



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

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## Step Back in Time on April 19

### A Trip Down Fourth Street: Springfield's Best Address

You won't need your walking shoes to learn about the area that was once Springfield's best address. Just take a seat at the Sangamon County Historical Society's Tuesday, April 19 meeting to get a virtual tour and insight into the city's most prominent families who lived along and around South Fourth Street from East Lawrence to just north of Jackson Street.

The program, to be held in Carnegie Room North at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, is free and begins at 5:30 p.m.

Providing the details for this in-person Powerpoint presentation will be local history experts Allison Smith and Cinda Klickna, each bringing in-depth knowledge about the area as part of their involvement with the Dana-Thomas Foundation. Smith is a former Foundation board member and has been a docent at the Dana-Thomas House for a decade.



**GAME CHANGER:** Susan Dana and the home that would help define a Springfield neighborhood.

Clinka, a current member of the Foundation Board (and Sangamon County Historical Society board member), is a freelance writer and author. Both have extensive backgrounds in education.

At the heart of the program, as it was in its heyday, is the 12,000 square foot, 35-room Dana Thomas House on East Lawrence Avenue designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1902 for socialite and civic leader Susan Lawrence Dana. Architecturally striking then as now, today it is a popular tourist attraction, a National Historic Landmark that's listed on the Register of National Historic Places.

In 2020, the Society awarded the Foundation a Special Projects Grant to produce a self-guided walking tour booklet that visitors can use to tour the his-

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Stephanie Martin

## Great Programs, Grant Deadline and a New Research Source

Many thanks to Susan Helm and Cinda Klickna, both board members and Dr. Gina Lathan of Route History, Inc for the February program, Chelsea Coates for the March program, and Cinda Klickna and Allicent Smith for the April program. I'm proud that the Society can provide quality history programs for Sangamon County.

\* \* \*

A reminder to share our grant applications with groups who are working on Sangamon County history projects. We want to support this important work. The deadline is April 30. I'm looking forward to reviewing the applications and announcing the recipients in June.

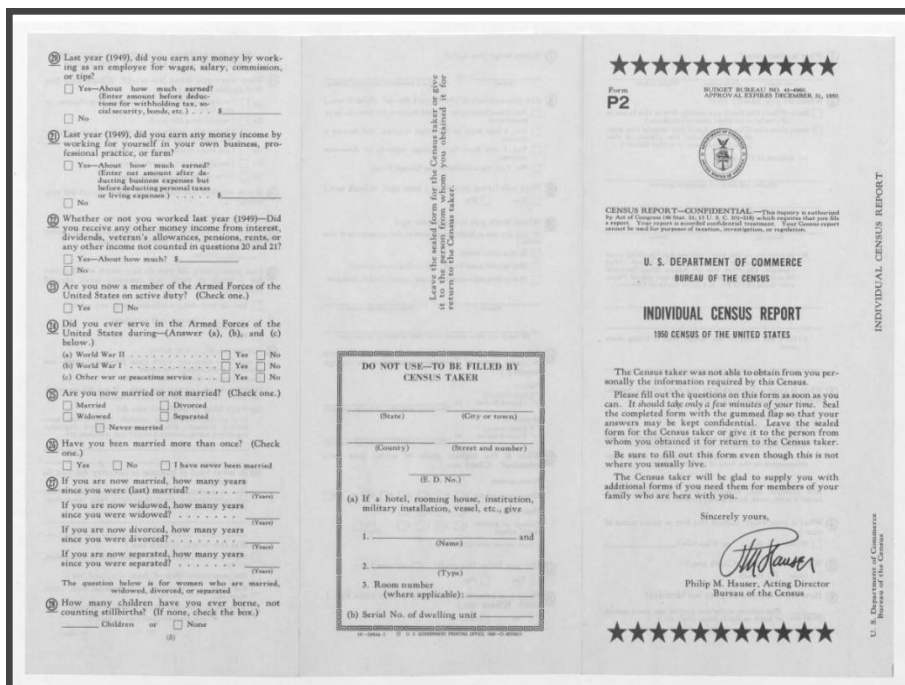
\* \* \*

The National Archives will release the 1950 US Census in April. Not only is it exciting for genealogists, but it can also be important for local history too.

