



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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FEBRUARY 2020

February 18: Investigating Sundown Towns:

An Overlooked Legacy of Racism in Illinois

It took 100 years for Springfield to officially mark the 100th anniversary of the 1908 Race Riot. It is taking even longer to have its location designated a national historic site.

Sometimes lost in the Race Riot's telling is, as one prominent historian noted, "a hidden dimension," the racist actions of white residents in some of the smaller communities surrounding Springfield who barred entry, threatened and refused aid or shelter to black Springfield residents fleeing the riot for their lives.



Jaffe

Known as "Sundown" towns, either by ordinance, practice and/or signage, they barred African Americans (and in some cases other ethnic or religious groups) from being in their communities after sunset. And although their actions in the 1908 riot may have faded with time, their long-term impact on residential and racial demog-

raphics of Illinois has not.

Taking a closer look on the subject will be Logan Jaffe, a reporter for Chicago-based ProPublica Illinois, whose story on contemporary Anna, (population 4,000) in Union County, Illinois, "*The Legend of A-N-N-A: Revisiting an American Town Where Black People Weren't Welcome After Dark*" was jointly published with Pro-

Publica in the November 2019 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Jaffee will be the Sangamon County Historical Society's guest speaker on Tuesday, February 18, in a program co-sponsored with the Springfield and Central Illinois African-American History Museum.

The free program begins at 5:30

Continued on page 4

Joe Crain Tapped to Emcee Society's Eighth Annual Trivia Night March 21

Joe Crain, the popular former WICS-TV Springfield meteorologist who now directs public programs for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum, will emcee the Society's Eighth Annual Trivia Night fundraiser set for Saturday, March 21 in Parish Hall at Christ the King Church, Springfield.

Tickets for the event are now on sale on-line at the Society's website, sangamonhistory.org. or can be purchased by mail using a downloadable form from the site or filling out the one on page 7 of this issue of *Historico*. Table-purchasing early birds have a sign



Crain

(Continued on page 6)

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**TICKET
ORDER
FORM**

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Have Fun and Support a Very Worthy Project

The "Project" in this case is the one you will help come to fruition by having a little fun on Saturday, March 21 at the Society's annual Trivia Night.

All proceeds from the event help underwrite small but significant local history projects that otherwise might fall to the wayside for lack of funds.

In recent years, the Society has funded more than two dozen such projects, every one of them contributing greatly to understanding the history of our community and its historic sites. You can find a detailed list of them on our website, *sangamonhistory.org* along with photos.

Each in its own way is unique, ranging from signage that tells the history of some facet of earlier times here as diverse as crops original settlers planted in their gardens (Clayville), the impact of transportation (Williamsville), to promoting and thereby encouraging support for future historic restoration projects (Rochester, Springfield).

* * *

The Special Projects Grants program began in 2013, the outgrowth of constant requests for funding from local history organizations and individuals. The Society had previously provided monies where it could on a one-by-one basis, without formal guidelines that would bring a measure of consistency in what we could fund and when.



As we started to look at the approach we were using, it became clear that we really needed guidelines and a timetable not to mention a level playing field that would allow each request to be evaluated based

on a written application that asks for detailed information on such things as a projected budget, timeline, and historic impact.

Each year we tweak the guidelines, a move that not only helps our Special Project Grants Committee better determine where the funds will go, but also helps those applying for funds to prepare a realistic, budget-based and time-line view of what they are trying to accomplish and its impact on the community's history. That's why it's always fun to look at the Society website Grants page to see photos and details on the great variety of projects that have been funded in the past.

* * *

Time and experience has taught us what type of projects merit a short term investment that will bring long term impact and how to recognize those that fall short of that goal. Our application for Special Project Grants, revised each year, reflects our concern that monies we raise to underwrite the program will be used in a manner reflective of our goals.

But ultimately it is your support for Trivia Night—our only fundraiser—that makes the Special Project Grants program viable. Please don't hesitate to join us on Saturday, March 21. It's a fundraiser and a "fun raiser", an event packed with fun, friends, and great food!

* * *

We're delighted the Springfield and Central Illinois African-American History Museum has joined us in co-sponsoring our February meeting. We hope it will be the first of many joint ventures with area history organizations that help expand our knowledge of the people, places, and events that helped shape our lives today.

