



HISTORICO

March 2026

Vol. 62 | No. 3

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter
P.O. Box 9744 Springfield, IL 62791-9744 | 217-525-1961 | schsoffice@gmail.com
www.sancohis.org | www.sangamonlink.org

March Program at Lincoln Library

Built on the River: The Rise and Decline of Sangamo Town

Tuesday, March 17

5:30 pm at Lincoln Library -
Carnegie Room

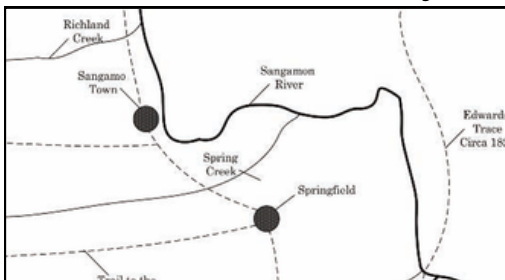
Sangamo Town was an early contemporary – and short-lived rival – of Springfield during the formative years of Sangamon County. Today, the village is most often remembered for a single episode: Abraham Lincoln’s work there helping to build a flatboat that carried a cargo of hogs to New Orleans. Yet Sangamo Town was once a river community with residents, businesses, and ambitions of its own.

In “Built on the River: The Rise and Decline of Sangamo Town,” historian Curtis Mann explores the broader story of Sangamo Town, examining its origins, daily life, economic activity, and the circumstances that ultimately led to its decline and disappearance.

Curtis Mann has worked as Librarian, archivist, and historian in

Springfield for over 30 years. He has co-authored numerous pictorial histories about the history of Springfield. Mann formerly worked as a Research Librarian at the Illinois Legislative Research Unit, and was a partner in the research firm, Sangamon Researchers, where he prepared nomination forms for the National Register of Historic Places as well as local landmark forms for the city of Springfield. He retired in 2023 as the city of Springfield’s historian as well as the manager of the Sangamon Valley Collection at Lincoln Library in Springfield.

Mann has served on the boards of the Sangamon County Historical Society, the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies, the Elijah Iles House Foundation, and the Springfield Historic Preservation Association. Mann also serves as the secretary and treasurer of the Illinois Foundation for Colonial and American Studies. Mann received his BA in History from Southern Illinois University and his MS in Information Sciences from the University of Illinois.



Highlights

March Program

March 17 at
Lincoln Library
Carnegie Room

February Program Recap

SangamonLink Stories



IN THIS ISSUE

February Program Recap.....	3
2026 Grant Applications.....	4
SangamonLink Stories.....	5



Please make sure we have your email address so you can stay up to date! Winter cancellations are possible - make sure you don't miss any notices!

From the President's Desk



I am happy to announce that our Annual Meeting/Celebration will be held this year on Tuesday, June 16 at the Pasfield House. More details about time and agenda will be forthcoming. Mark your calendars and plan on joining us for this annual celebration.

I am proud that our organization has the practice of funding special historical projects within the county that preserve and promote interest in the history of Sangamon County. We are now accepting applications through April 20, 2026 and information on how to submit an application is found elsewhere in this newsletter and on our website: www.sancohis.org. Grant recipients will be recognized and celebrated at the Annual Meeting/Celebration.

LINDA SCHNEIDER

A concern has been raised about registering on the website for our monthly programs. When the email reminder comes into your inbox, you have the ability to register free of charge, but you do not need to register on the website to attend. Our programs are free and open to the public so no registration is required.

I hope to see you at our next monthly program on Tuesday, March 17 in the Carnegie Room at Lincoln Library to learn more about Sangamo Town from Curtis Mann.

Linda



Don't forget that you can log on to your member profile at the top right of our home page to update information and make sure communications are going to the right place!



2025-2026 Officers

President - Linda Schneider

Vice President - Scott Pillsbury

Past President - Cinda Klickna

Treasurer - Sam Sgro

Secretary - Sarah Adams

Directors

Term ending 2026

Ruth Slottag

Term ending 2027

Brian Barstead

Mary Alice Davis

Susan Helm

Kathy Hoffman

Stephanie Martin

Term ending 2028

Lee-Ann Burgener

Dawn Phillips

Ashley Yoggerst



Historico, published 9 times a year 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.sancohis.org.

Send event announcements to: schshistorico@gmail.com

February Program: "Preserving History Through Hospitality"



by Cinda Klickna

Karen Conn of the Conn Hospitality Group shared the story of her 40 years with the Conns, starting at the age of 15 working for their concession at the fairgrounds. After marrying Court Conn, the couple ran a catering business and then wanted a brick-and-mortar business.

