



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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VOLUME 53 NO. 8

SEPTEMBER, 2017

September 19



ENTER HERE: A map to the Antique Sign Museum at Ace Sign Company in Springfield can be found on page 7.

Fall Season Openers

Antique Sign Museum Tour, Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk, Edwards Place Art Ahead

The Sangamon County Historical Society will kick off a fall meeting season with a triple header of programs and events starting Tuesday, September 19 with a members-only tour of Springfield's unique Antique Sign Museum.

Following closely will be the Society's annual *Echoes of Yesteryear Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk* on Sunday, October 1 and a joint meeting at Edwards Place with the Springfield Art Association on Tuesday, October 17, at which a Boston-based nationally known art scholar will provide details on the celebrated portrait artist who captured an influential 19th century Springfield businessman, J.W. Bunn, on canvas. The Bunn family is loaning the painting for long-term display at the site.

On-line sign up at www.sangamonhistory.org or by phone at 217-525-1961, is now underway for the expansive Antique Sign Museum located at the headquarters of Ace Sign Company, 2540 South First Street in Springfield. The free tour will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Started in 1940 by Franklin Horn and his wife Alvina with a pick-up truck and modest store front, four generations later the company operates nationwide out of a modern 50,000 square foot building that includes the museum. Parking is on-site.

The museum is open to the public Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and includes neon signs and artifacts such as the fully restored Sputnik from the Bel-Aire Motel in Springfield. It is among the recommended stopping points on the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

(Continued on page 6)

October 1



WALKING THE WALK: Members of the Cemetery Walk committee tour the site in anticipation of the October 1 event. For a guide map, see page 7.

INSIDE

From the President's Desk.....	2
Society Elects Officers, Board.....	3
Touring the Supreme Court.....	6
Event Maps.....	7
Calendar	7

GRANT WINNERS: The Clayville Historic Site's new school house (right), Oak Ridge Cemetery, the Springfield Art Association, and the Springfield, and Central Illinois African American History Museum were the winners of the Society's annual grant competition. Story, page 5.





Exciting Programs, Events Kick Off New Season

We're looking forward to an exciting new season of programs and events at the Sangamon County Historical Society. Our officers and board members have been busy planning and organizing speakers for our monthly programs and special events.

All members are invited to our first member meeting of the season on September 19. A history of signs will be presented by Ace Sign Company at its Sign Museum. Many interesting signs will be on display and their history will be explained.

One of our favorite events coming up this fall is the Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk which will be held October 1 (a week earlier than the two previous years). This year all of the notables featured had connections to President Abraham Lincoln. Thank you to Mary Alice Davis and her committee (a photo of many of them are on the front page) for their dedication and hard work to produce this great event.

Congratulations to the four organizations who are recipients of the Society's grant awards presented at the Annual Meeting in June: the African American History Museum, Clayville Historic Site, Springfield Art Association and Oak Ridge Cemetery. We will be anxiously awaiting the completion of the projects.

Don't Miss An Opportunity to Volunteer!

This year the Society is partnering with other organizations including the Lincoln Home National Historic Site and Downtown Springfield, Inc. to produce Historic Christmas Walks on a few Saturdays in December. We are looking for volunteers to do short performances at some of the historic sites in the downtown area. Also needed are people to walk around the sites in period costumes as well as volunteers to roast chestnuts on an open fire during the festivities. Please contact me or a board member if you are interested or if you know someone who might be interested.

September Historical Highlights

Some significant historical events occurred during the month of September, as compiled by Mike Kienzler, editor of our on-line and searchable encyclopedia of Sangamon County history, *SangamonLink.org*. Check them out:

◆**September 6, 1967:** Southeast High School opened with 1,295 registered students. It replaced Feitshans High School, which reverted to its original use as an elementary school.

sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=6874

◆**September 8, 1946:** WCBS radio became WCVS.

sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=7812

◆**September 12, 1933:** Sheriff Samuel Metcalf is ousted by the Sangamon County Board on the grounds of insanity. Metcalf never fully recovered from a head injury suffered a year earlier in a fistfight with Illinois State Journal reporter William "Smokey" Downey.

sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=6559

◆**September 23, 1968:** Lincoln Land Community College holds first classes. The school was officially named Lincoln Land Junior College at the time; change to "Community" didn't take place for another two weeks. Unofficially, of course, it was called "Plywood U."

sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=9341

◆**September 25, 1899:** The double arches erected a month earlier on all four corners of the downtown square were illuminated with electric bulbs for the first time on opening night of the Illinois State Fair (then held in September). By 1921, the arches were considered outmoded; they were removed that June. And, by the way, the arches did NOT come from the Chicago World's Fair; they were built specifically for Springfield.

sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=7654



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

Annual Dinner: Officers, Trustees Elected to Lead Historical Society for 2017- 2018

Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society elected officers and new board members at the organization's annual dinner meeting held at the Clayville Historic site on Tuesday, June 13.

