



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

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## February 17 General Meeting to Focus on Oak Ridge History As Society Gears Up for Cemetery Walk Restart in Fall

With Sangamon County Historical Society plans in the works to restore its popular Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk in Springfield next fall, members and guests will get a preview of what's ahead Tuesday, February 17 from the man who knows the site best: Michael Lelys.

As Oak Ridge Cemetery executive director, Lelys oversees what is one the na-

tion's foremost historic sites, drawing nearly a million visitors a year, second only to Arlington National Cemetery.

Lelys has been working closely with the Society mapping out a return of the event planned for October 11. His talk, at 5:30 p.m. in Carnegie Room North and open to the public, will provide general underpinnings

the cemetery walk that had been on a hiatus for several years. SCHS president Mary Alice Davis and members of the Society board have been meeting informally since the summer to plan the event and related activities that in the past has drawn several thousand visitors.

The cemetery itself dates back to 1865, when the city purchased a 28.5 acre site

two miles north of the Capitol after passing legislation the previous spring to forbid further burying within city limits. Today, Oak Ridge is the largest municipal cemetery in Illinois, encompassing 365 acres of rolling prairie land, thousands of hardwoods and conifers, and over 75,000 interments.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Lincoln Troubadours to Benefit from 3rd Annual History Trivia Night, March 21

Table and individual reservations are now being taken for the Society's third annual History Trivia Night to be held Saturday, March 21 at the Old State Capitol for benefit of the Lincoln Troubadours,

Seating is limited to 130 players (13 tables of 10). Tickets are \$10 per person or \$100 per table of 10, paid in advance.

"Last year was a sell out," noted SCHS president Mary Alice Davis, "and we expect that to happen again and quickly." Last year's event, that like this year's, is co-sponsored with the Old State Capitol Foundation, drew history buffs and players representing history groups from across the county including five tables from the Society alone. "It was a lot of fun," said Davis, "and at the end of the event, people were already anticipating 2015."

Doors will open at 6 p.m., with game time at 7 p.m. in Foundation Hall on the lower level of the Old State Capitol building. Entrance will be through the lower level, or via elevators and stairs from the south plaza above. The site's underground parking facility will remain open after hours to accommodate the event. Usual underground parking fees apply.

*(Continued on page 6)*

**MARCH 21!**

**3rd annual**

**HISTORY TRIVIA NIGHT**

Sign Up On Line or by Mail

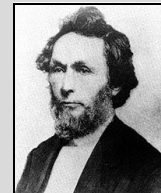
### INSIDE

From the President's Desk.....	2
Edwards Place Shapes Up .....	4
Calendar.....	7

**Grant Deadline, Rules Set For History Projects**

Page 5

**WHAT'S NEW on SangamonLink.org**



Page 3



## We're Bursting With Energy for an Exciting Season

The new year may be just getting underway, but not for the Sangamon County Historical Society. We have an almost full plate and it isn't even March! But that's okay. We're used to it.

At the top of our list, of course, is the Third Annual History Trivia Night, which last year was a sell-out a week or two in advance of the event. We think that it may happen again, which is why we strongly urge you to get your reservations in quickly. Last year we have five tables (50 players!) from SCHS alone, but the competition was fierce...and fun!

If you've never played trivia, here's a chance to learn and help a really worthy group of young people, the Lincoln Troubadours, who sing their hearts out every spring and summer (and then some) at historic sites across the area. They get a small stipend from the state that doesn't make much of a dent in their personal expenses getting to and from sites, costumes, etc. We really want to help these talented youngsters and do so with your help.

Last year, the Troubadours entertained throughout the evening, sold cookies and at the end, shook hands and thanked everyone for coming. There will be more of that this year and you can see it for yourself, first-

hand. We encourage you to come out and play or just lend a hand throughout the evening.

\* \* \*

Our February meeting should provide you with a lot of good information about Oak Ridge Cemetery from the man who knows it best, Michael Lelys. We have been working with him for several months and now and in coming weeks, will begin the process of putting together the committee and drawing up specific plans to restore a popular history-laced event that drew thousands of participants here each fall. If you want to be part of the planning process, don't be shy about it. Contact me asap!

