



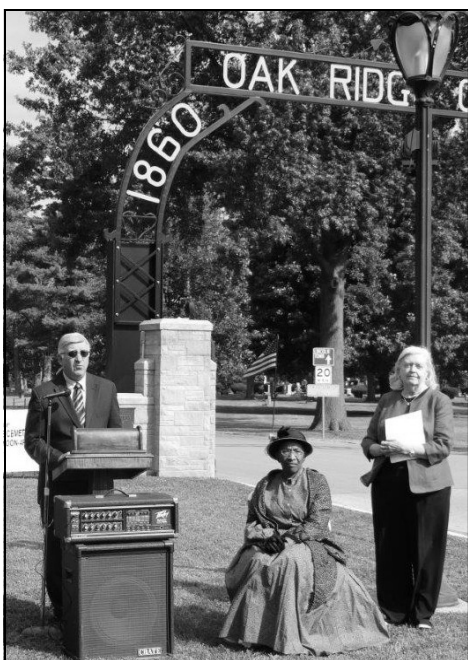
HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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VOLUME 52 NO. 1

OCTOBER 2015



DETAILS: Oak Ridge Cemetery executive director Mike Lelys (left) details the walk at a recent on-site press conference as re-enactor Kathlyn Harris (seated) and Society president Mary Alice Davis look on. Local media covered the event, gearing up for its October 11 return. *Donna Catlin photo*

Activities Start at Noon

Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk Returns Here October 11

What seemed like a long-way off last winter--the return of the Society's popular Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk--is now just around the corner: Sunday, October 11. The free event, running from Noon to 4 p.m., is open to the public as well as to Society members, their families and friends.

"Time has really gone by quickly," noted SCHS president Mary Alice Davis, who has been coordinating the effort with a committee drawn from both the Society and the broader community. "The Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk was long one of the most popular events for area history buffs and the general public during its first 15 years, drawing more than 70,000 visitors over that time span. When it ended in 2008,

many people, myself included, wanted to see it come back. We're delighted that Mike Lelys, executive director of Oak Ridge, felt that way too, and has played a major role in its return."

If you've not been on the Society's cemetery walk before, you're bound for a new experience, listening and learning through re-enactors, about some of the people who made and shaped this area. As you move from one gravesite to the other, one of eight re-enactors, dressed in costume of the period, will share life of the characters they are portraying, recounting their stories and experiences based on extensive research and a script produced by Society members.

(Continued on page 4)

Tennessee Lawyer to Provide Details

Sultana Sinking, Lincoln Link to be Focus of October 20 Meeting

Timing is everything. History is no exception.

Take the ill-fated *Sultana*. On April 27, 1865, the 260 foot wooden-hulled steamer, overloaded with more than 2,400 Union soldiers on a boat designed to carry 376 passen-

gers, exploded and sank on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee. Most of the victims were on their way home from Confederate prison camps.

It was America's worst maritime disaster, but was overshadowed

in its day by news of the end of the Civil War, the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, and the capture of John Wilkes Booth. The tragedy might have passed unnoticed if not for the definitive research and writing of Mem-

phis attorney Jerry O. Potter who will tell its tale and point to its Springfield connection when he speaks to the Society on Tuesday, October 20.

The free program, with illustrations, will begin at 5:30 p.m.

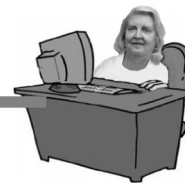
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RADIO DAYS: With the Springfield High School Radio Club, Class of 1922 on the screen, SCHS audience members took a visual trip through communications history here in the meeting season opener: *From Telegraph to Television: The Amazing History of Sangamon County's Electronic Communications*. More on Page 3.



Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk: A Group Effort

Though we're still a few days away from re-launching the Society's annual cemetery walk, it's never too early to thank the many people who helped restore this long-time heralded project. It's very gratifying, in fact, to know so many people in and out of the Society, wanted to see the cemetery walk return.

