

In May of 2022, Arthur History Facts began being published weekly in the Arthur Graphic newspaper through August of the community's Sesquicentennial year of 2023.

Arthur History Fact #1

1873

On **September 2, 1873**, Michael H. Warren entered the plat for the original town that would become Arthur, Illinois, and deeded over his land nearest the Moultrie County side of the railroad to the Board of Supervisors “for use of the public generally.”

This date marks the founding of Arthur.

Considered the “Father of the Town,” Warren also holds the distinction of raising the largest family in Arthur’s history. He fathered four sons and nine daughters, thirteen children in all.

Arthur History Fact #2

1818

On **December 3, 1818**, Illinois becomes the 21st State admitted to the Union.

However, at this time, the marshy land of the area that would become Arthur was only visited by native Americans who considered it good hunting grounds. This swamp-like area was called

The Big Slough.

Early immigrant settlers to Illinois would bypass this area because there was an excess of more hospitable land available elsewhere and because there was the misconception that only land that grew forests of large trees was the most fertile.

The Black Hawk Wars drove the indigenous people from Central Illinois into Iowa in 1832. However, early settlers reported spotting them in Bourbon Township for a while after that.

Arthur History Fact #3

1830s

The first settlers came into the Arthur area in the early 1830s.

The first family on record was George DeHart and his sons Samuel and Lucas.

Other early family names were:
Campbell, Chandler, Gruelle, and Jones.

Malden Jones became one of the wealthiest men in Bourbon Township.

He was elected to the State Legislature in 1864 and 1866 and knew Abraham Lincoln.

By the end of the decade, the land west of the Kaskaskia River was being called

The West Prairie.

Arthur History Fact #4

1850

A Congressional land grant was made for the
Illinois Central Railroad.

The builders of the railroad braved the swampy area and pushed a branch south from Chicago through Champaign, Mattoon, Effingham, and eventually all the way to Centralia.

Soon all along the railroad line sprang up towns and villages every three to five miles apart where the steam locomotives had to stop at water tanks to fill their boilers with water.

The stop most influencing the West Prairie was called **Okaw**, but the name was later changed to **Arcola**. It was from here that trappers, woodsmen, and eventually settlers began filtering into the land on the west side of the Okaw River.

Arthur History Fact #5

1850

Malden Jones and a few others migrated six or seven miles west from the railroad stop at Arcola to some high ground across the river.

In this same year, they received a post office permit in the name of

Bourbon

so named in honor of Bourbon County, Ky., which was represented in this area by several families from that county in Kentucky.

From the Arcola railroad stop other people went west and southwest and named their small settlements **Bagdad**, **Cook's Mill**, and **Fuller's Point**.

Migration further west was still hampered by a lack of good transportation into the area.

Arthur History Fact #6

1864

Amish Bishop Joel Beachy of Maryland and Moses Yoder of Pennsylvania set out west to find fertile land where they could farm without having to burn lime on the land.

On this trip, Mr. Beachy thought more of going to Wisconsin, but Mr. Yoder preferred Missouri. So they visited both.

On their way home from Missouri, they stopped at Pana, Illinois and took a long walk north where they saw promising land.

The next day they boarded a train for Mattoon, walked north to Arcola, and there met Joel Smith who offered to take them around a few days and show them the countryside.

They were so impressed with the land, especially the land of the West Prairie, they said they would return in September.

Thus began the Amish migration into the area.

Arthur History Fact #7

1868

Ulysses S. Grant of Illinois was elected the 18th President of the United States.

This same year William and Carolyn Kanitz started farming in Lowe Township.

Because of a fire at the Sullivan courthouse, records of the settlement of the area west of Arthur is almost non-existent.

However, by 1868 the entire area that would become Arthur was being farmed by settlers still migrating more from the east because of the railroad passing north and south through Arcola.

Arthur History Fact #8

1870

The country was excited about the announcement that a railroad was going to cross “The Big Slough” east to west from Paris, IL to Decatur, IL.

This was initially an enterprise of investors from the area, as most railroads were local projects in those days.

Canadian-born, Robert G. Hervey, was a railroad contractor and promoter. This new railroad would be one of three lines he founded that would eventually stretch from Terre Haute to Decatur and Peoria and be called the Illinois Midland Railway. Later the three lines would connect with the Terre Haute & Indianapolis Railroad.

Hervey also helped found the Decatur National Bank, investing \$100,000.00, and was the bank’s first president.

Arthur History Fact #9

1872

On October 25, 1872
the first train wended over a track laid on the
ground following the contour, except where
grades were absolutely necessary to keep it
out of the water.

Going west from Arcola,
the first water tank to provide water for the
steam locomotives was built
at what is now called Chesterville.

Then going west another five miles
it was necessary to have a passing switch,
so one was made near a road that had been
laid out at right angles with the track.

The road at that time started nowhere and ran
nowhere, but there were those who said it was the
county line.

This passing track was called

Glasgow.

Arthur History Fact #10

Glasgow

An Unsolved Mystery

It is unclear why the railroad passing track built by Robert G. Hervey at the location later called “Arthur” was originally named “Glasgow.”

Not to be confused with Robert George Hervey, a prominent Chicago lawyer of the same era, some have speculated it was the railroad president’s middle name.

Others think it may have been the ancestral home of the Hervey family, Glasgow, Scotland.

Likewise, some have speculated that Chesterville and Williamsburg, another railroad stop between Arthur and Lovington, were named after Robert G. Hervey’s brothers,

Efforts so far to discover Hervey’s middle name and if he had brothers named Chester and William have been unsuccessful.

