



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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OCTOBER, 2017

October Double Bill:

Cemetery Walk, Story Behind Historic Portrait

Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society will get a double treat this month, with two programs--one at the start of October, the other mid-way, that will reveal more about the area's history and the people who helped shape it, Here are the details:

Sunday, October 1: *A Walking Tour Back in Time*



The Society's annual series of two-hour *Echoes of Yesteryear*" walking tours of Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, begin at Noon on Sunday, October 1 and will run until 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. Rain date is Sunday, October 8. There is no charge for the tour which takes about two hours and runs a walking distance of about three quarters of a mile, but a free-will offering is suggested. Refreshments and history-related Society publications will be available for purchase at the site.



Period-costumed re-enactors will be at designated sites to provide tour takers with details on the lives of eight Sangamon County residents who had a link to

Abraham Lincoln. They include Dennis Rendleman, who will portray attorney John Todd Stuart who made Lincoln a junior partner in his firm in 1873, a relationship that ended in 1841 when Lincoln left to join a new practice as a junior law partner with Stephen T. Logan. At another stop, those on the Oak Ridge tour will be greeted by Linda Schneider who will portray Sally

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Tuesday, October 17: *An Artist Inspired by Lincoln Link*

The Society will be joining members of the Springfield Art Association for a Tuesday, October 17 presentation on the fascinating life of Cecilia Beaux, an unconventional, internationally acclaimed early 19th through the early 20th century artist whose interest in Lincoln shaped her decision in 1913 to paint a portrait of John Whitfield Bunn, a nationally prominent Springfield businessman and civic leader,



Boston-based Beaux expert Tara Lee Tappert, will be guest speaker at the event at the Association's historic Edwards Place M. G. Nelson Family Gallery of Art at 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield, starting at 5:30 p.m. The event is tied to the unveiling of the Bunn portrait which will be on long

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SIGNS OF THE TIME: SCHS Members toured the Springfield Sign Museum on September 19, kicking off the fall meeting season. The restored, former Belaire Motel "Sputnik" sign was among the iconic links to the area's past. See more photos, page 4.





Society's Great Seasonal Program Line-Up Continues

A new year of Sangamon County Historical Society programs is well underway. We are excited to have some new members and board members who joined us during the summer. We look forward to seeing you for our great line up of interesting and exciting programs during the year.

We want to thank Dennis Bringuet and all the nice folks at ACE Sign Company for providing us with a very interesting tour of their historical Sign Museum in September. Who knew that they produced signs for clients throughout the U.S. and beyond? The Museum is open during business hours and by appointment.

Our signature event of the year is coming up Sunday, October 1. The Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk, "Echoes of Yesteryear," will be held from Noon to 4 p.m. Be sure to arrive between Noon and 3:15 p.m. to get on the bus to go up the hill for the approximately two-hour tour. The program features eight actors in period dress, each character sharing a personal story of their relationship to President Abraham Lincoln. It's free, but a donation is suggested. Be prepared to walk approximately three-fourths of a mile.

We're looking forward to the joint program with the Springfield Arts Association on Tuesday, October 17. The event will feature the unveiling of a large portrait of John Whitfield Bunn by artist Cecelia Beaux, which will be on a long-term loan to the Association. Bunn was of great historical importance in the commercial, civic, political, and industrial development and growth of the State of Illinois and the American Midwest during both the 19th and 20th centuries.

* * *

On a sad note, we fondly remember Carol Jean Fraase, a Life member of the Society who passed away this summer. She was well known for catering many wonderful parties in Springfield and surrounding areas including many of our Society events. Her extraordinary culinary skills long will be remembered. She will

truly be missed for years to come.

October Historical Highlights

Some very interesting historical events occurred during the month of October, compiled by Mike Kienzler. You can find more details about these events at our searchable encyclopedia of Sangamon County history: www.SangamonLink.org.

■ **October 23, 1908:** Joe James, convicted of the murder of Clergy Ballard on July 5, 1908 -- one of the two supposed black-on-white crimes that led to the Springfield Race Riot -- is hanged at the Sangamon County Jail.

