



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

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## *Atheist or True Believer?*

### Historian to Scrutinize Lincoln's Religious Views at February 16 Meeting

Historian Samuel P. Wheeler will provide an in-depth look and perhaps some answers to the controversy surrounding Abraham Lincoln's religious views or lack thereof, when he addresses the Society on **Thursday, February 16** at 5:30 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, which is co-sponsoring the talk.

The program, "*Christianizing Lincoln: Historical Memory and the Religious Views of Abraham Lincoln*" will be presented in the church sanctuary, 321 South Seventh Street and will be followed by a reception.

"The assassination of Abraham Lincoln sparked a war over historical memory," says Dr. Wheeler. "Who was the real Lincoln? What sort of man was he? While many of the individuals who knew Lincoln personally during his lifetime weighed in, scores of individuals who never shared a conversation with the sixteenth president felt just as eager to join the conversation."

Many versions of the "real" Lincoln emerged, he says. His talk will analyze one of the earliest battles in this war over Lincoln's memory—Lincoln's religious views. "One side in this debate claimed Lincoln was a devout Christian. They pointed out that Lincoln referred to God—"Divine Providence," "the Almighty," his "Maker"—in speeches throughout his presidency. Lincoln directly quoted the Bible in his presidential speeches as frequently as any American president."

*(Continued on page 6)*



**INTERPRETING LINCOLN:** The famed Lincoln Window at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. has as its central theme Lincoln's dependence on divine help during his war-plagued administration. The Federal flags and eagle at the top center unite the opposing armies depicted at the right and left sides. A fragment from his Second Inaugural Address appears above all: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right." It shows the president standing beside his pew during the pastoral prayer, as was his custom. President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln first visited the church shortly after he took office on March 4, 1861, and although they never joined the church, they often attended services until Lincoln's death on April 15, 1865.

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**MUSIC LESSON:** Historian and musician Peter Ellertson gave Society members a taste of Illinois frontier culture. More about his presentation on page 5.





NANCY  
CHAPIN

## 2012 Brings Lots of Choices, Deals, and an April Tour!

### CHOICES, CHOICES, CHOICES

We are holding our meetings at 5:30 p.m. this spring and we have had a good audience at the last couple of programs; however, we want to hear from you as to your preference of meeting time being at 5:30 p.m. or at 7 p.m. Those attending the 5:30 p.m. meetings tend to vote strongly for that hour, so we need to hear also from the rest of you. Please let us know your preference by e-mailing [schsoffice@gmail.com](mailto:schsoffice@gmail.com) or calling 525-1961 and leaving a message.

### SUCH A DEAL!

The Membership Committee is offering a special membership to new members for the remainder of this year. A new member can join now for \$40 and their membership will be good through the 2012-2013 year until May 31, 2013. If you have friends who have been thinking of joining, now's the time!

### THE FRIENDS AND SPONSORS CARTEL

The Board has determined that it needs increased revenue in the future in order to carry out its mission and so has authorized a "Friends and Sponsors" group to help carry out that mission. The first results are evident with the 'business card' friends listed on page 7 supporting the *Historico*. If you would be interested in being part of our new 'cartel' please email or call the office ([schsoffice@gmail.com](mailto:schsoffice@gmail.com)) or 525-1961.

### WAR OF 1812 COMMEMORATION

The local chapters of the Society of the War of 1812 are planning to remember that conflict by placing a marker on the Oak Ridge cemetery grave of Ninian Edwards, territorial governor and Commander in Chief of the Illinois forces during that war. Former board member Elaine Birtch will represent the Society on the planning committee. If you'd like to know more about the event, contact Mary Barringer at [marpaybar@comcast.net](mailto:marpaybar@comcast.net) or call 793-4073.

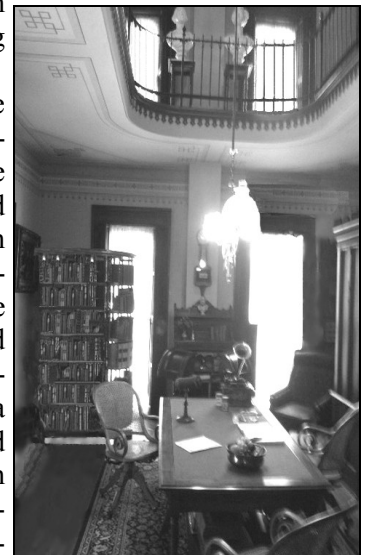
### HOSPITALITY

We have had delicious refreshments at our last couple of meetings, but we have several more meetings scheduled this year and invite anyone who would be willing to help with providing for those occasions to contact Linda Bee, [Linda.Bee@illinois.gov](mailto:Linda.Bee@illinois.gov) or 558-8872.

