

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

Spring 2013

Grand Marshall

Bob Novy has lived on the NW corner of Sixth & Lacey more than 50 years, and served on our board under three mayors.

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Homecoming Notes

Our museum schedule June 19-23 during the annual homecoming.

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FIRE !!!!!

One hundred years ago marked the end of our village business district and the end of an era.

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A Trotter Family

Last store of the old days.....

Reunion Palooza in the Carbon Hill Park

Saturday, July 27
noon til midnight

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Books

We keep a supply of great local books on hand for sale. New ones added all the time.

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About our Society

Your membership in the Society keeps the school museum thriving.

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Grand Marshall

Bob Novy

Bob Novy's parents best illustrate the source of his own talents. Dad Gus built a sod house, worked in North Dakota copper mines, then enjoyed woodworking in Illinois. Mom Hilda kept a cozy home for their nine children. Born in 1937, Bob was raised near East School in Braidwood. He remembers a student smoking a corn cob pipe and a tiny old teacher wearing long skirts which dusted the floor. Always an active guy, Bob ice skated at "Q Dump" and sang a solo at his 8th grade graduation, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow".

High school years were filled with sports and old cars from the local



junkyard: a Model A, a '40 Ford, and then a '48 Chevy he outfitted with headers, duals, and hubcaps. (his hubcaps were stolen while he was very busy wooing a girl in his nice car).

His current harem includes a '46 Ford, "Betty Boop"; a '48 Chevy,

Sandy", and a '50 candy apple red Ford, "Baby Girl".

Bob's home is neat as a pin, his Xmas lights are legendary, and he loves woodworking. Serving on the village board under three mayors while working a midnight shift at work meant that at 8 am Bob was fixing pipes in some hole in town. Homecomings found him in the beer garden with glass bottles in icy troughs; his work lately has been devoted to our car shows. Bob says he "just can't stay in the house" -- how lucky for us.

We appreciate and say thank you for jobs well done!

Join us in honoring Bob Novy on Sunday, June 23, 3:30 pm at the museum. There will be time to share your stories and photos!

A TROTTER FAMILY

Robert Trotter emigrated to the United States from Scotland in the middle 1800's and although he began his career as a railroad engineer he soon turned to the grocery business. By 1900 he owned stores in Carbon Hill, Braceville, Coal City, and Dodge City, Kansas.

The stores "sold everything except men and coffins," according to Grandson Robert. At its peak the store in Carbon Hill had five delivery wagons, drawn by horses brought from the elder Trotter's farm in Kansas. The wagons carried groceries to rows of miners homes at a time when Carbon Hill boasted a population of 2,000.

One of Trotter's chief competitors was the Big Four Store, owned by the Big Four Coal Co. which required their miners to buy a certain amount of their supplies from the company store.

But miners seemed to thrive on cheese and crackers so Trotter's store carried 20 pound boxes of crackers to supply the demand. A truckload supply of flour was also on hand. Potatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables were placed near kerosene lamps in winter so as to prevent frost. The stores prospered.

A salesman with a truckload of peppers once offered Trotter a gold watch if he could sell the whole truckload. Trotter took up the challenge, and, while the salesman was a bit dismayed, Trotter was very proud of that gold watch!

In the early years of Carbon Hill the Trotter General Store served both the Bunker Hill neighborhood as well as Oklahoma, two sections divided along ethnic lines. As the children began to speak English, they "melted the pot" and the store lasted until 1924.

Miners worked in deep passageways three feet high, and in winter, would return many times at the end of their shifts soaking wet with clothes frozen to their bodies. Seeing such hardship, generations of Trotters -- Robert, son Ben, grandson Robert -- extended credit and gave financial help to these miners.

"A man takes a chance and works hard. He needs a little support." Wise words, Mr. Trotter.

FIRE!!!

One hundred years ago marked the end of an era

Old timers spoke often of the fire of 1913, voices filled with both excitement and sadness. Following the 1912 tornado, the town lost its vitality and miners moved on for work. Business slowed, making it no surprise that the little company town of insured wooden buildings would be destined for fire.

And, sure enough on Friday-- June 13, 1913 -- a dry, windy, hot summer day, in a vacant storeroom of Gallo's Hall, a fire broke out. This NE corner of 3rd and Lacey marked the center of Carbon Hill's business district. Across the street was a two story hotel, owned and operated by Big Four Coal Co and home to the EJE offices as well.

Gallo's Hall -- a vacant saloon and opera house -- sat first in a row of businesses up 3rd Street: a butcher shop, the post office, a dry goods store, and lastly the brick coal company store marking the north end of the block.

One block east sat the Methodist church, the KP Hall, and the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse roof was salted and so lived to tell the tale, but the church and the Knights of Pythias Hall both burned to the ground. South of the hotel Squire Henderson's JP office also went up.

Trotter's Store on the SW corner of 3rd and Lacey was salted and so survived. Next door a cigar and candy store and barber shop still stood. Of course, the brick company store stood. Despite heroic efforts the scene was a shambles.

Frances Veronda, was that day in charge of the post office and quick enough to rescue everything there. David Wharrie, expert with pumps, worked the system for the volunteer firefighters.

Annie Martinec and friends were eating lunch at the factory, sitting under the trees, when they saw smoke to the west. Running home breathless they saw their town was gone!

Come visit us during Homecoming ---

June 19, Wednesday 9 AM :

"Lost in Time" 5th annual bus tour. Sign up only with Coal City Public Library, the sponsor of this tour.

June 19 -22 :

Open 6-8 pm featuring display of the village fire scene from 100 years ago.

June 23, Sunday:

Open at noon before the parade, closed during the parade, open again at 3 pm until 8 pm.

Sunday, June 23. celebration for Bob Novy at 3:30 pm.



Books and treasures:

items for sale at the museum

We stock a supply of local books, as well as Carbon Hill School paperweights and children's slates, all or any which make great gifts. Proceeds from sales help to ensure our little museum's future.

Titles on hand include: Trapped, the story of the 1909 Cherry mine disaster; 1892-1992 Carbon Hill Centennial; 1897-1997 Goose Lake Township Centennial (Goose Lake is part of the original Felix Township); Mazon Creek Fossil Animals by T V Testa; Cardiff by Jim Ridings; The Promise of a Better Life by Jim Piacenti (Bureau County mines); Coal Dust (Carbon Hill details and stories; reprints of Wildfeather; Growing up in Goose Lake; and Company Town.

From school days through the Doc Brockhause years and right up until this very moment, people like you continue to contribute to the effort to make the Carbon Hill School Museum a treasure for all to enjoy. So many photos, scrapbooks, artifacts, and stories now illustrate our common history. Come see for yourself!

See you at Homecoming? See you at Reunion Palooza? See you soon!

Carbon Hill Historical Society Officers, 2013

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

Public Relations

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Membership application & information please write:

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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. --- and by appointment. We are located at 875 Second Street in Carbon Hill. Dues for membership in the Society is \$15.00 annually. Call Louise to check your membership status. Thank you!



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