Family history is local history. It's another tool to learn more about the people that lived in Sangamon County. For example, was there a common occupation of residents on a particular street? It is a snapshot of people and communities.

The 1950 census was the last time enumerators personally visited most households with large multi-family census sheets.

During the 1960 and later censuses, households received enumeration forms in the mail and mailed them back to the Census Bureau.



I'm looking forward to exploring the census in April. For more information go to [archives.gov/research/census/1950](http://archives.gov/research/census/1950)



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

*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). Catch us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Send event announcements to [historicoeditor@gmail.com](mailto:historicoeditor@gmail.com).

Vicky Whitaker, **Historico** Editor.

Cinda Klickna, Mike Kienzler, contributors

# Nominating Committee Seeking Candidates for Seats on Board

Interested in serving on the Society's board?

The Nominating Committee would like to hear from you.

To seek a one-to-three year term on the board, you must be a dues-paying member in good standing, have e-mail/computer skills, and have the time and commitment to attend monthly board meetings (conducted in person or on-line as conditions permit), serve on committees and engage in a variety of Society activities.

“We’re a working board,” noted Nominating Committee chair Mary Alice Davis. “Having both the time and commitment is and always has been integral to the Society’s growth and success.”

The Society normally has 15 board members, a third of the directors elected each year. Occasionally vacancies occur, the Society either filling those posts by appointment or leaving them open until the next election.

To apply, send a resume electronically to [schsoffice@gmail.com](mailto:schsoffice@gmail.com), with the subject *Attention of the SCHS Nominating Committee* no later than Monday, May 2. Applicants will interviewed by the Nominating Committee prior to the announcement of the slate in June.

Elections will be held at the Society’s annual meeting, to be held on Tuesday, June 21 at the Clayville Historic Site in Pleasant Plains.

Profiles on all candidates will appear in the June issue of *Historico*.

## May 17 Society Meeting to Look at How Area History Organizations Are Documenting Covid

Like the pandemics that have preceded it, COVID19 will be remembered by future generations.

How that story will be told will depend on the institutions and methods being employed now to collect, store, and make accessible to historians and researchers in the decades that will follow.

The Society's Tuesday, May 17 meeting will bring together representatives from area history organizations to discuss the approach they have been taking to make that information available in the future, among them Sangamon Experience at the University of Illinois at Springfield director Anne Moseley who will talk about its oral history “Covid19 Project” to record and preserve the personal experiences of students, faculty, and staff during the Corona Virus outbreak. Amanda Riggerback will discuss the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library’s “Tumultuous 2020” oral history project and a panelist from the Illinois State Museum will provide details about its “Illinois Stories-COVID” collection. The program will be held in Carnegie Room North at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library, starting at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public.



### 2021-2022 OFFICERS

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*Term Ending June 2022*

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Please make note of our official mailing address:

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**STATUS SYMBOL:** In the 1920s, developer Harris Hickox built this Georgian-Style apartment house on the corner of Cook and Fourth for upper middle-class families, employing domestic staff and lobby guards to attract a wealthy clientele. When it was nominated for a spot on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 (and later granted) it was noted that the building exterior and lobby were completely unchanged from 1929 and that it was a classical example of the typical modern apartment building of the era.

## Taking A New Look at Springfield's "Best Address"

*(Continued from page 1)* The homes and those who lived in them will get an up-close look when the presentation duo shares their stories.

