



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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BIG TOP HISTORIAN Tara McClellan McAndrew (right) will discuss the state’s extensive circus history including that of the Ringling Bros. when she addresses the Society on Tuesday, March 20. See details, below.

Writer to Detail State’s Long Circus History

The state’s little known and extensive circus history--dating back to the 1830s---will be detailed by historian and writer Tara McClellan McAndrew, guest speaker for the Society’s monthly program meeting slated for Tuesday, March 20. Her topic will be *“The Big Top on the Prairie: Illinois’ Circus History.”*

The meeting, open to the public, begins at 5:30 p.m. in the Carnegie Room of the City of Springfield’s Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

“Illinois was a key player in the circus world for many decades” says

McAndrew, who researched the subject for a feature article on *“Illinois’ Rich Circus History”* published last October in the **Cook-Witter Report**. (Circus history fans can get a sneak preview on what made Illinois a popular stop and eventually home to circuses and circus performers by downloading her full article in PDF format from www.cook-witter.com).

“Not only did our state produce top notch circus performers, but we were the winter headquarters for several shows and the opening site for the Ringling Brothers’ circus season for years. Two of our own central Illinois

towns were key to circus history -- Bloomington and Petersburg housed and trained circuses and performers for a long time. Who knew there was center ring sawdust mixed with prairie soil?”

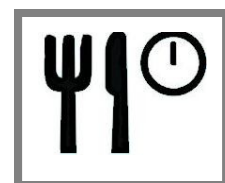
McAndrew has been writing a local history column for about eight years, most currently for the *Illinois Times*. Her book about local history, *“Stories of Springfield: Life in Lincoln’s Town,”* was published in 2010. She is a full-time writer whose roots reach back at least five generations in this area.

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NANCY
CHAPIN

Your Support Will Be Need to Help the Society Grow

Now that we've had a little over a year to figure out what all is involved in keeping things going for the society, we are looking into ways to accomplish it for the future. All of you who attended Sam's presentation at the First Presbyterian Church on February 16 know why we are very excited about having Sam Wheeler on board and believe he will be a great help in getting us focused and working on projects that will interest an ever greater number of members.

Sam is also willing to pick up some of the membership load, but he cannot handle everything in the few hours a week available to him.

We have considered hiring someone part time to manage an office, but quite honestly we can not afford much at this time, and we have considered trying to keep office needs handled by a series of volunteers, but it is pretty difficult to maintain continuity that way.

Currently we are considering an online management system that could significantly change how membership records and other communications are

maintained, but could enhance our service to members.

Whatever way we go, you can all be assured that more will be asked of you as a member than was previously. Robinson's—Mary and Theresa—spoiled us! We know that we will need to have members handle reservations and fees for events and that we will most likely need volunteers stepping up in many ways from time to time.

Likewise we will need members to come forward and help with information and research. The skeletal crew of librarians in the Sangamon Valley Room simply do not have the time to do for us what we had come to expect in the past.

All of this means that we will need to have all members remain alert to ways they might enjoy helping out. We need you, and hope you will find a way to help that is rewarding to you. When you see or hear of something you might be willing to help accomplish, please call or email the office and volunteer. We need you!

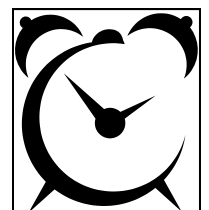
Nancy

Friends Interested in History? Tell Them About Our Membership Deal!

The Sangamon County Historical Society's 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!



Historico, published 10 times a year, is the official monthly bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society.

You can download back issues of *Historico* in PDF format by going to our website, www.sancohis.org.

Event updates also can be found on our **Facebook** page (www.facebook.com) and **Twitter**. (www.twitter.com). Log in and search for *Sangamon County Historical Society*.

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor



Society's New Lunch Hour Lecture Series Starts March 23

A new Sangamon County Historical Society series of lunch hour programs will begin Friday, March 23 on the 5th floor of the building housing the Society's office at 123 South 7th St., Springfield. Lunch will begin at Noon and the program at 12:15 p.m..



JAMES CORNELIUS

Kicking off the Noon series will be Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Curator James Cornelius who will discuss "*Recent Revelations in the Lincoln World, Little and Big.*" He will be followed on March 30 with a presentation by author Roberta Volkmann who will talk about "*The Enigma in the Wright House.*" On April 6, the Presidential Library's Director of Library Services, Kathryn Harris will be the guest

speaker, topic to be announced.



KATHRYN HARRIS

The lunch and program is limited to 20 participants in order of receipt of a check covering either the series of three programs or individual programs. The charge for program and lunch is \$45 for the series or \$20 per individual session. Members may invite a non-member to attend, but a non-members attendee is limited to just one program.



ROBERTA VOLKMANN

Checks should be sent to the Society at 123 S. 7th St. #402, Springfield, Illinois 62705.

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

MARCH MEMBERSHIP and DONATIONS REPORT

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: *Deon Bishop, Betsy Briney, Barbara Burris, Peter Ellertson, Nancy Simpson, Kathy and Sam Wheeler, Marie Wheeler.*

CORRECTION to February new member list: It's *Pamm Collesbrosc*, not Pat.

