



Historico

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

May, 2009

Oral History of Illinois Agriculture will be Featured at Society Program May 19, 7 PM



The Historical Society's monthly program will feature an ongoing Illinois State Museum (ISM) project called the Oral History of Illinois Agriculture. The project is supported by a federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. It is creating an interactive Web module called the Audio-Video Barn which will house digital oral history interviews with people involved in agriculture and rural life in Illinois.

Curator of Anthropology and Principal Investigator of the oral-history project. The presentation will feature video clips from a sample of the new interviews.

The program will held in the East Conference Room at the Illinois State Museum's Research & Collections Center (RCC) at 7 pm on May 19. The RCC is located on 10½ Street between Ash and Laurel streets. Free parking is available on the west side of the building. RW

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Some of the interviews are from old audio tapes archived in libraries at the University of Illinois at Springfield and Northern Illinois University. In partnership with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, the project is also recording new video interviews with a diverse array of people from throughout the state.

The Audio-Video Barn will contain more than 300 hours of audio and video interview recordings. ISM is working with a fourth partner institution, the State University of New York at Buffalo, to make it easy for Internet visitors to navigate the Web site. All of the audio and video files are being digitally indexed by theme, topic, time, and location so visitors can find what they want, whether it's "chickens," "oregano," or "women's roles on the farm."

The May 19 SCHS program will be presented by Dr. Robert Warren, ISM,

Save the Date!

June 16, 2009

SCHS Annual Meeting

6:30 PM



**At the most famous
 "Blind Pig" in southern
 Sangamon County**

Note from Nancy

We have a problem. We need an editor for the *Historico*. Unless someone offers to take on the job, we will need to radically change our way of communicating with members. We are investigating the possibility of changing to a format of sending out postcards to announce coming events and then attempting to put out three or four *Historicos* a year that will include an article or two and report on programs and activities that have occurred.

We will be discussing these and other possibilities at the Board meeting on May 13 beginning at 5:30 PM in the Lincoln Library Carnegie Room South and invite anyone with "positive" suggestions and solutions to join us. If you plan to come, it would be helpful if you would let Board Secretary Curtis Mann (cmann67@hotmail.com) know, but come regardless if you can help us solve this problem.

In years past we have often included a membership list with the May *Historico*, but it has become very difficult to fit the names in as we have increased membership. Many of you enjoyed the return of the "Year book" in 2005-2006, our 45th anniversary year. The "Year book" included not only the membership but an Officer and Board member list and an annual synopsis of the Society's activities since its inception. Dr. Gil Pilapil has agreed to bring it up to date for us this year, and it will be available at the annual meeting. The "Year book" will be mailed later to those unable to attend the annual meeting.

We are looking for new ideas, new projects, and new ways of preserving and/or sharing the history of Sangamon County! We are also looking for new ways and activities to attract younger members. If any one has suggestions as to ways we might achieve those goals, please let us know. Vice President David Scott has just put together a Long Range Planning Committee that would appreciate your input. You can send an email to schs@sancohis.org, or send a letter to SCHS, 308 E. Adams, 62701 care of the Long Range Planning Committee. *Nancy*

WANTED

Historico Editor

Contact Nancy Chapin

483-2376 or
nchapin@springnet1.com



Long Range Planning Committee Appointed

In anticipation of the fiftieth anniversary of the Sangamon County Historical Society in 2011, Vice President David Scott has named the members of the newly formed Long Range Planning Committee. They are: Jack Alexander, Fred Hoffmann, Janice Petterchak, Bill Siles, Bill Vetter, John Weck, and Martha Wolters.

Article II of the Society's Constitution reads: "The purposes for which the corporation is organized are: to perpetuate and create interest in the history of Springfield and Sangamon County, and promote educational and literary purposes." The Committee's charge will be to ask the following questions:

- Are the organization's original purposes still viable?
- Are we structured to best support those purposes?
- Does the Constitution still adequately state what we are/should be doing?

Board Meeting
May 13, 2009, 5 PM
Lincoln Library Carnegie
Room South

OFFICERS

President
Nancy L. Chapin
Vice President
David Scott
Secretary
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Directors to 2011

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Paul Mueller
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Jane Vetter
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William Hughes
Diller, Jr.