\* \* \*

There's a lot more that will be coming your way this spring and also this summer and fall. This issue of *Historico* tells you a bit more about the April tour of Edwards Place, which is a members-only event. We have lots of other exciting activities ahead as the good weather approaches and of course, our annual dinner with its own list of surprises! You'll have to wait a few weeks but we think you'll enjoy what's in store.

Mary Alice



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You can download back issues of *Historico* in PDF format by going to our website, [sangamon-history.org](http://sangamon-history.org) or [sancohis.org](http://sancohis.org). Send event announcements to [historicoeditor@gmail.com](mailto:historicoeditor@gmail.com).

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

WITH THE Old State Capitol as a backdrop, newly-elected Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner and his wife Diana, met members of the community at an inaugural day open house January 12 following his swearing in as the state's 42<sup>nd</sup> governor. SCHS president Mary Alice Davis (right), who is also vice-president of the Old State Capitol Foundation, helped host the public event. *Historico* photographer Donna Catlin (left), usually on the other side of the camera, joined Davis in welcoming the Rauners to Springfield.



**OFFICERS**

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 Vice-President.....Ruth Slottag  
 Secretary.....Sue Massie  
 Treasurer.....Richard Herndon  
 Past President.....Roger Whitaker

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**Term Ending 2015**

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 David Grimm  
 Francie Staggs  
 Vicky Whitaker

**Term Ending 2016**

Kathy Dehen  
 Cathy Mosley

**Term Ending 2017**

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 Genevieve Kaplan  
 Jerry Smith  
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**Committee Chairs**

**Legal:** Bruce Beeman  
**Special Projects:** Elaine Hoff  
**Finance:** Patricia Davis, Doug Polite,  
**Nominating:** Brenda Holmes  
**Membership:** Claire Eberle  
**Membership Relations/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**

**Newest SangamonLink.org Entries:**

**1870s Farming, Library's Shaky Start, Famed Dancer, Law School No More**

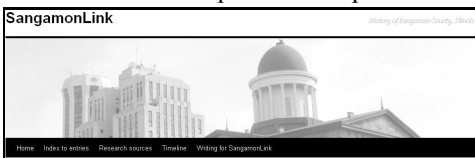
As it continues to approach the 1,000 entries mark, the Sangamon County Historical Society's new on-line and searchable county history encyclopedia, *SangamonLink.org* added several more entries last month ranging from comments by Lincoln's last law partner and biographer, William Herndon on the state of farming, to the origins of the City of Springfield's public library whose early days were roiled by a racial dispute.

The on-line encyclopedia, edited by veteran journalist and Society member Mike Kienzler, will eventually encompass thousands of entries that unlike a printed book, can be constantly updated and expanded. Individuals and area organizations can easily contribute new information to Kienzler, even suggest new topics, comment on what has been posted or expand on existing entries through the website.

The Herndon entry provides the text of part of a speech Herndon made to the ninth annual meeting of the Old Settlers of Sangamon County in August, 1876. In it, he comments on the changes he has observed

in farming techniques over the 50 years that had elapsed since Europeans and African Americans moved into Sangamo Country.

The forerunner of today's city operated Lincoln Library was rife with controversy back in 1865 when famous black activist Frederick Douglass was invited to speak at a fundraiser for the fledging library. The Civil War may have been over, but, as the Springfield Library Association learned, the battle for racial equality still festered here and would shape its future policies.



Famed Lithuanian-American dance man Joey Mack, half of the traveling vaudeville dance team, Jo and Joey Mack, is also among the new entries as is the Lincoln College of Law that for more than 40 years until its closing in 1953, educated prospective lawyers, mostly in night classes.