<http://sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=9830>

■ **October 11, 1913:** A spectacular fire demolished the Johnston-Hatcher home furnishings store on the southwest corner of Seventh and Adams streets. It was the second time in six years that the store was destroyed by fire. When Johnston-Hatcher rebuilt this time, fire safety precautions included a sprinkler system with 350 automatically triggered outlets. The building still stands.

<http://sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=9409>

■ **October 13, 1917:** The Sangamon County Farm Bureau was organized with a membership of 300 farmers, each of whom pledged to donate \$10 toward the hiring of a county soil adviser.

<http://sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=9190>

■ **October 10, 1970:** Illinois Secretary of State Paul Powell dies in Rochester, Minn. In the next day or so, associates find \$820,000 in cash that Powell had stuffed in briefcases, overnight bags and the famous shoebox.

<http://sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=7438>



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

Secrets of Historic Trees to be Shared at November 14 SCHS Program Meeting

If only trees could talk.

Wait. They can...but only if you understand their language.

And that's what a pair of researchers know how to do, by interpreting tree rings that can provide historic details on everything from settlement chronology and patterns to the year the trees were planted. It's the latter that will be explained in greater detail when the internationally prominent team of anthropologist Glen Freimuth of Rochester and arborist Guy Sternberg of Petersburg speak at the Society's Tuesday, November 14 meeting.

The meeting, free and open to the public, will be held in Carnegie Room North at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library starting at 5:30 p.m.

The tree ring data, from samples taken from two trees at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site run by the National Park Service in Springfield, and two at the Illinois Executive Mansion, provide clues to what was on the home site when Lincoln lived there and when the trees at the mansion were planted. The findings are part of a wider project, partially funded by a \$1,000 Sangamon County Historical Society Special Projects grant to accurately date the construction of the area's fast disappearing log structures. The researchers will also update their progress on the overall project.

Dr. Freimuth, who did his undergraduate work at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, holds a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Illinois. An adjunct research associate at the Illinois State Museum's Research and Collections Center in Springfield, he is a retired Professor Emeritus and author of numerous articles and papers. His archaeological research has taken him across the Mid-

west, including excavations at the Lincoln Log Cabin and Moore Home historic sites. He is a member of the Society for American Archeology, the Illinois Archaeological Survey and the Illinois Association for the Advancement of Archeology and is a certified Professional Field Archaeologist.

Sternberg, who has been studying and cultivating trees since 1952, is an award-winning landscape architect, arborist, tree consultant, writer, lecturer and photographer who has propagated and grown hundreds of species of trees and maintains his own research arboretum, Starhill Forest, in Petersburg, assembling one of the largest PCN oak



genus living reference collections for North America.

The first president of the International Oak Society, Sternberg is also a life member of the International Dendrology Society, International Society of Arboriculture, and American Forests. He is a charter life member and past chapter president of the Illinois Native Plant Society and holds life memberships in the International Society of Arboriculture, from which he received a Special Recognition Award for his work with historic trees. He also is a founding life member, past president, and past journal editor for the International Oak Society, with members from more than 35 countries on six continents, and the recipient of its Lifetime Service Award.



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Please make note of our official mailing address:

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Box 9744
Springfield, Illinois,
62791-9744

OCTOBER 2017 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Society welcomes the following new members:
Len Lieberman, Will O'Hearn, Joanne O'Hearn



SIGN LANGUAGE

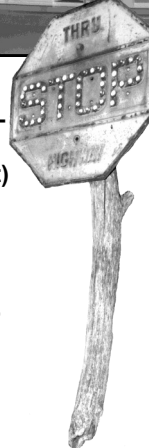


One of the more unusual and newest additions to its collection is this 1930s taxi whose door signs were hand-painted by Bringuet's grandfather. The cab was donated by the Antonacci family who introduced taxi service to the area in the early 1930s. Lincoln Yellow Cab owner Mike Antonacci's grandmother, Mary, Springfield's first licensed cab driver and first female cabdriver, originally drove the vehicle.

ACE Sign Company president Dennis Bringuet (above right) provides Society members with background on some of the growing collection of signs—old or unique or both—that ring the 76-year-old, four generation-operated firm's constantly expanding Sign Museum collection in Springfield. Over 70 SCHS tour-takers learned the backstory on some of the area's most iconic signs at the September 19 event, detailed by Bringuet and his son Todd who is developing the museum's website. The museum is housed in Ace Sign's 50,000 complex on First Street and is open to the public during business hours and by appointment.



