

# Notable Women of Galesburg, Illinois

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*March 2012*

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\* denotes still living

## Categories

An attempt to categorize the notable women on this list has been made in order to facilitate naming honors. The categories used are:

- Arts/Culture (writer, poet, dancer, painter, etc.)
- Athlete
- Business/Entrepreneur
- Community (organizer, service, humanitarian)
- Educator
- Environmentalist
- First Decade (founder, settler)
- Innovators/First
- Journalist
- Medical/Science
- Philanthropist
- Service (official, government, public and civic)
- Wartime

## **Purpose**

*To identify, acknowledge and celebrate women who have an attachment to Galesburg and have made a significant difference in our society either locally, nationally or internationally.*

Successful communities tend to have interesting and inspiring stories. From time to time, it is valuable to review and learn about those women who contributed to this legacy. Current generations learn to become a part of their own history by understanding those whose contributions preceded them. We continue this legacy by making our community a safe, healthy, caring place to live and raise our families. Every so often we need to look to our past to find inspiration and ideas for the next generation.

Galesburg is currently in the midst of celebrating its 175<sup>th</sup> birthday. In recognition of that anniversary, Galesburg seeks to rediscover more about women who have played an important role in the history of our community. This new research is important in order to recognize our past and enrich our future.

We encourage and challenge future generations to continue this process. May our successful history contribute to a successful future.

## **Juanita Kelly Bedner**

Date: 1908-1968

Category: Innovator/First; Service

Juanita Bedner graduated from Lombard College and was a school teacher. She was the president of Civic Art League for seven years, member YMCA Board, Public Library Board and President of Carl Sandburg Association. Juanita helped with the Carl Sandburg cottage, Penny Parade and the Sandburg Park & Remembrance Rock. She planned the memorial service where Sandburg's ashes were placed under Remembrance Rock. She wrote the Dram Girl of Delta Zeta and several other songs. She was very active in the First Presbyterian Church. She established a Christmas Shrine. She was Charter member of the Galesburg Junior Womans Club and advisor to it 1948-1952.

## **Joan Zeldes Bernstein\***

Date: 1926-

Category: Service

Bernstein was born Joan Zeldes in Galesburg, where her father owned Louie's Liquor store and her mother was a buyer at a department store. Received her Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from the University of Wisconsin and a J.D. from Yale Law School. Was Director for the Bureau of Consumer Protection Federal Trade Commission. Served as General Counsel of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and as General Counsel of the Department of Health and Human Services. She also chaired the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. She was Assistant to the Director, Deputy Director and Acting Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

## **Mary Ann Bickerdyke**

Date: 1817 - 1901

Category: Medical/Science; Wartime; Community

Mary Ann Bickerdyke moved to Galesburg with her husband. After her infant daughter died she resolved to learn more about medicine and began reading medical books. Her husband died in 1859 and she took work as a laundress and maid and attended Congregational Church. Shortly after the start of the Civil War, Reverend Beecher received reports of the poor medical care wounded soldiers were receiving. Mary Ann Bickerdyke resolved to do whatever she could to improve the situation so she left her children with a neighbor and took donated food and medical supplies to nearest Union

base in Cairo, IL. She refused to leave after seeing squalid conditions and so began washing soldier's clothes and bedding, cooked meals, and kept soldier's wounds clean, all without official sanction and in violation of regulations forbidding women within the fort. She assembled a small staff of local women volunteers and recovery rates improved greatly. She began accompanying soldiers into battle working in field hospitals along side doctors and cooked for and fed the ill, cut off bloody clothes and replaced them with soft hospital garments. When officers complained of her presence on the battlefield she stood up to them and continued her work. After dark she would return to the battlefield with a lantern and bring more wounded soldiers to the hospital. After the Battle of Shiloh she was hired by General Grant in an official capacity as part of the US Sanitary Commission and traveled with Grant to Vicksburg, Mississippi and Tennessee and with Sherman on his march to Atlanta. After the war, she rode at Sherman's invitation at the Grand Review in Washington. She continued to provide nursing care to recuperating soldiers. Later she worked to help Union veterans secure back pay and pensions. She raised funds for veterans to buy land in Kansas under the Homestead Act and opened a hotel with her sons in Kansas but went bankrupt because she let so many Union veterans eat and lodge for free. She called them "my boys. After her death, her body was brought back to Galesburg and she is buried in Linwood Cemetery

### **Julia Fletcher Carney**

Date: 1823-1908

Category: Arts/Culture; Faith; Educator

Julia Fletcher Carney was a writer, primary school educator, feminist, Universalist, and Boston-area resident. She achieved world fame for her poem "Little Things," written in 1845. Born in Lancaster, Massachusetts, and educated at Lancaster Academy, she became a teacher at the age of 21. In 1849, she married Universalist minister Thomas J. Carney, and the couple had nine children, four of whom died in infancy. Julia wrote many articles and poems for the religious periodicals of her demonization and various periodical of her day. She also wrote a series Sabbath-school instruction books which were used for many years in the liberal churches. A number of her verses were also set to music and used in worship services. Julie lived on Berrien Street. Carl Sandburg remembered her as an old, little woman with snow-white hair, sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch. Sandburg recalled, "She was just one more nice old woman who wouldn't bother boys at play" (Prairie-Town Boys, 1953). Julia's father was a Galesburg Universalist minister. One of her sons was mayor of Galesburg from 1899 to 1901 and was the senior partner of the law firm, Carney, Carney and Frank.

## **Sara Pike Conger**

Date: 1843-1932

Category: Arts/Culture

Born in Galesburg, she was an American Presyterian Missionary and writer about Persia. Taught at the Iran Bethel Girl's School in Tehran, 1910 and became principal. She married Dwight Donaldson in Tehran in June, 1916. During thirty years of sharing her husband's missionary work, giving Bible instruction, and teaching English, particularly to women, Bess Donaldson gathered material for *The Wild Rue* (London, 1938), a unique study of Persian folklore and myths, ranking with but based on more direct personal experience than Henri Massé's *Croyances et coutumes persanes*. . . . In her book she treated such topics as the evil eye, childbirth practices, love and marriage, pilgrimage, burial practices, angels, cosmology and astronomy, names and numbers, the calendar, the Koran, the significance of flora and fauna, personal hygiene, and talismans and signs. It is indispensable to any serious student of Persia and popular Islam. She also published *Prairie Girl* and *Prairie Girl in Iran and India* (Galesburg, IL, 1971 and 1972, respectively).