**FEBRUARY 2015 MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

*The Society welcomes new members:*

**Pam and Paul Brown, Larry and Rita Werline, Donald and Marilyn Ferricks**

Please make note of our official mailing address:

**SCHS**  
**Box 9744**  
**Springfield, Illinois,**  
**62791-9744**

# Oak Ridge Exec to Share Site's History

*(Continued from page 1)*

Oak Ridge is the final resting place for President Abraham Lincoln, his wife, and all but one of his children and over 80 other notable dignitaries including several former governors and legislators.

Among those interred at Oak Ridge are famed labor leader John L. Lewis, Springfield's first settler, John Kelly, Vachel Lindsay, Elijah Iles, and Ninian Edwards. There are also three state war memorials located at Oak Ridge, commemorating Illinois lives lost in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

A native of Linz, Austria, Lelys grew up in Springfield, attending St. Joseph Elementary School and later graduating from Springfield High School.

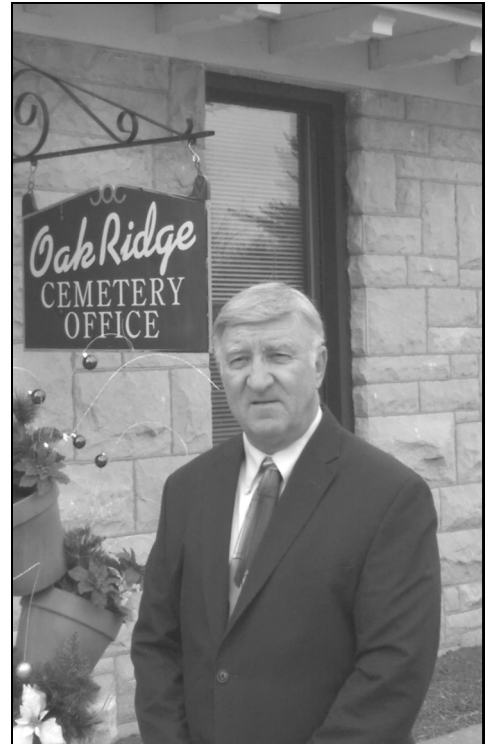
He holds an associate in arts degree from Springfield College, a bachelor of arts degree in education from Illinois State University, and a masters in

educational administration from Sangamon State/University of Illinois.

Prior to being named executive director of Oak Ridge in 2011, Lelys was executive director of the Springfield Community Federation, director of Community Service and Grants for the Springfield Housing Authority, Director of Recreation for the City of Springfield, and Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, also for the City of Springfield.

Prior to that, he was principal of St. Joseph Elementary School and a teacher at Little Flower Elementary School.

Lelys currently serves on the NE-HEMIAH Affordable Housing and Daycare Development Boards and is a former member of the boards of the Diocese of Springfield School Board, the Lincoln Library Board, the Springfield Community Federation Board, and the Springfield Homeless Task Force.



Lelys

## April 7 Pre-Public Edwards Place Tour a Members-Only Event

After being closed for nearly a year, Edwards Place is getting ready to reopen to the public on Saturday, April 11. Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society will get a free pre-public tour of the site on April 7. Pre-registration will be required on-line or by phone. Registration will begin March 1.

The historic mansion, built in 1833, has been restored to reflect the time immediately following the house's 1857 remodel, when Abraham Lincoln and his contemporaries were frequent dinner guests.

Restoration work, which began last May, included structural repairs to the plaster, updated electrical sys-

tems, refinished walnut trim, faux walnut graining on the pine trim, refinished chande-

liers, reupholstered furniture, and the installation of period-appropriate wallpa-

per, carpeting, and window treatments. In two instances,

*(Continued on page 5)*



**GETTING IN SHAPE:** Devoid of furnishings, stripped down, and restored, historic Edwards Place is almost ready for its re-opening which begins February 28 with a \$200 per person gala and extends into April with pre-openings including a special members-only tour for SCHS.



