



THE ILES FILES

The Newsletter of the Elijah Iles House Foundation

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Farrell Gay, *r.i.p.*

Sadness visited the Iles House family this season when Farrell Gay died on 27 March 2023 at the age of 89. His beloved wife Ann predeceased him, on 31 August 2022. They are survived by sons Todd and Cole as well as 2 daughters-in-law, 4 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren.

The lower level of the Iles House, completely modernized during the major reconstruction in 1998-2005, was soon named the Farrell and Ann Gay Museum of Springfield History. This beautiful space hosts our visiting speakers, public receptions, holiday meals, and especially the exhibits curated by Linda Garvert and various others on a range of new and old features of this city and area. Perhaps most memorably, it showcased Farrell's world-class collection of Springfield Watch Company wares, from personal letters, to 1920s prize essays and medalions, to wrist watches and wall or mantel clocks. Farrell had even rescued the large lettered sign from the Watch Co. factory, which is now ensconced at the Ace Sign Company Museum on S. 1st St.

His civic-mindedness might have peaked when Farrell determined to revive the Essay Contest, and give the winners – from each of the 6 high schools in Springfield – original 100-year-old watches as well as scholarship money for college. This contest ran for 8 years, and brought many new and old, small and large families to the Iles House for presentations and photo-ops; Farrell also arranged to hold the actual announcement of the winners in the Hall of Representatives in the Old State Capitol, the perfect spot for students who were asked to write on different themes of Lincoln's life and career.



A moment of silence will be observed for Farrell when we launch the new season of Porch Chats in that downstairs Gay Museum on Wed. 3 May, at 5:30 p.m. These 'Growing Up in Springfield' talks now memorialize Dick Hart, who passed away on 16 May 2022. The Iles House has lost its two greatest champions and promoters (Ann Hart now resides near a daughter in Austin, Texas). Yet new generations carry on!

Open Saturdays, Noon to 4:00 p.m., April 29th to October 14th. 628 S. 7th St., at Cook St.

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Photo, left: The 4th of July Strawberry Party at Iles House inspired a lot of people to attend, contribute, and even make art. *Below:* Farrell majored in art at Coe College in Iowa, with the result that he and Ann chaired the face-painting table at every Christmas Open House.

People living long into the future will remember his skills as an artist, golfer, old-car collector, watch collector, preservationist, businessman, family man, friend, benefactor, and inspiration.

Photos by Logan McMinn



Some fond memories: As a docent upstairs, I heard Farrell downstairs telling visitors about his watch collection. He loved to talk about the past, how he started out in business and built up a small empire. He collected watches as he traveled the country. -*Connie Sims*

He was one of the most polite and well-mannered individuals I've ever met. Modest about his career success, he claimed that it was achieved because he was in the right place at the right time and because he worked hard. He was deservedly proud of his children and grandchildren. An immaculate dresser, he was not above posing as an elf at Christmas. - *Richard Herndon*

Please Come Listen to One or All 'Chats'

The **Richard E. Hart Memorial Porch Chats** spring series continues on the theme of "Growing Up in Springfield." This spring's three programs will be presented at the Elijah Iles House, 628 South Seventh Street on Wednesdays May 3rd, 17th, and 31st. The talks will start at 5:30 p.m., each lasting about an hour. Light refreshments will be served afterwards. Admission is free, but donations are cheerfully accepted. For more information email ileshouse1998@gmail.com or visit www.ileshouse.org.

May 3: *Chris Noonan:* Senior Vice President of Merrill Lynch's Springfield office; boyhood in Knox Knolls, attendance at Vachel Lindsay School, lots of bike-riding all over town with friends.

May 17: Former state senator *Larry Bomke:* growing up on a small farm west of town; attending Pleasant Plains High School; career in insurance, the County Board, a family ...

May 31: The *four Barringer siblings:* memories of father, neurosurgeon and local historian Dr Floyd Barringer; their English mother, Winifred; life in the 1960s; and their 4 entirely distinct careers.

➡ These names and dates are slightly revised from those announced in our February *Iles Files*. ⬅