## **Mary Allensworth Creighton**

Date: 1895 - 1995

Category: Community; Innovator/First; Business/Entrepreneur; Journalist

Mary Allensworth Creighton wrote for William Randolph Hearst's New York American newspaper and in 1928 co-founded the Galesburg Post newspaper which brought a new dimension to the political scene in Galesburg. The Galesburg Post supported independant candidates and causes and was involved in the reform movement that targeted the Republican machine which had controled Galesburg. She supported the Council-Manager form of government for Galesburg. She founded the Children's Milk Fund when milk was considered a luxury item and not given to children (only to babies). She paid for milk for 15 families in need and when she saw how the health of the children in these families had improved, she convinced her readers to contribute as well. She and a volunteer ran the Milk Fund so that all money could go towards purchasing milk. She expanded this by also purchasing infant formula from Milk Fund donations. When the government red tape prevented some from finding lodging, Mrs. Creighton stepped in and helped. She heard of a family of six with a sick baby who were living in a hen house after World War II. She found then housing. Post readers donated furniture and local carpenters donated time to make the house livable. She helped other families in need of homes. The Milk Fund helped pay utility bills, provided used washing machines, refrigerators, shoes and boots. She never said no to anyone needing help. She was named Woman of the Year by

the Cosmopolitan Club and awarded Charles Morrow Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to journalism. Mary Allensworth Creighton was active in the restoration of Knox College's Old Main building.

### **Olive Temple Custer**

Date: 1873-1956

Category: Philanthropist

She performed charitable work in Galesburg and founded the Empty Stocking Club.

### **Mary Brown Davis**

Date: 1800-1853

Category: Journalist; Community

In 1837, Mary Brown Davis moved to Peoria, Illinois. Her husband, Samuel, published the newspaper, The Peoria Register. While living in Peoria, Mary and Samuel became committed Abolitionists and both of them endured harsh criticisms and harassment due to their anti-slavery advocacy. In 1843, Davis joined other women who helped established a female anti-slavery society in Peoria. During this time, she became closely associated with abolitionists in Galesburg. In 1844, she helped form the Illinois Female Anti-Slavery Society. After her husband Samuel died of Cholera in June of 1849, Mary and her three sons moved to Galesburg. While living in both Peoria and Galesburg, Mary Brown Davis, wrote scores of newspaper articles that were published in Chicago's newspaper The Western Citizen. Her articles, always-signed M.B.D. strongly supported the Abolitionist Movement. As a journalist she also made numerous contributions to pioneer periodicals in Illinois including The Oquawka Spectator and The Galesburg Free Democrat. In the mid-1850s, she left Galesburg and moved to Chicago. Throughout her life, she was a social worker who promoted a variety of social reforms. She organized female auxiliaries to the Sons of Temperance and also defended dress reforms for women promoted by the Bloomer Style of Dress. Her son, Southwick Davis was a member of the first Knox College graduating class in 1846.

## **Frances (Kap) Kapusinski Dayton**

Date:

Category: Medical/Science

Frances Kapusinski was born in Whitesboro, Wisconsin. She married Dr. Charles Arthur Dayton. Frances Dayton was a Pediatrician in Galesburg from 1945-1961 and a staff physician at the former Galesburg Mental Health Center. She was the Chief Medical Examiner for the Polish Women's Alliance of America for one term, member of the Galesburg Cottage Hospital and St. Mary's Medical Staff until she retired, member of the Knox County and Illinois State medical societies and the American Medical Association. She served on the board of the Visiting Nurses Association and Knox County Day Nursery. She was listed Who's Who Among American Women and the world's Who's Who of Women in London. She was a graduate of Crane College and Lewis Institute of Technology in Chicago. She received her Doctor of medicine degree from Chicago Medical School and served her internship and residency in Montreal and Port Arthur, Ontario. She was a member of the 50 year Club of the American Medical Association, member of Soangetaha Country Club, Charter member of Altrusa, and a former member of Galesburg Women's Club.

## **Bess Allen Donaldson**

Date: 1879-1974

Category: Faith; Educator

Born in Galesburg, she was an American Presbyterian Missionary and writer about Persia. She taught at the Iran Bethel Girl's School in Tehran, 1910 and became principal. Bess Allen married Dwight Donaldson in Tehran in June, 1916. During thirty years of sharing her husband's missionary work, giving Bible instruction, and teaching English, particularly to women, Bess Donaldson gathered material for *The Wild Rue* (London, 1938), a unique study of Persian folklore and myths, ranking with but based on more direct personal experience than Henri Massé's *Croyances et coutumes persanes*. . . . In her book she treated such topics as the evil eye, childbirth practices, love and marriage, pilgrimage, burial practices, angels, cosmology and astronomy, names and numbers, the calendar, the Koran, the significance of flora and fauna, personal hygiene, and talismans and signs. It is indispensable to any serious student of Persia and popular Islam. She also published *Prairie Girl* and *Prairie Girl in Iran and India* (Galesburg, IL, 1971 and 1972, respectively).

## **Alice Egan**

Date: 1917-2006

Category: Service

Credited with the formation of the Illinois Association of Housing Authorities in 1961 and became its president in 1978. Worked for the Knox County Housing Authority for 50 years, retiring in 1998 at age 81. The KCHA office building was named the Alice Egan Program Administration Building.

## **Justina Ford**

Date: 1871-1952

Category: Medical; Community

Justina Ford was the first African-American woman physician in the Denver, Colorado, area. Born on January 22, 1871, in Knoxville, Illinois, Justina grew up in Galesburg, Illinois. Her mother was a nurse, and she was the seventh child in the family. She would not play with her siblings unless they played hospital and she was the doctor.

Following her graduation in 1899 from the Hering Medical School in Chicago, Illinois, she directed a hospital in Normal, Alabama, for two years. Then she moved to Denver in 1902. She applied for her license and found the authorities reluctant to grant it to her because she was an African-American woman. However, she did get her license and set up her practice. Still, the medical community was slow to recognize her abilities. Ford was not accepted into membership by the Denver Medical Society, or the American Medical Association until very late in her life.

Specializing in obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics, she came to be known as the "baby doctor." Because Denver General Hospital would not take Black patients or physicians, Ford took her practice door- to-door. A stern and brisk-mannered woman, Ford was known for her unique system of delivering and providing the best care for mother and baby in the home. She delivered over 7000 babies before, during, and after World War II. Her patients came from many ethnic groups including Hispanic, Native American, Chinese, Greek, Japanese, African-American, and white cultures. Transportation to her patients progressed from horse and buggy to taxicabs. She finally purchased a car and hired a relative to drive her. When her car came into a neighborhood it was a sure sign that someone was having a baby.

Justina married Reverend Ford early in her career. She remarried after her first husband's death, but she continued to be known as Dr. Ford. Her second husband was Alfred Allen.

