

Local Authors Document Bethalto History, Launch Call for Images

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BETHALTO, Ill. - If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a book coming out about Bethalto, Illinois, should be priceless. With a little help from generous townspeople, the book surely will be.

Local resident Jeff Allsman, who is co-authoring the book with Mayor Steve Bryant, is looking for old photographs that might be used in *Images of America: Bethalto*, a pictorial history to be published this fall by Arcadia Publishing.

“Bethalto is a great community and it is extremely important to share our history and our heritage with as many people as possible,” Bryant said. “The roots of our history lay the groundwork for our future. Our forefathers continue to leave their footprints on this community. I thought this was a great way after my 16 years as mayor, to leave a Bethalto Legacy in the form of this book.”

The collector’s book will be available at local retailers, national book store chains and through the Internet. All proceeds from the book will go towards operating the Bethalto Historical Museum. The authors are also donating all royalties from the book to the Museum fund.

“*Images of America: Bethalto* will be another great way to document, present and preserve the early history of Bethalto,” said Allsman, who grew up in nearby Alton and moved to Bethalto a little more than a decade ago. “Researching the history of the Village has been an enjoyably educating experience for me. Even prior to its incorporation, the history of the Village reveals some very compelling storylines. I’m sure it will be of interest to Bethaltoans as a piece of personal or family history and to members of surrounding communities as an historic documentary.”

There are few documented histories of early Bethalto on record. *Images of America: Bethalto* draws upon information provided by those sources as well as the stories and pictures passed down through generations.

“We began by our efforts by reviewing various sources of documented history and scanning hundreds of pictures hanging in the Bethalto Historical Museum,” Allsman said. “The leaders and volunteers at the Museum have been very generous with access to the materials and their assistance. Now, we’re seeking contributions from members of the community who might have some very interesting stories or vintage pictures that they would be willing to share in our publication. We believe *Images of America: Bethalto* will be of interest to persons of all ages.”

Anyone having photographs for consideration in *Images of America: Bethalto* may contact Jeff Allsman at jallsman@bethalto.com or 618-377-8051. Allsman and Bethalto Museum volunteers will be available at the Museum January 28 and 29 from noon to 5 p. m. and again on January 30 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to accept vintage pictures. The pictures will be scanned onsite and returned to the owner before they leave the museum. Owners of images used in the book will receive credit in the publication.

The importance of family collections cannot be overemphasized. Vintage photographs become increasingly fragile and by scanning and reproducing them in a book, they become available for all to see.

“Several of the photos used in the book, as well as several displays currently in the museum, were found in the historic Klein’s Drug Store when I purchased it in the 1990’s” Mayor Bryant said. “They are a part of my personal historic collection of Bethalto.”

Images of America: Bethalto is scheduled to be published and available to the public prior to the Bethalto Homecoming over Labor Day weekend. The book is projected to contain several chapters and hundreds of images depicting Bethalto before the turn of the 20th Century through the mid-1950s.