



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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SEPTEMBER 2015

OAK RIDGE CEMETERY Society Readying October 11 Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk

Volunteers Sought to Round Out Unique View of Local History

When the Sangamon County Historical Society brings back its popular cemetery walking tour “*Echoes of Yesterday: A Walk through Oak Ridge Cemetery*,” next month, you can be among the public guides or play other key roles. All you have to do is volunteer!

“We’re looking for about 30 members to step forward and work in shifts at the event that will run from Noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday, October 11 at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield,” said Society president Mary Alice Davis. The volunteers will guide visitors to individual performance sites, direct them to other sites, and handle a multitude of specific tasks associated with the

event. “The last tour begins at 3:15 p.m. and we’re planning two-hour shifts.” Rain date is Sunday, October 18.

“The walk will provide visitors with a glimpse into the history and heritage of Springfield,” noted Davis. Eight actors and actresses have already been recruited, including Bruce Davidson who will portray Roland W. Diller (1822-1905), drug store owner and personal friend of Abraham Lincoln; Fred Floreth, portraying poet/artist Nicholas Vachel Lindsay (1871-1931); and Pat Foster, playing Dr. Henry Wohlgemuth

(Continued on page 6)

From Telegraph to Television

Fall Opener to Put Historical Eye on Communications Here

Mirroring an era that would change America, the introduction of the telegraph in the mid 1800s and the inventions that would follow in almost rapid succession, altered the way people and events played out in Central Illinois.

The Sangamon County Historical Society kicks off its fall general meeting series on Tuesday, September 15 with a program co-sponsored with the Sangamon Valley Radio Club that will take a visual look at those changes. “*From Telegraph to Television: The Amazing History of Sangamon County’s Electronic Communications*” will begin at 5:30 p.m. in Carnegie Room North at the City of Springfield’s Lincoln Public Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield. The program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.



HOME radios and radio equipment were on display at Springfield’s First Annual Radio Show in 1925 at the Fairground’s Exposition Building, a sign of the radio’s growing popularity. You’ll get a closer look at it in the Powerpoint presentation.

Assembled by long-time communications history buff Joe Armstrong of Springfield and Mitch Hopper of Rochester, a veteran television broadcast engineer, the Power point presentation will provide both a visual and anecdotal look at the area’s communications history. Armstrong and Hopper are both licensed amateur radio operators and SVRC members.

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ANNUAL MEETING goes gathered for dinner, voting, and more. See page 3.

BACKSTAGE AT



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Fall Season Kicking Off With Major Events

Hard to believe September has arrived and with it an amazing array of Society programs and events.

As you may have already read, our September 15 program kicks off the season with a look at the area's electronic communications history, from telegraph to television. It's amazing how in such short a period of time, our ability to communicate has so drastically changed the way we live. We've had a sneak peak at some of the photos and data the researchers have uncovered to date. We think you'll find their Powerpoint presentation both intriguing and nostalgic.

And with September here, can October be far off? Not for us! Our big project of the year is the "Echoes of Yesteryear: A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery" set for Sunday, October 11 (rain date is Sunday, October 18). The restart of what for years was an annual event drawing thousands of people, took months to set-up, from walking the site, finding and/or rewriting scripts, and lining up a cast of experienced re-enactors able to portray some of the ordinary citizens—and some extraordinary—whose final resting place is at this historic site.

At this point, we're hoping many of you will step forward and help out that day, greeting visitors and providing with directions from one presentation to the next, overseeing some of the special displays, and similar activities associated with an outdoor event. The cemetery walk is only from Noon to 4 p.m., so if you choose, you

can work just a two-hour shift, giving you time to listen to the captivating tales of life here as it was when settlers and those who followed in their wake, shaped the community as it is today. If you would like to volunteer, drop me a line at schspres@gmail.com or leave you name and phone number on the Society's message line, 525-1961. You can be sure we'll get back to you!

