



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

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## Sangamon in Focus May 16

### Ordnance Plant History to Get First Look In Springfield

The Sangamon County Historical Society will be taking an updated look at the impact and legacy of Sangamon Ordnance Plant this month, when it brings a powerful and comprehensive audio and visual look at the history of the massive 1940s munitions plant that rose on the farm fields of Illiopolis, to Springfield audiences on Tuesday, May 16. The program, free and open to the public, will begin at 5:30 p.m. in Carnegie Room North at Springfield's Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street.

The story of the munitions plant that drew thousands of workers from Springfield and Decatur, was shown last fall to standing-room audiences in Buffalo and Illiopolis, but not in Springfield until now. "We had so many requests from people who missed the

original presentation last September in Buffalo and second showing a few weeks later in Illiopolis, that we wanted to bring it to Springfield," explained Mary Alice Davis, co-chair of the Society's program committee. "This was the first opportunity to schedule it, since we work many months in advance in planning our programs.



"Many of our own members in Springfield, unable to make the drive out to Buffalo or Illiopolis, heard about it later and wanted to see it. In fact, not a meeting has gone by since then that people have asked us to bring it here. It's appropriate since Springfield and its

people--many of them our parents and grandparents--as well as the city itself, were integral to and personally impacted by the plant's operation."

*The Sangamon Ordnance Plant: Its Impact and Legacy*, gives historical context to the U.S. government's decision to build a nearly 32 mile-square city on prime farmland virtually overnight. While the operation displaced hundreds of local farms and families and brought unwanted congestion to a once bucolic village, it had broader impact on Springfield. The city supplied much of the munitions plant labor force--most of them women--and changed social and business patterns still with us today.

The presentation, which includes television and audio clips, "brings an almost forgotten chapter of our history, front and center," notes Davis.

### 2017-2018 Society Slate Set, Annual Dinner Meeting June 13

The Sangamon County Historical Society will hold its annual meeting and dinner on Tuesday, June 13 at the Clayville Historic Site. In addition to the election of officers, the event will include a presentation by

Carolyn Moore, who served as president of SCHS 10 years ago, from 2007 to 2008. She will show and discuss her collection of historic plates. Tickets to the event, which begins at 5:30 p.m.,

are \$30 for members, \$35 for non-members and can be purchased on line at the Society's website, [sangamon-history.org](http://sangamon-history.org) or by using the order form on page 7 and mailing it to the Society with your check that must be re-

ceived no later than Monday, June 5.

Society members will be voting on a slate of officers advanced by the Nominating Committee last month and

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TALKING HISTORY: Curtis Mann (back to camera) who oversees the Sangamon Valley Collection, chats with SCHS president Ruth Slottag, her husband Ernie (left) and *Illinois Times* publisher Fletcher Farrar (right) during a Society tour of the Sangamon Valley Room April 18.

Story, photos, Pages 4-5



## May a Good Time to Reflect on Our History

As we move into the month of May, we can't help but notice the beautiful blooming trees and flowers that signal its glorious arrival. May is always a very busy month for most of us, keeping busy with gardening, graduations, Mother's Day and Memorial Day activities.

As we celebrate these joyous occasions with families and friends, it is a good time to remember those who came before us and reflect on their contributions and sacrifices which helped make our nation and community what it is today.

This month is the time to renew your membership in the Society so we can continue providing programs and events to promote and preserve the history of Sangamon County. Your membership will ensure that you continue receiving *Historico* and allow you to attend all of our events.

Last month, the Society enjoyed a very informative program by Curtis Mann and Linda Garvert, who showed many photos from their latest book, "Images of Modern America: Springfield." The program was followed by a tour of the renovated Sangamon Valley Collection of Lincoln Library. The space contains more computers available to patrons doing research.

