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HISTORICO

JUNE, 1990

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LOOKING AHEAD - ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting and Election of Officers will be held on Tues., June 19, 1990, at the Illini Country Club, 1601 Illini Road, at which time all past presidents will be honored.

6:00 - 6:45 P.M. Cash bar. During this time we will be entertained by Mary Tobermann, harpist, and by a slide photo presentation, "Vanishing America," from the collection of the late Dr. A. Ray Grummon, Senior Pastor, First United Methodist Church.

6:45 P.M. - National Anthem - Ms. Polly Roesch

Business Meeting - Election of Officers

7:00 P.M. - Buffet Dinner

8:00 P.M. - Sally Robinson-Horney, Past President, program speaker

After Program - Social Period. Music by Polly Roesch and John Jordan. "Sing-a-long." Display of books by SCHS authors.

Reservations required by June 15. To make reservations, send \$12.00 per person, with checks made payable to the SANGAMON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY and marked "Annual Dinner" - send to Mrs. Carl D. Franke, Jr., 1013 East Ash, Springfield, IL 62703. (Call 522-3313 after 5:00 P.M. for further information.)

An exhibit at the Annual Meeting will feature the literary works of our own members. We are asking any members who have had books or booklets published to bring copies to the Annual Dinner Meeting on June 19 to be displayed as part of an exhibit promoting our Society's own authors. Books may be brought to the meeting that evening. A table will be provided for their display where members may see them during the social period following the dinner.

As is our custom, the Society's president of ten years earlier is the featured speaker at the Annual Dinner. Sally Robinson-Horney was our president in 1980-81 and will be our speaker on June 19. During Sally's term of office her focus was on "Preservation and Adaptation for Re-Use." In following this theme we visited several sites which had been restored for modern day use, such as the 1919 railroad station in Williamsville which had been adapted to serve as the community's Senior Center. Another "field trip" took us to the abandoned Illinois Central depot in Springfield which had been considered for several different enterprises. Within a few years after our visit to its murky interior it had been developed by the

Scullys into a bright and attractive commercial building housing shops and restaurants. Recently it has been acquired by the State and houses some of the offices of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

A LOOK BACK

At our May 15th meeting at Lincoln Library our members were privileged to hear a fine program by a long-time SCHS member, Robert Larson, now retired from his position as Artist-Curator with the Illinois State Museum's Exhibits Section. Bob's program, The Historical Role of the Artist-Naturalist, dealt with a most timely topic - that of concern for the environment, together with the role played by the nature artist in advancing the cause of care and conservation. In his introductory remarks Bob noted that "... people around the world are moving into an era of serious environmental debate. The immediate decades ahead may well decide whether man can live a comfortable, secure life, or whether he must face the wretchedness that will inevitably result from continued environmental decline. From the beginning of historical time, this great concern regarding the environment has been reflected in nature art..... it is known that 30,000 years ago during Paleolithic times, artists among the prehistoric clans were making exquisitely expressive drawings and polychrome images deep in the caves of France and Spain mainly depictions of animals with which prehistoric people had to contend. We citizens of the 20th Century no longer need to depend on wild animal life for sustenance and the remaining animals are no longer a source of fear and danger. However, to the contemporary nature artist, the state of the surviving wildlife of the world and the ailing global environment are deep and abiding concerns. The contrasts in the condition of the natural world from its pristine state until now are nearly unbelievable. Nature art has reflected these changes in countless ways for decades."

Bob mentioned in particular the works of "pioneer artists who endured physical hardship and personal adversity to capture their impressions of the natural world and present their work to the public." Among those mentioned perhaps the best known was John James Audubon (1785-1831) whose famous works, including "The Birds of America," comprise a major contribution to American art and the understanding of the world of nature. Modern day nature artists continue to bring enjoyment to the public, but the purpose of their work is now broadened to include education in the world conservation movements.

In illustrating his presentation, Bob showed a number of very interesting slides which showed the works of many nature artists from times long past up to the present days. He also included slides of some of his own works and related the circumstances under which they were painted. (At one time Bob, his wife, and their daughter "sat out" a growing tornado, observing its various stages from their car, which was littered with the corn and beans swept from the fields by the fury of the winds!)

The final part of the slide presentation depicted the work done by Bob on a mural recently installed in a building at Southeastern Illinois College in Harrisburg, Illinois. This school has established an outdoor environmental laboratory and Bob's painting, installed in the main building as an introduction to this project, is a picture symbolizing the southern Illinois area which is under study. On a 4½ ft. x 14 ft. panel, which has a solid mahogany base covered with canvas, is a composite scene of the woods, rivers and bottom lands typical of the area, with the native wildlife found there both at present and in days gone by. Several slides show the moving of the panel from the studio to the permanent site. The installation was carefully engineered and included a feature which allows the panel to move enough to avoid damage in the event of an earthquake - a real possibility in this area.