

BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

“Everything we do is for the betterment of the City of Belleville.”

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THE MISSION OF THE BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS TO PROMOTE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE HISTORY, CUSTOMS, ARTIFACTS, ARCHITECTURE, AND PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS. IT STRIVES TO ACQUIRE, MANAGE, AND PRESERVE ARTIFACTS, DOCUMENTS AND REAL PROPERTY SIGNIFICANT TO BELLEVILLE AND TO ENCOURAGE PRESERVATION OF THE CITY'S CULTURE, HISTORY, AND ARCHITECTURE.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

FIRST 2026 CONCERT ON THE LAWN



On May 21, the BHS hosted our first Concert on the Lawn of 2026 with music provided by the Belleville West Jazz Band! We had a great turnout and raised several hundred dollars through donations and sales from our Mocktail Bar, a new staple at our events. Thank you to BHS member Margaret Meyer and Band Director Michael Pond-Jones for their efforts to bring this event to life. We hope to see everyone at the next concert!



On May 18th and June 1st, the BHS hosted over 200 individuals who were participating in the "Freedom Road Rally" at our Museum of Mid-Century Modern Museum of Architecture & Design/Blazier House. Most of the guests, who were from all over the US and Canada, were traveling in vintage cars. They were very complimentary of our collections and enjoyed sharing their "my grandma had one of those" stories. They also were very willing to share tales of their "rides" (vintage cars). We loved hosting this group and hope they visit us again.

Much thanks to the following board members and volunteers who served as hosts for this event: Margaret Meyer, Bob Quaas, Katie McDowell, Cassy Geib, Julia Skrabacz, Hunter Robinson, and Christine Branum.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER, AND CONGRATS TO OUR NEW VICE PRESIDENT

The BHS is excited to welcome new Board of Trustees Member Cassy Geib. Cassy Geib is a geotechnical engineering lab technician who lives in, and is currently involved in, restoring a Charles E. King house in Swansea. She is an amateur radio operator and holds a first-degree black belt in Shorin-Ryu karate. Cassy also has a strong interest in the arts and works in a wide range of creative and hands-on mediums.

We would also like to thank our former VP Bob Quaas for his years of service. After stepping down, the BHS voted Hunter Robinson as Quaas's successor. We look forward to seeing more of his work and dedication to the organization!

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE



Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2026 Memorial Day Parade. It's always a pleasure to be a part of community events!

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR USA'S 250TH

Celebrate America's 250th by traveling back in time with us at Belleville History Field Day! On Saturday, June 20, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., there will be historical demonstrations, interactive exhibits, films, live music, a block party, and food and drink! The BHS portion of the event will be held outside the Historic Garfield Street Saloon Museum (633 E Garfield Street), and the rest of the event will be on East Garfield and the 200 and 300 blocks of Abend Streets.

Plus, take a guided walking tour about The Day Lincoln Came to Town! Reservations are required for the walking tour, so please call 318-799-1088 for more information.

Belleville History Field Day is a collaboration between the Belleville Historical Society, Gustav Koerner House Restoration, St. Clair County Historical Society, The Labor and Industry Museum, The St. Clair County Geneological Society, and the Abend and Garfield Streets Neighborhood.

On June 27 at 11 a.m., the BHS will also be participating in the Belleville Liberty Parade, beginning at North 3rd Street and culminating at 2400 West Main Street. We hope to see everyone along the route!

NEWLY DISCOVERED:
TWO CHARLES E. KING
DESIGNED HOMES

The BHS recently found two homes in the area that were designed by architect Charles E. King. The Mr. & Mrs Roy Wiebe House, located in Swansea, was built in 1954. The Burton & Joyce Graham House, located in the Lake Forest Subdivision, was built in 1959.

If you believe you have information about a potential King house, please contact our King Advisor Margaret Meyer to discuss further. We are always looking to add to the official list of homes!

ATOMIC TEA TIME:
A MID-CENTURY TEA PARTY

We are thrilled to announce our first-ever tea party, hosted at the Mid-Century Museum of Architecture, in collaboration with The Tea Spot, the London Tea Merchant, and Larissa Photography!

Join us on July 11 from 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. for an afternoon of mid-century fashion, a specialized food and drink menu, an etiquette lesson, and photo-ops throughout the museum.

Tickets will be available online, so be sure to check out our social media and website for more info, or look us up on Eventbrite.com. A limited number of in-person ticket sales will be available at The Tea Spot in downtown Belleville.

We hope to see you there!