The dinner drew close to 100 members and guests. A pre-dinner reception was hosted by SCHS member and Clayville supporter Bette Franke in part of the site's Stagecoach Barn which flowed into the main dining area.

In casting a voice vote, members unanimously decided to keep the Society's executive board in place for another year and elected seven directors to posts ranging from one to three years.

Ruth Slottag will serve a second term as president, as will vice-president Vicky Whitaker, secretary Kathy Dehen and treasurer Jerry Smith. Mary Alice Davis continues on the board as past president.

Elected to three year terms on the board of directors, ending in 2020 were

Peter Harbison, Susan Helm, Stephanie Martin, Eugene Walker, and Angela Weiss. Mary Mucciante was elected to a two-year term ending in 2019. Doug Polite was elected to a one-year term ending in 2018. All the directors were elected unanimously.

"Speaking on behalf of the executive board and board of trustees, I am delighted that the membership—through its vote—has reaffirmed its support for the programs and activities in which the organization has engaged over the past year," president Slottag declared.

"Our membership base expanded dramatically in 2016-2017, a trend already showing signs of continuing through 2017-2018 and beyond. We will work hard over coming months to provide our membership and the broader community with information and services that enhance and further an understanding of Sangamon County History."



OFFICERS

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

DIRECTORS

Term Ending 2018

Larry Stone
 Roger Whitaker
 Sue Massie
 Doug Polite

Term Ending 2019

Jennie Battles
 Terri Cameron
 Elaine Hoff
 Mary Mucciante
 Mary Schaefer

Term Ending 2020

Peter Harbison
 Susan Helm
 Stephanie Martin
 Eugene Walker
 Angela Weiss

Committee Chairs

Legal: Bruce Beeman
Finance: Doug Polite, Larry Stone
Membership: Terri Cameron
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



IN SERVICE: Officers, board and committee members attending the annual dinner team for a group photo. The are, from left, back row, Jerry Smith, Eugene Walker, Roger Whitaker, Doug Polite, Stephanie Martin, Peter Harbison, Sue Massie and Larry Stone. Second row, from left: Elaine Hoff, Mary Alice Davis, Angela Weiss, Mary Mucciante, Susan Helm. Seated, front row, from left, Vicky Whitaker, Sue Slottag, Mary Schaefer, Kathy Dehen.