It would be appreciated if anyone with genealogical evidence that validates any of this unwritten historical tradition would bring it to the attention of Village President Rod Randall.

It is clear that Robert Hervey had a brother named Arthur, but that’s for another history fact.

Arthur History Fact #11

1872

With the presence of a railroad running almost directly east and west and a semblance of a street running north and south, there was enough to start talk of a town.

The earliest settlers of the village itself moved their homes up to the tracksides from the southwest, out of Lowe Township.

These settlers petitioned for a post office, but were told there was already a town named "Glasgow" in Illinois.

So, Robert G. Hervey, president of the railroad, renamed the railroad passing switch

“Arthur”

in honor of his youngest brother, so that the settlers could re-petition for a post office.

Arthur History Fact #12

Mysteries Solved

The full name of the entrepreneur who was instrumental in building the first railroad thru the area that later became “Arthur” is Robert Glasford Hervey (1839-1910). His middle name was his mother’s (Sarah) maiden name.

Since he was known more as Robert G. Hervey, some people thought the original name of the passing track where Arthur now lies was named “Glasgow” after his middle name.

Most likely “Glasgow” referred to Glasgow, Scotland, his father’s hometown.

Robert had three brothers, none of which were Chester or William, so the idea that the train water stops at Chesterville and Williamsburg were named after his brothers is incorrect.

However, when the residents of Glasgow petitioned for a post office, and it was discovered there was already a Glasgow, IL, Robert Hervey did provide the alternate name of “Arthur” in honor of his youngest brother James Henry Arthur Hervey.

A special thanks to Eric Alexander who researched and provided this information as a helpful addition to our town’s history.

Arthur History Fact #13

1873

By 1870, the area around Arthur had become extensively farmed.

Michael H. Warren owned the land nearest the railroad on the Moultrie County side, and Pendleton Murphy owned the land nearest the railroad on the Douglas County side.

In 1872, the two men began platting out the original town that would become Arthur.

On June 20, 1873 Warren deeded over to the railroad president, Robert G. Hervey, Block A and Block B of the new town.

On September 2, 1873, Michael Warren entered the plat that established the

Village of Arthur.

On Saturday, September 2, 2023
Arthur will be having a special
Sesquicentennial Celebration
to commemorate this founding date.

Arthur History Fact #14

1872

John W. Sears, a carpenter and shoemaker, hauled lumber from Arcola to build the first house in Arthur.

This two-story structure was built on the west side of the main road and the first floor was used as a store.

On February 16, 1873 the first child born in the year Arthur was founded was

Olivia Mae Sears

She was the daughter of John Sears and born in the first house built in Arthur.

Olivia later married Charles Hooten of Danville where she resided until her death on June 22, 1957.

In 1875, Mr. Sears built a large hall north of his residence for his store.

It would be an interesting to know if there was any family connection between John W. Sears And Richard W. Sears who founded Sears, Roebuck and Co. in Chicago in 1893.

Arthur History Fact #15

1873

After John Sears established the first store in what would soon become Arthur, W. H. Ward of Arcola brought a stock of goods to town and established a store.

It seems amusingly coincidental that the first store in Arthur was a “Sears” store and the second store was a “Ward’s” store as in the Montgomery Ward & Co stores founded in 1872.

J. W. Barrum managed the store for Mr. Ward and later became the owner of a drug store and spent the rest of his life in Arthur.

Also in 1873, a large two-story building was built by Joel Miller on the southwest corner of Vine Street and Railroad (now Progress) Street.

On the lower floor of this building was a drug store and a hardware store. In the second story was held the first church and Sunday school services in the community.

Arthur History Fact #16

1873

The Panic of 1873 in America was a result of the over-expansion of industry, especially the railroads, along with a drop in European demand for American farm products and a drop off of European investments in the US.

However, the Panic did not stop the growth of the new metropolis, Arthur.

In 1873, three grain offices opened for business and thirty new homes were under construction.

Most of the dwellings and stores faced north along the railroad right-of-way as did the new Dixon Blacksmith Shop.

The first business to face west on the main street of Arthur was begun in 1875 and was a harness and furniture store run by Hans Tay.

Arthur History Fact #17

1874

On November 4, 1874, the Paris and Decatur Railroad merged with the Paris and Terre Haute Railroad and the Peoria and Decatur Railroad to form the Illinois Midland Railroad.

For emerging Midwestern towns like Arthur, railroads were an important factor in the growth and success of a community and its business and industry.

Robert G. Hervey was still president of the newly formed railroad system, but it was experiencing financial difficulties.

At this time, trains passing through Arthur would often take 24, 48, or even 72 hours in making a round trip from Terre Haute to Decatur.

Arthur History Fact #18

1877

In April of 1877, a petition for incorporation of the Village of Arthur was entered in the court of Moultrie County.

Among those signing the petition of over forty residents were: M.H. Warren, J.W. Sears, David Crockett, C.G. McComb, William Ellers, B.G. Hoover, M. Hunsaker, and H. DeHart.

The court found there were 350 inhabitants residing in the territory, granted the petition, and ordered an election for May 7, 1877.

There were thirty-three votes for organization of the village and thirty votes against.

On June 12, 1877, an election was held for Village Trustees and Clerk.

Trustees elected were: C.G. McComb, W.H.H. Reeder, H.C. Jones, J.W. Sears, Nick Thompson, and M. Hunsaker. J.W. Barrum, owner of the local drug store, was elected Clerk.

