



Historico

The newsletter of the Sangamon County Historical Society
 308 E. Adams Street, Springfield, IL 62701
 www.sancohis.org 217.522.2500

February, 2007

February 14, 2007. Wednesday, 5:00 pm

Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room South

Board Meeting

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Taylor Pensoneau

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Carolyn Moore

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Nominations

Dr. Virgilio R. Pilapil

Programs

Taylor Pensoneau

Project Awards

Dr. Virgilio R. Pilapil

Publications

Curtis Mann

Publicity

Janice Petterchak

Webmaster

Karen Everingham

February 20, Tuesday, 7:00 PM

Iles House, 628 S. 7th St. (7th & Cook Sts.)

Program

Parking is available in the lot on the Southeast corner of 7th & Cook

A Soldier's Story

Robert J. Davis

The emotional story of Andrew Lewis, a onetime slave who escaped to freedom and went on to serve with an Illinois unit in the Civil War, will be depicted by Robert J. Davis, an Illinois state fiscal officer with a broad background in higher education and business management.

In his portrayal of soldier Lewis, Davis will reminisce about Lewis' birth as a slave on a Kentucky plantation, his sale to a slave-holding family in Missouri and his flight to freedom in Illinois with the help of the Underground Railroad. After securing his freedom, Lewis served with the Illinois 29th Infantry of the United States Color Troops in the War Between the States. To further authenticate his presentation, Davis will wear a Civil War uniform and display exhibits that include an 1853 single-shot musket.

Since 1998, Davis has been a fiscal officer with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Coming out of Detroit, where he graduated in 1970 from Wayne State University, he proceeded to receive a master degree in urban and domestic policy from Princeton University and a master in management from the University of Chicago. In subsequent years, his career stops included a stint as assistant professor of management at the University of Illinois at Springfield and six years as an adjunct instructor at Lincoln Land Community College. His many community activities in Springfield include membership on the Board of Directors of the Sangamon County Historical Society.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>A Soldier's Story</i>	1
<i>Around Town: Report on Holiday Party; Oak Ridge Writing Project</i>	2
Report on January program; New Members; Publication Comm. report	3
ISHS Symposium announcement	4
President's Report; Nominating Comm. report	5
Spring schedule; "The Long Nine" revisited	6

Around Town in February

February 12

9:00 AM Lincoln Home Visitors Ctr.
George Painter Lecture Series

Guy Fraker:

"The Real Lincoln Highway: The Lincoln Circuit Markers"

Harold Holzer & Frank Williams:

"Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation: An Act of Political Courage"

1:00 PM Old State Capitol
Hall of Representatives
Lincoln and the Politics of the 1850s

Nicole Etcheson:

"A Living, creeping lie: Abraham Lincoln on Popular Sovereignty"

Matthew Pinsker:

"Not always such a Whig; Abraham Lincoln's Partisan Realignment in the 1850s"

Orville Vernon Burton:

"Lincoln Reconsidered"

Endowment Fund Reception
5:00 PM(Reservation required)
Old State Capitol

Annual Abraham Lincoln Banquet
7:00 PM(Reservation required)
Jon Meacham

Sponsored by:

Abraham Lincoln Association
ALPLM
ALPLM Foundation
IHPA

February 15-17 ISHS Symposium
See page 4

February 23 Deadline for submitting poems for: 6th Annual Museum of Funeral Customs Poetry Reading. Contact 544-3480 or email museumcurator@ifda.org for details.

Report on 'History for the Holidays' party

This was the '2nd Annual' holiday party, and it proved to be a very special occasion, thanks to the Nolls for their most generous hospitality and to Mary Jo Potter, and her committee, for superb planning!

The party was planned as a *gift* to members and volunteers as an opportunity to become better acquainted, with only a nominal fee for attendance. The liquid refreshments were all donated by members of the Board (with the elegant wine glasses provided by Mary Jo, herself), and the delicious 'feast' was catered by Carol Jean Fraase, who was most generous with her offerings.

The size of the Yates Mansion enabled a large group to attend and learn about the incredible restoration the Nolls have achieved. Pinky Noll had guides positioned in every room, downstairs and up to explain details of the work done there, and then gave a fascinating overview of the scope of the work herself.

If we are able to hold such occasions in the future, we may need to limit attendance to just volunteers, so be sure to answer any call to volunteer!