ICONS: In the 1950s, the 12 foot high, neon-lit Pepsi Cola cap (left) now on a Museum wall, was part of a Springfield outdoor billboard. The yellow stop sign (right) from the 1930-40s and still on its original wood post, used reflective glass beads to catch vehicle headlights. Today, stop signs are red and use reflective coatings. At far right, one of the dozens of commercial signs that provide a link to the area's commercial past. Society members also got a personal tour of the sign-making operation (above).



Oak Ridge Walk to be Filled With Tales from the Past

(Continued from page 1)

Logan, Logan's daughter.

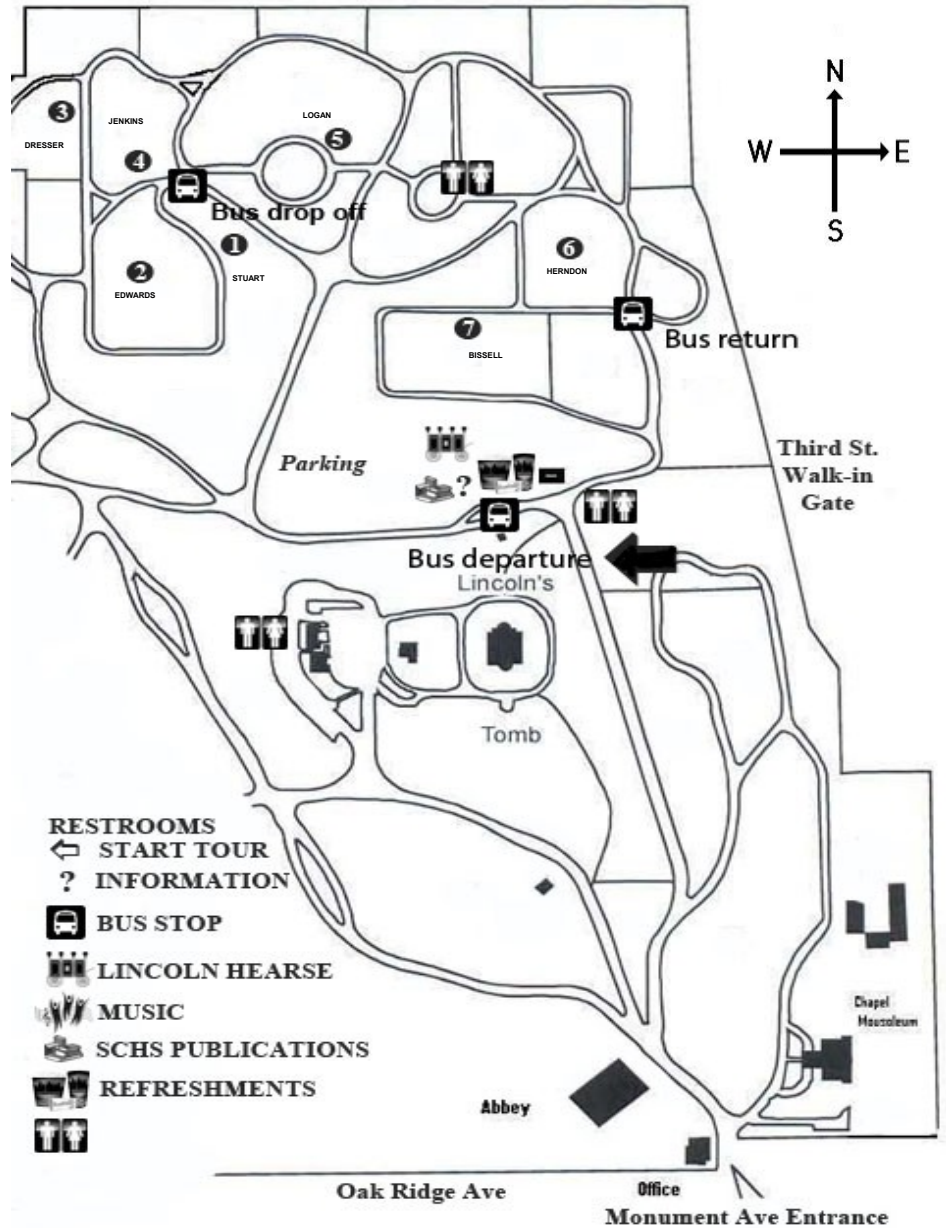
At other stops, Lincoln's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Todd Edwards will be portrayed by Mary Disseler. His neighbors, Jameson and Elizabeth Jenkins will be depicted by Robert and Patricia Davis.

