



# MCHS News

Nov 2016

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 4 No. 6

715 N Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL  
62025

**Hours:**  
Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm  
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm  
Group Tours Available

**Free Admission**

**Museum Phone:**  
618-656-7562

**Library Phone:**  
618-656-7562

**Web Address:**  
madcohistory.org

**E-mail:**  
info@madcohistory.org

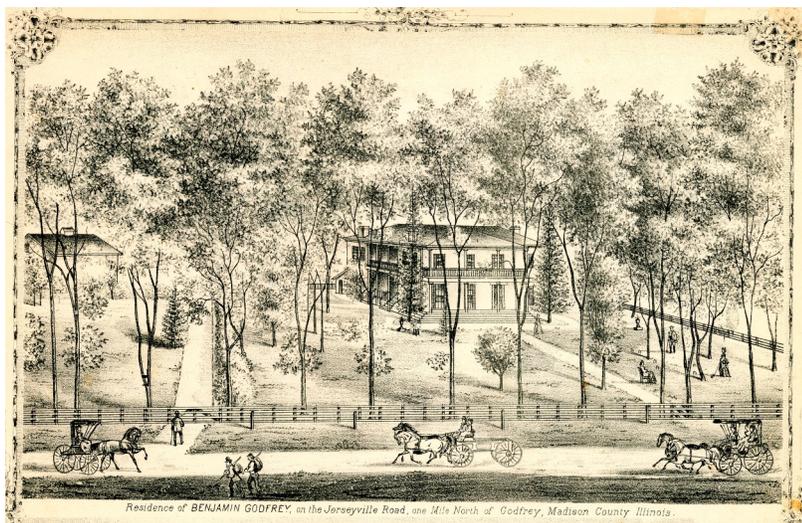
**About Us:**  
The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

## THE GODFREY MANSION - WITNESS TO HISTORY

The stately Godfrey Mansion, shown here in 1873, is located on Godfrey Road in the Village of Godfrey, but except for local residents, few know the fascinating story of its namesake, Captain Benjamin Godfrey. It would be even more difficult to find county residents that know the story of the Waters family who were the next family to own this landmark home, but between them, the Godfrey and Waters families occupied the house for well over 150 years. Today the mansion, no longer a private home, is owned and maintained by Lewis and Clark Community College who use the rooms of the old house for office space.

*Continued on page 7*



*Residence of BENJAMIN GODFREY, on the Jerseyville Road, one 1/2 mile North of Godfrey, Madison County Illinois.*  
Brink, McCormick & Company published their "Illustrated Encyclopedia and Atlas Map of Madison County" in 1873. In addition to maps and plats, the volume also has nearly 200 illustrations of people and places. The illustrations include the above "Residence of Benjamin Godfrey, on the Jerseyville Road."  
(MCHS)

## MUSEUM DIRECTOR TO RETIRE

Suzanne Dietrich, who has served as Director of the Madison County Historical Museum and Archival Library for the past 17 years, will be retiring the end of November.

When Suzanne accepted the job in 1999, she came with memories of visits to the museum when it was located in the Madison County Court House prior to 1964. During her childhood, her grandfather, William L. Waters, served on the MCHS Board, including several terms as president. Her grandfather's active role in MCHS brought a lifelong connection to the organization for Suzanne as well. William Waters, whose story will be told elsewhere in this newsletter, left a worthy legacy with MCHS, and the same can be said for his granddaughter.

After college and career obligations, Suzanne became reacquainted with the Madison County Historical Museum and Library in 1990 when she began researching the sesquicentennial history of St. Mary's Catholic Church of Edwardsville. A few years later she served on the committee researching and gathering materials for a local book, *Edwardsville: An Illustrated History (1997)*. The following year she was invited to serve on the MCHS Board.

*Continued on page 4*



*Suzanne Dietrich earlier this year when she was awarded the ISHS Lifetime Achievement Award.*

## Holiday Book Fair Celebrates Madison County History

Sunday, December 4 ♦ 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Madison County Archival Library

## ABOUT US

### MCHS BOARD

Gary Denué, Pres  
Candace Ladd, V-Pres  
Arnold Meyer, Treas  
Norma Asadorian  
Mary J. Bade  
Miriam Burns  
Tallin Curran  
Norma Glazebrook  
Mae Grapperhaus  
Murray Harbke  
Don Huber  
Tina Hubert  
Jeff Pauk  
Cindy Reinhardt  
Sue Wolf

### STAFF

Suzanne Dietrich  
Director  
Mary Westerhold  
Archival Research Mgr.  
LaVerne Bloemker  
Archival Research Asst.  
Carol Frisse  
Archival Research Asst.  
Jenn Walta  
Curator  
Casey Weeks  
Asst. Curator

### VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the museum or the archival library. Please call if interested.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our web site, at the MCHS Museum or at the Archival Library.

### PUBLICATIONS

#### MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually  
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

### WEB SITE

[madcohistory.org](http://madcohistory.org)

## ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

By Mary Westerhold, Archival Research Manager

### The 1876 Presidential Election

In our collection at the Archival Library is the Democratic Ticket for Election Day, November 7, 1876. It was also a year for a presidential election with Rutherford B. Hayes, Republican, running against Samuel J. Tilden, Democrat. It sounds like a simple election, right? Rutherford B. Hayes was President, so he obviously won the election. But it was not a simple victory.