In 1991, they began searching for the right property; three years later they found the historic Bell Miller Apartment building at 835 S. Second; although the owner didn't want to sell, Karen did research and sent weekly information to the owner who eventually sold the property to the Conns. They established what is now the Inn at 835 that opened in 1977. This is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Conn says, "I get the itch about every 2-3 years to do something else." Obed and Isaacs restaurant, beer garden, and cidery was the next huge project. This involved moving a house six blocks to the corner of 7th and Jackson, acquiring the Grunendike house on the corner of 6th and Jackson, eventually tearing out a parking lot (what Karen says was looked at as a "crazy plan") to make a beer garden, and establishing a popular spot.

Karen says she is passionate about the history of places, the people who lived there, and often walks into properties that "just talk to me." Turning historic buildings into places for hospitality is her passion. She says, "I believe in history, and we must preserve it."

Over the years, the Conns have faced foreclosure when the bank went into receivership, filling out tons of paperwork, legal fees etc. to accomplish their passion. Their work has expanded into Peoria, whose leaders invited them to establish a second Obed and Isaacs; they did by restoring a church. They have saved Vinegar Hill Mall with Wm. Vans and Trish and Mary's Pub, and the Elkhart mansion.



With a few tears, Karen shared that their properties are for sale as the Conns want to "realign what we want to do," Karen says. "We want to find the right people to take over the properties who will respect what we have built for the community."



Karen is actively working on My Heart's Downtown campaign to increase awareness of all the Springfield downtown area offers.

All photographs by Ernie Slottag

Grant Application Period Underway!

The Sangamon County Historical Society will be accepting 2026 grant applications through April 20, 2026 for funding special historical projects within the county that carry out its mission, which is to preserve and promote interest in the history of Sangamon County.

Last year, the SCHS was able to fund six projects! One such organization that received a grant in 2025 was the Illinois State Historical Society for their “It Happened Here! A Guide to Historical Markers throughout Sangamon County” project. With the help of the SCHS, a four-fold, full-colored and rack size brochure that will provide information about all historical markers in Sangamon County was produced. The brochure lists the title and dates of each of the nineteen markers of the Illinois State Historical Society, location, and a Q/R code that provides a link to the site.

Other organizations that received funding in 2025 were: the Village of Divernon; First Presbyterian Church Springfield; The Cathedral Church of St. Paul the Apostle; Rochester Sesquicentennial Committee; and the Enos Park Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Applications can be found on-line at <https://www.sancohis.org>.

Click on “Resources”, then “Grants” to download applications. Completed forms can be submitted online to schsoffice@gmail.com or mailed to: Sangamon County Historical Society, Special Projects Committee, P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744.



The deadline is **April 20, 2026**. Award winners will be announced at the Society’s Annual Meeting in June. For more information, contact the Sangamon County Historical Society at 217-525-1961.



Sangamon County Historical Society 2025-2026 MEMBERSHIP/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, P.O. 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 _____

Spouse’s maiden name where applicable _____

Your e-mail _____

Your address _____

City, State , Zip _____ Phone _____

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 \$_____

SangamonLink Stories - Women's Literary Clubs

The literary club movement began early in the 19th century as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. The first recorded occurrence was a lecture series started in Milbury, Mass., in 1826. By 1834, 3,000 groups had been organized to listen to lectures. By 1840, clearing houses were acting as agents for speakers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Susan B. Anthony, Daniel Webster and many others. Both men and women attended these lectures.

Lyceum meetings were pretty much put on hold during the Civil War, but the war also brought women out of their homes to work together making flags, clothes, etc. to help the war effort. Following the Civil War, many museums and libraries were formed across the country, the land grant universities were created, and the Department of Agriculture established to disseminate information to the rural population. The era saw a virtual explosion of learning.

The government's response to anti-immigration sentiment in the second half of the 19th century was to establish literacy as a criteria for assessing the "quality of those who sought to enter the country." In addition to governmental and philanthropic efforts to expand education, the literary movement itself spawned hundreds of clubs, circles, and associations in which people of like backgrounds endeavored to educate each other. The suffrage movement, too, had women thinking more about their place in the community.

A myriad of women's literary clubs sprang up in Springfield, but only a few have left any footprints in the community. Here is a look at some of them.

The Shakespeare Club

A new bride from St. Louis, Susan Young Lanphier, began the Shakespeare Club on March 6, 1887, by gathering together a group of young women in her home. The Shakespeare Club was limited to 18 members. They studied Shakespeare for the first nine years of the club's existence and then went on to the study of various countries' histories and other subjects. One can guess that the club may well have been serious about study in the beginning, but probably deteriorated into a gathering of friends once a week over the years. Since the Shakespeare Club stopped taking in new members, it may not come as a surprise that the club is no longer in existence.



