



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744, Phone: 217-525-1961,
e-mail: schsoffice@gmail.com web: www.sangamonhistory.org, SangamonLink.org

VOLUME 59 NO. 3

MARCH 2023

For Ursuline Site, New Beginning And A Bright Future Ahead



Exclusive SCHS Members Only Tour March 21

Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society will get a private guided tour of the former Ursuline Academy's Conservatory of Music being restored to its original beauty as part of a massive undertaking to preserve an important part of Springfield's history.

Society members will be guests of Tony Libri for the Tuesday, March 21 tour of the site on which work has been underway since last spring.

The tour, guided by Libri and members of his restoration team, is expected to run about an hour, with SCHS members gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Becker

Library and then proceeding to walk a short distance to the Music Conservatory Building.

Provision has been made to accommodate members who might have difficulty walking up or down the Conservatory's staircases. A special seating area with displays and a presentation will be provided to those who can't take the full tour. Refreshments will follow.

"We're delighted that our members will get to see this important work in progress," noted SCHS president Susan Helm. "The restoration project was one of

Continued on Page 4

IN THIS ISSUE:	<i>FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK</i>2	◆	<i>GRANT COMPETITION OPENS</i>3
◆	<i>WHEN FOUL WEATHER STRIKES</i>3	◆	<i>CARNEGIE'S MUSICAL LEGACY</i>6
		◆	<i>CALENDAR</i>7



From the President's Desk



Susan Helm

Enthusiastic Start Bodes Well for SCHS in 2023

It's continuing to be another productive year at the Sangamon County Historical Society with a very active *SangamonLink* website about to celebrate its soft opening almost 10 years ago. More details on this and the players involved in the early years will be coming soon.

A special thanks to our many generous members who supported our recent appeal for funds specifically dedicated to our grants. We collected over \$4,800 which would definitely have exceeded any fundraiser we might have hosted. Speaking of our grants, it's that time of year and in last month's issue our editor Vicky Whitaker gave a rundown on the beneficiaries of this past year's monies and now we're appealing to like-minded history related organizations to consider applying for one. The details and criteria are listed on our website – www.sangamonhistory.org. We look forward to lots of applications to consider. The winners will be awarded at our annual meeting and dinner in June.

At a recent grants subcommittee, we decided to have one of our fall 2023 programs highlight some of our most successful grant recipients of the past.

We are extremely excited to take you on a member's only field trip for our March program to former Ursuline Academy and the Music Conservatory and see the work Tony Libri has been doing to restore it to its original beauty. More informa-

tion on this is in this issue of *Historico*. This was one of our grant recipients in 2022.

One of our newest board members Scott Pillsbury from Green Family Stores gave us a great idea about another funding source through a partnership between his employer and News Channel 20 with its three-degree weather guarantee. The Sangamon County Historical Society was chosen as the charity for February with his help.



Each week day the meteorologist predicted the next day's high temperature. If they were correct within three degrees, the Green Family Stores donated \$100 to us. It was great exposure for our organization as well as another source for money to help the community.

We look forward to the remaining programs and annual meeting and dinner as well and we've already geared up for this year's Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk on October 1.

Again, thanks to our great board that is so dedicated to this organization. I continue to be amazed at the commitment these people have made to history in Sangamon County.



Historico, published 9 times a year (except July, August & 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.sangamonhistory.org or sancohis.org. Catch us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Send event announcements to historicoeditor@gmail.com.

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor.

Cinda Klickna, Mike Kienzler, contributors

Application Deadline Set for Society's Special Project Grants Competition

Seeking a Special Projects Grant from the Sangamon County Historical Society? You have until April 20 to submit your application.

The grant program is designed to help underwrite local projects geared to preserving and promoting interest in the history of Sangamon County.

Applications and competition rules can be found on-line at the Society's website, www.sangamonhistory.org. under "Grants." Completed forms can be submitted online or mailed to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Special Projects Committee, P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. Award winners will be announced this summer.



Last year the Society awarded grants to restore a summer kitchen that was part of the original Leland Farm House moved from its original site to Washington Park; funded restoration of the Vachel Lindsay *Lincoln*-poem-inspired Fiberglass top hat on permanent outdoor display at the Illinois State Museum where it was originally created for a "Hats Off to Lincoln" Bicentennial Project; provided underwriting to Oak Ridge Cemetery for a brochure and map identifying

and celebrating distinguished individuals of color buried at the cemetery; and for supplies and labor costs associated with dry-walling damaged ceiling and walls in practice rooms around the stage of the 1908 music conservatory on the former Ursuline Academy campus.

Weather Most Foul? Here's How SCHS Deals With It

You know how the prose goes: *March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb.*

But not always.

If February, with its spring-like temperatures, storms and snowflake filled alternatives are any indication, March and perhaps April weather will be hard to predict, especially as the Society approaches its program schedule. The Society has policies and procedures in place if bad weather forces us to cancel a meeting or tour. In most cases, they will be rescheduled for a later date. But how will you know?