She succeeded in being admitted as a staff member of the Denver General Hospital, the same hospital that refused her services early in her career. Moreover, her home and office have been relocated, renovated, and reopened as the permanent headquarters of the Black American West Museum in Denver, Colorado. It is also used as a community meeting place. She died at the age of eighty-one in October 1952. Source: Margaret Jerrido

### **Alma (Lescher) Archer Fox**

Date: 1899-1988

Category: Arts/Culture; Business/Entrepreneur

Born and raised in Galesburg, she was a well-known authority on fashion, style and taste. She graduated from Knox College in 1919 then went to Hollywood, CA and designed custom-made Cadillac's for movie stars. She married Harry Archer, Broadway composer and opened a charm school in New York City. Alma also sold the classes by mail order. She was a columnist for United Press International and became columnist for the New York Mirror and was a columnist for the Hurst Syndicate of newspapers with a world wide circulation of more than 1,100 newspapers. She interviewed Adolph Hitler and many other people of importance and celebrities for the Hurst newspapers. Alma was friends with writers James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway, among others. She wrote the book "Encyclopedia of Beauty and Charm" published by Hermitage Press in 1948.

### **Irma Reel Gale**

Date: 1873-1964

Category: Education; Community

Irma Gale came to Galesburg as a seven year old from German where she had completed first grade. She knew the multiplication tables through the 19s. She lived in Galesburg till her death. She taught mathematics, social studies, coached debate. She was a brilliant lady who loved to teach. When retirement age arrived, she asked to go on teaching without a salary. Material things did not matter. She was said to have dressed poorly. She retired in the 1940s.

Irma Gale married a lawyer who was part of the founding Gale family. They had three children. Her open attitude was illustrated by the fact that although she was Jewish she let her children choose their own religion. When her husband died she sold their home and moved into the Harrington Home orphanage as a "house mother." Later she was a "house mother" for the Cottage Nursing Program on Seminary Street. Later having lost her eyesight she was in a nursing home but she was helping two people get their citizenship

from memory. Mrs. Gale used to put a saying on the blackboard every day. She spoke of not sending greeting cards at the holidays but instead using that money for charity. There is an Irma Gale award given annually at GHS to the American History student who scores highest on a competitive test.

### **Adda Gentry George**

Date: 1873-1968

Category: Educator; Community

Adda Gentry George was a graduate of Galesburg High School and Knox College (1895). She was widowed (at age of 31) after her husband, a Knox College professor, John George passed away. She was a former English teacher at Galesburg High School and later taught in Milwaukee. She returned to Galesburg upon retirement and resided at 258 N. Academy where her flower garden was featured in Woman's Day Magazine. When she was almost 70 years old and after much investigation, she located the birthplace of Carl Sandburg at 331 E. Third Street. The house was in a state of decay and so she began national letter writing campaign to obtain donations. Short of funds she used money from her own modest personal funds to make up the difference. She organized volunteers who began the restoration of the old three room home including enlisting neighborhood children to clean up the street. The Sandburg Birthplace Association was established in 1941. Despite indifference from much of the community she vigorously led in its restoration. The birthplace was dedicated on October 7, 1946 when she was 73 years of age with Marshall Field from Chicago as the main speaker at her invitation. The Lincoln Room was dedicated on October 7, 1948. She continued as the president of the Carl Sandburg Association until 1959 at the age of 85. She was named Woman of the Year in Galesburg at the age of 80.

### **Sophie Higarela Gonzales**

Date:

Category:

First Mexican to graduate from Cottage Hospital School of Nursing in 1949.

## **Louise Harrington**

Date: 1895-1969

Category: Community; Educator

Superintendent and treasurer of the board of the Knox County Free Kindergarten Home for 26 years.

## **Kate Harrington**

Date:

Category:

Mother of Louise T. Harrington.

## **Virginia Hinchliff\***

Date: 1910-

Category: Educator; Community

Virginia Hinchliff is a life-long resident of Galesburg. Her family is an old family of the city and her maternal grandfather was a state legislator. She is a member of Congregational Church although she attended some various churches as her parents both directed church choirs. She graduated from Galesburg High School in 1928 and Irma Gale was her debate coach. She attended Lombard College two years before its closure and then graduated from Knox College in 1932. Upon graduation, financial troubles were great for the country and the Hinchliff family. She was hired as a teacher in Victoria, IL to teach a variety of subjects, direct plays and teach home economics although English was her field. After three years, she was hired to teach at Lombard Junior High and from there she moved to Galesburg Senior High School. She retired from GHS in 1972 after 25 years there. In total, Virginia was a teacher for 40 years. During her early years of teaching she had earned a Master's degree at the University of Illinois in the summers. Virginia was highly regarded by her students and her colleagues. A gruff brick mason who had been her student spoke of her as a very good, caring teacher who was also a tough determined lady. She was chairman of the English department for years. She sponsored the Future Teachers organization, the AFS and others. Professionally she was active in the Galesburg Education Association and also the Western Division of the Illinois Education Association. She was the first president of Alpha Rho Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, a women educators honorary and served as recording secretary at the state level. She was a member of the state Teacher's Certification Board for nine years. She was a member of the Knox-Lombard Fifty Year Club and a member of Sorosis and

Meletomen. After retirement she was president of the Knox County Retired teachers Association. As an educator she served on a state committee dealing with teacher certification. Over the years she was a member of many different community organizations such as study groups and P.E.O. She worked on the Hope Cemetery Committee. She was Chairman of the Bicentennial Ethnic Festival, and a guest editorial writer for the Register-Mail for one year. Virginia was a member of the Central Congregational Church, serving as deaconess and chairman of the Christian Education Committee.

### **Doris Brown Johnson**

Date:

Category: Community; Medical/Science; Educator

Doris Brown Johnson was a naturalist and supporter of Standish Park. She was one of the first promoters of the Galesburg Youth Center which was located in the old post office building which stood on the corner of S. Cherry and E. Simmons Street. She was a member of the board for the Galesburg Youth Center.

### **Anna Sophia Johnson\***

Date:

Category: Environmentalist; Arts/Culture

Anna Sophia Johnson was born in Galesburg and grew up on a farm near Wataga, northeast of Galesburg. She attended a one-room grade school, Galesburg High School, MacMurray College and the University of Iowa. From the 1940's through the 1960's she played violin in the Knox Galesburg Symphony. She has lived in Chicago, San Francisco, and London and, for the past 30 years, on the farm that has been in her family since 1870. On June 8th, 2002, Anna Sophia Johnson received an honorary degree of humane letters from Knox College in recognition of her work with Knox County resident, Jane Johnson, to protect the nation's prime farmland from damage by surface coal mining.

With some of the best farmland in the nation, and 61-percent of its area also containing coal reserves, Knox County became a natural battleground for mining and agriculture. The first surface mine in the county opened in 1933, and prior to the enactment of regulations, mining devastated more than 20,000 acres in the county.