Arthur History Fact #19

1880

In 1880, Robert G. Hervey, the railroad president, donated land at what is now the 200 block of South Beech Street for Arthur's first church building.

By subscription, the Cook School House, which had been located one mile west of Arthur, was purchased and moved to this location.

The building was owned and maintained by the Village of Arthur and was governed by a board of six trustees.

People of all faiths attended the regular and revival services and other community gatherings at this church.

Various entertainment fundraising events were also held to obtain money for the purchase of paper, paint, and a bell for the church.

This remodeled building was known as the

Union Church

and many of the Arthur churches had their beginning organization here until the construction of their own buildings.

Arthur History Fact #20

1887

In 1887, Arthur held a horse fair to encourage the breeding and selling of fine horses, and the town became famous for its fine horses over the years following.

Many carloads of horses were shipped annually to Chicago and New York where they always topped the market.

In 1901, the Chicago Journal had this to say, “The handsomest pair of draft horses that has ever come to Chicago has just arrived from Arthur.”

English Shire and French Percheron draft horses as well as passing and trotting horses were raised and sold.

Arthur History Fact #21

1887

The Illinois Midland Railroad was sold under foreclosure and reorganized as the Terre Haute and Peoria Railroad.

The T.H. & P. was jokingly referred to as the “take hold and pull” railroad.

In November of 1887, the T.H. & P. was selling round-trip tickets to Decatur at the one-way fare for people to attend a lecture by the popular Sam P. Jones, a Methodist Episcopal revivalist.

The offer was good on the forenoon passenger train and coaches were added to the midnight freight train for the return of those attending the lecture.

The local people thought this was great service!

Arthur History Fact #22

1883

Businesses flourished in the young community of Arthur.

In 1883, John F. Martin and his brother, Robert, built a drain tile factory. The farmland around Arthur was wet and in need of tiling.

The factory purchased one of the first steam powered ditching machines. At the height of its operation the factory employed 11 men working in the factory and 11 men out doing the ditching.

As much as a million feet of tile per year was being manufactured before the factory closed in 1920.

A young Arthur Martin started out helping his father, John, in the Arthur Tile Factory. He later partnered with Joel Fitzjarrald to found Progress Manufacturing Company in 1922.

Arthur History Fact #23

1894

Businesses flourished in the young community of Arthur.

In 1894, N. S. Monroe decided he could build a machine that could do better and faster work in road maintenance.

Through trial and error, first using wood parts, he developed his first machine until it was good enough that he started manufacturing them in Arthur two years later using steel parts.

The “Jumbo Road Machine” began selling well and Monroe greatly expanded his factory in 1913.

At one time his road machine was selling on Russian, African, and South American markets.

After nearly 40 years in business, the factory closed in 1933 due to increasing competition from larger companies making larger machines as road building had become a national priority.

Arthur History Fact #24

During the 1880s and 1890s

the streets of downtown Arthur were lit by coal oil lamps on every other corner.

Each evening the city policeman, who was also the cleaner of crossings, the lamplighter, and who held many other public jobs, lit each lamp, which went out when all the oil was exhausted.

Then around 1904 an acetylene plant, owned by the Village of Arthur, was built to furnish gas for street lighting as well as for lighting in private homes.

Since acetylene is extremely flammable, a safer gas made from casing head compressed gas was soon used instead, but it had a tendency to create a flickering light.

Not long, though, in 1914, electricity came to Arthur and new electric streetlights were installed downtown.

Arthur History Fact #25

During the 1880s

in the swampy land of Arthur, all that was necessary to get water was to hire the town well digger to dig a hole twenty feet deep, line the hole with brick, put on top a platform, install a hand pump, and there was water.

Each home had their own well and almost each store had one in front of their place of business.

There was a watering trough for horses as well as a few hanging tin cups for customers.

Along the main street of the business district, Arthur had nine such wells.

On days of celebration like the 4th of July, the horse troughs were cleaned, and three or four new tin cups, donated by the local hardware store, were chained to the pumps for all to use.

Then in 1913 Arthur put in a regular system of waterworks with a high pressure tower and water mains.

Arthur History Fact #26

Early Arthur Professionals

1867

Dr. John B. Rigney, first area physician.

1872

Dr. John P. Lamb, first resident physician

1873

Mrs. Banta, first paid teacher

1874

J.W. Barrum, druggist

1893

Dr. P. W. Murton, first dentist

1896

First law office opened by Marion Watson

Arthur History Fact #27

1876

The first school district was formed in the spring of 1876 and called Union #7.

The first school directors were:

D.N. Magner, James Ellars,
and James Watkins, Sr.

They built a two-classroom structure, one room above the other, on the southeast corner of Vine and Park Streets.

The directors were criticized for building the school “so far out of town” as there were no sidewalks connecting the school with the town, and most of the year it was wade mud, slush, or snow for the schoolchildren.

So, one fall some enterprising men hauled in slab lumber from the sawmill to make a single track sidewalk to the school.

Arthur History Fact #28

Union #7

The first school district was formed in the spring of 1876 and called Union #7.

Mr. Charley Righter and Miss Delia Birchfield were the teachers of this two-room school.

The following year the school had the same teachers, but they were now Mr. & Mrs. Charley Righter.

In 1888, two more rooms and two more teachers were added to the school as well as high school courses.

The first high school graduating was in May 1892 and consisted of Horation Dildine, Lena Kelly, Fannie McIntyre, and H.M. Rigney.

