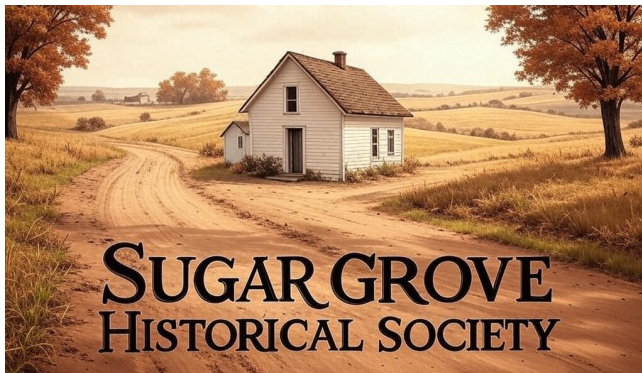


# SUGAR GROVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

259 MAIN STREET, SUGAR GROVE

P.O. Box 102, Sugar Grove, IL 60554

PH (815) 218-4094



The new Sugar Grove Historical Society website is now live, thanks to our skilled tech professional, Frank Sarnelli.

Website: [sugargrovehistory.org](http://sugargrovehistory.org)

If you click "Museum" on the menu, you can access our photo archival databank or access the archival collection at: [museum.sugargrovehistory.org](http://museum.sugargrovehistory.org)



Joan Perrin  
1935-2025

It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we at the Sugar Grove Historical Society say goodbye to our dear friend and longtime colleague, Joan Perrin.

Joan was a devoted and generous supporter of the Society, always willing to lend a hand. She spent countless hours clipping articles, filing, researching, and sharing ideas. Her contributions were not only practical, but they added meaning and depth to the work we share at the SGHS.

Joan was born and raised in Michigan, but made Sugar Grove her home in 1964. She had three children-Don, Dana, and Dale-who continue to live in Illinois. Her love for family, history, and community was evident in all she did. We are grateful for the time we had with her and will carry her memory with us always.

## Don't forget to renew your membership!

## Officers and Board

### President

Dennis Panagopoulos  
(815) 218-4094

### Vice President

Dave Frantz  
(630) 999-3620

### Treasurer

Lori McCaffrey  
(630) 881-4426

### Recording Secretary

Karen Elifson

### Historian

Rick Johnson  
Clif Frantz

### Advisory Board

To be determined

### Next QUARTERLY Board Meeting:

July 15 2025

The Sugar Grove  
Historical Society  
Newsletter is published  
quarterly. Society  
members receive the  
newsletter as part of  
their membership.

Educational Director/Editor:  
Janie Panagopoulos  
pandex1600@aol.com ©

## From the President's Desk

Dear Friends and Members of the Sugar Grove Historical Society,

I'm writing this message on July 10, so happy belated Fourth of July! I hope this note finds you well and that you're enjoying summer, even with the recent heat wave we've all been enduring.

With our newsletter issued quarterly, I have only a few opportunities to update you on the latest happenings at 259 S. Main Street and to express my sincere appreciation for our dedicated volunteers. Their hard work keeps us moving forward and allows us to continually improve the services we offer our community.

In April, we approved several new improvements designed to enhance the entryway exhibit area. We've recently met with two local electricians to collect bids for updated interior lighting that will offer both improved visibility and a refreshed look. We're also exploring the addition of an exterior light to illuminate the Bliss House sign during the evening hours.

As the main entryway is our only exhibit space at the Bliss House, a key part of this project is to make better use of the wall space to feature meaningful historical references to Sugar Grove. We hope to complete these—and other improvements by early fall.

In June, the Sugar Grove Township coordinated the replacement of the Bliss House roof. The previous roof, which had served us and the other two businesses located here for 25 years, sustained hail damage two decades ago; it was well overdue for replacement. A special thank-you to Tom Rowe, Township Supervisor, and our community for supporting the preservation and outdoor upkeep of the Bliss House.

Lastly, it is with a heavy heart that we share the passing of our dear friend and longtime colleague, **Joan Perrin**. Joan was a dedicated presence at the Society for over 20 years, serving in many roles throughout her time with us. She will be deeply missed.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, and as always, thank you for your continued support of the Sugar Grove Historical Society!

Warm regards,  
*Dennis Panagopoulos*  
President



The Sugar Grove Historical Society is undergoing several exciting updates to enhance its community offerings and improve access to local history. In March, the Board approved the use of membership and quilt raffle funds to support outreach and facility improvements.

As a part of this effort, the Society has launched a new website that features our newsletter, event details, educational videos, interactive quizzes, and an online store for merchandise and membership renewals.

