

The Joiner Room Journal

Vol. 10 No. 3

Saving the Past for the Future

2009

A Postscript on the Lusitania Story

In the January 2009 *Journal* we printed the story about a Mayfield farmer, George Groves, going down on the ill-fated *Lusitania* when it was torpedoed by a German submarine in 1915. Mr. Groves had sold his farm here, withdrawn \$9,000 from a Sycamore bank, and planned to retire in England where his sister lived. We thought that was the end of the story, but thanks to Sheri Baker, who posted the *Journal* on the county GenWeb site, we heard from an interested historian from “across the pond.”

On May 17, 2009, we received the following e-mail from Peter Bradshaw, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, England.

“I have just found your article from January 2009 mentioning George Groves and the *Lusitania*. I thought you may be interested in the attached photos from Gainsborough Cemetery in Lincolnshire. The grave of his niece mentions his death on the *Lusitania*.”

Regards, Peter

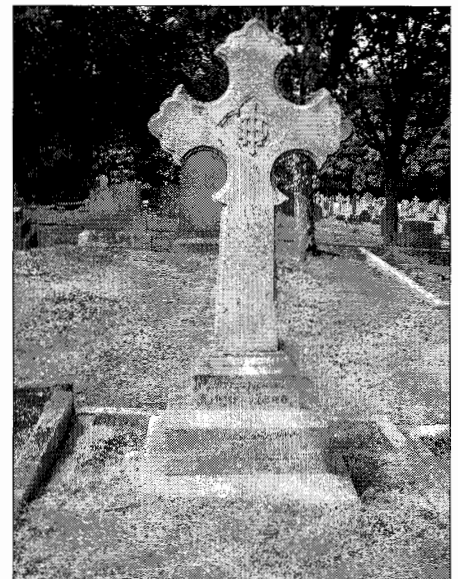


Gainsborough Cemetery, Lincolnshire, England

Our question back to Peter was, “How did you find the Joiner Room? And are you related to the Groves family?”

Peter: No, I’m not any relation at all. I live in Gainsborough Lincolnshire and a group of local people are trying to raise interest in the Gainsborough Cemetery Chapel and the cemetery in general ... we had an exhibition in the chapel a couple of weekends ago. There are several WWI soldiers buried in the cemetery or remembered on family graves. . . . I just noticed the inscription on the grave and was intrigued. I

Googled “George Groves *Lusitania*” and the article in your journal came up. . . . Your article was very informative—his sister stayed in Lincolnshire and married. . . . Did his brothers stay in the USA? Another article came up about the court case after WWI in which his brothers were not awarded any compensation for the death of their brother.



On the back of the niece’s tombstone is the inscription: George Groves who was lost with the *Lusitania* at sea, May 7th 1915, Age 68 years.

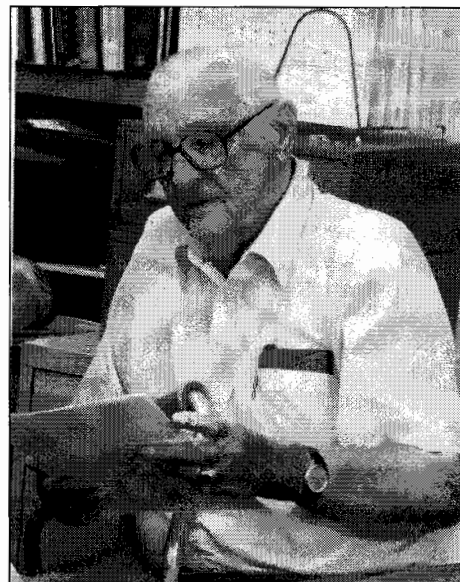
J Room Visitors

We have a lot of “Red Letter Days” at the J Room. Old friends drop in; out-of-state visitors, interesting mail, and rare and valuable additions to the archival collection make it a fascinating and fun place to work.

September 9 was one of those special days. Al and Otta Ritzman came in with additional photographs from the collection of Al’s father, Floyd Ritzman. These rare black-and-white pictures date back to the 1890s, and most are identified. The photo collection will be sorted, put into individual archival envelopes, numbered and added to our database index during the next few weeks. The many Northern Illinois State Teachers College (NIU) photos will be put into an album.

A BIG THANK YOU to the Ritzmans for making our day. And, oh yes, Al says there will be more!

In August, former county sheriff Field Utter stopped by for a visit. He was interested in the files and notebooks that cover the history of law and order in DeKalb County. Mr. Utter shared some interesting stories with our staff as he looked at some of the old “mug” shots and arrest cards, many with his “arresting officer” signature.



Field Utter, 2009

A Swede named Johnson, living 7 or 8 miles east of Sycamore, committed suicide by taking Paris Green last Sunday. We are unable to learn particulars farther than from the son, who came for his coffin, who remarked, “I don’t see why the old fool wanted to do it for.” The relatives seem to be annoyed at the event.

