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# John Messinger. Messinger Cemetery & Schoolhouse

Swansea, Illinois

#### ABOUT JOHN MESSINGER

John Messinger was born in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, on January 4, 1771. He was raised on a farm but received a good education and was particularly fond of the study of mathematics. In 1783 his family moved to Vermont. John learned the carpenter's trade and became a millwright. Roderick Messinger, John's Father, was a Revolutionary War veteran.

In 1801 he joined a party of pioneers led by Matthew Lyon who left Vermont and settled in Eddyville, Kentucky. Messinger married Lyon's daughter, Anne, (1774-1842). He was opposed to slavery so he and his family along with his brother-in-law, Dr. George Cadwell, moved on to Illinois in 1802, first settling in the American Bottom and then moving to New Design.

In 1807, Messinger moved his family 2 1/2 miles north of



Belleville, Illinois, naming his property Clinton Hill. He was the first postmaster outside of Cahokia, in the county, having the post office at his residence.

The first surveys of land under the government of the United States, were made by William Rector in 1808. They were part of Cahokia Commons and military claims. The surveying of Congressional townships was not made until 1814, when much of the work was done by John Messinger, who was a sub-contractor under Rector.



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Messinger surveyed much of the public domain in both St. Clair and Randolph Counties. In 1815 he was made a deputy under the Surveyor-General of Ohio with authority to survey the military tract in the forks of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and surveyed much of that tract.

Later he was appointed to assist in the survey of the northern limits of Illinois and he made a part of the astronomical and mathematical calculations by which the line dividing the states of Illinois and Wisconsin was located. He and Philip Creamer, a skilled mechanic, made surveyors' compasses.

Messinger was a member of the convention that met at Kaskaskia and framed the first constitution of Illinois.

In 1814, Belleville became the county seat, and subsequent elections were held at this place. Poll list and return of the first election held in St Clair County, after the admission of Illinois as a state, Sept. 17, 1818. Election polls began and were held at Belleville, for and within the county of St. Clair, in the Illinois territory, on Thursday, the 17th of September, 1818, to elect the following members to organize and form the. Government of the State of Illinois, by virtue of the Constitution passed in August, 1818, to elect one Governor, one Lieutenant-Governor, one Representative to Congress, one Senator to the General Assembly, three Representatives to the Assembly, one Sheriff, and one Coroner. The election was closed at three o'clock on Saturday, the third day of said election, whereupon it appears that Wm. Kinney is duly elected Senator of the Assembly, John Messinger and James D. Thomas elected Representatives, Wm. A. Baird elected as Sheriff, and Job Badgley as Coroner. Voting took place viva voce (Viva voce is a Latin phrase literally meaning "with living voice" but most often translated as "by mouth"). The two-year term was the last political office Messinger held.

Messinger wrote and published a book entitled, "A Manual or Hand-Book of Practical Surveying" in 1821.

In February of 1825, John Mason Peck, a Baptist minister, arranged for establishing a Baptist Seminary in Illinois, and St. Clair County was selected for the location of the school. A two-story frame building, with two wings, was completed in 1827, and the "Rock Spring Theological Seminary and High School" was opened. Rev. Joshua Bradly was principal. Rev. John M. Peck Professor of Theology, and Rev. John Messinger Professor of Mathematics. It opened with one hundred students. This was the first literary institution in the state higher than a common or primary school. In 1831 it was transferred to Alton, and became the foundation for Shurlleff College.



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Messinger fought in the Black Hawk War in 1832 under General Atkinson's command. In 1835 he produced the first map of Illinois based on the official United States Survey.

Messinger died on September 16, 1846.

#### THE MESSINGER CEMETERY



The enclosure around the graves of the Messinger family was built by the Belleville Daughters of the American Revolution "DAR" Chapter and is not original to the cemetery.