Vicky Whitaker



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.sangamonhistory.org or sancohis.org. Send event announcements to historicoeditor@gmail.com.

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor, Photos by Kathy Dehen, Larry Stone

Applications for Special Project Grants Will Be Available Starting This March

Applications will be available on-line (at sangamonhistory.org) starting in March for the Society's annual Special Project Grants competition.

The grant program provides financial underpinnings for small but significant Sangamon County history projects proposed by individuals and organizations who can complete their work within a 12-month period.

The Society usually sets aside a total of \$3,000 a year for the Special Projects Grant program whose winners are determined by a committee. If less than \$3,000 is awarded in any given year, the additional funds are applied to the overall total the following year or kept in reserve. Funds for the program are raised through the Society's annual Trivia Night, the eighth year of the event to be held on Saturday, March 21. (See story, page 1).

Since the program began in 2013, the Society's Special Projects Grant program has funded 25 projects ranging from signage programs that help communities better understand their local history to underwriting research for a museum display on early African-American pioneers who settled in Sangamon County and surrounding areas in Central Illinois. Special Project grant funds have also gone to digitize and preserve blueprints of Sacred Heart Chapel and Ursula Hall Music Conservatory in Springfield designed by William Conway, Springfield's first architect.

Last year, Special Project grants went to five organizations: Central 3 Community First Project for signage associated with the preservation of Springfield's first black firehouse and its role during the 1908 race riot; the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum to help fund an exhibit on national Negro League players from Springfield and Central Illinois; construction funds for the Pleasant Plains Historical Society to rebuild wheel chairs ramps at its Clayville Historic Site; Oak Ridge National Cemetery, for an interpretive marker about its former third street entrance sign; and the Springfield Art Association's Historic Edwards Place to create a traveling history trunk program to bring history into the classroom.



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Vicky Whitaker

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Mike Kienzler, SangamonLink.org Editor

Snow Go? Here's the Society Weather Policy:

It's February. Ice and snow could be in the forecast.

If weather conditions warrant it, the Society will cancel a meeting or special event and hopefully reschedule it. Such is the nature of the wilds of winter.

A cancellation notice will be posted no later than 3 p.m. on the day of the meeting/event several different ways:

* on our website, sangamonhistory.org

* on our phone, 217-525-1961.

* radio and television outlets that normally announce weather cancellation notices.

FEBRUARY 2020 MEMBERSHIP & DONOR REPORT



The Society is pleased to welcome new members Gary Stevens, Kathlene Stevens, Kurt Tarada, Kayla Graven and Andrew Kirchgessner and extends its thanks for donations from Paul Schanbacher and Theresa Marie Power, the latter in memory of Phyllis Brissenden.

Please make note of our official mailing address:

SCHS

Box 9744

Springfield, Illinois,

62791-9744

Journalist Takes A Fresh Look at Sunset Towns in Illinois

(Continued from page 1)

p.m. in Carnegie Room North, in the city of Springfield's Lincoln Library.

A-N-N-A, whose name became a catch phrase to describe racist Illinois Sundown communities, drew the interest of Jaffee, an investigative reporter who traveled to the downstate community after reading James Loewen's extensively researched book, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*, published in 2005 and updated in 2018. An Illinois native and college professor, Loewen started researching the subject in 1990, expecting to find about 10 in the state and 50 around the country. Much to his surprise, he found 507, two thirds of all the towns in Illinois. In the preface to his updated book, he noted that Sundown towns in Illinois as elsewhere, are on the decline as the nation becomes more multiracial.

Jaffee, who came to ProPublica by way of **The New York Times** and Chicago Public Media (**WBEZ**), talked to Anna residents and officials, studied census figures and demographics, historic documents and probed the question of whether the community is aware of or willing to confront its history like some other Midwest former Sundown towns have done. For the February meeting, Jaffee will talk about both her research and the interview process by which she put her article together.

No stranger to the topic, Jaffee was the multimedia producer for WBEZ's Curious City, a journalism project fueled by audience questions about Chicago, and previously an embedded media-maker with *The New York Times'*

Race/Related newsletter in collaboration with the documentary showcase POV, in which she reported and produced an audience-driven project confronting the pervasiveness of racism through everyday objects. Jaffee was

Investigating Sundown Towns:

An Overlooked Legacy of Racism in Illinois

also a producer with *The New York Times Daily 360* project. In Chicago, she was a recipient of Chicago Filmmakers' Digital Media Production Fund for "Battle Flag," an interactive documentary which questions the meaning of the Confederate battle flag in America.

