



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

308 East Adams Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701 217-522-2500 [www.sancohis.org](http://www.sancohis.org)

MAY 2010

## Ex-Illinois Political Columnist Taylor Pensoneau to Spotlight “Governors and Gangsters” May 18

Former *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* Illinois political columnist and author Taylor Pensoneau will share his knowledge of Illinois political history and gangster legend and lore when he speaks to the Society about “Governors and Gangsters” on Tuesday, May 18.

The session, open to the public, starts at 7 p.m. in the Carnegie Room at the Lincoln Public Library, 326 S. Seventh Street, Springfield.

A former president of the Sangamon County Historical Society, Pensoneau spent 12 years as the *St.*

*Louis Post-Dispatch* Illinois political correspondent. He is the author



PENSONEAU

of *Brothers Notorious: The Sheltons*, *Southern Illinois’ Legendary Gangsters*, as well as three biographies of Illinois political heavyweights: *Dan Walker: The Glory and the Tragedy*; *Richard Ogilvie: In the Interest of the State*; and *Powerhouse: Arrington from*

*Illinois*.

He also has penned one work of fiction, *The Summer of ’50*, a mystery that revolves around Jake Brosky, a colorful investigative reporter for the *St. Louis World*.

After his overall 16-year stint with the *Post-Dispatch* ended in 1978, Pensoneau began a 26-year career with the Illinois Coal Association, the trade organization for the state’s coal industry. He retired in December 2003 as president of the association.

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## Lincoln Home Historian Timothy Townsend to Keynote Annual Dinner

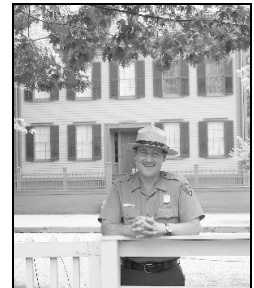
When members and guests of the Sangamon County Historical Society gather in Williamsville next month for the organization’s annual dinner meeting, they’ll get some special insight into a Presidential election that changed history... 150 years ago.

Providing that look will be Tim Townsend, historian at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield and a past president of the Society. Townsend, a nationally-known

expert on Lincoln, will be the featured speaker at the Tuesday, June 15 gathering that is expected to draw more than 100 people to Williamsville’s Community Center/Municipal Building.

His topic will be “*We Will Give You a Larger House on the Fourth of March: The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Lincoln’s Presidential Election.*”

*(Continued on page 7)*



TOWNSEND

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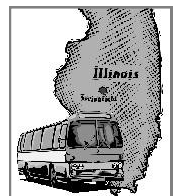
It’s Time to Renew



Special Form Inside

### Take A Bus Trip into Springfield’s Past!

The Society and the Iles House Foundation are partnering on a very special bus tour June 5 and you’re invited! See details, page 3.





# Long Range Planning for the Society Needs Your Input

The Long Range Planning Committee report, the results of a year-long study, was presented by chairman Dave Scott, at the March Board meeting.

The LRP Committee report focused on job descriptions for Board members, a planned giving program, gathering program ideas from other historical societies, developing cooperative programs with other organizations, expanding family programming and exploring historical preservation, but left it to the Board, perhaps with input from the membership, to decide whether and how to incorporate the concepts.

The Board followed up in April with a planning exercise led by Vicki Megginson. The planning exercise focused more broadly on the society's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT).

It was easy to agree that we have a county with an unusually rich heritage, a great asset in the Sangamon Valley Collection and its leadership, a good reputation over our almost 50 years in the community, a wonderful newsletter and website and treasures in Mary and Theresa at Robinson's who have held us together all these years.

We agreed that our weaknesses included fairly stag-

nant membership numbers, under-utilization of volunteers, need for more leadership, greater technological sophistication and more family oriented programming.

After a short discussion and listing of Opportunities and Threats to the society, Vicki attempted to sum up where our one hour session had led us: the need for a future central office of some sort; need for membership growth of all ages; commitment to being a county wide organization or reorganize as a 'city' organization; the need to keep abreast of current communication methods and, as Vicki warned in closing, to beware of assuming what our *current and potential membership wants without really checking with them.*

It was clear to all that we have begun a process that will take more time and study, and we would like input from the membership and are quite aware that today's best format for that is a 'blog.'