Arthur History Fact #29

1900

A two-story brick schoolhouse was built east of the old existing schoolhouse that was on the corner of Vine & Park Streets.

This building had six rooms, a library, five halls, and a janitor's room.

On December 10, 1901,
both schoolhouses burned down.

The following summer, a new brick schoolhouse was built exactly like the original brick schoolhouse.

School was held in churches for over half a year while the new building was being constructed.

In 1902 the high school curriculum was extended to a full four years.

Arthur History Fact #30

1902

The Arthur Driving Club was organized in 1902 at which time they leased twenty acres of land from Peter Jurgens on the northwest edge of town.

On this land the club built barns, a grandstand, and what was reported to be the fastest half-mile track in the State.

There were also ball grounds built in the center of the track.

Most of the members of the club had their own speedy racer, were lovers of good horses, and took much pride in the track.

Each year one or more matinee race meets were held in the fall, and it was the center of all attractions for many miles around.

It is uncertain how long the track was in operation, but a ticket found in a diary was dated October 2 & 3, 1908 for the Annual Races and Horse Show, Arthur, Illinois.

Arthur History Fact #31

1877

Every town had to have their own band and its citizens bragged about their hometown band and followed it wherever it went.

These bands were generally made up of local businessmen.

Arthur's first band was organized in 1877 and called the "Von Lanken's Band."

Members were George Von Lanken, Henry Moler, W.A. Dawson, Gilbert Maddox, J.W. Barrum, Ed. George, A.D. Sears, Tittle Warren, John Warren, and Charlie and Frank Hunsaker.

Later the band became known as the "Arthur Merchants Band" and was directed by Dr. O.C. Bruce, the town's dentist.

Arthur History Fact #32

1910-1920

In 1910, concern was expressed in the Arthur Graphic that the town no longer had a band to play for special occasions like Decoration Day or the 4th of July.

By 1920, high schools in the State were required to have a band, and Arthur had a good one, winning State and National prizes.

So the school band became the band used for special occasions since the other local bands had disbanded.

The director of the high school band during this time was H.D. Darling.

Francis Stevens was the star of the band, though, and he spent the first part of his life after high school as a member of the United States Marine Corps Band in Washington D.C.

Arthur History Fact #33

1905

Seems like there were lots of things for young people to do in 1905.

Here are a few excerpts from 18-year-old Augusta Brown's diary:

Aug. 23 – Went to Hammond picnic.

Sept. 1 – Went to picnic in Atwood.

Oct. 4 – Went to Springfield State Fair, got my new winter cloak, sold my pig for \$7.50.

Nov. 4 – Went to Mrs. Williamson's for a party.

Nov. 24 – Basket Supper at Dry Ridge School House. Prizes awarded:

A rooster for most popular young lady was won by Cora Grant;

Box candy for the handsomest young man won by Tom Ecret;

Cake soap for the dirtiest young man won by Clyde Wood.

Arthur History Fact #34

1905

Continuing with things for young people
to do in 1905. . .

Of course church was the chief social center
for young people, but there were also
picnics, literary societies,
sleigh rides, hay rides, and parties.

Dating customs were different in those days.
A young man might drop a note to a young
lady he liked and ask her if he could
accompany her to church or to a party that
evening.

Popular games played at parties were
Thimble, Boston Casino, and Charades.

Baseball continued to be an amusement, and
serious competition, for the adults.

In July 1887, Arthur defeated Lovington
by a score of 41-19.

Teams went so far as to hire out-of-town
pitchers to insure an edge.

Arthur History Fact #35

1911

The 1910 State Fair featured the Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, and their aeroplanes at the fair.

A year later, Arthur residents saw their first airplane flight when a man from Terre Haute brought his “new invention” to town as part of a Homecoming event.

The plane came in by rail and was set up in a pasture southwest of Arthur overnight.

In the morning the pilot went out to check it over before his flight and found that a cow had grazed on it, eating part of the wing.

The wing was repaired and two flights were made during the day.

It is reported that the largest crowd in the history of Arthur was on hand to witness this first airplane flight in the area.

Arthur History Fact #36

Organizations

Arthur has always had a rich history of civic clubs and organizations.

1883 – The Arthur Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) Lodge No. 742 was started.

1893 – The Arthur Lodge No. 825 of Ancient and Accepted Masons was chartered.

1899 – The Arthur chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star held its first meeting.

1908 – The Arthur Women's Club was formed.

1921 – The Arthur Parent-Teachers Association was organized.

1934 – The Arthur Evening Women's Club was formed.

1951 – The Arthur Rotary Club was organized.

Arthur History Fact #37

1900-1910

Turn of the century advances in transportation, communications, and modern conveniences were underway.

1900 – The Arthur Public Library was founded.

1901 – The first telephone company was established with thirty-five subscribers. By 1905 there were 275 subscribers.

1904 – An acetylene plant was built to supply gas for street lighting and homes.

1905 – Twelve passenger trains served Arthur daily.

1907 – John F. Martin was elected Village President on a platform to pave the downtown dirt street, which became a muddy mess when it rained, with brick.

1910 – Dan Evans bought a new Ford automobile and provided a taxi service for the town.