Its discontinuance was not of our doing. The Society was just as surprised as anyone several years ago when there was a policy change at Oak Ridge that essentially barred such events. But fortunately, administrators and policies do change and we are grateful for that in this case. Mike Lelys, who has been overseeing Oak Ridge in recent years, has been our enthusiastic partner for this event. It has been a pleasure working with him these past several months. We look forward to working with him in the future.

We also want to thank the many committee people who have worked so hard to bring this event back, especially the re-enactors who will be bringing back to life, at least figuratively, the people who molded Sangamon County's history. And we thank in advance the many volunteers who will be working with them, guiding visitors and helping in so many other ways.

We hope you will make it a point to participate in our October 11 "Echoes of Yesteryear" Cemetery Walk. We know you'll learn a lot more about our local history in a unique way. Bring friends and family too!

* * *

As we look ahead, we're pleased to be able to tell you that the Society has lots of exciting programs and events planned for the rest of 2015-2016. As you may have already read on page 1, our October speaker will be Tennessee lawyer Jerry O. Potter, who is driving up from Memphis just to address the Society.

While he may be a busy lawyer (in fact, one of the top in the nation) Potter is no stranger to history. He holds a degree in the subject from the University of Tennessee and while a student, won the Tennessee Historical Commission award for earning the highest marks in history. Still, his knowledge about the Sultana sinking eluded him until he came across a painting of the sinking ship. That set his history hunting instincts in motion and led to what many say is the most comprehensive look at this great maritime tragedy. We look forward to hearing what he has to say about the intriguing connection the disaster had to Lincoln and others with ties to Illinois. We thank Tara McClellan McAndrew, a member, writer, and herself, a superb researcher of things historical, for bringing Potter to our attention. In fact, we love to hear your programming ideas. We know we have a large resource in our membership and their interests. It's wonderful when these come together to give us another great program! See you at the Cemetery Walk on October 11 and at our program on October 20.