In the 1970s, in response to a mining company's plans to strip mine prime farmland, Anna Sophia Johnson and Jane Johnson helped found Citizens for the Preservation of

Knox County — an organization that filed lawsuits and presented testimony at public hearings on behalf of restrictions on mining and tougher reclamation requirements in farming areas where mining received regulatory approval. Since 1995, they have also been active in Citizens Organizing Project, a group that works to preserve the rural way of life.

Both Anna Sophia and Jane have worked for three decades to protect prime farmland from the ravages of strip mining. Along with officials from Knox County, they are credited with getting federal and state lawmakers to enact regulations that help minimize damage to both the environment and agricultural productivity.

### **Mary "Jane" McNamara Johnson**

Date: 1925-2010

Category: Environmentalist

Jane Johnson is a native of Mercer County, Illinois, and graduated from Aledo High School. She and her husband of 58 years, Richard E. Johnson, have farmed for more than a half-century near Gilson, southeast of Galesburg. She won the 1989 Conservationist of the Year award from the Heart of Illinois Sierra Club. Johnson is also vice president of Families Against Rural Messes (FARM), which has sought restrictions on large-scale animal operations in rural areas.

On June 8th, 2002, Jane Johnson received an honorary degree of humane letters from Knox College in recognition of her work with Knox County resident, Anna Sophia Johnson, to protect the nation's prime farmland from damage by surface coal mining. With some of the best farmland in the nation, and 61-percent of its area also containing coal reserves, Knox County became a natural battleground for mining and agriculture. The first surface mine in the county opened in 1933, and prior to the enactment of regulations, mining devastated more than 20,000 acres in the county.

In the 1970s, in response to a mining company's plans to strip mine prime farmland, Anna Sophia Johnson and Jane Johnson helped found Citizens for the Preservation of Knox County — an organization that filed lawsuits and presented testimony at public hearings on behalf of restrictions on mining and tougher reclamation requirements in farming areas where mining received regulatory approval. Since 1995, they have also been active in Citizens Organizing Project, a group that works to preserve the rural way of life.

The two women have worked for three decades to protect prime farmland from the ravages of strip mining. Along with officials from Knox County, they are credited with getting federal and state lawmakers to enact regulations that help minimize damage to both the environment and agricultural productivity. She was a founding member of several citizen organizations including Spoon River Watershed Project, Citizens for the Preservation of Knox County, Legal Aid Society, Prairie Woods Environmental Coalition, Citizens Organizing Project; as well as active involvement with Citizens Coal Council, Sierra Club, Rice Lake Conservation Association, Galesburg Historical Society, League of Women Voters, Knox County Peace and Justice Coalition, Illinois Stewardship Alliance (Illinois South Project), F.A.R.M. and C.A.L.M. and former Knox County Board member.

### **Helen Larson**

Date:

Category: Arts/Culture

Established a dance school in Galesburg

### **Ella Park Lawrence**

Date: 1857 - 1924

Category: Philanthropist; Community

She is considered to be the mother of the Illinois State Flag and helped found the Galesburg Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Rebecca Parke Chapter. She was Regent of the Illinois D.A.R. State organization. There was no Illinois Flag so she started a letter writing campaign with her chapter and convinced other chapters in the state to write letters as well to state politicians. She visited state officials and members of the General Assembly in Springfield and offered a prize of \$25 (\$600 in 2012 dollars) for the winning design for a state flag. The Illinois State flag became official on July 6, 1915. She personally paid to have the first 5 flags painted on silk with gold fringe borders and mailed two of them to the Illinois Secretary of State and Governor Edward Deneen. She provided \$1,400 of her own money (over \$34,000 in 2012 dollars) to start construction of the Free Kindergarten/Orphanage building (known today as the Harrington Home).

## **Mary Davis McKnight**

Date: 1844-1913

Category: Philanthropist; Community

Operated orphanage for girls on W. Main Street through the 1950s.

## **Alice Palmer**

Date: 1909-

Category: Environmentalist

As a resident of Galesburg beginning in 1946, Mrs. Palmer became involved in civic life. She attended Knox College, became active in the League of Women Voters, was notably instrumental in bringing city-manager style government to Galesburg, and was appointed to serve as a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention.

She served as an active member of the Knox-Galesburg Symphony Orchestra Guild, the Galesburg Women's Club, and the Daughters of the American Revolution, where she was proud of the fact that her ancestors served in the Revolutionary, Spanish-American, and Civil Wars.

Inspired by her childhood on the undeveloped Michigan Lake front in Chicago, she was first and always a conservationist. A voracious reader, from an early age she gained an expertise in environmental issues, and as an activist, made it her life's work to focus public attention on preserving the native habitats of North America. She was a member of The Nature Conservancy, the Wilderness Society, and the Illinois Audubon Society where she served in several capacities as a state officer.

To educate the public, she wrote a regular column on bird behavior for the Galesburg Post, and frequently contributed commentary to the Register Mail editorial page.

Her legacy includes a range of activities from the small: helping to establish the Arboretum in Galesburg's Standish Park, to the large: leaving a filing cabinet stuffed with copies of letters to and from governors, congressmen, and presidents, urging that we protect the Everglades, the Appalachian Trail, our rivers, prairies, marshes, and many other habitats we now enjoy.

Alice Palmer was an environmentalist and was instrumental in campaigning for Mississippi water line to Galesburg, supporting the bond issue for the high school and was active in the All-American City designation for Galesburg in 1958.

## **Dorothy “Dottie” Naum Parker**

Date: 1928-2008

Category: Athlete

Dottie Parker was a catcher, infielder and pitcher who played from 1946 through 1953 in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. Born in Dearborn, Michigan, Dorothy was the daughter of James and Mary. She learned fundamentals of baseball from her two brothers at an early age, but did not begin playing softball until she was a 12-year-old young girl. She entered the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in 1946 with the South Bend Blue Sox, playing for them one year before joining the Kenosha Comets (1947–1951) and Kalamazoo Lassies (1952–1953). Dottie married Ron Parker in 1953 and moved to Galesburg in 1958, living there for the next 50 years promoting and supporting youth baseball and girls softball.

Dorothy Naum Parker was a proud member of the All American Girls Professional Baseball League, which was honored with a permanent display unveiled at the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York in October 1988. The 1992 movie “A League of Their Own,” directed by Penny Marshall, brought long-overdue recognition to the AAGPBL. The movie’s main character, an attractive catcher named Dottie, played by Geena Davis, was partially based on the young Dottie Naum Parker. Always modest about her accomplishments, few of her friends in Galesburg even knew Dottie had played baseball until the movie came out.

