



# SANGAMON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# HISTORICO

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MARCH, 1991

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## LOOKING AHEAD - PETER CARTWRIGHT AS WESTERN FOLK HERO

The Sangamon County Historical Society will meet at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, March 19, in the Carnegie Room at Lincoln Library to hear a program on the pioneer circuit rider, Peter Cartwright. Edwin Booher, an English Instructor at Lincoln Land College, will explore the imaginative and literary significance of the famous frontier preacher. Cartwright was a charismatic man who helped to spread Methodism across the Midwest and embodied the cultural ideal of a Western hero. His prowess in exhorting early settlers to seek salvation was legendary in this area and hundreds attended his camp meetings. An Illinois Historical Site marker in Pleasant Plains notes his residence there from 1824 to his death in 1872, and that town's Methodist Church bears his name and houses some of the memorabilia of his days as the minister there. His grave is in the town's cemetery. Cartwright also was active in promoting elementary education in Pleasant Plains and in encouraging the establishment of McKendree College in Lebanon, IL. He also was a politician, elected twice to the state legislature, but losing to Abraham Lincoln when he ran for U. S. Representative in 1846. We are looking forward to Mr. Booher's program on this famous pioneer of our county's early days.

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April meeting - the Society will meet at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 16, at Lincoln Library for a program on the Illiopolis Ordnance Plant by Dave McArthy.

## A LOOK BACK - WE WENT TO COURT !

Yes, we did to to court - to the Supreme Court of Illinois on Feb. 19 for a most informative program and tour with the Supreme Court Marshal, Carolyn Taitt. Mrs. Taitt has served the court for fifteen years, starting as a deputy clerk, then holding the position of administrative assistant for the marshal's office for about twelve years before her appointment as marshal by the seven Supreme Court justices. Her duties include the supervision of the maintenance and security of the building and grounds as well as keeping order in the court when it is in session. It also is her duty to bring to the court attorneys from any part of the state when they are in legal trouble.

Our Supreme Court represents the highest in state law, and has charge of the Illinois legal system. It has been meeting in

this building since 1908. Previous to that time, circuit riders held court in Mt. Vernon, Ottawa, Chicago, and in all of the cities which have been our state capitals. At one time, probably while the new capitol was under construction, the court met on the third floor of the old Herbert Georg studio downtown on S. Fifth Street. Later it was housed in the second floor court room in the south wing of the present capitol building until its own building was completed in 1908. The sum designated for the construction and furnishing of the new court building was \$500,000 - and some funds from that total were left over! During a renovation eight or nine years ago it was estimated that a replacement cost would run from twenty-seven to twenty-eight million dollars.

The court meets officially in the Supreme Court chamber in January, March, May, September and November for about three weeks at each session with a one-week meeting in June before the summer adjournment. It is the highest court of review in the state's 3-tier system. (1) A person appearing before the Circuit Court has the right to a jury trial or to a bench trial (which is heard by the judge or the court without a jury). (2) An appeal of the Circuit Court verdict may be made to the Appellate Court, which has five judicial districts in the state (determined by population). No witnesses or juries are involved here. Each case is reviewed by three Appellate Court justices. This court meets about one week a month and must take any case appealed. (3) After this procedure a defendant may choose to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court, which may decide whether or not to accept the case. Each of the seven justices studies each case and casts a vote, and the majority decides which cases to hear - usually about 10 or 15% each year. Some cases are automatically accepted, including those concerning Constitutional questions, death penalty cases, and disciplinary actions against attorneys.

While the Court is in session the justices work part of the time in the conference room (which is back of the Supreme Court chamber), usually for five or six days in each session. Both on the bench and in the conference room the justices are seated in order of seniority of service. In the court chamber they hear the oral arguments on the docket of cases set for each day, usually six or seven. It is not unusual for justices to leave the chamber during the presentation, but the arguments continue not only because they are tape recorded but also are heard over speakers in the conference room - and even in the rest rooms! Attorneys' arguments in the court room are timed by the clerk - in a death penalty case each side is allowed thirty minutes to present its side, followed by a ten-minute rebuttal time for the appealing attorney. In other cases each side has twenty minutes plus the ten-minute rebuttal time.

After hearing the cases for the day the justices work together at their conference table and take "first impression" votes. The total number of cases is divided among the justices. During the time between the sessions held each year they work on these cases, usually at their offices in the districts they represent, where each has two or three research clerks (usually newly graduated lawyers) and a secretary. As an opinion is written on each case a copy is sent to the "reporter of decisions" office in Bloomington. From this office copies are sent to all of the justices. Much time is spent discussing opinions, and four members of the court must agree before an opinion is considered official. After that, for the record, other justices may write dissenting opinions, and it even is possible that some cases may be sent back to the Circuit or Appellate Courts.

The case load for the justices is very heavy and the work demands their full time. They are not allowed to conduct private law practices. While in session the justices live in the Supreme Court building where each has his own bedroom, bath and study on the third floor. There is a central living room, dining room and kitchen, and a lady who has done this work for thirty-eight years manages the entire third floor, including the cooking.