Tilden clearly won the popular vote but neither candidate had the 185 electoral votes needed to win. Tilden had 184 votes, Hayes had 165, and there were 20 votes that had not yet been counted from the states of Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina and Oregon. Naturally, both parties claimed their candidate had won each of the states. Both parties claimed the other party had either damaged ballots so they couldn't be counted or intimidated voters.

The debate raged on with neither side willing to concede. By January of 1877, no winner had been declared and there was nothing in the Constitution regarding how to resolve the dispute. Finally Congress appointed an Electoral Commission of five senators, five members of the House of Representatives, and five Supreme Court Justices to make the decision--eight Republicans and seven Democrats, all of whom voted straight party lines. The electoral votes were awarded to Hayes.

Finished, right? Wrong. The Democrats threatened a filibuster to prevent the official counting of the votes. Finally, a compromise was reached. The Democrats agreed to allow the counting of the votes if the Republicans agreed to withdraw the federal troops from the South, ending Reconstruction. This was agreed on by all parties and has become known as the Compromise of 1877.

Inauguration Day was March 5, 1877 and it was not until March 4 that Hayes was officially declared the winner by the Senate.

For more information, visit [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3109](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3109)

*The Democratic ballot of 1876 includes many Madison County names. Do they include your ancestor?  
(MCHS)*

# DEMOCRATIC TICKET.

Election, Tuesday, Nov. 7, 1876.

FOR PRESIDENT,

SAMUEL J. TILDEN.

FOR VICE-PRESIDENT,

THOMAS A. HENDRICKS.

For Electors of President and Vice-President,

William F. Coodbaugh,	James S. Eckels,	Cesar A. Roberts,
William J. Allen,	George B. Martin,	Orlando B. Picklin,
Thomas Heyne,	Henry W. Bullock,	Robert N. Bishop,
Samuel S. Hayes,	Lawrence W. James,	Jesse J. Phillips,
Arno Voss,	James W. Davidson,	Charles A. Walker,
Thomas B. Coulter,	William G. Ewing,	J. Perry Johnson,
William C. Green,	Charles A. Keyes,	John M. Crebs,

For Governor,

LEWIS STEWARD.

For Lieutenant-Governor,

ARCHIBALD A. GLENN.

For Secretary of State,

STEPHEN Y. THORNTON.

For Auditor Public Accounts,

JOHN HISE.

For State Treasurer,

GEORGE GUNDLACH

For Attorney-General,

EDMUND LYNCH.

For Representative in Congress--XVIIIth District,

WILLIAM R. MORRISON.

For Member of the State Board of Equalization--XVIIIth District,

FREDERICK SUNKEL.

For Representatives--XLIst District,

SAMUEL A. BUCKMASTER, 1½.....votes.

FRANCIS M. PEARCE, 1½.....votes.

For State's Attorney for Madison County,

E. BREESE GLASS.

For Clerk of the Circuit Court,

EDWARD L. FRIDAY.

For Sheriff,

ROBERT H. KINDER.

For Coroner,

CHARLES S. YOUREE.

# MCHS NEWS

## \$17,812 DONATION RECEIVED

MCHS is pleased to announce the receipt of an anonymous donation of \$17,812.50. With the renovation work currently in progress, timing could not be better.

Also received last month was a donation of \$1,500 to the Archival Library from Charles McKittrick in appreciation for the excellent service and assistance provided by the library staff.

The Society is very grateful for these generous gifts.

## HOLIDAY BOOK FAIR ~ DEC 4

Area residents are invited to attend a Holiday Open House and Book Fair on Sunday, December 4, 1 - 4 p.m. at the Madison County Archival Library at 801 N. Main Street in Edwardsville.

Authors of nonfiction books on various aspects of Madison County history will be on hand to sign books and answer questions about Madison County.

Also available will be gift certificates for membership in the Madison County Historical Society. Recipients will receive six newsletters during the coming year with in-depth stories about Madison County's rich heritage. Gift memberships or books featuring local stories are the perfect way to give the gift of history.

## MCHS MEMBERSHIPS

### IT'S TIME TO RENEW!

All memberships in the Madison County Historical Society run on the calendar year from Jan 1 - Dec 31, so you will receive renewal information in this newsletter as well as a letter in early December.

Our members are very loyal and nearly everyone renews each year, which is a very good thing! But for some, multiple reminders need to be sent, which costs the society both time and money.

We would like to encourage everyone to renew their MCHS membership sooner, rather than later. It is a significant advantage for the Society and greatly appreciated.

### HOW ELSE CAN YOU HELP?

The current renovations of the Weir House make membership dollars more important than ever in our history. Please consider joining at a higher level or giving a gift membership to friends and/or family this Christmas.

Additional membership renewal forms are available on our website and at the Archival Library or call 656-7569 and we would be happy to mail a membership application or accept a phone order.

## RENOVATION UPDATE

As is typical of the renovation of any 180 year old building, the work being done on the chimneys and roof of the Weir House uncovered a number of problems (i.e. additional expenditures) but they have been remedied and work continues.

