

St. Charles Heritage Center

# THE CHARLEMAGNE

215 E. Main Street ✧ St. Charles, Illinois 60174 ✧ (630) 584-6967

Volume XXV ✧ Issue 3 ✧ Fall 2008

## Belgiumtown in St. Charles researched & written by Jim McGuire

The Moline Malleable Iron Company began operations in St. Charles in 1893. Prior to this, the company was located in Moline, Illinois. While operating in Moline, many Belgians began working at the iron company, which was established in 1869. A disastrous fire in 1892 completely destroyed the Moline-based foundry. Company officials were lured with incentives given by the city to relocate in St. Charles, which was a highly regarded location due to its proximity to rail lines and Chicago.

With the relocation of the company, employees and their families also moved to St. Charles. For many years Moline Malleable would sponsor workers emigrating from Belgium to St. Charles. If workers had no family here, they would reside in a local boarding house.

The new foundry was situated on the north side of Dean Street, just east of Randall Road. Most of the Belgians who worked at Moline Malleable also lived near the foundry. The area west of Seventh Street along both sides of Main Street, as well as Dean Street became known as Belgiumtown. Many of the homeowners laid out neat lawns and unique flower beds, which contributed to the overall beauty of the neighborhood. Belgiumtown was also where these new residents brought their culture to the city. Saturday nights were party nights. Belgians would visit and drink homemade brews. The gatherings were held in the basements of the homes, since this was

where most of the living took place. The first floors were only used for special events. The basements were equipped with gas or wood burning stoves for cooking and a dining room at one end of the room, while living room furniture occupied the other end.

In the mid-1930s, dances with live music were held every Sunday during the summer months at the **Evergreen Farm** property on west Main Street. Beer and ice cream were sold at the events.

The Belgian immigrants appreciated peasant food, and often raised rabbits for stew and other dishes. They used almond flavoring for their baked goods and honey for sweetening. They clung to the custom of wearing wooden shoes in the garden and leaving them at the back door before entering their homes.

Many of the Belgian workers also frequented Ray's Evergreen Tavern, originally known as Gus's Evergreen Tavern. The tavern was built on land purchased by Gus Van Glabeke in 1928. However, alcohol was not available at the tavern until the end of Prohibition in 1933.

In 1948, the establishment was sold to Ray Triest and became **Ray's Evergreen Tavern**. It was at Ray's where Rolle Bolle — another Belgian custom — was introduced to St. Charles. Rolle Bolle involves rolling a ball (bolle) resembling a small wheel toward a stake. The object is to get the bolle as close to the stake as possible to earn a point for your team, generally consisting of three players. Ray's was so popular among the Moline Malleable workers that a 1963 company newsletter referred to the tavern as "Plant No. 2 – An important conference facility where the really important decisions are made."



*Two members of the Pigeon Flying Club*

"Belgiumtown" cont. page 5

# Congratulations, Natalie!

We are extremely proud to announce that the Center's Educator, Natalie Gacek, is the 2008 recipient of the Association of Midwest Museums (AMM) Promising Leadership Award.

The AMM Promising Leadership Award is given annually to individuals who have worked or volunteered for a museum or museum association for 10 years or less and provided exceptional service or shown outstanding commitment to the museum field. Natalie will be presented with her award at the AMM and the Mountain Plains Museum Association Conference in Kansas City, MO, this October.

Natalie has been at the Heritage Center since her graduation from Northern Illinois University in 2002. In her 6 years here, she has worked closely with the local schools to develop in-class and on-site programs to supplement the third grade local history unit, she has been involved with local museum organizations, and revived the Junior Historical Society – a group for youths interested in local history.

Natalie has been honored in the past with Awards of Excellence from the Illinois Association of Museum for her Junior Historical Society programs, and she was the 2007 recipient of the Illinois State Historical Society's Malkovich Award for a Young Museum Professional. She has also spoken about the Junior Historical Society at conferences and written an article for publication in a museum association newsletter. We congratulate Natalie on her latest accomplishment and look forward to her future successes.



