



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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VOLUME 59 NO. 8

OCTOBER 2023

October 17 Meeting to Provide Story Behind An Architectural Legacy

Society members and guests will get a close look at three prominent 19th Century Sangamon County residents whose lives intertwined to make history, architect E.E. Myers and building contractor Ernest F. Gehlmann of Springfield, and their colorful client, Wellington B. Huffaker of New Berlin, when they gather on Tuesday, October 17 for the Society's regular program meeting at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library. The free program starts at 5:30 p.m. in the Library's Carnegie Room.

Talking about the lives and legacies of the three will be Huffaker's great-great-granddaughter, Allisent Huffaker Smith of New Berlin, a retired Springfield School District 186 teacher whose love of history extends not only to her family, but also to the broader community. She served on Dana Thomas House Foundation board for six years, continues on its Education Committee and has been a docent at Dana Thomas House for the past 10 years.

Her great-great grandfather was born in Morgan County in 1829 and raised

on the family farm. At around age 20, Wellington B. Huffaker left Illinois to become one of the *Forty-niners*, pioneers who flocked to California during the 1848-1855 Gold Rush in search of a fortune. After spending almost a year

and stock raising operation to encompass 2,066 acres, becoming one of the most prosperous men in Sangamon County.

In 1866, Springfield architect Elijah E. Myers and contractor Ernst



THINKING BIG: Former California Gold Rush *Forty-niner* Wellington B. Huffaker found good fortune back home, his wealth reflected in a 16-room mansion in New Berlin (here in an artist's rendering) designed by an internationally-prominent Springfield based architect and constructed by an equally skilled Springfield contractor in the mid 1800s. In its day, the Renaissance Revival style mansion, *Fancy Point*, was one of the largest homes in Sangamon County.

in California, mostly hauling freight, he came home without a fortune, returning via the Isthmus of Panama, the Gulf of Mexico, and New Orleans. Huffaker married Lucinda Meacham, daughter of an early settler of Sangamon County and in 1857, bought a 160 acre farm near New Berlin for \$12 an acre, by 1859 expanding his farming

Gehlmann were tapped to design and build a new residence for the Huffakers to be named *Fancy Point*. It would be one of the largest homes in Sangamon County.

The mansion had 16 rooms, including two connecting parlors that were each about 25 feet long and 17 feet wide. *(Continued on page 7)*

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From the President's Desk



CINDA KLICKNA

Oak Ridge Walk A Success! More Good Things Ahead

What a wonderful afternoon on October 1 when some 500 people came out to the Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk!

We had glorious weather as people enjoyed the beautiful cemetery and heard the stories of people who made a difference in Springfield and Sangamon County history. Seven actors portrayed people buried at Oak Ridge. Plans are already underway for next year's walk.

* * *

Our year kicked off with the first program, presented by Erika Holst, Curator of History at the Illinois State Museum. She told stories of several Springfield families and displayed items that were owned by them and now housed at the Museum. These included garments worn by members of the Enos family, a top hat made in Springfield by C. Wolf Company and worn by George C. Huffaker.

* * *

The story of Huffaker was a perfect lead-in to our October 17 program, to be presented by Allisent Smith, the great-great granddaughter of Huffaker. He had his home, called *Fancy Prairie*, built in New Berlin. Smith will share stories about the family as well as the lives and legacies of the builder and the architect.

* * *

Set your calendar for November 14 at the Springfield Art Association. In partnership with the Sangamon County Historical Society, the Dana-Thomas House Foundation, and the Springfield Art Association, the evening's program will focus on Springfield artist, poet, photographer Leigh Gross Day (1861-1910) who was way ahead of her time in the art world. Her work became nationally known, and she was friends with Susan Lawrence Dana whose house was often where she photographed her children.

* * *

It's my pleasure to return to a tradition of the president welcoming new members and their families in this column.

We look forward to their participation and enjoyment as they learn more about Sangamon County history:

Jim Allen Hudson, Beverly Provines, Dr. James Priept, John Owen, Kendra McCarthy, Andy Vandervoort, Keith Pratt, and Charles Matheny.

Cinda



Historico, published 9 times a year (except July, August & December), is the official bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Springfield, Illinois.

Winner, Certificate of Excellence, Illinois State Historical Society.

You can download back issues of *Historico* in PDF format by going to our website, www.sangamohistory.org or sancohis.org. Catch us on Facebook and Twitter. Send event announcements to historicoedi-

SCHS November Meeting, December Holiday Party to be Held at Historic Edwards Place

November and December will bring two opportunities for Sangamon County Historical Society members to learn more about local history and mix and mingle in its environs.