### APRIL 14 BUS TOUR TO C. H. MOORE HOMESTEAD/DEWITT COUNTY MUSEUM

The Moore homestead in Clinton, Illinois, is a fascinating place that is not very well known. Clifton Moore was a lawyer and land speculator who became a friend of Lincoln's and is felt to have been a factor in Lincoln securing the nomination for President.

Moore purchased the homestead, added an incredible library to it and left the house and a great deal of land to his heirs in trust, which preserved the homestead. Today the house is owned by the Dewitt County Museum and has been restored. In addition to the house, there is a carriage barn with sleighs and buggies, a farm museum with vintage tractors and a threshing machine, a telephone exhibit.



You'll get more details in next month's *Historico*, but you may want to sign-up early. It could be a sell-out! The tour will leave Meijers at 9 a.m. and will cost \$45 per person for members/ \$55 for non-members. You can reserve your place now by sending a reservation and check to the office: 123 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 62701.

Nancy



*Historico*, published 10 times a year, is the monthly bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Back issues are always available on-line in PDF format at our website, [www.sancohis.org](http://www.sancohis.org). We are in the process of redesigning our website. Look for more information in the future. Event updates also can be found on our **Facebook** page ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) and **Twitter**. ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)). Log in and search for *Sangamon County Historical Society*.

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor



## ***Civic Leader, Civil War Historical Re-Enactor Patricia James Davis Elected to Society Board***

Community leader and well-known Civil War and historical re-enactor Patricia James Davis of Springfield has been unanimously elected to the Sangamon County Historical Society's board of directors. She will fill the remaining term of Robert Brozio that ends in 2014. Brozio resigned late last year.

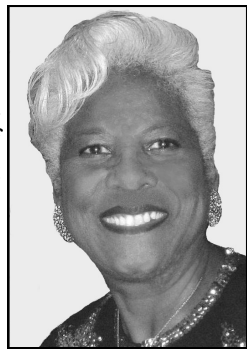
Prior to her retirement in 2010, Davis, who holds a bachelor of science in social work from Central State University in Ohio and a master of social work from the University of Iowa, was a counselor at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. Her professional experience includes serving as a court liaison and public service administrator for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and as an adoption caseworker for Catholic Social Services of Wayne County in Michigan and the Children's Home and Aid Society in New Jersey. During her career, Davis also worked as a personal banker and loan officer for Harris Trust & Savings in Chicago and as a statistical analyst for the industrial division of Deere and Company.

A member of the Society for five years, Davis brings a record of broad community involvement to the board. She serves on the Allocations Committee of the United Way of Sangamon County, is past president of the Pioneer Park

Home Owners Association and has played an active role with the Springfield Chamber of Commerce Leadership Springfield program, the East Side Theatre, the American Red Cross in Rock Island and Sangamon Counties, and the Girl Scouts of America Scott County and Land of Lincoln Councils. She also serves on the entertainment committee for the Memorial Hospital Foundation's annual Festival of Trees.

Davis is a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority and is active in community theater here. She also performs with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. Her husband, Robert, a retired fiscal officer for the State Department of Natural Resources, is also a Civil War re-enactor and historian.

"We're delighted that Pat is coming on to the board. Her broad involvement in history and the community is welcome," said Society president Nancy Chapin. Davis will serve on the Society's nominating committee.



**Patricia Davis**

### **OFFICERS**

- President**.....Nancy Chapin
- Secretary**.....Carolyn Moore
- Treasurer**.....Paul R. Mueller
- Past President**.....David Scott

### **DIRECTORS**

#### **Term Ending June 2012**

- James H. Beaumont
- Donna Catlin
- Jacqueline Jackson
- Ruth Slottag
- Roger Whitaker

#### **Term Ending 2013**

- Linda Bee
- Bruce Beeman
- Claire Eberle
- Elaine Hoff
- Carolyn Oxtoby

#### **Term Ending 2014**

- Mary Alice Davis
- Patricia Davis
- Kathy Hoffmann
- Brenda J. Holmes
- Doug Polite

## **FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP and DONATIONS REPORT**

***The Society welcomes  
the following new members:***

- Dean & Martha Clough
- Pat Collebrusco
- Donald Gottschalk
- David Joens
- Alice Martin

