

ALTAMONT SESQUICENTENNIAL



Celebrating 150
years of history

AN EFFINGHAM DAILY NEWS
PUBLICATION



**People's Choice Best Locksmith
& Best Security/Alarm Dealer**

"Locally Owned & Operated For Over 50 Years"



For All Your Security Needs...

- Fire Alarms • Security Systems**
• Bonded Locksmith • Access Controls
• Burglar • Medical • CCTV

347-9630 OR 1-800-322-7569

1107 S. Willow • Effingham • IL 62401

Hours: Mon-Fri 8AM - 4:30PM;

Closed Sat. & Sun.

**We are driven.
We are Kubota.**



RTV-X900 Utility Vehicle

- 21.6 HP* Kubota Diesel Engine
- Exclusive Variable Hydro Transmission
- Front and Rear Independent Suspension



Standard L Series Compact Tractors

- 24.8 to 47.3 HP* Kubota Diesel Engines
- Powerful Transmission Options
- High Quality, Versatile and Affordable



M6 Series Mid-Size Ag Tractors

- 104.5 to 141.4 HP* Kubota Diesel Engines
- Exclusive Bevel-Gear Front Axle for Easy Handling and Maneuverability
- Climate-Controlled, Grand X Cab with Ample Head and Legroom



BX Series Sub-Compact Tractors

- 18 to 25.5 HP* Kubota Diesel Engines
- Hydrostatic Power Steering and 4WD
- Category I 3-Point Hitch for Performance-Matched Attachments



BLUFF EQUIPMENT

— WHERE YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME —

1090 US Highway 40

Vandalia, IL 62471

Phone: (618) 283-3277



www.kubota.com

*For complete warranty, safety and product information, consult your local Kubota dealer and the product operator's manual. Power (HP/KW) and other specifications are based on various standards or recommended practices. Optional equipment may be shown.

© Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2016



THE WEDDING CATERING PROFESSIONALS

Catering to Your Tastes

When it comes to your reception dinner, you want it to be perfect. It should be delicious as well as beautifully presented. Stop worrying, and enjoy your day. We've been helping brides relax while their quests enjoy a fantastic meal for over 20 years.

- Personalized Menus
- Competitive Prices
- Famous for our gourmet carrots



Deb's Catering Service

9 Do It Drive • Altamont

Weddings, Anniversaries, Reunions, OPEN HOUSE,
Company Parties, Picnics, Hors d'oeuvre Parties

Ask for Al or Deb Schultz

618-483-3777

Congratulations, Altamont on your Sesquicentennial!



*It only took 150 years and a little technology to get
you the High Speed Fiber Internet!*



Just another reason to celebrate living in Altamont.



PAGE

6

150 years of Altamont history and counting

By Devin Walk

- 12 | The Wright family in Altamont
- 16 | The Ellis family legacy in Altamont
- 19 | Altamont Sesquicentennial celebration activities

On the cover: Members of the Altamont Sesquicentennial Committee are pictured from left, Heather Davis, Amy Rippetoe, City of Altamont Mayor Jason Rippetoe, Jess Polk, Altamont City Commissioner Tayler Polk, Shane Frederking, Carly Dorr and Lisa Dorr. Committee members not pictured are Michelle Barns, Connie Schultz and Emily Miller. Charles Mills photo

on the web

Altamont Sesquicentennial and other EDN magazines on the web:

