



# The Recorder

## Rock County Historical Society

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Photos of the  
1860s Holiday  
event, Novem-  
ber 27, 2010 at  
the Lincoln-  
Tallman House.



Left: Mary Todd Lincoln visits us in  
the drawing room.

Below: Caroling outside the Tallman  
House.



Below: Lighting the tannenbaum  
outside the Tallman House.



Above: Making tinsels from tin in  
the Tallman basement.



# Directors Report

Our 2010 year was a very busy year. Attendance at the Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center, the Francis Willard School, and the Lincoln-Tallman House is up by 4858. I was shocked to see the difference and quite pleased. Most of the change occurred due to the Society hosting the Tallman Arts Festival which brought in over 1600 attendees. We were also very happy with our new events including our Collectible Series, Oak Hill Cemetery Tour, Mother's Day Tea and Fashion Show, Concert Series, an 1860s Holiday, and the Twilight Tour event. Many dedicated volunteers helped us in countless ways to bring about this change and we hope to continue offering our public great events and activities at all of our facilities.

We are also very pleased with our new exhibit, *Pickard China: An American Company With Local Roots*. Working with the Pickard China Collectors Club has been a rewarding experience this past year and they have brought new life and energy to the Museum Center. Our China Painting Design Competition awards ceremony will happen on April 9 and the committee has decided to extend the deadline of the exhibit to April 29. If you have not seen the exhibit, do visit us to see one of the largest displays of Pickard China before it is gone.

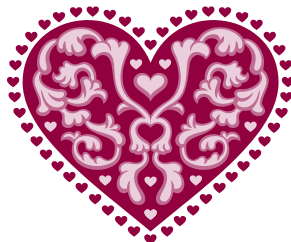
Joel Van Haften

## VOLUNTEERISM AT RCHS

We would like to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU to all the volunteers that gave their valuable time to the Rock County Historical Society. With the help of our dedicated volunteers we were able to execute many successful events and have a stellar year. Volunteers logged almost double the hours in 2010, than they did in 2009, with 8,619.37 hours logged.

- Thank you Tony Briski for logging in 1,271.38 hours at the Archives and Research Center.
- And thank you Dave Fellows for all your volunteerism. We all wish you nothing but the best in your retirement. Good luck!

If you currently are not a volunteer and would like to become one just contact me, Tina Love, by phone: 756-4509 or email: [tlove@rchs.us](mailto:tlove@rchs.us). We could always use someone like you. Our hearts go out to our volunteers this February.



## Exhibit Case Memorials Still Available

The Society has added five new cases at the Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center and each case is available as a memorial. Supporting the Society through a memorial will help us fund their installation, lights, and exhibits. If you would like to arrange for a memorial to be placed in the gift shop below one of the stained glass windows or above one of our new exhibit cases, please contact us at the museum. All memorials are noted in our Annual Report and a mention of each can be included in our newsletter.



## President's Report

This is an exciting and challenging time for Janesville, the Rock County Historical Society, and the Tallman House. As Janesville and Rock County face economic challenges, so do house museums. Across the country, museums find that they do not support themselves through standard tours and admissions alone. The successful models are those that go 'beyond the velvet ropes' to develop greater public access and involvement and increase revenues. Our Tallman Arts & Music Festival, the increasingly popular Historic House Tour, and Christmas Twilight Tours are excellent examples of this approach. We need to build on our successes and recast the Tallman House and our historic campus for ever greater public and private use.

Our Board is currently working to refine a business plan, developed with the Ad Hoc Committee of the Janesville City Council, to increase access and increase revenues. That plan calls for business meetings, weddings, and other receptions, and more community-wide events. Our challenge will be to preserve our artifacts and historic fabric while opening to wider contact, and expanding our educational mission.

We will need the ideas, commitment and support of our members, volunteers, and the wider community to achieve what might be possible. We need to ask how our community's knowledge of its past informs our present and shapes our future. We need to understand that spirit of entrepreneurship that took William Tallman west, where he faced the political and economic challenges of his time. As Tallman reinvented himself in the changing environment of the 1850's & 60's, so we need to reinvent the Tallman House and Campus for today's challenges.