## St. Charles Heritage Center & History Museum

Office & Museum (630) 584-6967  
Fax: (630) 584-6077  
www.stcmuseum.org  
info@stcmuseum.org

### –St. Charles History Museum–

215 E. Main Street  
Tuesday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.  
Sunday, noon–4 p.m.

### –Dunham-Hunt House Museum–

304 E. Cedar Avenue  
Open June 1  
Thursdays & Sundays, noon–4 p.m.

### –Archives–

Call for Appointment

### –Officers–

Mary Ellen Segraves, President  
Jack Brens, Vice President  
Allen Landmeier, Secretary  
Melvin Peterson, Treasurer

### –Board of Directors–

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### –Staff–

Julie Bunke, *Registrar*  
Natalie Gacek, *Educator*  
Patty Thayer, *Director*

### Please Clip & Send Today!

#### St. Charles Annual Membership Meeting Reply

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Will                  \_\_\_\_\_ Will not Attend

The St. Charles Heritage Center Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 11, 2009

Hilton Garden Inn • 4070 E. Main Street

Kindly enclose your check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ by January 6

\$30 per person in advance

\$35 per person at the door

Luncheon • Presentations • Door Prizes

# News, Events & Noteworthy Items

## Joe K. Anderson History Roundtables

The final Joe K. Anderson Roundtable discussion for the season will take place Wednesday, October 15, at the Pottawatomie Community Center from 1 – 2:30 p.m.

The topic will be Transportation in St. Charles. Join us in our discussion reminiscing about the many modes of transportation used in town throughout its history. **OR, Join us strictly as a listener** and hear others as they recall their memories of times past. As always you are encouraged to bring along photographs, memorabilia, and stories to share with the group. If you have any questions on this program, please call the History Museum, 630-584-6967.

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*All committee meetings are held at the History Museum unless otherwise noted.*

## October

- 11 JHS meeting: Location TBA, 1-2:30 p.m.
- 15 Education Committee meeting, 10 a.m.
- 15 Joe K. Anderson History Roundtable, Pottawatomie Community Center, 1-2:30 p.m. Free.
- 22 Fundraising Committee meeting, 4 p.m.
- 22 Board of Directors meeting, 5 p.m.

## November

- 8 JHS meeting, 1-2:30 p.m.
- 13 Thursday Evening Lecture, St. Charles Public Library, 7-8 p.m. Free.
- 19 Education Committee meeting, 10 a.m.
- 19 Fundraising Committee meeting, 4 p.m.
- 19 Board of Directors meeting, 5 p.m.

## December

- 4 Members' Day at the Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. See page 8 for more details.
- 13 JHS meeting, 1-2:30 p.m.
- 17 Education Committee meeting, 10 a.m.
- 17 Fundraising Committee meeting, 4 p.m.
- 17 Board of Directors meeting, 5 p.m.

**Dec. 22 through Jan. 5, 2009, Museum Closed.**

*Program dates and times are subject to change, please call to confirm all events 630-584-6967.*

## Reserve the Date for the Annual Meeting

The Annual Membership Meeting and lunch will be held again at the **Hilton Garden Inn on Sunday January 11, 2009, at 11:30 am.**

As valued members, please join us for yearly event that provides you with information, special presentations and a delicious luncheon. Your interest and support is what allows us to fulfill our mission to collect, preserve and present our city's history.

Save the date and reserve your table today. The cost is \$30 per person in advance or \$35 per person at the door. Your advance reservations help us plan for the number of attendees and saves you money at the same time. **See the form on page 2 of this issue.**

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## Thursday Evening Lecture

Join us on November 13 at the St. Charles Public Library Carnegie Room at 7 p.m. for a special program presented by **Rochelle Pennington**, author of the best selling book about the historic *Christmas Tree Ship*. Rochelle will be discussing her latest publication, *An Old-Fashioned Christmas*.

This book tells about "A time when every Christmas tree was real. A time when Christmas shopping meant paging through a Sears & Roebuck catalog, and heading downtown to Main Street. Christmas meant the arrival of Norman Rockwell paintings of Santa on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*, and handwritten letters addressed to the North Pole with wishes for record players, choo-choo trains and Raggedy Ann dolls."

Signed copies of the book will be available for purchase. If you have any questions on this program, please call the History Museum, 630-584-6967.

# New Donations *by Julie Bunke*

Past Heritage Center board member, **Jerry Swanson**, gave several St. Charles High School yearbooks dated 1969 and 1991, and multiple yearbooks from Haines Junior High School. If you have yearbooks from any of the St. Charles schools and would like to donate them to the museum, they are a valuable source of reference material. **Please contact Julie at 630-584-6967 with any questions.**

Also donated was a patch awarded to **Bill Warner** for being part of the team who won the Little Seven Conference Track Championship of 1953.