You may want to check out this month's calendar on page 7. We try to promote not only our own programs, but those of other area history groups and educational institutions we think have events you might want to put on your calendar.

Two programs, one ours, the other at UIS, may be of special interest to you. They're a few days apart, the UIS event on Thursday, October 15, and ours, the following Tuesday, October 20. UIS expects a big crowd for what is a 50th anniversary salute to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. If you can't make it to the Brookens Library, you can watch "Lincoln and Voting Rights" on your computer via a live webcast!

We were fortunate to snare Tennessee attorney and author Jerry O. Potter who is traveling here especially for our meeting. He's an expert on America's worst maritime disaster and history mystery, the sinking of the steamboat, the *Sultana* in 1865, whose destiny may have been tied to Springfield. See you there!

Mary Alice



Historico, published 10 times a year, is the official monthly bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. *Winner, 2013 Certificate of Excellence, Illinois State Historical Society.*

You can download back issues of *Historico* in PDF format by going to our website, sangamon-history.org or sancohis.org. Send event announcements to historicoeditor@gmail.com.

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor, Donna Catlin, *Photographer*

Officers, Directors For 2015-2016

Get the Nod at Annual Meeting

Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society unanimously elected officers and directors when they gathered for the organization's annual dinner on Tuesday, June 23. The event, that included an annual live and silent auction to raise funds for the Special Projects fund, drew over 100 people to the Fellowship Hall of historic Westminster Presbyterian Church in Springfield.

The meeting also included the announcement and a check presentation to winners of the Society's annual *Special Projects* awards, and presentation of certificates to directors and officers completing their terms.

Special Projects awards went to:

□ **Tara McClellan McAndrew**, \$900, to continue writing and producing stories about Springfield and Sangamon County history that are aired on Springfield's National Public Radio station, **WUIS-FM**. The series puts local history in context with our state and nation's past.

□ **Oak Ridge Cemetery Foundation**, \$1,000 toward replacing the broken automatic controller in the bell tower at Oak Ridge Cemetery so that it can resume tolling on the hour and half hour as well as for special events. In early days, the bell was manually tolled by the sexton each time a funeral procession entered through the cemetery gateway.

□ **Illinois State Museum Society**, \$1,000 to help establish a tree ring analysis laboratory at the Museum's Research and Collection Center, the only one in the state. By analyzing tree rings, the facility will be able to resolve debate regarding the first structures in Sangamon County

by accurately determining date and establish settlement chronology and settlement patterns.

Re-elected to second one-year terms were president Mary Alice Davis, vice-president Ruth Slottag, and secretary Sue Massie. Jerry Smith, who was serving on the board as a director through 2017, was elected treasurer. Doug Polite, who served as a director until 2014 and then co-chaired the Society's finance committee, was elected to fill out the two years remaining on Smith's term.

Elected to three year terms ending in 2018 were Valerie Patterson, Jane Running, Larry Stone, Roger Whitaker, and Heather Wickens. Patterson, Stone, Wickens, and Running are filling three-year term board seats for the first time. Whitaker, who chaired the Society's Publications Committee for 2014-2015, was president of SCHS for two years, 2012-1014. Prior to becoming president, he served three years as a Society director.

Elected to one-year terms to fill existing board vacancies through 2016 were Pamm Collebrusco, Elaine Hoff, and Vicky Whitaker. Collebrusco is new to the board. Hoff was elected to the board for a three-year term in 2011 but gave up her seat in 2013 to run for a one-year term as board secretary. This past year she served as chair of *Special Projects*, a position in which she will continue as a director. Whitaker previously filled a two-year vacancy on the board and serves as editor of *Historico*, the Society's monthly newsletter. She also co-chairs the Program/Special Events committee with President Davis.