effinghamdailynews.com/news/magazines/

Publisher

Amy Winter
amy.winter@effinghamdailynews.com

Editor

Jeff Long
jeff.long@effinghamdailynews.com

Contributing Editor

Cathy Griffith
cathy.griffith@effinghamdailynews.com

Art Director

Natalie Reidford

Contributors

Charles Mills
Devin Walk
Linda Schmidt
Dawn Schabbing

Advertising sales consultants

advertising@effinghamdailynews.com
DeeAnn Bauguss
Jody Hardiek
Julie Harkins

Contact Us

(217) 347-7151

E-mail

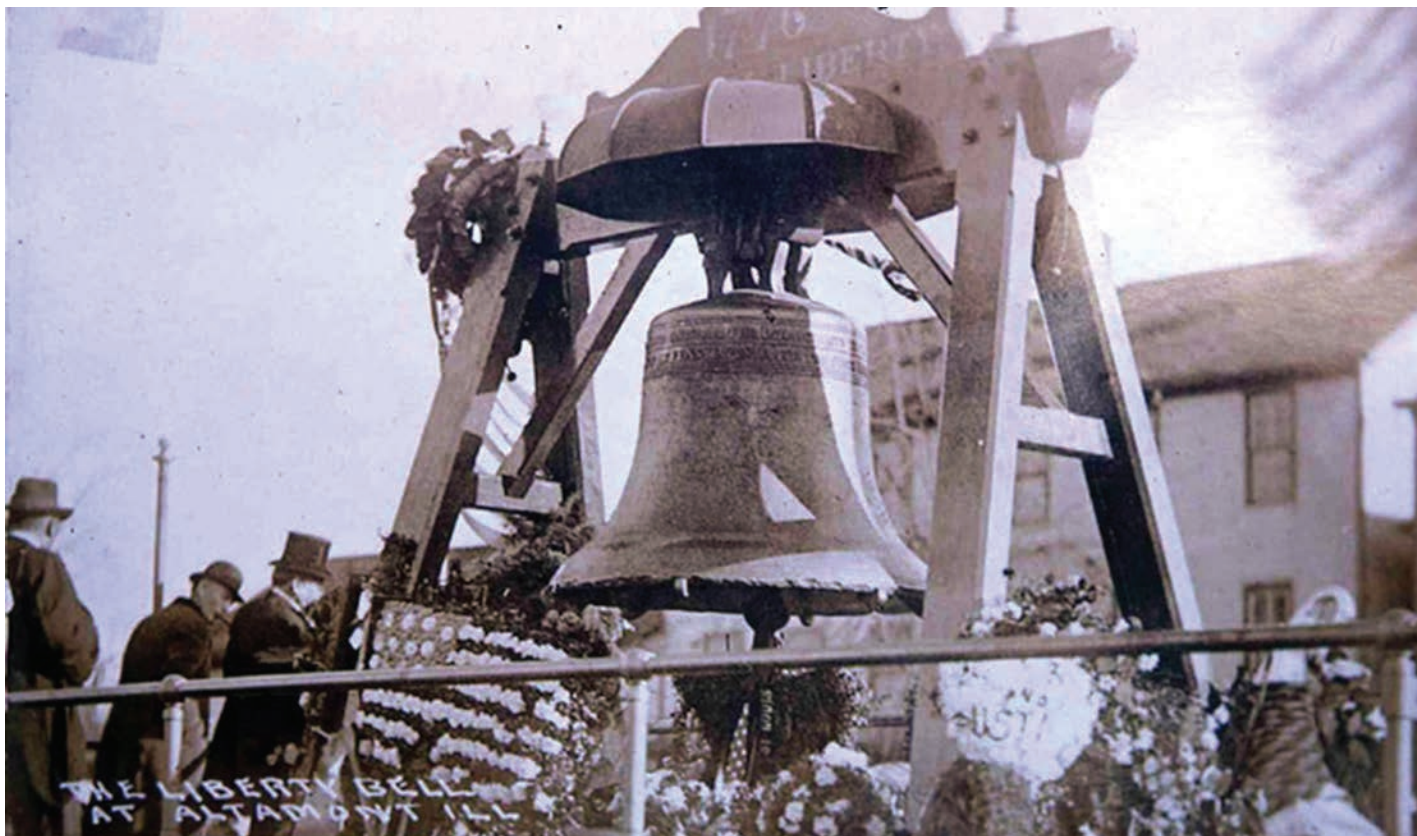
news@effinghamdailynews.com

Altamont Sesquicentennial is published by the Effingham Daily News at 201 N. Banker St., Effingham, IL 62401.
effinghamdailynews.com

Reproduction or use of editorial or graphic content in any manner without permission is prohibited. Copyright © 2021 by CNHI, LLC.

Please recycle when you're done with it!





Submitted photo

The Liberty Bell visits Altamont during a war bonds drive during WWI.

150 years of Altamont history and counting

BY DEVIN WALK

Thousands pass the Altamont exit on Interstate-70 each day.

Trains cut through the town center day and night.

Vehicles traveling from the west on Route 40 can see the mound, Altamont's namesake, towering above the houses below. Those coming from the east on Route 40 can follow the same path – the National Trail – that pioneers took to reach the area.

To the people passing through, it might seem like Altamont is just another small Midwestern town

surrounded by corn and soybean fields. They probably aren't thinking about its history.

But behind its tree lined streets, sophisticated old homes, fairgrounds, and brand new ballpark lights, sits a town celebrating 150 years of history.

Before white settlers came to the area, Effingham County consisted of woodlands, wetlands, and prairies. You can experience a taste of that landscape at the Ballard Nature Center, just east of Altamont.

In the days of the settlers, wolves hid in the shadowy

woods. Bison, up until the early 1800s, trampled prairie grass taller than a horse.

The Kickapoo tribe roamed the land, setting up camps near creeks, gathering at springs, and hunting deer. Their arrowheads and the artifacts of thousands of years of Native American habitation can be found throughout Effingham County.

GRIFFIN TIPSWORD

A man named Griffin Tipsword, who moved from North Carolina in 1815, was the first known white settler in the area. He lived and

hunted with the local tribes.

The 1883 Effingham County History book says he was a healer or even a witch doctor – which is most likely an exaggeration. It says that he stopped the Native Americans from murdering the incoming pioneers that pushed their territory farther to the west.

Around 1845, he died and was buried on the banks of Wolf Creek. His descendants are numerous, and include people living in Altamont today.

With the construction of the National Trail in the 1830s, which largely formed the path of Route 40 and ended in Vandalia, more pioneers from the east made their way to this area. The often muddy road provided a route out west for pioneers brave enough to take the journey.

It took a special kind of person to make it along the

route. It wasn't uncommon for whole families to pass away on the journey dying of a plethora of diseases, the cruel summer heat, or hypothermia from chilly winters.

The amount of unmarked graves lining the trail must be countless.

WRIGHT FAMILY

Dr. Charles Wright was one of those early, fearless pioneers.

Dr. Charles Wright III said that his grandfather handed a stage coach service all of his money and told the driver to take him as far as the money would allow.

He ended up in Effingham County.

In 1869, he moved to what would be the town of Altamont. He would eventually build the Wright House, one of Effingham County's two buildings on the National Register of Historical Places.