*Gift of Membership from Kathy Hoffmann for:*

- Tim & Jen Humphrey
- Rick & Anne Meyer

***The Society extends its appreciation  
to the following donors:***

- Kathy Hoffmann
- Donald Springer



**RESTORATION and conservation of Edwards Place paintings, furnishing and items that reflect the period of the historic home is in the works as the Springfield Art Association moves forward with a campaign to raise funds to refurbish the historical site.**

*Donna Catlin photos*



### **Edwards Place Readies Restoration Effort**

## **Last Minute Switch Taken In Stride Thanks to Stork, Association Exec**

Thomas Houghan’s secret past will have to wait a little bit longer. Members of the Society learned that first hand last month when they showed up on January 10 to hear Erika Holst, curator of historic Edwards Place provide some scandalous backdrop to the original owner of the Italianate mansion that would eventually become the home of Benjamin and Helen Edwards, social leaders of their time and friends of the Lincolns.

The stork interceded.

Holst went into labor and gave birth to a baby boy just before she was scheduled to appear. Stepping in for her but speaking on a completely different although historically pertinent topic was Betsy Dollar, Executive Director of the Springfield Art Association, which owns and operates the historic site.

The switch gave Dollar an opportunity to discuss the steps that are being taken to restore the various collections of Edwards Place and in doing so, provided Society members with a first-hand look at the initial efforts in advance of a major fundraising campaign to underwrite the restoration of the house and its art collection.

# Music Maker



Peter Ellertson

## Dulcimer Performance Brings Frontier to Life

Amateur musician and music historian Pete Ellertsen took center stage at the Sangamon County Historical Society's January 17 meeting, singing music of the Illinois frontier as he accompanied himself on the Appalachian dulcimer.

A retired journalism teacher at Benedictine University Springfield, Ellertsen previously performed at the Society's "History Through the Arts" celebration in September at the Old State Capitol.

Ellertsen is a frequent lecturer and writer on American folk music. His articles on music history have appeared in *Illinois Heritage*, *Dulcimer Players News* and *the Journal of Illinois History* as *EverythingDulcimer.com* and other magazines and on-line sites. As a trained volunteer interpreter at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, he staffs interpretive stations and demonstrates period music on the Appalachian dulcimer. He also developed presentations on shape-note singing schools and 19th-century "ballads, Bobby Burns and fiddle tunes" for the Road Scholars Program, a speaker's bureau of the Illinois Humanities Council, and coordinates meetings of the Prairieland Dulcimer Strings, a group of amateur musicians in Springfield.

Ellertsen told Society meeting-goers that early mid-western music was what he defined as a "creolization" of Scottish and Irish ballads brought here by immigrants and the African-American rhythms and culture coming up from the South. He credited the Ohio River traffic as being the meeting and mixing place for the new sound.

With the dulcimer as his instrument, Ellertsen sang some of those ballads that, he explained, were given new lyrics and new names. Several much loved folk titles utilized the same melody, he said, and fortunately many of these 'old time' melodies and lyrics have been collected and preserved by various individuals. While dulcimers and banjos were the predominant music of the frontier Illinois, there was most always a fiddler in the vicinity, he added



PROGRAM CHAIR Gary Vitale introduces Ellertsen (seated, right) to the Society meeting attendees. His January 17 presentation was held at Springfield's Lincoln public library.

*Photos by Donna Catlin*

# Historian to Unfold Lincoln's Views On Religion and Show How, When, and Why They Evolved

(Continued from page 1)

And, he says, "These individuals argued that Lincoln's faith was consistent throughout his life, sustained him throughout his darkest hours, and was the real secret to his success. Their interpretation has been influen-

from his childhood, through his time in Sangamon County, and into the White House. To build my case, I will cut through historical memory, examine evidence, and recover the all-important historical context to bring Lincoln's religious views into

lyzing his long-neglected private poetry.

He has been a lecturer in the history department at SIUC, where he taught a number of popular courses in U.S. history, including upper level courses on the Civil War Era and Illinois History, as well as a seminar on the art of Historical Research and Writing.

Before earning his doctorate in history, he worked as a site interpreter at two state historic sites in Springfield, the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office and the Old State Capitol. He earned a Master of Arts degree in history at the University of Illinois Springfield.

In addition to his work in the classroom, Dr. Wheeler is the creator of the interactive website *Lincoln-Studies.com*. He also serves as the Executive Coordinator for the Sangamon County Historical Society and is a researcher with the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, an ambitious documentary editing project that is producing a comprehensive electronic edition of documents written by and to Abraham Lincoln.