You've likely noticed the difference in spelling in the name. Is it Messinger or Messenger? The answer is the always-frustrating: "That depends." If we are interested in how John spelled his surname, there is little doubt. It was Messinger. Several



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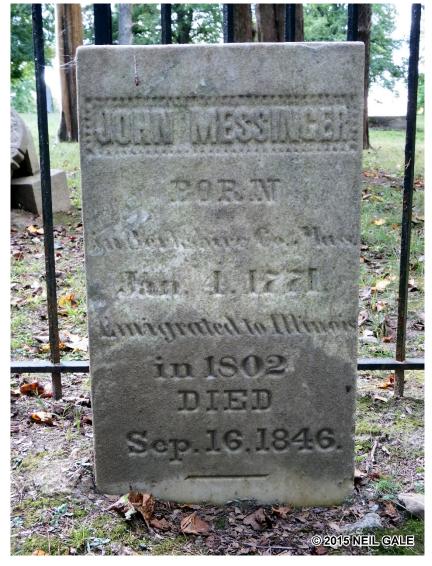
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documents written in his own hand confirm this. There was one branch of the family, however, who adopted the Messenger spelling.

On a property tax bill from 1827, a copy of the poems of Oliver Goldsmith from 1819, and his surveyor's field book (likely from the 1820s), he signs it with an, "i," every time.

The property tax bill, paid at Vandalia, Illinois, does not have the property on which the cemetery is located. In 1821, Messinger signed a quit claim deed with the Richland Creek Baptist Church for the land on which the cemetery now sits. The church building sat near where the schoolhouse sits now, but the church was destroyed sometime in the 1870s.





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#### MESSINGER ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

The St. Clair County Historical Society (STCCHS) relocated the historic Messinger Schoolhouse from Belleville, Illinois to Swansea in December of 2012 in order to restore and preserve this important piece of local history.

Built by pioneering surveyor and educator John Messinger for his children in the 1840's, the Messinger Schoolhouse is thought to be the oldest one-room schoolhouse in St. Clair County. The schoolhouse was donated to the STCCHS by the Agne family and was moved by Expert House Movers of St. Louis, MO.

The schoolhouse was moved almost a mile from its former location to an unused portion of the Messinger Cemetery, located at 3450 Old Collinsville Road in Swansea, Illinois. The STCCHS owns and maintains the Messinger Cemetery and plans to eventually open the schoolhouse to the public as a museum.

STCCHS Curator William P. Shannon, IV believes that this schoolhouse from the past has a lot to teach people in the present. "The Messinger Schoolhouse served as a place of teaching and learning for more than a century. We hope to restore this piece of our history and invite the community in to visit and learn with us."

by William P. Shannon, IV, STCCHS Curator





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The paint on the schoolhouse, as seen in the photographs, is not original. Most one-room schools were painted white in the 1880s and 1890s. The paint used was called "Milk Paint"; a mixture of milk, lime, and pigment. Milk Paint is incredibly durable but, on the downside, it is nearly impossible to remove from the soft bricks which were mostly likely made on site without damaging the bricks when trying to remove the paint.



Note the horizontal, "scar," on the back of the building. A closer look reveals a wooden cleat that is still attached to the brick. Research has suggested that a covered porch or lean-to once stood behind the schoolhouse. It may have been used by the students to store their bags and outerwear. How was this suggested? An 1890s picture of the schoolhouse exists that shows this rear structure (not clearly, but it is there). Also, a close look reveals that this door is an interior door; it was never meant to be exposed to the elements.



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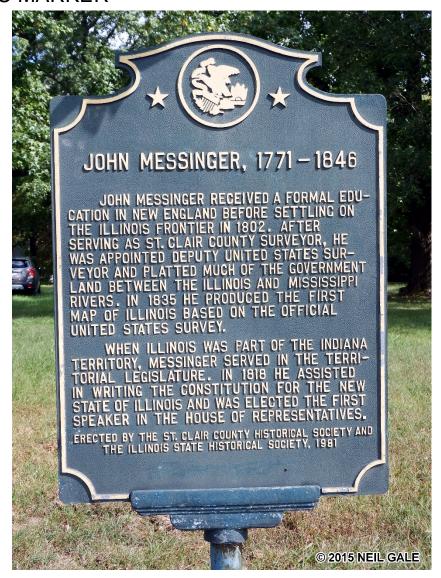
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After this building finished its life as a schoolhouse, it was used as a sort of vacation cabin. In the early twentieth century, the location on Old Collinsville Road was still fairly remote. Marvin Agne, who owned Marvin's Camera Shop on East Main Street in Belleville, Illinois, bought the building in 1957. The Agne family used it as a retreat and as a storage building.

### HISTORIC MARKER



"John Messinger received a formal education in New England before settling on the Illinois frontier in 1802. After serving as St. Clair county surveyor, he was appointed



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Deputy United States Surveyor and platted much of the government land between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. In 1835 he produced the first map of Illinois based on the official United States Survey.

