



Kirkwood Historical Society

"The history of Kirkwood is too valuable to lose." – Nancy Reeves

NEWSLETTER FOR MAY 2019



SIGNIFICANT DATES FOR MAY

- 5th – Cinco de Mayo
- 12th -Mother's Day
- 18th -Armed Forces Day (USA)
- 20th -Victoria Day (Canada)
- National Patriot's Day (Quebec)
- 27th -Memorial Day



FRIENDS SPEAKER SERIES PRESENTATION

MAY 6, 2019

**Join us at Mudd's Grove from
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

Our topic for the meeting will be ***Trolley Mail Service...Moving Mail...Not People.*** John Crowley will discuss the history of streetcars being used to assist in the delivery of mail in St. Louis.

Streetcar RPOs (Railway Post Offices) represented a real improvement in service in their time, but eventually were replaced by trucks as vehicles and roads improved in the early 20th century. These special trolleys collected, moved, sorted, and cancelled mail along their routes through the

city. Many had slots where mail could be deposited on the street. This is a program you will not want to miss. Light refreshments will be served.

Mudd's Grove is located at 302 W. Argonne Avenue in Kirkwood, MO on the corner of W. Argonne and Harrison Ave.

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SAVE THE DATE – Mark your calendars now:

TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2019 .Our annual **"Strawberry Festival" will be held at Mudd's Grove 302 W. Argonne Ave, Kirkwood, Mo.** Come join us for a fun time. More details to follow in the June newsletter.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15TH, 2019 – There will be a "House & Garden" Tour of Mudd's Grove from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM. More details as they become available in the June newsletter.

Come and take part in these exciting activities. ***And while you're at it consider becoming a member or docent or volunteer. Ask me how!*** If interested please send email to John F. Crowley at kxn896@hotmail.com with your contact information and best time to get in touch with you.



TREASURES OF MUDD'S GROVE: THE HEARTH ROOM: FLAT IRONS/SAD IRONS



Blacksmiths started forging simple flat irons in the late Middle Ages. Plain metal irons were heated by a fire or on a stove. Some were made of stone, like these soapstone irons from Italy. Earthenware and terracotta were also used, from the Middle East to France and the Netherlands.

Flat irons were also called sad irons or smoothing irons. Metal handles had to be gripped in a pad or thick rag. Some irons had cool wooden handles and in 1870 a detachable handle was patented in the US. This stayed cool while the metal bases were heated and the idea was widely imitated. (See these irons from Central Europe.)

Cool handles stayed even cooler in "asbestos sad irons". The sad in sad iron (or sadiron) is an old word for solid, and in some contexts this name suggests something bigger and heavier than a flat iron. Goose or tailor's goose was another iron name, and this came from the goose-neck curve in some handles. In Scotland people spoke of gusing (goosing) irons.

You'd need at least two irons on the go together for an effective system: one in use, and one re-heating. Large households with servants had a special ironing-stove for this purpose. Some were fitted with slots for several irons, and a water-jug on top.

At home, ironing traditional fabrics without the benefit of electricity was a hot, arduous job. Irons had to be kept immaculately clean, sand-papered and polished. They must be kept away from burning fuel, and be regularly but lightly greased to avoid rusting. Beeswax prevented irons sticking to starched cloth.

Constant care was needed over temperature. Experience would help decide when the iron was hot enough, but not so hot that it would scorch the cloth. A well-known test was spitting on the hot metal, but Charles Dickens describes someone with a more genteel technique in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. She held "the iron at an alarmingly short

distance from her cheek, to test its temperature..."

The same straightforward "press with hot metal" technique can be seen in Egypt where a few traditional "ironing men" (makwagi) still use long, heavy pieces of iron, pressed across the cloth with their feet. Berber people in Algeria traditionally use heated metal ovals on long handles, called fers kabyles (Kabyle irons) in France, where they were adopted for intricate ironing tasks.

===== A MYSTERY ARTIFACT IN THE DRY SINK: =====



When visiting the Hearth Room and viewing the artifacts in the dry sink, have you ever wondered what the item pictured on the left was? Well, thanks to a recent guest visiting Mudd's Grove it was discovered that this mystery artifact is actually an antique wooden wine bottle corker. *Now ya know!*

===== IT HAPPENED HERE IN ST. LOUIS: =====



March 26, 1916 - 103 years-ago, Susan Elizabeth Blow died in New York City. Born in Carondelet, Missouri (now part of St. Louis), she is considered to be the "Mother of Kindergarten."