In her spare time, Dorothy was an avid golfer. She participated in several Galesburg All-City Championships, while her other hobbies included bowling, contract bridge, knitting, needlepoint and watching sports, especially the National Basketball Association games. She also was a member of the Greek Orthodox Church.

## **Mary Maciel Ponce\***

Date:

Category:

Mary Ponce (née Maciel) is 90 years old. She is one of the few people who lived in all three of Galesburg’s railroad camps. She was born in a boxcar at the Humps Camp and lived there until it was razed and its residents moved to the Davis Camp. Her father worked for the CB&Q. Mary married Lee Ponce, who worked for the Santa Fe, and so as a bride she moved to the Santa Fe Camp. She and Lee raised their children there until Lee was able to build a house for the family (from boxcars) on Berrien Street. She still lives

in that house, which was built on land that Lee bought from African American grocer Charlie Anderson.

Mary's family is distinguished for being one of the earliest to come to Galesburg. Her mother, Emilia, was born in Mexico in 1901 but came to Galesburg in 1908. Emilia was a remarkable woman in her own right. She married her husband, Zacarias Maciel, at the Knox County Courthouse in 1918 and had four children. While the children were still young, Zacarias became disabled and Emilia became the family breadwinner, setting an example for young Mary of determination, energy, and resourcefulness.

While Mary was at the Humps Camp, she attended a one-room country school nearby, Thirlwell School, between 1927 and 1930. She then attended Cooke School, Churchill Junior High, and Galesburg High School.

For her entire life, Mary has been active in the Mexican American community, advocating for equal rights and fair treatment. She was one of the founders of the Galesburg chapter of LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) and currently serves as its president. On any day that LULAC opens to have its fund-raising dinners, Mary can be found in the kitchen from 7 in the morning until 7 at night, cooking enchiladas, overseeing the staff of volunteer helpers, and cleaning up. Money raised by the dinners goes to scholarships.

### **Vicki Maciel Ponce**

Date:

Category:

Box car chapel; annual Novena.

### **Janet Greig Post**

Date: 1871-1964

Category: Educator

Janet Greig Post came to Knox College in 1890 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in literature in 1894. After she completed graduate work in Europe, she returned to Knox as a German instructor in 1896 and the following year was appointed Dean of Women. In 1902, she married Phillip Sydney Post, Class of 1887 and a member of the Knox College Board of Trustees. Janet Post assumed her husband's position on the Knox College Board of Trustees after his death in 1920. On October 26, 1934, Janet Greig Post challenged the

Knox Board of Trustees to become active citizens and alumni and aid in the restoration of Knox's Old Main; which at 80 years old in the 1930s, this landmark was in dire need of restoration.

Amid the Great Depression, Post worked tirelessly to raise the funds necessary to restore Knox's most important campus building. Post wrote thousands of letters to alumni, friends, and donors and hundreds of notes of appreciation during her crusade. The campaign was "Post" marked only after more than 8,500 letters were written. Of the more than \$30,000 Post raised for exterior restorations, more than \$22,000 was in cash donations. The rest of the money for the exterior was borrowed on security from the Janet Greig Post Fund. In addition, Post single-handedly furnished the Alumni Room in Old Main, including structural restoration and top to bottom furnishings. Janet Greig Post maintained her seat on the Knox College Board of Trustees until her death in 1964.

### **Dorthea Richardson**

Date:

Category: Educator

Galesburg native and long-time teacher.

### **Susan (Aunt Suky) Richardson**

Date:

Category: Community; Faith

Susan Richardson was one of Galesburg's most famous early residents. Susan was an African American slave who escaped from Randolph County, in southern Illinois, with her three children and a slave named Hannah in 1842. She, Hannah, and her three children were captured in Knox County and were incarcerated in Knoxville's old jail. When her slave owner, Andrew Borders, came to Knox County in order to return her to slavery, she managed to escape to Galesburg but her children were captured by Borders and returned to Randolph County.

Susan took up residence in Galesburg and lived in the city for nearly sixty years. While she lived in Galesburg, she became involved with the operation of the community's underground railroad. On one occasion, she and Jonathan Blanchard, the second president of Knox College, helped a fugitive slave evade slave trackers and eventually the fugitive made his way to freedom. Her efforts in regards to anti-slavery activity helped established Galesburg's reputation as an important Underground Railroad location in the

state. In the mid-1850s she married a man by the name of Richardson and together they raised a new family. Susan Richardson helped established the first black church in town and became a notable and highly respected citizen of the Galesburg community. Late in her life, she moved to Chicago to live with one of her children and following her death, in 1904, she was buried in Hope Cemetery.

## **Sylvia Ryin**

Date: 1901-1988

Category: Educator

She taught for 47 years in Knox County and was Dean of girls at Galesburg High School for 21 years.

## **Ellen Browning Scripps**

Date: 1836-1932

Category: Journalist

Ellen Browning Scripps, member of the Class of 1859 and one of the College's most distinguished and generous benefactors, was born on October 18, 1836, just four months prior to Knox College's founding on February 15, 1837.

Ellen Browning Scripps came to Knox from Rushville, Illinois, and attended the Female Seminary, receiving a ladies "certificate of graduation" upon the completion of her coursework in 1859 because no diplomas were given to women at that time. While at Knox, she witnessed the Lincoln-Douglas Debate and later called it "the most important event of her time here." After graduation, she returned to Rushville, where she taught school, earning a salary of \$9 a month.

Unlike most women of her era, Scripps' life was devoted to knowledge for its own sake. She was particularly interested in education, free speech, women's suffrage, temperance, and world peace. She and her brothers were in the newspaper business; they formed what would eventually become the national Scripps Newspaper chain. She invested her own money in the papers and also wrote a syndicated column for them.

Scripps became one of the earliest women philanthropists, founding Scripps College, Scripps Biological Laboratory, and Scripps Institute of Oceanography. She also was the first woman to appear on the cover of Time magazine. Scripps has been called philanthropic for the transformative gifts she gave. Throughout the course of her life, she

made several investments in Knox. The first was \$1,000 in 1902. The second was \$10,000 in 1908. The third was \$100,000 to endow the Office of the President in 1915. At the time, these gifts were the most generous of any living benefactor to the College.

More recently, grants from the Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation to Knox College have supported the upgrade of the College's spectrophotometer, a state-of-the-art scientific instrument used by faculty and students; the establishment of the Ellen Browning Scripps GIS Laboratory and the renovation of a biology/biochem laboratory, both in the Umbeck Science-Mathematics Center. The grants also provided operating support for the start up of the journalism program, the Center for Career & Pre-Professional Development, and the Center for Community Service.