**PERSONAL HISTORY:** The Society's January 20 meeting at Springfield's Lincoln Library drew a full house to hear re-enactors Pam Brown (left and from left) who portrays Mary Todd Lincoln, Grant portrayer Larry Werline, and Don Ferricks who portrays soldiers from several periods in history, talk about what they do, their research and public reaction, during a panel on "When History Becomes Personal." Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition exec director Sarah Watson and Justin Blandford, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency superintendent for Springfield sites (third and second from right) served as co-moderators. SCHS president Mary Alice Davis (right), introduced the panel.

*Donna Catlin photos*



## Edwards Place Readying Reopening With Pre-Public Events, Gala

*(Continued from page 4)*

All proceeds go towards the wallpaper patterns were reproduced from original 1850s of Edwards Place and are fragments found during the restoration process.

The restoration project cost \$490,000. The bulk of the funds were raised through private donations which were matched by a \$150,000 challenge grant from the Jeffris Family Foundation of Wisconsin.

The reopening celebration will kick off with a dinner gala on February 28. Guests will step back in time to 1858 as they join Benjamin and Helen Edwards, Ninian and Elizabeth Edwards, Julia and Lyman Trumbull, Stephen A. Douglas, and Abraham and Mary Lincoln over a sumptuous four-course dinner inspired by the menu for Lincoln's 1865 Inaugural dinner.

Tickets for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity are \$200 per person, of which \$100 is

restoration of the second floor matched by another grant from the Jeffris Family Foundation. For gala ticket information visit [www.edwardsplace.org](http://www.edwardsplace.org) or call 217-523-2631.



GETTING NEAR the refinishing line.

## Special Projects Committee Sets Deadline for Grant Applications

The Sangamon County Historic Society's Special Projects Committee will be accepting applications starting this month for the Society's annual grant program to help underwrite individual and group projects that preserve and promote interest Sangamon County History. Filing deadline is April 20, 2015.

Over the past two years, the Society has given Special Projects grants to a variety of projects such as the Clayville Historic Site for permanent flora and fauna markers for its new nature trail; the Village of Williamsville to help underwrite public signage that links the community to the historic Interurban railroad; the Springfield Boys & Girls Club to participate in activities marking the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation; and for a National Public Radio

series on WUIS-FM on Sangamon history.

Individuals and groups can apply grants of up to \$1,000 each. An application form and related material will be posted



**TRAILMARKER:** A Society Special Projects grant in 2014 helped underwrite trail signs at Clayville.

on-line at the Society's website, [www.sangamonhistory.org](http://www.sangamonhistory.org) this month. Completed forms can be submitted online or mailed to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Special Projects Committee, P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744.

Award winners will be announced at the Society's annual dinner in June.





**READY FOR THE NEXT ROUND:** Players take a break as they get ready for the next round at last year's History Trivia Night.

## Sign Up Now for March 21 History Trivia Night

*(Continued from page 1)*

The March 21 event will be in place of the regular monthly general membership program meeting.

### Chilli on the Menu

Unlike most trivia nights, players cannot bring their own food to the site, a reflection of the need to protect the historic nature of the building, players cannot bring their own food to the site. There will be snacks however, and players can once again purchase regular and vegetarian chilli prepared by nationally-known chilli champion Les Eastep, a member of the SCHS board. (Eastep is author of one of the Society's best selling publications, "*Springfield, Illinois: A History of Chilli*," now in its fifth printing). Desserts will also be available.

### How to Play

Anyone can play trivia. It's fun and easy and you don't have to be part of a team of nine other players to be part of a table. SCHS individual members will be seated at a Society table or where space is available at an undesignated organization table.

The game is played in 10 rounds, each with 10 questions. A table usually works as a team, sharing written notes with what they think is the correct answer (to avoid being overheard by nearby tables). One person at the table is in charge of writing the correct answer on a score sheet that is turned into the judges at the end of each round.

The team with the highest number of answers at the end of the game will share a cash prize, as will second and

third place winners. In many cases, winning tables donate all or part of their prize back to the beneficiaries of the fundraiser, which was the case last year.