SEPTEMBER 2017 MEMBERSHIP/DONOR REPORT

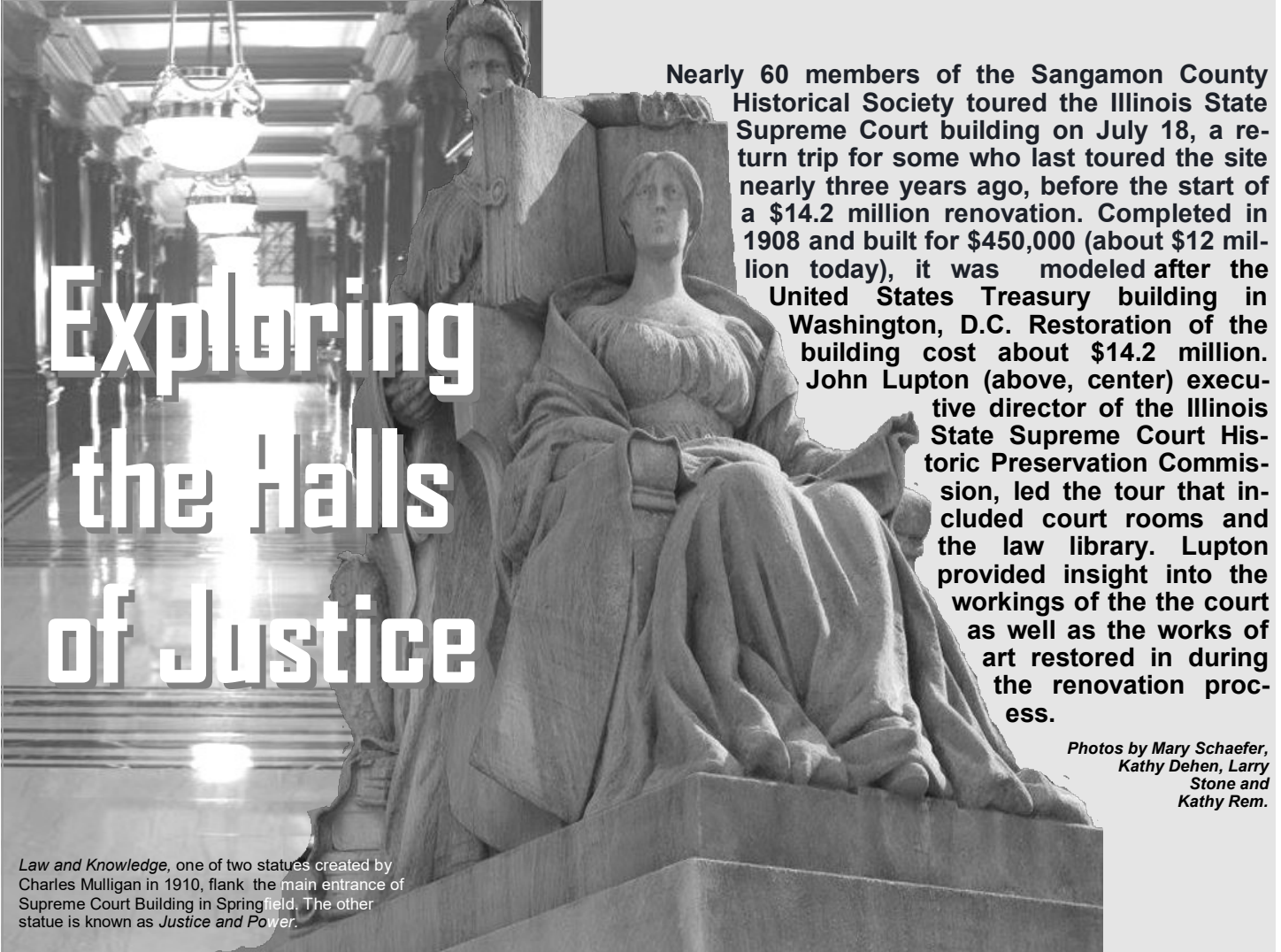
The Society welcomes the following new members:

Barbara Mason, Margaret Palmatier, David Palmatier, Carol Berning, Rich Berning, Margaret Gaedtka, Carol Harmon, Ezera T. Penning, Nancy Sage Marks, Barry Marks, David Senalik, Sharon Senalik, Matthew Senalik, Diane Senalik, Roselyn Wallis, and Dean Williams.

And thanks the following for their generous donations: William Furry; Elvin & Sharon Zook in memory of Carol Jean Fraase; and Dewel Sippel in memory of Donna Catlin.

Please make note of our official mailing address:

SCHS
Box 9744
Springfield, Illinois,
62791-9744



Exploring the Halls of Justice

Nearly 60 members of the Sangamon County Historical Society toured the Illinois State Supreme Court building on July 18, a return trip for some who last toured the site nearly three years ago, before the start of a \$14.2 million renovation. Completed in 1908 and built for \$450,000 (about \$12 million today), it was modeled after the United States Treasury building in Washington, D.C. Restoration of the building cost about \$14.2 million. John Lupton (above, center) executive director of the Illinois State Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission, led the tour that included court rooms and the law library. Lupton provided insight into the workings of the the court as well as the works of art restored in during the renovation process.

Photos by Mary Schaefer, Kathy Dehen, Larry Stone and Kathy Rem.

Law and Knowledge, one of two statues created by Charles Mulligan in 1910, flank the main entrance of Supreme Court Building in Springfield. The other statue is known as *Justice and Power*.



Four Groups Win Society's Special Projects Grants

Four area organizations will be expanding their history fare in coming weeks and months, thanks to funding provided by the Sangamon County Historical Society in this year's round of Special Project Grants. The recipients were announced by Special Projects Grants Committee chair Elaine Hoff at the Society's annual dinner in June.