MCHS President Gary Denué has applied for two grants to help pay for the replacement of the HVAC system in the museum and the Society is waiting to hear if these are accepted. Think of how much better the old house will look without any window air conditioners visible on the exterior of the historic building.



*Two issues that had to be dealt with in repairing the roof were inadequate flashing and the above rafters. None of the rafters were supported by a header so all had to be raised, reinforced and placed back on the header. The Society hopes that as we move into the next phase of construction, there are fewer "surprises," but, with an old house, it seems "there's always something!"*  
(Gary Denué)

## NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

September-October ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

**Individual \$35**

**Family \$50**

Robert Mallory

Charles McKittrick

Tena Ritzheimer

Phyllis West

## REMINDER!

**The Madison County Historical Museum Remains Closed for Renovations  
The Madison County Archival Library is open regular hours.**

## MUSEUM DIRECTOR RETIRES (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

After only a short time on the Board, Anna Symanski, the Museum Director, had to resign suddenly for personal reasons. Knowing Suzanne's qualifications and her experience as a communications consultant, Anna asked if Suzanne would be interested in serving as director until a replacement could be found. In March, 1999, Suzanne began work in the "temporary" position.

And the rest, as they say, is history. When asked the highlights of her tenure as director, Suzanne said it has to be management and maintenance of the facilities. She says, "Creativity has, by necessity, sometimes taken a back seat to preservation."

Early in her tenure, architects informed her that the 1836 Weir House could not continue to bear the weight of the books in the second floor library. With the help of the MCHS Board, grants were written and funds raised to build a separate facility for an archival library which opened in 2002.

After the books were removed, major repairs were needed to restore the front wall of the house which had suffered damage from the weight of the books and other artifacts over the years. Suzanne was instrumental in obtaining a \$200,000 grant to make this repair.

During Suzanne's tenure, the MCHS property has grown from a single museum building to a complex that also includes a library, a collections center and a fourth building that will one day allow for expansion of the library.

Over the years, Suzanne has received numerous awards for her dedication to her job and community. Two of the most prestigious are the Athena Award from the Edwardsville-Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce for the

"highest level of professional accomplishment" (2004), and last year's Lifetime Achievement Award from the Illinois State Historical Society (ISHS). In addition to her work in Madison County, she also served on the ISHS Board, including several years on the Executive Board. She was also named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club (2007) and awarded a Preservation Award by the Goshen Preservation Alliance (2008). In 2013 her biography was listed in *Who's Who in America*.

Suzanne is a native of Madison County. Her father, Charles Dietrich, a graduate of Cornell University, was hired out of college as an engineer for General Steel at Granite City. Her mother, Evelyn Waters, was born in Godfrey, Illinois and graduated from Washington University. She was teaching math and science at Granite City High School when she met a Charles Dietrich at the high school track. They married in 1933.

Part of Suzanne's childhood was spent in Pennsylvania where her father was transferred for a few years before returning to Madison County in the late 1940s. The family relocated to Edwardsville where Suzanne graduated from Edwardsville High School. She left Madison County for a successful college career, but afterwards returned to her hometown. She has an undergraduate degree in Radio, Television and Film from Northwestern University in Evanston as well as a Master's Degree in Public Communications from Boston University.

Suzanne's educational and professional experiences all became tremendous assets for the Museum and MCHS on that day in 1999 when she agreed to become director for "just a few months."

## MORE MCHS NEWS

### DR. JANET DUTHIE COLLINS FORMER MCHS BOARD PRESIDENT

The Madison County Historical Society Board as well as the Museum and Archival Library staff were saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Janet Duthie Collins on September 22, 2016. An SIUE English Professor, Janet was generous with her time and talents in the community. MCHS was fortunate to work with her when she served as president of the Society from 1996-2008. This was an important time in the growth of MCHS assets, and Janet was a key player, along with Director Suzanne Dietrich and Vice-President Sharon Helms, in obtaining grants and raising funds to build a separate library facility and obtain additional properties for MCHS.

The Madison County Historical Society is grateful for her service and to her family for naming MCHS as one of two organizations where gifts were directed in lieu of flowers at her memorial service.

### 2016 ANNUAL MEETING AND DINING-IN-HISTORY

Madison County Historical Society members and guests met on Sunday, November 6 at the Diamond Mineral Springs Restaurant for walking tours, a fine meal and a short program on the history of the former health spa and summer resort.

During the cocktail hour and dinner, guests enjoyed the sound of early American music provided by the band "Three Crooked Men." A family-style dinner with the restaurant's famous fried chicken, roast pork and numerous sides followed by "Foot-Hi Pie" was served.

At the brief business meeting held during the event, Don Huber of Alton was voted onto the board and terms for Gary Denué, Candace Ladd, Arnold Meyer, and Jeff Pauk were renewed.

This was the fourth year for the Society's Dining-in-History event, and it has proven to be a popular event.

# CAPTAIN BENJAMIN GODFREY

A native of Chatham, Massachusetts, Captain Benjamin Godfrey was born in 1794 to Knowles and Mary Ryder Godfrey. Knowles died of yellow fever the year Benjamin was born. Three years later, his mother married a sea captain, Caleb Eldredge. At a young age Benjamin also went to sea, eventually becoming captain of his own ship.

Although many of the finer details are not known, Godfrey was a fascinating character who lived an adventurous life that is remarkably well-documented for a man born over 200 years ago.

