

James Millikin Homestead Gazette

VOLUME XLVI

125 N. PINE STREET DECATUR, IL 62522

MAY 2021

Upcoming Events

Historic Preservation Week

Sunday, May 16 – 22

Visit History of the Heartland
on Facebook for more details

Open House

Saturday, May 22

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Regular Open Houses

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Sunday, May 30, 2021

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Sunday, July 25, 2021

Sunday, August 29, 2021

Sunday, September 26, 2021

Sunday, October 31, 2021

Lawn Party

Greater Decatur Youth Band &
Summer Strings

(Tentative)

Wednesday, June 16

Time TBA

Taste of History 2021

Saturday, September 25

More details to follow

Historic Preservation Week

In collaboration with the city, the History of the Heartland Consortium is organizing the 2nd annual Historic Preservation Week in Decatur, May 16-22. The James Millikin Homestead is a member of the consortium. Their mission is to aid in the preservation of structures and historic homes, the stories of people, and aid in the beautification of the community. The city manager has agreed that the plans for the week are Covid friendly. The Mayor will be signing a proclamation declaring the official week on May 3rd. Planned activities as of this writing include:

- 2nd Annual Architectural Scavenger Hunt downtown
- West End walking tours
- May 16 - Church Street Church Stroll
- May 17 - An open house on Van Dyke at the Terminal
- May 19 - Masonic Temple Open House including a meet and greet with local memory favorites in the Temple
- May 20 - Avon Theatre event including the presentations of the MacArthur High School Scholarship in Memory of Doug Hagen and the History of the Heartland Preservation Award
- May 22 - Downtown Historical Tours

Reopening of the Staley Museum 1pm-4pm

James Millikin Homestead Open House 1pm-4pm

For more details, contact Ayn Owens at 217-791-1385 or follow History of the Heartland on Facebook.

Mission Statement

Through the preservation of the Homestead, we engage, educate, and entertain visitors with the stories of the Millikins and Decatur.

Taste of History | Lawn Party

The James Millikin Homestead along with the Oglesby Mansion, the Staley Museum, the Mueller Museum and the Culver House are thrilled to announce the return of the Taste of History event on Saturday, September 25, 2021 from 5:00 pm until 9:00 pm. Join us for an evening to travel between Decatur's historic locations where music, appetizers and beverages will be served. Ticket sales and more details will be announced soon. Mark your calendars today for this entertaining, educational event.

The sounds of music will soon be in the air! It is with great anticipation that the Board looks forward to welcoming the Greater Decatur Youth Band, under the direction of Dr. Neal Smith of Millikin University, back to the Homestead lawn for a concert. This is a tentative engagement, but we are hopeful that we will be able to enjoy the talents of these young musicians. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, June 16, 2021 and be sure to watch our Facebook page and website for updated details.

From the President's Desk

Spring at Last! With the warm weather arriving, the Board is eagerly looking forward to welcoming our members and the community back to our regular open houses and scheduled outdoor activities. When you visit, be sure to check out the displays in the new history room. Every old house is a portal to our past and the Millikin Homestead, being one of the oldest buildings in Decatur, is a rare treasure to explore. A number of our activities have sought to build on this, with our Spanish Flu video, new History Room and the Mrs. Millikin Favorite Things live casts. Those who know me, know that my favorite YouTube channel is Cocktails with a Curator from the Frick Museum in New York. Mrs. Millikin is thinking about changing the name of her live casts to Lemonade with Mrs. Millikin, as we explore her efforts to bring art to Decatur and develop her home as the Decatur Institute of Fine Arts. Hope you can join us for these and don't forget, we have a special open house in conjunction with Historic Preservation Week, on May 22! Get out and enjoy those spring flowers!



Annual Meeting Report

At the Annual Meeting of the James Millikin Homestead, Inc. on Thursday, April 22, the following changes to the Board of Directors occurred:

- *Six New Board Members Elected*

The board unanimously elected Paul Dudra, Susan Dudra, Mike Gibson, Kim Mangan, Karla Miller, and Nola Wilkinson to each serve on the board for a three-year term. The Homestead is looking forward to the contributions they will make in the coming years.

- *Three Board Members Reelected*

The Board unanimously elected Brigitta Kapp, Joanne Kerper, and Douglas Warren to serve a second consecutive three-year term on the Board. The Homestead has appreciated their contributions over the past three years, including dealing with the fallout from the pandemic, and is pleased they will continue their service for another three years.

- *Three Board Members Roll Off*

The board regretfully said goodbye (for now) to Mary Lou Brown, Julie Carter, and Linda Ostrander. They have completed their second consecutive three-year term and are rotating off the board. They have contributed significantly to the ongoing success of the Homestead over the past six years.

Linda served as secretary and president of the Board. Julie served as vice president, publicity and social media coordinator. Mary Lou served on the Outreach committee and coordinated event rentals for the Homestead.

- *Officers Elected*

The following Board members were unanimously elected to serve as officers for the Homestead:

President - Donna Williams

Vice President - Ann-Marie Hillyer

Treasurer - Douglas Warren

Co-Secretary - Pat Wenda & Deb Scheiter

For astute observers of the Homestead, you will notice that the officers are the same as this past year. With the challenges of the pandemic, each of the officers willingly agreed to serve in their office for another term.

Additionally, they are hopeful to accomplish some items that were delayed due to the pandemic. The Board members, new and experienced, are excited to bring the history of the Homestead alive as can be seen in the other articles. Here's to 2021!

