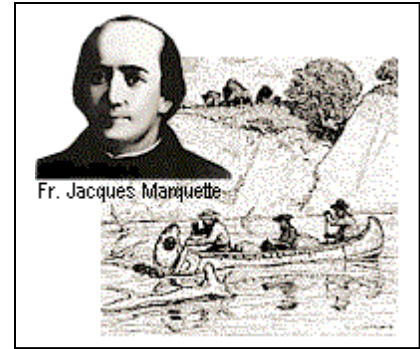


Kane County History

The territory is explored . . .

The growth of Kane County from virgin prairie to an agricultural-industrial area is a study in the evolution of modern government. Now the fifth most populous County in the state, Kane County is included in that part of Illinois traveled by French explorers Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet in 1673.

The Marquette-Joliet expedition traveled down the Mississippi River from Canada and explored this region on their return north along the Illinois River. The land was later claimed for France by the explorer La Salle and his lieutenant, Tonti, and in 1717 was placed under the government of Louisiana.



The territory becomes a state . . .



The territory remained a French possession until after the French-Indian war when it was ceded to the British by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. British domination of the area ended in 1778 when George Rogers Clark captured Kaskaskia and Cahokia (cities on the southwestern border of Illinois - *see map below*) and the land was claimed by the Commonwealth of Virginia. After the signing of the Articles of Confederation, Virginia surrendered all claim to the territory to the federal government.

There were many plans advanced for dealing with the new territories. Thomas Jefferson wanted Illinois divided into three states with Kane County in the state of Assenisipia. It was decided, however, to give Illinois large boundaries at the advice of James Monroe who had made several trips to the area and deemed the entire midwest "worthless and uninhabitable."

The Northwest Territory was established in 1787 by Congress to provide for government of all land northwest of the Ohio River. In 1800 Illinois became a part of the Indiana Territory and in 1809 the Illinois Territory was established by an act of Congress. Finally, in 1818 Illinois was admitted as the 21st state with Kaskaskia as its capital.

The County is formed . . .

At the time of statehood, written records indicate that only Native Americans resided in the area now known as Kane County. However, settlers soon began to take over this land, and resident tribes were forced to the west of Iowa. In 1832 a Sauk leader and warrior named Black Hawk (Makataimeshekiakiak) gathered together members of the Sauk and Fox tribes in an effort to regain their homelands. To aid against this uprising, United States Army troops under the command of General Winfield Scott were sent from the east to Chicago, where they were delayed by a cholera epidemic. While there were no battles in Kane County, Scott's men marched through the area on what is now Army Trail Road and forded the Fox River north of the present city of St. Charles near the Blackhawk Forest Preserve. Black Hawk's band was defeated at the Bad Axe River in Wisconsin.



Within two years the trail from Chicago made by the army wagons was followed by permanent settlers and the way was paved for new development in the Kane County area.



On January 16, 1836, the Illinois legislature formed a new County and named it after Elias Kent Kane, the highly-respected attorney who helped draft the Illinois constitution and was the first Secretary of State. Kane was later elected to Congress and represented Illinois in the U.S. Senate until his death in 1835.

The new "Kane County" included what is now DeKalb County and part of the northern portions of Kendall. DeKalb subsequently separated from Kane County in 1837 and Kendall in 1841.

The government is established . . .

A committee of three members of the legislature selected LaFox (Geneva) as the Kane County seat since James Herrington's Tavern and Inn, located on North State Street near the Fox River, had the only post office in the County. Herrington's Tavern also served as the first County Courthouse. On June 4, 1836, 180 men gathered at Herrington's Tavern to elect officials for the new County: three commissioners, a Sheriff, a Recorder of Deeds, a Coroner, and a Surveyor.

The Illinois Constitution of 1848 empowered counties to change their form of government and the residents of Kane County, mostly from New England, chose the county-township type. Sixteen townships were created: Hampshire, Jackson (Rutland), Dundee, Burlington, Washington (Plato), Elgin, Franklin (Virgil), Fairfield (Campton), St Charles, Royalton (Kaneville), Blackberry, Geneva, Batavia, Little and Big Rock, Sugar Grove, and Fox River (Aurora).



The following year the responsibilities of the County Commissioners were divided. The administration of the County was transferred to a Board of Supervisors consisting of one supervisor from each of the 16 townships. Another elected official, the County Clerk, was added. A Chief Judge and two associate judges assumed the judicial responsibilities formerly held by the commissioners.

The form of government for Kane County changed again in 1972 when the Illinois legislature abolished the Board of Supervisors and established the County Board. Kane County was divided into 26 districts and one Board member was elected from each district. The new 26 member County Board took office in May, 1972.

The courthouses are built . . .

In 1837 the County offices were moved out of Herrington's Tavern into a new Courthouse on the corner of 4th and State Streets in Geneva. Total construction cost for this Courthouse was \$3,000. Seven years later Kane County had outgrown these quarters and a new Courthouse, constructed of quarry stone, was built on the site of the present Geneva City Hall on Rt. 31.



