

Scott County Historic Preservation Society, Inc.  
PO Box 5017  
Bettendorf, Iowa 52722

# Scott County Historic Preservation Society, Inc.



## **Annie Wittenmyer Tour ~**

Although the 2008 Presidential election coverage daily celebrates a woman's inclusion on the national ballot (88 years AFTER women received the right to vote), female patriots of the Civil War period, like Annie Wittenmyer, had little choice but to power through the cultural and institutional roadblocks which prevented them from being civically active. As the bride of a wealthy Keokuk merchant, Annie lived a sheltered, comfortable life in her early years. After three of her four children died in childhood, her husband died on the eve of the Civil War, and her four remaining brothers left to enlist in the Union Army, Annie turned her grief into constructive activism.

During the Civil War, Keokuk was a center for the war effort. Annie volunteered her time caring for the soldiers. In 1861 she joined the Ladies Aid Society and started writing letters describing the conditions and needs of the Union soldiers. During one of her hospital visits, she was horrified to discover her own brother, David, who was ill with dysentery and typhoid fever. His deteriorated condition inspired her to launch a national campaign for better sanitation practices--and against feeding severely wounded surgical patients the same daily boiled beef food rations that were fed to healthy soldiers in the field. In September of 1862 Annie was appointed to the State Sanitary Commission--the first time a woman was named in an Iowa legislative document and she held that position until 1864.

Annie knew that the number one concern of the soldiers who died in her care was not the inevitability of their own death, but the fear of what would become of their orphaned children. Since she had established a soup kitchen to feed the hungry children of Civil War soldiers in Keokuk, she was well equipped to undertake the task of establishing a series of Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Homes. The third state home established in Iowa was where she cared for 150 children, and was built on the grounds of Davenport's old Camp Kinsman and Roberts, Nov. 16, 1865. She continued campaigning for the quality of food in army hospitals and set up a special dietary kitchen system that is still in use today. Annie ran the kitchens until April of 1865, the end of the Civil War.

## **The Orphanage: Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home**

Annie was matron from November 11, 1865 until 1867. She established her dietary kitchen system, considered a forerunner of the present school lunch programs. The State of Iowa took over the home June 6, 1866, and the barracks-style dormitories were replaced with smaller home-like "cottages"; each had a married couple or matron to provide a family-style atmosphere. This turned out to be very practical since there were 3 fires at the home and overall damage was very minimal with no loss of life. Training for the orphans consisted of working in the tailor shop, the dry goods "canteen", or farming the 300 acres of cropland. The farm was sold off in 1970. The house closed in 1975 and the city purchased the property in 1976. It is estimated that well over 12,000 children were helped by the home during its 115 years of operation. None of the original Civil War Camp buildings has survived.

Today, Family Resources continues Annie's tradition of service to distressed families on the original Soldiers'



*Annie Wittenmyer Boy's Cottages, c. 1900*

## **October 2008 Newsletter**

**October 9th at 6:00 P.M. tour  
of Annie Wittenmyer complex  
on Eastern Ave. in Davenport**

**Next SCHPS Meeting  
Nov. 13, 2008 at 6:00 P.M.  
History of Davenport Schools  
& Old Davenport School  
Buildings**

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**Newsletter setup courtesy of**



**(563) 322-4634 or visit their website at [www.davenportprinting.com](http://www.davenportprinting.com)**

Orphans' Home site. Won't you join SCHPS on October 9, 6:00 P.M. for a beautiful fall guided tour of the historic Annie Wittenmyer Grounds. Mr. Rod Ossowski of Family Resources, Inc., will give us a walking architectural tour where we will be able to go into some of the buildings. He will tell us about current use and activities. Please stay for coffee and cookies, complements of Family Resources, where Rod will graciously answer all of our questions. Please enter the main headquarters building at the top of the circle drive off Eastern Ave. There is plenty of parking in the main parking lot just off of Eastern Ave.