HISTORICO CONTRIBUTORS

Donna Catlin
Nancy Chapin
Robert E. Church
Debbie Greene
Carl Volkmann
Roberta Volkmann
Robert Warren

WEBMASTER

Terry Cameron

Society Visits Chatham Public Library



Linda Meyer, Chatham Library Director

For the April Sangamon County Historical Society meeting, Linda Meyer, Chatham Area Public Library Director, led Society members and guests on an in-depth tour of the newly renovated library. Assisted by Amy Ihnen, Meyer pointed out the computer lab with 15 desktop and 13 laptop computers, the Jessica Hay Toddler Area, community meeting rooms, an expanded children's library, and a bookstore/café which sells used books. The newly expanded facility boasts the latest technology with a state-of-the-art microfilm reader and a "Peek-a-Book" computer for children. Of special interest to Sangamon County historians is the Opal Lee Chatham History and Genealogy Room. The room currently houses the collection of local historian Opal Lee and will be the center for Chatham area historical publications and artifacts.

After the tour president Nancy Chapin presented Linda Meyer with back issues of the *Historico* and copies of the Society's publications. Charles Chapin then read an excerpt about his great grandfather from a copy of the Chapin family history. Rev. W.J. Chapin served as the Baptist minister in Chatham from 1877 to 1902. He is buried in Chatham Cemetery. Charles Chapin then presented the history volume to Meyer for inclusion in the new local history room.

Dana-Thomas Welcoming Visitors Again

The Dana-Thomas House has returned to regular hours of operation after a re-opening ceremony on April 23, 2009. Closed in November, 2008, by former Governor Blagojevich, the Frank Lloyd Wright designed home is again opened for guided tours 9 am to 4 pm Wednesday through Sunday.



Dana-Thomas House

The Dana-Thomas House was designed by Wright in 1902 for Susan Lawrence Dana, a Springfield socialite. With more than 100 pieces of original Wright furniture, 250 examples of art glass doors and windows, and more than 100 art glass light fixtures, it contains the largest collection of site-specific, original Wright art glass and furniture in the world. The house has 35 rooms in the 12,600 square feet of living space which includes 16 levels.

On his website peterbeers.net, Peter Beers, one of the many national and international admirers of the house, voices the feelings of many who celebrate the re-opening of this treasure. He says, "I have visited the Dana-Thomas House four times now, and I can't wait to go back again. This home takes my breath away and brings a tear to my eye".

Lincoln Home to Present Daily Programs in May

As a continuing celebration of the anniversary of Lincoln's 200th birthday, the Lincoln Home National Historic Site staff is planning daily special events during May. Lincoln neighborhood tours will start hourly beginning at 10 am Monday through Friday. Other events are below. For more information, call 492-4241 or click www.nps.gov/lliho.

Saturday, May 2
2 pm Visitor Center

The Black Widow- Learn about Mary Lincoln's life after her husband's assassination.

Sunday, May 3
2 pm Visitor Center

Walking Downtown Tour- Explore Springfield's historic sites and how they are connected to Lincoln.

Saturday, May 9
2 pm Visitor Center

Secession Crisis- A living history program dealing with the critical four months Lincoln spent as President-elect.

Sunday, May 10
2 pm Visitor Center

Walking Downtown Tour (see May 3)

Saturday, May 16
10 am to 4 pm

Living History Vignette-An interpreter dressed in historic clothing will discuss a period character.

Sunday, May 17
2 pm Visitor Center

Living in Lincoln's Shadow-Discover how Mr. Lincoln's home became a National Park Site; *Walking Downtown Tour*- 3 pm

May 18 & 19
9 am to 4 pm

Living History Vignette (see May 16)

Saturday, May 23
2 pm Visitor Center

Lincoln the Inventor-Author Jason Emerson will discuss his new book *Lincoln the Inventor* followed by a book signing.

Sunday, May 24
2 pm Visitor Center

Can You Hear Me Now?-A presentation featuring the invention of the telegraph and its influence on Lincoln.

Monday, May 25
2 pm Visitor Center

Living in Lincoln's Shadow (see May 17)

Saturday, May 30
2 pm Neighborhood

Politics on the Porch-Two of Mr. Lincoln's neighbors discuss the political issues of Lincoln's day.

Sunday, May 31
2 pm Neighborhood

Lincoln Neighborhood Tour-Learn about the lives of Lincoln's neighbors and other 1860 Springfield residents.



Pleasant Plains

Approximately 15 miles west of Springfield, Illinois, on the route to Beardstown lies a small community known as Pleasant Plains. The first white man settled in this area around the year 1819. According to early records, a grist mill, operated by horse power, was built by a Mr. Spillars as early as 1819. In 1821 the first school building of the area was constructed in the form of a log cabin.

Some controversy exists as to the first dwelling within what became the town limits. Some say the first house was a cabin built by William Carson who came in the early 1820's. Others say that Madison Glenn built the first dwelling in 1848. Mr. Glenn's cabin was built of black walnut logs. After arriving earlier, Peter Cartwright began holding church meetings in his home when his family arrived in 1824. In 1838 he announced that he thought it necessary to build a church. Costing \$600, the completed structure was located a few miles north of the present village and measured 24 feet by 30 feet. They called the little church Pleasant Plains Church. This is the apparent conception of the name of the town.

