



**O'Fallon Historical Society
O'Fallon, Illinois**

NEWSLETTER

**Volume 10, Issue 3
August-October 2006**

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*Founded May 1988
501(c)3 tax exempt*

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Officers and Directors

Brian Keller	President
Vacant	Vice-president
Dorothy Falk	Secretary
Maurice Hesse	Treasurer
Bill Peach	Director (2007)
Barb Nute	Director (2008)
Gerald Worms	Director (2009)

Newsletter Staff

Brian Keller	Editor
Dorothy Falk	Mailing

Member—Illinois Association of Museums



President's Message

This newsletter is arriving a bit late but we hope it is still timely. Suffice it to say that it's been a busy summer here at the museum.

The illustration above is our new Christmas ornament featuring a vintage engraving of the museum building. Many thanks to Joan Houston and Joyce Zimmermann who coordinated this project. 100 of the undated ornaments were ordered from Gifts for Individuals. While supplies last, they may be purchased from the museum during regular hours at \$5.00 each. All proceeds benefit the museum.

Annual elections were held at the September membership meeting with the results seen to the left. Heartfelt thanks goes to retiring vice-president Ruth Grandcolas and director Fred Wiechert. We are grateful for their faithful service in those positions. Also, thanks to Gerald Worms who has agreed to accept election as director for a three year term.

Our annual Christmas party will be after our regular meeting on Tuesday December 19, 2006. We ask everyone to bring their favorite finger foods.

So, on that note, we wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2007!

Brian Keller



On October 22, 2006, the St. Clair County Historical Society presented an historic site award to Keppler Cemetery. Located on O'Fallon-Troy Rd, half way between Seven Hills Rd and Scott-Troy Rd, it is the final resting place of many early farming families in north O'Fallon Township. Brian Keller presented a brief history of the cemetery at the awards brunch held at Bellecourt that afternoon. Here is the transcript.

Keppler Cemetery is located on a picturesque hill-top on the O'Fallon-Troy Rd. in rural northern O'Fallon Township. It was established in 1846 when trustees of the Protestant Evangelical Church, in order to provide a proper burial ground for church members, purchased one quarter acre of land from William and Anna M. Voisin. The church was organized just prior to that date and it was the first German-language congregation in the township, serving a community of German and Alsatian farmers who lived in the surrounding area popularly known as Engel's Prairie. The church building, believed to have been constructed with bricks made 3/4 mile to the north, was located just southeast of the cemetery on the opposite side of the present road. About 1851, Rev. Heinrich Keppler, a native of Wuertemberg, Germany, began to serve the congregation as a minister and teacher. Rev. Keppler, his wife Anna Maria and seven children lived just south of the church. During his tenure, the church building would serve as a place for worship services and as a private German-language school. So closely was he associated with the congregation and the area that the church and cemetery were known as Keppler church and cemetery and



the area was sometimes known as the Keppler community. In August 1873, church members formed a nonprofit corporation called the "St. Joseph Cemetery Association of St. Clair County, Ills." for the expressed purpose of acquiring additional land for the cemetery. Two months later, additional acreage was acquired from Sebastian and Anna Eva Joseph, expanding the cemetery to 1.5 acres. Care of graves was generally the responsibility of the individual lot owners but annual assessments of \$1.00 were sometimes levied to help cover the cost of general maintenance. In 1892, Rev. Keppler died and was buried in the cemetery bearing his name. The congregation was served for a time by local ministers, but the church was unsuccessful in replacing their beloved pastor. In 1896, Rev. Keppler's wife died and about that time the decision was made to disband the congregation. Most of the members joined the Evangelical Church (UCC) in O'Fallon. Others went to St. John Evangelical in Collinsville and a few went to St. Paul Evangelical in Lebanon. In 1898, the remaining funds in the church's treasury were disbursed. The church building may have been used briefly during this period as a German summer and Sunday school, but it soon fell into disuse and disrepair and was later razed. It was believed that there were some graves next to the church building, but all traces of these have disappeared. By 1949, the appearance of the cemetery became a serious concern and members of the Cemetery Association

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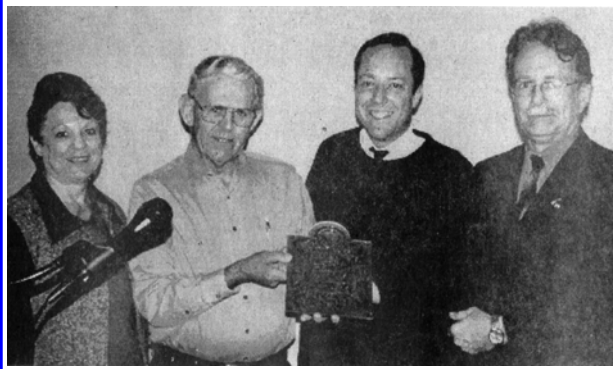
Don't forget to renew your membership for 2007. A renewal form is included with this newsletter. If you are a life member, please pass the form along to a friend.

Keppler Cemetery *continued from page 3*

decided to establish a perpetual care fund with \$100 per lot assessments. Henry Borchers was appointed the first caretaker and was paid from the fund. The association's incorporation apparently having lapsed, in 1950 members decided to re-incorporate under the new name of "St. Joseph's Burial Association." In 1988, the present wrought iron sign was installed at the entrance to the cemetery and in 1990 a gate and fence were erected to discourage vandalism. In 2005, Kenneth and Mary Ann Joseph and James and Gladys Williamson donated acreage for expansion on the western boundary and Kenneth and Mary Ann Joseph donated a 20-foot strip of land on the north boundary. That brought the total acreage of the cemetery to 1.69 acres. There are currently approximately 200 marked graves in the cemetery—the oldest dating 1852 and the newest 2006. There are, however, numerous unmarked graves especially in the eastern section where many infants are known to rest. To recognize this, in 1998 a granite marker was installed near the cemetery entrance in memory of the unknown infants. Keppler is still an active cemetery under private ownership of the burial association which meets annually on the Norman Keller farm. Graves are still available and are sold and a caretaker is provided for. Now in its 160th year, Keppler Cemetery remains a visible reminder of a once thriving rural community from the early days of the O'Fallon area.



Would you be interested in receiving the newsletter and other Society news via email? If so, we'd like to hear from you. We are making the newsletter available as a pdf file and will be sending out periodic notices of Society events and news. If interested, please send an email to Brian Keller at bjk1855@usinternet.com



James Morris of the St. Clair County Historical Society (far right) presenting landmark plaque to (l to r) Clementine Smith, Kenneth Joseph & Brian Keller. Photo by Harrison Church (Lebanon Advertiser).



Current officers of the St. Joseph's Burial Assn. are Bill McIntosh, president; Norman Keller, vice-president; Henrietta Keller, secretary/treasurer; Kenneth Joseph, Ralph Keller & Clementine Smith, trustees.

