



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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Rich Saal, SJ-R Photographer With a Historian's Eye, To Kick off 2017 Program Season on January 17

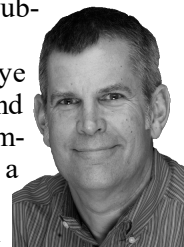
Award-winning *State Journal Register* photo editor Rich Saal will kick off the Society's 2017 offerings in January with a program on Tuesday, January 17 focusing on preserving history through photography.

In his presentation, at 5:30 p.m. in Carnegie Room North at the City of Spring-

field's Lincoln Library, Saal is expected to discuss not only the photographer's eye in capturing history, but also changes in the methods used in today's photographs and those in the future that could impact on how such photos will be collected and preserved for future generations.

The program is free and open to the public.

Saal's eye for people and places combined with a vision of history through photography has resulted



Saal

in both personal collections that capture local history and the assembling and publishing of a collection of glass plate images of Springfield from the late 1920s through the mid 30s, *Springfield Photographs: Images from the Illinois State*

(Continued on page 6)

Sangamon Valley Room's Expansion Underscores 48-Year Society Kinship

Clustered around a table in the Howard Johnson's Restaurant downstairs dining room on South Fifth Street one chilly Saturday in November, 1969, the Sangamon County Historical Society board of directors plunged into a three-hour discussion split between two topics:

Should it reprint John Carroll Power's, 797-page tome, *History of Early Settlers in Sangamon County* last published in 1876?

Should it accept a challenge from the city's Lincoln Library board to help plan the construction of a new city library?

It was thumbs-down on the book, thumbs-up for the library.

Thus began a 48-year relationship that

resulted in the creation of the Sangamon Valley Room whose expansion is being celebrated this month as part of a major City of Springfield Lincoln Library renovation project that began this past September.

In fact, by the time you read this (and study the photos snapped about a week ago, before the official opening), you should be able to check out the remodeled facility for yourself. Some equipment and tables were on order when *Historico* went to press, but a special Society tour of the totally renovated Sangamon Valley Room is in the works, once everything is in place.

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SCHS HOLIDAY PARTY goes get ready to raise a toast to the holiday season at the Society's annual event, held this year at historic Pasfield House on December 13. More photos on page 7.

Kathy Dehen Photo



2017 Will Be A Terrific Year for the Society

As another year rolls in, it's time to flip the calendar to begin a new month and year. The Sangamon County Historical Society officers and board members are busy planning activities and programs to make 2017 a very interesting year for our members.

Before talking about 2017 programs and activities, I want to mention that the Society celebrated a very good year at our Holiday Party held at the historic Pasfield House on December 13.

Great food and good times were enjoyed by a packed house full of members and guests. It was wonderful to see old friends and meet new ones. If you didn't attend, you missed a great party. See photos on page 7. I want to send special "thank you" to the Program and Events Committee for their work in planning and organizing the event.

A few of the programs for the next few months are listed below. In January, we are looking forward to our monthly program on Tuesday, January 17 at 5:30 p.m. at Lincoln Library's Carnegie Room North. Rich Saal, *State Journal-Register* photography editor, will discuss capturing and preserving history through photographs as well as sharing information about collecting and preserving them for future generations. He is sure to offer some great tips that we can all use in our individual history preservation projects. We hope to see you there.

Our February program will be a special observance of Black History Month featuring Kathryn Harris, retired library services director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and a past president of the Society. Her powerpoint presentation will lend a contemporary edge to the 1908 Springfield Race Riot that shocked the nation.

March brings the Society's annual Trivia Night on March 18 at Christ the King Parish Hall, 1930 Barberry Drive in Springfield. Master trivia producer Al

Gietl will be on hand with challenging questions. Les Eastep's famous chili will be served. Watch for more details in future issues of *Historico*. Now is the time to start getting a table of friends together to support this great Society fundraiser. Volunteers are needed to help with the event. If you would like to help, please call Volunteer Chair Jennie Battles, 217-741-6796 or e-mail her at jenniedick60@gmail.com.

History researchers will be happy to know that the Sangamon Valley Collection at Lincoln Library, which has been closed for a few months, is expected to re-open in early January after completing third-floor renovations. SVC will have additional space, new carpeting and other enhancements. A newspaper microfilm section and two more public computers are included in the renovations. Also new features of the space will include minutes from City Council and a variety of governing boards.

The Sangamon Valley Collection will sponsor a training session for genealogy researchers on January 28 at 2 p.m. Curtis Mann, city historian, a past president of the Society, and manager of the Collection, will demonstrate the use of *Ancestry.com*, the popular genealogy website. Patrons can use this service through the library's public computers. The training is free and open to the public, but you may need to register. Contact the Lincoln Library for more information.