J.W. Conologue, superintendent of the Vandalia Railroad, platted the town of Altamont in 1870. The proposed town was set up near a prominent mound, the highest point in Effingham County. The mound's aquifers would eventually be used as an early water source for the town. An observation tower was later



Submitted photo

A pie eating contest during the Altamont centennial celebration in 1971.

built on it.

Older Altamont residents used to talk about the importance of the mound. They said storms would part over the mound, blocking the center of town from being hit by the brunt of the storms. It was this fixture that Altamont was named after. In Romantic based languages "alta" means high and "mont" means hill or mountain.

Altamont became a town in 1871. Early residents were often people looking to

restart their lives, including Civil War veterans.

Around the same time, many German families were moving to the area.

The main street was Railroad Street – modern day Adams Street. At the end of the street were the train depots. The street was filled with wooden buildings crammed together – including saloons, general stores, barbershops, a John Deere Implement store, a hotel and more.

There were no sidewalks, just warped pieces of plywood for people to walk on. The train station was the town hub. Salesmen, travelers, newspapers, shipped goods, and more filtered through the train station. (Eventually, four railroad lines went through town.)

Meanwhile, factories popped up in the area of today's ADM grain elevators. Stately homes were built by early railroad supervisors and the movers and shakers of Altamont.

Houses had stables and

outhouses and many had chickens and large gardens.

The Dr. Wright house was built in 1889. It was the first house in town with plumbing and a heating system.

FIRE

In 1905 a fire started on Railroad Street, destroying the row of wooden buildings. The town woke up in the middle of that winter night in a panic.

The whole town was about to burn down, even with the townspeople and firefighters doing their best to fan the flames.

Effingham sent a fire wagon with some manpower barreling towards Altamont on the railroad.

The fire was put out, but much of Railroad Street, the heart of town, was destroyed. Unfortunately, the majority of businesses didn't have insurance.

In the following years, much of downtown shifted south of railroad street, including the area around the



Submitted photo

Downtown Altamont in the 1920s.



Submitted photo

Downtown Altamont at the Triangle in the early 1940s.

triangle.

CHANGES

The early 20th century was a time of change for Altamont. America's involvement in WWI started in 1917. While an anti-German sentiment swept the nation, Altamont's prominent German population was mostly shielded from it, even when the U.S. government kept a close eye on the county's German American population.

The Liberty Bell passed through on a train on a war bond tour. Altamont residents, including Frank Grobengieser, fought in the trenches of Europe. He was killed in action. His name is part of the American Legion post's name.

With the rise of automobiles, the streets started being paved in the 1920s. The tied up horses in front of businesses began to be replaced by Model T's.

Route 40 was built on the ruins of the old National Trail. It became cheaper to drive than to take the train.

Telephones were installed, eventually replacing the telegraph. Edison's phonograph brought recorded music into households. Movie theaters popped up, showing silent films accompanied by a live piano play-

er. More and more students started graduating high school at the two-story brick building located at today's train park.

Street lights went up, illuminating the dark thoroughfares that had been faintly illuminated by starlight.

Prohibition hit in 1920.

Saloons closed down and some of them were replaced with pool halls. Meanwhile, yeast was flying off the shelves in grocery stores for home brewing.

Like out of a classic black-and-white heist movie, the Hogan State bank, the brick building on the corner of Second and Washington Street, was robbed in 1926. The town's sheriff, nicknamed Tattoo Bill, was locked up in his own jail by the robbers.

DEPRESSION

The stock market crashed in 1929, leading to the Great Depression which sent the country into a tailspin. Altamont's First National Bank was one of the banks that closed. Businesses went under. Residents had to rely on their garden's food.

There are even stories from older Altamont residents

about having to kill neighborhood squirrels and rabbits for food.

Feed sacks and flour bags were used for children's clothing. One business used to throw live chickens out the second story window for residents to catch.

In 1937 oil was discovered near Loudon in Fayette County, Illinois. For a short while in the 1940s, Loudon oil field produced more oil than Texas. It brought an influx of workers, especially from Oklahoma.

Workers stayed at the Altamont Hotel on Railroad Street next to the train depot. Houses were built on the northeast side of the tracks, catering to workers and their families. This was called a Carter Camp (built by the Carter Oil Company). The oil field also brought job opportunities to local residents including high

Submitted photo

The midway at the Effingham County Fairgrounds in Altamont in the 1950s.



schoolers looking for summer jobs.

WORLD WAR II

In 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and pushed the U.S. into WWII. Altamont residents fought across the world, from the deserts of North Africa to the wintry hellscape of the Battle of the Bulge to the islands of the Pacific.

The first Altamont soldier to pass away was Paul Fischer. He is the other namesake of the Altamont Legion. In all, 17 Altamont area residents were killed in WWII.

In Altamont, blackout tests were performed. Residents had to ration goods, everything from gasoline to food. They planted Victory Gardens for food and took down iron fences for scrap metal for the war effort.

One of the brave heroes from Altamont was Sgt. James Greene. Greene was given a grand welcome home in 1944. He was in the Philippines when the Japanese invaded.

The American troops were overrun and Greene was forced on the Bataan Death March, a forced 65 mile march to a POW camp. Hundreds starved or were killed by the Japanese captors on the march.