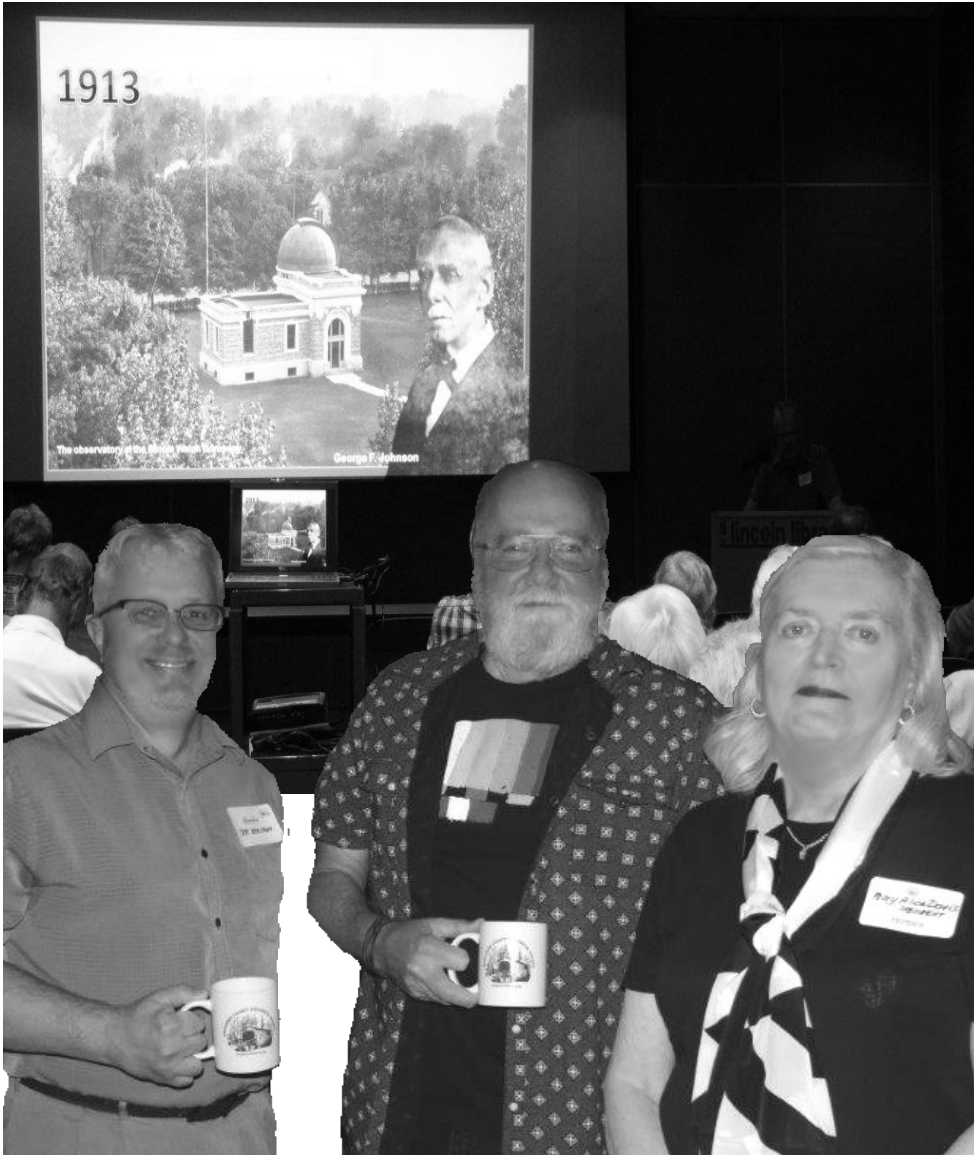
Mary Alice



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*



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SEASON KICKOFF: The Sangamon County Historical Society kicked off its fall-winter meeting season on September 15 with “*From Telegraph to Television: The Amazing History of Sangamon County’s Electronic Communications,*” a Powerpoint show with speakers Joe Armstrong (left) and Mitch Hopper (center), here with Society president Mary Alice Davis. The presentation, co-sponsored by the Sangamon Valley Radio Club, traced the growth of wired and wireless telegraph here, early experimenters and amateur radio operators, early commercial radio, and early television. Armstrong, a Society member, is a radio historian. Hopper served in engineering positions in most of the early television stations. Both are amateur radio operators and members of the Sangamon Valley Radio Club. After the presentation to more than 80 attendees, Davis presented each speaker with an official SCHS coffee mug.

Donna Catlin photos

SEPTEMBER 2015 MEMBERSHIP/DONOR REPORT

The Society welcomes new members:

Rhonda Robinson
 Thomas Wood

Please make note of our official mailing address:

SCHS
Box 9744
Springfield, Illinois,
62791-9744

Cemetery Walk October 11 at Oak Ridge

(Continued from page 1)

This year's event, "Echoes of Yesterday," will include stops at the graves of famed poet Nicholas Vachel Lindsay (portrayed by Fred Florent); drugstore owner and Lincoln friend Roland W. Diller (Bruce Davidson); physician and community leader Dr. Henry Wohlgermuth (Pat Foster); lawyer and Supreme Court Judge Samuel Treat (William Furry); and Mattie Rayburn, wife of Methodist Bishop W.H. Rayburn whose grave has the second highest obelisk in the cemetery, (Linda Schneider);.

Other stops include the grave of Phoebe Florville, freed slave and wife of Lincoln's friend and barber (Kathryn Harris); freed slave Rebecca Woods who worked for the Ridgely family and is interred with them, (Roni Betts); and Nellie Grant Jones, the only daughter of President Ulysses S. Grant. The family of her second hus-



ON DISPLAY: Cemetery Walk attendees will be able to see the Lincoln Funeral Hearse replica built for the Staab Funeral Home for last spring's 150th anniversary funeral re-enactment.