A prospering community such as this continued to draw in more people. Businesses began appearing to help supply the settlers' needs. In 1849 Jacob Epler established the first store in the area, and Mr. John Adams started a blacksmith shop. Dr. Albert Atherton began his medical practice in 1853. He bought 160 acres of land and established a drug store and grocery store. During the 1850's a two-story brick hotel was built. Formerly known as the Sanders Hotel and later the Crown Hotel, it was used for the stage coach to take on passengers and to pick up the mail. The Steam Flouring Mill and Elevator was built within the town limits in 1857. Reportedly, people came from miles around to have their grain

grain processed because the water powered mill was the only one of its size in the area. Mr. Epler platted the ground and recorded it on March 13, 1854. In 1856 Mr. Epler made his first addition to the town as originally laid out. The village people voted to incorporate in 1864 under the name Pleasant Plains.

Editor's Note: These facts are taken from "History of Pleasant Planis, Illinois" by Debbie (Boesdorfer) Greene with permission of the author.

Springfield Then and Now on the Web



For a fascinating view of Springfield then and now, click on Springfield Rewind (www.springfieldrewind.com) created by Russ Friedewald. With the help of the Sangamon Valley Collection at Lincoln Library, the web site, part of the Look Back Springfield project, documents the ways Springfield has changed over the years.

When a photo of a Springfield scene from the past appears on a page, one can move the mouse pointer over the photo and hold it there. This will cause an updated photo of the same scene to load, and it will be displayed until the mouse pointer is moved away from the image. One can then switch back and forth by moving the pointer over the image.

6th and Adams



Then



Now



David Koss

Robert Mazrim

Roger & Vicky Whitaker

Bruce Yurdin

"Patchwork of People" Luncheon Will Present Views of Early Workers

"How They Made a Living" will be the topic of the May session of *Central Illinois: Patchwork of People*, the popular lunch and learn series sponsored by the UIS SAGE Society and the Illinois State Historical Society with a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council. The program will be held May 19 in rooms C/D in the PAC at UIS. The buffet luncheon begins at 11:30 am, and the presentations will be from 12 noon to 1:30 pm.

Taylor Pensoneau, author and retired president of the Illinois Coal Association, will discuss "Dreams, Hardship and Danger--The Lives of Central Illinois Coal Miners." Associate professor of history from Eastern Illinois University Dr. Debra Reid will present "Harvesting the Soil: Central Illinois Agricultural Practices."

The cost of the lunch and presentations is \$20, but the presentations are free and open to the public. Pre-registration is requested. To register or to obtain more information, visit www.uiiaa.org/uis or call 206-7395.

Sangamon County Surveyors

With the opening of the new National Museum of Surveying in Springfield, Illinois, slated in the future, all eyes will be on Sangamon County's most famous surveyor, Abraham Lincoln. Three other surveyors connected to Sangamon County should also be noted: John C. Calhoun, Charles Manners, and Joseph Ledlie.

Joseph Ledlie was a surveyor for Sangamon County. He did the surveying for the Chicago and Alton railroad, platted the village of Sherman, Illinois, and performed many other local surveys. Ledlie was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on January 18, 1812. He was the son of Arthur and Catharine Ledlie who immigrated to this country from Ireland in 1801 and settled in the East. Ledlie's family later moved to Ohio, and Joseph and his brother Arthur came to Illinois about 1836. Around 1837 the brothers returned to Gallipolis, Ohio, and taught school in an academy. In 1838 Joseph Ledlie returned to Illinois in the Macoupin County area to farm and to teach school. He moved to Springfield around 1846. Because of his very inventive and mathematical mind, Ledlie was appointed by John B. Watson as deputy county surveyor soon after arriving in Springfield.

On October 14, 1806, John C. Calhoun was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He moved to Springfield in 1830. Calhoun became a surveyor and served in the Black Hawk War with Abraham Lincoln. In 1854 on the recommendation of Stephen A. Douglas, President Franklin Pierce appointed Calhoun as Surveyor General for the Territories. John C. Calhoun appointed local men Joseph Ledlie and Charles A. Manners as deputies in 1855. Manners was a New Jersey native who lived in Taylorville, Illinois. Calhoun and Manners were assigned to survey the first guide meridian east in Nebraska and Kansas. Manners was also contracted to test the baseline between the two future states which was previously surveyed by John P. Johnson. Both Manners and Ledlie discovered that Johnson had failed to accurately establish the 40th parallel of latitude. Beginning in 1855 Charles A. Manners and Joseph Ledlie completely resurveyed in the states of Kansas and Nebraska, looking to correct mistakes from previous surveys. With their fine work over the next few years, they both became heroes to surveyors in Kansas and Nebraska. Donna Catlin