Is there any member out there who would be interested in hosting a blog for the society?

Nancy

## MAY MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Sangamon County Historical Society is pleased to add the following people to its membership this month:

### Life Members

Tony Leone  
Thomas H. & Jane A. Niedzielski

### New Family Members

Robert & Marilyn Brozio  
Kiran Desai  
Paul & Jerold Gruebel  
Lucas-Brown Partnership  
Lee & Carol Shafer

### New Individual Members

Julie Baker Dixon  
Jan T. Kessinger  
Marian Galloway Marvin  
Jean Richards

*Membership in the Sangamon County Historical Society is open to both individuals and families. Dues are \$17.50 per year for individuals, \$25 for a family, \$50 for a sustaining member. For Individual Life Membership, there is a one-time payment of \$250 and for Family Life Member, a one-time payment of \$400. For a membership form and/or additional information, contact the Society at 522-2500 or write to us at 308 East Adams Street, Springfield, IL 62701.*



## 2009-2010 Officers Sangamon County Historical Society

President.....Nancy L. Chapin  
Vice-President.....David Scott  
Secretary.....Curtis Mann  
Treasurer.....Paul R. Mueller

### Directors to 2010

R-Lou Barker ♦ Elaine Birtch  
Kim Efir ♦ Sue Wall ♦ Martha Wolters

### Directors to 2011

Jack Alexander ♦ Connie Locher Bussard  
John Huther ♦ Don Springer ♦ Jane Vetter

### Directors to 2012

Tim Krell ♦ Vicki Megginson  
Donna Catlin ♦ Roger Whitaker ♦ James H. Beaumont

### Honorary Director

William Hughes Diller Jr.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS: *Finance:* Tim Krell; *Hospitality:* Jane Vetter; *Long Range Planning:* David Scott; *Membership:* Connie Bussard; *Nominating:* Phyllis Eubanks; *Program:* Jack Alexander; *Tours:* Susan Hammond; *Project Awards:* Elaine Birtch; *Publications:* John Huther; *Historico* editor: Vicky Whitaker.

## Society, Elijah Iles House Foundation Teaming Up For June 5 Bus Tour Along Historic Sugar Creek

Members and guests of the Society and the Elijah Iles House Foundation will be able to take a bus trip back in time on Saturday, June 5 in a jointly sponsored tour of the Cotton Hill District, Sangamon County's birthplace. The area—in and around Sugar Creek—was home to the first generation of settlers here.

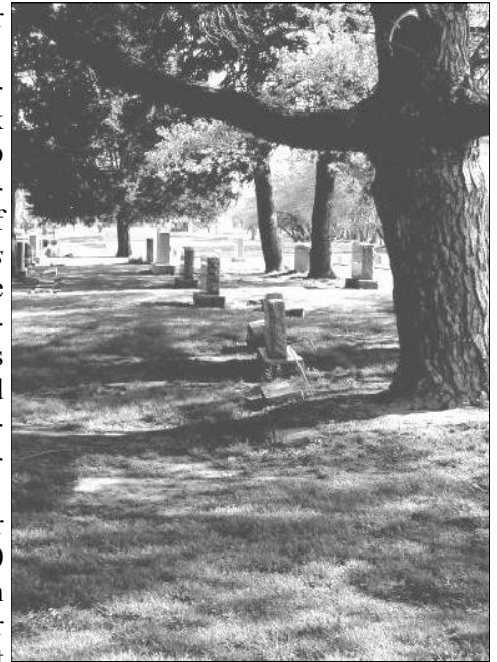
Traveling in a comfortable, air conditioned tour bus, trip takers will hear stories and descriptions of Sangamon's earliest settlement sites and view over five 19th century farm houses and early family cemeteries. At two of the cemeteries, actors will portray several of the early settlers buried there.

The tour, expected to take about two-and-a half hours, will leave from the Meijer's parking lot off Veterans Parkway (Route 4), Springfield, at 1 p.m. Sites and history along the route of what used to be the south side of Sugar Creek will be detailed by historian Dick Hart on the way down. He'll

do the same for the north side of Sugar Creek on the way back.