This month's program will be about the Sangamon Ordinance Plant: It's Impact and Legacy," a comprehensive photo and audio report of a massive munitions operation during the 1940s. Even though it was shown in September in Buffalo and Illiopolis, many of our members have not seen it and have asked us to show it again in Springfield. You won't want to miss hearing about this often-forgotten piece of local history.

A number of interesting historical events occurred in Sangamon County during the month of May, compiled by Mike Kienzler. You will find more detailed articles about most of them at [www.SangamonLink.org](http://www.SangamonLink.org).

Other articles will appear on the site later this month.

**May 2, 1948:** Bressmer's Department Store, on Adams Street between Sixth and Seventh streets, was destroyed by fire. The \$1.3 million blaze, adjusted for inflation, remains Springfield's most costly fire ever.

**May 4, 1865:** Burial ceremonies were held for President Lincoln at Oak Ridge Cemetery.

**May 5, 1905:** Nationally famous racecar driver Barney Oldfield came in second to Springfieldian Dr. Percy Taylor in a "free-for-all" race at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Oldfield had given Taylor and two other local drivers a three-quarter-mile head start in the three-mile contest.

**May 9, 1909:** Mother's Day was first observed in Springfield. Originally, observing Mother's Day meant simply to wear a white flower in honor of a person's mother.

**May 23, 1821:** The first church service held in Springfield took place in the cabin of Charles Matheny at what is now 101 East Washington. In addition to being a Methodist minister, Matheny was Sangamon County's first county clerk and was elected village president when Springfield was incorporated as a village in 1832.

**May 30, 1917:** Springfield's Memorial Day observance a century ago was more solemn even than usual. The United States had just entered World War I, and draft-age men were preparing to be called up for military service. Six days later, almost 5,000 Springfield men between the ages of 21 and 31 registered for the United States' first WWI draft callup. (Watch for a more details in an upcoming [SangamonLink.org](http://SangamonLink.org) article).



*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](http://www.sangamohistory.org) or [sancohis.org](http://sancohis.org). Send event announcements to [historicoeditor@gmail.com](mailto:historicoeditor@gmail.com).

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor

***Winter 2018 Programs Too!***

**Lots to Do and See as the Society  
Readies Summer, Fall Schedule**

With the Society's 2016-2017 program season rapidly approaching an end, what's in store for members as we shift to 2017-2018 footing?

Plenty.  
In fact, after the fiscal year wraps up on May 31 and we get past our annual dinner meeting on Tuesday, June 13--a week earlier than our normal third Tuesday schedule--you can look ahead to a busy summer and fall. Our big summer offering is set for Tuesday, July 18, a month in addition to August when we usually take a breather from program meetings.

Starting in June, you'll be able to register for this special members-only



outing, a tour of the refurbished and architecturally breath-taking 111 year-old State Supreme Court Building in Springfield.

If you've been a member of the Society, you'll remember that we toured the building just before it closed for \$16 million in renovations in 2013. The Society was one of the last groups to tour the building before it closed and was slated to go back in 2014 when it reopened. But lack of a state budget quashed after hours tours and a busy Society schedule prevented us from returning until now. Our host, then as now, will be John Lupton, historian of the Illinois Supreme Court Preservation Commission and an SCHS member. The tour will be limited to the first 50 members who sign up, but if you miss

the July 12 registration deadline, don't fret. We'll try to schedule a second tour if there's a demand for it.

Those who were on the original tour will be especially pleased to see that all the extensive artwork has been cleaned and woodwork restored. Dirty and fraying tapestries in the old Fourth District Appellate Courtroom, were also repaired and cleaned. The court and its 200,000 volume law library, also part of the original tour, were packed up and moved to another building during the renovation.

The regular meeting season will resume in September, the opener another members-only event on Tuesday, September 19 with a tour of the magical ACE Sign Company Sign Museum, a nostalgic look at the area's past. Check the calendar on page 7 for more details.

