

Carbon Hill School Museum

Welcome to the old Carbon Hill School, now a public museum, owned and operated by the Carbon Hill Historical Society, a registered not-for-profit Illinois organization, dedicated to collecting, preserving, and displaying our local history.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue # 2 Spring 2009

60th Homecoming

June 24 through 28, 2009 we will celebrate our 60th annual Carbon Hill Homecoming with many activities in the park and the museum. Meet old friends and make some new friends as well!

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The EJ&E RR

Trains, trains everywhere-----

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Museum Programs during Homecoming

There will be a reunion for families and former students, & programs, displays and stories. Bring the whole family, and bring an old photo or story to share.

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100 Years of Soccer Stories

Our claim to fame in 1904 was the Carbon Hill OKs Soccer team. Some of the names will be familiar to you. 1909 was a great year, too. Read more inside,

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At the Park during Homecoming

Whether sports, music, carnival, bingo, beer, or turkey poorboys, there's something for everyone. Cut out the schedule and come on out more than once.

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About our Society

Your membership in the Society keeps the school museum thriving.

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60 years of Homecoming

For many years, original mining families used our park for family reunions, arriving from their new homes in bigger cities, coming to see their grandparents still here in Carbon Hill. Villagers stopped in to see who had come to the park that week. Everyone was so familiar I thought all of them must be my own cousins, too; many of them were.

So when the idea for an annual Homecoming was suggested, the next generations joined happily in the planning. It just grew and grew.



Newspapers report crowds of over 40,000 in our biggest years!

One of my earliest memories is of that first Carbon Hill Homecoming, not nearly as elaborate as today's big splash is, but just as happy a time. There were real ponies, and a child sized ferris wheel. The first makeshift bingo stand was planks

on wooden crates. Pop and beer were kept in troughs filled with ice. The catalpas offered shade, the picnic tables were full, and the ball game was on!

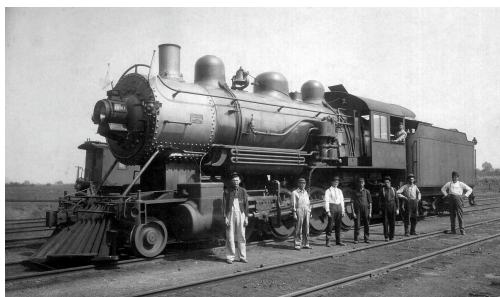
Over the years sports--- soccer, baseball, and bocce ball--- drew huge crowds, with ball teams from nearby towns as well as soccer teams from as far away as Mexico and Venezuela.

Once when a decision to hold the event earlier in summer caused a fear (the tomatoes wouldn't be ripe for the hamburgers) we learned that the people show up for their annual week shared with friends and family no matter when it is held! Join us this year on June 24-28, 2009.

THE EJ&E RAILROAD

Our coal was used mainly to run the big steam engines, to stoke the steel mill ovens that made the rails, and also for heat in our institutions and homes. The "Coal Branch" line of the EJ&E was our railway running from Minooka at Walker depot south over the river bridge, past the clay pit and Goose Lake, down along the east side of Carbon Hill, then continuing south through Coal City to Coster Junction and into South Wilmington. Spur lines ran to each of the mines along the way. Fourth Street of Coal City was originally one of these spur lines near our roundhouse.

Originally built as the Gardner, Coal City and Northern Railway, the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern RR had a big roundhouse in Carbon Hill, located south of town on the west side of the tracks. Carbon Hill had its own depot during its early days when our population of 2,000 and our 4 mines kept us lively! Even Gebhardt's brewery loaded beer on the train and dropped it off at the Keers Beer House on First Street. Passengers rode the train as well as freight. Del Abbey station boarded people and animals. Many local men worked for the E J & E and some of them are pictured here in a recently acquired photo. Maps, some news clippings, and more photos of our railway can be seen at the museum. We are not sure of all in this photo, but think a few may be:



Charles McDermott, switchman

Jacob Backer, Foreman of Roundhouse

Edward Galligan, engineer

Charles Chada or Charly Kasel, fireman

John Cerny & Albert Bovra, sectionmen

Louis Smith or Andy Vavrik, brakeman

Merrit Lees, boilermaker at Roundhouse

Museum Programs & Hours Homecoming Week, June 24-28, 2009

The old school museum will be open 5:30 pm through 9 pm on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of the Homecoming. On Saturday we will also be open -- from Noon until nine pm, and on Sunday we will open following the American Legion Band concert in the park and will remain open until the start of the fireworks (about 9 pm). Donations are taken at the door.