OFFICERS

President.....Mary Alice Davis
Vice-President.....Ruth Slottag
Secretary.....Sue Massie
Treasurer.....Jerry Smith

DIRECTORS

Term Ending 2018

Valerie Patterson
 Jane Running
 Larry Stone
 Roger Whitaker
 Heather Wickens

Term Ending 2017

Troy Gilmore
 Amy Henrikson
 Genevieve Kaplan
 Doug Polite
 Sara Watson

Term Ending 2016

Pamm Collebrusco
 Kathy Dehen
 Elaine Hoff
 Cathy Mosley
 Vicky Whitaker

Committee Chairs

Legal: Bruce Beeman
Special Projects: Elaine Hoff
Finance: Patricia Davis, Doug Polite,
Nominating: Donna Catlin
Membership: Claire Eberle
Hospitality: Marion Leach
Publicity and Marketing: Ruth Slottag
Publications: Roger Whitaker
Programs & Special Events: Mary Alice Davis,
 Vicky Whitaker

Staff

Dr. Samuel Wheeler, **Executive Coordinator**
 Mike Kienzler, **SangamonLink.org Editor**

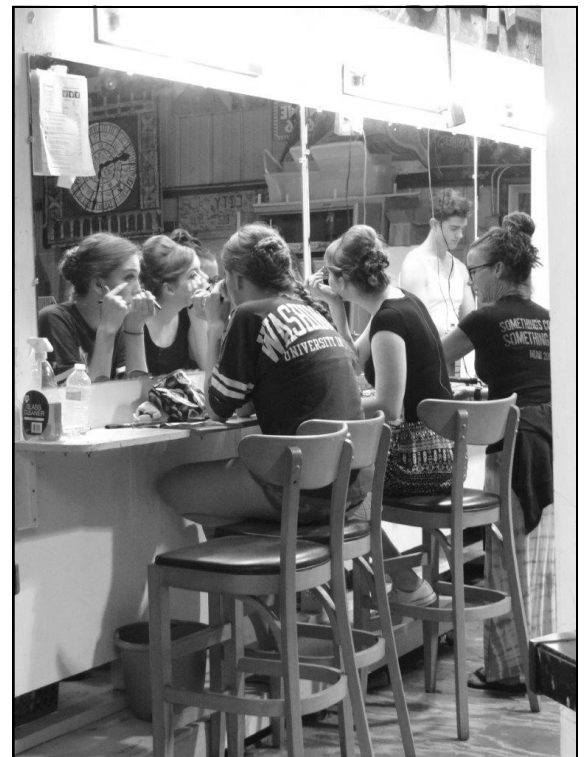
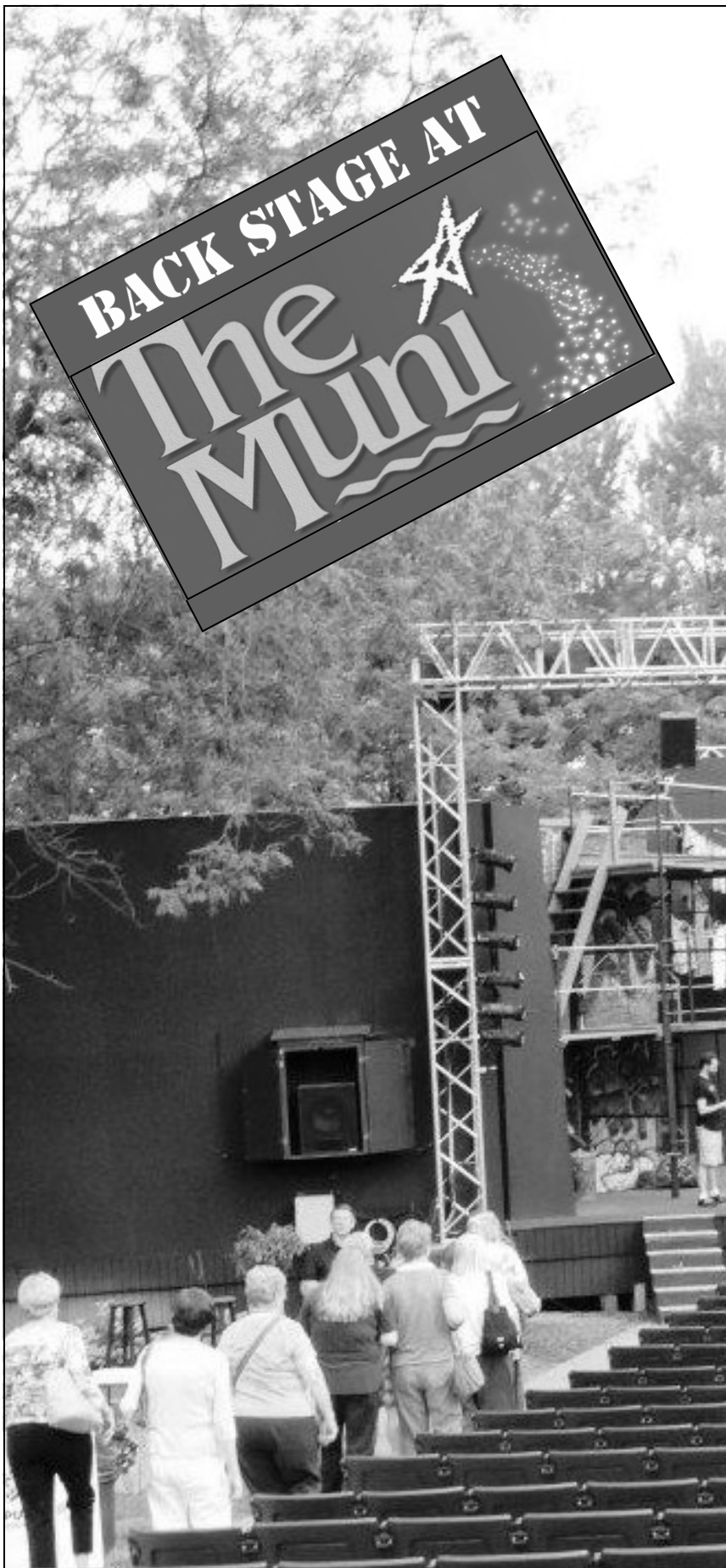
SEPTEMBER 2015 MEMBERSHIP/DONOR REPORT