On Tuesday, November 14, the Society, in conjunction with the Springfield Art Association and the Dana Thomas House Foundation, will explore the roots of some of Sangamon County's most prominent history-laced families with a program and exhibit focusing on nationally-known Springfield poet, artist and photographer Leigh Gross Day and her equally famous life-long friend, Susan Lawrence Dana.

The program will be held in the gallery of the Springfield Art Association/Edwards Place Historic Home complex

Project Grants enabling the three organizations to host a program and exhibit of Day's work and her connection to Dana. Many of Day's photographs were shot at the Dana Thomas House.

Klickna and Smith had an opportunity to meet two of Day's granddaughters, Kitsie Demby and Barbara Sutton, who shared stories of their family and Susan Lawrence Dana, and allowed photographs of Day's scrapbooks and art portfolios to be reproduced. These will be shown during the presentation. The artwork by Susan Lawrence Dana, called *Effect in Blue* will also be shared.

Day, daughter of Judge Eugene Gross and his wife, Susan Zimmerman Gross, grew up in the same Aristocracy Hill neighborhood as Susan Lawrence Dana.



EDWARDS PLACE will be the site of both the Society's Tuesday, November 14 program meeting and its annual Holiday Party on Wednesday, December 13 for which details and a reservation form will appear in the November issue of *Historico*.

at 700 North Seventh Street, Springfield, starting at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Society members and their guests will also be returning to Edwards Place on Wednesday, December 13 for its annual holiday party. Details and a reservation form for that event will appear in the November edition of *Historico*.

For the November 14 meeting, Society and current Dana Thomas House Foundation president Cinda Klickna, former Foundation board member and current DTHF Education Committee member Allicent Smith and Betsy Dollar, executive director of the Springfield Art Association will discuss and show some of the professional photographer, poet and author's life and works.

In June, the Society awarded the Dana Thomas Foundation and Springfield Art Association \$1,000 as part of its Special

Eugene Gross was a close friend of Susan Dana's father, Rheuna Lawrence Dana. The two young girls stayed friends into adulthood, with Day, by then a professional photographer, often using Susan's yard as backdrop for her work.

Day's stories, poems, and sketches appeared in several leading publications of the period, including *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *Woman's Home Companion*. She was on the staff of the *Burr-McIntosh Monthly*, published from 1903-1910. Her written work included *In Shadow Town* published in 1907 and *Borderland and the Blue Beyond* in 1908. Married in 1886 to George Edward Day, a Springfield businessman, she died in 1910 at age 48 and was buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery. Her husband died in 1919 at age 65 and is also buried at Oak Ridge.

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OAK RIDGE CEMETERY WALK BACK IN TIME

OCTOBER 1, 2023



Summer-like weather for the start of October along with a slight breeze, gave participants in the Society's annual Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk on Sunday, October 1, a pleasant afternoon filled with lots of local history.

Some 500 visitors were bused to and from the tour starting point from which they walked to seven grave sites to hear costumed re-enactors portray a specific historic individual. The afternoon event also included an opportunity to see the Lincoln funeral hearse provided by the P.J. Stabb Family Funeral Home which had it recreated for the May 2015 Lincoln Funeral reenactment in Springfield marking the 150th anniversary of the President's funeral. (The original hearse was destroyed by fire in 1887).

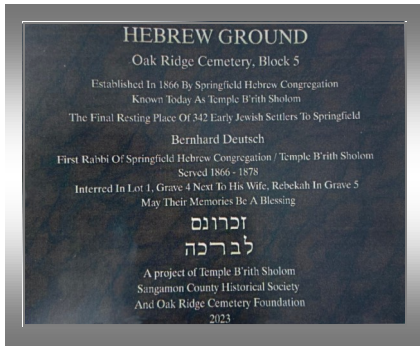
DRESSED in outfits of the period of those they were portraying, cast members for this year's Old Ridge Cemetery Walk were, (front, from left), Pat Foster as photographer Herbert Georg, Erica Smith as lawyer Emma Garrison Templeman, Mary Disseler as Nora Dueuel, wife of the Illinois State Museum director Thorne Deuel, and Tracy Petro who portrayed businesswoman Edna Dye Weaver. In back row, from left, Andy Vandervoort who portrayed manufacturer Edgar Shanklin, Willa Barger as Vera Shoultz, the wife of Reverend Rudolph Schoultz) and Dave Vandevoot as physician Dr. Don Deal.