The tour is the first of several activities in preparation for John Mack Faragher's visit to Springfield to help the Society celebrate its 50th anniversary next April. Faragher, author of "Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie" (Yale University Press), is the Arthur Unobskey Professor of American History at Yale. Faragher teaches the history of the American West and directs Yale's Howard R. Lamar Center for the Study of Frontiers and Borders.

Tickets for the bus tour, at \$40 for members of each organization, and \$50 for non-members, can be ordered from the Society. You can use the order form that's part of the insertion sheet in this issue of *Historico*. Checks should be made out to the Sangamon County Historical Society. Reservations and seating will be taken on a first come, first served basis.



**HISTORIC CEMETERY:** Bus tour takers will see some of the historic cemeteries in the Sugar Creek area. At two stops, actors will portray several of the early settlers buried there.

### New Play, Book from McAndrew

A new play by *Illinois Times* history columnist Tara McAndrew, will make its debut next month at New Salem's Theatre in the Park.

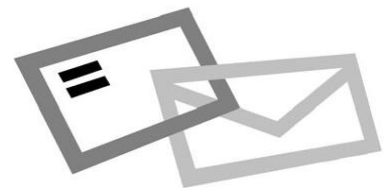
"Yearning to be Free," captures the immigration experiences of families on board the *RMS Capania* from Liverpool to New York City as they journey through Ellis Island in search of a new life in America. The play will run from June 24 through June 27. For hours and ticket information, call 241-3241.

Also anticipated this month: a compilation of McAndrew's local history columns and some new ones in book form, "Stories of Springfield: Life In Lincoln's Town," from History Press. McAndrew previously wrote a history column for the *State Journal Register* and remains a contributor.

### Time to Renew, Upgrade Your Membership

Yes, it's that time of year!

The Sangamon County Historical Society will be wrapping up its fiscal year at the end of the month, a signal that it's time to renew your membership in the organization. A renewal form is included on a separate sheet inserted into this month's *Historico*. Just fill it out and send it along with your check (made out to the *Sangamon County Historical Society*) and mail it to 308 East Adams Street, Springfield, IL 62701.



And think about upgrading your membership, such as moving from the Individual category to Family to include a spouse, child, or significant other in Society activities. Or become a Life Member and pay dues just once!

### Iles House Seeking More Docents For Summer Tourist Season Ahead

More docents are needed at the historic Elijah Iles House in Springfield to enable the house to be open longer during the summer tourist season.

Because of the layout of the house, there must be two docents

in attendance at all times the house is open.

Telling visitors about the house and its history is rewarding and fun. If you think you would be interested in helping out, call Logan McMinn 679-0797.

# 2009-2010 Membership Roster, Sangamon County Historical Society

## LIFE MEMBERS

Charles W. Adams	Nadine Ferguson	Robert C. Lanphier III	Pauline Roesch
Ann Allan	Carol Jean Fraase	Dr. Victor H. Lary	Dorothy Ross
Frances Armstrong	F. Sheplor Franke	Mary Frances Lavin	Patricia K. Rudolph
R-Lou Barker	C. David Franke III	Tony Leone	Edward J. Russo
Daniel Monroe Barringer	Mrs. Carl D. Franke, Jr.	Lincoln Library	Paul Schanbacher
Tadd K. Baumann	Donald Hay Funk	Mary Ellen McElligott	Logan H. Schlipf
Joann Bayer	Farrell & Ann Gay	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas C. McNichols	Nanchen & Michael Scully
Jay Elliott Bell	Linda L. Garvert	Dr. & Mrs. Kriegh P. Moulton	Don Springer
Justin A. Blandford	Karen Graff	Paula S. Myers	Dr. Charles A. Starling
Mary Blumle	Dr. Donald R. Graham	Aislin S. Nickey	Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Stuart Jr.
Edward A. Brooks	Perry & Marilyn Hall	Joe Nicoud Jr.	Don Tracy
Robert H. Bunn	Ginger Harmon	Thomas H. & Jane A. Niedzielski	Enrique J. Unanue
Sally Cadagin	Richard E. Hart	Georgia Northrup	Mrs. A. D. Van Meter
Terri Cameron	Earl W. Henderson Jr.	Thomas D. O'Brien	Elizabeth A. Weir
Donna G. Catlin	Mr. & Mrs. Frederick B. Hoffmann	Victoria O'Brien	Roger & Vicky Whitaker
Charles & Nancy Chapin	Kay V. Hattoon Hofmann	Thomas D. Patton	L. A. Wollan, Jr.
Bradley S. Churchill	Brenda June Holmes	Elena E. Pilapil	Mrs. Harold B. Wright
Job C. Conger IV	Walter Wesley Johnston	Dr. Virgilio R. Pilapil	Mary Jane Wright
Mary Alice Davis	Alex J. Jones IV	Priscilla Reyhan	Dr. Elvin Zook
William Hughes Diller Jr.	Karla Krueger	Sarah Robinson	Mrs. Sharon Zook
John B. Dixon	William S. Klein		
Barbara H. Farris			