Arthur History Fact #38

Early Business

1872 – John W. Sears General Store

1872 – Dr. John P. Lamb, Physician

1873 – J. W. Barrum Drug Store

1881 – Naurice (Watkins) Maxwell
Millinery and Ladies Apparel

1887 – Herman Stock Shoe Store

1892 – Warren Fleming Funeral Home

1893 – Dr. P.W. Murton, Dentist

1896 – Marion Watson Law Office

1905 – Housman & Wells Men's Clothing

1906 – Eads Brothers Grocery & Dry Goods

1908 - Reeves Bros. Furniture & Stoves

1917 – Dr. Thomas L. Graham, Veterinarian

1918 – John M. Ellison Maxwell Motor Co
Dealer

1918 – Fleming Bros. Overland Automobile
Dealer

Arthur History Fact #39

Highways & Byways

1907 – Vine Street was just a dirt road that got so muddy during heavy rainfall that wagon wheels got stuck in the mud until it was paved with brick in 1907.

However, the mud problem persisted because the side roads onto Vine Street were still dirt. The mud had to be scraped off the bricks periodically.

1915 – The first mile south of Arthur was oiled with a new type of road oil.

1920's – More of the side roads of Arthur were oiled and covered with rock.

1933 – State Route 133 was paved with concrete.

1934 – The bricks of Vine Street were turned over and re-laid because of wear.

1948 – Arthur was linked to route 36 by pavement. First only one lane was concrete and the other lane was oil & chip.

1956 – Street signs were installed.

Arthur History Fact #40

Businesses Flourished

Arthur had barely been named and the railroad siding established before there sprang up three different people buying grain and livestock and selling coal.

They were John and Asa Warren, R.P. Burlingame, and Pugh & Son.

Soon afterward, Tom McCord started a grain and coal office north of the railroad.

Paul Kuhn of Terre Haute built an elevator on the east side of Vine Street and put James Wright in charge.

Another elevator was built on the west side of Vine and Frank Powell managed it.

In 1894 Foster Cahill and Harry Baker put up a big grain dump on the C. & E.I. railroad east of Vine.

In the late 1930's, a group of men bought both elevators and ran them as a corporation.

Arthur History Fact #41

The Roaring 20's

1920 – The Arthur Fire Department was motorized. Before this all their equipment was horse-drawn.

1921 – The Arthur Parent-Teachers Association was organized.

1922 – Progress Manufacturing Company was formed.

1923 – Mr. & Mrs. W.A. Dawson established Dawson Apparel Shop that remained in the business of providing ladies' fashions for 46 years.

1925 – Pribbles and Cahill began selling men's clothing, hats, and shoes and advertised "Dress Well and Succeed."

1929 – A Ford car dealership, Aschermann Motor Company, was established in downtown Arthur.

1929 – A Chicago newspaper reported that Arthur was a city of "1500 friendly and progressive people . . . famous for its ability to do big things, due no doubt, to its wonderful slogan – 'We Will.'"

Arthur History Fact #42

Travel

It didn't take long for the residents of Arthur to travel outside their small community.

The Arthur Graphic reported in January of 1910 that several Arthur people were wintering in Florida.

They went to Pensacola in those days as Miami was still a swamp town of only a few thousand people.

Also during the early 1900's Ida Dorman Morris, the wife of the President of the First National Bank of Arthur, James E. Morris, was a noteworthy authoress.

Described as "a very cultured lady," Mrs. Morris wrote several books on nature and travel including *Pacific Coast Vacation* and *A Tour of Mexico*.

Arthur History Fact #43

1929

A newspaper article reported Arthur as being a “city of 1500 friendly and progressive people, located in a rich dairying, poultry and livestock district and in the center of the great Illinois Corn Belt.

It has good stores and business houses, modern homes, five churches, two miles of paved streets, adequate water system, two good schools, two strong banks, live-wire newspaper, municipal library, spacious park with playground equipment and camping facilities for tourists.

It has major industries, three good garages, three poultry buyers, three cream buyers, two mammoth grain elevators, two baby chick hatcheries, two canning factories, and the Arthur Mail Order House.

The city is a freight terminal of the Pennsylvania Railway, and has a second-class post office, unusual for a town of its size.

Arthur History Fact #44

1906

In 1906 Eads Brothers dry goods and grocery store opened.

Dr. S.O and brother, Frank Eads bought the business from the Piper brothers.

The Eads brothers enlarged the store by purchasing the building to the south in 1910. That building originally housed a barber shop and meat market.

When the store opened, it carried men's work clothing. A work shirt would cost 29 cents, work trousers were \$1.50 and 3-pairs of socks were 25 cents.

The store was remodeled in 1940 and Clark J. Eads, a nephew, bought into the business in 1945.

Prices had gone up by then. Some of the "specials" at Eads Store included: tomato juice 46 oz. 23 cents, coffee 4 lb. \$1.29, bleach qt. 10 cents, large pineapple 37 cents, toothpaste 2 for 15 cents and thread 6 for 25 cents.

Closing on January 19, 1980, Eads Store served Arthur for 74 years.

Arthur History Fact #45

1897

The wood-frame building on the SW corner of Vine and Progress Streets was torn down to make room for a new brick building for the Reeves and Fleming Opera House.

Entertainments took place on the second story of the building.

On December 23, 1897, the Opera House was dedicated with a presentation of “A Texas Steer” by the Charles Hoyt Comedy Company.

This comedy/drama was a political satire that was extremely popular nationwide.

The Opera House remained popular for a number of years, providing dramas and comedies, lectures by eminent men, and interesting shows like Blind Boone, a blind pianist.

However, stiff competition with the new moving picture show caused the Opera House to close by 1910.