Greene survived. But when the Americans recaptured the Philippines, the Japanese evacuated the prisoners on transport ships. While in transit, Greene's transport ship was sunk by an American submarine. He was rescued by American ships.

BOOM

After WWII, there was an economic boom. The returning soldiers came back from war ready to start families, creating the generation known as Baby Boomers. Memories of the



Effingham Daily News file photo

Ron and Carolyn Peters portray Ruth and Griffin Tipsword at a tombstone dedication in rural Beecher City in 2013. Griffin Tipsword is noted historically as the first white settler of Effingham County.

Great Depression faded.

In 1945, Altamont had its first Effingham County Fair at the location of a previous fairgrounds which ran the Altamont Agricultural Fair in the early part of the century. People throughout the county flocked to the fair to watch the horse races, enjoy live music, view the livestock, and see the newest models of washing machines, cars, tractors, and more.

The high school moved from the train park in 1954 to a new location east, and at

that time, outside of town. The empty fields surrounding the modern, brick building would soon be filled with new housing developments.

In downtown Altamont, band concerts were held on the Triangle every weekend. Kids would go to Bohlander's Pharmacy for candy and to try out the soda fountains. Teenagers would take out their family cars and cruise down Main Street. Ranch style homes popped up across town. Many of the old, wooden buildings were torn down to make room for modern

ones, including the massive general store, Milleville Stettbacher, across from the north side of the Triangle.

1960s

Then the 1960s happened. The mop topped Beatles played on the Ed Sullivan show, bringing their hairstyle to teenagers across America. Teenagers started driving muscle cars.

Altamont residents were drafted into the army for the Vietnam War.

A festival in 1966 celebrating Altamont's German

Congratulations Altamont on 150 Years!



**AFFORDABLE
HOME IMPROVEMENTS**



&

THE GUTTER GUYS, INC.

**Additions • Roofing • Siding • Remodeling
All Your Construction Needs**

(217) 347-0235

**STEVE GILLUM
PRESIDENT**

**701 WEST CLARK
EFFINGHAM, IL 62401**

heritage was started by a group of residents. It became an annual festival with trap shooting, polka music, and German food called Schuetzenfest.

The interstate came through, south of town, eventually bringing in revenue from travelers to the new Stuckey's gas station, and restaurants like the Carriage Inn and the Dutch Pantry, all built around the interstate exit.

CENTENNIAL

In 1971, Altamont celebrated its Centennial. The men grew out their beards and the women wore old-style dresses.

Events like tire racing, pie eating contests, and dunking tanks kept the kids entertained.

Many other events took place throughout that year. It also gave Altamont time

to reflect on its history. A special Centennial book was written on Altamont, which included the history of different businesses, stories from early Altamont residents, the history of the churches, and more.

Dr. Charles Wright II opened up the Wright House for a tour. The eldest residents were interviewed. Even the tallest woman in America at the time came to visit with the local pants and glove factory making her a special dress.

As the 70s went on, the train depot closed. Schuetzenfest grew to crowds of over 60,000 people. America celebrated its bicentennial.

1980s AND '90s

In the 1980s, Altamont reached its highest population count of 2,389. More of its downtown buildings were demolished. Businesses

continued to pop-up near the interstate. Altamont's subdivisions like East Meadows and Town and Country, continued to grow.

By the 1990s, with Walmart and K-Mart in Effingham, many local businesses had a hard time competing.

Frog Pond Nursery School opened, providing pre-k education to local children.

In 1996, Altamont had its 125th anniversary. People started to get dial-up internet in their homes. (Little did they know how much the internet would change the world.)

Altamont also got its first fast food restaurant, McDonald's.

In the late '90s, Ernie Ballard donated 210 acres of land to become Ballard Nature Center east of town.

TODAY AND TOMORROW

Today, Altamont stands as

a fine, tightly-knit community with some of the best schools in the area. Many of the businesses have moved south of the interstate.

Altamont's iconic Dairy Bar has closed, but other restaurants serving great food including the Open Door Diner, Joe's Pizza, El Rancherito, and more are open.

Also, unlike most small towns these days, Altamont still has a hometown grocery store serving the area, which became vital during the COVID-19 shutdown.

With the internet, many Altamont residents are able to work from home and some residents run their businesses entirely off the internet.

Who knows what Altamont will be like in another 25 years for its 175th anniversary or 50 years for its bicentennial?

Only time will tell.

Happy 150th Altamont!

**THE FIRST
NATIONAL BANK
OF BROWNSTOWN**

618-427-3363

Main St. Brownstown, IL

www.fnbbrowns town.com



FDIC

Beecher City Foodliner

\$5 off

on 25lb. Ground Beef Bundle

exp. 7/30/2021

Beecher City, IL • Ph. (618) 487-5239

"For All Your Shopping Needs"

M-F: 7:30am - 8:00pm • Sat: 7:30am-6:00pm • Sun: 9:00am - 5:00pm

The Effingham County Museum

110 E. Jefferson Ave, Effingham, Illinois 62401 • Phone: 217.240.2471

Hours: Tuesday and Saturday 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Showcases the Rich Heritage of ALTAMONT:

Such as Transportation History

Such as Civil War Veterans

Such as Local Businesses



**EACH COMMUNITY WITHIN THE COUNTY HAS MADE UNIQUE
CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR HISTORY!
CELEBRATE ALTAMONT'S 150 YEARS!
VISIT www.effinghamcountymuseum.org**

Congratulations on your 150th Altamont



**HEIDANES
HIDDEN TIMBERS**

Boarding & Grooming
5614 E. 825th Ave., Altamont, IL 62411

(618)483-5179

(618) 483-DOGS Fax

Check us out on Facebook!