**Mary Jaeger** donated several items from Mount St. Mary's Academy, as well as advertising items from past businesses in St. Charles. Included in the donation were pictures of Mayor Ival Langum posing with a bear in 1946. Image on right.

**The family of Victor E. Nelson** gave a plaque that was awarded to him for long and faithful service as treasurer of the Neptun Lodge 35, I.O. Vikings in St. Charles. He served as treasurer of the lodge from January 1, 1933 until March 28, 1981.

**Don Soderquist** donated photographs of St. Charles including many images of the construction of the Illinois Street Bridge built by Carl E. Soderquist and Sons Construction Company.

The **St. Charles Public Library** gave an oversized aerial photograph of downtown St. Charles taken in 1945. This map provides an interesting view of how the downtown has changed during the past 60 years.

**John and Kathy Grzywa** donated a unique photo dated 1944 of the interior of a downtown restaurant affectionately called "The Chatterbox." This restaurant was mentioned by many of the contributors to the Memory Book as being a popular place in St. Charles for kids to hang-out in the 1940s and '50s. Image below.



Special thanks also goes to **Peter Mincieli, Kristen Fischer, Shirley Anderson, Ron and Debb Murphy, Elliott Williams, Mary Riippi, Thomas Rosensteel, William Phillips, Jack Brainard, Judy Klima, Carl Safanda, Mary Anne Carlson Morgan, and Faly Colaizzi** for their generous contributions to the museum artifact collection.



## Speaking of Donations

Looking to make an end-of-the-year donation to help reduce your taxes?

Remember the St. Charles Heritage Center! Donations to the Center are completely tax deductible and help us to provide our many educational programs for adults and children... such as

- History Roundtables
- JHS Programs
- Thursday Evening Series
- The Charlemagne
- Grave Reminders
- Printed Self-Guided History Tours
- ...And Much More!

# Belgiumtown in St. Charles *continued from page 1*

Pigeon racing was another favored pastime among the workers. According to Ray's son Dick Triest, pigeon racing club members would gather on weekends at a member's garage where the pigeons were housed. The members would hire a driver to take the pigeons west of town and release them. Precision clocks developed in Europe timed how long it took for them to fly back home. Dick Triest remarked that this was a good way to pass the time, and the sport was popular in this area for more than 50 years.

Young workers from Moline Malleable organized a semi-pro football team in 1916 known as the Belgian American Club. The players held games on Sundays. In 1917, the team merged with another area semi-pro team and practiced on a field near west Main Street. The field had a rise in the middle, which was referred to as "Dead Man's Hill." Following the merger, the team stormed through the competition and went undefeated (7-0-3).



The Belgian influence was very substantial in St. Charles. From making up much of the workforce at Moline Malleable to introducing many homeland customs and games to making the city a hotbed for semi-pro football, Belgian immigrants helped contribute to St. Charles' unique culture and history.

**Bernie Deutsch** owned and operated Ray's Evergreen Tavern for more than 25 years. He recently sold the establishment to **Peter Lappin and Malcolm Kanute**, who completed an extensive remodel and are now operating the historic site under the name of **Ray's Evergreen Grille**.



*Members of the Pigeon Flying Club with trophies.*

## The Sport of Rolle Bolle

Rolle Bolles are made of a hi-tech hard rubber substance that is virtually indestructible. The bolles are shaped like a small wheel that is beveled on one edge causing it to roll on the path of an arc. The size of a bolle ranges from 6 inches to a maximum of 8 inches in diameter and weighs a maximum of 8.5 pounds. The bolles are 2.5 inches thick.

The bolle can be sized and shaped to the bowlers preference as long as it meets the physical characteristics stated earlier. The most common customizations are the diameter and bevel of the bolle. Changing the diameter effects the size and weight of the bolle. Changing the bevel effects the amount of arc and the speed of the bolle.

### The History of Rolle Bolle

Shortly after the Reformation, Europeans turned toward sports and games of chance and skill. Based on using local materials and providing entertainment, these games became formalized competition with the sanction of the Church. Some of these came down through the ages, such as Rolle Bolle, Horseshoes, Ten Pin Bowling and Bocce Ball.