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Glen H. Alexander	Lee Eastep & Dorothy Ford	Elizabeth N. Kloppenburg	Lynda E. Skinner
Jack Alexander	James A. Edstrom	David Koss	Elmore W. Snyder
David Barringer	Kim Eford	Margot L. Kramer	Katie Spindell
Mary R. Barringer	Phyllis N. Eubanks	Deborah S. Krohe	Barbara Steward
Byron (Bud) Bartlett	Jane Fee	Ronald D. Ladley	Nicky Stratton
Sherri Boner	James H. FitzGerald	Marion Leach	Joyce M. Stuper
Estella P. Booth	Robin Foster	Doris J. Leonard	Phyllis G. Summer
Norma Brantley	Kerry Franke	Lincoln Home	Dennis L. Sweatman
Tom Brinton	Kathleen F. Friedman	Curtis Mann	Frances M. Telsey
Helen E. Brooks	Lee Gonzalez	Marie Galloway Marvin	Sarah H. Thomas
Daniel Buck	Donald Gottschalk	Robert Mazrim	Karen Thompson
Norman Ray Buecker	Dianne Hardwick	William S. Minder	Glenda Tjelta
Barbara J. Burris	Kathryn Harris	Paul W. Mueller	Mary L. Townsend
Darlene Burtle	Daniel Hiler	Telia S. Murphy	Jone M. VanWinkle
Diane Canavan	Elaine Hoff	Jack Navins	Matthew Vernau
Ileen Casebeer	Newlyn Hosea	Byron Nesbitt	Charlene M. Vollmer
Cathy Caughlin	William J. Hosking	Lorraine O'Hern	Larry A. Von Behren
Chatham Area Library	Doris Hunter	Martine Paludan	Susanne Wall
Margaret J. Collins	Jane E. Hurie	Ian J. Patterson	Richard R. Wallin
Alberta Conover	Jacqueline D. Jackson	David Ramsey	Patricia Warren
Elaine Corum	Jerome Jacobson	Barbara Jean Reid	Robert E. Warren
Cathy Cragoe	Julia L. Jeffers	Jean Richards	Betty Washko
Mary Crane	David Joens	John E. Roberts	Andrew Wilkins
Theresa Faith Cummings	Roberta Johantgen	Orvetta Robinson	Bradley T. Wilkins
Thelma Davenport	John Hunter Jones	John R. Rodenburg	Wynn T. Wilkins
Mary Lou Delahunt	Paul Jones	Joyce Sandage	Bruce Yurdin
Anna Marie Diefenback	L. Eileen Kendle	Todd A. Saviste	
Barbara Weitekamp Diller	George R. Kennedy Jr.	Dorothy Z. Sheedy	
Julie Baker Dixon	Jan T. Kessinger	Dore Skeels	
	Rosemary King		