ON THE AIR: Kathryn Harris, costumed as Phoebe Florville, is interviewed about her role by a WICS reporter at a recent press conference at Oak Ridge detailing the event. Harris is a past president of the Society.

band, Frank Hatch Jones, a Chicago banker, was from Springfield. She will be portrayed by Tracy Sitton-Petro.

If you're planning to go, enter Oak Ridge either through Monument Avenue—the most direct route to the parking area—or via Walnut. Direction signs to the parking area will be posted along each route.

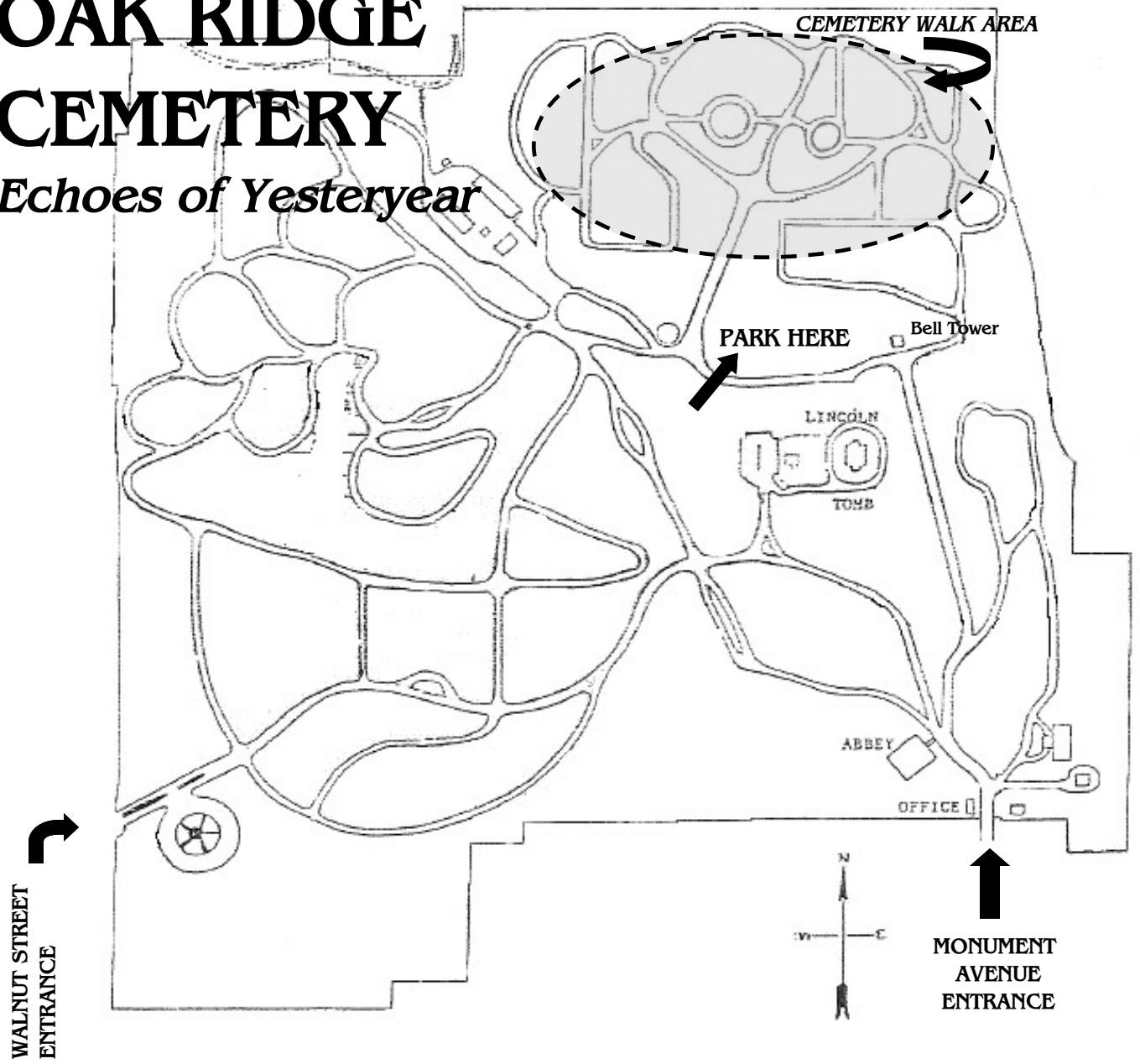
Once you park, you can pick up a shuttle bus to take you to and from the tour site. The parking area will also include a refreshment area, tables featuring Society publications, books produced by local authors (with the authors on-hand to autograph them, if you wish!), and a display of items by the Lincoln Monument Association.