### **LaMorne Hickey Schurtz\***

Date:

Category: Wartime

LaMorne Hickey Shurtz served as Navy nurse in the Pacific Theater during World War II and helped liberate American soldiers from Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

### **Harriet Post Simpson**

Date: 1879-1953

Category:

She was a teacher and among the founders of the PTA movement in Galesburg. She was a founder of the Children's Room at Cottage Hospital and a charter member of Hawthorne Club and one of the early sponsors of the Galesburg Day Nursery (1926), She 'gave generously of her time and money.'

### **Claire Snyder Smith**

Date: 1908-1998

Category: Arts/Culture

Claire Smith was a non-traditional Knox College graduate and an artist of distinction.

## Harriet Standish

Date: 1823-1911

Category: Educator

Harriet Standish arrived in Galesburg on August 29, 1854 and began teaching at Lombard College the next day. The college was at that time known as the Illinois Liberal Institute. She was principal of the Ladies Department of the college and taught French, Italian, English literature, history and some mathematics. He was one of the foremost botanists in the country and studied it for 70 years. She was also an astronomer. Harriet Standish organized the first reading clubs in Galesburg and worked for civic improvements in Galesburg including better trash removal and the beautification of the town. Harriet was married to John Van Ness Standish in 1859 and being an expert in botany, no doubt helped her husband in the creation of what was to become Standish Park.

## Mary “Evelyn” Strong

Date: 1854 - 1903

Category: Educator; Community; Service

In 1868, at the age of 12 she began teaching Bible stories to neighborhood children in family dining room. The number of children attending kept increasing until they outgrew the house. The Bible story class was absorbed by the City Mission with Evelyn, then 14 hired to teach. Evelyn became a semi-invalid while in high school and when seeking treatment in Indianapolis she met the pioneer of the kindergarten movement. She studied and taught for the next six years returning to Galesburg in the spring of 1879. She began teaching again in her mother’s home and enlisted a pony and a short open, wicker carriage to bring children from different parts of Galesburg to her mother’s home. This forerunner of the school bus was nicknamed the Kindergarten Clothes Basket. In 1885 Evelyn opened the first Kindergarten Normal School and it moved to different locations as it grew. Seven prospective teachers were employed at the school and from 1896 to 1901 over 1,000 students and teachers graduated from the school. Evelyn formed the Free Kindergarten Association on which only women could serve in a governing capacity. Men could be honorary members and give of their time and efforts but could not vote. The goal of the association was to alleviate the “trials and sorrows of the poor, and give the children a better opportunity to become good citizens and live useful lives.” In 1890 the Galesburg Free Kindergarten opened its doors in rent free rooms from the city. County children needing a home were sent to the Free Kindergarten rather than the Alms House in Knoxville, until homes could be found or families reunited. The children ranged in age from 2 – 18 years. In 1903 construction began on the building now known as the Harrington Home, the year Evelyn died.

## **Beulah Sullivan**

Date: 1906-1993

Category: Medicine/Science; Community; Innovator/First

Her affiliation with the Red Cross began in 1939. She began the American Red Cross blood program and developed it into a regional operation. She was instrumental in the erection of the Knox County Chapter of the American Red Cross building at 1640 N. Henderson Street having personally raised \$76,000 toward the construction. She was volunteer administrator for the blood center from 1949 – 1963. She was Chairman of the community division of the United Way fund – Red Cross Appeal, Chairman of the rural United Way in 1973 and organized a program for disabled children at Lillian Taylor School. She was a member of the steering committee of the Public Health Department and a member of Illinois League of Nursing.

## **Nellie Swanson**

Date: 1883-1973

Category: Educator

She began teaching at Cooke School in 1900. She was principal of Silas Willard School from 1918 – 1919 and principal of Weston School 1920 – 1930. Nellie Swanson was superintendent of Galesburg Schools until her retirement in 1956. She was president of Galesburg Teachers Association, assistant state president of Illinois Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. She organized the Association of Childhood Education and was a Supervisor of Childhood Education for Lombard College. She served on the faculty of Augustana College and was chairman of the Junior Red Cross.

## **Bea Swartz\***

Date:

Category: Innovator/First; Service

First woman to serve on the Galesburg City Council in the late 1960s.

## **Yvonne Tabb**

Date: - 2008

Category: Innovator/First; Service

In 1970, Yvonne O'Brien Tabb became the first woman to be elected to county-wide office in Knox County. She also was one of the first two Democrats to serve in county-wide offices since the 1930s. Tabb also served for 3 years as a Knox County Board member from District 2, before leaving office in 1998. She was an active member of the Exchange Club.

## **Dorthea Tanning**

Date: 1910 - 2012

Category: Arts/Culture

Dorothea Tanning was a Galesburg native who graduated from Knox College in 1932. She died in New York City at the age of 101 in 2012. After leaving Galesburg, she went on to gain worldwide fame as an artist and writer. She has left behind a significant body of painting, sculpture, and written works that cover six decades. In addition, she is known for her theatrical designs. In 1988, she was the recipient of Knox College's Honorary Doctorate Degree.

In 2011, at a festival celebrating her life in Galesburg, Knox College professor Robin Metz praised her as "one of our most innovative and provocative painters, print makers, sculptors, and designers for theater and ballet. Her achievements have transcended visual art--in her mid-80s she established an entirely new career in writing, through her poetry, fiction and memories." Her artworks have been exhibited throughout the world. Tanning's accomplishments in literature include two volumes of poetry and have been praised by the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Knox College president Teresa Amott has said that Tanning "serves as a model for all who seek to pursue a life of passion, creativity, and intellectual challenge—we celebrate her bright, beautiful life."

## **Marie E. Tarver**

Date:

Category: Educator; Innovator/First

The Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision 50 years ago which determined that "Separate but Equal" was unconstitutional didn't make much of a difference to the students in Galesburg. The City had but one public high school.

And for the first hundred years of its existence, every teacher was white — until 1954. Maybe related to the goal of integration encouraged by "Brown," or maybe because she was a competent instructor, Marie Tarver, an African-American, was hired to teach English at Galesburg High School that Fall.

Tarver was 28 years old and had come to Galesburg with her husband, Rupert, in 1952 when he assumed the post of Executive Director of the Carver Center.

Tarver, who now lives in Poughkeepsie, N.Y, remembers: "I was the national editor of my sorority magazine and after we moved to Galesburg I had to find a place to get it printed. I got to know William Moon at The Labor News printer. He knew about my education and competence and he was on the School Board."

Tarver, who had a BA from Southern University in Baton Rouge and a Masters from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was hired in 1954 and remembers it mostly for being uneventful. "It wasn't controversial at all. I felt accepted. The people were pleasant. There was some curiosity, perhaps, and some teachers were more cordial than others but nobody was abrasive. I got a good deal of welcome from the community. I had a lot of visits from parents my first year."