Tour takers also will hear Tracy Petro speak as Virginia Dresser, daughter of Reverend Charles Dresser who presided over the marriage of Mary Todd to Abraham Lincoln.

Don Schneider will portray Governor William Bissell, who was Governor of Illinois when Lincoln was elected President. William Henry Herndon, Lincoln's last law partner before becoming President, will be played by William Furry. Lincoln was also a junior partner in the firm, from 1844 to 1861, an association that continued informally until Lincoln's death in 1865.

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, notes event chair Mary Alice Davis.

On-site parking is free. Refreshments provided by the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, will be available for purchase.



Donna Catlin photo, 2015

Bunn Portrait Focus of October 17 Joint Program

(Continued from page 1)

term loan to the Association.

In 1913, a group of Springfield citizens hired renowned Beaux to paint a portrait of Bunn, thus “saving” his image for future generations. A century later, the last-minute discovery of century-old letters saved the portrait from disappearing into a corporate archives on the other side of the country.

Following Dr. Tappert's remarks, Springfield attorney Kurt Wilke will share the story of how the portrait fell in danger of being lost to Springfield forever, and how some determined research saved the day.

Dr. Tappert is an independent scholar, archivist, and curator who wrote her dissertation on Beaux, work supported by a Library of Congress fellowship through the American Studies Program at George Washington University, a pre-doctoral fellowship at the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, and the Beverly R. Robinson Museum, Gardens, and Library. Her book, *Cecilia Beaux and the Art of Portraiture*, was published in 1995 by the Smithsonian. After completing her doctorate at George Washington University, Dr. Tappert turned to working with many institutions and private families to documenting their Cecilia Beaux portraits.

Since 2010, Dr. Tappert has been researching and writing about the arts and the military, and about artistic expressions of war trauma. The link between her current arts and military work and her earlier work on Beaux is tied to the many portraits of war heroes the artist painted throughout her career. Of particular note are Beaux's World War I paintings for The Portrait Commission of Lord David Beatty, Premier Georges Clemenceau, and Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier owned by the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Beaux, who died in 1942, created a highly successful career producing magnificent portrayals of Gilded Age upper class men, women, and children. Her life and painting career developed in Philadelphia, New York City, and

Gloucester, Massachusetts, where she painted nearly 400 portraits, more than 110 of which were of men and boys.

Among her male sitters were business executives, federal judges, congressmen, university presidents, ministers, doctors, lawyers, musicians, artists, writers, and actors. During an era when the roles of men and women were strictly defined, Beaux found a way to cross gender boundaries by defining her career as a “sacred calling,” and choosing a work life over marriage and family. Her success was such that

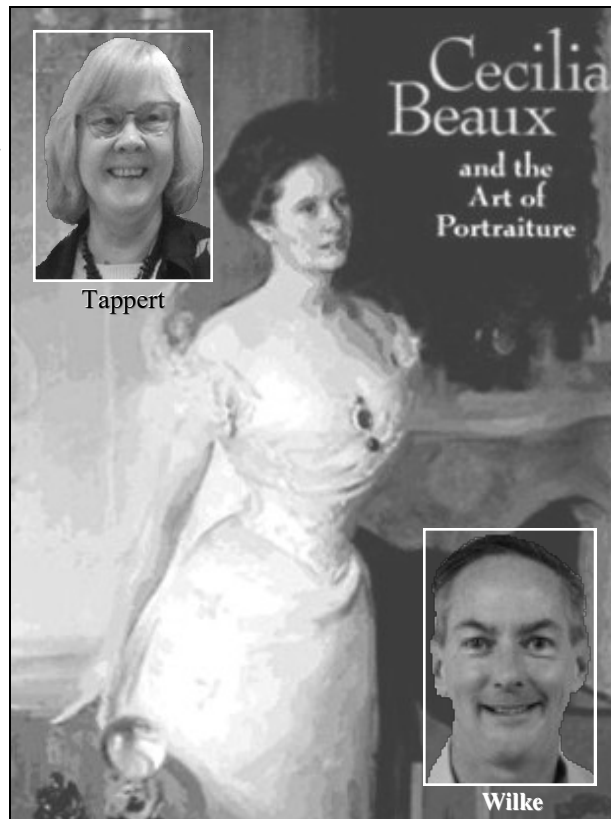
agreed to paint Bunn because she wanted to hear his Abraham Lincoln stories. Bunn had forged a friendship with Lincoln when he moved to Springfield as a teenager in the 1840s, and when his friend ran for President in the 1860s, the now successful banker became one of Lincoln's earliest financial backers. Beaux's painting of Bunn offers hints of his friendship with Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Tappert says.