Abraham Lincoln, Surveyor and Lawyer

The early county and private surveyors were not governed by any fixed rules in making surveys. Usually, if called upon to make a survey of, for instance, a half-quarter section of 80 acres, they would commence at a government section corner of the 80 acres and run around north or south and east or west, depending on how the tract was laid out. A chain is 66 feet in length, and 40 chains by 20 chains established the boundary. This was generally satisfactory to all parties concerned, for the land was of little value, and the method saved expenses at a time when money was scarce. If an owner of land was certain he was on the right tract and within a rod (16.5 feet) or so of the property lines, that was sufficient. But if greater accuracy was demanded, and as the state became more thickly settled and land more valuable, the practice of fixing the center of a section and subdividing equally from it became more important.

In 1850 the Surveyor General for Illinois and Missouri published his "Manual of Instructions to the U. S. Deputy Surveyors," with an appendix for use by County Surveyors. This was immediately recognized, without question, as the conclusive authority and generally adopted by the better class of surveyors in the state. Then the solar compass was introduced. This opened up the whole subject of the proper survey and subdivision of the sections and led to much oral and written discussion. Finally a Surveyor's Convention was called.

In a letter dated December 18, 1856, several land surveyors from around the state including Z. A. Enos, Joseph Ledlie, Cortes Fessenden, J. Ward and H. A. Ulfers of Sangamon County asked that a Surveyor's Convention be held in Springfield the 7th day of January 1857. The purpose of the convention was to discuss several surveying matters including the proper way to establish the center of a section.

At the convention many surveying matters were discussed and agreed upon, but not the center of section issue. In 1858 another Surveyor's Convention was called by the same surveyors along with several additional surveyors from around the state. The center of the section was the main topic on the agenda of the convention which was held on the 5th day of January 1859 in Springfield. After a very long and heated discussion on the center of the section, the group agreed to submit the question to some able lawyer for his decision. The convention chose Mr. Lincoln as the attorney because he was a practical surveyor as well as a recognized leading member of the bar. The group believed that a good lawyer could better interpret and apply the law to a subject with which he was thoroughly conversant. Accordingly a committee was appointed to contact Mr. Lincoln and to ask for a written opinion on the subject. Mr. Lincoln responded with the following written opinion:

The 11th Section of the Act of Congress, approved Feb 11, 1805, prescribing rules for the subdivision of sections of land within the United States system of surveys, standing unrepealed, in my opinion, is binding on respective purchasers of different parts of the same section, and furnishes the true rule for surveyors in establishing lines between them. That law, being in force at the time each become a purchaser, becomes a condition of the purchase.

And by that law, I think the true rule for dividing into quarters, any interior section, or section which is not fractional, is to run straight lines through the section from the opposite quarter section corners, fixing the point where such straight lines cross, or intersect other, as the middle of the section.

Nearly, perhaps quite, all the original surveys are to some extent erroneous, and in some of the sections, quite so. In each of the latter, it is obvious that a more equitable mode of division than the above might be adopted; but as error is infinitely various no better single rule can be prescribed.

At all events, I think the above has been prescribed by the competent authority.

Springfield, July 6, 1859

A. LINCOLN.

This opinion settled the question in the convention as to the controlling authority of the law of 1805 and still holds true today. Robert Church

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



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May

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Note: During May daily activities are planned at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in commemoration of the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth. See page 3 for the complete schedule.

9	“Poets in the Parlor”-Dr. Ren Draya, Professor of British and American Literature at Blackburn College, will be the presenter.	2 pm Vachel Lindsay Home, 603 S. 5 th St., information: 524-0901.
16	“My Grandmother’s Apron with the Tea Ladies” – Bring your own vintage apron with a story behind it. The Tea Ladies will share what women historically have done while wearing their aprons.	2 pm Lincoln Reception Room, ALPL. 112 N. 6 th St.; Tickets \$35; reservations:-558-8934.
19	SCHS monthly program: “Oral History of Illinois Agriculture Project” by Dr. Robert Warren (see page 1) <i>Central Illinois: Patchwork of People- “How They Made Their Living”</i> (see page 3)	7 pm Illinois State Museum’s Research and Collection Center 11:30 am to 1:30 pm Public Affairs Center, University of Illinois Springfield; information: www.uiaa.org/uis or call 206-7395.
23	“A Strawberry Party in Union Square Park” – Enjoy period crafts, toys & games. Free music and fun for the whole family –strawberries, desserts & beverages available for purchase.	10 am to 2 pm Union Square Park, Across from Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, 212 N. 6 th St., Springfield; free admission.