# 2009-2010 Membership Roster, Sangamon County Historical Society

## SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Dr. Alan & Elaine Birtch

Jim & Madelyn Bogue

Mrs. Walter F. Brissenden

Lawrence & Connie Locher-  
Bussard

Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Church

George Anne Daly

Dr. G. Cullom & Ann Davis

David & Laurie Farrell

Charles & Susan Hammond

John & Catherine Huther

Mr. & Mrs. J. Patrick Joyce

Kent & Sue Massie

Richard McLane

Vicki & Norman Megginson

Paul R. Mueller

Carolyn Oxtoby

John Shafer & Cathy Schwartz

David & Virginia Scott

Harvey B. Stephens

R.W. Troxwell & Company

Joe Victor

Carl W. & Roberta E. Volkmann

John & Martha Wolters

## FAMILY MEMBERS

Bill & Kathie Adams

Gary & Jan Adams

Stan & Carolyn Adams

Jim & Madelyn Allen

Robert & Ann Barker

Douglas M. & Pamela Barringer

Richard Kerhlikar & Judith Barringer

Mary & Jim Beaumont

Linda Bee

Charles & Patricia Boyce

Dave & Jan Brady

Michael & Christine Brophy

Robert & Marilyn Brozio

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Bubnis

Mr. & Mrs. George N. Buck

Mr. & Mrs. John H. Buck, Jr.

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Carlson

Jeremy Carrell

Mary Lynne Cleverdon

Mr. & Mrs. Denis J. Conlon

Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Crome

Diane Crown

Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Davenport

Mr. & Mrs. Kirby Davenport

Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Davenport, Jr.

Robert & Patricia Davis

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Derhake

Kiran Desai

Mary Disseler & James Hoffman

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Dickerman

Lela E. Espenshied

Flagg Farmstead Bed & Breakfast

Stuart & Judith Fliege

William & Galen Furry

Lois M. & Kathryn Gietl

Paul & Jerold Gruebel

Ralph & Nancy Hahn

Mark E. Hansen

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Hiler

Mr. & Mrs. John P. Hiler, Jr.

Preston & Joanne Hott

Susan & Bruce Imig

Mr. & Mrs. William Irvine

Bryan & Mary Lou Johnsrud

Orville A. & Miriam Keirs

Joan Keller

Ronald R & Alvera Knox

David & Cathy Kolaz

Lee Korty & Bert Morton

Tim E. Krell

Terry Bayliss & Joan Lewis

Mr. & Mrs. Loren L. Lowery

Lucas-Brown Partnership

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Lynn

Denise & Robbie MacDonald

Frank & Ruthann Mazrim

Stephen D. & Susan McKenrick

Ralph & Carolyn Moore

Richard & Caryl Moy

Mike & Kathie Nenaber

Mr. & Mrs. Jon Noll

Mr. & Mrs. J.W. Patton

John & Joanne Paul

Phil & Thelma Peabody

Taylor & Elizabeth Pensoneau

John & Janice Petterchak

Patrick Phillips Family

Ernie & Ruth Ponai

Wauline Ann Quick

Lawrence & Elizabeth Reisch, Jr.

Neil & Peggy Riley

Patricia Sabo Family

Mr. & Mrs. William Sausaman Jr.