### Support for Students

As in past years, members of the Lincoln Troubadours will be on hand to perform and assist with the event. The vocally-talented high school and college students, directed by Lincoln Land Community College music professor Sue Hamilton, receive a very small state stipend to that does not completely cover their travel and other expenses incurred in performing free at historic sites across Central Illinois each summer. Proceeds from the March 21 help supplement their expenses.

## SCHS Weather-Related Cancellation Information On Line, By Phone

A heavy evening snowfall predicted on the day of an SCHS event? Icy roads too hazardous to drive?

Winter is here and with it the possibility that a Sangamon County Historical Society meeting could be cancelled if weather conditions call for it. Here's how you can find out before heading out the door:

If road conditions or hazardous weather prompts a general meeting or event cancellation, an announcement to that effect will be posted by **3 p.m.** of the day of the meeting/event several different ways.

Notices initially will be posted on our main website, [www.sangamonhistory.org](http://www.sangamonhistory.org) and on our phone, **217-525-1961** by 3 p.m. on the day of the meeting. This should give you ample time to change plans.

Where possible, we will also post any cancellation notices on media websites and request that they be broadcast through local radio and television outlets.



# Calendar of Historical Events

**Tuesday, February 17:** "All About Oak Ridge Cemetery," with Oak Ridge exec director Michael Lelys, guest speaker. Sangamon County Historical Society program meeting, 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield. Free. Open to the public.

**Saturday, February 28:** *Edwards Place Grand Unveiling Gala, 6 p.m.-9 p.m.* Join Benjamin and Helen Edwards, Ninian and Elizabeth Edwards, Stephen A. Douglas, and Abraham and Mary Lincoln at this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be among the very first people to see Edwards Place newly restored to the splendor of its 19th century appearance. The \$200 per person ticket includes a four-course dinner inspired by the 1865 Inaugural dinner. All proceeds will go toward second floor restoration of Edwards Place. For more information, call 523-2631.

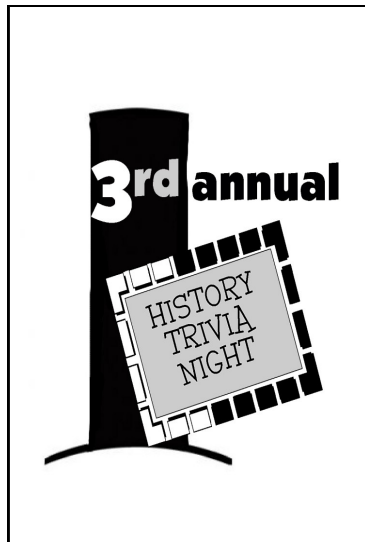
**Saturday, March 21:** *3rd Annual History Trivia Night* for benefit of the Lincoln Troubadours, Old State Capitol, Springfield. Doors open 6 p.m. Order tables of 10 or individual tickets on-line (preferred) or by mail. See information below and on page 1.

**Tuesday, April 7:** *SCHS Members Only Pre-Public Private Tour of Edwards Place* renovations, 5:30 p.m. Free but pre-registration will be required. Reservations will begin March 1. See story, page 4.

**Saturday, April 11:** Edwards Place opens to the general public.

**Tuesday, June 23:** *SCHS Annual Dinner*, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Springfield. 5:30 p.m.

**Sunday, October 11:** *Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk* sponsored by the Sangamon County Historical Society. Details to come.



## Here's How to Guarantee a Seat or Table at the 2015 HISTORY TRIVIA NIGHT on MARCH 21

**GO TO [www.sangamoncountyhistory.org](http://www.sangamoncountyhistory.org) NOW** and follow the March 21 Trivia Night reservation/payment instructions. You can order a table of 10 for \$100 or buy individual tickets at \$10 per person...or use the form below to order by mail:

### 2014 TRIVIA NIGHT TICKET/TABLE ORDER FORM

**MAIL IN THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHECK.** Make checks payable to SCHS and mail to the Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. Checks must be received no later than **MONDAY, MARCH 9.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Table(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Tickets

**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

**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](http://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