LOTS TO SEE AND HEAR: Participants in this year's Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk got insight into the lives of some of Springfield's early movers and shakers, walking between several sites to hear re-enactors share the history of those they portrayed (above and below, right), see the reproduction of the historic Lincoln Funeral Hearse (below, left) and listen to period music as performed by the 10th Illinois Infantry Cavalry Regiment and Band (below). *Photos by Larry Stone, Cinda Klickna.*



MAKING HISTORY



DEDICATION: Below, Stephen Stone blows the shofar (Ram's horn) at the plaque's unveiling. It's traditionally used during important Jewish public and religious occasions.



A new plaque at Oak Ridge Cemetery marking “Hebrew Ground”— the resting place of 342 early Jewish settlers to Springfield and Central Illinois— was unveiled in a ceremony on September 17. The plaque, which sits in front of the graves of Springfield’s first rabbi and his wife, was partly financed by a grant from the Sangamon County Historical Society.

About 20 Jewish families formed what was then known as the Springfield Hebrew Congregation in 1858. They first met in family homes and later in various rented spaces around the city. Julius Hammerslough, a clothing merchant and friend of Abraham Lincoln, was the congregation’s first president, and Samuel Rosenwald, father of noted philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, was the incoming president when Hebrew Ground was purchased.

The congregation made its first cemetery purchase, part of Block 5 at Oak Ridge, in 1866 (Hebrew Ground was expanded twice more later). Rabbi Bernhard Deutsch, his wife Rebekah and daughter Paulina arrived in Springfield that same year, after emigrating to the United States from Bohemia.

Rabbi Deutsch served the congregation until 1878. The congregation built its first temple on Fifth Street between Mason and Reynolds streets in 1876, when it also adopted the name Temple B’rith Sholom. The temple now is at 1004 S. Fourth Street.

Rebekah Deutsch died in 1878 and was buried in the Hebrew Ground. Rabbi Deutsch died in 1889 in Carthage, Missouri; his body was returned to Springfield for interment next to his wife.

Those participating in the dedication ceremony included Temple B’rith Sholom president Sam Gorden, temple cemetery chair Max Parienti and the temple’s rabbi emeritus, Rabbi Michael Datz.

Also speaking were congregation members Alan Cherrick and Jamie Myers, an “old settler” descendant.

In addition to Temple B’rith Sholom and the SCHS, the Oak Ridge Cemetery Foundation participated in the plaque project. The SCHS support for the plaque was part of the society’s annual Special Projects Grant program. More information on the grant process is available on the society web site, sancohis.org.— *Mike Kienzler*

Culver Tour, Postponed from Spring, Set to Go on October 21

A chartered bus tour of Colonel James Culver’s iconic historic Springfield buildings, is back on schedule for 1 p.m. Saturday, October 21, sponsored by the Springfield Area Home Builders Association.

Culver historian Lee-Ann Burgener, the Association’s executive officer and a member of the SCHS board, will lead the tour that had originally been planned for last spring.

Reservations are a must since seating is limited. The tour and presentation is \$85 per person, the presentation only, \$25. Refreshments are included. For reservations and information, call 217-698-1941 .

Last April, Burgener, an expert on Culver, provided illustrations and insight into the man and the family who built some 3,000 stone structures in and around Springfield as well as Civil

War monuments around the country in a presentation to the Society. A member of the Historic Decatur Foundation, Burgener’s interest in historic preservation started at an early age as the result of a school project. Today she serves as Historian of Culver House, the restored Decatur home of James Culver’s brother, John Culver, which was built in 1888. John Culver was in the monument business with his brother James and founded the electric company today known as Ameren. She is also on the board of the Historic Decatur Foundation.



Culver

Among the Culver’s Springfield projects were the City Library whose construction was underwritten by Andrew Carnegie, the Franklin Life Building, Governor Tanner’s Monument at Oak Ridge Cemetery, Governor Yates’ home, the Illinois State Military Museum, and the first reconstruction of Abraham Lincoln’s Tomb.

He also built the Illinois Monument at Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi.

Culver worked closely with architects George Helmle and Bullard & Bullard, becoming a general contractor in 1887 when he built the Second Methodist Church at Fifth and Carpenter.

The company name changed to Culver Stone Company in 1894, and it changed again in 1899 to Culver Construction.

Calendar

A Heads Up Guide to Area History Events



Send announcements, information, photos and illustrations to historicoeditor@gmail.com. You can still see a list and links to all the Zoom programs the Society offered during the Pandemic on-site meeting shut-down, by going to the SCHS website, sangamonhistory.org.