The Society is already gearing up for its annual "Echoes of Yesteryear: A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery, scheduled for Sunday, October 1, a week earlier in the month than in past years. The event will run from Noon to 4 p.m. If you're interested in being involved in the planning process, contact chair Mary Alice Davis.

November will bring us a look at one of History's Mysteries, the Story of What Sangamon County Tree Rings can tell us about local history (November 14) and in December, get set to party at our annual holiday celebration. A program for January 2018 is already in the works but February 2018 is already set: a look at how a Riverton company adds historical accuracy to the movie industry. March will bring our 6th Annual Trivia Night, one destined to be bigger and better than even this year. The rest, as they say, is history...almost. We'll keep you posted on the spring line-up!



**OFFICERS**

**President**.....Ruth Slottag  
**Vice-President**.....Vicky Whitaker  
**Secretary**.....Kathy Dehen  
**Treasurer**.....Jerry Smith  
**Past-President**.....Mary Alice Davis

**DIRECTORS**

**Term Ending 2019**

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Terri Cameron  
Mary Schaefer  
Elaine Hoff

**Term Ending 2018**

Larry Stone  
Roger Whitaker  
Sue Massie  
Carol Phillips

**Term Ending 2017**

Troy Gilmore  
Doug Polite  
Sue Helm  
Eugene Walker  
Cathy Mosley

**Committee Chairs**

**Legal:** Bruce Beeman  
**Finance:** Doug Polite, Larry Stone  
**Nominating:** Mary Alice Davis  
**Hospitality:** Marion Leach  
**Publicity and Marketing:** Ruth Slottag, Susan-Helm  
**Publications:** Roger Whitaker  
**Programs & Special Events:** Mary Alice Davis, Vicky Whitaker  
**Social Media Chair:** Mary Schaefer  
**Special Projects:** Elaine Hoff

**Staff**

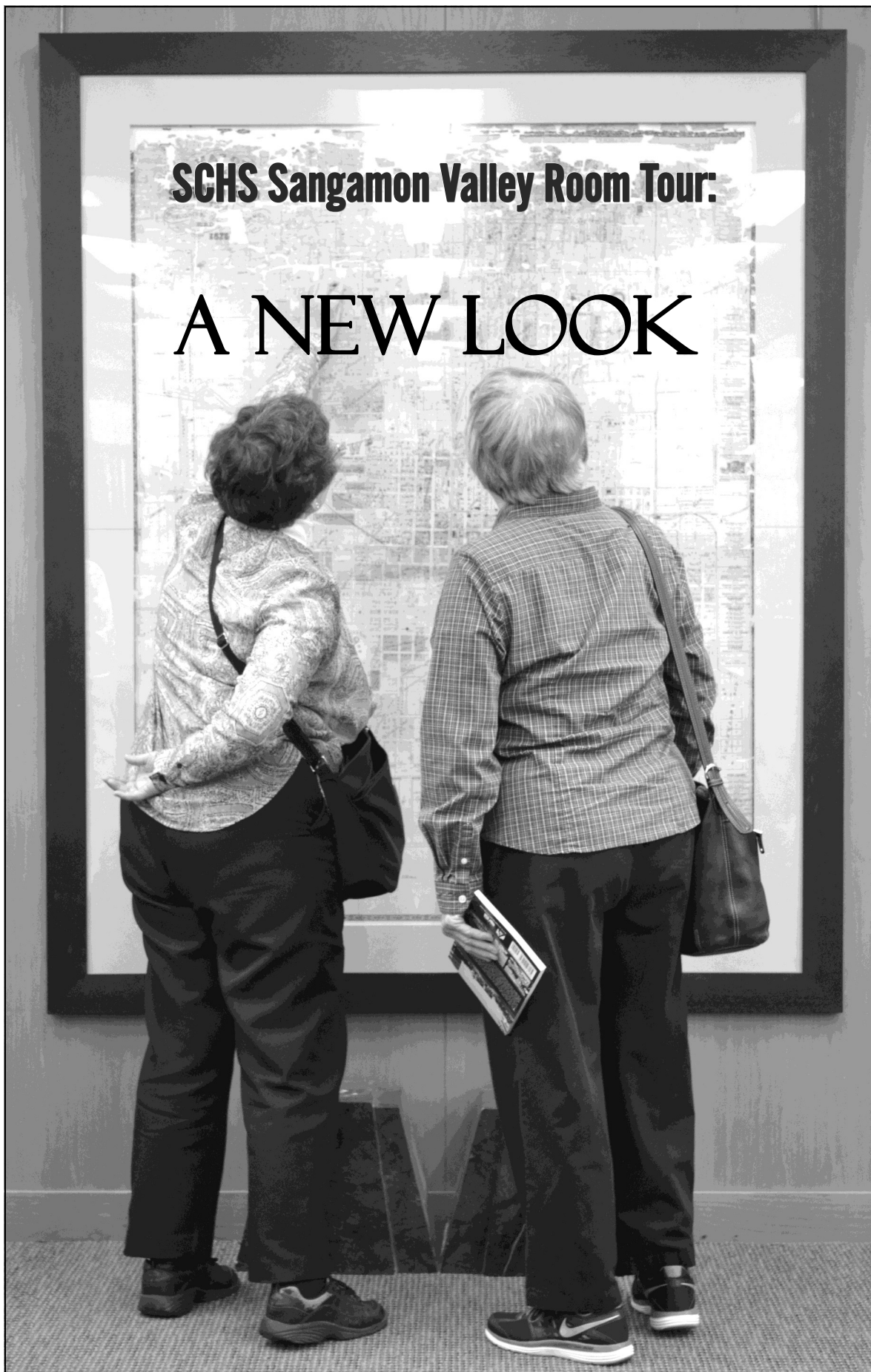
Mike Kienzler, *SangamonLink.org* Editor