PROGRAMS

Wednesday, June 24, at 6:30 pm we will feature one of our annual topics of interest to the general public: **Mazon Creek Fossils**. The presenter, Richard Rock, is a member of ESCONI, and a new author on local fossils. He will speak and also have his book on hand. We also expect Mitch Pakosz, another ESCONI member, along with other local fossil hunters, to join in for a lively talk about the importance of our fossils, the types unique to this area, and finding them. Specimens will be on display. Bring any fossils you would like to have identified by these people.

Thursday, June 25, at 6:30 pm we will feature **local sports** through great old photos, news clippings, and a rousing roundtable conversation. We hope to have many former players and their families as well as fans and spectators join us for this event. For a highlight of our famous old soccer teams, we will have a powerpoint screen presentation. That show may include a few bocce ball players as well, and don't be surprised if it happens to have some of the baseball players and teams from the earlier eras included, too!

Friday, June 26, at 7 pm we will once again host the wonderful **Coal City Singers** led by Rita Wise. They will **sing us through Carbon Hill's history** with

old songs from all the periods of our past. This musical treat is interspersed with narrated highlights of our village's past. If you haven't heard this program before, this is the year to come. Our singers are just fantastic!

Saturday afternoon and evening is time to reunite. From noon to 9 we'll welcome our old families and alumni as well as the general public to view hundreds of old photos of the village, the coal mines, old homecomings over the years, picnics in the park, and of course, the school's own classes. Make some time to meet up with old friends and family from afar. Call your classmates, make a date, show up early or late. Bring photos or items to jog memories of days gone by. Treat your own kids and grandkids to a taste of life when you were their age. We hope the stories flow freely!

Sunday the parade is set to begin at 1 pm. This year's Grand Marshall is Thelma Born Wickman. Following the parade (? 2:15 pm?) the American Legion Band has a free concert in the park under the tent. Bring your folding chair in case it gets crowded. The concert should end around 4:30 pm and we will open the museum for the rest of the evening, featuring the Born family and Thelma Wickman. Come visit us!

At the Park-----

Ball games start Monday evening at 6 pm. There will be games each night during the carnival with Championship games held Sunday afternoon after the parade and in the evening. Weather and parade length determines games' start and stop times. Come early. Stay late! Food Stand and Beer Garden open at 5, close...????

Friday night's band is Brat Pack.

Saturday night's band is The Silhouettes.

Carnival opens at 5 pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Saturday opens at noon, along with Touch a Truck. Sunday open at noon until after the fireworks. Sunday: Parade 1 pm, Fireworks, 9 pm.

Remembering early days of Soccer

notes from Michele Micetich

Since coal mining was often seasonal but always day labor dependent on industry needs, the weather, labor strikes, and a host of other issues, there was much time left over for young men to get rowdy if they weren't channeled properly. In order to blend a community's diverse ethnic groups who worked their mines, and to keep the young men excited about living and working in a coal mining community, local mine owners, supervisors, and operators sponsored "socker" teams throughout the coal field. The Carbon Hill OKs were one of the teams fielded in such a way.

In the early 1900's the Carbon Hill OKs were playing all over the coal field as well as hosting games here in the village. Teams from Chicago--- like the Pullmans, the Thistles, the Hyde Park Blues--- plus local teams from Braceville, South Willy, Braidwood, Clarke City and other mining camps, kept villagers excited with games and contests. Boys could pass the hat and make extra money while they had great fun. An Irish Kelly joined a Scottish Tallman and an Italian Rolando and a English Taylor for a wild American version of the old world sport of football. The Pilgrims of Liverpool arrived in 1905 and returned in 1909 trying to teach us a more civilized form of play. But we held them to a tie, an unparalleled feat in those tours.



Carbon Hill Historical Society Officers, 2009

Michele Micetich --- President
Linda Bradley ---Vice President
Louise Jensen ---Secretary-Treasurer

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Membership application & information at:

www.coalcity.lib.il.us/museum.htm

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Come Visit Us at the Museum!

The Carbon Hill Historical Society is dedicated to the collection, preservation and display of local history. The Society is a registered not-for-profit organization and is the sole owner of the Carbon Hill School Museum. The museum is open Mondays, noon to four p.m. --- or by appointment. We are located at 875 Second Street in Carbon Hill. Dues for membership in the Society is \$15.00 annually. Thank you!



Carbon Hill Historical Society & School Museum
630 Judson Street
Carbon Hill, Illinois 60416-7018

