



SANGAMON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICO

308 East Adams Street • Springfield, Illinois 62701 • (217) 522-2500

NOVEMBER, 1991

LOOKING AHEAD - ILLINOIS, A FREE STATE

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The Sangamon County Historical Society will meet in the Carnegie Room at Lincoln Library on Tuesday, November 19, at 7:00 P.M. to hear Kathleen Friedman speak on "Keeping Illinois a Free State; the Work of Governor Coles and Morris Birkbeck."

The young state of Illinois experienced a difficult time during the early part of its first decade. In a pro-slavery climate an attempt was made to hold a convention to change the original state constitution to one which permitted slavery. Two men were chiefly responsible for thwarting this attempt - Edward W. Coles and Morris Birkbeck. Edward Coles, Illinois' second governor, a Virginian by birth and an avowed abolitionist, devoted organization, strong effort, and his personal fortune to defeat this move. Morris Birkbeck, an English Quaker immigrant, provided the literary skill and the appeal to the common man of Illinois, which Coles' campaign lacked. Their time on the stage of Illinois was fleeting. Their contribution was lasting.

Kathleen Friedman

(Kathleen Friedman, a member of our SCHS Board, is a descendant of George Flower, who, like his associate, Morris Birkbeck, came from England in the early 1800's. These men and their families established an English settlement on the prairies of southeast Illinois. George Flower was the founder of Albion, the county seat of Edwards Co.)

A LOOK BACK - THE 1991 LINCOLN COLLOQUIUM

The Sixth Annual Lincoln Colloquium, held on October 26, at Sangamon State University, drew over 220 people, coming from many states to hear the nationally known historians who presented this year's program. The Historian of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, George Painter, reports that the comments of those attending indicate that the Colloquium is "better and better" every year. George, a former president of our Society, founded the Colloquium in 1986 and has been its coordinator each year. Our Society is one of the sponsors, together with the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, the

Eastern National Park and Monument Association, the Lincoln Group of Illinois and Sangamon State University.

Following the opening remarks and welcome by George Painter and Mayor Ossie Langfelder, former U.S. Representative Paul Findley spoke on the legislation that he authored 20 years ago which established the Lincoln Home as a National Historic Site in August, 1971. John Y. Simon, history professor at Southern Illinois University, noted that the sentiments of many citizens were turned against the South when the attack on the weak and practically defenseless Ft. Sumter was ordered by Confederate President Jefferson Davis. History Professor Emeritus Richard N. Current, of the University of North Carolina, spoke on one of the lesser-known aspects of the Civil War when he discussed the fact that many white Southerners had joined the Union Army. The president of the Abraham Lincoln Association, Frank J. Williams, spoke on the characteristics of Abraham Lincoln as compared with and contrasted to those of other world statesmen of that era. Lincoln's leadership, his compassion, and his use of language were noted. Mr. Williams' presentation was effectively illustrated with a number of slides. James M. McPherson, Professor of American History at Princeton University, presented a paper on the sometimes controversial topic, "Who Freed the Slaves?" He took the path of reasoning from the long-accepted answer, "Abraham Lincoln," to the logical final answer, still "Abraham Lincoln", by showing how the close study of historical facts leads to this conclusion. Lincoln, who had long opposed slavery, was elected president in spite of Southern opposition, eventually causing the South to secede. The war which followed sealed the eventual fate of slavery, which Lincoln believed should not exist in a country founded on the tradition of the equality of all men. However, his belief in gradual emancipation instead of the continuation of the war, as the total abolitionists wanted, eventually saved the Union and did away with the institution of slavery in the United States.

The papers which were presented will be published in a booklet to be sent to all those who registered for the Colloquium. Eventually copies also will be for sale at the book store at the Lincoln Home Visitor Center. The 1990 Colloquium booklet (\$14.95) is now available at the Visitor Center, 426 South Seventh Street.

BOARD MEETING REPORT

The SCHS Officers and Board of Directors met on October 9 at Lincoln Library with 17 members present. The secretary's and treasurer's reports were read and accepted. Our total balance in all accounts is \$22,576.36. President Cullom Davis announced upcoming events - the Lincoln Colloquium on October 26 and the program on Nov. 19 by Kathleen Friedman. He also expressed thanks to Kim Efirm for the fine fall tour on Sept. 28. Finance chairman Tom Patton asked all committee chairmen to present an estimate for their committee expenses in time for the next Board meeting. He also distributed copies of the application for project funds to be used by persons or organizations seeking grants from the Society for projects creating or promoting interest in the history of Springfield and Sangamon County. Tom led a discussion on the details of the application and guidelines for its use. Committee reports followed. John Macpherson announced that the Pioneer Park committee had appealed for reconsideration of county taxes leveled on the park. Tour Chairman Kim Efirm reported a very satisfactory trip to the Galesburg and Peoria areas on September 28, with twenty-two in attendance. The Board approved a \$10.00 donation to the Citizens to Preserve Jubilee College organization. George Painter announced that the pre-registration for the Lincoln Colloquium is proceeding well, and that