He served with the Naval Service during the War of 1812 and navigated a merchant ship to foreign ports before settling into service along the east coast of the United States. In later years Godfrey rarely spoke of this time, and for good reason. Surviving ship manifests indicate that “cargo” during those years included slaves in addition to consumable goods. Godfrey himself once confided that, “all which he could ever accomplish would do nothing toward repairing the evil he had wrought by his previous life of sin.” His philanthropy and devotion to his faith after arriving in Alton indicate that he may have been trying to make amends.

In 1817, while working out of the port at Baltimore, Maryland, Godfrey met and married Harriet Cooper. The couple would have homes in Maryland, New Orleans and Mexico before arriving in Alton in 1832 with their six surviving children (at least three other children died before then).

By this time Godfrey may have had his fill of adventure. He was reported to have survived financial losses from hurricanes, shipwrecks, pirates and robbers over the years as he travelled the world and invested in various commercial ventures. Yet he arrived in Illinois with funds to invest in property and business. In partnership with Winthrop Gilman, he constructed the firm of Godfrey, Gilman and Company, a commercial enterprise that also rented warehouse space. In 1837 the printing press of Elijah Lovejoy was in their warehouse when a mob came to destroy the press. Lovejoy, who was defending his property, was murdered. By the time Godfrey arrived in

Alton, it appears from letters and associates that he leaned anti-slavery, but was not an abolitionist. The leasing of space for Lovejoy’s printing press was not a political decision, but rather related to business. Other business interests would include banking, land speculation, mining and transportation.

Upon its arrival in 1832, the Godfrey family quickly joined the ranks of Alton’s elite, socializing with the likes of Cyrus Edwards (brother of Illinois Governor Ninian Edwards). Joining other transplanted Easterners, the Godfreys became active in the Presbyterian congregation

and in 1833-34 Godfrey constructed Alton’s first religious building, a stone church at the corner of Third and Market. He retained title of the building and allowed numerous other denominations to hold services there. In 1838, he donated the building which was then sold to St. Paul’s Episcopal congregation in 1845. St. Paul’s still occupies the building today.

It is unclear whether Godfrey purchased the property where he built the mansion for multiple purposes, or simply expanded after settling there. But soon after moving to Scaritt’s Prairie, Godfrey began plans for a village and a school, both named Monticello after Thomas Jefferson’s home. The new school would be recognized as one of the finest in the West and was within walking distance of the mansion.

According to an 1842 letter written by Godfrey to the Rev. Theron Baldwin, Godfrey was watching his wife interact with the children one day when he began “to reflect on the powerful effect of a mother’s example on the minds, matter and habits of their offspring.” Godfrey, “in consultation with his wife,” realized the importance of educating women who could then educate their children. Godfrey set about building a seminary for women where girls would receive moral, intellectual and domestic training. Monticello Women’s Seminary would be a school of the West where the importance of a woman being able to organize, clean and cook for her household was as important as the niceties of hosting a tea party and holding intelligent conversation. Godfrey was probably also influenced by the fact that by the time the school opened on April 11, 1838, the



*The above portrait of Captain Benjamin Godfrey is from a book, “The History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Illinois, Vol I,” by A. T. Norton, 1879.*

# CAPTAIN BENAMIN GODFREY



Godfrey opened the Monticello Female Seminary in 1838. This rendering from the 1873 Atlas of Madison County shows the original building which was destroyed by fire in 1888. A temporary building was erected within 60 days and Caldwell Hall, still in use today, was completed two years later. (MCHS)

Godfrey family had grown to include six daughters in addition to their two older brothers.

In order to bring materials from the Mississippi River to the building site, Godfrey built a plank road connecting the two. Local residents would take the “hard road” out to Monticello to view “Godfrey’s folly.” The cost of the original building would be \$53,000, all of it donated by or procured by Captain Benjamin Godfrey.

The building was constructed to provide living quarters, a library, classrooms and chapel for eighty girls but enrollment, with local students, exceeded that number within a few years. Godfrey hired Theron Baldwin, a graduate of Yale Theological Seminary, to lead the school and hired teachers that were eminently qualified making Monticello Seminary the finest school for women in the West.

The Monticello Female Seminary, later called Monticello College, closed in 1971 and sold its 183-acre campus to Lewis and Clark Community College the same year. The Monticello College Foundation, located on the campus, is dedicated to furthering education for women.

Harriet Godfrey lived to see the women’s seminary open, but died just a few months later. Benjamin was left a

widower with eight children, none of them yet married. On a trip to New York the following year, he married Rebecca Eleanor Pettit, 24 years his junior. The second Mrs. Godfrey was proud of her French heritage, and insisted that she be addressed as “Madame Godfrey.” Returning to Illinois, the couple had three children between 1840 and 1846, with two that survived to adulthood. It is interesting to note that Benjamin Godfrey was apparently determined to have his children carry particular names, to the point that he had three sons named Benjamin Godfrey, Jr., and two daughters named Marie Louise Godfrey. In each case, the name was reused after an infant/toddler passed away.

Even after his seafaring days were behind him, Godfrey continued to travel extensively, making numerous trips to the east coast on business and to raise funds for Monticello Seminary.