Chuck Rydberg



### Additions to Pickard China Exhibit

Two new china pieces have been added to the *Pickard China: An American Company with Local Roots* exhibit. Attributed to the *Edgerton P.C.* company, they represent another painted china company that surfaced for a very limited time following Pauline Pottery's end. *Edgerton P.C.* artists, including Edward Donath who painted this pitcher, would soon be hired by Wilder Austin Pickard in his newly formed Pickard China company. Please stop by to see the Pickard China exhibit before it closes and to see our lovely additions.

## Curator's Report

A hair wreath from the Rock County Historical Society's collection was selected for the exhibit "Handmade Meaning: The Value of Craft in Victorian and Contemporary Culture" in Madison. The wreath, made with hair from the members of the Ebert and Munzinger families was plaited, knotted and wrapped around wire and is attributed to Katherine Vollmar Ebert, ca. 1880. There are two other hair wreaths in our collection, along with several pieces of hair jewelry and a little book filled with labeled snippits of hair collected by local woman. At one time, it was popular to give the gift of a lock of hair to friends.

One of the Tallman House's lyre back chairs is being sent down to students at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago for restoration. Craig Deller, art conservator, will work with students on the restoration and refinishing of the chair. The learning project is being donated by Deller and the School of the Art Institute.

Volunteers are needed to help with the inventory of the artifact storage room at the Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center. Here is your chance to handle those wonderful artifacts (with gloves on, of course!) that are carefully tucked away, waiting for a future exhibit. This very fun task includes checking items to inventory lists, updating catalog cards and lists and research. Call Laurel at the museum to volunteer.

Laurel Fant



Above: Lyre back chair waiting to be restored.

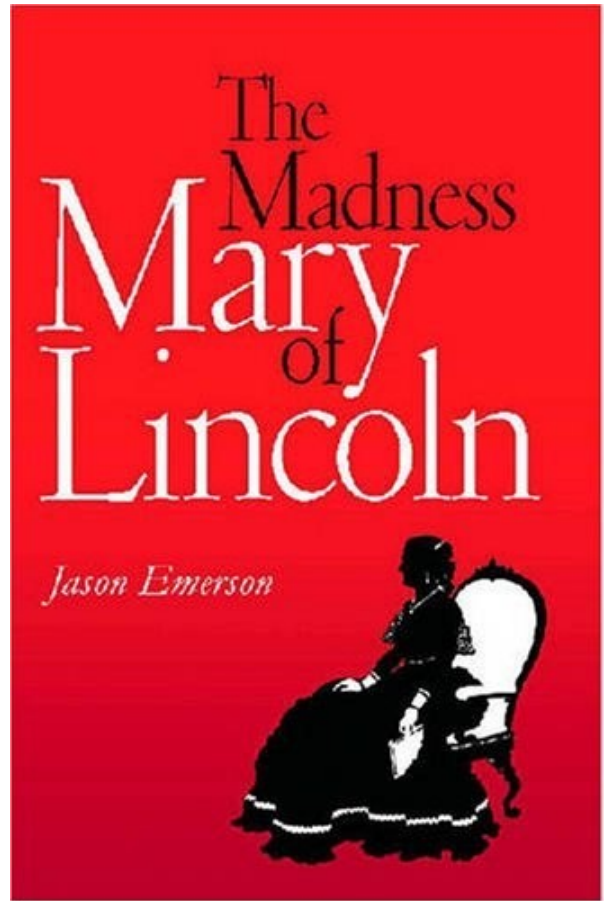
***Mary Todd Lincoln: Sane, Insane, or  
Simply Misunderstood?***

The Rock County Historical Society and the Hedberg Public Library will host a presentation on Mary Todd Lincoln on April 21 from 7 pm to 8 pm at the Hedberg Public Library with a book signing at 6:30 pm and following the presentation. The speaker, Jason Emerson, will present, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Sane, Insane, or Simply Misunderstood?*, which will examine Mary Lincoln's mental health from childhood to death, her commitment to an insane asylum in 1875, her history and her legacy as America's most maligned First Lady. This discussion will be based on Jason's two books: his newest, *The Dark Days of Abraham Lincoln's Widow, As Revealed by Her Own Letters* (published Feb 1, 2011) and his previous work, *The Madness of Mary Lincoln* (2007 -- named Book of the Year by the Illinois State Historical Society). Both books will be available for purchase and signing by the author.