Please make note of our official mailing address:

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

# SCHS Sangamon Valley Room Tour:

# A NEW LOOK



Members and guests of the Sangamon County Historical Society got an inside look at the pictorial history publishing business last month when Curtis Mann and Linda Garvert, authors of their new book, *Images of Modern America, Springfield*, spoke at the Society's April 18 meeting.

Mann, who oversees the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library Sangamon Valley Collection, and Garvert, a librarian who worked along-side Mann for many years prior to her retirement, shared the agony all book authors feel as they try to compress their words and content to meet publishing demands. As seasoned veterans of the publishing business (both have produced nearly a dozen books) their most recent venture posed some unique problems, from having to amass photos from the 1960s and 1970s that for the most part are still in family albums and photo boxes to writing tightly worded captions that leave no room for interpretation or background depth.

"Pictorial histories go back to the late 1800s," said Mann, pointing to a Powerpoint image that included the covers of *Springfield Illustrated* and *Illinois Capitol Illustrated* produced in the 1890s. Their new book presented the first chance for them to do a photo collection "of a time period that hasn't been done before," Mann explained. The book, published by Arcadia, is for the local market, he added, since there are some 30 Springfields in the United States. It's the first Arcadia has published in color and that alone posed a major problem for the authors.

"We had to have about 160 but not more than 170 photos and the majority had to be in color," said Mann. Unlike the thousands of historic black and white photos that fill the files of the Sangamon Valley Collection, "families are still holding on to color photos from the 1960s and 1970s and even when made available, have turned red because of the deterioration in the chemicals in photographic paper. "It was a rather difficult task," he admitted. In addition, the duo had 95 pages to fill, a number that translates into 8,000 to 11,000 words and between 100 and 140 captions. The downside of a book that relies heavily on photos and captions is that "you cannot tell the back story," Mann noted.