From the 1830s until his death in 1862, Benjamin Godfrey continued to invest in various enterprises. In addition to the mercantile and warehouse with Gilman, he made strong investments in Madison County real estate, estimated at over 10,000 acres in Madison County histories. He owned 4,000 acres at the time of his death

having already provided farms for his children. In 1937 a newspaper headline announced that the last of the Captain Benjamin Godfrey property, a farm originally inherited by his daughter, Catherine Godfrey Pearson, had been sold out of the family.

There were also investments in lead mines in Galena, formation of Alton’s first bank (with others) and, his largest and most precarious investment, the construction of a railroad connecting Alton and Springfield. For the railroad Godfrey was both financier and sole contractor, and came very close to again losing his fortune. In the end the courts awarded him the money he was owed so he could pay off debts incurred during construction.

During his lifetime, except for his business with Gilman, Godfrey did not use his surname when naming the places he built. But, like other towns in



Godfrey was instrumental in establishing the Congregational Church at Monticello, now the Benjamin Godfrey Memorial Chapel. It is one the few structures he did not build of stone. (MCHS)

## CAPTAIN BENJAMIN GODFREY (CONT. FROM PAGE 6)

Madison County, when a post office was established at Monticello, it could not be given the name of the town because Illinois already had a Monticello Post Office. So for a number of years the Godfrey Post Office was located at Monticello. The town's name was eventually changed to Godfrey long after Godfrey's death. The Benjamin Godfrey Memorial Chapel, built in 1854 on the grounds of the school he founded, was also not named for Godfrey during his lifetime.

Capt. Godfrey died at his home on August 13, 1862. His second wife, Rebecca and her children, Julia and Benjamin, would continue to occupy the house. At the 1870 census, Benjamin, Jr. was listed as the head of the household which also included his wife Augusta, his mother, his sister Julia and her family, and a farm laborer. Tragically, between July and November of 1870, Julia lost her entire family with the deaths of her two-year-old daughter, her husband, and an infant daughter born after her husband's death. With Julia's death just four years later, Benjamin and his family became Rebecca's sole heirs of the Godfrey farm.

By 1880, the household consisted of Benjamin, Augusta, and their five young children as well as Benjamin's mother, 74-year-old Rebecca Godfrey. There were also four farm laborers and two servants living on the property.

There is no surviving census for reference in 1890, but other records show that the family dynamic changed dramatically by 1890. Augusta died in 1882 and Benjamin two years later. Rebecca, then 78 years old, was named guardian of their six young children who were by the time of their father's death aged 4-13. When Rebecca died in January 1892, the children of Benjamin and Augusta Godfrey were placed under guardianship of some of Benjamin's half siblings until they reached their majority.

On March 1, 1895, the eldest of the Godfrey children,

Mrs. Julia Godfrey Short, arranged for a Master's Sale and auction. The auction was won by Patrick Waters, a man in some ways completely different from Captain Godfrey, but in other ways very similar. It is interesting to note that although the house would be owned by the Waters family for over 60 years, perhaps because of their appreciation for history, the house would always be known as the Godfrey Mansion.



**From the *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, June 27, 1938:**

"Locks and keys used on homes in 1832 were of large proportions if one just loaned to the Madison County Historical Society by Wm. L. Waters, Godfrey, president of the society, can be taken as an example. It was once the lock on the home of Calvin Riley, later purchased and remodeled by Captain Benjamin Godfrey, founder of Monticello Seminary."

"The lock and knob are placed in a casing which is five inches high, nine inches long and two and a quarter inches in thickness. The key weighs several ounces and is five inches in length".

The lock and key are now part of the permanent MCHS collection. (MCHS)

## THE GODFREY MANSION (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

The history of the house dates back to 1831-1833 when Calvin Riley built a two-room stone house for his family in an area northwest of Alton known then as Scarritt's Prairie. Riley, a native of New York State, didn't stay with the house for long. He moved to Edwardsville for a short time, then back to Alton for a few years and eventually migrated east to Michigan where he died in 1853.

Calvin and Eunice Riley sold the house with acreage to Captain Benjamin Godfrey on Dec 5, 1833 for \$4,500. Godfrey would raise the roof and add a north wing to the house, transforming Riley's humble house into a 14-room, two-story limestone mansion with pillared porches on two

sides and seven fireplaces. It created quite a stir in the community, but it would not be the last time neighbors would look on with awe, and perhaps a little jealousy, as Godfrey pursued his interests.

In 1934, what was called the "Godfrey Homestead" was recognized for its importance to the history of the United States by inclusion in the National Historic American Buildings Survey. Photographs of the house taken at that time can be seen on-line through the Library of Congress. The importance of the home is due in part to its architecture, a blend of styles popular in the 1830s, but more importantly because of the families that lived there.

# THE PATRICK WATERS FAMILY

Patrick Waters purchased the Godfrey Mansion and surrounding farm for \$14,000 on March 1, 1895, but, although he and his wife visited often, they never made it their residence. A few months after buying the farm, Patrick's eldest son, William L. Waters, married Blanche Peters and the newspaper announced that they would occupy the Godfrey farm. The Godfrey place was one of many farms purchased by Patrick Waters. Like the farm's previous owner, Benjamin Godfrey, Patrick was one of the largest landowners in Godfrey Township, and, also like Godfrey, he was a greatly admired philanthropist, but quieter in his giving than Godfrey.