Your Happy Pet's Home Away From Home



**Doctor's Orders
And So
Much More**

Have your prescription filled by
our qualified, caring pharmacists
and fill your basket with other
personal essentials, too.

Phone: (618)483-5614

ALTAMONT PHARMACY
12 N. Third, Altamont, Illinois

Roger's

HOME APPLIANCES




**FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED
SINCE 2002!**

618-483-5955
115 NORTH MAIN STREET • ALTAMONT, IL 62401
217-342-3461
400 NORTH KELLER DRIVE • EFFINGHAM, IL 62401
<http://www.rogersaltamont.com/>

150 YEARS


ALTAMONT

CONGRATULATIONS!


MONTROSE

**MO CD McDEVITT OSTEEN
CHOJNICKI & DETERS, LLC**
ATTORNEYS AT LAW


127 West Jefferson Avenue • P.O. Box 507 • Effingham, IL 62401
Telephone: (217) 342-8060 • Fax: (217) 342-8066
200 North Main Street • Altamont, IL 62411 • Telephone: (618) 483-6333




David
McDevitt




Kirsten
Osteen




Chad
Chojnicki




Ed
Deters



Dale
Wolff



Bill
Austin



Sophie
Kabbes

P.O. Box 1341
15878 North 1400th St
Effingham, IL 62401
217.342.0240



UTZ+Associates Architects P.C.



ARCHITECTURAL
DESIGN

ARCHITECTURAL
VISUALIZATION

INTERIOR
DESIGN

CONSULTING

<https://www.utzarchitects.com/>



Submitted photo

Dr. Charles Wright Mansion in Altamont as it appears today. The home, built in 1889, housed three generations of the Wright family.

The Wright family in Altamont

BY LINDA SCHMIDT

Dr. Charles M. Wright moved his family to the village of Altamont in 1870. The next year Altamont was organized as a town and Dr. Wright built the two story Wright Building at the corner of N. Main and W. Jefferson. The first floor was his medical office and the second floor was the Wright Opera House. In 1878 he stopped practicing medicine after 19 years and started the C.M. Wright & Co. bank in the Wright Building. He continued the bank until 1893 and he died in 1895.

The first floor of the building was used by Dr. Wright's son, the second Dr. Charles M. Wright, as his medical office from 1902 until his retirement from practice 65 years later.

The building was torn down in 1971 and many items from office were taken to the Dr. Wright Home and are displayed in one of the rooms in the Dr. C. M. Wright House Museum, located on N. Main St. and W. Jackson Ave. in Altamont.

DR. CHARLES M. WRIGHT I, 1834-1898

Charles I was born in Ohio. In 1857 he received his medical degree in Philadelphia and had just enough money

to travel by stagecoach on the National Road as far as Ewington, Illinois, the county seat of Effingham County.

After one year of practicing medicine with Dr. LeCrone, he moved west to Freemanton, a village on the National Road, where he practiced medicine in his home for 10 years. Much of the doctor's time was spent on horseback visiting patients throughout the mostly-prairie countryside around Freemanton. Two of the doctor's daybooks contain entries in his own hand of the patients whom he served from October 1862 through October 1865. The families represented by the 600 names in those daybooks comprise what must have been a considerable portion of the relatively sparse population of the westerly part of the county and quite a few of those families remain in the area – Beccue, Burrow, Klitzing, Yagow, Petzing, Siddens, and Hoffmeister.

In 1870 Dr. Wright moved to Altamont. In 1871 he purchased five acres plus two lots in the new town of Altamont. On the two lots along the railroad tracks, he built a two-story square frame building in which he had, first, his medical office and, then, his bank, C. M. Wright & Co., a private bank having a capital of \$100,000, which he established in 1878. The building's second floor was a hall with a stage in its east end, which was known as the Wright Opera House and accommodated many of Altamont's civic, school and other gatherings.

In 1874 he built a home, barns, and outbuildings on 27 acres on the north

Submitted photo

Built in 1889, the Dr. Charles M. Wright House was home to three generations.





Submitted photo

Dr. Charles M. Wright.



Submitted photo

Dr. Charles M. Wright, II.



Submitted photo

Attorney Charles M. Wright, III, J.D.

edge of Altamont. In 1889 that home was moved across the street (605 N. Main St.) and a new brick home was built at 3 W. Jackson Avenue. The 18-room structure was home to the three Charles M. Wrights

and since 2003 has been a house museum. The home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

DR. CHARLES M. WRIGHT II, 1879-1970

After attending the Altamont Public Schools, Charles took two years of pre-medical work at Austin College in Effingham, and graduated in 1902 from the School of Medicine of Washington University in St. Louis. In that same year he opened his office in the building on North Main Street immediately north of the Penn Central (Vandalia) Railroad crossing, where he engaged in the practice of medicine until the spring of 1964, when a serious illness compelled him to retire.

Over the long course of those years, spanning the eras of the horse-and-buggy, the Model T and the Model A, he ministered tirelessly to the people of the community; and when, at the age of 70, he resigned the responsibility of obstetrical work, he had delivered over 1,000 babies in three generations.