2026 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Henry Raab (1837-1901)**Master Teacher**

Raab was a native of Rhenish Prussia, Germany, who came to the United States in 1853. He began a teaching career in Belleville in January 1858. During 1873-1882 and 1887-1890 he was the city school superintendent. He was elected Illinois State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1882 and 1890. He promoted fitness instruction, teacher training, and kindergartens. Raab was active in the German Turnverein movement, promoting physical fitness and mental growth. As Turnverein president he reinvigorated the movement in Belleville. For nearly 20 years he was the librarian of the forerunner of the Belleville Public Library and advocate for a public library. He served on the city library's board of the directors. Raab was a founder of the Belleville Philharmonic.

**Jacob Brosius (1824-1882)****Inventive Manufacturer**

After arriving in St. Clair County from Kronberg, Germany, in 1849, Brosius cofounded in 1856 the Geiss and Brosius foundry in Belleville, which produced agricultural implements – some of patented design – and structural metal work. He established Belleville Oil Works in 1866, which used innovative technology to press oil out of seeds and nuts. The pond located at his Kronthal mansion provided the water needed to produce steam that flowed from his power plant through pipes of Brosius's design to warm the county courthouse and residences beginning in 1879. To synchronize the time displayed by municipal clocks in Belleville, he ran electric wires to them from his electric clock. Brosius died just before his electric power plant began to produce electricity in Belleville in 1882.

**GARFIELD STREET SALOON MUSEUM BY BOB BRUNKOW**

The Reverend William Homeier reported in 1854 that the majority of Belleville's residents were "friends of beer and whiskey." One needed only to walk the city's streets to find confirmation of the pastor's observation. In 1909, when the city had a population of about 20,000, there were 117 licensed saloons in Belleville. The neighborhood saloon was a cornerstone institution in Belleville. A homegrown brewing industry developed to supply these saloons. Western Brewery (manufacturer of Stag Beer) and the brewery best known as Star Brewery were the leading breweries.

The Historic Garfield Street Saloon Museum honors the heritage of the saloon and brewing industry of Belleville, preserving the artifacts and stories of these institutions. For a hundred years the saloons and taverns in this building served alcoholic beverages to their patrons. Adam Gintz, the retiring president of Western Brewery, had this saloon constructed about 1895. Gintz hired master brick masons whose talent is displayed in the masonry above the windows of this saloon. Normally saloons were in larger buildings, including residences and hotels. This building, however, is probably the first freestanding saloon in Belleville. It included the residence of the saloonkeeper. The saloon opened for business in 1896 under saloonkeepers Gerhard and Wilhelm Hoelscher. They were so successful that a frame storage wing was added to the building before 1900. About 1918 Gintz had a brick addition constructed. The style was simpler than the original brick building but did include ornamental bricks with an egg-and-dart pattern. For a few years, barbers intermittently rented space in this addition. Later it became the women's room, where women could imbibe in peace.

Gintz ownership of the building continued until 1922 when George "Long Bob" Wiesner, who had become the saloonkeeper here in 1916, and his wife acquired the building. Unfortunately for Wiesner, Prohibition went into effect by statute in 1919 and by constitutional amendment in 1920. Wiesner had to change occupations so opened a "soft drink emporium" in this building but sold beer under the table until 1927, when he was apprehended and imprisoned. Upon release, he opened a grocery store and sold canaries here.

Prohibition was repealed in 1933, and alcoholic beverages again were legally sold in this building. By the 1940s television and movies enticed patrons into the tavern. Family dining was featured in the 1950s and 60s. For a brief period in the early 2000s, Garfield Street Bar and Grill was a popular place to dine, but subsequent taverns in this building suffered the fate of many neighborhood taverns in Belleville. Their clientele no long consisted of neighbors but of people from outside the immediate area who lacked the neighbors' decorum, and the taverns developed rowdy reputations. The last tavern here was foreclosed in 2010. The mayor would not issue a liquor license for a new business in the building to respond to neighbors' concerns. The building consequently lost value, and the Belleville Historical Society acquired it for its saloon and brewery museum.

Membership:

Membership forms for the BHS can be downloaded from our website, www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org, by contacting us at bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com, or at 633 East Garfield Street, Belleville, IL 62220.

Recent donations to the BHS have been received from:

Azizat Danmole	Linda Weisenstein	Jessica Guldner
Joe & Christine Hayden	Ann Peters	Thomas Partelow
Mark Walz	Blackbird Giving Fund	Roger & Joni Agne
Missouri Historical Society	Charities Aid Foundation of America	Jon & Debbie Wessel
Larry Betz		

Supporting the Belleville Historical Society:

As a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, the BHS is authorized to receive gifts and donations that can bring tax benefits to the donor. Gifts to the BHS demonstrate support for the preservation of Belleville history. If you would like more information, please contact us at bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com, or by mail: President, Belleville Historical Society at 633 East Garfield Street, Belleville, IL 62220. We welcome the opportunity to serve you.

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Thanks to Hunter Robinson for providing pictures for this newsletter.