Winners of this year's competition were:

The **Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum**. It will use its \$1,000 award to research and develop data, pictures and information pertaining to early African American pioneers who settled in Sangamon County and surrounding Central Illinois areas, which will be used to create new exhibits and displays. Elizabeth Alexander, Patricia

Davis and Doris Bailey are identifying Springfield African American families from the 1800s through the early 1900s, interviewing and gathering photos and artifacts from descendants still living in the area. The results will form the heart of an exhibit to debut at the organization's Sixth Annual Gala in October before becoming an ongoing and expanded exhibit at the Museum. Accepting a check from the Society's Special Project Committee chair Elaine Hoff (left) were museum representatives Alexander (center) and Davis. Davis is a past member of the Society board.



as well as informational signs about the original school. Above, left, Pleasant Plains Historical Society vice-president and education coordinator Debbie Edie (above, left) accepts the Society's check from Hoff. The log cabin school house will include a copy of the United States map from the early 1800s, quill pens and inkwells, slate boards, lunch buckets and wall

pegs to hang hats and coats. Wall-mounted slanted wood desks and split log benches with wooden legs will be among the furnishings.

The **Springfield Art Association**. The Association, which owns and operates historic Edwards Place in Springfield, received \$500 to install an exhibit of archeological artifacts dating to circa 1835-1850, which will provide a glimpse into an early 19th century kitchen. The artifacts will be displayed with explanatory labels in the original kitchen of Edwards Place which dates to its construction in 1833. Edwards Place curator Erika Holst (above left) accepted the check from Hoff on behalf of the Association.



The **Oak Ridge Cemetery Foundation**. The cemetery will use its \$500 award for a bronze donor plaque which will display the names and donors contributing to the restoration of Oak Ridge Cemetery's handwritten internment Books 1 (includes Abraham Lincoln) and Book 2 (includes Mary Lincoln). At

left, Oak Ridge Cemetery director Mike Lelys is joined by Oak Ridge volunteer and SCHS member Katie Spindell (center) who discovered the books, in accepting a check from Hoff for the project.



The Society's Special Project grants are designed to fund or help kick-start history projects that will have long-term impact in keeping with the Society's mission to preserve and promote interest in the history of Sangamon County.

The Society awards up to \$3,000 a year in the annual competition for funding, monies raised primarily from its annual Trivia Night event each March. The projects funded in June, 2017 must be completed by June, 2018.

Special Projects grants have been used to repair the Oak Ridge Cemetery bell controller and repair a weathered, interpretive Bell Tower marker that explained that a marble slab inlaid on the Tower was the one upon which the remains of Abraham Lincoln were first placed in the cemetery's receiving tomb.

A Special Projects grant also helped purchase equipment to establish a tree ring analysis laboratory at the Illinois State Museum, and for a National Public Radio series on WUIS-FM about Sangamon history. Previous grants also have underwritten permanent historic flora and fauna markers for a nature path at the Clayville Historic Site, and historic signage in the Village of Williamsville.

Historical Society's Fall Filled With Tours, Talks

(Continued from page 1)

The free annual Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk—"Echoes of Yesteryear"—in past years held on the second Sunday in October—will this year be a week earlier, on Sunday, October 1, and will run from Noon to 4 p.m. with the last tour beginning at 3:15 p.m. The event has attracted several thousand visitors over the years and a large turnout is expected again, says Walk chair Mary Alice Davis. Rain date is Sunday, October 8.

"With the help of period-costumed re-enactors at each site, this "Echoes of Yesteryear" will provide a look at seven of Sangamon County's notable pioneers, all with a link to Abraham Lincoln," Davis noted.

The historic figures being portrayed will be Lincoln's law partner, John Todd Stuart; Mary Todd's sister, Elizabeth Todd Edwards, the Reverend Charles Dresser who presided over the marriage of Mary Todd to Abraham Lincoln; Lincoln's neighbors Jameson and Elizabeth Jenkins; Stephen T. Logan, Lincoln's law partner; Governor William Bissell, who was Governor of Illinois when Lincoln was elected President; and William Henry Herndon, another of Lincoln's law partners.

Those attending the walk will be bused to the first gravesite, but will need to walk to the other sites, a distance of three-fourths of a mile.

The tour will take about two hours. Free on-site parking will be provided. Refreshments will be available for purchase. The event is free and open to the public, with a donation suggested.

The Society shifts its activities indoors on Tuesday, October 17, when it joins with members of the Springfield Art Association for a program at the latter's complex that includes the historic Edwards Place house at 700 North

Fourth Street, Springfield, starting at 5:30 p.m.

The event is tied to the unveiling of a large portrait of John Whitfield Bunn by famed artist Cecelia Beaux which will be on long term loan to the Association.