For the Society presentation, Mann and Garvert displayed their personal "Gallery of Favorites," commenting as they went on some of their favorite features in each photo, from what people wore in the 1960s and 1970s to the magnitude of change that occurred here as the result of massive construction projects. As new roads, retail stores, hotels, and college campuses grew, whole areas of the city were demolished to make way for modern structures.

After the presentation, members of the Society were given an exclusive tour of the newly expanded and refurb-



ished Sangamon Valley Room, which houses the Sangamon Valley Collection. The Collection incorporates materials from 11 counties within a 50 mile radius of Springfield.

The tour took place a few days short of the 48th anniversary of the original opening of the Sangamon Valley Room, an event that then underscored the role the Society played in its creation, design, and financial support that continues to this day.



# SCHS Members Play Roles In State Historical Society WWI Program



Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society served as moderators and/or panelists at the recent Illinois State Historical Society's Symposium, focusing on World War I, "1917, Year of Turmoil: War and Suffrage." The event was part of a nationwide United States World War I Centennial Commission commemoration of the 100th anniversary of America entering the war.

The two-day event, April 21-22, that drew historians and those interested in the "Great War" and the period leading up to it, was held at Lincoln Land Community College's Trutter Center. The seminar included speakers discussing everything from the Wartime Experiences of the Pullman Company and Neighborhood in Chicago, the Influenza Outbreak's Impact, and the Music of the first World War, to Central Illinois Women on the Home Front.

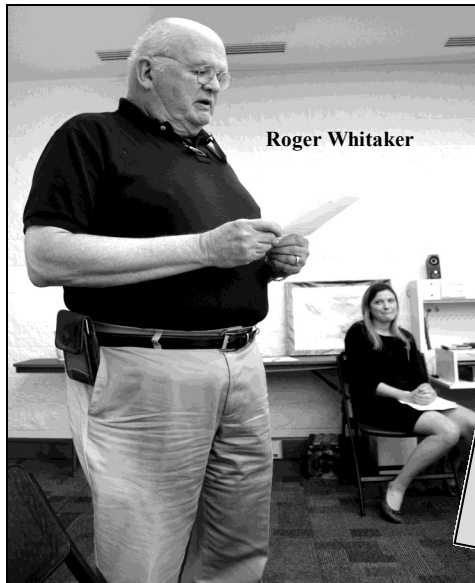
Mike Kienzler, editor of the Sangamon County Historical Society's on-line and searchable encyclopedia of Sangamon history, *SangamonLink.org*, discussed the early women voting records of Sangamon County, part of a concurrent theme of the conference that also focused on the role of women and the suffragette movement of the period. Panel moderators included SCHS members Stephanie Martin, Roger Whitaker, Sue Massie, and Vicky Whitaker. Roger Whitaker, Martin, and Terri Cameron read from the WWI Book of Honor.

The event was coordinated by William Furry, the state organization's executive director, who is also a member of SCHS.



Terri Cameron

Mike Kienzler



Roger Whitaker



Sue Massie

## SCHS to Elect Officers, Board at June 13 Annual Meeting

(Continued from page 1) approved by the board. Profiles of each of the candidates will appear in the June issue of *Historico*.

The Society's governing board is composed of 15 board members and a five member executive board

consisting of the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and past president.

Board members serve three-year terms, except when they are filling a vacancy. Nominated for board seats (three-year terms ending in 2020) are Peter Harbi-

son, Susan Helm, Stephanie Martin, Eugene Walker, and Angela Weiss.

Seeking a two-year term filing a vacancy ending in 2019 will be Angela Weiss. Doug Polite is seeking a one-year term filling a vacancy ending in 2018.

All of the current executive board members (president Ruth Slottag; vice-president Vicky Whitaker; secretary Kathy Dehen; treasurer Jerry Smith; and past-president Mary Alice Davis will be seeking second terms.