MEMORIAL GIFT: from *Barbara Dickerman* in remembrance of long time Life Member **John Brown Dixon.**

DONATIONS: from *R-Lou Barker, Jim and Mary Beaumont, Bruce and Joan Beeman, Phyllis Brissenden, Carl and Donna Catlin, Chick and Nancy Chapin, Kiran Desai, Claire Eberle, Elaine Hoff, Fred and Kathy Hoffmann RL and Carolyn Moore, Brad and Carolyn Swanson, Roger and Vicky Whitaker* for the reception following Sam Wheeler's presentation:

SPECIAL THANKS: to *Marion Leach* and her crew of *Sharon Van Eman, Richard and Pat Sabo, Susie Hammond,* and *Sue Massie* for their efforts that resulted in a very attractive and delicious reception! And Marion managed to do it WAY below budget! We are also grateful for the program's co-sponsorship and support from the *First Presbyterian Church!*

Lincoln's Religious Views ...Or Lack Thereof Draws A Big Crowd

Where did Lincoln stand on religion?

That's a question scholars will continue to debate, but it was enough to draw a record-breaking crowd to hear historian Samuel P. Wheeler's views on "Christianizing Lincoln: Historical Memory and the Religious Views of Abraham Lincoln," as guest speaker at a Society-sponsored lecture February 16

The session filled the sanctuary of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, which co-sponsored the talk. While in Springfield, the Lincolns attended and rented a pew at the First Presbyterian Church, then located at Third and Washington. The church building in which they rented a pew for 10 years was later sold and torn down, the congregation moving to its present location on the corner of Seventh and Capitol in 1876.

Though Lincoln injected God and the Bible in speeches throughout his presidency, some scholars argue that he was motivated by politics, not belief. Though remembered as one of the most religious presidents, even his third law partner, William Herndon, argued that Lincoln really was "a freethinker, skeptic, and even an out-right atheist." Dr. Wheeler told the gathering that in his view, Lincoln's beliefs evolved and were accurately reflected in his later writings and decisions.

Dr. Wheeler, the Society's Executive Coordinator, is a researcher with the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, a documentary editing project producing a comprehensive electronic edition of documents written by and to Lincoln. Dr. Wheeler received his doctorate in history from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.



RECORD TURNOUT: About 175 history buffs provided a record turnout for a single Sangamon County Historical Society program on February 16 when historian Samuel P. Wheeler provided an in-depth look at the controversy surrounding Abraham Lincoln's views on religion. The program, held at and co-sponsored by the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, provided a special historical texture to the discussion. After the talk, attendees were able to see the Lincoln family pew that is on display in the church narthex.



TASTEMAKER: Society member Marion Leach gets an assist from fellow Society member Pat Sabo in making a tasty punch that complimented the cookies and desserts Leach created along with platters of food that lecture attendees dined on following the program. The reception held in the Church Commons.

Donna Catlin photos



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A reception following the program provided members and guests with an opportunity to discuss the lecture, dine on delicious food, and look over the Society's many publications.

Unique Combination in Store for Tour Takers

April 14 Trip to Moore Homestead/ DeWitt County Museum, Atlanta

Tickets are going fast for a Society-sponsored bus trip to the C.H. Moore Homestead/DeWitt County Museum in Clinton, Illinois with lunch in Atlanta on Saturday, April 14.

A coach bus will depart from the Meijer's parking lot at 9 a.m. and return at 3 p.m..

"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," notes Society president Nancy Chapin who organ-

ized the trip. "Moore purchased the homestead, added an incredible library to it and left the house and hundreds of acres of land to his heirs in trust, which preserved the homestead. The house was purchased by the DeWitt County Museum and handsomely restored. In addition there is a carriage barn with sleighs and buggies, a farm museum with vintage tractors and a threshing machine, a telephone exhibit.

From Clinton, tour takers will go across country 20 miles to Atlanta, Illinois.

"Atlanta has taken advantage of the Route 66 tourism incentives to restore its downtown to complement its 100 plus-year-old octagonal, limestone library and Illinois' only working wooden grain elevator museum" Chapin points out. Tour goers have the option of having a modestly priced (under \$12) lunch at the Palms, a 1930s restored restaurant.

Send checks to the Society at 123 S. Seventh Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Tickets are \$45 for members, \$55 for non-members.

Area Historians, Researchers to Speak at Illinois State Historical Society Symposium

Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society and representatives of several Sangamon County-based historical or history-related sites will be making presentations or serving as commentators at the 2012 Illinois History Symposium April 26-28..

The event, at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in East Peoria, is sponsored by the Illinois State Historical Society and will be a foray into Midwest frontier history, accenting the War of 1812, Native American history, prairie archaeology, and the historic city of Peoria.

