



The Adair  
HISTORIAN

C/O ADAIR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

211 South Elson Street  
Kirksville, MO 63501-3466

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Preserving Artifacts and  
Narratives of Adair County

The Adair  
HISTORIAN

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**Be Sure to Check  
Your Current  
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Your Current  
Membership Status**



The membership year is from January 1 till December 31. We are now in year 2000. The mailing label on this newsletter has been coded. It shows the membership category and the year the dues have been paid. It shows the membership category and the year dues have been paid on the top line above your name - e.g. F 00.

- I 00 Individual Member
- F 00 Family Member
- S 00 Sustaining Member
- LIFE Life Member
- X Exchange Copy

## Notice

**2000 Membership Dues**  
Individual Membership \$ 15.00  
Family Membership 0 \$ 25.00  
Sustaining Membership\* \$ 50.00  
Life Membership \$ 200.00

\*Sustaining memberships includes business, professional, and institutional.

**Mail checks payable to:**  
Adair County Historical Society  
211 South Elson  
Kirksville, Missouri 63501-3466

### ADAIR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2000-2001

**Officers**  
Pat Ellebracht, President  
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Deena Moffitt, Historian

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Camelia Harrell  
Robert Funk  
Russell Harrison  
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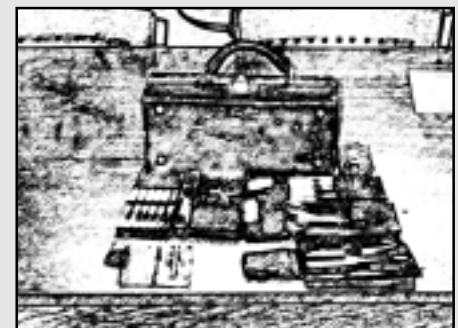
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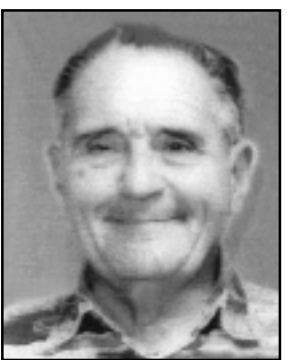


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## A LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

As the year 2000 comes to a close, it is time to begin to look ahead to 2001.

The year 2001 is the 25th anniversary of the Adair County Historical Society. ACHS was issued a charter from Missouri's Secretary of State on February 6, 1976.



In those early years the organization's members held regular meetings but they had no building, few financial resources and not much in the way of historical artifacts and records. In the year 2000 ACHS has a historic building, over \$45,000 in the bank and the beginnings of collection for a public historical society.

One of the primary goals of our organization is to preserve our building in downtown Kirksville. Our organization will be spending approximately \$13,000 in the near future to make our building more attractive on the exterior and energy efficient on the interior. This expenditure will not only benefit ACHS it will also benefit the community. The ACHS building will be an asset to the downtown area and visitors will be attracted. The interior of the building needs to be refurbished. While all gifts will be appreciated, ACHS needs some significant donations to meet these building needs. To do this job correctly ACHS needs ten donations of at least \$10,000 each.

On a lighter side, the ACHS Appraisal Day was a success (see inside article). A wide spectrum of the public responded. In a small way, Appraisal Day showed that ACHS can present a worthwhile activity for the public.

On November 6 we have our annual meeting (see inside article). Hope you will be able to attend. This annual meeting promises to be a very enjoyable evening.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pat Ellebracht, President  
Adair County Historical Society  
27 October 2000

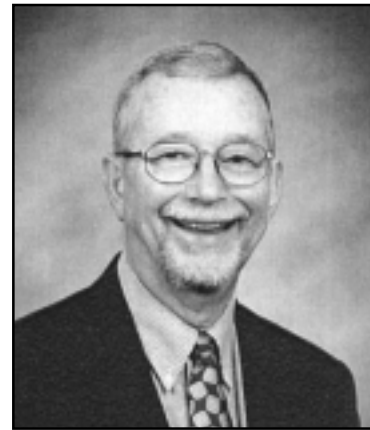
# HARRY LANGDON TO ENTERTAIN ACHS

Harry Langdon of Kansas City will present *Music of the Midwest* at the annual Adair County Historical Society dinner meeting on November 6 at the Travelers Hotel.

Langdon will present music, stories and songs of Midwesterners' lives by exploring the ethnic roots of our folk tunes. The speaker plays Native American tunes on his wooden flutes and accompanies group singing on keyboard and banjo. Langdon sings solos and presents slides showing life on the farm, ranch, railway and town, in a program that promises to be both educational and entertaining.