In Memoriam

Our deep sympathy to the family of Irene Huff. Irene passed away in Quincy, Illinois on April 6, 2021 at the age of 88. Irene was a very engaged member of the Homestead Board from 2008-2013 when she left Decatur to be near family in Quincy. While she served as president from 2011-2013, she laid the important groundwork for our very successful fundraiser, "Gangsters, Gals and Gumshoes" in the fall of 2012. We fondly remember this vibrant and enthusiastic woman who gave much time and effort to the ongoing preservation of the Millikin Homestead.

Thanks for Supporting the Homestead
as an Organizational Member!



Membership Reminder

Members are the core of the Homestead's continued success as a premier historic site in Decatur. Pamphlets, announcing membership renewal time, were sent out in February. To those of you who have already responded and renewed your Homestead membership, our many thanks to you. If renewing your Homestead membership slipped your mind, it is not too late to join for the 2021-22 year. You can find the membership form on our website under "Get Involved" at: <https://jamesmillikinhomestead.com/getinvolved.html>. Or call 217-422-9003 and leave a message to have a form sent to you. We look forward to your return as a Homestead member.

Around the House - Spring 2021

While it has been quiet around the Homestead as we all froze for two weeks in February, the busy bees have been working quietly in the hive.

- The large painting in the dining room had an anchor pull out of a stud, swinging the painting into the nearby woodwork. Thankfully, no damage was sustained, and Duane Shepherd will remount both anchors and rehang the painting soon.
- Our "Smart" thermostats detected extremely low humidity levels in the Homestead this winter. Alerts are sent via email to Doug Warren's home whenever anything is amiss. There were many alerts this winter warning that the humidity level had fallen below 20% and a few that indicated humidity level fell below 10%. The National Association of Museums tells us that, to protect the interior of a historic home museum, humidity should never fall below 40%. Two HVAC companies were asked to give suggestions to remedy the extremely low humidity in the home during winter months. A capital project was added to the coming budget year to make progress on alleviating this problem.
- As the weather warmed, you may have noticed that the gardens have begun to be cultivated and the American Kestrels (*Falco Sparverius*) returned to nest, as they did last year, behind the Carriage House. There has been an interesting "battle" between the Kestrels and a murder of crows. We are sad to say, the crows seem to have chased the Kestrels away.
- The Homestead's curved drive and parking area are beginning to show wear and ruts. The chat is washing away and being carried away in the tires of the vehicles that come and go. Junior Welfare Organization paid for the original driveway work in the 1970's. In 2014, the Homestead drive saw major repairs including fresh oil and chat laid down. We are looking to bring repairs to low spots and fresh chat rolled into place this year.
- **Update:** We are very pleased to announce that the James Millikin Estate Trustees have granted the funds for the driveway upgrade! Many thanks to the Trustees for their continued support of the Homestead.

Southwest (side) Porch Update

If you have visited the Homestead and entered from the southwest porch, you have probably noticed the sad deterioration of the porch rails, peeling paint and, and cracked posts. The side porch has been targeted as a capital project for this year. We know that the front porch, side porch and back porch are in all need of a major work, but coming out of the Year of Covid, we decided to set our sights on a project that could possibly be accomplished in this fiscal year with grant and in-kind support. During a meeting with Millikin University Facilities and Management representative, Shane Bracken, it was decided that the porch work could be broken down into two portions. The first portion being the deck, columns, rails, balustrades, skirting and the side-back door. The second portion would include the ceiling, roof, and guttering system. A rough estimate of \$10,000+ for each portion was suggested by the Facilities staff. It was decided to focus on the first portion of the porch repair; deck, columns, rails and so forth. MU carpenter and cabinet maker, Dan Janvrin, who has an appreciation of historic homes, indicated that he would love help with this work. Mr. Fraley and Mr. Bracken suggested that MU may be able to absorb the cost of Dan's time and talent if the Homestead would purchase the materials. This brings the most visual portion of the project within perhaps \$5,000. We have begun to look at grant funding to begin this project this year.

Florida Boys Caladiums

Our indefatigable, Doug Warren has found another remarkable source in his pursuit to advance the Homestead – Florida Boys Caladiums. This Florida-based, family business sells an amazing variety of beautiful caladiums and their prices are very reasonable. Florida Boys will be donating almost a bushel of caladium bulbs to the Homestead. In return, we hope our members will visit their website at www.floridaboyscaladiums.com to shop for your garden this spring and please, mention the Homestead when you order. Watch the Homestead grounds for the sprouting of caladiums this summer!





James Millikin Homestead, Inc.

125 N. Pine St.
Decatur, IL 62522

**James Millikin Homestead
Board of Directors**

President: Donna Williams
Vice President: Ann-Marie Hillyer
Treasurer: Doug Warren
Co-Secretaries: Deborah Scheiter &
Patricia Wenda

Jason Butterick
Marilyn Davis
Susan Dudra
Paul Dudra
Alan Duesterhaus
Mike Gibson
Brigitta Kapp
Joanne Kerper
Kim Mangan
Ruby Mathews
Karla Miller
Nola Wilkinson

Social Media Manager & Newsletter Editor
- Laura Shaw



Please consider making your support of the James Millikin Homestead a part of your legacy by including the Homestead in your estate planning.



Not a member of the James Millikin Homestead? Memberships are inexpensive and the support you provide through a membership is immeasurable. Please contact the Homestead for more information.



Stay in touch with the James Millikin Homestead:
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Please leave a message and your call will be returned.