For 53 years Dr. Wright had the companionship of his late wife, the former Ella May Hobbs of Oneida, Ill., whom he wed in 1907. The couple had one son, Charles M. Wright III, (1912-2001) who was an attorney.

During the most active years of his professional life, the doctor always found time for other service toward the betterment of the community. He was, for many years, health commissioner of Altamont; a member of the public school boards, including the first board of the Altamont Community High School; and an elder of the Presbyterian Church. The Wright family donated one of the stained glass windows in that church, currently the Altamont Living Museum. In 1962 the Altamont Cham-

ber of Commerce recognized Dr. Wright for more than sixty years as a doctor, friend, advisor, and scholar.

DR. CHARLES M. WRIGHT HOUSE MUSEUM

3 W. JACKSON AVE.,
ALTAMONT, IL

The third Charles M. Wright was an attorney for the Shell Oil Company from 1937-1977. Upon retirement he returned to his family home. He died in 2001 leaving the

Wright home and five acres in a trust to be preserved and maintained. The Wright House Property Trust is funded by trust investment income, donations, fundraisers, and tours.

The home remains as when the third Charles Wright lived there. He considered himself a lifelong student and most of the 7,000 books belonged to him. The oak furniture in the hired girl's room was manufactured in 1907 in the Hilleman Furniture Factory located in



Submitted photo

Furniture brought to the Dr. Charles M. Wright House in 1971 for exhibit from the office of Charles M. Wright, II that was located in downtown Altamont.

Congratulations Altamont!

**On Your
150th
Anniversary
Celebration!**

Burkland's Florist & Gifts
 311 Rinehart • Effingham
 217-342-4184 • effinghamflowers.com



Submitted photo

Director of Tours for the Dr. Wright House, Linda Schmidt, is pictured in a room of the Dr. Charles M. Wright House that features furniture crafted in Altamont by the Hillemann Furniture Factory.

Altamont.

The Dr. Charles M. House Museum opened for tours in 2003. Volunteer guides lead guests through the 18 rooms telling about the Wright

family and their home. Currently the museum is open 2 to 4 p.m. on Sundays from May to September, except on holidays. To schedule group tours on other days contact www.wrightman-

[sion.org](http://www.wrightman-sion.org) or Facebook or 618-483-6397. Admission is currently \$5 for adults and \$1 for students.

On Saturday, Sept. 18, 2021 the annual Wine and Music on the Lawn Fundraiser will feature wine and craft beer

tasting, food vendors, and live music plus tours of the house. Many community volunteers donate countless hours ensuring the success of the fundraisers.

Submitted photo

Mabel Wright, left, and her brother, Charles M. Wright II, stand in front of an office building at the corner of North Main Street and West Jefferson his father built in 1871, the year Altamont was organized.



**CONGRATULATIONS ON 150
Altamont YEARS!!**



**ORCHARD INN TAVERN
& PACKAGE LIQUOR**

"Come As A Customer, Leave As A Friend!"

Open 7 days a week including Holidays 7am-1am

- Video Gaming • Drive-up Window
- Live Music • Food Available

Visit our facebook page:

www.facebook.com/theOrchardInnEffingham/

800 N. 3rd St. Effingham, IL 62401

217.342.9025

Congratulations
on
150
years

First Mid
BANK & TRUST

BANKING | WEALTH MANAGEMENT | INSURANCE

Find us in these communities:

Effingham • 902 N. Keller Dr. • 217-342-6111

Altamont • 101 W. Washington • 618-483-5151

Neoga • 102 E. Sixth St. • 217-844-3000

Member
FDIC

firstmid.com

**New Location
Same Excellent Care**



SBL Altamont Medical Center
8 North Third Street

Welcoming New Patients

Please call **618-483-6151**
for an appointment.

 **Sarah Bush
Lincoln**
Trusted Compassionate Care

LEISURE TIMES

**Congratulations
To Our Friends in
Altamont and
Montrose on
150 YEARS!**

217.347.0777 LEISURETIMESFUN.COM
f @ 1205 W. JEFFERSON AVE. EFFINGHAM
POOLS • SPAS • FIREPLACES • GRILLS • BILLIARDS • PATIO

BK

RESOURCES

SOLID QUALITY. SOLID SERVICE.



**STAINLESS STEEL FOOD SERVICE
& PLUMBING EQUIPMENT**



**LET'S CELEBRATE
THE SESQUICENTENNIAL!**

BK-RESOURCES.COM | 120 Frontage Road • Altamont, IL





William Albert Ellis family.

Submitted photo

The Ellis family legacy in Altamont

BY DAWN SCHABING
EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS STORY
ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN
THE EFFINGHAM DAILY NEWS
ON OCT. 31, 2016.

Ellis descendants Wilma Ellis Kazemzadeh, Marian Irving Jones and Ronald Ballinger were among those who returned to their roots in Effingham County for the unveiling of a new display featuring a family that left an indelible mark on Altamont.

Credited for their values, including faith, family and hard work, the Ellises were a Black family who arrived in Altamont in 1873, historians say. Many of the men in the family were barbers in the all-white community.