Patrick Waters was born in Kilkenny, Ireland in 1837. He immigrated to the United States in 1854, going first to Ohio for a few years, before he continued west to Madison County. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1864 and the following year married Mary Ellen Lindley, the daughter of early Madison County settlers. The couple would have four children that lived to adulthood.

Patrick worked as a quarryman during his early years in this country to earn the money needed to purchase his first farm. And by all accounts, he was an extraordinary farmer. In his obituary it was reported that, "He came to this country a poor young man, but he developed soon an ability to acquire land. By hard work and good management, he succeeded in getting a number of rich farms in Godfrey Township. The farms may have been poor enough when he got them, but it was apparent to everybody, after he had a farm a while, it became a producer. He made a reputation as a builder of worn out farms and the land he owns is among the most valuable in the vicinity of

Alton."

This is probably a very good description of what the Godfrey farm was like by 1895 when Patrick purchased it. Captain Godfrey had died in 1862 and his son Benjamin in 1884. During the next eight years, the farm was under the direction of Rebecca Godfrey, an elderly woman who also had charge of six young orphaned children. Waters purchased the farm three years after Mrs. Godfrey's death.

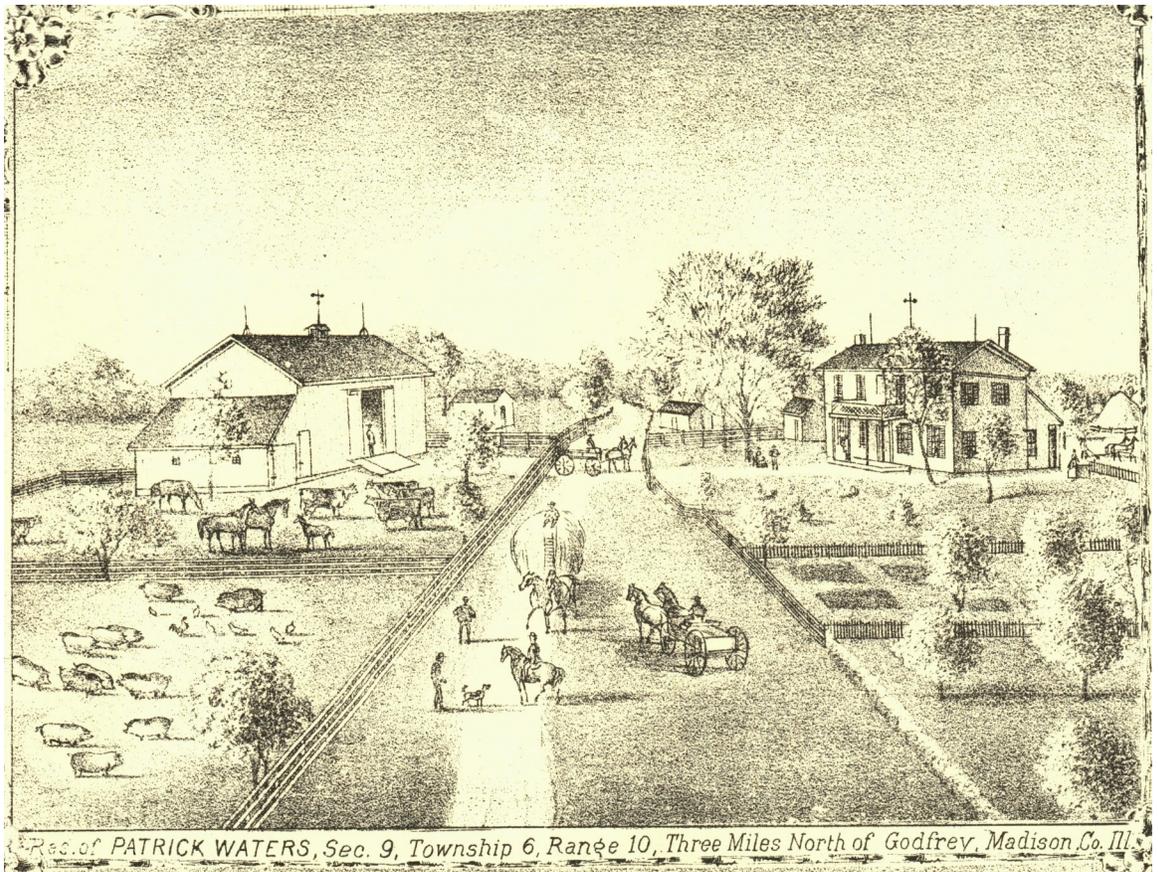


Patrick Waters

(Suzanne Dietrich)

Patrick Waters purchased some farms with the intention of passing them on to his children. The Godfrey farm would eventually go to his oldest son, but not immediately. Patrick retained ownership of the Godfrey property for nine years before passing it on to his son's family.

When Patrick died in 1916, numerous articles were written about him that praised his character and quiet generosity for those in need. One editorial said, "If strictly adhering to the injunctions of the "Golden Rule" will get a person to an everlasting heaven, the gates of paradise were wide open to let him through when Patrick Waters arrived." That's not a bad legacy.



