” Right, Old Abe today.

## Case ‘Old Abe’ trademark on display at Lyon Farm

The “Old Abe” Eagle, the trademark from 1865 to 1969 of the J. I. Case Agricultural Equipment Manufacturing Co. of Racine, Wis., that was once on display at the Homer Dickson farm implement business in Yorkville, has found a new home at Lyon Farm.

Homer’s son Fred, who recently donated the valuable artifact to the Kendall County Historical Society, says he remembers going to his dad’s business as a boy with his mother, and trying to climb up on the four-and-a-half-foot tall emblem.

“Dad started his business in the 1930s,” Fred says. “In the 1950s he built the brick building in Yorkville on Rt. 47 on the right at the Fox River, on the south side.”

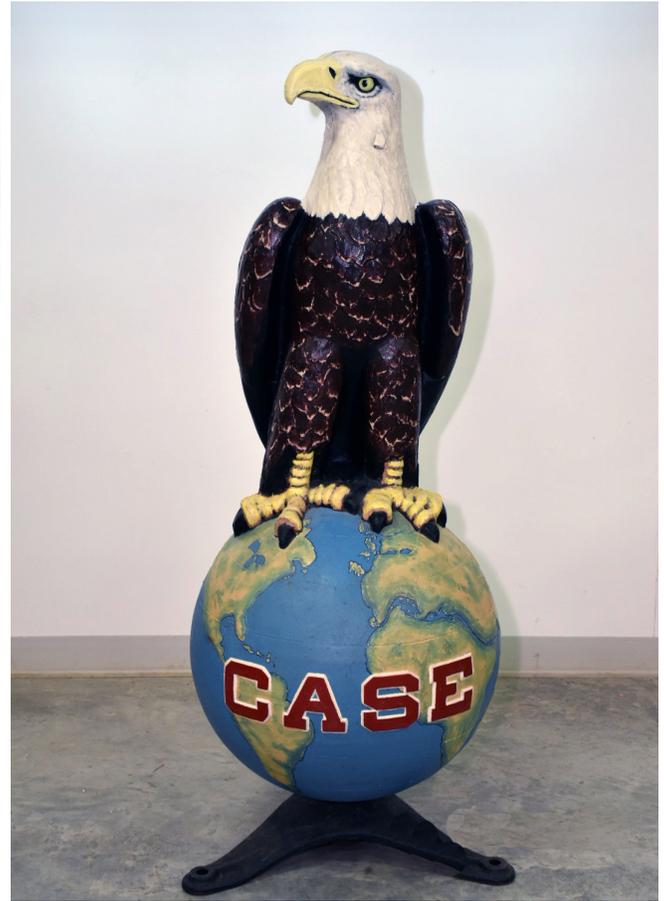
According to a brochure developed for the exhibit at Lyon Farm, Old Abe, the real life eagle on which the trademark was based, was captured in 1861 by a member of the Ojibwe tribe, who traded him to a Daniel McCann of Jim Falls, Wisconsin for a bushel of corn. McCann then sold the eagle for \$2.50 to the Eau Claire Badgers, which became Company C of the 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment. It became known as the Eagle Regiment during the Civil War, and its Captain Perkins named the eagle after Abraham Lincoln.

During the Civil War, the bird was carried on a wooden platform into 22 actions and 30 skirmishes. Although hit once by a musket ball that went through its wing and knocked off some feathers, Old Abe made it through the war intact. He was classified as a war relic and retired to a special two-room apartment with caretaker. He died in 1881 from smoke inhalation when the Wisconsin capitol building caught on fire.

In the meantime, Jerome Case put Old Abe’s emblem on Case tractors, and had a replica built and placed on a globe, to be used in company stores.

Fred says that since his father’s business closed, he has kept Old Abe on his globe down in the basement of his family home.