**Summary of September meeting~**

Very special thanks are extended to Bill Fisher and Ryan Dye for their highly informative September 11th tour of the Celtic Heritage Trail. The tour started at Sacred Heart Cathedral, built on a parcel of land donated by Antoine LeClaire that overlooks the Cork Hill area of Davenport. Cork Hill is an area of Davenport that was settled by the Irish. The cathedral grounds were also the original site of St. Ambrose College (then Seminary) that opened 1882. From Sacred Heart, the tour wound down the hill to other points on the Celtic Heritage Trail- among them Sharon Home where brothers, Fred and Thomas lived and together published the Iowa Catholic Messenger for over 50 years, and Hibernian Hall where in March 1884, the Davenport Irish organized an Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). By 1889, they built the hall between 4th and 5th Streets on Brady Street (now part of Riverbend Antiques). For an informational booklet to take a trip along the complete Celtic Heritage Trail, contact info@celticheheritageqc.org

**Thank You~**

SCHPS would like to extend very special thanks this month to Gretchen and Frederick Flynn, John and Carol Willard, and Paul and Paula Hartmann. Their 3 very generous donations put SCHPS to within \$100 of making Ella Hartmann's bench with a memorial plaque on the grounds of the LeClaire House, become a reality. Paul and Paula are Ella's son and daughter-in-law, and SCHPS greatly appreciates their most generous contribution. Thank You!

**November 13 meeting of SCHPS -6:00 P.M.~**

Schools are an anchor of every community. They keep it alive and vibrant, and often determine where new residents to an area will reside. Come and learn about the History of the Davenport Public Schools: Early Activities and Old Buildings. Jim Schebler will present his power point program in the School District's Central Office Building located on corner of Brady St. and E. 16th St. (just south of Aldi's). Central Office also houses the Davenport District's Museum, so come and enjoy the memorabilia.

**Upcoming Events~**

**Moline Preservation Society~**Saturday, October 6, 2008, downtown Moline Pub Tour presented by Curt Roseman, check www.molinepreservation.org for time and details.

**Rock Island Arsenal Historical Society**

~Oct. 2, Irish Immigration into the Quad Cities, presented by Deloris Sierra (Irish by origin). This is a great follow-up to our last meeting when we traveled the Celtic Heritage Trail

~Nov. 6, Clam Button Manufacturing in the local region presented by Jim Schebler

**Rock Island County Historical Society**-meets at 11:30 at the First Congregational Church - 2201 7th Ave, Moline Cost is \$6.50 and meetings are open to the public

~Oct. 20, Dr. Myron Fogle will present a program on QC Churches in brick, stone and glass

~Nov. 17, topic is Marx Detlev Hauberg, 1837-1928, immigrant, settler, farmer, raconteur and author presented by Steve Scott

**Welcome New Members~**

Frederick and Gretchen Flynn of Eldridge

**Annual Country School Conference~**

**October 10-11 in Ames Iowa:** This year's conference, "Perceptions of the Country School", will feature Dr. Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, ISU Director of Graduate Education, Program in Agricultural History and Rural Studies. Learn the pros and cons of restoring a country school to a specific time period, how to create a website for your country school museum, and how to beautify your country school's grounds appropriately. Get the latest on resources available for restoration of country schools. On Saturday learn about the Lincoln Highway as you tour Nevada's historic village, Colo's Reed-Niland restored gas station and motel, and country schools in State Center and Marshalltown. Conference Registration is \$30 for educational session on Fri. and \$30 for bus tour on Sat. (includes lunch both days). For more information go to www/iowapreservation.org or contact Bill Sherman at 1-800-434-2039.

**Annual Dues~**

Thanks to all of you who have already renewed your annual SCHPS membership or have recently joined our group. Dues are \$15 annually per household and our membership year runs from July 1 through June 30. You are in good standing if you did not receive a dues envelope in this newsletter. If you would like to join SCHPS, please call Ferenc Beiwel-treasurer, or complete the membership form at the bottom of this letter and bring it to our next meeting.

**JOIN US!**

**Membership fee:** \$15 per household per year (July 1-June 30)

**Members receive:** ~ 10 newsletters per year ~ Opportunities to participate in meetings, special events, and guided tours  
~ A chance to meet and share with other people interested in historic preservation

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please check how you wish to receive your newsletter~**

Email copy is sufficient: \_\_\_\_\_ Hard Copy through US Mail is sufficient: \_\_\_\_\_ Both Email and Hard Copy: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please pay annual dues when you come to our monthly meeting or Mail to:**

Scott County Historic Preservation Society Inc., P. O. Box 5017, Bettendorf, IA 52722

Areas of Interest (please check all that apply):

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serving on Board              | <input type="checkbox"/> Editing Newsletter                | <input type="checkbox"/> Presenting a program of Historical Interest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tour Guide for LeClaire House | <input type="checkbox"/> Researching a Project             | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being a host at meetings      | <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-on Labor                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Having SCHPS tour your house/business       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staffing a merchandise table  | <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate at City Council meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Ideas for Programs                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                  |  |  |