**"As men of faith were praising Lincoln as a Christian believer, a dissenting interpretation emerged promoted most famously by William Herndon, Lincoln's third law partner. This interpretation argued that Lincoln was a freethinker, skeptic, and even an outright atheist."**



Dr. Wheeler

tial. Indeed, today Lincoln is remembered as one of the most religious presidents."

However, as men of faith were praising Lincoln as a Christian believer, a dissenting interpretation emerged, he says, "promoted most famously by William Herndon, Lincoln's third law partner. This interpretation argued that Lincoln was "a freethinker, skeptic, and even an outright atheist."

In his talk, Wheeler will look at how these vastly different interpretations developed, as well as the evidence for each.

"On one level, this is an excellent case study to see how history unfolds—how competing historical interpretations are formed. More importantly, at the conclusion of my talk, I will do what has never been easy for historians to do: I will outline Lincoln's religious views and show how they evolved over time—

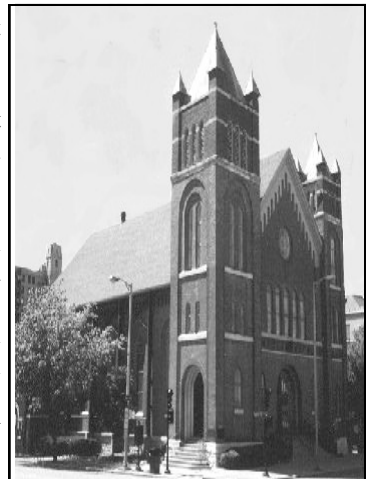
sharper focus."

Dr. Wheeler holds a Ph. D. in history from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. His dissertation, *"Every Spot a Grave: The Poetry of Abraham Lincoln,"* traced the 16th President's literary evolution by ana-

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN: THE LINCOLN CONNECTION

The site of the February meeting at First Presbyterian Church is particularly appropriate, points out Society president Nancy Chapin.

"The Lincoln family became part of that congregation when they lived in Springfield and Mary Lincoln became a member of the church. Abraham Lincoln and the minister, Dr. James Smith, became close friends and Lincoln was part of a church committee that defended the church's position when a dispute arose concerning a claim taken to the Presbytery. When Lincoln was President, he appointed Dr. Smith the United States Consul to Dundee, Scotland. The pew for which the Lincoln family paid pew rent, resides in the narthex of the church,"



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*Anonymous*

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*We don't want to be history*



*Windridge ladies*

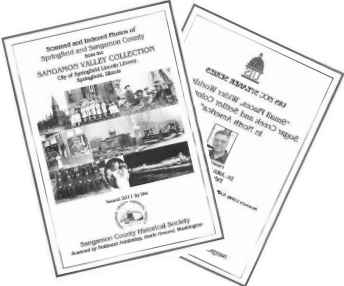
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**NOW AVAILABLE ON DVD!**



The Society has just issued two new DVDs, one with over 1,000 photos from the Sangamon Valley Collection at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library and those brought in by the public to be scanned for the State Journal-Register photo history book series. The other DVD is the lecture Yale University Professor Dr. John Mac Farager made on April 26, 2011 at the University of Illinois at Springfield in celebration of the Society's 50th anniversary. These are two must-have additions to your DVD collection! They also make great birthday, graduation and housewarming gifts!

If you would like to purchase a copy of either or both DVDs, call the Society office at 525-1961 or drop us an e-mail at [schsoffice@gmail.com](mailto:schsoffice@gmail.com).



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## **WINTER-SPRING PROGRAM CALENDAR**

Mark your calendars now! The Society has a range of programs set for the months ahead. Here's what's planned as of now:

**Tuesday, March 20**

***“Circus History in Illinois”*** Speaker: Tara McAndrew 5:30 p.m, Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

**Saturday, April 14**

***Bus Tour to C.H. Moore Homestead/DeWitt County Museum.*** Reservations are now being taken for this day-long bus-trip to the home of Clifton Moore, a Lincoln friend and lawyer and land speculator whose home in Clinton, Illinois is now a museum. In addition to the house with its unique two-story library, the site include a carriage barn with sleighs and buggies, a farm museum with vintage tractors and a threshing machine and a telephone exhibit. Fee is \$45 for members, \$55 for guests. Send a check to the Society office at 123 South Seventh Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701 to reserve a seat.

**Tuesday, April 17**

***“The Sangamon Country and the War of 1812.”*** Speaker: David Brady. 5:30 p.m. Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

**Tuesday, May 15**

***Trip to Power Farm,*** Cantrall, Illinois. 6 p.m. Power Farm owned by Harry and Susie Estill.

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**FEBRUARY 2012 FEBRUARY 2012 FEBRUARY 2012 FEBRUARY 2012**