“A lot of people tried to buy it,” he says. “It was like having an



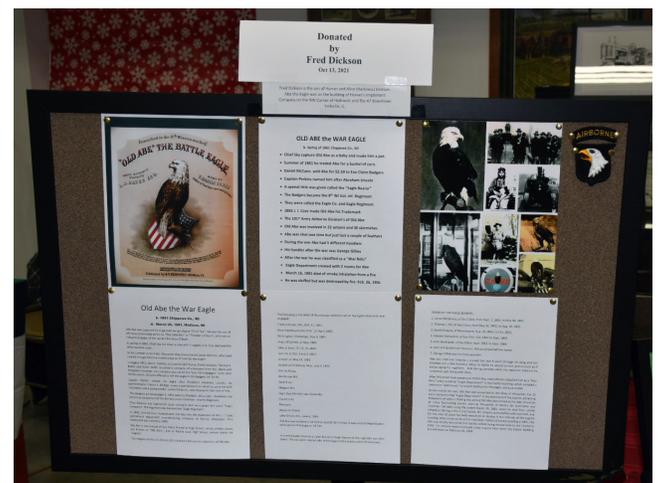
antique car. It’s of more interest to people who lived in that era.”

About five years ago, he says, he decided to have it appraised.

“One thing we did wrong, we repainted it,” he admits. “It would have been worth more money if we hadn’t done that.”

Still, he says it appraised for around \$10,000. And by donating it to the KCHS, he can be assured it won’t be given to a scrap dealer.

“It’s a really rare thing,” Fred says. “This way everybody can see it and enjoy it.”



# Lawrence Langland Uniforms Span 30 Year Service



Lawrence Q. Langland, far right, in one of the U.S. Army uniforms that he wore during his 30-year military career. Five of his uniforms and military gear, donated by his family, are on display at Lyon Farm.

by Beverly Casey

The U.S. Army uniforms worn by long-time Yorkville resident Lawrence Q. Langland (Lieutenant Colonel Retired) and donated by his family to Lyon Farm in 2021 are on display in the main building at the farm, with information about his extensive service.

Langlund, who was born on 20 May 1919 in Scarville, Iowa to Peder and Marie (Kettleston) Langlund, died on 9 Dec 2008 in Aurora. He was buried in the Elmwood Cemetery in Yorkville.

On 27 April 1942, Larry married Alta Mae Gabel, who passed away in 2013 at age 92. She and Larry were married for 66 years. During his years in Yorkville, he and Alta lived at 208 S. Bridge St. and 906 S. Main St.

After serving five years in the Army during WW II, Larry came home in 1946 and ran for Kendall County Sheriff, but had to give up the position when he was recalled to active service. He went on to serve another 25 years, during the Korean and the Vietnam Wars.

During World War II, Larry received the Silver Star, awarded for gallantry in action against a US enemy, and a Bronze Star, awarded for heroic or meritorious achievement or service, for his service in Beaumont, Belgium, and a Purple Heart, awarded to those wounded or killed during service, for his service in France for shrapnel in his hand. He received another Bronze Star during the Korean War, a Bronze Star in Africa from the battle of El Guettar, and a final Bronze Star during Vietnam in 1969. He also was awarded

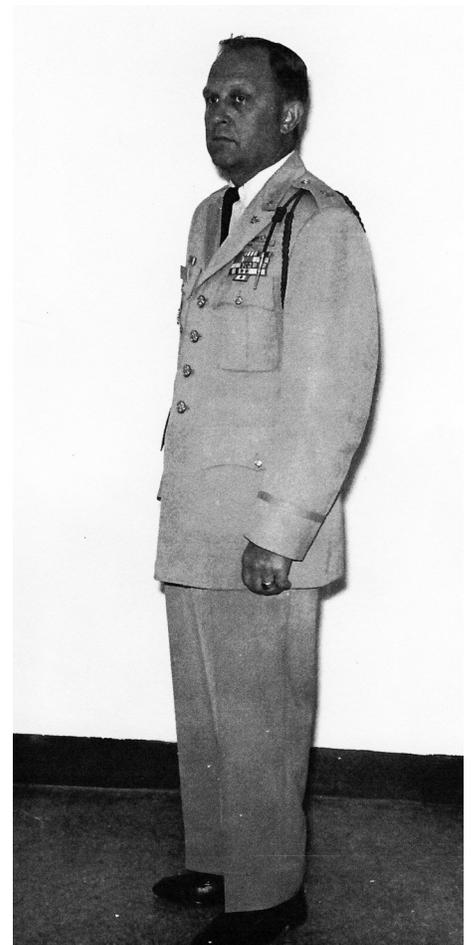
the Joint Service Commendation Medal.