Other history-related activities and events are coming up. Be sure to check out *Historico's* events calendar on page 7.

Wishing you a very Happy New Year!



Historico, published 10 times a year (except July & December), is the official bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. *Winner, Certificate of Excellence, Illinois State Historical Society.*

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

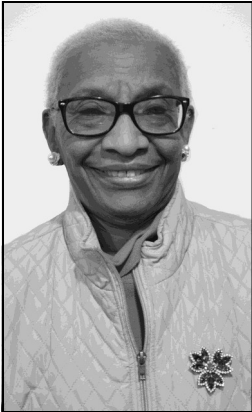
Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor

1908 Springfield Race Riot Timeline And Look Back for February Meeting

A vivid look at the 1908 Springfield Race Riot in a format you may have never seen before, will be the focal point for the Society's next general meeting, Tuesday, February 21.

The program, in recognition of Black History Month, will begin at 5:30 p.m. in the City of Springfield's Lincoln Room Library, Carnegie Room North and is open to the public.

Providing the Power Point, commentary and the historical



Harris

insight to an event that shocked the nation and led to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People will be Kathryn Harris, president of the Abraham Lincoln Association and a past president of the Sangamon County Historical Society.

Harris is the retired chief librarian of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

"There are some parallels to current times and the current racial tenor," says Harris, the first woman and the first black woman to head the ALA. "The same kind of sentiments that existed then continue to persist," she says of the 1908 racial rioting in Lincoln's home town that shocked the nation and became front page news around the country. "If you don't know your history, you're bound to repeat it."

A Carbondale, Illinois native, Harris holds a bachelor of arts degree in French/education from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and a Masters in Library Science from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. She moved to Springfield in 1971 after being hired immediately

after graduation by the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library as Reference Librarian, the first African American on the staff with a professional degree in library science. She stayed in the post for about nine months before being lured away by Sangamon State University to served as an instructional services librarian, a post she held until 1974 when she married and moved to Florida. There, she was quickly hired by Florida International University as circulation librarian.

Harris returned to Springfield in 1981 where she joined the Illinois State Library as head of its Reference Department, a post she held until 1990 when Harris moved over to the State Historical Library, then located on the lower level of the Old State Capitol. She served as Supervisor of Reference and Technical Services until 1996 when she was named Director of the State Historical Library. Harris helped oversee its move to its new home and name change to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library complex in downtown Springfield.

Harris retired from the Library in 2015 but continues to play a role in the community. She serves on the board of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum and is also well-known for her portrayals of historic figures including Harriet Tubman, an African-American abolitionist, humanitarian and civil rights activist who guided slaves to freedom via the Underground Railroad during the Civil War; Elizabeth Keckley, Mary Lincoln's confidante and dressmaker; Jarena Lee, the first African-American woman to have an autobiography published in the United States and the first woman authorized to preach in the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and Sadie Delany, an educator who was one of the subjects of the best-selling oral history "Having Our Say."



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Please make note of our official mailing address:

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JANUARY 2017 MEMBERSHIP REPORT
The Society welcomes the following new member: Kim Effrid

Sangamon Valley Room: Resource Long Linked to SCHS

(Continued from page 1)

To understand the importance of this major center for research and preservation of Sangamon County history and the Society's role in it, requires a little digging, made easier in part by the existence of *SangamonLink.org*, the Society's online encyclopedia of county history edited by Mike Kienzler. A search of back issues of *Historico* through the 1960s and 1970s provides additional insight into the interplay between the library and the Society, both in their fledgling years. The Society was formed in 1960.

Part of City Fabric

Springfield's first library was created just after the end of the Civil War and struggled to serve the community. Between 1867 and 1904, the library was housed in five different locations, its final move before the construction of the Carnegie-financed library, to the top floor city hall on Seventh and Monroe in 1894.

In its best year, 1902, patrons checked out about 109,000 books, but the library at city hall was crowded, hot and hard to reach (circulation dipped in 1903 when the building's elevator broke down for two months).

The city couldn't afford to build a new library on its own, but found a deep-pocketed donor in famed steel magnate-turned philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who had been financing construction of libraries since 1886. He was, as Kienzler put it, "an obvious prospect for a construction grant." Between 1883 and 1929, Carnegie underwrote the cost of constructing 1,689 libraries throughout the United States (2,509 world-wide), first in his home-town in Scotland and Pittsburg, Pennsylvania and later, in response to requests from local communities. One such appeal, from the Reverend Edwin S. Walker, a retired Springfield Baptist minister, resulted in a \$75,000 library construction grant from Carnegie in 1901.