*THE SCHS & OAK RIDGE CEMETERY
"FAMILY HISTORY
WRITING PROJECT"*

The Family History Writing Project came about as an upshot of the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Oak Ridge Cemetery. It was thought that a project to commemorate the event could add meaning to the occasion. Cooperating on the project, the Sangamon County Historical Society and the Oak Ridge Cemetery Board of Managers decided on a *Family History Writing Project* for those who have any member of their families buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery.

This is probably one of the most publicized projects that the SCHS has ever done. A pro-

spectus on the project was first handed out to those attending the Oak Ridge Cemetery 150th Anniversary Picnic and the 10th Annual Cemetery Walk. Ads were later placed in the State Journal-Register and the Illinois Times, with news reports in The Writers Block, two issues of Senior News & Times for Illinois and in three issues of *Historico*, as well as two spaced announcements in The State Journal-Register. Postings in some office bulletin boards were also made. The final charge was by personal solicitations with follow-up telephone calls by some members. Very slowly but surely, the effort finally paid off as the reports started to trickle in after two exten-

Report on the January program

Gary Vitale chronicled the early years of James Colin Brewster, a charismatic Mormon prophet, who went by the name of Colin Brewster, and who strove to first hold Mormon beliefs to its origins by publishing the books of 'Esdras' as revealed to him in visions and then holding together the splintering groups of the church after the death of Joseph Smith. Gary paralleled the efforts of Lincoln to build unity in the Whig party at the same time to Brewster's efforts; both utilizing the 'house divided' theme in their efforts to unify. Lincoln was successful. Brewster was not, and in 1850 Brewster led a splinter group to a promised land in California, stopping in New Mexico on the way. One family, the Oatmans, continued on, only to be massacred and/or taken hostage by hostile Indians, which effectively killed the 'Brewsterite' sect, and Colin Brewster seemed to disappear from the earth.

After extensive research, Gary discovered what happened to Brewster after the Oatman massacre, which led to a fascinating reconstruction of the life of the former prophet. He had returned to Illinois after his failed settlement effort and, after a few years as both a farm laborer and teacher, joined the 33rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company K, the famous "Teacher's Brigade" together with his younger brother, Orlando. James became ill, but was forced to keep marching to Arkansas, where he was hospitalized. Later discharged due to debilitating illness, he returned to his family in Illinois, only to reenlist later in an 'Invalid Corps'. After the war he tried farming, teaching and other jobs that proved too much for him due to his disability, and he applied for a disability pension in 1880. It was through the 14 affidavits required to prove his disability that Gary was able to reconstruct some 40 years of his movements from one end of the Mississippi to the other until his death in 1909 at the age of 82.

In conclusion Gary pointed out that James Colin Brewster had really lived two separate lives; as the Mormon boy wonder, Colin Brewster, and then as the vulnerable Civil War veteran, James Brewster.

Gary should also be congratulated for his fortitude in carrying on in the face of the major tech breakdown of his very extensive visual presentation. Fortunately his script carried the story, but the loss of the visual portion was most unfortunate.

sions of the deadline that will end by the time you, the members, receive this issue of *Historico*.

As of the time of this writing we have received 22 reports from 19 people with around 8 more that are expected to come. Among those submitted, four came from out of state, two from other counties in Illinois, three from Sangamon County outside Springfield and the remaining 13 from Springfield residents. With the original goal of receiving at least 25 submissions, we can say that the project is coming along well.

So far, the reports that have been received tell very interesting stories, often inter-related, with historical tidbits that are not well known. From them, one can easily sense the history of Springfield and Sangamon County. It is hoped that this collection of family histories will become an important publication of the Society.

By Virgilio R. Pilapil, M.D.

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Editor's note: If you have been secretly working on a family history for the project, please finish it and send it in. We bet the good doctor will accept it, regardless of the date!

We Welcome New Members!

Cathy Caughlin
Mr. & Mrs. Jon Noll
Diane Simpson
Barbara Steward
Sarah H. Thomas

Publication Committee news -

The newly formed Publications Comm., chaired by John Huther, has established general policies and purposes for future publications.

They have also acquired 10 ISBN numbers and barcodes to enable the Society to have a wider distribution of its materials to libraries and book stores.