Dr. Richard & Sally Sellwood

Lee & Carol Shafer

William H. & Bonnie Shannon

James A. & Jo Skeeters

Mr. & Mrs. Duane Slater

Ernie & Ruth Slottag

Robert & Mary Sneed

Mr. & Mrs. Arnold A. Stern

Guy & Edie Sternberg

Larry A. Stevens

Brad & Carolyn Swanson

Robert & Virginia Taylor

Donald P. & Donna M. Thannen

Michael & Debra Thompson

Tim & Diane Townsend

Terry & Judith Ullrich

Larry & Pam VanAlstine

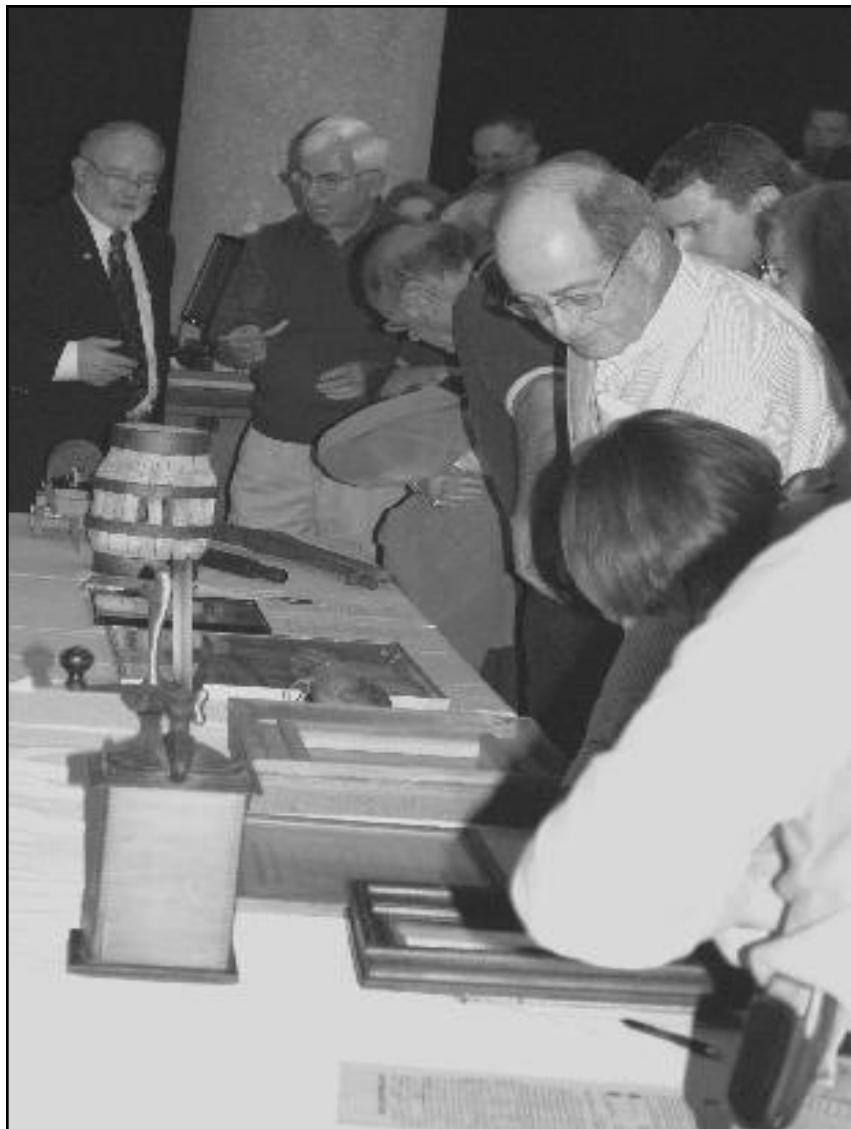
William & Jane Vetter

Gary & Jean Vitale

Richard E. & Mary Ellen Walton

Randall & Karen Witter

**IT WAS STANDING ROOM ONLY** at the University of Illinois Brookens Library Auditorium Tuesday evening, April 20, when an overflow crowd turned out to hear Sangamon County Historical Society board member Don Springer talk about the trials and tribulations of the famed Donner Party. Springer is the great, great, great, great grandson of George Donner, who was chosen to lead the wagon train over the final 1,000 mile portion of the historic journey in which nearly half the party perished after becoming trapped in a winter blizzard in the Sierra Mountains. With his brother Bill and other descendants of the Donner family in the audience that topped 220, Springer provided lesser known details about the Donners prior to settling in Springfield. He also reflected on the motivation behind their decision to leave Springfield in 1846, after 30 years of residence in Sangamon County. After his talk, sponsored by the Society in conjunction with UIS and Friends of Brookens Library, audience members had a chance to look at some of the documents and artifacts related to the Donner Party and talk with Springer (top left, in photo). You can watch a UIS video of Springer's talk by following a link on the Society's website, [www.sancohis.org](http://www.sancohis.org).



## Governors and Gangsters Focus of May Meeting

*(Continued from page 1)*

Pensoneau resides in New Berlin. He and his wife Elizabeth, the retired editor of *Outdoor Illinois* magazine, own and operate Downstate Publications.