*Rec. of PATRICK WATERS, Sec. 9, Township 6, Range 10, Three Miles North of Godfrey, Madison Co. Ill.*

*The home farm of Patrick Waters as pictured in the 1873 atlas of Madison County. It was located near the northern border of Madison County, a few miles northwest of the Godfrey Farm and on the same road.*

# THE WILLIAM WATERS FAMILY

William Lindley Waters was born on his parents' farm in Godfrey Township on October 12, 1867. He was educated in the Godfrey and Alton schools and attended Christian Brothers College in St. Louis. He took up farming at the age of 21, beginning with the 260 acre Godfrey property.



*Wedding portrait of William L. and Blanche (Peters) Waters; August, 1895. (Suzanne Dietrich)*

In 1895 he married Blanche Peters, the daughter of an early Madison County family where education was also stressed. At the time of their marriage, Blanche, a high school graduate in an era when most women didn't attend secondary school, had been teaching school for ten years.

The Waters family had five children, Lindley (1896), Willard (1899), Evelyn (1901), Mae (1905) and Veronica (1911), who filled the old house.

William and Blanche were ideal caretakers for the historic Godfrey property as both had a keen interest in history. They carefully restored the mansion, turning it into the showplace it had been a half-century earlier. By 1920, they had modernized the house with the addition of a hot water heating system and electricity. Electricity was still rare for farm houses which meant they had to pay to extend electrical lines 2,000 feet to their property. A 1920 article in the Alton Telegraph described the newly refurbished home as "one of the finest, if not the finest, country home in Madison County, being built of stone and finished in fine style inside."

During a later renovation, while working on Captain Benjamin's built-in desk, workers found a

hidden stash of letters dated from 1835-1865. These were given to the Godfrey family who in 1965 donated them to the Madison County Historical Society.

But electricity was not the only innovation brought to the Godfrey farm. When the U.S. Postal Service began moving mail by air in 1926, 40 acres of the farm was leased to the government at \$700 annually for an emergency landing field. The route from Chicago to St. Louis needed places where pilots could land in the event that they experienced mechanical difficulties or if the St. Louis area was fogged in. The Godfrey site was chosen by Charles Lindbergh who is known to have made use of the field at least once. For William, responsibilities included maintaining the field (mowing the grass), making sure it was well-marked and maintaining the beacon, which could involve shimmying up the pole in winter to knock off ice that could keep it from turning. In the event that a plane needed to land at the field, he was responsible for loading the mail into his automobile and driving it to St. Louis. For his services he was paid \$450 per year. The government leased the air strip from 1926-1931.

William and Blanche Waters didn't just live in a historic house. They also both participated in activities designed to preserve the history of Madison County in addition to many other civic activities.

From a young age, William, accompanied by his mother, began collecting Native American artifacts. As an adult, his interest continued to grow so that by his later years he had an impressive collection of over 10,000 pieces, many of them rare. His collection, said to be the finest in the State of Illinois, was often written about in archaeological journals,



*Patrick Waters is shown here on a visit to the Godfrey Mansion which can be seen in the background. He sold the mansion and surrounding acreage to his son in 1914 for \$1. (Suzanne Dietrich)*

## THE WILLIAM WATERS FAMILY (CONT.)



*William and Blanche Waters on the steps of the Godfrey Mansion ( Suzanne Dietrich)*

and he was active in related organizations. It was not unusual for the Waters household to hosts guests from all over the country who came to see this excellent collection. Many of those items are among artifacts now owned by the Madison County Historical Society.

William first became involved with the Board of Directors of the Madison County Historical Society in 1937 when he was elected vice-president. However, the Society's president, Clara Needles of Granite City, died suddenly a month later. William became president of the society

and would serve in that capacity for three years. He remained a member of the MCHS Board until his death in 1959. He became an emeritus member of the board in 1957.

At various times, Blanche Waters served as president of the Alton Women's Council, secretary of the Madison

programming for farm wives. Like her husband, she was also part of MCHS, serving on numerous committees.

As noted above, William Waters was a farmer, however that was only one of many hats he wore. Like previous owners of the Godfrey Mansion, including his father, William was actively involved in his community, volunteering for the local school board, and also involved in the organization of the Madison County Farm Bureau, Madison Mutual Automobile Insurance Company and Northwestern Mutual Insurance Company, all organizations where he was a long-time board member as well. He was a proponent of "hard roads" and instrumental in establishing Madison County's first Rural Free postal delivery service.



*The Godfrey Mansion as it appears today. (Cindy Reinhardt)*

His intellectual pursuits included participation in state historical organizations (Illinois and Missouri), the Naturalist Club, St. Louis Science Museum, and more. He regularly contributed to magazines and journals on archeology. During their tenure in the Godfrey Mansion, the Waters family often played host to some of the above organizations, including the Madison County Historical Society.

In the *1912 Centennial History of Madison County*, William Waters is called, "Prominent among the intelligent, prosperous and highly esteemed citizens of Madison County."

The Waters family enjoyed the Godfrey Mansion for over 60 years. Blanche passed away in 1956 and William in 1959. After William's death, the house was sold to an association that for a time considered making it a new city hall for Godfrey. The property between the house and Monticello College was developed. The house itself was sold to a series of owners who converted it for use as an antique mall and, in the early 1990s, a restaurant called "Godfrey's." In the late 1990s, it was purchased by Lewis and Clark Community College.