Arthur History Fact #46

1898

25 years after its founding, these were some of the leading business people of Arthur:

Martin Haney, Graphic Editor

E.E. Luke, Merchant

Robert Martin, Restaurant & Bakery

F.M. Powell, E.B. Snyder,
Farm Implements

S.A. Vradenburg, President,
First National Bank of Arthur

J.W. Probst, General Store

Eakle & Fisher, Livestock Shippers

O.C. Bruce, Dentist

W.H. Whitlock, Clothing Store

Greer & Son, Butcher Shop

Pat Sears, Drug Store

Hobbes & Cox, Milliner Store

Marion Watson, Lawyer

G.E. Grisson, Railroad Agent

J.B. Rigney, J.R. Colyer, J.W. Dobson,
Doctors

D.A. Terry, Photographer

Arthur History Fact #47

1908

35 years after its founding, these were some of the leading business people of Arthur:

J.F. Helmuth was a builder of many homes in Arthur

W.F. Pribble, Barber

Ned Williams, Bakery

Rigney & Haney, Dry Goods

John Winter, Willie Miller,
Tin Shops

J.C. Williamson, Barber

Frank McKee, Jewelry Store

Dr. O.W. Winter, Veterinarian

J.B. Jocelyn, Pianos & Sewing Machines

John Jocelyn, O.E. Gibson, Ed Kerns,
Painters

Campbell Bros., Implement Dealer

H.A. Baker, Blacksmith

H.M. Rigney, Book Store

Ben Jocelyn, Skinner

H.F. Kirk,
Justice of the Peace

Arthur History Fact #48

1948

Arthur's Centennial book had some gaps in its business history, but this information was included about businesses 75 years after Arthur's founding.

The Thrift Shop, owned by Roxy Ray, would shampoo a 9 X 12 rug for \$2.97.

The H.E. Hood Insurance Agency was selling liability insurance to comply with the new Illinois Safety Responsibility Law.

D.C. Moses, who later owned Moses Cafe, was managing Turner Seed and Supply, selling Case Tractors.

Factory Sales had Kem-tone wall finish for \$2.98 per gallon in paste form.

The Ben Franklin Store, under G.H. Stock, was having a 9-cent sale.

Brad's Jewelry was selling Keepsake diamond rings for \$15.00 and up.

Arthur History Fact #49

1946

In the section of Arthur's Centennial book called "When We Wanted to Have Fun," it was mentioned that the card game of bridge had become very popular in the late 1920's.

By 1946, up to six bridge parties were being held in Arthur homes weekly.

In March of 1946
Bridge parties were given by:
Mrs. James L. McHose,
Mrs. R.H. Reeves,
Mrs. Marvin (Rose McDonald) Pankey,
Miss Irene Day (later Pennell),
Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. McDonald,
and Mrs. M.W. Chandler.

At the writing of the 1973 Centennial book it was noted that,
"Bridge clubs are still one important form of entertainment for Arthur citizens."

Arthur History Fact #50

1923

Arthur was celebrating its 50th Anniversary with picnics, parades, and much bravado.

Minnie Reeves was an early Arthur historian whose historical records were the basis of much of the Centennial book of 1973.

In 1929, Mrs. Reeves took a look back at Arthur's first 50 years and read some of the history of Arthur she had written at a Woman's Club meeting.

The history she read was subsequently published in the Arthur Graphic-Clarion along with these personal thoughts:

“It is with a touch of sadness that I look back across the years and note the change that time has wrought. So many of my friends and loved ones are gone. Of the people who were married and living in Arthur when I came in 1879, I can think of but two couples that are left. The others are gone, either one or both, and most of them are sleeping in our City of the Dead.”

Arthur History Fact #51

1910

Revivals were promoted by traveling evangelists and would usually last for a week.

During a revival held in Arthur in 1910 a total of 126 individuals accepted Christ and publically vowed to “forsake their haunts of sin and take up their journey on the straight and narrow path to eternity.”

Of course a plea for funds was made each night. At one revival, in response to a complaint about the constant request for money, the following note appeared in the Arthur Graphic:

“EXPENSE MONEY HAS GOT TO BE RAISED AND THE QUICKER IT’S DONE THE QUICKER WE WILL STOP PASSING THOSE BASKETS UNDER YOUR NOSE.”

(From historical notes by Noel C. Dicks)

Arthur History Fact #52

In the late 1930's Albert Heerdt started barbering in Arthur and did so for over fifty years.

Barber shops were good places to catch up on all the town gossip as well as pass along the best jokes going around town.

According to Albert, one of those jokes was about the traditional rivalry between Arthur and Atwood. He said,

“In the barbershop, waiting for a haircut, were two young men. One was wearing an Arthur letter jacket, and the other was wearing an Atwood-Hammond letter jacket.

The Atwood student got up to go to the bathroom. When he returned the Arthur student asked him, ‘Did you wash your hands?’ to which the Atwood student coolly replied, ‘No.’

Pushing the issue, ‘Well, in Arthur they teach us to wash our hands after going to the bathroom,’ declared the Arthur student.

The Atwood student responded, ‘In Atwood they teach us not to pee on our fingers.’”

Arthur History Fact #53

The Great Bank Robbery of 1899

Part 1

(This incident occurred at the First National Bank of Arthur which was located at the corner of Vine and Illinois Streets where the Arthur First Bank is currently located.)

It was a bone-chilling zero degrees outside that early morning in January.