When Illinois was part of the Indiana territory, Messinger served in the territorial legislature. In 1818 he assisted in writing the constitution for the new State of Illinois and was elected the First Speaker in the House of Representatives."

#### THE 95 INTERRED

#### Aultman, John

born: unknown / died: Jul. 12, 1902

#### **Aultman, Martha Jennings**

born: May 16, 1846 / died: Jul. 11, 1909

#### Aultman, Susie

born: Jul. 16, 1870 / died: Jul. 15, 1872

#### Badgley, Edith L

born: 1901 / died: 1901

#### Badgley, J Russell

born: 1866 / died: 1945

#### Badgley, Levi P.

born: Oct. 22, 1871 / died: Mar. 8, 1876

#### Badgley, Lillian

born: 1873 / died: 1967

#### **Badgley, Mary Lorette Wilderman**

born: Mar. 3, 1836 / died: Mar. 23, 1918

#### **Badgley, Simon Peter**

born: Aug. 30, 1828 / died: Mar. 2, 1908



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Bevirt, Hezekia B

born: Sep. 22, 1842 / died: Mar. 12, 1917

Bevirt, Sarah A.

born: Feb. 17, 1848 / died: Dec. 26, 1906

Bussong, Etta E Glenn

born: Dec. 16, 1867 / died: Jan. 5, 1900

**Bussong, Thomas A** 

born: Aug. 20, 1867 / died: Aug. 17, 1944

Chenot, Lee

born: Feb. 21, 1884 / died: Aug. 21, 1888

Daniel, Fuller

born: 1845 / died: 1911

Daniel, S. born:

born: 1842 / died: unknown

Drake, Nellie C

born: Oct. 28, 1865 / died: Jan. 23, 1936

Drake, William V

born: Oct. 1, 1849 / died: Sep. 18, 1890

Frick, Louise M.

born: Jan. 10, 1817 / died: Nov. 7, 1869

Fuller, Daniel

born: 1845 / died: 1911

Glenn, Albert

born: Jan. 10, 1872 / died: Sep. 26, 1872



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Glenn, Hannah C Phillips

born: Aug. 10, 1836 / died: Feb. 27, 1907

Glenn, Mary J.