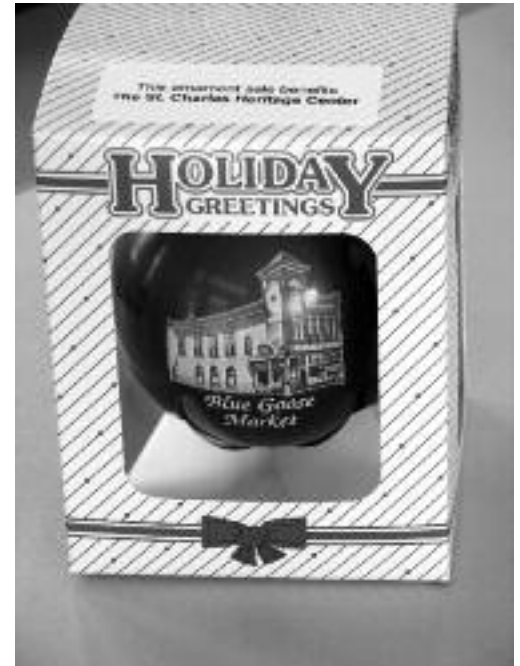
The Belgians developed Rolle Bolle as we know it, a game played on bare ground with stakes set 30 feet apart. The bevelled bolle is rolled from one stake to the other. As it slows down, it turns into the stake and comes to rest. The bolle, or bolles which comes closest to the stake scores.

## 2008 Collectible Ornament Now Available

The new ornament for 2008 is available in the museum gift shop and features the second location of the Blue Goose Supermarket at the southwest corner of 3rd and west Main Streets.

The ornament is a blue glass bulb with a photo of the Main Street location in frosty white. This building was the second of the four locations of the Supermarket. The ornament is also available for purchase at the front counter of the Blue Goose Market and sells for \$10.

This ornament is 18th in a collector's series available for purchase from the St. Charles Heritage Center; past years are available for purchase either individually or in a set. All sales help support the Center's mission.



## Center's Programs Win State Award

The St. Charles Heritage Center has been honored with three awards from the Illinois Association of Museums (IAM) for our outstanding programs. These awards go to staff members, *Julie Bunke and Natalie Gacek along with every volunteer who helped make them possible.*

**Special Projects Award of Excellence:** The 75th Anniversary Diamond Celebration Memory Book.

**Special Projects Superior Achievement Award:** The 75th Anniversary St. Charles History Crawl.

**Platinum Anniversary Award:** For 75 years of service to the community.

Since 1994, the Illinois Association of Museums has awarded the important work of museums across the state, offered grants and scholarships to volunteers and staff to further their understanding of best practice issues, offered workshops and conferences, collaborated with many organizations for the benefit of the museum community, and represented and advocated for museums in the Illinois General Assembly and beyond.

Last year, The Charlemagne received an Award of Merit for the Center's quarterly newsletter.

The annual IAM conference and award ceremony was held in Elmhurst, September 24-26. Thank you Natalie & Julie, for submitting these achievements for consideration. Congratulations to all who made them happen!

## Joann (Norris) Collins 1926 ~ 2008

St. Charles certainly was her hometown. And she gave generously of her talents, time, position in the community and her wonderful sense of humor.

Joann (Norris) Collins died August 12 at her home. She leaves behind a generous legacy few others in recent years can claim. And like her mother, Dellora, and her father, Lester Norris, she spent many, many hours in service to her community, including the St. Charles Heritage Center.

It's been noted that Mrs. Collins volunteered her time to about 15 organizations.

The people of St. Charles will miss her.

# 75 Years & Counting!

It's still 2008 and NEVER too late to make a donation to the 75th Anniversary Endowment Fund for the St. Charles Heritage Center.

Your **fully tax-deductible donation** will go a long way to ensure the future of the St. Charles History Museum and the award-winning educational programs that it has to offer residents of all ages.

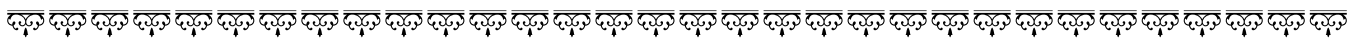
For more information or to make a donation please contact the staff at the St. Charles Heritage Center at 630-584-6967 or contact any of the members of the Board of Directors.