She feels that the biggest impact of her hiring was that it led the way for others. "There hadn't been any African-Americans working for the school district at all when they hired me. Soon afterwards, they hired a black maintenance person."

"Willabell Williams was working with my husband at the Carver Center and later went on to become a teacher for many years. I think my hiring helped her realize that she could do it, too."

Tarver left Galesburg in 1956 when her husband accepted a position in Poughkeepsie. She's been there with him ever since. She went on to teach at the college level and was the first African American on the Poughkeepsie school board and later its president. She was director of the local Model Cities program and stayed in municipal government and active in civic affairs until she retired in 1990. She has headed the local United Way and was honored by the local AAUW chapter in 1982 as "Woman of the Year." -- Norm Winick, *The Zephyr*

Additional research find that she was the first African-American to be elected to the Poughkeepsie School Board in 1965 and later in 1970, she was the first African-American School Board President. Also, she was the first African-American to teach at Marist College.

## **Lillian Taylor**

Date:

Category: Educator

Lillian Taylor was principal of the Sixth Ward School in Galesburg in 1880. She used the principles of teaching kindergarten and the application of its methods to public school work in upper elementary grades. She was the first to graduate and receive a diploma for the teaching of kindergarten in 1882 in Galesburg. A new “progressive” plan of teaching required the Galesburg School Board to change text books which had not been done in 25 years. Lillian helped to train teachers of kindergarten, even giving them lessons on Saturdays.

## **Corneila Simpson Thompson**

Date: 1900-1961

Category: Arts/Culture; Community; Philanthropist

She continued the now Kid Care Station that her mother started, raised money and donated land. It was originally named The Day Nursery and was established for working parents. She was on the Cottage Hospital Board, a member of the Baptist church. She helped organize the Galesburg Chapter AAUW, League of Women Voters, art center, State Public Aid Commission and had been acting chairman. She was a niece of Janet Greig Post. She was active in republican politics as her husband was Wallace Thompson, a state senator. She wrote Galesburg’s Mighty Horse Market and was an activist and involved in community service. She graduated from Knox College in 1919 and Vassar in 1922.

## **Hettie Linsley Thompson**

Date: 1857-1939

Category: Community

Mrs. George W. Thompson was the founder and first president of the Galesburg Woman’s Club. She was the person who appointed a committee to look into the possibility of forming the third woman’s club in Galesburg. Hettie Linsley was born December 29, 1857, in Galva, the daughter of James and Susan Albro Linsley. In 1864 the family moved to Galesburg. Hettie graduated from Knox College in 1877 and became librarian at the Galesburg Public Library. On September 11, 1884, George Wallace Thompson and Hettie were married. Mr. Thompson had been born and educated in Canada. He came to Galesburg to practice law. He later served as circuit judge and was

appointed to the appellate court. They lived in the house just south of the old St. Mary's Hospital. The Thompson's had three children: two daughters, Alma and Ruth, and a son Wallace. There were eight grandchildren by the time of Mrs. Thompson's death in 1939. Mrs. Thompson maintained a close connection to Knox College after graduation. She helped with the restoration of Old Main in the 1930s. The college conferred an honorary degree on her at commencement in June, 1937. She was also active in the joint centennial celebration of Knox College and Galesburg that year.

In December, 1937, her children arranged a reception for Mrs. Thompson's 80th birthday attended by three hundred friends and relatives. Eighty candles topped the cake on the refreshment table. Christmas greenery decorated the dining room of the Wallace Thompson home at 345 Park Lane. Hettie received many bouquets of flowers, cards and other gifts which she enjoyed very much. After her husband's death in 1921, she had traveled extensively and made her home in the Broadview on the Public Square.

Several years before her death, Mrs. Thompson was interviewed by a newspaper reporter. She told a story about runaway slaves being hidden in the bell tower of Beecher Chapel erected in 1857 on the east side of South Broad Street. A girl dressed in a long black cape would go to the church late at night to practice on the organ. Under her cape she carried food for the runaways. Years later some people said you could hear the organ playing at midnight in the church.

On March 3, 1939, Mrs. Thompson was hit by an automobile while visiting in Florida. Her leg, arm and hand were fractured and she suffered serious internal injuries. She was brought back to Galesburg by train and immediately taken to Cottage Hospital. The broken bones were mending, but the internal injuries led to an embolism which caused her death on April 27th. She was buried next to her husband in Hope Cemetery.

Hettie Thompson had a gracious personality which endeared her to many friends and acquaintances. She had interests in a wide variety of subjects and served her community well.

## **Martha Farnham Webster**

Date: 1846-1933

Category: Innovator/First; Community; Arts/Culture

Martha Farnham Webster(1846-1933)was the daughter of Galesburg founders, Eli Farnham and Jerusha Loomis, and was born Galesburg in 1846. She graduated from Knox College in 1869, taught at Knox from 1969-1870, married Charles Ashley Webster in 1881, and received an

honorary degree from Knox College in 1919. Martha Farnham Webster was an author, historian and a co-founder of the Knox County Historical Society.

## **Rose Hoben Welch**

Date: 1878-1967

Category: Educator; Faith; Humanitarian

Rose Hoben Welch graduated from St. Joseph Academy in 1896 considered an all-girls school during that time period. She then graduated with a Bachelor's Degree from Illinois State University, Normal IL in 1901. Thereafter she began her teaching career. She served as a principal at Churchill Junior High School and Mary Allen West Grade School. Her education career lasted 68 years of teaching and administrator service for District #205, retiring at the age of 75. After leaving the public school system, she joined the faculty at Corpus Christi High School and also taught at Immaculate Heart of Mary School until she was 87 years old. Her acts of generosity and kindness extended to teaching the Mexican children who resided in the railroad camps by purchasing items of necessity to meet their spiritual needs. She often invited them into her home, while introducing them on how to answer the telephone and teaching them social graces as well as educational and religious studies. She also provided dinners for safety patrol boys grades 5th and 6th at the Hotel Custer for 20 consecutive years at her own expense.

In 1960 Rose Hoben Welch School was built to relieve overcrowding at other existing elementary schools (including Bateman, Cooke, and Weston Grade Schools) in Galesburg, likely the result of the post-World War II "Baby Boomers" filling our buildings beyond capacities. According to reports, Rose Hoben Welch was built at a cost of less than \$175,000 and housed 160 students in its first year of operation. At the beginning of 2009-2010 Galesburg District #205 rededicated a 50 year building to serve as an alternative school for at-risk students to increase the graduation rates under the program name of Galesburg High School North.

Rose Hoben Welch passed away on July 30, 1967, at the age of 89. Her legacy is that of a tireless educator who never gave up on a child's abilities to grow and succeed.