With the cooperation of School Superintendent William Torrey Harris, she opened the first successful public kindergarten in the United States at Des Peres School, 6307 Michigan Ave, at Iron Street. Built in 1873 as a simple, four-room primary school, Des Peres' first year enrollment included forty-two students in an experimental kindergarten class which became the model copied throughout the country.

From a prominent family, her paternal grandfather, Peter Blow, was a native of Virginia, & had once owned the slave, Dred

Scott, & brought Scott with him, when he moved to St. Louis, where Scott was sold. As mentioned yesterday, Susan's father, Henry Blow, had the Midas touch, making a fortune in every business he entered. He was also one of the area's largest landowners. Serving two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, he decided not to seek re-election, & was named Ambassador to Argentina. Later serving as Ambassador to Brazil, his daughter, Susan, taught herself Spanish & Portuguese to act as his Secretary.

Henry Blow was opposed to slavery, & later offered to buy Scott & set him free, but the owner wouldn't sell. Blow then urged Scott to sue for his freedom. He paid for Scott's legal expenses, hiring Attorney Roswell Field. Field's son, Eugene, would become a famed children's poet, & author of "Little Boy Blue", & "Wynken, Blynken, & Nod". His home has been turned into a museum, on the southern edge of downtown.

Scott would ultimately lose his case, one of the events which led to Civil War.

When Scott died in 1858, he was originally interred at Wesleyan Cemetery, near Grand & Laclede, with the expenses paid by the Blow family. But when that cemetery was closed nine years later, all the bodies had to be removed. Taylor Blow arranged for him to be moved to Calvary, which had a policy where non-Catholic blacks could be buried, if their former owners were Catholic. But Taylor Blow was required to purchase a lot with room for three graves, putting Dred Scott in the center one, & leaving the other two vacant. That way, no white person would have to be buried next to him.

Harris Teachers College was named for William Torrey Harris, the former St. Louis superintendent of schools and United States Commissioner of Education. They would merge with Stowe Teachers College, named after Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin", to become the current Harris-Stowe State University in Midtown.

Some material from Mo.. State Historical Society, by permission.

Happy Mother's Day to all of our mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers etc. May you enjoy your special day.



The United States celebrates Mother's Day on the second Sunday in May. In 1872 Julia Ward Howe called for women to join in support of disarmament and asked for 2 June 1872, to be established as a "Mother's Day for Peace". Her 1870 "Appeal to womanhood throughout the world" is sometimes referred to as Mother's Day Proclamation. But Howe's day was not for honoring mothers but for organizing pacifist mothers against war. In the 1880s and 1890s there were several further attempts to establish an American "Mother's Day", but these did not succeed beyond the local level.

In the United States, Mother's Day remains one of the biggest days for sales of flowers, greeting cards, and the like; Mother's Day is also the biggest holiday for long-distance telephone calls. Moreover, churchgoing is also popular on Mother's Day, yielding the highest church attendance after Christmas Eve and Easter. Many worshippers celebrate the day with carnations, colored if the mother is living and white if she is deceased.

Mother's Day continues to be one of the most commercially successful U.S. occasions.

It is possible that the holiday would have withered over time without the support and continuous promotion of the florist industries and other commercial industries. Other Protestant holidays from the same time, such as Children's Day and Temperance Sunday, do not have the same level of popularity.

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William Bodley Lane



Speaking in a 1994 interview to North Glendale students, William Bodley Lane revealed that when he purchased Mudd's Grove in 1955, it was a dream come true. Mr. Lane a member of an old Kirkwood

family, grew up hearing stories of "the old days" and personally knowing many of the families who lived at Mudd's Grove over the years, in fact, during the 30's he recalls that when the Sommervilles were looking for a buyer for he house he tried to convince his father to buy it. His father decided however, to use his capital in other investments.

When Mr. Lane bought Mudd's Grove from the Union Reality and Securities Company on June 30, 1955, he was a fledgling historical architect, only 30 years old. The house had more space than he needed, so over the years various family members lived there with him. During the late 50s and early 60s, his brother's family, which included five active youngsters took up a great deal of the living space in the house. (NOTE; Mr. Lane believes that the plastic toy soldiers excavated during the archeological dig conducted by Kirkwood School District students in 1994, probably belonged to his nephews.)