"Walker sent his letter to Carnegie on February 9, 1901, and less than a week later, Carnegie offered a \$60,000 construction grant if the city would spend \$6,000 annually to operate the library. (That 10 percent ratio was typical of Carnegie grants). James Bertram, Carnegie's

secretary, added a note personal to Springfield: "*The home of Abraham Lincoln has claims on every American, Mr. Carnegie adds, indeed on every good man.*" When told in 1901 that local officials intended to name the institution the Lincoln-Carnegie Memorial Library, Carnegie responded that he "*would consider it a desecration to have any other name linked with that of Lincoln.*"

After a follow-up appeal from Springfield, Carnegie increased his pledge to \$75,000, and the city increased its minimum library budget to \$7,500, says Kienzler. The city bought the property on which the Carnegie-financed library would rise (and today's library now sits) at Seventh Street and Capitol Avenue for \$20,000. Construction started in 1902. Weather, shortages of stone and labor disputes delayed the work, but the library was finally dedicated on June 7, 1904.

Back to the Future

Though the discussion started in 1969, it would be another six years before the wrecking ball moved into to tear the old library down. But by then, the Society was deeply embedded in the planning process for the new library, intent on see-

the purchase of print and non-print materials for the facility, part of an overall commitment to "a program of tangible and continuing support for the Sangamon Valley Room," according to an article in the November 1973 edition of *Historico*.

With construction plans firmed by 1974, the Society learned the Sangamon Valley Room would be located on the south side of the third floor of the new building, overlooking the Lincoln Home area.

Saving and Razing

The relationship between the Library and the Society to provide both advice and financial support had one of its first tests in 1974, a few weeks before the old building was to be razed. The Library needed money to try to save some of the building's historic architectural features before the wrecking ball started to swing in early September.

Among the items sought to be saved was an ornate entry way that framed the main door on Seventh Street, a bust of Lincoln looking down on the Seventh Street entrance, as well as two plaques on the corners of the building's exterior that bore the inscriptions "*This records the gratitude of the City of Springfield to Andrew Carnegie*" and "*Named in Honor of Abraham Lincoln by Andrew Carnegie.*"

Also on the save list was a "unique copper catch basin and parts of the main staircase" to be "preserved for future generations of Lincoln Library patrons." The Society needed to raise \$2,000 by September 9 to save the artifacts. It did and in fact, brought in close to \$3,000. Monies exceeding the goal were to be used to defray costs of reinstalling the items in the new library.

The Lincoln bust has been on display in the Sangamon Valley Room for years. The other "rescued" pieces were not as lucky. Dumped at some point on to a back lot in the northeast corner of the Illinois State Fairgrounds, they were uncovered in 2010 by Department of Agriculture workers cleaning up the site. Found were the carved stone lintel that once stood atop the library entrance along with one of the engraved plaques, the one expressing the city's gratitude to Carnegie. A piece of the staircase was also found.



LOST IN TIME: The carved lintel above the door to the Carnegie financed library (far left and left) and historic plaques were among several items for which the Society raised money to save before the building was razed in 1974. They were found in a brush-covered State Fair Grounds lot in 2010 but their present whereabouts are unknown.

ing that its vision of a place "devoted to the history of Sangamon County" would have a significant part in those plans.

By 1972, the Society's Special Committee on the Sangamon Valley Room was well into its work, developing and recommending an acquisition policy that would have the Sangamon Valley Collection focus on Sangamon County and contiguous areas representing a broad range of materials. These included recordings of local pop music groups, all newspapers, photos, locally published books and magazines, funeral notices, club programs, yearbooks, chamber of commerce brochures, directories, even handbills about events.

In 1973, the Society formally approved raising funds to construct and furnish the Sangamon Valley Room and create an acquisition fund to underwrite



BIGGER AND BETTER: Equipment and furnishings were still coming in earlier this month at the expanded Sangamon Valley Room.

The current whereabouts of the “rescued” relics is unclear. After a cursory investigation in 2010, the issue of what to do with the cache drifted from public view and discourse, although a recent inquiry from *Historico* to city agencies may rekindle the search. Some of the building’s columns wound up in a city park garden. Other pieces of the building were turned into paperweights. But the heavy lintel and two engraved slabs identifying both the city’s appreciation for the gift and explaining that Carnegie named the building the Lincoln Library, may still be deteriorating in the rubble of an Illinois State Fair Grounds back lot.