The Prairie Aires, an all-woman Dulcimer group, will play music for tour goers throughout the afternoon.

In addition, you'll also be able to view the replica of the Lincoln hearse built for the Staab Funeral Home that was created for last spring's re-enactment of the 150th anniversary of the Lincoln Funeral.

OAK RIDGE CEMETERY

Echoes of Yesteryear



DIRECTIONS: Enter either through Monument Avenue or Walnut Street visitors gates. Special signs will direct you a grassy parking area near the cemetery's bell tower. From there you can take a free shuttle bus to and from the site.

HOURS: Noon to 4 p.m. (Last tour starts at 3:15 p.m.).

CONCESSIONS, SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS: A refreshment stand will be located near the parking area. In addition, you can purchase books, meet local authors, listen to the Prairie Aires, and get a close-up look at the Lincoln Hearse recreated for the Staab Funeral Home.

TOUR GUIDE: Participants will receive a printed tour guide, with a map detailing each stop, the location of nearby restrooms, and shuttle bus pick-up points.

RAIN DATE: Sunday, October 18.

Free UIS Lecture Series to Salute 1965 Voting Rights Act

The University of Illinois will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on October 15 when it holds its 13th Annual Lincoln Legacy Lectures with “Lincoln & Voting Rights” as its theme.

A trio of lectures, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the UIS Brookens Auditorium, are free and open to the public with no reservations required. Arrive early for best seating; overflow seating will be in Public Affairs Center Rooms C/D and G. You can also view the live webcast at: <http://www.uis.edu/technology/uilive.html>.

Dr. Michael Vorenberg, associate professor of history, Brown University, will present the first lecture: “Voting Rights and the Meaning of Freedom: The View from the Civil War Era.” Vorenberg is the author of *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Dr. Ronald Keith Gaddie, professor of political science, University of Oklahoma, will present the second lecture: “Citizenship and Voting Rights in the Modern Era.” Gaddie is co-author of the forthcoming *The Rise and Fall of the Voting Rights Act* (University of



Burlingame, Vorenberg, Gaddie

Oklahoma Press, 2015).

Dr. Michael Burlingame, Chancellor Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at UIS, will offer opening remarks on “Lincoln and Black Voting Rights” and serve as moderator. Burlingame is the author of a comprehensive, two-volume biography, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

The UIS Center for State Policy and Leadership, in cooperation with Burlingame, sponsors the lecture series. This year’s cosponsors include the Abraham Lincoln Association, the State Historical Society, the State Li-

brary, the McLean County League of Women Voters, the Springfield Branch NAACP, Springfield Chapter, American Civil Liberties Union, ECCE Speaker Series, Gobberdiel Endowment, Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund, UIS Colleges of Education and Human Services, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Public Affairs and Administration, and WUIS/Illinois Issues. The authors’ books will be available for purchase and signing at a reception following the lectures. For more information, contact Dr. Barbara Ferrara at bferr1@uis.edu, 206-7094, or visit www.uis.edu/cspl/.