Bunn, a native of New Jersey, moved to Springfield in 1847 at age 16 to join his older brother Jacob, who with a partner, started a grocery business here in 1840, McConnell Bunn & Company. The name was changed to J & J.W. Bunn Grocery Company when the elder Bunn bought out his partner.

The brothers were friends and political and financial backers of Abraham Lincoln. The Bunn brothers' enterprises, together or singly, eventually included banking, in-

president of its board of directors. He played a significant role in the commercial, civic, political, and industrial development and growth of Illinois and the Midwest during both the 19th and 20th centuries.

Bunn, who never married, was president of Marine Bank from 1903 to 1920, beginning a 70-year period during which the bank was headed exclusively by Bunns. At his death, he also was vice president of the Illinois Watch Company and of a Chicago-based shoe wholesaler. He served four terms as city treasurer and was treasurer of the University of Illinois from its creation in 1859 until 1898.

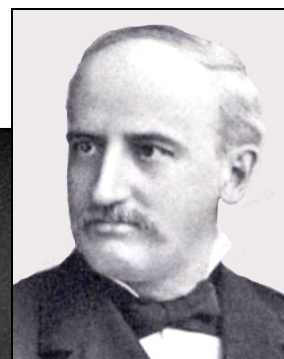
Nearly every business in town closed for his funeral on June 9, 1920.

Trained in Europe and the United States, by the late 1890s, Philadelphia-born Cecelia Beaux, who painted

Bunn's portrait in 1913, had become one of the most prominent and prolific American society portrait artists.

Among her celebrated subjects were author F. Scott Fitzgerald, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt and daughter Ethel, United States Congressman Sereno Payne, the first House Majority Leader, and French premiere Georges Clemenceau. Beaux died in 1942 at age 87.

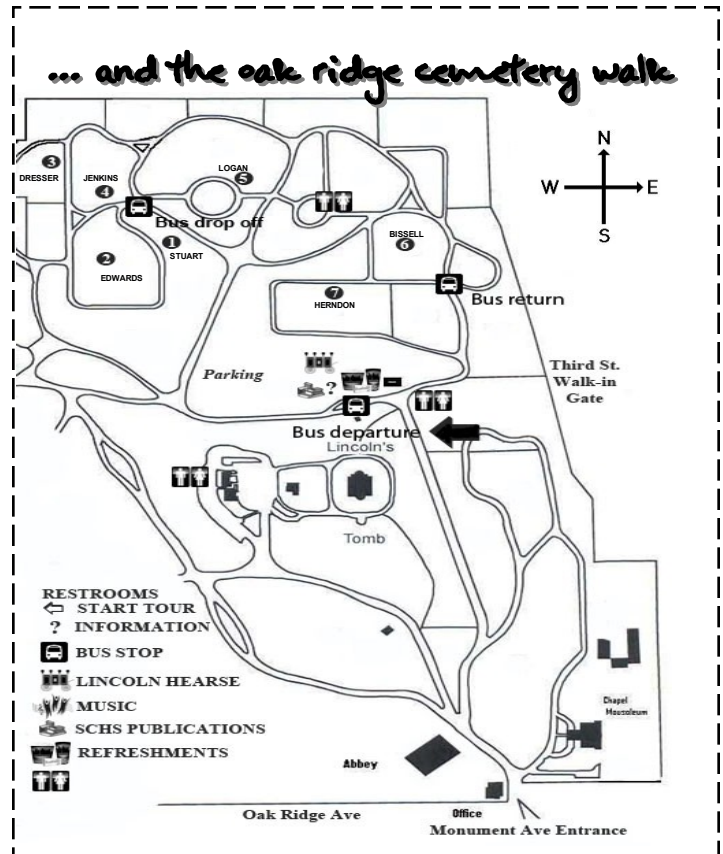
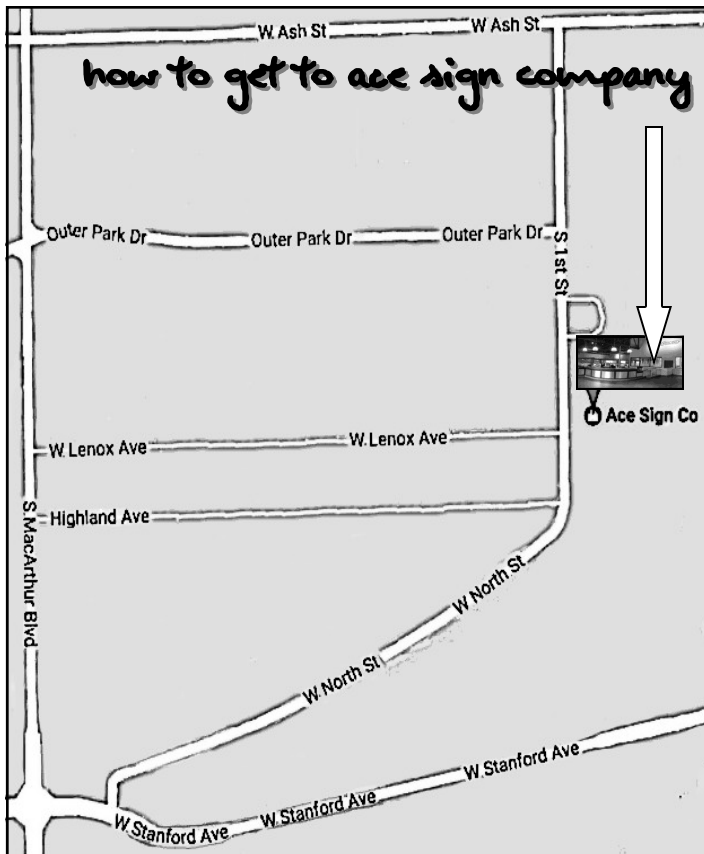
Guest speaker and Beaux scholar Tara Leigh Tappert is an award-winning archivist and American art consultant. Dr. Tappert's clients range from universities, libraries, and museums, to commercial galleries, private companies and institutions and private individuals. By the time she accepted the commission to paint the then 82-year-old Bunn in 1913, her reputation was such that she could pick and choose her sitters. According to Tappert, Beaux agreed to paint Bunn because she wanted to hear his Abraham Lincoln stories and included hints of his friendship with Lincoln in the painting.