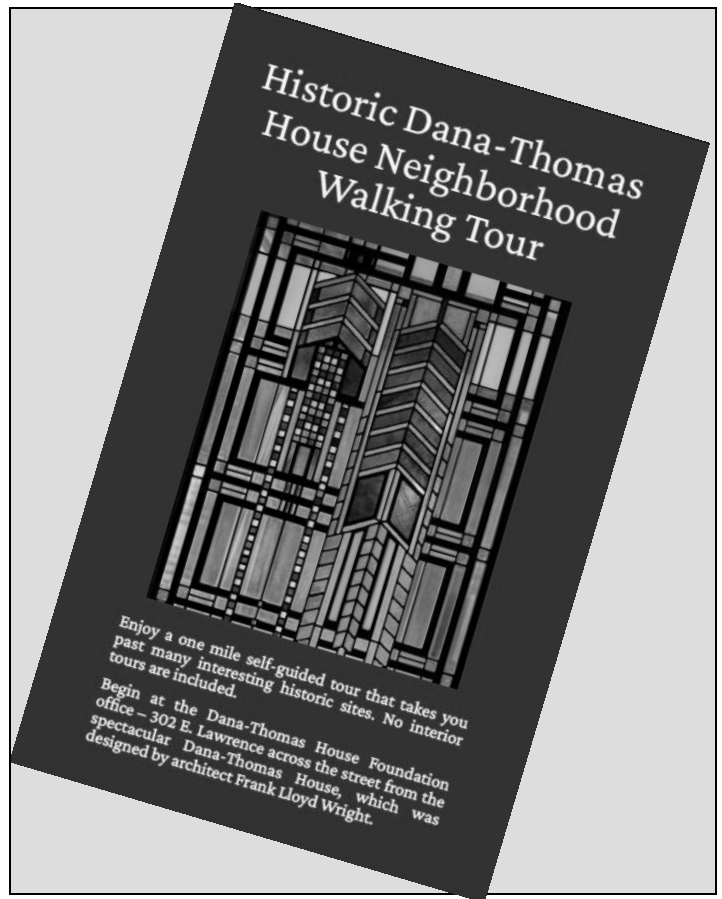
The rambling Dana-Thomas House sits on the site of the home of Rheuna D. Lawrence, who at the time of his death in 1901, was president and one of the largest stockholders of Springfield's State National Bank. He also owned extensive commercial and agricultural property in the area and silver and gold mines in Colorado and California, respectively.

Lawrence had served as Mayor of Springfield and was president of the school board. But it was his daughter, Susan Dana,

who would eventually set the area apart from other neighborhoods across the city. When she gave Frank Lloyd Wright an open checkbook to build the house she inherited from her father, only one room, a parlor with a Victorian fireplace, was left intact in his memory.

The new house cost approximately \$60,000 at a time when an eight-room brick house would have cost \$4,000 and a six-room frame house \$1,500, no match even for the mix of existing and future homes and mansions that would rise in the area.

The April 19 program will take a closer look at the social life and business and professional connections that crisscrossed the area and its ups and downs as the city continued to grow.



**STEP INTO SPRING** with this one-hour walking tour guide to the Historic Dana-Thomas Neighborhood. The brochure, available through the Dana Thomas Foundation, was financed in part by a grant from the Sangamon County Historical Society.

## Looking Ahead...

### May 31 Dues Deadline for 2022-2023 Approaching as Fiscal Year Wraps Up

April showers may bring flowers, and that's a good thing.

It also means May is around the corner and that's also a good thing as far as the Sangamon County Historical Society is concerned.

May is the final month of our fiscal year, giving treasurer Jerry Smith a chance to wrap up the books and prepare a fiscal report we issue at our June annual dinner meeting set for Tuesday, June 21 at the Clayville Historical Site in Pleasant Plains. (You'll be getting details on that event in the May issue of *Historico*).

But it also means it's time to renew your annual dues, give a gift of membership, raise your membership level, even give a donation!

Dues for 2022-2023 must be received by Wednesday, May 31.

If you want to mail in your renewal, you can use the form on the back page of this issue of *Historico*, (even though it says 2021-2022, we will automatically apply your payment to 2022-2023) or you can renew on line by going to the Society's website page, [sangamonhistory.org](http://sangamonhistory.org) and go to the Membership section. It will guide you through the on-line payment process.



**THE RUSTIC CLAYVILLE HISTORIC SITE** in Pleasant Plains with its charming outdoor pavilion and indoor dining will once again be the site of the Society's annual dinner, set for Tuesday, June 21. Elections are part of the event, but you must be a member in good standing (2022-2023 dues paid by May 31) to cast a vote.

## ...And Don't Forget

### April 30 is the Deadline to File a Special Grants Project Application

If you or someone you know wants to apply to the Society for a Special Projects Grant, the clock is ticking. The deadline is April 30.

The funds are designed to help underwrite a range of small but significant history projects across Sangamon County that might otherwise be overlooked by major funding sources because of their scale.