In addition to his role with the Sangamon County Historical Society, he has served as president of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

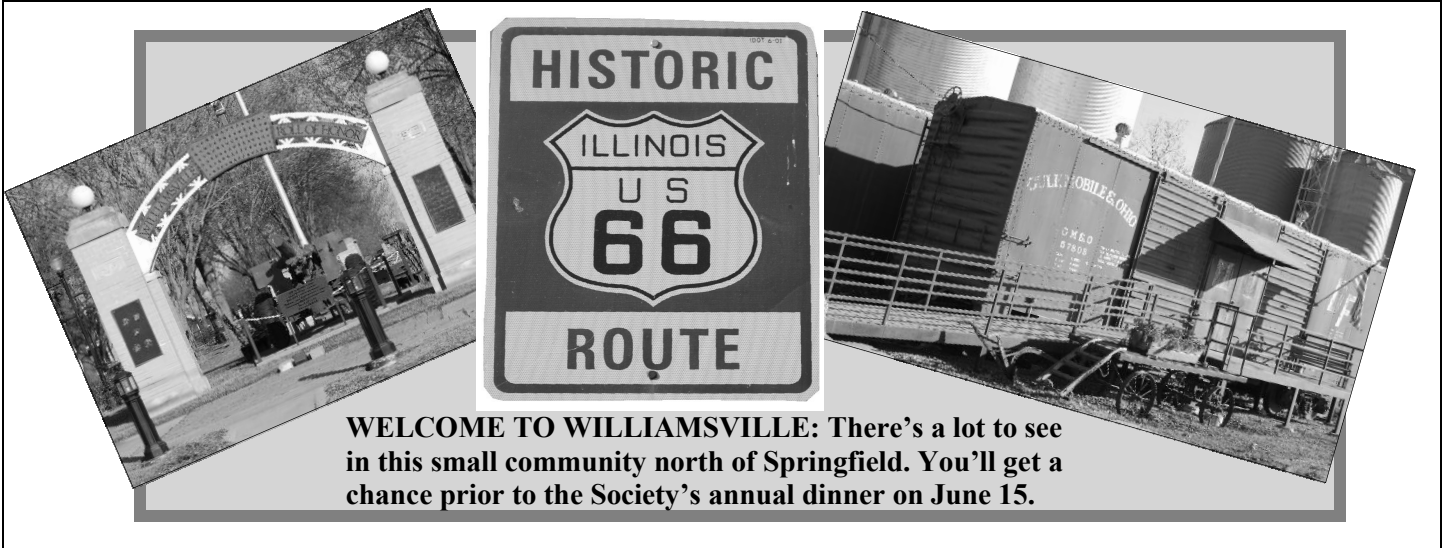
He also is a member of the Advisory Board for *Illinois Issues* magazine and president of the board of the West Sangamon Public Library District.

## *Society Represented at 54th Annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony Held at Oak Ridge Cemetery*

Board member R-Lou Barker officially represented the Sangamon County Historical Society April 15 at the 54th Annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony commemorating the 145th anniversary of the death of Abraham Lincoln. The Society was one of 40 organizations from a wide area placing wreaths at the Tomb during the event coordinated by the Death Day Association.

"I was proud to present the wreath from the Society," said Barker, who observed Tomb staffers ushering several busloads of school children in and out of the historic site during the ceremony. Like those involved in the event, the well-behaved youngsters recognized the solemnity of the occasion, she noted. "There was a feeling of reverence for Lincoln, our martyred president."

A luncheon at the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel followed the ceremony. Abraham Lincoln historian and author Dr. Michael Burlingame was the guest speaker.



**WELCOME TO WILLIAMSVILLE:** There's a lot to see in this small community north of Springfield. You'll get a chance prior to the Society's annual dinner on June 15.

## Lincoln Home Historian Tim Townsend to Speak at Annual Dinner

*(Continued from page 1)*

Townsend, who served as president of the Sangamon County Historical Society from 1999 to 2000, began his career with the National Park Service in 1991 as a Lincoln Home Park Ranger. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in history from St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, and holds a Master of Arts degree in history from the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Prior to his assignment at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Townsend worked on the curatorial staff at the Rock Island Arsenal Museum and was an interpreter at the U.S. Grant Home, the Vachel Lindsay Home, and the Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices. He also assisted with field archeology and research for the Springfield archeological firm of Fever River Research.

"We're delighted that Tim will be this year's keynoter," says Society president Nancy Chapin. "He is a gifted speaker with a depth of knowledge about Lincoln history. We're pleased that he will be able to share his information and observations about the Lincoln Presidential election."