A little after 12:00 AM, six masked bandits, having already stolen some of the tools they would need for their crime from other businesses in town, chiseled and punched out the lock on the protective grating door of the First National Bank of Arthur and then pried open the north side entrance door of the bank.

When the robbers got inside, they found the steel grating door of the vault open, so they found themselves in front of the vault without further hindrance.

The vault had 30" thick brick walls and a floor of solid concrete. The vault had two sets of doors, each made of half-inch hardened steel. But these obstacles proved little resistance to the expert safe-crackers.

To be continued . . .

Arthur History Fact #54

The Great Bank Robbery of 1899

Part 2

The armed bandits were now standing in front of a Hall time-lock “burglar-proof” safe in no time.

The safe had a 4” thick steel door and a money chest inside with 2½” thick walls.

Just then, a young German fellow, who had come to visit his cousin came to town.

His cousin’s family was sick and he had come to find a doctor. Thinking the two bandits who were standing outside the bank as lookouts were night watchmen, he asked them where he could find the residence of the town’s doctor.

“Right in here,” remarked one of the bandits and, to his amazement, the young man found himself looking into the muzzles of two large revolvers.

The robbers placed the young man on the floor and compelled him to remove his shoes. They searched his pockets, but took neither his money nor his watch.

To be continued . . .

Arthur History Fact #55

The Great Bank Robbery of 1899

Part 3

One bandit kept a gun on their young captive while the two lookouts returned to their positions outside the bank.

The safe-crackers did not try to drill the safe, but, instead, were going to “blow” it with nitro-glycerin. By using a blowpipe or air pump, they carefully injected the nitro into the top crack of the door.

The young captive was getting nervous at all these events and, when he saw one of the robbers get a rope, he thought, “If it was hanging me they were after, I’d better be getting out.”

One of the robbers lit a long fuse that led to the safe while the others took cover.

The explosion propelled steel parts from the safe through the front window of the bank and through the window of a store clear across the street.

The young man ran and, with all his might, jumped against the guards and fled out the door. As the young man ran across the street he fell down, and the bullets from the bandits’ guns passed over his head. He sailed up Vine Street yelling, “Help” and “Murder” at every breath.

To be continued . . .

Arthur History Fact #56

The Great Bank Robbery of 1899

Part 4

The robbers, after letting their prisoner escape, hurriedly gathered up all the valuables they could find in the blown safe, and made their way to the Vandalia train house where they stole a hand car and headed to Arcola on the railroad tracks.

The next day bloodhounds were called in from Sullivan and a Pinkerton Detective Agency man arrived on the scene with some clue as to who the perpetrators were.

He reported that the work was done by “experts” who divided up in Arcola. Three went north by train that morning and three went south on another train.

But the suspects were never caught and had managed to get away with gold, silver, and paper money amounting to \$3720.00 along with diamonds valued at around \$300.00. (An amount equivalent to approximately \$150,000.00 today.)

The editor of the Arthur Graphic stated, “Our city will be familiarly spoken of in the annals of crime yet to be written and we will rank along with Coffeyville, Kansas and other western towns where outlaws have reigned supreme . . .”

Arthur History Fact #57

It was the year 1901 . . .

Two years earlier, the bank robbery of 1899 was one of the most harrowing criminal activity the young community had experienced.

However, in 1901, some other strange happenings were going on.

Suspicious fires had been springing up throughout town. One of the fires burnt down a local hotel.

But the biggest disaster was when the new Grade School, having just been completed about a year earlier, burnt down.

Funny thing was that a reporter for the local newspaper always appeared on the scene to catch good photographs of the fires.

There was never any hard proof, but it seems some pressure might have been put on this reporter who soon moved out of town to Arcola.

Guess what? The story is that suspicious fires started happening in Arcola.

The citizens of Arthur rebuilt the school exactly how it had been before the fire.

Arthur History Fact #58

Give me that old time religion. . .

Arthur's first church, the Union Church, was established just seven years after the town's founding by moving a country schoolhouse onto property donated by the railroad president.

Arthur didn't have their own ministers at the time, so traveling ministers would come to provide for the religious needs of the community.

There must have been quite a group of pranksters during those days for, on one visit, the minister was in for a big surprise – he had a wedding to perform.

The bride and groom proceeded down the aisle and stopped in front of the unsuspecting minister.

The pranksters had coaxed one of the men to dress up like a bride to get a funny reaction from the minister, but the minister went right along with the service and performed the marriage.

On another visit, they had the minister perform a funeral for a man who wasn't even dead. He just laid real still in the casket during the service.

Arthur History Fact #59

1920

The George C. Thomsen family had a difficult time.

He and his wife, Minnie A. (Perryman) lost their first-born son when he was only 4- months old. They then lost their next child, a daughter, when she was only 8-months old. Their second son died when he was only 14 years old.

Three years later, in 1918, their adopted son, Bruce Thomsen, was born. Many people remember Bruce who served one term as Moultrie County Sheriff, spent many years as the Arthur Chief of Police, and retired as Assistant Chief of the Sullivan P.D.

In 1920, Minnie had a song published that she had composed about the loss of a mother's son during the fighting in World War I. The title of the song is "My Boy Who Stayed in France" and its haunting lyrics and melody was sold through A.W. Perry's Songs of Sedalia, MO.

Minnie was probably a little disappointed that the publisher spelled her name incorrectly on the sheet music of her song - "by Mrs. Geo. Thomson."

Arthur History Fact #60

2023

On September 2, 2023 Arthur celebrated the 150th Anniversary of its founding on September 2, 1873 with a Founders' Day Dinner held at Penn Station in downtown Arthur.