A Miami native, Jaffee earned her degree in photojournalism from the University of Florida in 2011.

The Book That Inspired a New View of Racial History

It's no coincidence that the February speaker, Logan Jaffee found inspiration for her up-close look at Anna, Illinois and other Sundown Towns in the extensive research by sociologist James W. Loewen.

Loewen's groundbreaking book, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*, published in 2005 (and updated in 2018) is still the go-to volume on the subject as it was in November 2007 when Loewen, came to Springfield to talk about how some communities have come to terms with "ugly aspects of their past."

Covering Loewen's presentation at the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Springfield, *State Journal-Register* reporter Pete Sherman provided a detailed look at the Decatur, Illinois-born author's view that communities with racist histories need to reverse course.

In his talk, reported Sherman, Loewen pointed out that news of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot was reported around the country, and in the months that followed, "white participants involved in race-based attacks in other communities sometimes yelled, "Give'em Springfield" as their rallying cry," Loewen told the gathering.

"Perhaps now is the time for "Give'em Springfield" to mean something else."

Sherman's article went on to describe what Loewen said was Springfield's effort

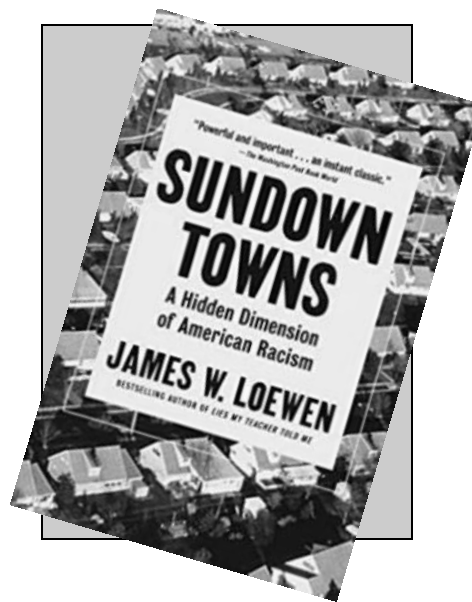
searched the riot for a history project. The girls were surprised that the city, while having a "historical marker for everywhere Abraham Lincoln sneezed," as Loewen put it, had no monuments commemorating the riot, which led to the formation of the NAACP, wrote Sherman of Loewen's remarks.

"The girls petitioned the city, which eventually placed eight markers at major riot locations," Loewen noted, adding that "Springfield's work is not done. Imagine if...two white sixth-grade girls could bring into being, with help, these eight markers, then imagine what any two of you could do, let alone all of us," Loewen said.

Loewen, Sherman wrote, "went on to list examples of cities with racist histories that have gone on to reverse course, the author adding that "You are only beginning to deal with the event and the situation of race relations in America."

And, wrote Sherman, Loewen said that "It's harder to face the past about sundown towns because we don't have justice in the present," adding that "My hope is that the relationship is reciprocal. That is, by telling the truth about the past, that helps bring about justice in the present."

to face its past: "Springfield began to get it right only in the early 1990s, after two Iles Elementary School sixth-grade girls re-





BACKGROUND: Panelists (from left) Mike Kienzler, Cinda Klickna, Tara McClellan McAndrew and Taylor Pensoneau (far right) field questions from Society president Vicky Whitaker (second from right) in a January 21 Society program at the City of Springfield Lincoln Library that gave the audience a behind-the-scenes look at the untold stories, funny tales and more compiled by four well-known history researcher and writers. In a lively presentation that drew both laughs and insight, the panel shared a range of "back stories" that reflected their broad experience covering Illinois history and history makers. Kienzler, a retired *State Journal Register* editor and reporter, edits *SangamonLink.org*, the Sangamon County Historical Society's online encyclopedia of county history. Klickna is a free-lance writer whose work frequently appears in the *Illinois Times*. McAndrew's journalistic works have been aired or published in a broad range of local, state and world-wide media outlets including *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Illinois issues*, *National Public Radio* and the *BBC*. She's been writing about local history for the past decade. Pensoneau is a former *St. Louis Dispatch* reporter covering the Illinois State House and is author of several books on both Illinois political figures and downstate gangsters.

