

METAMORA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

NEWSLETTER

December 2018



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A Special Thanks to John and Linda Keys.... We wish to thank John and Linda Keys for their generous donation of John's mother's, Lois, scrap book. The book contains articles of many subjects on Metamora, Woodford County and the entire Central Illinois area. Topics ranged from old Indian sites to Adlai Stevenson's visit to Old Settlers as a newly elected governor in 1949. Among them are:

- The flyer for the WW II Metamora blackout practice.
- A Carlock resident who tried to develop a Woodford County fest similar to the Spoon River Drive.
- Sites of old Indian mounds.
- A 1926 Rand McNally map of Illinois showing the paved roads – with driving tips, such as “when calling for people at their homes, don't use your horn as a substitute for the doorbell.”
- Washburn farmer finds the bones of 200 prehistoric Indians in 1954
- The Old Settlers committee from 1931
- The Metamora student who won the 1971 Woodford County Spelling Bee

This edition will focus on just a few of these topics. Absolutely fascinating!! This book will be on display at the Stevenson House.



THE LATE ADLAI STEVENSON is shown when he visited the former Woodford County courthouse at Metamora in 1949 to speak at the Old Settlers program. He is holding a case which belonged to his grandfather, the first Adlai Stevenson, who practiced law at Metamora in the 1860s.

Metamoran Recalls Adlai Visit To Grandfather's House In 1949

Adlai Stevenson visits the Abe's in 1949

“I was frantically taking the last stitches in a dress, getting ready to go to Old Settlers Day, when a knock came at our door and it was Adlai Stevenson asking to come in and ‘see my grandfather’s house.’”

“Mrs. Charles Abel well remembers that day on August 11, 1949 at the beginning of Stevenson’s term as governor of Illinois. He had come to Metamora to speak at an Old Settlers Day program.”

“My two daughters and I were home at the time when Gov. Stevenson came to the door and asked if he and others with him could take a look at his grandfather’s former home,”

Mr. Abel recalled. “We hadn’t known it at the time we bought the house in 1935, but found out later that it had been the home of the first Adlai Stevenson when he was a practicing lawyer in Metamora in the 1860s.”

“The governor, in his speech remarked that his grandfather had lived and worked in Metamora for about 10 years. Then he quipped: “so I am more than a little happy and flattered that you asked me to come to the Old Settlers picnic. I was fearful that perhaps after 10 years of one Adlai Stevenson you might not want another.”



1942 Metamora Leaders ->

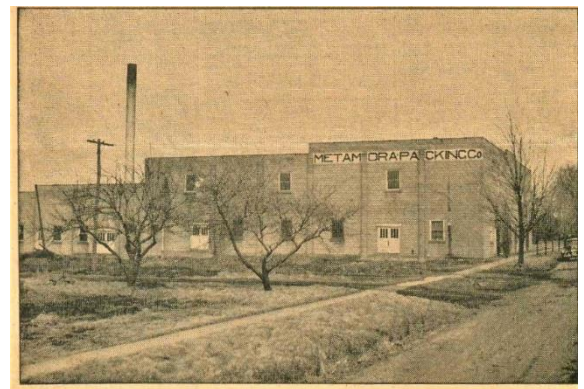


In 1954 John Brown shows his sister Reaelyn a skull from Indian burial pit. John and his father Roland uncovered the first bone while plowing a field on their farm near Washburn. They returned the next day and quickly found skulls and other skeletons just below the surface. (Photograph: Photos)

Farmer Finds 200 Prehistoric Indian Skeletons

Washburn farmer finds bones of 200 prehistoric, unidentified Indians (from around 1200) in 1954. All seemed to die of natural causes, one being almost 100 years old. “The evidence is clear, scientists say, that the bodies were reduced to skeletons before being placed in the 15'x6' shallow pit. That implies some sort of tree or scaffold burial before the interment in the pit.” “This form of burial, while known in certain parts of New York state, has not previously been identified with the Illinois region.” “The probably date of burial was as early as 1200.”

Metamora Packing Company ->



Metamora's only industry is the packing plant operated by Metamora Packing Co. Many residents of the community are employed in Peoria factories.-- Star photo.



Walt Laitas
Metamora's 2nd Football Coach

Tradition: From Shucking Corn to Shucking Tacklers.

In 1946. When the only fall sport at Metamora High School was con shucking, the new high school principal was approached by a group of make students with a request. "They asked if they could start a football team," Sherwood Dees recalled. He was 29 then, in his first year as principal. "There seemed to be real interest, so I agreed. I also agreed to be the first coach, just as a volunteer."