Sultana Sinking to be Subject of October 20 Meeting

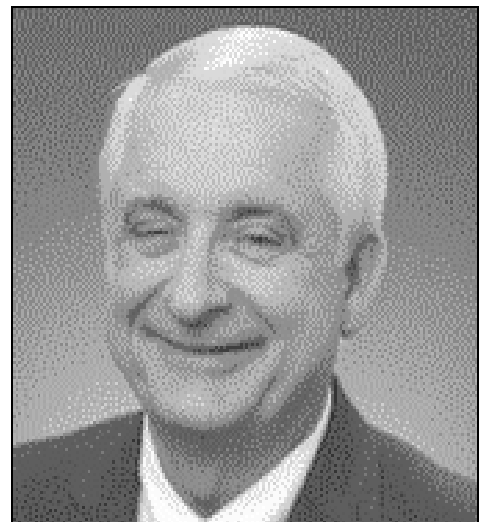
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in Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street. It’s free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Potter, a frequently-honored Tennessee attorney and president of The Hardin Law Firm in Memphis, became interested in the *Sultana* over a decade ago after coming across a painting of the burning ship hanging in a local bank. A graduate of the University of Tennessee with a degree in history (and a law degree from Memphis State), it piqued his curiosity. As a student, he won the Tennessee Historical

Commission Award for the highest marks in history. His interest in history never faltered.

Determined that the *Sultana* should not be forgotten, Potter researched newspaper accounts, the three existing books on the subject, and previously unused original military and government documents before writing a book of his own. In his highly documented tome, *The Sultana Tragedy: America’s Greatest Maritime Disaster*, Potter focuses on how greed, indifference, gross stupidity, and criminal misconduct reaching as far as the White House led to the overloading of the *Sultana* at Vicksburg.

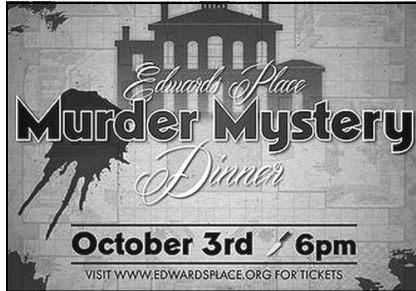


Potter



Calendar of Historical Events

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 an engagement party for their daughter Alice, but murder is in the air. It's up to you to discover "whodunit" and solve the crime in this murder mystery dinner whose \$40 per person ticket 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.

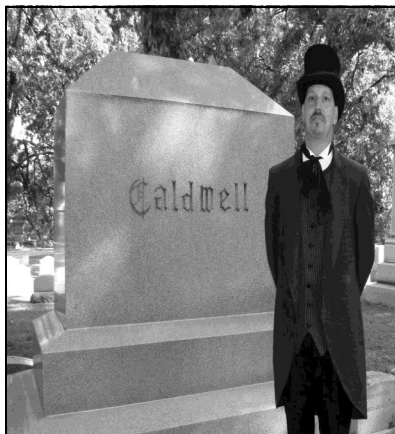


Tuesday, October 6: *Thomas Lincoln and Other Furniture Makers of His Era*. Iles House, 628 S. Seventh Street, Springfield. 7 p.m. Dale Ogden, a curator at the Indiana Museum, speaker at this Iles House Fireside Chat series. Free.

Saturday, October 10: *Sangamo Country Harvest Celebration*, Strawbridge Shepherd House, 5251 Shepherd Road, Springfield. 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Live auction, entertainment, candle-light dinner, 19th Century Sangamo Country Foods will be featured in this annual fundraiser for the operation of the Elijah Iles House. Tickets are \$50 per person and must be purchased by **October 2**. Call 546-1713 or 558-8892 for information.



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).

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 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 Lincoln Studies and several co-sponsors. 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>.



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. Free.



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. Free.

Tuesday, October 21: *Flags, Then and Now: Military and Political Significance*. State Military Museum director Stewart Reeve, guest speaker. Iles House, 628 S. Seventh Street, Springfield. 7 p.m. Free.

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.



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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.



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City, State, Zip _____

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Status

New Member

Renewal

Gift of Membership from:

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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).
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