Earning a PhD. in theatre from the University of Iowa, Dr. Langdon has taught theatre at the university level and has authored two books and forty articles on theatre.

The Missouri Humanities Council supports and sponsors this program. ACHS members are encouraged to attend. The public may attend this program. Social Hour is at 5:30 pm; Dinner is at 6:00 pm. Prepaid reservations are necessary by November 30. The cost is \$14.00 per person. Seating is limited. Mail your check/reservation to ACHS, 211 South Elson, Kirksville, Missouri 63501.



## FAMOUS QUOTATION

Ours is an age which is proud of machines that think and suspicious of men who try to.

Howard Mumford Jones



## JESSE KIRK ANCESTOR VISITS ACHS

Recently Elizabeth Kirk Anders from Lafayette, California visited the Adair County Historical Society Museum. Anders is a great great granddaughter of Jesse Kirk, the individual for whom Kirksville is named. Anders spent two afternoons at the museum looking for information about her great great grandfather and the Kirk family.



According to legend, Jesse Kirk provided the surveyors of Adair County with a drink of whiskey and invited them to have Thanksgiving dinner on a cold November day. For those favors, the surveyors named the town to be, Kirksville.

### THANKS TO APPRAISAL DAY VOLUNTEERS

Sandra Fleak, Claire Jepson, Linda Hudnall, Pam Sylvara, Deena Moffitt, Russell Harrison, John Sparks, Walter Davison, Odessa Ofstad, Del Tolenaar, Denise Treasure, Charles Elam, Cora Etta Lawson and Mary Slawson.

## FAMOUS QUOTATIONS

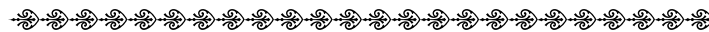
A people who do not hold in reverence the splendid achievements of their ancestors will not in themselves accomplish anything to be remembered of posterity.

We must keep an eye on the shrines of yesterday if we would rock aright the cradles of tomorrow.

Pat Neff

Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self confidence.

Robert Frost



*A letter . . .*

Check from 1920

Note from 1895, signed with an "X"

Contract Sale from 1892, signed with an "X"

## PIONEER DOCTOR'S MEDICAL BAG AND INSTRUMENTS



The medical bag and instruments of G.A. Sparling, M. D. were donated to the Adair County Historical Society Museum several years ago by Gerald A. Reeves, M. D., Dr. Sparling's grandson.

Sparling was born in 1856; in 1876 he entered the newly established Normal School in Kirksville; graduated from the American Medical College in St. Louis in January 1880. Sparling practiced medicine in Adair County from 1880 to 1930.



Sparling had the first telephone in Adair County from his house to his office. He owned one of the first bicycles and later one of the first automobiles.

## WILLIAM HART DIED IN OLD MEXICO

ACHS member Michelle Cragg of Kahoka, Missouri notified the *Adair Historian* that she made notes of William Hart's death while doing research in the Pickler Memorial Library in the 1980s. According to Cragg, Hart died April 2, 1907 in Las Mochis, Sinaloa, Mexico.

Pickler library archivist Elaine Doak found William Hart's obituary in both the Kirksville Weekly Graphic and Kirksville Democrat for April 5, 1907. Hart was a jeweler for thirty one years in Kirksville who invented Hart's Mercantile Computing Machine.

According to the obituary: "Hart established a reputation for honesty and integrity that comes to few men. His rule of conduct was 'do right because it is right.'" Hart was not a believer in religion but he did give liberally to church building and charitable purposes. In later years he accepted a spiritual life and became a believer in spiritualism.

Hart had five children to survive him - Mrs. Emma Hahn of Portland, Oregon, Henry Hart and Mrs. Rose Whitzel of Las Mochis, Mexico, Lawrence Hart of Seattle, Washington and Mrs. Myron Miller of Kirksville.

According to Elaine Doak, since William Hart died in Mexico it is doubtful that he is buried in the Forest-Llewellyn cemetery. Probably what happened, when Hart's wife died a tombstone with both of their names on it was purchased. Hart later left Kirksville for Mexico and never returned.

### NEW MEMBERS

Jeff Gall  
Cora Etta Lawson

### NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Mary Lucille Dabney  
Iva Daniels

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO BUILDING FUND

Mary Lucille Dabney  
Pat and Eleanor Ellebracht  
Emil and Pat Green

### NEW VOLUNTEER

ACHS would like to formally welcome Cora Etta (Corky) Lawson as a new volunteer. Corky will give ACHS much needed help in the area of membership records and displays.

