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## Contents

- 66 James Semple, Prairie Entrepreneur  
*William L. Burton*
- 85 George Wolfe and the "Far Western" Brethren  
*David B. Eller*
- 101 Ferdinand Ernst and the German Colony at Vandalia  
*Paul E. Stroble, Jr.*
- 111 Book Reviews
- 128 Picture Credits

**Cover:** In this issue, William L. Burton of Western Illinois University relates the story of James Semple, who—despite long careers in politics, the diplomatic service, and town building—is best remembered as the inventor of the prairie car, a steam-powered carriage. After the failure of his invention in the late 1840s, Semple retired to the woods at Jersey Landing, on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River opposite St. Louis. He committed himself to the founding of a new town, Elsah, and he built this imposing residence, Trevue, for his family. Burton's account of Semple—land speculator, politician, and inventor—is our first article. The illustration comes from the 1872 *Atlas Map of Jersey County, Illinois*.