Jason Emerson is an independent historian from upstate New York. He has worked as a National Park Service ranger at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, the Gettysburg National Military Park, and as a professional journalist. His upcoming book is a biography of Robert Todd Lincoln, scheduled for fall 2011 release. The presentation is funded with support from an Alliant Energy grant, the Rock County Historical Society, the Hedberg Public Library, and the Rock County Civil War Round Table.

**Anonymous Donation to the Charles Tallman House**

An anonymous donation of \$50,000 has been received to help the Society restore the Charles Tallman House. Adjacent to the Lincoln-Tallman House, the Society hopes to use this building as our new archives and research center. Work will begin in the spring on the roof and the exterior painting and the Society is beginning to layout the floor plan on the main level, address handicap needs, electrical updates, and security of the new building. If anyone would like to become involved in a committee for this restoration, please contact staff at the Museum Center. The Charles Tallman House received a new front steps and downspouts this Fall.



Copies of Mr. Emerson's book will be available for sale at the Hedberg Public Library during this event.



Above: Antique hardware from the Tallman House awaiting refinishing.

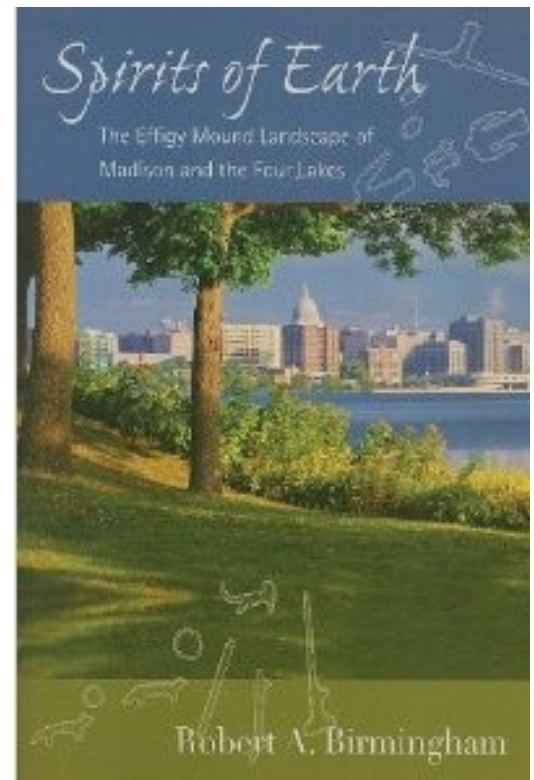


**Door Restoration Half Finished**

Ron Suttlerin of Suttlerin Restorations has finished restoring two of the doors at the Lincoln-Tallman House. The two doors leading into the conservatory have been removed and are currently being restored. The restoration will also include a replating of some of the silver key escutcheons and door hardware courtesy of the Monterey Questers.

## Annual Meeting: April 27

The Rock County Historical Society will host its annual meeting on April 27<sup>th</sup> from 6 pm to 9 pm at the Armory in Janesville. The speaker, Bob Birmingham, will be presenting his research into effigy mounds of the south central region of Wisconsin and will focus upon sites in Rock County. Robert Birmingham served as Wisconsin State Archaeologist at the Wisconsin State Historical Society from 1989-2004. He now teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha and writes from his home in Madison. He is the senior co-author of two award winning books *Indian Mounds of Wisconsin* and *Aztalan: Mysteries of Ancient Indian Town*. Bill will be having a book signing before and after the presentation for his new book *Spirits of Earth: The Effigy Mound Landscape of Madison and the Four Lakes*. Members of the Rock County Historical Society will be receiving an invitation in the mail. Non-members are encouraged to attend and may do so by contacting the Rock County Historical Society at 608-756-4509. All attendees must RSVP and pay for the dinner by April 26. The cost of the dinner is \$26 for members of the Society and \$30 for non-members.