## ACHS Appraisal Day Is A Success

Cold weather did not deter interest in the ACHS Appraisal Day. By 9:30 Saturday morning collectors began arriving at the Adair County Historical Society Museum bearing items to be appraised by Carolyn Peterson. The twenty seats were filled prior to the 10 a.m. starting time. During a six hour period from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Peterson appraised 262 items from 138 collectors. Most collectors brought two items. Since collectors were limited to two items per time through the line some persons went through the line several times.



Carolyn Peterson ready to appraise



The crowd comes early

Most appraised items had great sentimental value. A duck decoy was the most expensive item appraised at \$2,000. One collector brought four toys from the 1930's that were appraised over \$100 each. Peterson appraised a child's riding horse at \$125, numerous household items from \$50 to \$150, and others from \$300 to \$500.

According to Pat Ellebracht, ACHS President, "The day went well; we had about all we could handle; many individuals who brought items to be appraised lingered to see what others brought; all in all, it seemed to be an enjoyable event." With this initial success, ACHS plans to have additional Appraisal Days.



Fred Veach brings rare duck decoy



Peterson takes a closer look



Peterson appraises a horse brought by Judy Clark

A Kirksville jeweler/watchmaker by the name of William Hart invented a circular calculator known as Hart's Mercantile Computing Machine. The 4 7/8 inch pressed brass main disk is divided from 1 to 100, mounted with an inner and an outer volvelle each with index holes from 1 to 100 with a stationary index arm plus a spring plate.

Hart patented his calculator January 15, 1878. Witnesses on Hart's patent were listed as E. H. Bates, George E. Upham, A. Slingerman and Albert Dutcher. The patent number issued was 199,289. Hart's invention could be used for adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. The invention was viewed as a valuable improvement in "mechanical accountants."

The present volunteers at the Adair County Historical Society were unaware of Hart and his calculator. Several months ago Dan Weinstock, M.D. of Geneva, New York contacted the Adair County Historical Society requesting information on Hart and the calculator. Weinstock has one of the few known Hart calculators. The Smithsonian National Museum of American History has a Hart calculator, which was donated by Mrs. Robert T. Kerr of Keokuk, Iowa in 1994.

There are fewer than a half dozen of these calculators known to exist, and there is an uncertainty as how many were actually produced. Hart may have hand made a few. To illustrate, Weinstock's has no markings on it, but identifiers on the Smithsonian's calculator indicate Scovill Manufacturing of Waterbury, Connecticut, and a company by the name of J. W. Strange, made it. Scovill was a maker of brass products. The cylindrical case for the calculator is made of wood.

Weinstock says that he found no record where Hart ever sold the patent for someone else to produce the calculator. Weinstock did find where Hart had two patents for clock escapements in the early 1860s, but he does not believe these escapements were ever used since he knows of no one who has ever seen a clock movement using either one of these inventions.

From information developed by Elaine Doak, archivist at Truman State University, William Hart, a watchmaker/jeweler, was born in the state of New York ca 1829. He moved to Kirksville from Maysville, Wisconsin ca 1867 and opened a jewelry store, doing business as W. Hart Jeweler. In 1875 he entered a partnership with Albert Dutcher and then sold his share of the firm to Dutcher.



Because of declining health, Hart said that he wanted to "take up something giving more outdoor exercise." In 1874 Hart ran for City Council and lost. In 1884, William Hart was one of the incorporators of the Spiritual and Liberal Association, which believed that certain spirits of a deceased manifested themselves and, in some instances, conversed with their friends on earth.

The 1880 Federal Census shows Hart's occupation as a watchmaker; whether he was actually pursuing a career at that time is not known. Hart was back in business by January 1886, in the firm of Hart & Miller. Again, there is no known record how long this partnership lasted, but in 1890 the business was simply Hart's Jewelry Store.

## RARE CIRCULAR CALCULATOR

On Saturday, December 15, 1890, Hart's Jewelry Store was destroyed by fire that originated in P. M. Smith's hardware store on the northwest corner of the square. An explosion of a keg of powder accelerated the fire. Responding quickly the fire department connected a hose with a well at the Parcels House and soon realized nothing could be done to stop the fire. Fire officials then gave attention to the Masonic building across the street which was already beginning to smoke from the intense heat.

The firemen moved to the well at the mill since the well at the Parcels House was exhausted. They attached the hose and attempted to reach the mansard roof of the Masonic building. Unfortunately with the fire in the cornice, the pump simply could not raise the water high enough to the building to extinguish the blaze, threatening the destruction of the entire building. Firemen then ascended to the roof and attempted to extinguish the flames from that position, but the heat was so intense that they soon had to abandon that position.