# Historic Preservation Info

The Historic Preservation Commission reviews façade improvements and building permits for exterior work within the historic district and consults on projects for historic buildings.

Meetings are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of every month, 7 p.m., Committee Room, 2 E. Main Street, 2nd Floor.

Staff Contact: Kim Malay, (630) 377-4443 or [kmalay@stcharlesil.gov](mailto:kmalay@stcharlesil.gov).



**Memberships are important to the St. Charles Heritage Center!** Your support is vital! The Heritage Center derives a majority of its operating budget from its annual memberships. Please tell a friend about the St. Charles Heritage Center and use the form below to invite them to become a member. The many benefits of being a member include 10 percent off in the museum store, free admission to the history museum and Hunt House Museum as well as other special events throughout the year.

## Membership

Check the Yearly Membership Level of Your Choice

- Grantor \*\$5,000+
- Benefactor \*\$1,000 - \$4,999
- Corporate \*\$500 - \$999
- Patron \*\$250 - \$499
- Sponsor \$100 - \$249
- Family \$40
- Individual \$25 *Your company may match your gift.*
- Senior \$10 *Please contact your employer for details!*
- Student/Junior \$10

*\*Your Name will be on Wall Recognition Plaque in the Museum*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

•We do not rent or sell our private mail list.

**Clip & Mail to: St. Charles Heritage Center  
215 E. Main Street, St. Charles, IL 60174**

## Membership Benefits

- ❖ Free admission to the St. Charles History Museum, Hunt House Museum and various programs yearly.
- ❖ Reduced admission to lectures and programs.
- ❖ Free quarterly publication, *The Charlemagne*
- ❖ 10% discount on Museum Gift Shop items.
- ❖ Reduced fee on local history research services for home or family.
- ❖ Knowing that your membership, participation and support helps the Heritage Center to collect, preserve and present our history.

*I would also like to be involved with the following...*

- 4th of July Glowsticks Sales
- Appraisal Weekend Fund-raiser
- Grave Reminders Cemetery Program
- Tour Docent
- Museum and/or Hunt House Docent
- Office Assistance
- Gift Shop Assistance
- Special Events
- Other (please tell us your special talents)

# Member's Day at the Museum & *The Gift Shop*

Make a trip downtown on **Thursday, December 4**, for the Annual Members Open House at the History Museum. Please stop in anytime from 10am to 4pm to view the museum all decked out for Christmas.

This is also the date for unveiling our newly redecorated, revamped and restocked Gift Shop! During this special day, Heritage Center Members will receive 20% OFF their purchases\* instead of the traditional 10% discount.

AND, bring a neighbor, friend, relative, co-worker or acquaintance with you. If they join the ranks of the St. Charles Heritage Center Membership, they will ALSO receive the 20% Discount AND you will receive a special token of our appreciation! Be sure to tell them their membership is TAX DEDUCTIBLE as yet another incentive to support our vibrant history, our museum and our mission.

The staff — with the generous assistance and guidance of member & volunteer **Sue Villanova** — have been working toward and shopping for new lines of gifts, treasures and trinkets for the store. Sue's talents can be appreciated daily at the Blue Goose Market in downtown St. Charles at First and Indiana Streets. She has given generously of her expertise in redesigning the decor of the Gift Shop as well as assisting in selection of merchandise. The Gift Shop will continue to carry its current favorites, such as St. Charles North Stars and St. Charles Saints scrapbooks, crocks, ornaments and our new addition of local photography matted or framed by professional **Mike Cain**.

*\*All Mike Cain items excluded from any discounts.*

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## Local Photographer now featured at Museum Gift Shop

Mike Cain's artistic eye can be seen in his photography. And his admiration for local landmarks is evident as well. However, he has put his unique vision on everyday icons that makes his photographs truly collectible.

Cain's images are now available at The Gift Shop in a variety of sizes all either matted or framed. Custom orders are also available directly through Cain. One of the most unusual is Cain's "Rocks" series. These are images that cannot be adequately described in words

and definitely need to be seen in person. **He has also created one to celebrate the Center's 75th anniversary in a very limited edition.**

Again, this keepsake concept is perfect to commemorate any special occasion or life story in a distinctive array. Stop in today and view this new addition to The Gift Shop.



215 E. Main Street  
St. Charles, IL 60174

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