Tuesday, October 17: "The Lives and Legacies of Architect E.E. Myers, Builder Ernest F. Gehlmann and Farmer Wellington B. Huffaker," 5:30 p.m. Allcent Huffaker Smith takes a close look at three prominent 19th Century Sangamon County residents including Huffaker, her great-great grandfather, whose lives intertwined to make local history in this presentation for members and guests of the Sangamon County Historical Society, Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street. Free.

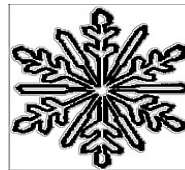
Saturday, October 21: Sites of Springfield: Colonel Culver's Stone Structures, 1 p.m. Leaving from the Lincoln Park Pavilion, 1601 North Fifth Street, Springfield. The bus tour and presentation is sponsored by the Springfield Area Home Builders Association. Reservations and tickets are required (\$85 per person for the tour and presentation by Culver historian Lee-Ann Burgener), \$25 per person for the presentation including refreshments. For information and registration, call 1-217-698-4941.



Saturday, October 21: 12th Annual African American

History Museum Fundraising Gala, 6 p.m., Northfield Inn and Suites Conference Center, 3280 Northfield Drive, Springfield. Tickets \$65, Students \$32. For information call 1-217-391-6323.

Tuesday, November 14: Leigh Gross Day and Susan Lawrence Dana: Bonded by Photos, Art, and Friendship, 5:30 p.m. Springfield Art Association/Edwards Place Historic Home complex at 700 North Seventh Street, Springfield. A panel of experts explores the friendship and work of nationally-known Springfield poet, artist and photographer Leigh Gross Day and her equally famous life-long friend, Susan Lawrence Dana in a program being held in conjunction with the Springfield Art Association and the Dana Thomas House Foundation.



Wednesday, December 13: Sangamon County Historical Society Annual Holiday Party. 5:30 p.m., Edwards Place, 700 North Seventh Street. Ticket information and a reservation form will be in the November edition of *Historico*.

October Meeting to Focus on Historic Mansion With a Prize Winning Design

(Continued from page 1)

The private rooms for the family could be completely shut off from the public rooms.

A local legend says that a team of four horses and a wagon once drove through the downstairs parlors.

Myers would later enter his Italianate design for *Fancy Point* into a design competition at the 1865 Paris Exhibition in France and won a prize.

By the mid 1800s, both Myers and Gehlmann were already prominent in Springfield and beyond. Myers was a leading architect of government buildings in the latter half of the 19th century and the only architect to design

the capitol buildings of three U.S. states: Michigan, Texas and Colorado. He also designed buildings in Mexico and Brazil and multiple courthouses, churches, hospitals, and city halls throughout the United States.

Gehlmann, the contractor, arrived in Springfield from Germany in 1849. Some of his work included rebuilding the Chatterton Opera House in 1879 and remodeling the St. Nicholas Hotel.

He also built many of the luxury homes in and around Springfield for prominent community leaders including James Conkling, George and Jacob Bunn, Dr. George Pasfield, Milton

Hay, and R. L. Herndon.

For *Fancy Point*, Gehlmann used the finest materials, including marble and mahogany, constructing a Renaissance Revival style secretary from the wood of a walnut tree that grew on the property,

Gehlmann made the secretary very large to fit into the grand new house he had built for the Wellington Huffaker family.

Because the secretary is almost ten feet tall, historians guess that the rooms probably had 12-foot ceilings. The historically significant piece of furniture is now in the Illinois State Museum in Springfield.

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Sangamon County Historical Society 2023-2024 MEMBERSHIP/*MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form*

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. Our membership year runs from June 1 to May 31. All memberships cover adults and children 16 and over living at the same address. Be sure to list their full names. *PLEASE PRINT.*

Your Full Name _____ Spouse/Significant Other First Name _____

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Your address _____ City, State , Zip _____ Phone _____

Full Names of other family members included in your membership:

Choose Your Level of Membership. — Regular (\$30) — Pioneer (\$100) — Settler (\$250) —Trailblazer (\$500)
— Lifetime (\$700 one-time fee) — College/University Student (individual) (\$20)

— This is a GIFT (Name of recipient, mailing and e-mail address):

— I am adding a donation to the Society in addition to my membership in the amount of \$ _____

OCTOBER 2023	OCTOBER 2023	OCTOBER 2023	OCTOBER 2023
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