

# Frank L. Breen Collection

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Table of Contents  
Collection Information  
Brief History  
Box and Folder Inventory

## Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1842-1979
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	Archived photographs under "Breen" and "Lake Bloomington (Hudson Township)—East Bay Camp and Conference Center"

## BRIEF HISTORY

Rev. Frank L. Breen (1886- 1967) was a prominent local Protestant minister in Bloomington. He was responsible for organizing East Bay Camp on the shores of Lake Bloomington, Western Avenue Community Center on Bloomington's west side, as well as many additional public service projects. Breen was born at Lanark, Carroll County, IL, on July 23, 1886, and came to Bloomington in 1920.

He was the first director of East Bay Camp, established in 1933 and located on Lake Bloomington, a manmade body of water ten miles north of Bloomington-Normal. The first permanent buildings were built by campers, parents, and friends. Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and YWCA members all contributed labor and funding for the buildings. When denominational groups began developing church youth camps in the 1930s, their search for adequate facilities brought them to East Bay. Every major church in the state had part of its regular camping program at East Bay each summer.

Rev. Breen also helped organize the Western Avenue Community Center in 1926 and became full-time director in 1931. When many families were without means during the Great Depression, this center, located on the working class west side of Bloomington, offered much-needed recreational activities. In 1932, Breen was the recipient of the first *Daily Pantagraph* Community Betterment Scroll.

He was director of this center until 1956, when he retired to devote all his time to East Bay Camp. Frank Breen died at Brokaw Hospital, Normal, on November 13, 1967.

Rev. Breen married Thelma Van Ness in 1945 (he had been married once before, to Flora J. Giles in 1908, but she died in March 1927). Thelma Breen was a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University and the University of Illinois Library School. She also studied at Columbia University and worked in the New York Public Library system on Long Island. Once in Illinois, Thelma worked for McLean Township Library back when the library was housed in the back room of a barbershop. In 1923 she began working at Withers Public Library (Bloomington's public library), and in 1941 she became head librarian. She held this post until her retirement in 1972. Thelma helped found Western Avenue Church and East Bay Camp with her husband. She died at the age of 79 in August of 1979.

## **BOX AND FOLDER INVENTORY**

### **Folder 1: Obituaries**

- 1.1.1 "Thelma Breen, ex-librarian, dies" in *The Pantagraph* Thursday, August 2, 1979
- 1.1.2 "Rev. Breen, Easy Bay Camp Founder, Dies" in *The Pantagraph* November 15, 1967

### **Folder 2: Veterans Home Building**

- 1.2.1 Correspondence from Grover C. Helm to Reverend Frank L. Breen December 19, 1945 asking him to consider helping veterans obtain housing
- 1.2.2-11 9 note cards
- 1.2.12-16 Green Wells Inc., 4 receipts, auto repair
- 1.2.17-24 Modahl & Scott cement receipts
- 1.2.25 Building Permit & Permit Application, December 12, 1945 (303 Maizefield Ave)
- 1.2.26 WWII Veterans Stoddard Contract, 2 pages, lot sale
- 1.2.27 January 11, 1946. Correspondence to Federal Housing Authorities from William T. Beadles, Price Panel Chairman. Letter regarding local men interested in constructing homes for returned service men
- 1.2.28 January 25, 1946. Correspondence from Home Electric Company to unknown regarding wiring of the G.I. House
- 1.2.29 January 25, 1947. Correspondence from Edw. A. Larson to Rev. Breen agreeing to install downspouts and a warm air furnace. Attached is a flier showing images of the furnace
- 1.2.30 January 26, 1946. Correspondence from L. Shepard to Gunnison Homes, Inc. regarding houses for veterans.
- 1.2.31 March 6, 1946. Correspondence from Edgar E. Lundeen to West Side Lumber and Coal Co. changing the price of plans from \$10 to \$25.
- 1.2.32 March 18, 1946. Correspondence from C.V. Archibald, Manager of Apfield-Grohne Concrete Products Co. to Frank L. Breen regarding price of building material. (\$.15 per unit)

- 1.2.33 April 24, 1946. Correspondence from Frank L. Breen to Arthur Adams of National Bank of Bloomington regarding an enclosed invoice for Oil O Matic and the status of house construction

**Folder 3: Breen Residences**

- 1.3.1 List of attendees for meetings, 5 pgs  
1.3.2 Specifications of Labor and Materials for the Rev. Frank Breen Residences, Bloomington, Illinois, by Lundeen and Hilfinger, Architects.  
1.3.3 Agreement between Frank L. Breen and Paul Lee, William Thomas, Virgil Baird, Clifford Bowman, and Donald Breen, dated November 18, 1940  
1.3.4 November 15, 1939. Correspondence from Edna Lonigan to Frank Breen regarding the sending of published material on behalf of Dr. Tippy.  
1.3.5 December 11, 1940. Correspondence from H.C. Adams to West Side Coal & Lumber Co. regarding a wall