Women's Right to Vote Historian at Chatham Library March 25

Jeanne Schulz Angel, an expert on the history of the Women's Right to Vote movement in Illinois, will be the featured speaker in a free program, *Casting A Historic Vote: Suffrage in Illinois*, Wednesday, March 25 at the Chatham Area Public Library.

The program begins at 6 p.m. The Library is located at 600 East Spruce Street.

Angel is part of the 2019-2020 group of Illinois writers, storytellers, historians, folklorists, musicians, and living history actors selected to be part of the Illinois Humanities *Road Scholars* Speakers Bu-

reau, a programming resource for a broad range of local community organizations.

Angel holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology and a master's degree in history at Illinois State University.

Angel has an extensive background historical archaeology and Illinois history. She is the for-



mer Executive Director of the Lombard Historical Society, in Lombard, Illinois, and was Executive Director of the Illinois Association of Museums, a statewide museum professional organization with offices in Springfield and Chicago from late 2013 to 2015. In May 2015, she became the Executive Director of the Nineteenth Century Charitable Association in Oak Park, Illinois.

Her talk will focus on how the diverse group of activists fought against sexism and racism and for the right to vote. For information, call 217-483-2713.



SCREEN SAVVY: Players at last year's Trivia Night eye images and questions projected on a large screen at one end of the room in a bid to win the game. Nearly 300 players competed last year.

Tickets on Sale for Society's Annual Trivia Night

(Continued from page 1)

-up incentive: one or more of 12 reserved up-front tables.

Tables of 10 are \$100. Individual seats are \$10. You can purchase both on line following the link on the Society's website, *sangamonhistory.org* home page or by mail, by downloading a mail-in form from the site.

A pre-printed mail-in order form is on page 7 and will also be included in the March issue of *Historico*.

You or your company can sponsor an individual round of questions, with your company logo or message appearing on the screen and announced at the start of one of the 10 rounds of trivia questions that make up the Trivia Game.

Round sponsorships are \$100. For information about Round sponsorships, contact the Society at sangamon-history@gmail.com or call 217-525-1961.

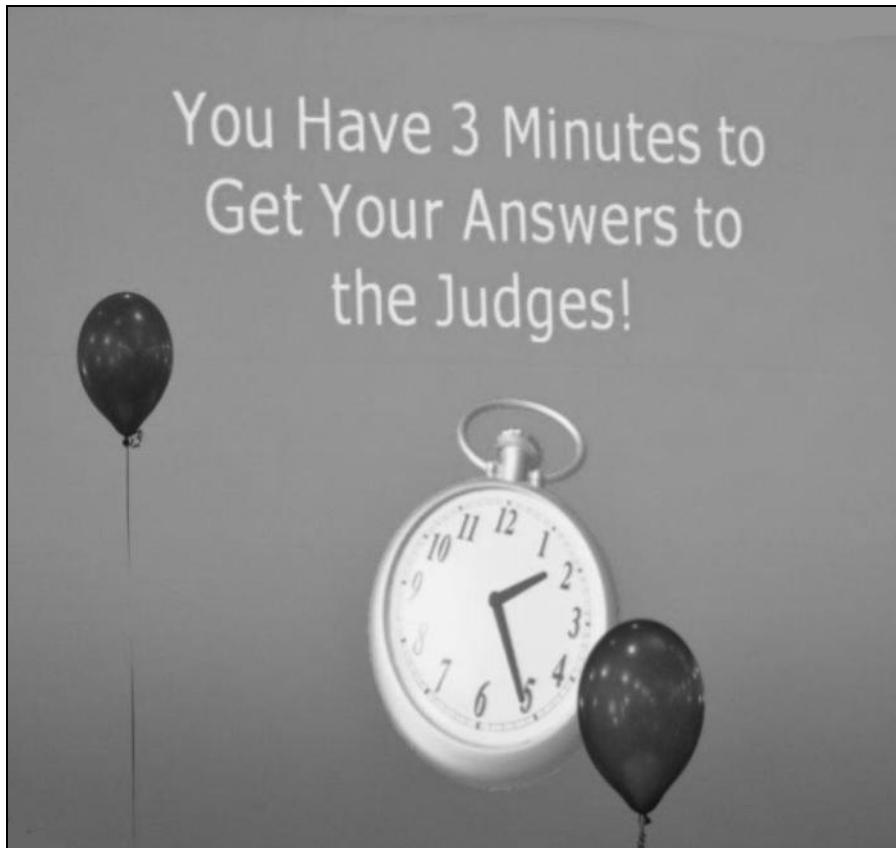
With questions and categories devised by well-known