The annual meeting will include some optional pre-

dinner events including tram tours of the community with its architecturally-striking historic homes, the Williamsville Boxcar Museum, the Williamsville Public Library, and a Shell service station wrapped in memorabilia of the pre-interstate Route 66 period just across the street from the village's Community Center/Municipal Complex where the dinner will be held.

Pre-dinner offerings will begin at 5 p.m., with activities moving over to the Community Center when a cash bar opens at 6:30 p.m. and a buffet dinner is served at 7 p.m. The evening will also include the Society's annual elections and a raffle.

Tickets for the event are \$20 per person for members, \$25 for non-members. Seating is limited.

To order tickets, fill out the appropriate section of the insert in this month's *Historico*.

Maps and tour information will be published in the June edition

Williamsville, established in 1853, was originally known as Benton, but the name was changed in 1854 in honor of Colonel John Williams, a local landowner, after residents petitioning for a post office in the community learned there was another Benton in Illinois. Downtown Williamsville is located just off of I-55, about 19 miles north of Springfield at exit 109 (Illinois 23).

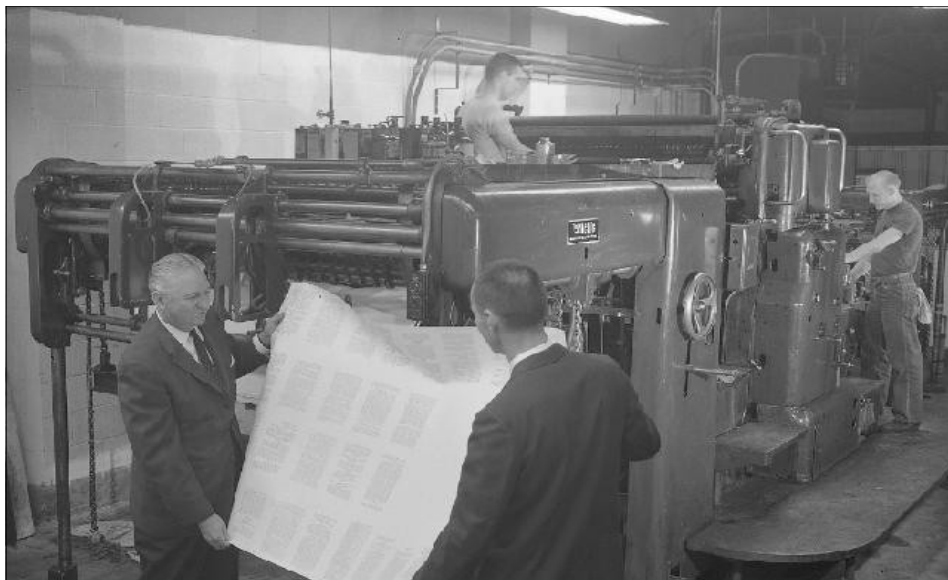


**Tim Townsend**

***Sangamon County Historical Society***  
308 East Adams Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62701  
*Return Service Requested*

Non-profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 777  
Springfield, Illinois

## ***Can You ID This Month's Mystery Photo?***



**LOOK FAMILIAR?** This shot was taken in November, 1963 at Phillips Brothers Printing. Are you in the photo? Know someone who is? It's another in the Society's series of Photo ID contest shots to help the Sangamon Valley Collection at the Lincoln Library identify Mercury Studio photos they're now digitizing. If you can name one or more of those in the photo, send the info along to [research@sancohis.org](mailto:research@sancohis.org). Your name will be entered in a prize drawing scheduled for this month. For more photos, go to [www.sancohis.org](http://www.sancohis.org).

## **2010 Meeting Calendar**

### **Monthly Programs**

*(Third Tuesday)*

**May 18**

*Governors and Gangsters*

**Speaker: Taylor Pensoneau**

*7 p.m., Lincoln Library, Springfield*

**June 15**

**Annual Dinner Meeting**

**Speaker: Tim Townsend**

*Williamsville Community Center  
Municipal Building,  
Williamsville*

### **2010 Board Meetings**

*5 p.m., Lincoln Library, Springfield*

**May 12**