At this point, saving the Masonic building looked hopeless. Persons did take the county records in the park away from

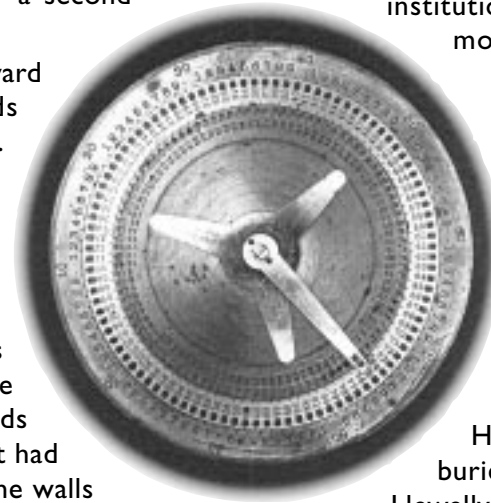
the flames and the water. Other individuals worked at removing goods from McKeechan's Drug Store, Hart's Jewelry and Pickler's Dry Goods. The fire gradually worked itself into the Masonic building and once inside it spread rapidly over the entire upper story. The burned joists on the east side of the Masonic building fell pushing the fire wall of the building outward; then, it toppled over and fell on the Hart building and Pickler's storeroom.

When the crash descended on the Hart building, William Hart and his son Volney were in the building along with Hart's daughter Mrs. Rose Bunker, Fred Sweat, William Price and N. D. Smith. For an hour and a half, Hart was pinned down by a heavy timber. Hart's son Volney died in the fire after being crushed with the fall of the fire wall. William Hart barely survived a second crash.

The fire continued its northward direction burning the Woods building which housed D. H. Nighawander's Grocery, owned by J. M. DeFrance. Nighawander saved about \$200 worth of stock. C. Borneman lost a barn, hay and corn but managed to save his residence. Charley Lay's Marble Shop, just north of the Woods building, escaped the fire but had to be razed after the walls of the Woods building fell.

Volney Hart was the only casualty of the fire. William Hart had a broken right leg with burns on the hands and face. Hart's daughter, Rose Bunker had a head and face cut with internal injuries. The William Hart building was valued at \$7,500; insurance at \$1,500, goods saved were worth \$2,000. The Masonic building was valued at \$18,000; insurance at \$8,000; Masonic regalia, uniforms, and fixtures were valued at \$5,000, with insurance at \$2,750. P. M. Smith's Hardware and Furniture was a complete loss with insurance of \$23,000.

In 1892, Hart was back in the jewelry business again, known now as Hart & Son. Apparently, he was in business with his son Lawrence who later became an osteopath. Hart was still in business in 1894 when his wife died on January 27. She is buried in the Forest-Llewellyn cemetery. Hart had either died or left town



by 1899 because he does not appear in the 1899-1900 City Directory or in the 1900 Census. The date and place of his death are not known, but he is buried in the Forest-Llewellyn cemetery in Kirksville, Missouri.

The William Hart story had many twists and turns. If this story had been published without the help of Elaine Doak, archivist at Truman State University it would have been in error. Doak learned that there were two William Harts in Adair County in the late 19th century. One was a jeweler/watchmaker; the other was a farmer. Both of them had wives by the name of Elizabeth. The farmer, one of the wealthy individuals of the county, had the misfortune of being afflicted with insanity. He died in Fulton in the state mental institution on March 27, 1890, which was almost nine months before jeweler Hart's store burned.

Doak also found the "farmer" Hart had a son by the name Richard William Hart, who was elected judge in Adair County in 1906 and 1908. Richard William Hart, who died in 1926, is buried in the Fort Madison Cemetery north of Kirksville. The cemetery surveyor also has him buried in Forest-Llewellyn, so he is "buried twice." Doak says, "The 'calculator' Hart is the one buried in Forest-Llewellyn."

When the Smithsonian Institution received its Hart calculator in 1994, the Adair County Historical Society was contacted for information about Hart and the calculator. The information sent indicated it was the "farmer" Hart who was the inventor. The information ACHS had on Hart evidently was sent to the Smithsonian since that was a more permanent place than ACHS was at that time.

During this saga, the Adair County Historical Society has found no Kirksville resident who has ever heard of William Hart or his calculator. Individuals finding a Hart calculator in their attic will possess a real treasure.

Source about the fire:

"KIRKSVILLE FIRE: A Young Man Crushed Beneath Falling Walls," *Kirksville Weekly Graphic*, 19 December 1890. p. 2.