Shakespeare Club, 1891, courtesy of the Sangamon Valley Collection

The Every Wednesday Club

The Every Wednesday Club was created in Springfield about the same time as the Shakespeare Club, but there are no records as to its beginning or its ending. Springfield's chapter was formed as an auxiliary of the Chicago chapter of a group of the same name by Julie Ridgely Rea, who was its long-time local president. Her sister, Mary Ridgely Hay, daughter of Charles Ridgely of Springfield, was president of the Chicago chapter for many years.

(continued on page 6)

2026 Programs March - May

March 17

Curtis Mann
*History of Sangamo
Town*



May 19

Cinda Klickna
*April 15, 1909: The Day
the Petticoats
Swarmed the Capitol*



April 21

Mary Alice Davis
*Growing up
on Route 66*



*All programs take place at the Lincoln Library, the
Public Library of Springfield, in Carnegie Room
North, unless otherwise noted.*

SangamonLink Stories (continued from page 5)



The Sunnyside Circle

The Sunnyside Club began in the fall of 1887 and (as of the writing of the entry) is still in existence. A dictionary and encyclopedia saleswoman from Decatur met with some ladies at the home of Mrs. H. S. Dickerman, urging them to start a group. The group brought her back in October to give a lecture on American literature, and from there, formed an organization they first called the South

Fourth Street Circle (some of their husbands objected to their using the term “club”). When it was pointed that one member of the group lived on South Fifth, they changed the name to the Southside Social Literacy Circle. Their topic that first year was Washington Irving, whose home on the Hudson River was known as Sunnyside. So, a couple of years later, when Southside took in someone from another part of the city, members changed the name to Sunnyside.



The Anti-Rust Club

The other women’s literary club still in existence (as of the writing of the entry) is the Anti-Rust Club, founded by Katie Dresser White, who proposed the idea in February 1894. A constitution was signed by 18 members in March of that year. The Browning motto from which the club gets its name was also adopted almost immediately: “Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust / Just so

“much play as lets the heart expand.” It seems likely that the Anti-Rust Club was started in reaction to Sunnyside’s policy of not allowing relatives to join, since many of Anti-Rust’s beginning members had relationship connections to members of Sunnyside. During its first year, Anti-Rust took on the subject of “women.” The club then spent several years studying history, in 100-year increments, and literature.

The clubs demonstrated a responsibility to the community. Some clubs avowed an interest in improving social conditions and actively worked to do so. The Author’s Club, the Fortnightly and other clubs are mentioned in various newspapers of the period, but no records exist on them.

SangamonLink was created to put the rich history of Sangamon County — home of Abraham Lincoln and the capital of Illinois — at people’s fingertips. This online research hub is edited by Mike Kienzler.

Calendar

A Heads Up Guide to Area History Events

Save the Date!



Send announcements, information, photos and illustrations to schshistorico@gmail.com.



March 9: Elizabeth Packard: The Woman Who Would Not Be Silenced. 6PM. Hear from Packard while the Civil War rages, and her private war is raging in her soul. (217) 753-4900 ext. 5634
[Lincoln Library](#)



April 15-17: The Illinois State Museum Society plans an overnight motorcoach tour to explore Illinois artists' and architects' works in southeast Wisconsin.
www.illinoisstatemuseum.org
[IL State Museum Society](#)

March 27: Victorian Game Night. 7PM. Learn the games of the 19th century. Registration required, 21+ event only. (217)523-2631
[Edwards Place](#)



April 17: Dana-Thomas House Foundation Annual Dinner - "Growing Up in a Frank Lloyd Wright House." Registration required. (217)788-9452
[Dana-Thomas House Foundation](#)



March 28: Reenactor Swap Meet. 10AM-4PM. For those interested in becoming reenactors or living historians to meet others and begin collecting necessary items. Free Event – Donations appreciated. (217)761-3910
[IL State Military Museum](#)



ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April 22: Earth Day Drive Trip to Funks Grove - Prairie Home, Museum, Maple Syrup and Bluebells!
www.historyillinois.org.
[Illinois State Historical Society](#)

Sangamon County Historical Society
P.O. Box 9744,
Springfield, IL 62791-9744
Return Service Requested

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



PROGRAMS

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
5:30 PM AT LINCOLN LIBRARY

March 17
Curtis Mann

April 21
Mary Alice Davis

May 19
Cinda Klickna

Want to get involved?



Consider joining a committee. It's a great way to give back while preserving and promoting Sangamon County history.

Committees:

Programs/Special Events
Membership
Grants
Cemetery Walk
Finance