## **Mary Allen West**

Date: 1837 - 1892

Category: Educator; Innovator/First; Faith; Service

She was educated in Galesburg and at the Knox (Female) Seminary (part of Knox College). By 13 years of age she passed the required examination to enter Knox

Seminary, but was too young to be admitted so she taught school for two years under advisement of Professor Hitchcock. She graduated Seminary at 17 years of age and taught school until her election as the Knox County Superintendent of Schools, beating two other candidates by a wide margin.

During the first years of the Civil War, many former slaves wished to learn how to read. West was their first teacher with a class of all age ranges from 5 years old to adults. Her class had about 100 students. She taught the class until a proper but separate school was opened in September 1863.

She was the Illinois correspondent of the New England Journal of education in Boston, Massachusetts. She was a member of the Examining Committee of the State Teachers Association, and member of the International Council of Education of the Permanent Exposition in Philadelphia. She taught a large Bible class for young ladies at the First Church and worked every Sunday afternoon among the inmates at the county jail when it was moved to Galesburg. She was active member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and was the Secretary of the Soldiers Aid Society. She was a member of the Woman's Centennial Commission.

### **Willabell Hall Williams**

Date: 1920 - 2011

Category: Educator; Arts/Culture; Service; Community; Journalist

Willabell worked in the Galesburg School District for 24 years teaching social studies at the junior high level. She was a guidance counselor at the Jr. High and High School levels and served as Student Council sponsor for 12 years. She taught English, math and French at the Carver Community Center and was director of the Carver Community Center for several years. She was a lecturer on race relations, columnist for the Register Mail, Girl Scout leader, and Knox County United Way board member. She served on the District 205 Board of Education, and Galesburg Public Library board for many years. She served on the Galesburg Police and Fire Commissions and was a member of American Association of University Women, and member of Illinois Association of Women Deans. She received the Thomas B. Herring Award from the City of Galesburg and an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Knox College. She was involved on the state level as well, where she served on the Scholarship and Personnel Committees.

### **Other - St. Mary's Hospital Nuns**

Date:

## Category:

The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis  
St. Mary Medical Center, Galesburg

Father Joseph Costa, an Institute of Charity priest who was instrumental in founding Corpus Christi and St. Patrick's Catholic Churches in Galesburg, approached Bishop John Lancaster Spalding, Bishop of the Diocese of Peoria, for permission to obtain from St. Francis Hospital, Peoria Sisters to open a hospital in Galesburg. With the Bishop's support Mother Anthony and a companion Sister arrived in Galesburg to explore the possibility. The Judge Thompson property, directly across from the courthouse and less than a block from Corpus Christi Church, was selected as the site for the hospital. The residence was remodeled to provide room for 27 patients. When the facilities were completed, Sister M. Frances Dieman (Superior), Sister M. Prudentia, and Sister M. Engelbertha were sent. The hospital was opened in September 1909. Shortly after, five more Sisters came to assist them: Sister Ignatia for surgery, Sister Leona for obstetrics, Sister Liboria and Sister Winefrid for nursing, and Sister Andrea for the kitchen.

Soon the physicians in town began bringing their patients to the new St. Mary's Hospital. The kindness and the charity of the Sisters soon won the friendship and cooperation of the Galesburg citizens. The Sisters continued to give the same care to all regardless of race, creed or nationality and regardless of the patient's financial circumstances.

The Sisters lived in an old wooden house on the property. One minor difficulty they had to content with was the problem of no running water in the convent. The entire house was heated by a large coal stove on the first floor, the stove pipe extending through the second floor presumably heating the second floor also, where the Sisters slept. It was necessary to carry over the water from the hospital; but the water froze solid overnight in the cold second floor rooms. The Sister on night duty in the hospital would bring water along with her when she came to awaken the Sisters at 5:00 A.M. each morning.

The people of Galesburg were appreciative of the Sisters' care and outdid themselves to support them. Time and again the Sisters were touched by the kindness of the people who did not even leave their names with their donations of food and other items. The dedication of these pioneering women and the generosity of a community that received them so warmly made a wonderful partnership that has endured for over 100 years and has blessed countless lives in need of health care.

## **Other - Catherine Club Charter members**

Date:

Category:

Those women who started the Catherine Club (1915)

## **Other - Comadres**

Date:

Category:

In Mexican Roman Catholicism, compadres are, literally, “co-parents” to the child they baptize. A sacred bond is established between families in this way, making compadres part of the family. To the child, a padrino and madrina are adults to be respected and loved, with the same standing as aunts, uncles, and grandparents. To the father and mother, the compadre and comadre are sometimes even closer than real family.

The early Mexican immigrants to Galesburg fled a country in turmoil, leaving behind close-knit families to seek a better life. Many never returned to visit, severing forever the ties with their families back home. Others were married in Mexico but lost their spouses there or on the difficult journey north. These widows and widowers found each other, remarried, and raised each other’s children along with the children from their new marriage.

As they stabilized in their new home, the early Mexican immigrants also created new extended families for themselves. They made compadres and comadres of one another as friendships grew in the railroad camps and surrounding neighborhoods. This compadrazgo became not only a happy outlet as families celebrated baptisms and other events together, but also a very real means of survival. If a father or mother suddenly became widowed, the compadres could be called upon to take in the children for a while, or to help the surviving parent in any other way.

As homemakers and caregivers, the comadres faced special challenges, since living conditions in the boxcar camps were rough. The boxcar homes had no electricity, running water, or indoor toilets. In cases of very serious illness, the families usually called one of the very few doctors in town who would come to the camps. For other illnesses, they relied on traditional folk remedies and rituals. A few comadres were known as healers, with knowledge and a gift that had been handed down for generations.

In this way, and in everyday life, the comadres in Galesburg’s early Mexican community were its life-source. They supported their husbands in their backbreaking jobs for the

railroad and factories, looking after housework, laundry, cooking, child-rearing, and countless other tasks. They are remembered by their descendants as determined, generous women, sharing the little they had with whoever came along. This includes hobos during the Great Depression, who soon learned that the boxcar camps were a good place to stop for a meal. The comadres made extra money for the family by cleaning, doing laundry, and working other jobs outside the house when they could. They also cooked for the solos, the single Mexican men, who had come north with no family to take care of them.

There is no single, outstanding, civic act that the comadres did in Galesburg, nor an accumulation of accomplishments that can be listed and recognized. Theirs was a hard-scrabble life, constricted by their living conditions and discrimination. But the comadres found ways to bring grace and joy to it. They deserve recognition as pioneers, for their courage and perseverance in the face of often daunting challenges. A street or a structure named for them would be an appropriate honor and would evoke yet another piece of Galesburg's rich and varied history.