*The children of William and Blanche Waters at their Godfrey home circa 1919-1920. From left, Back row: Lindley (in uniform), Evelyn and Willard; Front Row: Veronica and Mae. (Suzanne Dietrich)*

County School Officers Association, and a member of the Godfrey School Board, to name just a few organizations that benefitted from her participation. She was also instrumental in forming a branch of the Domestic Science Association in Godfrey. The Domestic Science Association was a branch of the Farmer's Institute that provided educational

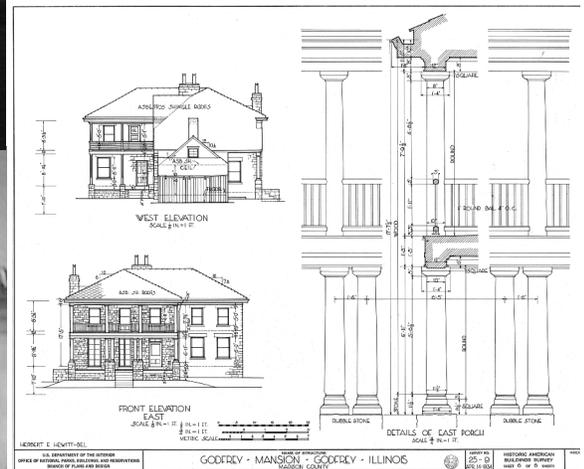
# THE GODFREY MANSION



The Godfrey Mansion gained national recognition in 1934 when it was recognized as being of significant historical and architectural value in the *Historic American Buildings Survey*. The house was photographed and floor plans drawn which can be viewed today on the Library of Congress website. Various publications picked up on this, and the history of the house would be written about in newspapers and magazines far from Madison County, including an article on *Old Illinois Houses* in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1941. There were also a number of articles about either Captain Benjamin Godfrey or his home in the *Illinois State Historical Society Journal*.

Benjamin Godfrey renovated Calvin Riley's house to create a beautiful 14-room mansion. The Waters family brought the house into the 20th century, moving from a life where transportation was on dirt roads with horse and buggy, to hard roads, automobiles and even air planes.

They added plumbing and electricity to the house, but respected its rich heritage by preserving original woodwork, mantles and doors. LCCC has turned parlors into offices, but they too have preserved many interior finishes.



These photographs, as well as eight drawings of architectural plans for the house, are from the Library of Congress website. In the photograph at left, a small portion of the Waters collection is visible

Library of Congress Website:  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.il0162.photos?st=gallery>



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## LEGACY TRAIL PROJECT

The North Alton Godfrey Business Council recently announced the formation of the Benjamin Godfrey Legacy Trail Project to educate both children and adults about the life and entrepreneurial spirit of Benjamin Godfrey.

Part of the project will be the installation of permanent markers at the following sites:

- The Godfrey and Gilman Warehouse, Alton
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Alton
- The Godfrey and Gilman homes
- The Alton and Sangamon Railroad Freight Station, Alton
- The Godfrey Mansion
- The Godfrey Cemetery
- The Benjamin Godfrey Chapel
- Monticello College (now Lewis and Clark Community College)
- The Plank Road traversing between the Mansion in Godfrey and 4th & Belle Streets in Alton.

## MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn Walta, Curator

Madison County residents continue to bring interesting artifacts to MCHS while the museum is closed, but this month's Museum Spotlight focuses on items collected on site during the renovation. A piece of brick recovered during tuck pointing as well as three nails from the original planks on the roof were added to previously collected items related to the 1836 Weir House. The repairs and renovations will ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy Madison County treasures.

Construction at the house meant that the work of cataloging materials was increased by with volunteers who logged over 130 hours during the summer months. As a result of this work by staff and volunteers, a portion of the museum's Native American artifacts are now searchable and viewable on the MCHS website under "Collections," then, "Explore Our Collections" at: <http://madcohistory.pastperfectonline.com/>



*A piece of brick and three nails recently recovered during restoration of the Weir House. (MCHS)*

## MARY'S RESEARCH TIP

### Read, Interpret, and Write Carefully

When researching, it is important to read carefully and, more importantly, to interpret cautiously what you read. For example, the following sentence found in a recent article about a Civil War veteran buried in an Illinois cemetery is very ambiguous: "He was buried by the G.A.R." The common assumption is that the funeral and burial were handled by the local unit of the Grand Army of the Republic. However, in this particular cemetery there was a special section for G.A.R. burials with an appropriate monument to that organization. In addition, the veteran being

buried was not a member of the G.A.R., but actually a Confederate veteran. The question is, does the phrase "buried by the G.A.R." mean "near" the G.A.R. graves or did the local G.A.R. actually take part in the ceremony? In this case, the Confederate veteran's grave is **near** the G.A.R. graves, but whether the G.A.R. actually participated in the ceremony is still unknown since no written account of the burial has been found.

This is also a good reminder to be careful how you write and to be sure to check for ambiguity in the words you use.



# Madison County Historical Society

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www.MCHSnews.org - 618-656-7562

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- ◆ Six issues of the MCHS newsletter full of interesting, informative stories of Madison County Heritage.
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