Among the presenters or commentators on April 26 will be Society member and independent researcher **David Brady** of Springfield, who will discuss "*Ninian Edwards and the War of 1812*" as part of the opening session focusing on *Americans on the Frontier*. Also speaking in that session will be **Matthew Perbs**, assistant director of Abraham Lincoln's National Museum of Land Surveying in Springfield, who will discuss "*Contested Lands: Surveying the Illinois Territory and Indian Lands*"

Immediate past Society president **David W. Scott**, a past president of the Illinois State Historical Society, will serve as commentator for a session on *Civilization Moves to the Frontier*.

Society member **Robert E. Warren**, curator of anthropology for the Illinois State Museum in Springfield will talk about "*Illinois Indians in the Illinois Country: Conflict, Disease, and Diaspora*."

Society member **Terri Cameron**, an independent scholar with the Illinois State Historical Society in Springfield, will discuss "*Edwards Trace: Illinois First Highway*" as part of a session on *Revolution and Invasion*. Brady will chair that session.

Among the local historians speaking on April 27 will be:

Dawn Cobb of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in Springfield who will discuss "*Preserving Cemeteries in Illinois* as part of a workshop on *Cemetery Restoration*."

Robert Mazrim of Springfield, Illinois State Archaeological Survey speaking on "*At Home in the Illinois Country: Recent Archaeology at French Colonial Farm Sites in Southern Illinois*."

Society member **Stu Fliege** of the Illinois State Historical Society will chair a session on *Miners and Badger Hits*.

Daniel Stowell, Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Springfield, on "*Bearding the British Lion: Abraham Lincoln and the Memory of the War of 1812*" as part of a session on *Lincoln and the Black Hawk War*.

Wayne Temple of the Illinois State Archives, Springfield, will serve as commentator for that session.

For registration information and fees, call 525-2781 or visit the ISHS website at www.historyillinois.org.

Lincoln, Logan, and the Irish Connection: March 16

The Elkhart Historical Society will present the second of a new season of lectures at the Wild Hare Café, Elkhart on Friday, March 16. "*Abraham Lincoln in Logan County, and the Irish Connection*" will be presented by Professor Emeritus Paul Beaver of Lincoln College who will provide little known facts about Abraham Lincoln in Logan County from 1834-1860. Lincoln was a surveyor, lawyer and politician in and around Logan County and left much documented information. He will also discuss the impact of the waves of Irish immigrants who came into Logan County and the influence they had on Lincoln's political success. Log on to the Elkhart Historical Society web site for a reservation form at www.elkharthistoricalsociety.org.

Big Top Was Big Time In Illinois: Historian to Provide Details March 20

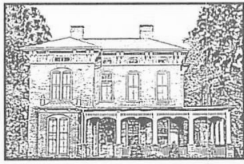
(Continued from page 1)

McAndrew's play about comical local people and events, "*The Lighter Side of Springfield History*," will be performed at Springfield's Hoogland

Center for the Arts in July and her play about Clayville, the historic stage-coach stop near Pleasant Plains, will be performed at Clayville in September. She has written articles for about 35 publications, including the **Chicago**

Tribune Magazine and **Illinois Issues**, and has produced or helped produce radio pieces for **National Public Radio**, **Christian Science Monitor**, **Illinois Public Radio**, and the **BBC**.

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**My Name is Duncan
And I Love History**



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The Community Learning program at Lincoln Land Community College is beginning a non-credit curriculum related to interpretation about people, animals, nature, and cultural artifacts. Upcoming programs include:

Discovery Daytrip: Taylor Studios in Rantoul, one of the busiest exhibit fabricators in the world. March 16, 2012.

Springtime and Gangsters, overnight tour of Southern Illinois, hosted by Liz and Taylor Pensoneau, April 19-20, 2012.

Interpretation and Your Summer Visitors. April 25, 2012.

Vicksburg in the Civil War-The Key. Overnight to Vicksburg, with daytrip to Natchez, May 3-6, 2012

Other offerings, including those leading to certification follow, in association with the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).
For information, call 217-786-2430 or 217-786-2432.



Sangamon County Historical Society
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2012 WINTER-SPRING PROGRAM CALENDAR

Tuesday, March 20

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

Fridays, March 23, 30 & April 6

Lunch and Lecture Series

March 23 ***“Recent Revelations in the Lincoln World,
Little and Big.”***

James Cornelius

March 30 ***“The Enigma in the Wright House.”***

Roberta Volkmann

April 6 ***Mystery Subject*** TBA

Kathryn Harris

All Friday lunches Noon to 1 p.m., 5th floor 123 S. 7th St.,
Springfield. *See page 3 for details.*

Saturday, April 14

Bus Tour to C.H. Moore Homestead/DeWitt County

Museum and Atlanta, Illinois. Bus departs 9 a.m. from
Meijer’s Parking Lot and returns by 3 p.m. *See page 6 for
details.*

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 Farms, owned by Harry and Susie Estill,
6 p.m., three quarters of a mile east of Cantrall, Illinois.

Thursday, June 21

SCHS Annual Meeting, Pleasant Plains, Illinois.
Guest speaker, Sally Cadagin, Sangamon County Historical
Society president, 2002. More details in the next issue of
Historico.