# Sangamon County Historical Society Annual Dinner



The annual meeting/dinner will be held at the Clayville Historic Site, Pleasant Plains, on Tuesday, June 13 starting at 5:30 p.m. Members, \$30 per person, Guests \$35. Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744 or sign up on-line at [sangamonhistory.org](http://sangamonhistory.org). Payment must be received by June 10.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of Guests: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Names of those attending (For nametags. Please print):  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Calendar of History Events

### Now Through July 30: "The Story of New Philadelphia."

The Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum exhibit showcases the first town in the United States platted and registered by an African American in 1836, former slave Free Frank McWorter. The Museum is located at 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield. Museum hours are Noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

### Saturday, May 6: "Looking Back, Looking Forward."

Iles House marks its 180th Birthday with a special Preview Party and Fund Raiser at 5:30 p.m. Tours, food, live music and a raffle for an Illinois Watch. Tickets are \$80 per person. For information and reservations, go to [ileshouse.org/event-2392838](http://ileshouse.org/event-2392838).

### Tuesday, May 16: The Sangamon Ordnance Plant.

Sangamon County Historical Society brings back "The Sangamon Ordnance Plant: It's Impact and Legacy," a powerful and comprehensive audio and visual look at a massive munitions operation that in the early 1940's rose on the farm fields of Illiopolis, drawing thousands of workers from Springfield and Decatur. 5:30 p.m. Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library.

### Tuesday, June 13: SCHS Annual Meeting & Dinner,

Clayville Historic Site, Pleasant Plains. Keynote speaker will be Carolyn Moore, president of the Society from 2007-2008. Moore will show and discuss her collection of historic plates. Reservation form above or on line.

### Saturday, June 24: Lincoln's 8th Circuit as Lincoln Experienced It Bus Tour.

Guy Franker will provide the expertise for this day long Abraham Lincoln Association tour with stops in Middleton, Metamorea and Mt. Pulaski. \$45

ALA members, \$55 non members. Mail check, cell number and e-mail address to ALA 8th Circuit Bus Trip, 6820 Wagon Ford Road, Chatham, IL 62629.

### Tuesday, July 18: Members-Only Tour, State Supreme Court Tour.

Reservations begin June 1.

### Tuesday, September 19: Members-Only Tour, ACE Sign Company Sign Museum.

The Society kicks off its fall meeting season with a members-only tour of this unique, privately run museum that charts Springfield's history through its signage heritage led by ACE president Dennis Bringuet. The tour will begin at 5:30 p.m. at 2540 South First Street, Springfield.

### Sunday, October 1. "Echoes of Yesteryear, A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery,"

sponsored by the Sangamon County Historical Society. Noon to 4 p.m.

### Tuesday, November 14: History's Mysteries: What Tree Rings Can Tell Us.

Sangamon County Historical Society general meeting, 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library. Scientists Glenn Freimuth and Guy Sternberg detail their tree ring research for which the Society provided a \$1,000 Special Projects Grant.

### Tuesday, February 20, 2018: Adding Historical Authenticity to the Big Screen.

The Sangamon County Historical Society plays host to Karl Luthin, owner of KEL Equine Productions, Riverton, who will share both his expertise and the stories that go along with being internationally known for providing historically authentic horses, uniforms, crews, riders, drivers and stunt men to the movie industry. 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library.

**Sangamon County Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 9744,  
Springfield, IL 62791-9744  
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**Sangamon County Historical Society MEMBERSHIP/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form**

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

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



**Status**

\_\_\_ New Member

\_\_\_ Renewal

\_\_\_ GIFT of Membership from:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**2017-2018 Membership Levels**

*All the levels listed below cover adults and children 16 and over living in the same household. Please list their names in the space provided.*

\_\_\_\_\_

- Regular Membership - \$30
- College/University Student - \$20.
- Pioneer Level - \$100
- Settlers Level - \$250
- Trailblazer Level - \$500
- Lifetime Membership - \$700 (*one time fee*)

\_\_\_\_\_

Business /Corporate Membership - \$200