

The tour of Alton will feature some of the older sections of the city and historic buildings still standing. A stop will be made at the monument to Elijah P. Lovejoy and at his grave site. The Rev. Lovejoy, a Presbyterian minister, avid abolitionist, and newspaper publisher, was one of the earlier and more courageous fighters against slavery. He was killed in November, 1837, by a mob bent on destroying his newspaper press because he continued to publish his strong anti-slavery views in his paper, the Alton Observer.

### A LOOK BACK - AT PETER CARTWRIGHT

The Sangamon County Historical Society met at Lincoln Library on March 19 to hear Lincoln Land Community College instructor Edwin Booher present a program on Peter Cartwright, the frontier circuit rider, as a Western hero. Preceding his program Ed showed a number of slides featuring the Cartwright family, early homes and preaching sites of the pioneer Methodist minister, and some of the Cartwright memorabilia which can be seen at the Pleasant Plains church which bears his name. Both in person and through literary research Mr. Booher has retraced the trails followed by the pioneer preacher from Cartwright's early days in Kentucky and throughout his long life. One of the sources often used was Cartwright's own Autobiography, written in 1856 when he was 71 years old.

Peter Cartwright was born in Virginia in September, 1785 and migrated with his family to Kentucky where part of his boyhood was spent in a "depraved and wicked region of the frontier," in a town appropriately named "Rogue's Harbor." During the era of the great Kentucky Revivals, which took place from about 1795 to 1802, Cartwright, as a boy of sixteen, experienced a "backwoods conversion" from the wild ways of his youth. The young man was licensed as an exhorter and circuit rider in 1802, following the Methodist beliefs of his mother. First known as the "Boy Preacher", he was ordained a deacon at twenty-one and an elder at twenty-three. From 1804 - 1811 his circuit riding took him into areas of Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Indiana. In 1808 he had married Frances Gaines, and to this marriage were born nine children. After twenty years Cartwright felt that he needed new opportunities both for his work and for his family. In Kentucky, a Southern state, he felt a prejudice against the children of poor families such as his, and he completely disapproved of the Southern support of slavery. The family moved to Illinois from Kentucky in 1824, encountering tragedy on the journey when their young daughter, Cynthia, was killed by a falling hollow tree at their campsite in southern Illinois. The family settled in Pleasant Plains, at the edge of the wilderness at that time. Indian country lay to the north and the Sangamon River bottom was a favorite winter campground for the native tribes. The Cartwrights lived in a log cabin, later replaced by a brick home, and Peter led his congregation in the village to build a Methodist Church. His circuit travels still took him on long six-weeks journeys, typically north to Rock River, then to Galesburg, to Canton, south to Pike County, across the Illinois River at Beardstown and back home. He preached "a fundamental Christianity, morality and grace," and felt that it was the destiny of the West to witness "the creation of a new life in the spiritually unredeemed, sinful humanity on the frontiers of a developing nation." As Mr. Booher noted, circuit riding was "the spark that ignited the faith." Peter Cartwright felt that simple, direct exhortation was the best way of fighting the powers of darkness and bringing a new birth of the spirit to the frontier.

The Cartwrights were a farm family, working their small landholding which eventually they increased to 600 acres. Peter gloried in the beauty and fertility of the state's farmlands. In countering efforts to make Illinois a slave state, he entered politics and fought for progressive causes during two terms in the state legislature, to which he was elected in 1828 and 1832. He served on about twenty committees, where he promoted the establishment of better schools, roads and farming methods. In an attempt

to win election to the United States House of Representatives in 1846 he was defeated by Abraham Lincoln, but later, after Lincoln became President, Cartwright defended him as a gentleman and a patriot and a "rescuer of this country from perils now before him." To him, liberty and the Union were inseparable.

Cartwright was not only physically sturdy and inured by frontier hardships, but also was fearless, assertive and resolute in his beliefs. Many tales have grown up about his prowess in exhorting his camp meeting followers to see the light of the Lord's truth - and in the use of his physical strength to discipline those who disrupted his services. Some of these tales are true - others are myths - but in his own writings he did state that "... we old time preachers had to have a steady nerve and strong fists."

Peter Cartwright served his church for 65 years (53 of these as a circuit rider), retired at age 86, went on a speaking tour of the Midwest lecturing on Western history, and wrote a second book, Fifty Years as a Presiding Elder. He died in September, 1872, and is buried, beside his wife, in the cemetery at Pleasant Plains.

Cartwright may be characterized as a true Western hero because, as Mr. Booher pointed out, he is identified with these Western views which were prevalent in this country in the 19th century: the West was both a real place for advancing pioneer goals, and also an ideal place for carrying out the more abstract goals - "culturally as old as the ancient Utopian dreams that brought the colonists to this country"; the West was a setting for rebirth and regeneration; the West was a "garden" for cultivation not only of the soil but of independence; the West was a place for the pioneer to "conquer and subdue ugly antagonistic forces"; the "real Westerner" can be portrayed "in exaggerated and sublime language." Peter Cartwright embodies all of these themes. In the words of the author, Milburn, "... he had stood on the outskirts of civilization and welcomed the first comers to the woods and prairies." And he brought with him to the West the Word of God, both to change and to sustain the pioneers.

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We were pleased to have at this meeting several descendants of Peter Cartwright who still live in this area.

Program chairman Polly Myers served refreshments following the meeting. We appreciate Polly's fine work this year in arranging for so many excellent programs.

### LINCOLN HOME NEWS

April 14 marks the anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln who died on the following day, Apr. 15, 1865, after being shot by actor John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater in Washington. In observance of this date the Lincoln Home National Historic Site invites the public to a slide program, The Assassination of President Lincoln, by Lewis T. Mallow, Jr., retired from the staff of Chippewa Valley Technical College. Mr. Mallow has done extensive background research for his program and it has been well-received by many audiences. It will be shown at the Lincoln Home Visitor Center, 426 S. Seventh St., on Sunday, April 14, at 10:30 A.M., 12:00 Noon, 1:30 P.M., and 3:00 P.M.

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The State of Illinois closing of historic sites for two days each week will not affect the Lincoln Home National Historic Site as it is a national site, federally operated, not a state site. In fact, the spring schedule hours are extended. From April 1