

# 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 # 4 Fall 2009

## Our Long Distance Relations

Our original Rossio family immigrated in 1872, traveling to the Indian Territory, Texas, and the western states as miners. But Carbon Hill became home.

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## Thanks for the Memories

The museum grows with your continuing gifts ..... YES!



## Mining & Fossils

There seems to be no end to the underground treasures in our area which people old and young have collected, studied, and mapped.

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## New Gymnasium, 1927

Coal City high school had a new gym put up in 1927 and dedicated it to the soldiers -- along with a bronze plaque to honor them.

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## HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

On December 27, 2009 the Carbon Hill School Museum will hold its annual open house from 1 to 5 pm. Join us for a jolly-holly- merry - old time!

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## About our Society

Your membership in the Society keeps the school museum thriving.

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## Our Long Distance Relations

Last July an email arrived from Oregon, written by Bob Rossio who asked what we might know about his family from Carbon Hill --- within a summer, the Rossio relatives were connected from New York to Virginia to Kansas to Oregon and back to Illinois.

Francesco Rossio and Rosalie Mercier arrived from Belgium with their baby son in 1872 . Frank and Rosalie had 14 children; only 10



survived to adulthood. One little girl died in a cyclone in Oklahoma - Indian Territory. Today there are Rossio generations both local and widespread.

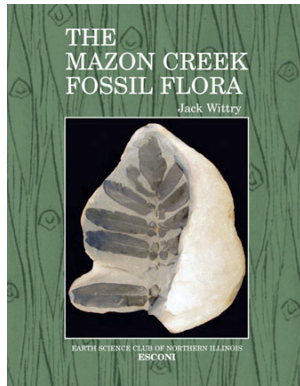
In Carbon Hill second son Henry Rossio and daughter Rose Rossio

Testa stayed to raise their families, as did several grandchildren. Our 1992 centennial book tells of Rosa Mercier Rossio Daco's ice cream shop on First Street where her grandson Frank Testa courted Anne Martinec. Records show the Rossio girls' local marriages with Ruffatti, Lafferty, Scerine, Bertot, Arnold, and other familiar names.

One famous descendent is film writer Terry Rossio, co-writer of "Shrek" and of all three "Pirates of the Caribbean." His picture at left may show family resemblances...

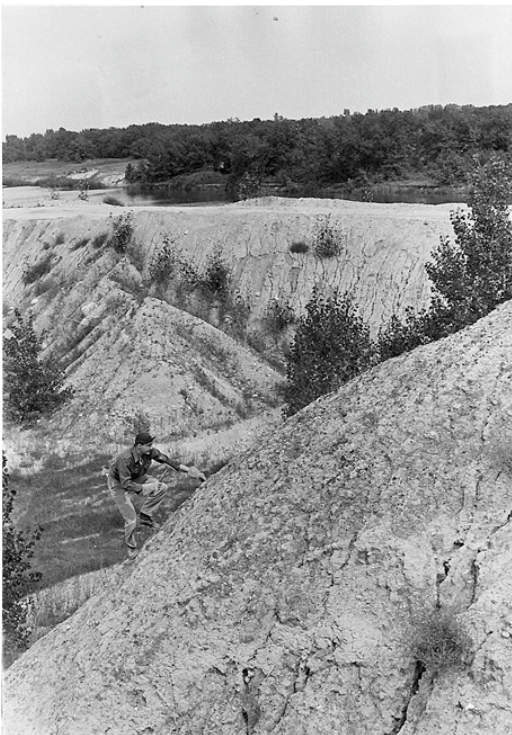
Bob Rossio has also learned his grandpa, first born Joseph Rossio, married Emma Berta, first cousin to Maggie Enrietta --- Michele's grandma. A small world indeed!

## STRIP MINING AND FOSSIL COLLECTING



*"The Mazon Creek flora is renowned for being almost completely collected by amateurs. Since 1858, in an area covering approximately 100 square miles, untold numbers of collectors have gathered fossils in quantities unprecedented in North America." Jack Wittry*

*Sincere thanks to several individuals with the amateur collectors group ESCONI (Earth Science Club of Northern Illinois) for sharing their local fossil interests with the museum. Mitch Pakosz, Richard Rock, Tom Testa, Ed Vassel, and Jim Turnbull have been generous with maps, photos, books, & specimens. Jack Wittry's new book is on display along with a treasure trove of original "stuff" from Jim Turnbull, shown below in Pit 11, circa 1967. Jim worked with Dr. Richardson at the pits and for Richardson's Vanishing Press.*