The Society's program has provided the financial underpinnings to individuals and history organizations for dozens of local projects ranging from installing historic

grave markers, funding exhibits, digitizing architectural plans of historic buildings, even production of a walking guide at the heart of the Society's presentation this month on what was once Springfield's "Best Address."

Compared to government and large private funding organizations that underwrite major, often six-figure projects, the Society application form is neither long or complicated, nor does it require a professional grant preparer.

Rules and information are posted

on the Society's website, [sangamonhistory.org](http://sangamonhistory.org). An application can be downloaded from the site.

The Society's Special Projects Grant Committee will review and discuss the applications in May. It will submit its recommendations to the Sangamon County Historical Society's full board by month's end.

Winners will be notified by the Society and invited to be guests at its annual dinner in June, at which time they will have an opportunity to talk about their proposed project and receive a check.



## Forgotten Grocery Store Saga and Myth Busting

Remember the last time you walked to the neighborhood grocery store down the street?

Maybe never.

But your grandparents probably did.

Up until about 1918, there were no super markets. Small grocery stores dominated Springfield neighborhoods. At least 171 of them, in fact, discovered Mike Kienzler, editor of the Society's encyclopedia of Sangamon County History, *SangamonLink.org*, in preparing a new entry related to an aluminum cooker offer to Springfield households that was advertised in a February 15, 1917 edition of the *Illinois State Register*.

The ad, directed at Springfield households, was placed by Quaker Oats in conjunction with Pettijohn's Breakfast Food (which it acquired in 1893 and which made a popular wheat bran cereal that, like oatmeal, needed to be cooked).

Here's how the deal worked:

Anyone who sent in trademarks from the two cereals could buy a special aluminum cooker for only \$1. But you had to act quickly. The deal was good for only one week.

"This offer ends with our present supply, and probably forever. Unless aluminum drops 50 per cent, we cannot again offer a Cooker like this for \$1," the advertisement warned.

But, Kienzler notes, "for readers a century later, the most interesting element of the advertisement probably is the accompanying list of local grocers who had signed on to feature the cooker offer: 171 grocers, virtually every grocery store in town in a period where small stores dotted neighborhoods throughout the city." (You'll need to check out the site for yourself to see the list and locations)!

"The list probably catches the neighborhood grocery at its highest point in Springfield. Transformation of the local grocery business would begin only a year later, when Moran's Market, 727-29 E. Washington St., would become the city's first self-service grocery," he wrote. (You can read about that too on *SangamonLink.com*).

It's not the only surprise among the latest entries at the website.

Myth-buster Kienzler squashes the popular legend surrounding the late Roy Bertelli and his accordion

"Roy Bertelli's mortal remains are at Oak Ridge Cemetery. His accordion is not," he says, noting that "the internet is wrong on both counts. Who could have guessed?"

Bertelli, who called himself "Mr. Accordion," gained local fame in 1997 when he paid \$30,000 to have a one-person mausoleum erected just inside the Monument Avenue entrance to Oak Ridge, recounts Kienzler.

"The memorial included an engraving of Bertelli's favorite instrument, with the words "*Lifetime Dedication to the Accordion.*"

The location, size and design of Bertelli's mausoleum caused a minor brouhaha when it was built, says Kienzler, pushing one critic to publicly complain that it compromised the entrance to Oak Ridge.

Bertelli, who died in 2003 and was cremated, had earlier requested that one of his accordions be buried with him.

The request was denied, spawning internet rumors that he had it burned and the ashes placed in the Oak Ridge mausoleum and that he was eventually buried at Camp Butler. Neither is true, Kienzler points out, but it makes for good reading...and myth busting!



# SCHS ON-LINE PROGRAM GUIDE

When the Corona virus prevented the Society from having face-to-face meetings back in early 2020 and through most of 2021 and the start of 2022, we did the next best thing: videoed our programs and put them on-line. We returned to a live format with the March meeting, but you can still catch those on-line-only meetings. Just follow the instructions below:

## HERE'S THE BASIC HOW-TO:

1. Go to the Society's website. [sangamonhistory.org](http://sangamonhistory.org).
2. At the top of the page, go to the menu and tap **BOOKS & VIDEOS**
3. On the **BOOKS & VIDEO** page, you will find links--by month and year.
4. If you're watching it on YouTube Hit the iconic "Skip the Ad" button [that's part of the YouTube experience unless you like commercials.]
5. Enjoy!