Dedicated in 1977

The new City of Springfield Lincoln Library’s Sangamon Valley Room was officially dedicated on April 22, 1977 with a tour and several speeches including those by then library director Robert Wagenknecht, an active member and later president of the Society (1978-1979); Ed Russo, Director of the Sangamon Valley Collection, and Donald A. Henry, Jr., who served as president of Sangamon County Historical Society from 1976-1977. (Henry died in 1996).

In detailing the event, *Historico* noted that the dedication would climax “the dreaming stage of our Society’s cherished plan for a permanent collection of Central Illinois historical data. At the same time, it heralds the future of a collection still growing because of the awareness that the time of records of the present become almost immediately the history of the past.”

Reflecting on the long-term relationship in an article in *Historico* in 2004, historian and a past Society president Cullom Davis (1991-1992) noted then that Society members might not be fully aware of the close ties between the two entities, the

staff and the Sangamon Valley Room’s holdings that at that point had flourished for over 30 years.

“Some aspects of that linkage are easily apparent: the superb local history collection that serves us on Lincoln Library’s third floor, and the generosity of many of our members in donating old books and photographs to the Sangamon Valley Collection. Two others are less familiar and therefore warrant retelling,” Davis wrote.

Task for a Committee

When city leaders decided to replace the overcrowded Lincoln Library with a spacious new facility, it was Wagenknecht {who served as Library Director from 1967 to 1981) who asked the Society to name a committee to advise him on various issues related to a local history room he wanted to include in the new building, Davis pointed out.

“The committee met with Bob perhaps a half dozen times, in 1973 and 1974. We discussed the room’s design and location, agreeing that it had to be large enough to accommodate future growth. Bob also asked us to help formulate policies for the collection’s geographic scope (Sangamon Valley) and range of media (print, manuscripts, audio and visual materials). We also advised him on proposed acquisitions, loans, and donations to augment the holdings.”

Some of the recommendations, in retrospect, bordered on the grandiose,” Davis added. “For example we hoped the facility might include a photography lab and darkroom, and even space and equipment for rare book repair. On most points, however, Bob enthusiastically concurred.”

A final question was what kind of ongoing relationship should exist between Sangamon Valley Collection and the Society. “It was not realistic to fashion an

official tie between the publicly funded municipal library and our private membership organization, but the committee did persuade the Society board to commit itself to a “program of tangible and continuing support,” Davis pointed out.

“The second connection centers on the talented and dedicated librarians at the Sangamon Valley Collection who have contributed enormously to our local history in general and the Society in particular. Bob was both astute and fortunate to hire a young college student, Ed Russo, to begin amassing and organizing the collection well before the new building was completed.

As the Center’s director (and later City Historian), Russo oversaw every aspect of its rapid growth and development, Davis pointed out in his 2004 *Historico* article. “His gifted colleagues, Karen Graff, Linda Garvert, and Curtis Mann, have made their own significant contributions. Their service to our Society, through program offerings and leadership positions, has been extraordinary.”

Changes, New Look

Today, Mann, a member and a past president of the Society, oversees operations of the Sangamon Valley Room and is the Library’s Division Manager. Russo, Graff and Garvert, all Life Members of the Society, are retired.

The makeover of the library’s first and third floors, including the Sangamon Valley Room, cost \$700,000, funds provided from part of a \$1.9 million gift to the Library by the estate of Joe and Rose DeFrates. The gift allowed the library to do \$600,000 in renovations to the second floor in 2013 and also purchase News Bank in 2014 that filled a 35-year gap in its online archive of the *State Journal-Register* and its predecessor newspapers.

- VW

HISTORY MAKERS

SCHS members generate history every day. This new *Historico* nutshell feature details their achievements. We welcome your input. Send member news items and photos to historicoeditor@gmail.com.

Four Society members were among some 50 people who will serve on the Illinois Bicentennial Commission, Governor Rauner announced. They will be planning statewide events when



Clockwise from top left: Slottag, Scott, Joens, Cornelius.

Illinois marks its 200th birthday in 2018. Voting members include SCHS president **Ruth Slottag**, past president **David Scott** (representing the Illinois State Historical Society), and **David Joens**, Director of the State Ar-

chives. **James Cornelius**, Collection Curator of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, is serving as a non-voting member.

Life Member **R-Lou**

Barker's recent donation to the Abraham Presidential Library will provide researchers world-wide with greater insight about the sacrifices and horrors young soldiers faced while serving in World War II. Barker gave the Library letters and pictures sent to her family related to the imprisonment of her brother-in-law, West Point graduate Captain Robert A. Barker by the Japanese during World War II. Taken prisoner in the Philippines early in the war, he never made it back. After the war, the family received letters



from soldiers who survived the Japanese prison camps and remembered seeing Captain Barker. The family also received letters sent to Captain Barker that were never delivered by the Japanese.