During his 30 years in the Army, Larry served in the Sicilian Campaign, in Germany, Greece, Korea and Vietnam.

After his military career, Larry came back to Yorkville and established Langland Realty, which he owned for 15 years. He also became very active in community organizations. He was a member of both the Yorkville Lions Club and the Yorkville American Legion Post # 489. In addition, he was a Shriner with the Medinah Temple and a member of the Yorkville Masonic Lodge.

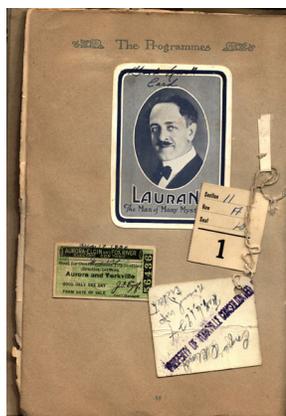
Larry also was a former member of the Yorkville Planning Commission and a longtime member of the Yorkville Congregational Church. Larry served from 1975 through 1994 on the board of the Yorkville National Bank. He was also active in several Plattville organizations, including the Plattville VFW, and was a member of the Retired Military Club.

In his retirement years, his family says he enjoyed golfing, traveling, his fishing vacations to Sanibel Island, Florida, and watching the Chicago "Cubbies" baseball games. Some of his travel highlights with his wife, Alta, included a trip to China, a Kenyan Safari in Africa, and a flight on the Concorde.



# 'Memory Book' offers look back to 1920's

by Johanna Byram



Notes passed in class between friends, programs from basketball tournaments and school plays, Valentine's Day cards, Commencement Day programs, dance cards and report cards: How many of these items did you save from your high school years? Engre Marie Oakland (Toots to her friends) saved them all.

Who is Engre you ask? Engre Oakland was a member of the class of 1927 at Yorkville Community High School. In May of 2021, the Kendall County Historical Society received a box of photographs and a "Memory Book" from Arlene Johnson of Rockford, IL, Engre's daughter-in-law. Looking through the pages of the "Memory Book" is like stepping back in time. The book gives the reader a glimpse of what it was like to be a teenager almost 100 years ago in Yorkville in the 1920's.

Did you know that Yorkville was a stop on the Vaudeville circuit?

Engre Oakland's "Memory Book" is just one small piece of the extensive collection of treasures that the Kendall County Historical Society has in the library at Lyon Farm. Our volunteers are in the process of digitally preserving the thousands of items that tell the story of the lives of the people who made Kendall County their home throughout the years.

## Thank You to Our Event Sponsors, Donors and Demonstrators:

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- Martin Plumbing, Yorkville
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- Bob Davidson
- Wackerlin Family, pumpkins
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- Jim & Joann Savino
- Wayne & Pat Norr
- Todd Milliron - Santa Claus

### Demonstrators who donated their time & goods

- Al Birdwell, rope making
- Oswego Quilters Dozen
- Cheryl Parker, vintage sewing machine
- Bill Novicki, beekeeping
- Sandwich Small Engine Club
- Templeton's
- Trish Kinavy Folk Music
- Hix's Bros.

## 2022 Events at Lyon Farm . . .

*Fall Fest*

*Halloween on the Farm*

*Christmas on the Farm*



## *Upcoming Events . . .*

### **April 16**

#### **Spring on the farm - Easter Egg Hunt**

Egg hunt at noon for children ages 2-12. Cash and candy prizes

Time : 10am-3pm

Event is contingent on weather. Refreshments available for purchase.

Tickets ages 2 to 12 \$6, ages 14 and over Free

### **May 11**

Oswego Chamber of Commerce Business over coffee

8am -10am

### **May 21**

#### **Genealogy Event**

Join the Fox Valley Genealogy Society in finding your own family roots.

Saturday 1pm-4pm

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