**Folder 4: News Clippings**

- 1.4.1 "Frank Breen Gets Earned Recognition" 1955 in *The Pantagraph* (2 copies)  
1.4.2 "Breen's Works in Behalf of Community Extolled" in *The Daily Pantagraph* May 29, 1963  
1.4.3 "Site for Medical Structure Bought" in *The Daily Pantagraph* Sunday, February 3, 1930  
1.4.4 "Center Will Review Decade of Service" in *The Daily Pantagraph* December 7, 1938  
1.4.5 Photograph in newspaper of some of the 150 who attended Friendship Camp at Lake Webster, Ind. Photograph shows Carl Vrooman, who gave a course of lectures, and Rev. Frank Breen who helped organize the camp  
1.4.6 Photograph in newspaper of East Bay Camp associates. In photo are Miss Thelma VanNess, Carl Vrooman, Rev. Frank L. Breen, Mrs. Hazle B. Ewing, Miss Vera Snow, B.F. Hiltabrand, and Mrs. Raymond Baldwin.  
1.4.7 1 page of photographs of East Bay Camp, in *The Pantagraph* Sunday, June 27, 1937  
1.4.8 "Speakers Praise Work of Canter and Director" date and newspaper unknown (2 copies)  
1.4.9 "Mrs. Walter Brandt, Frank Breen Honored" in *The Daily Pantagraph* January 13, 1937

**Folder 5: East Bay Camp**

- 1.5.1 Booklet "A Walk with Mr. Breen" by Tom Gumbrell  
1.5.2 East Bay 1-page flier  
1.5.3 East Bay Camp card  
1.5.4 1 page of photographs of East Bay Camp  
1.5.5 Summer Short Course for community leaders form

**Folder 6: Friendship Circle**

- 1.6.1 Lists of names: Congregational Friendship Circle 1926-1927, 1 page; Friendship Circle 1927-1928, 1 page; undated list, 4 pages; "Young People" September 1928, 4 pages; alphabetical list, 21 pages; list of addresses, 1 page; list of Friendship Choir members 4 pages, undated.  
1.6.2 Brochure: A Real Vacation in Dune Land- Friendship Camp at Tower Hill, 1927  
1.6.3 Western Avenue Boy Scouts- Towanda list  
1.6.4 Pledges received October 12, 1928, Friendship Campers  
1.6.5 The Friendship Call- Friendship Circle Camp Reunion, East Bay Camp September 5-7, 1931

- 1.6.6 December 3, 1931. Letter to Members of Friendship Circle from the Building Committee (Harrold Wilson, "Andy" Washburn Lillian Nichols and Grace Evans) regarding building a cabin at East Bay Camp.
- 1.6.7 Informational sheet regarding the Friendship Reunion on Friday, December 30<sup>th</sup>, at Western Avenue Community Center (2pgs)
- 1.6.8 "To Relive the Old Days" schedule of events for home-coming January 1-3<sup>rd</sup>

**Folder 7: School Letters**

- 1.7.1 35 letters to principals of high schools in Illinois regarding barter for higher education

**Folder 8: Barter & Exchange Workman's Records**

- 1.8.1 Card specifying name, address, work specifications, date needed, materials required, date began and ended, and the customer's O.K. (9 cards)

**Folder 9: Depression Era Scrip**

- 1.9.1 6 scrip dollars from Barter & Exchange Inc. Bloomington IL, each with various numbers of stamps on the back. Dated January 24, year illegible, May 27, 1933, 1 date too light to read, and 3 are undated.

**Folder 10: Barter & Exchange Scrip Reports**

- 1.10.1 68 reports specifying name, amount of scrip on hand, methods of disposal, condition of scrip, average number of stamps, and date of issuance

**Folder 11: Self-Help Publications**

- 1.11.1 Washington Self-Help Exchange booklet, July 1937-December 1938
- 1.11.2 The Self-Helper, Volume 2, No.1. January 1939.

**Folder 12: Memorabilia**

- 1.12.1 Account book of Mrs. Amy Giles of 503 W. Jefferson for My Store (furniture insurance).
- 1.12.2 Big May-Time Programme
- 1.12.3 Program for McLean Eighth Grade Commencement, Thursday, May 19, 1921 (2 copies)
- 1.12.4 Program for Normal Community High School Commencement, Friday, May 27, 1960
- 1.12.5 The Pullman Company Passenger's Check. Tourist Car Kansas City to Los Angeles
- 1.12.6 Vehicle Registration Card for Barter and Exchange, 1933
- 1.12.7 Class Record and Quarterly Grades for Thelma Van Ness, First Grade and Fifth Grade.
- 1.12.8 Synopsis of the Law of Illinois relating to Motor Vehicles booklet
- 1.12.9 Invitation to Normal High School Commencement 1905
- 1.12.10 November 5, 1932. Letter to Mr. E. Kletz, Proprietor, Kletz Nursery, from Alton Athletic Association regarding Miss Glenna Burnsmier winning \$2.50 worth of nursery stock

**Folder 13: Religious Memorabilia**

- 1.13.1 February 1943. Second Presbyterian Church historical outline (2 copies)
- 1.13.2 April 1943. The Second Presbyterian Church morning worship program
- 1.13.3 1916. The Nineteenth Annual Report of the First Congregational Church, Seatonville, Illinois.
- 1.13.4 May 9, 1926. First Congregational Church, Bloomington, Illinois, worship service program
- 1.13.5 April 22, 1937. Christian Science Monitor Coronation Color Section
- 1.14.6 June 1942 Second Presbyterian Church Sunday worship program
- 1.14.7 May 9, 1926 First Congregational Church service program

**Folder 14: Miscellaneous**

- 1.14.1 Dated July 1842, 3 pages
- 1.14.2 Contract between John Gregory and Mary A. Gregory of the first part and Trustees of the Black Hill Christian Chapel, June 1893
- 1.14.3 October 24, 1962. Correspondence from Mrs. David D. Day of Peoria, Illinois to the Rev. and Mrs. Frank L. Breen regarding "Last Supper" at Union Chapel