born: Dec. 19, 1848 / died: Jun. 5, 1878

Glenn, Rachel Amanda

born: Oct. 29, 1872 / died: Jul. 31, 1945

Glenn, Thomas

born: Nov. 24, 1832 / died: Oct. 7, 1898

Hartmann, Hilda Anne

born: Apr. 26, 1867 / died: Dec. 7, 1892

Hartmann, Hubert H

born: Sep. 1, 1829 / died: Feb. 1, 1922

Hartmann, John Joseph

born: Mar. 2, 1856 / died: Aug. 11, 1858

Hartmann, Otto

born: Jul. 10, 1893 / died: Aug. 10, 1894

Hartmann, Pamelia Anne "Annie" Leach

born: Nov. 11, 1835 / died: Oct. 27, 1870

Heisinger, Andrew Chester "Andy", Jr

born: Feb. 3, 1908 / died: Sep. 28, 1971

**Heisinger, Dorothy Rosemarie McNulty** 

born: Jun. 21, 1911 / died: Jun. 3, 1970

Hoffman, A A

born: 1872 / died: 1874



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Hoffman, C D

born: 1838 / died: 1881

Hoffman, F

born: 1867 / died: 1868

Hoffman, G E

born: 1875 / died: 1954

Hoffman, George E

born: unknown / died: unknown

Hoffman, J

born: 1831 / died: 1918

Hoffman, M A

born: 1841 / died: 1877

Hoffman, PA

born: 1877 / died: 1931

Isaacs, Martha

born: Oct. 15, 1810 / died: Jan. 11, 1877

Isaacs, William Albert

born: unknown / died: Jul. 30, 1863

Jennings, Susan Pringle

born: Sep. 20, 1816 / died: Aug. 31, 1874

Jennings, William

born: 1806 / died: Sep. 20, 1875

Landolt Hartmann, Katharine "Katie" Lamprecht

born: Mar. 12, 1838 / died: Jul. 26, 1901



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LeChien, Hector

born: 1874 / died: 1927

Lienesch, Pamelia Ann Messinger

born: May 29, 1816 / died: Dec. 1, 1852

Lotz, Margaretha

born: Jun. 14, 1801 / died: Feb. 2, 1867

Marquis, Francis M

born: Nov. 4, 1826 / died: Jan. 16, 1877

Marquis, William

born: Aug. 17, 1852 / died: Oct. 2, 1894

Marquis, Zachary

born: Oct. 29, 1817 / died: Aug. 7, 1895

McNickle, Andrew

born: Apr. 12, 1818 / died: Dec. 14, 1872

McNickle, Richard

born: Apr. 14, 1858 / died: Oct. 3, 1859

McNickle, Sarah M

born: Nov. 26, 1868 / died: Apr. 5, 1871

Messinger, Amanda

born: Aug. 29, 1797 / died: Sep. 27, 1865

Messinger, Anne Lyon

born: Jan. 14, 1774 / died: Oct. 16, 1842

Messinger, John

born: Jan., 1771 / died: Sep. 16, 1846



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Messinger, Matthew Lyon

born: Feb. 26, 1814 / died: Oct. 7, 1865

Moergen, Conrad

born: 1866 / died: 1943

Monken, Frances H.

born: Nov. 7, 1862 / died: Jul. 26, 1888

Monken, Gus

born: 1867 / died: 1914

Monken, John

born: Apr. 25, 1860 / died: Sep. 12, 1898

Monken, Kath

born: Dec. 22, 1829 / died: Nov. 13, 1910

Monken, Ludwig

born: Oct. 13, 1854 / died: Jan. 12, 1862

Monken, Margaret Moergen

born: Aug. 16, 1865 / died: May 7, 1953

Monken, Maria J.

born: Mar. 15, 1858 / died: Jan. 24, 1873

Monken, Mary E.

born: Oct. 7, 1898 / died: Feb. 16, 1899

Monken, Susie T.

born: 1873 / died: 1958

Monken, Therese

born: Nov. 29, 1852 / died: Jan. 14, 1862



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Monken, Wilhelm Ludwig

born: Dec. 18, 1850 / died: Dec. 12, 1876

Monken, William

born: unknown / died: Dec. 12, 1856

**Neill, John Elvis** 

born: Dec. 29, 1889 / died: May 23

Neill, Lucieno

born: Aug. 29, 1894 / died: Mar. 6, 1895

Owen, Rose

born: 1916 / died: 1918

Phelps, Cnazada

born: Sep. 11, 1822 / died: Sep. 13, 1906

Phillips, Anne May

born: May 1, 1869 / died: Mar. 22, 1870

Phillips, Arthur

born: Oct. 5, 1873 / died: Aug. 27, 1875

Phillips, Cecil L.

born: Feb., 1887 / died: Mar. 6, 1888

Phillips, DJM

born: Jun. 1, 1833 / died: May 30, 1897

Phillips, Oliver C.

born: Feb. 1885 / died: May 10, 1888

Phillips, Sarah E

born: Feb. 17, 1848 / died: May 21, 1906



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Phillips, Stella A

born: Dec. 15, 1875 / died: Oct. 16, 1876

Phillips, Tamesia M.

born: Nov. 19, 1877 / died: Dec. 17, 1882

Powell, Elizabeth

born: Apr. 29, 1831 / died: Mar. 8, 1904

Rittenhouse, Asa

born: Oct. 20, 1870 / died: Feb. 12, 1871

Rittenhouse, George

born: Jan. 22, 1838 / died: Apr. 11, 1873

Rittenhouse, Mary J.

born: Sep. 21, 1869 / died: Mar. 18, 1870

Rittenhouse, Sarah J.

born: Oct. 29, 1871 / died: Mar. 22, 1872

Rutherford, Benjamin R.

born: Jul. 20, 1872 / died: Jul. 21, 1873

Rutherford, Jedidiah C

born: 1845 / died: 1922

Rutherford, William H

born: unknown / died: unknown

Stanton, Samuel Edwin

born: Dec., 1860 / died: Jan. 10, 1870

Wilderman, Ann Lacy Phillips

born: Oct. 5, 1868 / died: Mar. 28, 1951



### Wilderman, Henry Clay

born: Mar. 19, 1871 / died: May 22, 1911

Wilderman, William C

born: Jan. 19, 1902 / died: May 3, 1902



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