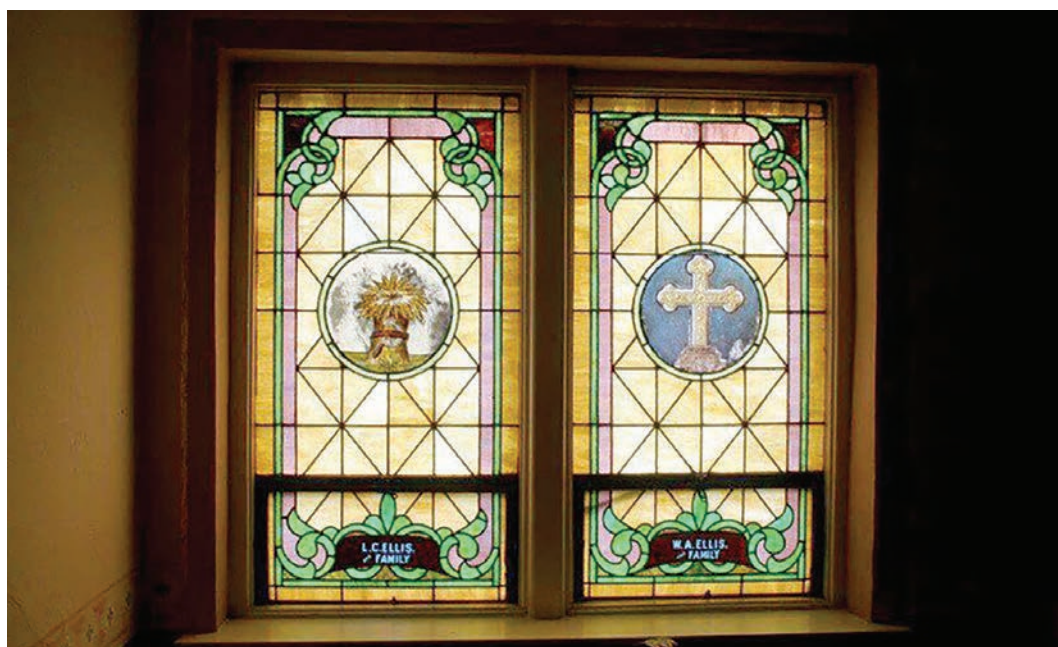
The pictorial display is a story of the first black families in Altamont between 1873 and 1933, titled "Altamont Residents and Barbers."

One barber, Charles Everett Ellis, left Altamont in 1933 just as quietly as his father, Levi, and uncle William had arrived in 1873, said Lila Bowers, a local genealogist. She and Cecile Broeren have written articles about the family for The Effingham County Museum.

"That 60 years had a tremendous effect on Altamont that would prove difficult to replace — racial diversity," Bowers wrote in an article for the Effingham Daily News published July 18, 2016.

A diary Charles Ellis kept was discovered and made into a documentary, called "The Barber's Diaries." He penned six volumes of material spanning some 47 years of his life, his learnings and his observations — from the Altamont weather, to people, to war, and many other things.

In all, there were 2,560 pages of entries. He started writing in 1927 and con-



Altamont Methodist Church stained-glass windows.

Submitted photo

cluded at his death in 1974, Kazemzadeh said.

Kazemzadeh, 87, was the last Ellis born in Altamont to Charles and Sadie Ellis. She went on to earn her doctorate degree and now resides in Rancho Cucamonga, California.

Kazemzadeh worked as a college administrator at Stanford University. She also was vice president of Spelman College in Atlanta and administrator general of the Baha'i International Community United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva, Switzerland, Bowers said.

She and her sister, Adrienne Ellis Reeves, 97, who also holds a doctorate, are the only remaining children of Charles Ellis still living. Reeves has authored 11 books all about black family life.

After outlining the successful careers of all of her six siblings, Kazemzadeh said their successes were in part credited to their upbringing in Altamont. Their family moved when she was a toddler in order for her father to find work during the Great Depression.

"It all started in Altamont, Illinois," said Kazemzadeh. "I feel indebted to Altamont. I feel indebted because you did not treat my people in a way that made them feel anxious, frightened or depressed. I owe something to Altamont."

Education was a top priority to the Ellises. Each male would teach barbering skills to the next one. Many went on to higher education, achieving things not typically open to a Black man or woman in those days.

"To me, Altamont was a fantasy, because I heard all about it, but I was only 2 when we left," she said. "I think what you are doing (keeping history alive) is very, very important."



Dawn Schabbing photo

Family members of the Ellis Family pose with a display unveiled in 2016 at The Effingham County Museum. Shown from left are Paula Henderson; Shirley Ballinger; Marian Irving Jones, seated; Wilma Ellis Kazemzadeh; and Ron Ballinger.

Kazemzadeh explained how sometimes African-American people are perceived inaccurately.

"People think that if you are Black, you have no money and are poorly educated — or you can be like the Cosby family," said Kazemzadeh. "But, they don't know that in little towns all over this country there are families like the Ellises."

Jones, 75, of Chicago, said her mother was born in Altamont and she has relatives who attended the University of Illinois. Her roots derive from the William Ellis family, while Kazemzadeh descended from the Levi Ellis family.

"My mother talked a lot about what life was like in Altamont," said Jones. "She talked about how the neighbors embraced them. It was wonderful to hear."