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 Lincoln. The Bunn brothers' enterprises, together or singly, eventually included banking, 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 its first board director. 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.



she was regarded as the female equivalent of John Singer Sargent, America's most famous portrait painter in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Beaux's decision to pursue a professional career made it possible for her to create felicitous relationships with professional men, a rapport that positively influenced her portrayals of them. By the time she accepted the commission to paint 82-year old banker in 1913, her reputation was such that she could pick and choose her sitters.

According to Dr. Tappert, Beaux

Weather-Wise Words and an SCHS Travel Reminder

Phew! We made it through the Summer with- nary a tornado (although they can touch down any- time during the year).

Now that Fall has ar- rived, can Winter be far away? Nope, which is why we want to remind all Soci- ety members of both our Inclement weather policy and "Snow Bird" proce- dure.

Let's deal with the heavy weather first. If the forecast calls for a major snow or ice storm that would make driving hazardous, chances

are the meeting or event will be cancelled. Here's how you can find out be- fore heading out the door:

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

Notices initially will be posted on our main website, www.sangamonhistory.org, our Facebook page and on our phone, 217-525-1961 This should give you ample

time to change plans.

Where possible, we will contact local radio and tele- vision outlets for inclusion on their websites, television news crawls and broadcasts

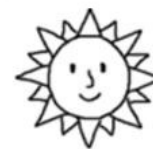
If you're planning an extended stay in some warmer climate during the winter months, please send us a *change of address* via e- mail or phone so you can continue to get *Historico* while you're away.

Our monthly newsletter is mailed Third Class to get the best postal rate, but that also means it is not for-

warded to you. In fact, we get it back, with full postage due.

At that point, your name will be r e m o v e d from the mailing list because of the increased cost and will not be restored until you notify us that you're back.

Please let us know and send some of that warm sunshine our way.



Calendar of History Events

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 start page 1, map, page 6). 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 17, 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 and attorney Kurt Wilke the story behind its return to Springfield. The meeting will be held at the Association's M.G. Nelson Gallery of Art 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: The Secrets Historic Trees 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.t. (see story, page 3).

Tuesday, December 12: SCHS Annual Holiday Party.

Tuesday, January 16, 2018: Sangamon County's Italian Heritage. The Society kicks off the State's Bicentennial Program Year with a presentation by Chicago-based educator and historian Bill Cellini Jr. who has researched and written about the area's Italian immigration and heritage, some of which is the basis for a section on early Italian immigrants to which he contributed to the Society's searchable encyclopedia of county history, sangamonlink.org. 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library. Free and open to the public.

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.

Saturday, March 10: Trivia Night. The Society stages its Sixth Annual Trivia Night, returning to the Parish Hall at Christ the King Church in Springfield for another round of questions, fellowship and fun, the proceeds of which will benefit Society programs and projects. Mark McDonald returns as emcee, with trivia master Al Geitl handling the proceedings. Watch *Historico* for further details.

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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 — except Business/Corporate and college/university students — cover adults and children 16 and over at the same address. Be sure to include their names.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____



Status

___ New Member

___ Renewal

___ GIFT of Membership from:

Phone _____

2017-2018 Membership Levels

Except for business and college/university student membership, all levels listed below cover adults and children 16 and over living at the same address. ***Please list their names in the space below.***

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

Business /Corporate Membership - \$200