## Dedication of the New Gymnasium:

Coal City Courant, Dec 9, 1927

*"The dedication of the new gymnasium to the ex-service men of the community held on Friday evening was attended by a large crowd including a good representation of the former soldiers. By exerting great effort the contractor and various firms had worked to complete the building and have things ready for the dedication.*

*At 8 o'clock Faletti's orchestra started to play Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" as the service men marched in to their places in the reserved section. Following invocation by the Rev Mr. Leon Arpee, President Albert Rubin introduced the principal, Mr. A P Gossard, who made several announcements and told what the plans were for the use of the gymnasium and then turned the program over to Dr. F A Stockdale, who served as chairman for the evening. The ex-service men were somewhat taken by surprise at the commands of "Attention" and "About Face" but the old training came to the fore and they responded. As they faced the audience, Dr. Stockdale paid high compliment to these men.*

*Architect J E Coyle, who planned the building, was the next speaker. He presented the building to the board of education, District 98. Dr. Stockdale then called on Hoover Opperman, a member of the contracting firm of Hal Opperman and Sons, of Pontiac, builders of the gymnasium. Following Mr. Opperman's remarks. Mr. Richard Hill, former president of the board of education was called upon to speak. After Mr. Hill came County Superintendent Root. At this point a more serious side was introduced into the program when everyone stood in silence for a time in memory of those men of the community who failed to return at the close of the war.*

*The main speaker of the evening was Hon. Mr. Henry R Rathbone, congressman-at-large, who gave a most fitting address in which his good humor and deep insight into the community problems and the sacrifices of the ex-service men were most evident. Mr.*

*John Ross was called on following this address to give a response from the group of ex-soldiers. In his short response he spoke of the appreciation of the men on having their names handed down to future generations and predicted that this appreciation would grow in years to come when children with pride would point to the names of their fathers on the beautiful bronze tablet at the main entrance of the gymnasium.*

*The members of the audience came to their feet when the orchestra played the "Star Spangled Banner." The program closed with a benediction given by the Rev. Mr. George Shepherd. Following the close of the program open house was declared and the large crowd wandered over the building inspecting and admiring the beautiful and convenient new structure. "*

*It seems appropriate with Veteran's Day just behind us, a refurbished monument and another gymnasium underway, that we note in December 1927 there was not yet a WWII, no Korea, Viet Nam, Middle Eastern wars. That fresh bronze plaque of 1927 was only part of history.*

## THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES---

*We are truly grateful to all who donate old photos, maps, items, and stories but especially this quarter thanks to Evada Brown of the Born/Frye families, Ron Kessler of the Kessler/Pomatto families, Marilyn Hook of the Tira/Bono families, and Dick LeBeau of the Jones/Tracy families, for an amazing array of very old items and photos from our local mining communities!*





# Sunday, December 27, 2009

## Holiday Open House at Museum

*1 pm - 5 pm.*

Each year on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year the Carbon Hill School Museum opens its doors for a Holiday Open House, where we sip warm drinks and appreciate the glow of the season. The whole building is decorated with items from Christmas past. The big tree with its old ornaments is surrounded with toys of years gone by. Various nativity sets mingle in the displays. Old winter woolens, quilts, sleds and skates are displayed along with "the good dishes" and linens of the season. The stockings are hung by the fire, filled with a traditional orange and a lump of coal. Lit by all eras of light sets and sprinkled with sparkle, the school is aglow in the magic of Christmas!

Join us Sunday afternoon, December 27, between 1 and 5 pm. for a day of old-fashioned Christmas. Refreshments will be served. Photos of Christmases past will be on display. If you have one you'd like to share, Michele will make a copy for display. Phone her at 815-634-4213.



### Carbon Hill Historical Society Officers, 2009-10

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

### Public Relations

Michele Micetich ---- [mmicetich@comcast.net](mailto:mmicetich@comcast.net)

Michele --- 815-634-4213

Louise --- 815-634-8413

Membership application & information at:

[www.coalcity.lib.il.us/museum.htm](http://www.coalcity.lib.il.us/museum.htm)

**Carbon Hill Historical Society**  
**Louise Jensen**  
**630 Judson Street**  
**Carbon Hill, IL 60416-7018**

# 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!*



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

Join us for the 9th annual  
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE  
SUNDAY  
DECEMBER 27, 2009  
1- 5 PM