Overcrowding in the jail and the Courthouse soon created a need for a newer and larger building, and in 1854 bids were let for construction at the site of the present Courthouse on 3rd Street in Geneva. Disputes with the contractor over completion dates and workmanship prevented the building from being occupied until 1857.

The new Courthouse was a magnificent structure, considered the most important architectural monument in Kane County. It was designed by John M. Van Osdel, one of Chicago's leading architects. The ornate, three-story limestone building was capped with a large cupola which became a favorite valley vantage point.

On the night of March 13, 1890, Kane County lost one of its most prized buildings when the Courthouse burned. Fortunately, the records of the recorder, County Clerk, and the Circuit Clerk were locked in fireproof vaults and not damaged.

For the next two years, the County rented a house at 2nd and Campbell Streets in Geneva for \$30 a month in order to conduct County business. The clerks crowded into the various rooms and the judges held court in the dining room.

The Kane County Board commissioned Chicago architects W. J. Edbrooke and Franklin P. Burnham to design the new Courthouse and jail. The massive 4-story Courthouse which stands today is still regarded as one of the finest in Illinois. The original construction cost was \$195,000. The square dome rises high above the rotunda. Decorative ironwork railings encircle each floor and eleven murals, depicting various scenes from the County, are painted on the arches of the 4th floor.



Soon the County Board was faced with problems in the County jail. The 1892 facility had come under attack for being "totally inadequate" and having "deplorable conditions." In June of 1972, construction was authorized on the new jail, called the Kane County Corrections Complex, located on Fabyan Parkway in Geneva. The new institution cost 3½ million dollars.

With the continued growth of Kane County, the Courthouse was also crowded and the County had been forced to rent a number of downtown homes for additional office space. In November of 1972, the County purchased the Sacred Heart Seminary on Rt. 31 in Geneva. Remodeling began and by spring of 1975, all County administrative offices had moved to the site, called the Kane County Government Center.

In September, 1975, the County Board empowered the Public Building Commission to refurbish the Courthouse and convert the vacated administrative offices into space for the Circuit Court and Clerk. Subsequent growth of the County in the 1980's required the acquisition of the former Sixth Street School to house the Family Court and the rental of space in the former Campana building on Rt. 31 and Fabyan Parkway for the offices of the Circuit Clerk.

The County continued to rapidly grow, and once again the 1892 Courthouse became exceedingly crowded. In 1991 the County Board approved the construction of the Kane County Judicial Center to be located on Route 38 in St. Charles. The Judicial Center was opened in October of 1993.

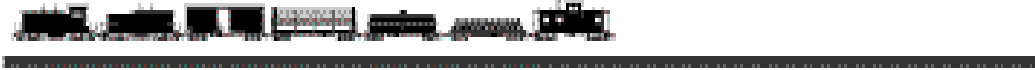


The economy and population grow . . .

Besides financing construction of the new Courthouse, the Kane County Board faced other budgetary problems as the Civil War required a continual outlay of men and money. In July, 1861, the Board appointed a War Committee which appropriated money for horses, bounties, equipment for the troops, and family benefits. The hundreds of men from Kane County who volunteered to serve in the Civil War attest to Kane County's involvement in the war operations. The names of these men are preserved in a plaque on the monument in front of the present Courthouse in Geneva.

The years following the Civil War were marked by a sudden increase in population as people came to the area looking for jobs in the mills and factories which were built along the Fox River. The railroads also played a significant part in the growth of Kane County as the first line in northern Illinois crossed Elgin and continued south to Geneva. This was the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad which linked the lead mines on the Mississippi River with the Chicago industrial area. This line eventually became the Chicago and North Western Railroad which has run through Kane County since 1853.

Aurora was also a major railroad center with the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, now the Burlington Northern, operating through Aurora. The old roundhouse still stands on North Broadway. and has been converted to a restaurant and micro-brewery.



Other railroad lines connected the river towns with each other, as well as the Chicago metropolitan area.

The railroad was also instrumental in establishing Kane County as a prominent dairy region around this time. The Chicago hotels were a major consumer for the milk, butter and cheese from the northern Kane County area and the railroads provided rapid transportation for the fresh dairy products which were shipped daily into the city. The Elgin Board of Trade established butter prices throughout the entire country.

Kane County continued its rapid growth during the 1900's. The population doubled from 65,000 to 130,000 during the 50-year period from 1890 to 1940. The population doubled again to 260,000 in the next 30-year period to 1970, along with the increasing number of industries, medical centers, and educational institutions. In 1967, the United States government built Fermilab, a center for energy research and development, on a 6,800 acre site outside Batavia. This research center provides educational and cultural opportunities for residents of Kane and surrounding counties.

According to the census bureau, as of 2002 Kane County's population is estimated to be over 443,000 and is steadily increasing due largely to expansion from the Chicagoland area. More Kane County farm lands are being rezoned to fit the demand of housing construction.

The Kane County Board is now struggling with the problem of maintaining the traditional beauty and open spaces of Kane County despite the pressures for rapid development of the agricultural areas. The decisions made today will influence the future growth of Kane County.