- Sycamore True Republican, June 29, 1878

Volunteer News

After several weeks of absence due to illness, we were so glad to welcome Sheri Baker back to her special spot at the computer, where she answers most of our e-mails and history questions. When it comes to genealogy, Sheri knows where to find the answers. Not only is she part of our crew, she also adds her expertise as Webmaster of the DeKalb County GenWeb site, dekalb.ilgenweb.net

Check it out for interesting items about our area.

In June, Ann Marie Babich joined the J Room volunteer crew. Born and raised in DeKalb County, she retired in 2006 after teaching at DeKalb’s Littlejohn School for 31 years. She also taught Haish and Ellwood schools. Ann Marie came in just in time to help Fran Besserman and Jackie Tyrrell with

their latest project, sorting and eliminating duplicate obituary cards and refiling them. There is no end to the filing jobs in an archives! Ann Marie also pitches in to help “walk-in” visitors find the answers to their history and genealogy questions. We are glad to welcome her aboard.

Another Happy “Customer”

A September 7, 2009, e-mail request was received from someone named Patti who lives in Bergschenhoek, the Netherlands, a small town northeast of Rotterdam. Patti was doing genealogy and was looking for a family member who was in DeKalb County between 1857 and 1910. Could we help?

On September 9, Sheri sent her a scanned copy of the man’s obituary and also a copy of the registration of his veterinarian’s license.

Doctors, dentists and veterinarians were required to register with the county before they could practice here. That registry, dated 1878-1977 is in the J Room archives.

Immense fields of corn have been planted this season by itinerant corn planters who take jobs at 25¢ an acre. With a man, a boy, a machine and 2 horses they plant 20 acres a day.

- Sycamore True Republican May 17, 1871

About one-third of the reapers and harvesting machines of the county are driven by women and girls. Many women of intelligence and refinement manage in this way to save the expense of a man in the harvest field.

- Sycamore True Republican July 30, 1870

Thank You

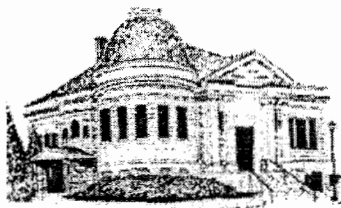
- * To the Doug & Lynn Roberts Foundation
For two walls of new floor-to-ceiling shelving in the archives room, replacing the old mismatched book cases and the wooden newspaper racks. The new arrangement gives us room to expand as well as additional work space.
- * To all the people who worked so hard to take the “old” out and put the “new” in, especially Sue Breese, Bob Myers, Jackie Tyrrell, Ann Marie Babich and Bud Burgin, who all worked overtime. And to the county staff who took away the old book cases. Thanks to all who made it happen.
- * To the family of the late Gary E. Hoffman for the contribution in Gary’s memory
- * To all who put donations in our money box and in your notes and letters

- * To the National Bank and Trust Company for a grant to convert our collection of oral history tapes from cassettes to CDs. The collection dates from 1976 through 1979 and contains interviews conducted at Kishwaukee Community College by local volunteers.
- * To all who have contributed to the J Room Fund at the DeKalb County Community Foundation

We appreciate your continued support!

Send contributions for the Joiner History Room Endowment Fund to:

DeKalb Co. Community Foundation
2600 DeKalb Ave.
Sycamore, IL 60178
815-748-5383
www.dekalbcountyfoundation.org



JOINER HISTORY ROOM

At the Sycamore Public Library
103 East State Street
Sycamore, IL 60178

Phone: 815-895-7271

E-MAIL:
JOINERHISTORYROOM@DEKALBCOUNTY.ORG

Hours
Tues & Thurs
10-3

New Resources

- Holmes, Wadley, Kempson and Pickwell family genealogies by the late Alberta Strasser. These four books contain photos, charts and the results of many years of careful research in the U.S. and England. Alberta died May 2009 at the age of 97.
- Sycamore Women's Club collection of historical papers, including by-laws, programs and club charter.
- 1949 program for grand opening of the DeKalb Theatre on 3rd Street, DeKalb.
- Photo of DeKalb (city) police force, c. 1950.
- History of Lahti Clothing Store in Sycamore donated by Rachael Lahti Donnelly.
- City of Sycamore Industrial Directory 2009. Includes history of all Sycamore industries, a fabulous research source! Thank you, Mayor Mundy.

What's Your Question?

Question: Can you find any articles that mention Chase, Illinois?

Answer: Yes, we found several newspaper articles about Chase. It was in Pierce Township, south of Cortland. We have a photo showing Chase (population never got above 11) depot, store, one house and a grain elevator taken sometime before 1940. [I was so inspired by this query, I decided to write an article about "The Place Called Chase" for the DeKalb County Historical-Genealogical Society newsletter. Check out the next issue of *Corn silk*.

Question: When I was a teen in the early 1980s, I stopped in a little soda fountain on your main street. It's name was Florian's. I know it is now out of business, but I don't know when it closed. I have begun a website called SodaFountainMuseum.org for the purpose of preserving this part of Americana for current and future generations and I would like as much info and as many photos as possible regarding this soda fountain.

Answer: This was an easy one! Florians closed in 1991. And, yes, we furnished the inquirer with photos as well as information on Mr. Florian, who was known for his "hand stirred Coke."