Jones worked for Random House Publishers and had

Congratulations Altamont on your 150th
Call 618-881-0094



carriagehousewedding@gmail.com

Russell and Janet Ramsey,
The General Manager is Matt Ramsey

COBBLESTONE
INN & SUITES

Altamont, IL | 618-483-3111

NEW LOCATION, SAME PATIENT- FIRST CARE!



Robert Frost, MD
Family Medicine
Obstetrics

Kathi Vaughn, APRN
Tammy Sasse, APRN
Family Medicine



Beginning July 12, we will see patients at our new location:



5 E. Cumberland Rd.
Altamont, IL 62411



HSHS Medical Group

For an appointment,
please call 618-483-6131.



Submitted photo

Ellis graves at Altamont.

also worked as an early childhood educator in Chicago, she said.

"There's a long tradition of education on both sides of my family," she said.

Jones said she learned in 2010 that Levi and William Ellis' grandfather, John Ellis, served in the 10th Regiment of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. She had researched the original documents stored at the National Archives related to John Ellis and his children.

"That was the Army of George Washington," Jones said.

Jones credited genealogists and historians in Altamont for the massive amounts of research that has been shared with the family in the process of making "The Barber's Diaries."

"We have had the Ellis family so embraced by Altamont that we have such good memories of our home," she said.

Alvin Oliver of Altamont, who helped with the research, said he knew of the Ellis family who attended the Altamont Method-

ist Church, where there are two beautiful stained-glass windows named after the family.

"They had total dedication to that church," said Oliver. "When times got tough, Charles Ellis lived in the back of the barbershop. At one point, Altamont had six barbers."

He said the Ellis family never had a car. During the economic downturn, Charles Ellis sent his family to live in Alton with family members, while he lived in the back of his barbershop being available nearly day and night to get as many customers as he could.

"Eventually, he hitchhiked to Arizona and sent for his family," said Oliver.

Delaine Donaldson, president of The Effingham County Museum, said the Altamont family display has a unique story and is a big part of local history. He wants the family display to expand.

"It's a very special story," said Donaldson.

Altamont Sesquicentennial Celebration Activities

All events are subject to change.

Thursday, Sept. 2

DOWNTOWN ALTAMONT

- 6 p.m. — Ice cream social, pork burgers, DJ at the Triangle and exhibit hall opens.



Effingham Daily News photo
Lynn Biehl added color to the festivities of the parade with his eye catching stunts and dress during the Altamont Centennial parade.



Charles Mills photo
Devin Walk and his grandfather Bill Wendling search through Wendling's collection of Altamont history.

- Announcement of Altamont's oldest citizen.
- Time Capsule burial.

Friday, Sept. 3

SCHMIDT PARK

- 5 p.m. — Food trucks and beer tent opens and Lady Cluck Bingo.

- 6 p.m. — Mr. Altamont Pageant
- 7 p.m. — Pie Eating Contest
- 8 p.m. to midnight — Backroad Boogie band performs

Saturday, Sept. 4

DOWNTOWN ALTAMONT

- 7 a.m. — 5K Walk/Run Registration — Altamont Community High School
- 8 a.m. — Altamont Sesquicentennial 5K Walk/Run starts ACHS
- 9 a.m. — Parade Registration — Altamont Community High

Optimal Performance Starts Here

We Repair:

- Transmissions
- Heat & A/C
- Engines
- Muffler & Exhaust
- Oil Lube & Filter

We Sell & Repair Tires

EFFINGHAM AUTO



Marlin Alwardt
(217) 240-3441

Effauto@mediacomb.net
effingautorepair.com

Kevin Clayton
(217) 240-0188

2300 Hoffman Drive
Effingham, IL 62401
Behind Village Square Mall
P (217) 347-0311 | F (217) 347-0328

CELEBRATING OVER 36 YEARS IN BUSINESS

*Late Model Used Cars & Trucks For Sale
We Repair All Makes And Models*

Congratulations Altamont on your 150th!



610 E. Cumberland • Altamont • 618-483-6157

School

- 10 a.m. – Altamont Sesquicentennial Parade starts from ACHS
- 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. — Tractor and Car Show around the Triangle
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Cake Walk
- Noon — Lunch Available for Purchase
- 1 p.m. – Pedal Tractor Pull
- 2 p.m. – Recliner Races begin



Effingham Daily News photo

SCHMIDT PARK

- 4 p.m. — Food trucks and beer tent opens
- 4 p.m. — Inflatables and other activities for kids.
- 5 to 8 p.m. — Mustang Sally performs
- 9 p.m. to midnight — Josh Holland Band performs

Stuckey's Pecan Shop that was located where Jack Flash is today as it looked in 1962.

**Sunday, Sept.
5**

SCHMIDT PARK

- 9 a.m. – Community Church Service
- Noon — Food trucks and beer tent open, several activities throughout the day, Bags Tournament, Volleyball Tournament, Inflatables, Mechanical

Bull, Dunk Tank and Old-Time Games.

- 4 p.m. – Beard Judging and Pigtail Contest
- 5 to 8 p.m. – Surviving Members performs
- 9 p.m. to midnight – Superbad performs

Effingham Daily News photo

Kathy Camp is secretary of the Altamont Centennial headquarters in 1971.



THAT'S QUITE A MILESTONE!

1871 **150 YEARS** **2021**
ALTAMONT

We are glad you are part of our community.



Located in Effingham & Mattoon
www.washingtonsavings.net

Washington
Savings Bank