

# Historic Preservation Commission

## Pearce Homestead Property of the Season Summer 2013

The Daniel Pearce Home has the honor of being this summer's Property of the Season by the Oswego Historic Preservation Commission. Built circa 1874, the home is constructed in the Upright and Wing style with a two-story gable front portion, which included a parlor on the first floor and two bedrooms on the upper floor. The main portion of the house is a two-story wing containing the kitchen and living room on the first floor and an additional set of bedrooms above. This portion of the home boasts a narrow covered porch with attractive corbels and arches. The exterior of the home is virtually unaltered except for a one-story addition to the back of the structure, which added a family room with a spiral staircase down to the basement living space. The home is now part of the Fox Bend Golf Course owned by the Oswegoland Park District.

This is the second home built on the Pearce homestead. Tragically, the first structure was destroyed by fire in December 1873. The Kendall County Record wrote, *"The residence of Daniel Pearce, about one mile east of town, was burned Sunday morning and proved a very distressing occurrence. Most of the family was yet in bed when the fire was discovered and the boys, James and Colvin, rushed out in their bare feet to carry water from the spring some little distance below the house ... The house burnt down in a very short time; there was nothing saved except a couple of trunks containing some of their effects."*

Daniel Pearce, a Veteran of the War of 1812, was born in Maryland in 1789 and moved with his parents to Logan County, Ohio as a child. He was married three times, his first two wives dying young. His third wife was Sally Titsworth.

Daniel and his brothers, John and Walter, and their brother-in-law William Smith Wilson, walked to northern Illinois in 1832 prospecting for good land on which to settle. They were impressed with the area where Waubonsie Creek entered the Fox River. After staking their claims, the foursome returned to Ohio, settled their affairs and the next year, 1833, returned to settle with their families.

Daniel claimed 100 acres of mixed prairie and timber along Waubonsie Creek, while his brothers claimed land west of the Fox River. Wilson staked his claim at today's busy "Five Corners" intersection of US Route 34, IL Route 25 and Jefferson Street.



Daniel and wife Sally were active Methodists and Oswego's earliest church meetings and services were held at the Pearce homestead.

Three generations of Pearces lived on the homestead over the years; Daniel and Sally raised their children on the homestead and passed away there in 1873 and 1874.

Son Colvin, a Civil War veteran with the 127th Illinois Volunteers, took over occupancy of the homestead after his marriage to Lucy Perry. Their daughters, Dora and Bernice, were born at the homestead, and in September of 1904 Dora was married there to Alvah E. Cooney. The newlyweds lived on the homestead with her parents for a year until Colvin and Lucy retired from farming in 1905 and moved into the Mary Cliggitt house in town. Alvah and Dora lived on the farm for a few years until World War I, when the entire family moved to Pasadena California, where they spent the remainder of their lives.

The Cooney's kept possession of the home and rented it out to local farm families. The George Hafenrichter family lived on the farm in the teens as did the Laurence Ode family. Alvah Cooney died in 1936 and Dora on July 31, 1942. Shortly after her death, her sister Bernice sold the homestead. It came into the possession of John J. McGarry who owned the farm until 1966 when he sold it to the Monier Sheep Company of Montgomery, IL. The Monier Sheep Company, considered the largest sheep processing facilities in Illinois in the 1950s, cleaned, sheared and vaccinated up to 250,000 sheep per year for the Chicago market. The Monier Sheep Company subdivided the Pearce property into the Windcrest Subdivision and St. Anne's Catholic Church to the north and the Fox Bend 9-hole golf course to the east. The golf course was expanded to 18 holes in 1970 and was purchased by the Oswegoland Park District in February 1980.

The Pearce homestead was occupied by Fox Bend staff through the 2000s. The house is currently used for storage and set preparation by the Limelight Theatre group.