The Illinois State Historical Society

presents

**“Knowledge on the Prairie:
The 27th Annual Illinois History Symposium”**

February 15-17, 2007

**Bone Student Center
Illinois State University, Normal**



*Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Illinois State University,
the state’s oldest public institution of higher learning*

Symposium registrants will also be guests at ISU’s Founders’ Day Lecture
featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning historian

David McCullough

**For details visit the Illinois State Historical Society website
at www.historyillinois.org or call 217-525-2781.**

**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**



The President's Corner

To say that the History for the Holidays event at the Yates Mansion in late December was a special occasion might be an understatement. Nothing short of the word superb suffices for the evening that members of the Society were fortunate to spend in a truly magnificent setting.

The evening was made possible by the gracious hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Jon Gray Noll, the current owners of the restored home in Springfield. Mrs. Noll, known to friends as Pinky, headed the private restoration project—undertaken in 1988, the year of the mansion's dedication to the Register of Historic Places of the United States Department of Interior. Mrs. Noll worked with Mary Jo Potter, head of a special Society committee on the event, to make the evening possible.

The mansion, an example of Romanesque architecture with touches of the late Victorian, was built in or by Washington Park in the early 1900s by the state's second Governor Richard Yates, who served one term in office from 1901 to 1905. His father, the first Richard Yates, was Illinois governor during the Civil War. The second Governor Yates, who died in 1936, lived in the mansion until 1928. After a number of other owners came and went through the years, the Nolls bought the home in 1987.

A highlight of the December gathering was Mrs. Noll's enlightening discussion of the challenges encountered in restoring the home. Prior to the start of actual work on the project, significant research was conducted through contact with family members of previous owners, review of historical documents and other research. At all times, the restoration process was in keeping with original building designs of the Yates family, the home's well-known architect (George Helmle of Springfield) and the builder, James Culver. Strictly speaking, the Nolls did not attempt to duplicate the Yates home. Instead, they restored the structure to its period authenticity.

One of the many fascinating aspects of the renovation was the restoration of a major focal point of the home, a large cobble stoned fireplace serving as a backdrop to an elevated, first-floor landing. The undertaking included the restoration of two cannonballs originally in the fireplace. These were gifts to the first Governor Yates. According to the best available information, the cannonballs were from the Civil War's Chattanooga battlefield. Legend had it that a person touching both cannonballs at the same time and making a wish would find the wish granted.

More than one member of the Society moved to determine if the legend of the cannonballs was true. Only time will tell if their wishes were met.

Taylor Pensoneau

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for Officers for 2007-2008 (VP, Secretary, Treasurer) and five Directors to 2010.

Nominees must be paid members of the Society. Board members are expected to be able to attend and participate in the meetings and be prepared to serve on committees.

The slate of officers will be presented for election at the June annual meeting. Please submit nominations to Dr. Virgilio R. Pilapil, P.O. Box 1882, Springfield, IL 62705; E-Mail gilpini46@yahoo.com; Cell phone: 217-494-2386.

schs@sancohis.org

5

CALL FOR PAPERS

Ninth Annual
Conference on Illinois History
Springfield, Illinois
October 18-19, 2007

Proposals for individual papers or panels on any aspect of Illinois' history, culture, politics, geography, literature, and archaeology are requested for the Conference on Illinois History. The Conference welcomes submissions from professional and avocational historians, graduate students, and those engaged in the study of Illinois history at libraries, historic sites, museums, and historical societies.

Each proposal should include a summary of the topic and a one-page resume of the participant. The summary should specify the major primary and secondary sources used in the research. Proposals should be for formal, footnoted papers. The deadline for proposals is March 10, 2007. Send proposals to:

Thomas F. Schwartz, State Historian
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
112 North Sixth Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Phone: 217/782-2118, Fax: 217/558-1574
E-mail: tom.schwartz@illinois.gov
www.IllinoisHistory.gov/conference.htm

Sangamon County Historical Society
308 E. Adams Street
Springfield, IL 62701



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

2007 Program Schedule

All programs start at 7:00 PM

February 20

A Soldier's Story

Robert Davis

Iles House, 7th & Cook Streets

March 20

Brother James Court—A Proud Role

Franciscan Brothers

Brother James Court

April 17

New Berlin—Pretzel Town on the Prairie

Village leaders

Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room, North

May 15

The Statehouse Pressroom—A Place Like No Other

Taylor Pensoneau

Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room, North



John Trutter, the Society's first president, recently sent a copy of this photo of the anniversary banquet for the "Long Nine" held in February, 1961. It was attended by 500 people, including Governor Kerner, Mayor Collins and Dr. Paul Angle. 8 of the 'Long Nine' impersonators are seated at the table in front. How many can you identify?