*The Society welcomes new members: Christian McWhirter, Kathryn Rem
 ...and thanks the following donors:*

Bruce & Joan Beeman, Norm & Gloria Clausen, Kay V. Hofmann, Sally & Stan Papp, Dr. Elvin & Mrs. Sharon Zook, Mary Dissler, James Hoffman, David & Laurie Farrell, Tom Fitch, Jackie & Mark Hansen, Ken & Judy Lazar, Tom & Sharon McSwiggin, Jon & Ida Noll, John & Linda Rodenburgh, Donald & Donna Thannen, Richard Hart, Robert & Valerie Patterson, Stephen McKenrick, John Schaffer, Cathy Schwartz, RL & Carolyn Moore, Perry & Marilyn Hall, Joseph & Rebecca Dombrowski, Rick Fiddyman, Susan E. Nelson.

Please make note of our
 official mailing address:

SCHS
Box 9744
Springfield, Illinois,
62791-9744



WITH running commentary provided by Muni board member Dennis O'Brien (at right, center top), those who signed up for the August 13 tour of the outdoor theater facility gained insight on the history of theatre here as well as The Muni—the Springfield Municipal Opera—itsself, in a special Sangamon County Historical Society event capped by watching an optional evening performance of *“West Side Story.”* O'Brien, a Springfield attorney who has been with the Muni more than 19 years and serves as its stage manager and technical director, took tour goes in, around, and backstage at the outdoor theatre that since 1950 has presented Broadway-style musicals each summer at its East Lake Drive lakeside amphitheater. The tour, held an hour or so before the general public was admitted to the theatre, included going backstage where Society members were able to see a pre-show “pick-up” dance rehearsal, (near right), watch the cast in a pre-show warm-up (right, bottom, center) and visit the makeup, wardrobe and costume storage building where signage from past shows—each autographed by cast and crew—are also on display (at right, below, left). The tour was arranged and coordinated by Society board member Genevieve Kaplan.