Two Society members were among a group of preservationists honored at the 2016 Preservation Awards ceremony sponsored by the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln and the *Springfield Business Journal*. Board member **Sue Massie** received the Mayor's

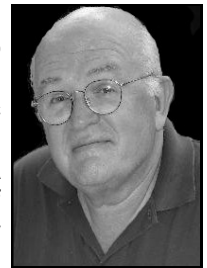


Preservationist of the Year Award for her restoration efforts including restoring the old entrance to Oak Ridge Cemetery and restoring Taylor House as a future community center on Springfield's east side. Massie was presented the award by

Mayor James Langfelder. **Curtis Mann**, a past president of the Society, City Historian and Division Manager and head of the Sangamon Valley Room at the City's Lincoln Library, was presented with a Springfield Preservation Award for his "educational efforts that advance the preservation and understanding of our historic heritage."



Past president and Life Member **Roger Whitaker** has been named to the Springfield Historic Sites Commission. A member of the Society board, he will serve a two-year term on the city agency.



Photojournalist's Eye on History Focus of January 17 Meeting

(Continued from page 1)

Journal Glass Plates 1929-1935. The glass plates were donated to the Sangamon Valley Collection by the *S-JR* in 1989. Saal learned of the plates at the Library in 2010 when he was doing research for his master's degree in history from the University of Illinois.

A more recent collection of his own work focusing on mom-and-pop stores in Illinois and Missouri over a 35 year period was recently featured along with a personal narrative in the *State Journal Register* this past October.

The photos were part of a documentary photography project he started in the early 1980s in which he tried to record the dozens of mom-and-pop grocery markets that could still be found in southern and central Illinois as well as part of Missouri and Kentucky.

Saal resumed the project last summer, "curious about what had happened to these wonderful places," he said, in the commentary that accompanied the published photos.

"I didn't assume anything. I knew most of them--and the people too -- would be gone. The idea was to create

a visual timeline with two points 35 years apart."

In 2012, Saal, with underwriting provided by Patrick Coburn, former publisher of the *SJ-R*, the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation of Chicago, the Illinois Press Association, and the Sangamon County Historical Society, reproduced photos originally taken on glass plates by the *Illinois State Journal's* first photographers, Earnest Pearson and Raymond Hodde.

A limited number of copies will be available for sale at the meeting.

Party



Members and guests of the Society celebrated the start of the holiday season on December 13 with a party at historic Pasfield House in Springfield. Party-goers dined on hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, shrimp and fruit platters and delicious desserts, munching as they toured the handsomely holiday-decorated manse or sat down to chat at the main dining table and or one of several gathering spots around the sprawling historic home.

Larry Stone photos



Calendar of History Events

Saturday, January 14: *Servants' Tour, Historic Edwards Place*, Noon and 2 p.m. Learn about the Edwards family through the eyes of their servants. The cook and maids will describe their duties and share gossip about the Edwards family as they take you through the house. Visitors will be able to see the cellar and attic – spaces that are not normally on view to tourists, 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield. Tickets \$15 (available online or at the door; limit 20 people per tour).

Tuesday, January 17, *Preserving History Through the Photographer's Lens*, 5:30 p.m. *State Journal-Register* photo editor Rich Saal talks about his efforts in preserv-

ing history in this 2017 SCHS program season kick-off. Free and open to the public. Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield. (See *story*, page 1).

Saturday, January 28: *Genealogy Research Training*, 2 p.m. The Sangamon Valley Collection at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library will hold a free training session for genealogy researchers led by the Library's Division Manager Curtis Mann, city historian and a past president of the Society who oversees the Sangamon Valley Collection, will demonstrate the use of *Ancestry.com*, the popular genealogy website. Patrons can use this

service through the library's public computers. The training is free and open to the public, but you may need to register. Call 753-4900 for information.

Tuesday, February 21, *The 1908 Race Riot: A Timeline*, 5:30 p.m. Kathryn Harris, speaker. Free and open to the public. Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

Saturday, March 18: *SCHS Trivia Night*, Doors open 6 p.m., game starts 7 p.m. Christ the King Parish Hall, 1930 Barberry Drive, Springfield. Tables of 10, \$100. Individual tickets \$10 will be on sale in coming weeks. Round sponsorship now available.

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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 June 1 to May 31. All memberships cover adults and children 16 and over living in the same household. Be sure to include their names.



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