Inside improvements include a reorganized document and research area with new shelving and labeled archival boxes, a dedicated research table, and updates to the exhibit room featuring a new layout. Additionally, a video area is available for viewing "The Many Lives of the Bliss House," along with themed educational displays that will be coming soon.

These efforts reflect the Society's continued commitment to preserving and sharing Sugar Grove's history as a resource for the entire community.

Come visit, and bring your questions. We will try hard to help you have a better understanding of our Sugar Grove history. We are also always on the lookout for individuals interested in volunteering.

Website: [sugargrovehistory.org](http://sugargrovehistory.org)

Photo archival collection:  
[museum.sugargrovehistory.org](http://museum.sugargrovehistory.org)

## Thank you!

### Donations

Elisheva E. Dulitz

Judy Gould

Kathy Walz

Jeff & Judy Willour

Rachel Rockwell, who, yesterday, July 10th, gifted us with a surprise find from the Plaid Umbrella Collective in Plano.

### In Honor

Jack Shouba, in honor of Dave and Clif Frantz

### In Memory of Joan Perrin

Family of Joan Perrin

LuEllen Dunlap

Ruth Frantz

Rick & Becky Johnson

Virginia Marshall

Lori & Bob McCaffrey

Dennis & Janie Panagopoulos

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP.**

**Sugar Grove Historical Society will be open  
Saturday, July 26 (Corn Boil weekend) from 10:00-2:00.  
Stop by, enjoy the AC, have a cookie and cold drink, and  
watch the *Many Lives of the Bliss House*.**

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J.L. Panagopoulos

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### FRANK HAVEN HALL 1841-1911

Of the many notable people who have called Sugar Grove, Illinois, home, few are as fascinating as Frank Haven Hall.

Born February 9, 1841, in Mechanic Falls, Maine, Hall served in the Civil War as a hospital steward with the Union Army's 23rd Maine Volunteers. Afterward, he attended Bates College in 1863-64. Upon graduating, he taught at Bates College for one year. He met his soon-to-be wife, Sybil Norton, in Maine. They married in LaSalle, Illinois, in 1866, where he continued his career in Earlville.

Afterwards, the couple moved to Aurora for seven years, and there they started their family of three children before settling in Sugar Grove. Hall, who was principal, was known as "Professor" of the Normal and Industrial School, established in 1875. While leading the school, Hall also took on numerous odd jobs around the community and later served as township treasurer and clerk.

Hall led the Sugar Grove Normal and Industrial School for twelve years. It was a combination of hands-on and academic training. Hall challenged the "rote" memorization method of education and began lecturing at teachers' institutes nationwide, promoting hands-on progressive education.

His success in education led to leadership roles in Petersburg, Jacksonville, Waukegon, and Milwaukee and he authored a number of mathematics textbooks.

By 1890, Hall had become Superintendent of the Illinois School for the Blind in Jacksonville, Illinois, despite having no prior experience in the field. To prepare, he visited several East Coast schools for the Blind and became convinced blind students also need vocational and experiential learning.

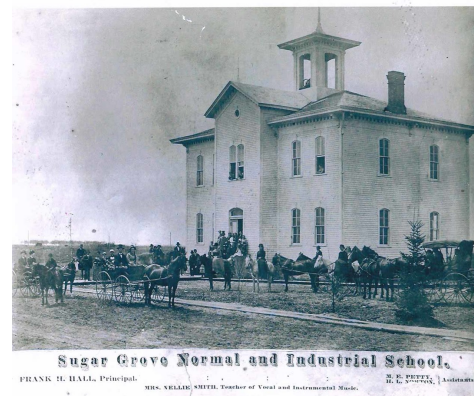
Losing his position due to political interruption, Hall in 1893 became Superintendent of a Waukegan school, but continued his interest and studies in the needs of the blind. By 1897, he returned to the School of the Blind, where he remained until 1902. During this time, Hall successfully persuaded Chicago school administrators to launch the first public day school for blind students, offering an alternative to segregated boarding schools and institutionalization.

Hall's most enduring legacy came through innovation. As Superintendent, he invented the **Hall Braille Writer**, 1892, modeled after contemporary typewriters. At the time, Braille was rarely taught because existing writing tools were bulky, confusing, and hard to use. Hall's machine changed that. Produced by Harrison & Seifried of Chicago, it cost \$10.00 to manufacture and was sold for \$11.00. It spread worldwide, with units found as far away as Australia and China. Thanks to his invention, Braille became the dominant written language for the blind. Remarkably, Hall never patented the Braille Writer—believing that profiting from the blind would undermine his mission.

He went on to invent several more tools, including a **stereotyper** used to produce Braille printing plates, and he co-invented the **stereotypewriter**, which made type copies faster and cheaper. He even created a **milk-skimming machine**.