**February, 15 2022: *Black Experiences in Education.*** The Sangamon County Historical Society marked Black History Month on Tuesday, February 15 with an on-line presentation focused on education that looked at the experiences of two Black female educators—one in the 1870s, the other in the 1950s, who overcame prejudice in their careers and at the history and fate of the Ambidexter Industrial and Normal Institute for Black students established in 1857 in Springfield and almost erased from the history books when the building in which it was housed was twice threatened by razing, once in 2013 and again in 2018. Catch the full presentation on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0G96IRHE9k>.

**January, 2022: *History of Springfield's Movie Theater Industry.*** It's a Powerpoint available both as a downloadable PDF and on YouTube and just like the silent movies it includes, there is no sound, but if your computer has an extra drive, you might want to add a little background music, you might want to pop in "The Very Best of Ragtime." To download it, go to [https://sancohis.org/PDFs/THEATER\\_PDF.pdf](https://sancohis.org/PDFs/THEATER_PDF.pdf) or watch it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTAV7maS-sE>.

**November, 2021: *The Mysterious Bard of Sangamon,*** can be found on Vimeo (a video sharing website), at <https://vimeo.com/626671152/daae07f0cc?m0>

**May 2021: *A Pictorial History of the Construction of the Vachel Lindsay Bridge.*** Kansas City-based Lance Warren, Research Librarian/Archivist with Burns McDonnell, provides a pictorial and in-depth look at this iconic Springfield landmark and the story and people behind its creation and Lake Springfield.

**April 2021: *Virginia Eifert: Springfield Native, Prolific Naturalist.*** Learn about the life and legacy of Virginia Eifert from researcher John Hallwas and the Illinois State Museum's Tracy Pierceall. Eifert, a naturalist, author, and artist, worked at the Museum where she created, wrote and edited its *The Living Museum* magazine and publications on Illinois flora and fauna, rivers, people, and history. In 2019, Hallwas, who specializes in "forgotten voices from Illinois history," provided the cover story on Eifert for *Illinois History Magazine*, whose archives are housed at the Western Illinois University Library.

**March 2021: *Lake Springfield In Illinois: Public Works and Community Design in the Mid-Twentieth Century.*** The perfect primer for the Society's May meeting, historians Curtis Mann and Robert Mazrim provide details from their new book and the story-behind-the story that motivated them to take a closer look at a public project that helped shape Springfield's future.

**February 2021: *Shine A Light Project: Historic Preservation and Interpretation on Springfield's East Side.*** Preservationists Sue Massie and Kathryn Harris take a look at efforts to preserve the John Taylor House, the Lincoln Colored Home and Fire House No. 5 and how each site contributed to the lives of African-Americans here.

**January 2021: *In The Beginning: A Look at Sangamon County 200 Years Ago.*** Using maps, illustrations and a knowledgeable voice-over, Curtis Mann, head of the City of Springfield Lincoln Library's Sangamon Valley Collection, provides an illustrated look at both the people and geography that played into the development of Springfield.

**November 2020: *"I Think That We Will Soon Be In Springfield": An Illinois Civil War Soldier's Quotations About Sangamon County from their Personal Letters.*** Author Mark Flotow brings the Civil War to its grass roots, in a program that illustrates the letters home by including audio readings of some of these moving stories provided by Sangamon County Historical Society members

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**Sangamon County Historical Society 2021-2022 MEMBERSHIP/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form**

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. Our membership year runs from June 1 to May 31. All memberships cover adults and children 16 and over at living at the same address. Be sure to list their names.

Your Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse/Significant Other First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's maiden name where applicable \_\_\_\_\_ Your e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Your address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State , Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Full Names of other family members included in your membership:

*Choose Your Level of Membership:*  Regular (\$30)  Pioneer (\$100)  Settler (\$250)  Trailblazer (\$500)  
 Lifetime (\$700 one-time fee)  College/University Student (individual) (\$20)

This is a GIFT (Name of recipient, mailing and e-mail address):

I am adding a donation to the Society in addition to my membership in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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