Society Seeks Volunteers for October 11 Cemetery Walk

(Continued from page 1)
Nellie Grant Jones (1855-1922), a German-born physician and member of Springfield City Council, Board of Education and County Board of Supervisors.

Visitors will also see portrayals of Judge Samuel Treat (1811-1887), lawyer and judge on the Illinois Circuit Court and Supreme Court who served as Chief Justice, played by William Furry; Mattie Rayburn (1836-1891), wife of Methodist Bishop W. H. Rayburn portrayed by Linda Schneider; and Phoebe Florville (1804-1897) a freed slave and wife of Abraham Lincoln's barber, portrayed by Kathryn Harris.

In addition, Patricia Davis will portray Rebecca Woods (1812-1865), a freed slave and servant of Nicholas Ridgely, a prominent Springfield banker, while Tracy Sitton-Petro will play

Nellie Grant Jones (1855-1922), the only daughter of President Ulysses S. Grant. Her second husband was of interesting people who have been buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery over the years. These authentic sto-



PERFORMING at this year's Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk will be the **Prairie Aires**, a dulcimer group.

Frank Hatch Jones, a Chicago banker, whose family was from Springfield. "They will tell the stories

sight into the lives and times of these historic individuals," Davis noted.

The free, popular cemetery walk was held annually for eleven years beginning in 1996 and ended in 2008. It is being brought back by popular demand. "We're really delighted to bring it back. Over the course of its history, it drew several thousand visitors each year. We are hoping to draw a large crowd."

In addition to the walk, attendees will be able to purchase books published by the Society and local authors. The Prairie Aires, an all-woman Dulcimer group, will perform throughout the afternoon.

To volunteer, contact President Davis at schspres@gmail.com or leave your name and number with the Society at 525-1961.

September 15 Meeting to Focus on Area's Communications History

(Continued from page 1)

In melding their research, they've drawn from archives ranging from the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library's Sangamon Valley Room photo collection, personal collections including those of Society member and fellow amateur radio operator Ben Kinningham, a retired Springfield area radio reporter and photographer, and Peoria-based television broadcaster Doug Quick.

Armstrong, a Society member, has had a lifelong fascination with radio and is developing a website on early radio history, k9atg.com that includes photos and details about some of Springfield's earliest radio communications. His education in electronics and computer networking led to a ca-

reer in information technology, for the past 24 years with the State of Illinois.

Hopper has been associated with broadcasting and electronics since 1969 when he started his career at **WJYY-TV** in Jacksonville, Illinois. In 1970 he was named Chief Engineer what would later become the Illinois State Board of Education broadcast teleproduction and distribution complex, retiring in 2005.

During his employment with the ISBE, he also operated as Assistant to the Chief Engineer for **WBHW-TV** thru its change to **WRSP-TV**, leaving in the late 90s. He continues to provide engineering services to the Illinois Information Service at their satellite uplink facilities as well as the Department of Electronic Media at the

University of Illinois at Springfield.

The program's co-sponsor, the Sangamon Valley Radio Club, marked its 66th anniversary this year as an affli-



ate of the American Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL), the nation's largest association of amateur radio operators. Based in Springfield, it has 80 members and is one of the fastest growing amateur radio clubs in Illinois.



Calendar of Historical Events

Saturday, September 19 to Sunday, September 20: Clayville Fall Festival. Clayville Historic Site, Route 125, Pleasant Plains. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. Prairie crafts, historic tours, children's activities, entertainment, food. Admission \$5, children 6 to 12 \$3, under six free. Free parking. For more information, go to www.clayville.org.