In 1893, Hall met Helen Keller at the Chicago World's Fair, where she famously hugged and kissed him in gratitude—a gesture that reportedly stunned onlookers.

Frank Haven Hall was more than an educator or inventor—he was a tireless advocate for inclusion and innovation. His years in Sugar Grove laid the foundation for a lifetime of groundbreaking work that changed the world for generations of the blind. He died in Aurora 1911 of lung cancer.



Frank H. Hall, in the early 1870s, served as Superintendent of the West Aurora Schools. He was invited by Sugar Grove leaders—Judd, Chapman, Reynolds, Benjamin, and Gillette to lead a new Normal and Industrial school that combined academic and industrial/agricultural education. Hall agreed, with a salary of \$500 per year. Hall remained in Sugar Grove for twelve years.

On May 28, 1875, a picnic at Judd's farm drew 1,000 people to discuss the school. After Hall's speech, \$2,200 was raised in 15 minutes; later donations and taxes increased the fund to \$4,500. Judd donated the land, and the Sugar Grove Normal and Industrial School opened that fall, with approximately 100 students, including 25 from the local area.

The curriculum included Latin, mathematics, history, grammar, agricultural science, literature, and music. A teaching certificate was awarded upon graduation.



### Quilt Raffle Tickets

This year's quilt, made by Vickie Frantz, will be raffled off as our yearly fundraiser. The quilt is 84" wide by 94" long will fit beautifully on a "Full" size bed. The quilt features a stained glass design with a unique back quilting.

Raffle Tickets for this quilt may be purchased on our website at: [sugargrovehistory.org](http://sugargrovehistory.org), or at the Sugar Grove Historical Society, 259 Main St., Sugar Grove, 60554. Tickets are \$5 for one or \$20 for five. Don't need a quilt? Consider buying a ticket for a loved one and gift the quilt if you win. The raffle will be held in December 2025, just in time for a great Christmas gift!

**Sugar Grove Historical Society will be open Saturday, July 26, during Corn Boil weekend from 10:00-2:00. We invite you to stop by and enjoy the air conditioning, indulge in a cookie or two, and sip on a cold drink. Additionally, you can watch the film *"The Many Lives of the Bliss House," which documents the 1997 relocation of the Bliss House from Bliss Road to Main Street.***

## SUGAR GROVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### MEMBERSHIP

Individual Membership.....\$15.00

Family Membership.....\$20.00

Business/Organization.....\$30.00

Supporting.....\$50.00

Individual/Family Life Member...\$225.00

Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you interested in Email Newsletter?    Yes    No**

**Mail check to Sugar Grove Historical Society, PO Box 102, Sugar Grove, IL 60554**

The story of the Hall Braille Writer begins in 1890, when Frank Hall, the forward-thinking Superintendent of the Illinois School for the Blind, envisioned a more efficient way for blind students to write. He teamed up with Gustave Seiber, a talented local gunsmith and machinist, who built the first prototype. Recognizing its potential, Hall brought the device to the Munson Typewriter Company in Chicago. There, Superintendent T.B. Harrison and designer Samuel J. Seifried refined the concept, producing six working models. These were delivered to Hall on May 27, 1892, marking a significant milestone in the development of accessible technology.

Inspired by the Braillewriter's promise, Harrison and Seifried soon left Munson to devote themselves fully to its manufacture. Their efforts expanded to include the Hall Stereotyper and eventually a tactile mapmaking machine, tools that broadened access to information for the blind. When their partnership came to an end, Seifried continued the work on his own until his death in 1912.

The legacy was picked up by the Cooper Manufacturing Company. In 1921, businessman M.B. Skinner acquired Cooper and oversaw a redesign of the Hall Braille Writer. The improved model remained in production until around 1930, when Cooper sold the design to the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB). AFB assembled a few final machines from remaining parts, even as they were already working on the next chapter in braille technology—their own innovation, the Foundation Writer.

The first “Braille” writing code (1824) was invented and named after its inventor, Louis Braille, a Frenchman who lost his sight after a childhood accident. At fifteen, he invented the Braille code in the French language, based on the French military codes using dots and spaces.



We were recently gifted with a second Hall Braille Typewriter from **Elisheva E. Dulitz**, from California, whose grandmother, **Joan Dulitz**, was a teacher from New York who was the youngest braille transcriber certified by the Library of Congress, and a teacher to the blind. Dulitz once met Helen Keller, whose quote 'The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or heard—they must be felt with the heart,' inspired Dulitz's and her work with the blind. We at Sugar Grove Historical Society are honored by the gift.

**SUGAR GROVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**P.O. BOX 102**

**SUGAR GROVE, IL 60554**