SCHOLAR, ARTIST, SUBJECT: Art expert Tara Leigh Tappert (left) will speak at Edwards Place at the unveiling of a portrait of Springfield businessman J.W. Bunn (right) by famed 19th and 20th century American artist Cecelia Beaux at work in her studio. Her October 17 presentation is jointly sponsored by the Springfield Art Association and SCHS.

insurance, intercity and intra-city railroads, newspapers and such industries as the Illinois Watch Company and the Springfield Iron Company, among others. The brothers also were involved a variety of civic causes, helping to found the Home for the Friendless (now the Family Service Center).

John Bunn led the effort to found Lincoln Library and served as the first



Calendar of History Events

Tuesday, September 19: Members-Only Tour, ACE Sign Company Antique 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. (See details page 1 and 6, map, above)

Sunday, October 1. "Echoes of Yesteryear, A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery," sponsored by the Sangamon County Historical Society. Noon to 4 p.m. (See details page 1 and 6, map, above). Rain date: Sunday, October 8.

Thursday, October 5 and Friday, October 6: 19th Annual Conference on Illinois History, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum starting at 8 a.m. both days. The multi-faceted two-day program at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum includes 24 individual sessions on a broad range of Illinois history topics from "New Perspectives on the Practice and Legacies of Slavery in Southern Illinois," to "Music in Illinois: The Sounds of Two Centuries of Illinois History." Several Sangamon County Historical Society members will be among those serving as moderators or panelists. Stuart Layne, Executive Director of the Illinois Bicentennial Commission will be the keynote speaker at the Thursday luncheon, Louise Bernard, Director of the Museum of the Obama Presidential Center is Friday's luncheon keynoter. An opening reception at the Museum at 6 p.m. Thursday is free to all participants. Tickets are \$50 per day or \$90 both days, with additional fees for lunch. You can download information and registration forms at illinois.gov/alplm/library/programs/documents/conference17.pdf

Tuesday, October 18, Sangamon County Historical Society-

Springfield Art Association Joint Meeting marking the long term loan of a large portrait nationally prominent late 19th century-early 20th century Springfield businessman John Whitfield Bunn by famed artist Cecilia Beaux. Boston-based art scholar Dr. Tara Lee Tappert, an expert on Beaux, will discuss the artist's work. The meeting will be held at historic Edwards Place, 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield, starting at 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 26: Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum 6th Annual Gala Banquet. This year's theme will be Early African American Pioneers of Central Illinois. Reception at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m. Wyndham Springfield City Centre. Tickets are \$50 per person, student tickets \$25. For information and reservations, call 217-552-5380 or 217-726-5698.

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 Glen 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, 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
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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. 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 below.*

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