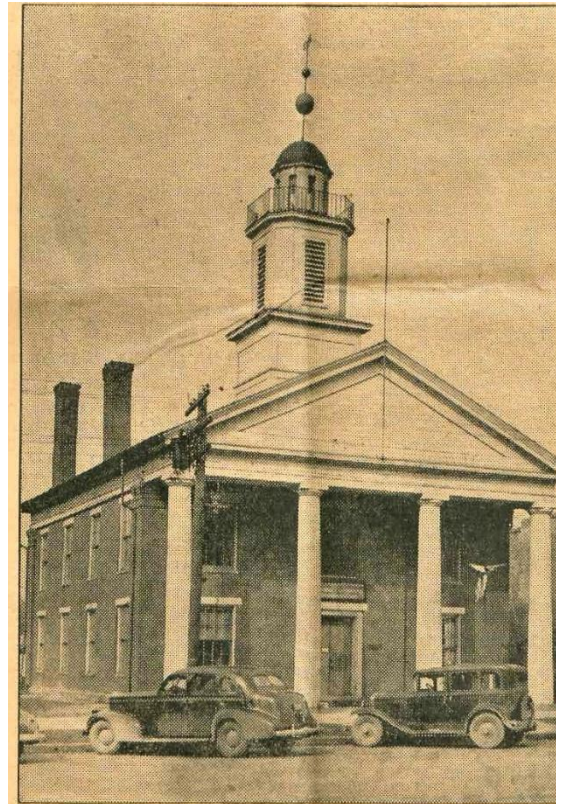
"To my knowledge none of the boys who played that first year had ever been in or even seen a formal football game," said Dees, now 60. Dees coached two years.

Walt Laitas, who had just graduated from Illinois State University when he succeeded Dees as coach, is still at Metamora as a history teacher. And he watches every football game, home and away.

Laitas: "There were 33 kids out for the team my first year, but by the end of the season only 20 were left because of injuries and kids quitting. We couldn't even scrimmage.

We played our games in the afternoon behind the school, and one of my halfbacks had to miss a game one day because his father wanted him to help harvest corn."

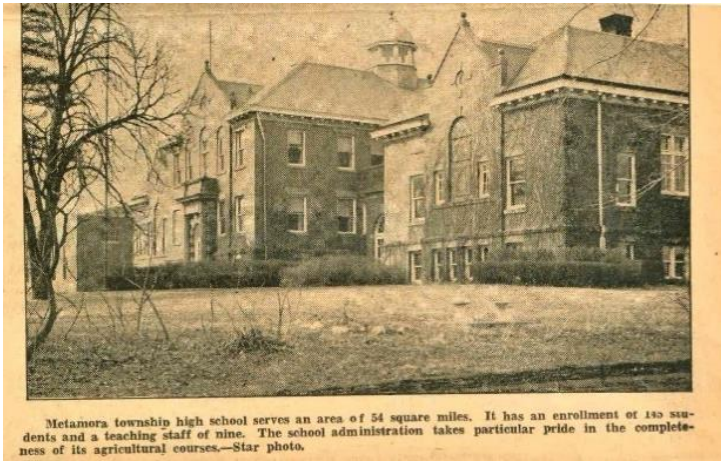
A lot of the players were in the band, too. At halftime, they'd march with the rest of the kids – wearing their football uniforms.



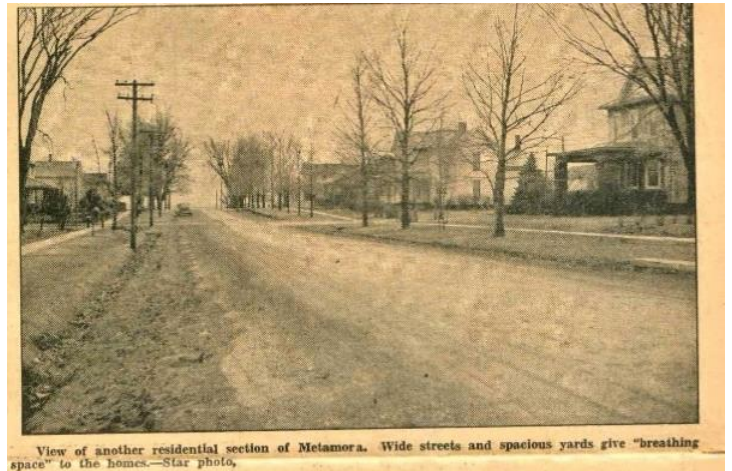
Metamora courthouse appears today just as it did when Abraham Lincoln occasionally appeared as an attorney in the old eighth circuit court room on the top floor. The building was presented to the state in 1921 and is now a part of the Illinois park and memorial system, drawing many tourists to the town.—Star photo.

1942 Courthouse ->

1942 High School and Street Scene



Metamora township high school serves an area of 54 square miles. It has an enrollment of 130 students and a teaching staff of nine. The school administration takes particular pride in the completeness of its agricultural courses.—Star photo.



View of another residential section of Metamora. Wide streets and spacious yards give "breathing space" to the homes.—Star photo.

Contact Us

Questions, ideas - Love to hear from you

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