13th Annual Legacy Lectures series sponsored by the UIS Center for State Policy and Leadership, in cooperation with Dr. Michael Burlingame, Chancellor Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lin-Studies several spon-

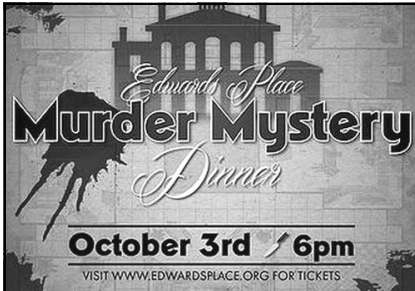


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Overflow seating will be in Public Affairs Center Rooms C/D and G. The lecture, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, can also be viewed via a live webcast at <http://www.uis.edu/technology/uislive.html>.

Saturday, October 3: Murder Mystery Dinner at Edwards Place, 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield,. 6 p.m. The year is 1864. Benjamin and Helen Edwards are

throwing
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t o y o u t o



and solve
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price includes dinner, mystery, and table wine. For information and reservations, visit the historic Edwards Place website at www.edwardsplace.org or call 217-523-2631.

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Tuesday, October 20: "The Sultana Tragedy And Its Springfield Connection," 5:30 p.m. Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 S. Seventh Street. For its October Sangamon County Historical Society program meeting, Tennessee attorney Jerry O. Potter, author of "The Sultana Tragedy," details the strong Springfield connection that led to America's greatest maritime disaster, the April 27, 1865 sinking of the *Sultana*, a wooden-hulled steamer overloaded with war-weary Union soldiers, that exploded and sank on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee. More than 1,800 soldiers, veterans of some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War and survivors of the Andersonville and Cahaba prison camps, died en route to their homes and families in the North. The magnitude of the catastrophe was overshadowed by the turbulent events that shook the nation: the end of the Civil War, the assassination of President Lincoln, and the capture of John Wilkes Booth. As a result, the explosion of the *Sultana* has been all but passed over in the pages of history. Free.



Sunday, October 11: "Echoes of Yesteryear: A Walk through Oak Ridge Cemetery" Noon to 4 p.m. Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield. Get a glimpse into the history and heritage of Springfield in this special Sangamon County Historical Society guided tour featuring performances by eight costumed actors and actresses portraying and telling the stories of individuals buried at the historic cemetery. (The last tour begins at 3:15 p.m.). Free. Parking will be available in designated areas. For information, visit www.sangamonhistory.org or call 217-525-1961. (Rain date is October 18).



Free. Parking will be available in designated areas. For information, visit www.sangamonhistory.org or call 217-525-1961. (Rain date is October 18).

Thursday, October 15: "Lincoln and Voting Rights," 7 p.m., Brookens Auditorium, University of Illinois at Springfield. The public is invited to this free lecture, part of the



December 5: Clayville Christmas, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Clayville Historic Site, Route 125, Pleasant Plains. Children's store, face painting, Christmas caroling by Pleasant Plains elementary and middle school students. For more information, go to www.clayville.org.

Sangamon County Historical Society
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Sangamon County Historical Society MEMBERSHIP/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. You may also join or renew on line by going to sangamonhistory.org. Our membership year runs from July 1 to June 30.



Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____ E-mail: _____

Status

New Member

Renewal

Gift of Membership from:

Phone _____

Membership Levels

- 01 - Regular Membership - \$25
- 02 - Not-For-Profit Membership - \$20 (Must show proof of status).
- 03 - Student Membership - \$10. (Must show proof of status).
- 04 - Educator, \$15. (Must show proof of status).
- 05 - Pioneer Level Membership - \$100.
- 06 - Settlers Level Membership - \$250.
- 07 - Trailblazer Level Membership - \$500.
- 08 - Lifetime Membership - \$700