The event was well-attended by members of the community and by those who once lived or went to school in Arthur.

The evening's program included an "interview" with Arthur's founder, entertaining Arthur history, and the opening of the time capsule from 1973.

BE PART OF ARTHUR'S HISTORY!

Purchase your tickets for the Founders' Day Dinner at the Municipal Building or by calling (217) 543-2927.

Pictures taken during the event, as well as a guest registry of attendees, will be enclosed in the new time capsule to be opened in 2073!

Arthur History Fact #61

1894

Lincoln Street Christian Church

On September 25, 1871, a Christian Church was organized by Ed. A. Harshberger.

At first services were infrequent, but by 1881 regular services were being held at the Union Church until their own church was completed in 1894 on the northeast corner of Lincoln and Pine Streets.

The members of the Lincoln Street Christian Church eventually merged with other churches in town and the building was demolished in the 1940's.

The blocks of the structure, however, were re-used to build the American Legion Hall at that same location.

That building was used by the Legion and by the community as a youth center, pre-school, for church services, and as a meeting place for the Arthur Boy Scouts until 1996 when it was finally demolished as well.

Arthur History Fact #62

1873

One of the longest-lasting businesses of Arthur existed four months before the founding of the town in 1873.

Even though it was not operated by the same owners since its beginning, it was located in the same general area between the two railroad lines on the east side of Vine Street for its entire existence.

During Arthur's big building boom in 1873, J. H. Manger and a Mr. Snyder of Arcola started a branch lumber yard that was later sold and managed by others until it was purchased on October 11, 1920 by Midland Lumber Company and was renamed the Arthur Lumber Company.

Max Fabert managed the lumber yard from 1951 until 1972 and during that time a new building was constructed further east, making room for a parking lot.

For approximately 125 years this business served the community well.

Arthur History Fact #63

1897

The Reeves and Fleming Opera House was built on the southwest corner of Vine and Progress Streets in 1897 and was dedicated with Arthur's first professional theatre performance on December 23, 1897.

But the new moving picture shows of the early 1900s began drawing audiences away from the Opera House and it closed in 1910.

The Garden Theatre, which had been located next to the railroad at 110 North Vine, later moved into the Opera House building.

It had already began treating the Arthur public with the new moving picture shows, but also had live entertainment periodically.

The hard economic times of the late 1920s kept people from spending money on entertainment which eventually caused the Garden Theatre to close,

Then in 1930, a few doors south of the old Garden Theatre, a new Garden Theatre movie house opened.

Later this was renamed the LaMar Theatre which was popular until it closed in 1965 after television had started taking away audiences from local movie houses.

Arthur History Fact #64

1877

Even though Arthur was founded in 1873, the village was not incorporated until 1877.

Results of the election for incorporation were 33 yea and 30 nay.

Those for incorporation wanted the community to have a local governing body that would proceed with improvements to the streets and alleys, provide other amenities in the future, and form rules and regulations for townsfolk to abide by.

Those who opposed incorporation knew there would be new municipal taxation to pay for these things.

On June 12, 1877 the first village election was held and six trustees were elected and J. W. Barrum was elected Village Clerk.

The trustees at this time would elect a president of the board.

Arthur History Fact #65

September 2, 2023

On this date, Arthur celebrated the 150th Anniversary of its founding on September 2, 1873 with a Founders' Day Dinner in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Amish Country Cheese Festival.

Descendants of Michael H. Warren, the person who entered the plat for the Village of Arthur with the Moultrie County Board of Supervisors in 1873, assisted with the Ceremonial Cutting of the Cheese and rode in the Cheese Festival Parade.

Approximately 200 people attended the Founders' Dinner which was entertaining and educational.

Richard Bradford, the current resident who has lived in Arthur the longest, blew out the candles on Arthur's birthday cake.

Those attending this Sesquicentennial Celebration not only reminisced about Arthur's past, but was also participating in an event that will forever become part of the community's history.

Arthur History Fact #66

1973 Time Capsule 2023

At the Founders' Day Dinner
held on September 2, 2023
the time capsule from Arthur's Centennial
year 1973 was opened.

Unclaimed contents of the capsule
that had been designated to go to
family members in the future (2023)
was taken to Arthur's Municipal Building
where they were available to pick up
approximately a week later.

The time capsule and some of its contents
was put on display for a while at the
Arthur Public Library.

Then later in the year, a public event was
held where Arthur residents had the
opportunity to leave something for the future
in the capsule.

The granite stone that covers the time
capsule that is housed in a concrete vault in
the floor of the Welcome Center was
re-engraved to read,

“Open in 2073”

Arthur History Facts #67

August 19-25, 1973

This week Arthur celebrated its Centennial. The community held special events and, for four evenings, the production “Arthurama – 100 Years Revisited” was performed on the football field.

The weeklong celebration culminated on Saturday with the closing of the time capsule and a parade that had an estimated 15,000 onlookers.

August 30-September 3, 2023

A special Sesquicentennial edition of the Arthur Graphic was published and mailed to every household in Arthur.

On Saturday, September 2, a Founders’ Day Dinner was held at Penn Station and the following morning a Community Worship Service was held there. Both events were well-attended.

A BIG THANK YOU

is extended to everyone who helped make Arthur’s Sesquicentennial Celebration successful and memorable!

After the 1973 Centennial Celebration, the people were eager to perpetuate the community spirit it had generated.

So, plans began for “Century plus 1.”