## Pickard China

*An American Company with Local Roots*

November 1, 2010 - March 20, 2011



Open Monday – Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. until November 19  
Open Seven Days a Week from November 20 to December 30.  
Open Monday – Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. January 2 to March 20  
Exhibit is free and open to the public.  
Closed major holidays.

Sponsored by the Pickard Collectors Club, Ltd.



**Rock County Historical Society**

426 N. Jackson Street, Janesville, WI Phone: 608.756.4509 www.rchs.us

## Pickard China Exhibit is Well Attended, Design Competition is Well Received by Area Schools

Staff has decided to extend the Pickard China Exhibit to the end of April. We have seen a significant increase in attendance due to this exhibit and are fortunate to work with such an active group of volunteers from the Pickard China Collectors Club. New Pickard pieces are being added on a continuing basis and an additional exhibit case has been constructed to fit the growing display. Over entries have been submitted by area 4th through 12th graders in our design competition. The China Painting Contest Ceremony will be held at the Museum Center on April 9th from 2-4 pm and will be open to students, parents, and friends of our talented designers.

## Restoration Work on Cupola Finished, Roof Scheduled for Spring

Ron Sutterlin has finished restoring the cupola on the Lincoln-Tallman House. Newly discovered paint colors reveal much different colors including a brown and a cream. The City of Janesville is working on securing contractors for the roof repair this coming Spring. The chimneys, soffits, fascias, built in gutters, and roof would be restored in this phase of restoration. The Society has raised nearly \$150,000 towards the restoration efforts of the Lincoln-Tallman House.



Lincoln-Tallman House Cupola, Restoration Complete



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### RCHS 2011 Schedule of Events

**Pickard China Exhibit**, Museum Center, Oct. 31 to April 29  
**Collectors Series: Hand Painted Porcelain**, Museum Center, January 27, 7-8 pm  
**Collectors Series: Button Collecting**, Museum Center, February 17, 7-8 pm  
**Collectors Series, Antique Duck/Bird Decoys**, Museum Center, March 24, 7-8 pm  
**China Painting Contest Ceremony**, Museum Center, April 9, 2-4 pm  
***The Madness of Mary Lincoln***, book signing and presentation by Jason Emerson, Hedberg Public Library, April, 21, 6-8 pm  
**Easter Egg Hunt**, Tallman House Grounds, April 23, 11-2 pm  
**RCHS Annual Dinner at the Armory, *Effigy Mounds of Rock County***, Bob Birmingham, April 27, 6-8:30 pm  
**Civil War Commemoration Student Presentations**, Museum Center, May 3, 5-7 pm  
**Mother's Day Tea and Fashion Show**, Tallman House, May 7, 10-2 pm  
**Civil War Commemoration Student Presentations**, Museum Center, May 10, 5-7 pm  
**Civil War Commemoration Student Presentations**, Museum Center, May 17, 5-7 pm  
**Collectors Series: Antique Bicycles**, May 19, Museum Center, 7-8 pm  
**Grand Exits Exhibit**, Museum Center, May to November.  
**Summer Tours of Lincoln-Tallman House**, June 1-Sept. 30  
**Collectors Series: Antique Purses**, June 2, Tallman House, 7-8 pm  
**World War II Living History Display**, Tallman House, June 18, 10-4 pm  
**54<sup>th</sup> Annual Tallman Arts Festival**, Tallman House Grounds, August 7, 10-5 pm  
**Historic House Gala**, August 27, 6-8 pm  
**Historic House Tour**, Look West District, August 28  
**Oak Hill Cemetery Tour**, October 8, 1-4 pm  
**A Civil War Holiday**, November 26, 11-4 pm  
**Twilight Tours of Lincoln-Tallman House**, Museum Center, December 3, 4-7 pm  
**Holiday Tours of Lincoln-Tallman House**, November 20-December 30, 10-4 pm