Trivia Night guru Al Gietl, tables will be vying for a \$200 first prize with second and third prizes of \$100 and \$75 to the runners up.

Doors open at 6 p.m., with the game starting at 7 p.m.

Prize-winning chef Les Estep's tasty chilli will once again be available to Trivia Night players throughout the evening along with snacks. Wine, beer, soda and water will also be available for purchase.

Proceeds from the event benefit the Sangamon County Historical-Society's Special Projects fund.



TICKING CLOCK: Trivia teams have three minutes after a round ends to deliver their answer sheets to the judges table. The table with the most correct answers for all 10 rounds wins the game.

2020 SCHS TRIVIA NIGHT TABLE, TICKET, ROUND SPONSOR ORDER MAIL-IN FORM

Advance table and individual reservations sent by mail must be received no later than March 10. Checks should be made payable to SCHS and mailed to SCHS, P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744.

TABLE RESERVATIONS: Enclosed is my check. Sign me up for ____ tables of 10 for the Saturday, March 21 SCHS Trivia Night @\$100 per table.

INDIVIDUAL TICKET RESERVATIONS: Enclosed is my check for ____ seats. Society members and their guests who purchase individual tickets (at \$10 per person) in advance will be seated at designated Sangamon County Historical Society tables.

Name: _____

Address: _____

e-mail: _____ Phone: _____

ROUND SPONSOR: Companies, organizations and individuals are welcome to sponsor individual rounds at \$100 per round. The name of the company, organization or individual will appear on the screen at the start of the round. You will need to furnish any art work associated with your sponsorship along with your payment no later than March 10. Please indicate if you wish to be contacted to discuss any technical details.

Name: _____

Please contact me at: e-mail: _____ Phone: _____



On The Calendar

The *Historico* Calendar of Area History Events includes not only the dates and information about the Sangamon County Historical Society meetings, special events and, where applicable, registration deadlines or filing dates, but also, as space permits, information about events being sponsored by other local history organizations. All area history organizations are welcome to post their events on the Society's website at sangamonhistory.org by sending your notice to sangamonhistory@gmail.com.

Tuesday, February 18: *Sundown Towns: An Overlooked Legacy of Racism in Illinois.* Sangamon County Historical Society Monthly Program co-sponsored by the Springfield and Central Illinois African-American History Museum, 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library. (See story, page 1). Free and open to the Public.

Saturday, March 21: *8th Annual SCHS Trivia Night,* Parish Hall, Christ the King Church, 1221 Barberry Drive, Springfield. Doors open at 6 p.m., game begins at 7 p.m. Food and drinks available. Tickets at \$10 per person, table of 10, \$100. Round sponsorship \$100. Purchase tables, tickets, round sponsorships on-line at sangamonhistory.org or use the form on this page You can also download a PDF mail-in form from the website. For additional information about Trivia Night, see story, page 1.

Saturday & Sunday March 21-22, *Civil War Era Actors and Costume Workshop.* Edwards Place brings in two nationally known re-enactors and costumers, Kay Gnagge (below left) and Karen Duffy, (right) for this day and a half workshop on Civil War era women's fashion and comportment open to the first 60 people who register for the \$90 course. Included is a Saturday lunch provided by the Springfield Art Association which operates the historic site. For tickets call 523-2631 or stop by Edwards Place at 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield.



Sangamon County Historical Society

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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 _____ Phone: _____

Cell: _____ E-mail: _____



Status

___ New Member

___ Renewal

___ 2019-2020 GIFT of Membership from:

Phone _____

2019-2020 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.**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Membership - \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> College/University Student (individual) - \$20. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pioneer Level - \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Settlers Level - \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trailblazer Level - \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership - \$700 (one time fee) |

I am adding a donation of \$ _____.