Mr. Lane modified the rooms of the house to fit his needs. At first he used the original kitchen on the west side of the house for his architectural office. Later he moved his office to the gate house because he said it was more private and it minimized interruptions caused by his brother's family's activities.

William Bodley Lane converted one of the bedrooms on the second floor into an historic chapel. He obtained the pews for the chapel from St. Peter's Catholic church. When the choir loft was renovated at st. Peters, the pews were set aside to be discarded. However the late Father Westhoff gave them to Lane, when he heard about Mr. Lane's project. Mr. Lane also decorated the chapel with an enormous religious painting which came from a demolished historic Kirkwood mansion. He also displayed an old Bible in the chapel. It was one that belonged to his grandmother, who was a

member of the Rozier family of St. Louis. All of the Bodley children's birth dates were registered in the pages of this family heirloom.

Mr. Lane recalls that a number of his relatives "laid in state" in Mudd's Grove parlors as was the custom in by-gone days. Wakes for both his Aunt Nona and Aunt Angela Lane were held at Mudd's Grove and Mr. Lane expressed the desire that at his death, he too, would like to be honored with this genteel custom, to be "laid in state," not in a public funeral home, but in a private family residence.

Naming the house at 302 Argonne, "Mudd'sGrove," was also the doing of Mr. Lane. Before he officially dubbed it with the name by which it is known today, it was sometimes called "The Dana Place" or "Muckerman's House." Mr. Lane says that the name, "Mudd's Grove," derived from the old tag used to refer to the enormous parcel of land owned by the Mudds, which encompassed much of what today is known as Kirkwood Park. He said that Kirkwoodians of Anglo-Saxon descent called that area "Mudd's Grove" because much of It was Mudd property and there was a large grove of trees located there. On the other hand, Mr. Lane said that German Kirkwoodians around the turn of the century called the area "Bopp's Pasture," because the Bopps owned much of the land near what is now Klrkwood Park. Mr. Lane says that one could tell people's ancestry by the name they chose. He thought the name "Mudd's Grove" had a nice ring to it, and so during the time he owned the house he dubbed it "Mudd's Grove."

By the 1990s Mr. Lane began to seek out alternatives to his private ownership of Mudd's Grove as the demands of maintaining the house became greater and greater. However, he also very much wanted to retain the historic character of the house that had been his home for over 35 years.

In 1991 the City of Kirkwood Landmarks Commission ordered a feasibility study for possible uses for Mudd's Grove that would be in keeping with its historic integrity. Suggestions were made that the house be used as a single family residence, an office/residence combination, or a bed and breakfast. However no buyers came forward to implement the suggestions at that time.

Shortly afterward, however, members of the Kirkwood Historical Society approached Mr. Lane with an offer to buy the house to be used as

the society's headquarters, historic museum, and library. Mr. Lane accepted. On August 10, 1992, the papers were signed making the Kirkwood Historical Society the new owner of Mudd's Grove. When he moved out of Mudd's Grove, William Bodley Lane ended an era for this historic house as a private residence, and set the record for the longest tenure in the house by any one owner, 37 years.

William Bodley Lane died on January 11, 2012 but visitation and viewing was at Bopp Chapel, not in his beloved "Mudd's Grove" parlor.

William Bodley Lane

circa 1955

Source: The Families of Mudd's Grove.



Get A load of the prices.

IN AND AROUND OUR TOWN: ARCADE-WRIGHT BUILDING.

The Arcade-Wright Building is the oldest indoor mall in the St. Louis area. The building was built in two stages, with the first being completed in 1906 by Eames and Young, and the second being completed in 1919 by Tom Barnett. The building was designed in the Gothic Revival style, and featured a two story lobby with multiple indoor storefronts, known as the arcade. At the time, most stores had their storefronts facing the street outside, and in the case of larger department stores, would have a large building with multiple floors that sold a large variety of

items. The Arcade was ahead of its time by this regard, offering multiple stores under one roof, nearly 40 years before the first shopping malls were constructed in St. Louis County. However, when the shopping malls were built in the mid 1950s and early 1960s, it caused the Arcade and the department stores downtown to lose business and eventually close. The Arcade was then abandoned in 1979, and it stayed that way for over 30 years. In 2015, the building was converted into apartments on the upper floors, and became a satellite campus for Webster University in the Arcade. The original architectural details of the building have been well preserved, showcasing the elaborate craftsmanship and Gothic design features of the building, following an extensive restoration.