Making a decision to cancel or postpone a meeting or event is usually made several hours in advance of start time. SCHS officers keep an eye on forecasts posted by the National Weather Service on television, radio and weather alert-services. If predictions call for severe storms or driving conditions, the Society will alert local television and radio stations that post closings and cancellations and will post messages to that affect on our website, sangamonhistory.org. or our Facebook page. A cancellation or postponement notice will also be recorded on the Society's phone that can be reached by calling 1-217-525-1961.



2022-2023 OFFICERS

President.....Susan Helm
Vice-President.....Cinda Klickna
Secretary.....Sarah Adams
Treasurer.....Jerry Smith
Past-President....Stephanie Martin

DIRECTORS

Term Ending June 2023

Vincent Chappelle
Peter Harbison
Mary Mucciante
Ruth Slottag
Scott Pillsbury

DIRECTORS

Term Ending June 2024

Mary Alice Davis
Kathy Hoffmann
Kathy Dehen

DIRECTORS

Term Ending June 2025

Elaine Hoff
Larry Stone
Angela Weiss
Vicky Whitaker

Please make note of our official mailing address:

SCHS
Box 9744
Springfield, Illinois,
62791-9744

Ursuline's Commitment to Learning Helped Shape Springfield

Back in January 2006, members the Ursuline Sisters of Springfield detailed the religious order's history in a presentation to the Sangamon County Historical Society.

Little did they or most anyone else realize their role in educating Springfield's young from the mid-1800s through most of the 20th century would be coming to a rapid end.

The three presenters, Sister Darlene Fulgenzi and Sister Beata Knoedler, both of Springfield, and Sister Rosemary Meiman of St. Louis—all now deceased—talked about the order—founded in Italy in 1535—that spread across Europe and by the early 1700s to the United States. In 1857, Bishop Henry Juncker, the first bishop of the Diocese of Alton, Illinois, asked for nuns to work and teach in Springfield.



WOULFE

Mother Superior Mary Joseph Woulfe and six Ursuline Sisters volunteered and within a month of their arrival in Springfield in August, 1857, opened the Ursuline Academy, an all-girls high school at Fifth and Mason streets (that in 1980s became co-ed).

Reflecting growing enrollment, the Ursulines purchased property north of Eastman Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets and in the late 1890s added more classrooms and convent space, a chapel in 1894, and in 1908, St. Ursula's Hall, the Conservatory of Music. In 1929, the Ursulines founded Springfield Junior College that for decades would be Springfield's only post-secondary educational institution.

In fact, the impact of all of their educational activities was underscored in the 1957 *Ursulines in Springfield Centennial Celebration*, a major civic event as well as a religious one. At the time, the Ursulines were educating 3,700 children and adults in the city. Expansion continued in 1958 with the completion of the Sixth Street Academy building as well as college dorm space, Mueth Hall, Hanlon Hall and additions to the convent building.

In 1968, Springfield Junior College was renamed Springfield College in Illinois, affiliating with Benedictine University of Lisle, Illinois in 2003, that gradually offered four-year degree programs here. At that point, the Ursulines bowed out of all involvement with the college.

"Ongoing adaptation to changing needs and situations has marked the history of the Ursulines in Springfield since the 1980's," the Sisters concurred in their presentation to the Society, citing partnering agreements with Benedictine University and the transfer of ownership of the property no longer needed by the Ursulines to Benedictine.

On May 11, 2007, the Springfield College in Illinois-Benedictine University Board of Directors voted to close the Ursuline Academy at the end of the 2006-2007 school year, notifying the principal the following day. Students were notified on May 14. The backlash from angry alumni and the community was fast and furious, but did not halt an eventual move that came in October 2014, when Benedictine announced it would shutdown of all its undergraduate programs in Springfield, permanently closing the campus.

The site went up for sale in 2018, was purchased last year by former Sangamon County Circuit Clerk Tony Libri, now

retired, and his wife, Ann, in a move to restore and preserve the historic buildings on the site, starting with the Conservatory of Music that had been vacant since 2007, damaged by roof leaks and neglect.



Teams of volunteers have been working on its restoration for several months. Libri sees a great future for the building, as a cultural center, a unique venue for social events and more, a return to the concept envisioned by its designer, William Conway, the city's first architect, as a place to hold large events and concerts. "I want it to bring back memories, have it look like the original and be functional," says Libri of his quest.

Society Members Invited to See Progress of Ursuline Renovation

Continued from page 1

those funded last year by the Society's Special Projects Grants, so it is especially significant to us to see what this aspect of our activities can mean to preserving our area's historic roots. We know this is a major project whose success will be important to future generations as well as our own. Individually and as a historical society, we're happy to be part of that long-term effort."

The building is being restored through the efforts of Tony and Ann Libri who purchased the Benedictine site between North Fifth and Sixth Street in 2021, forming a non-profit corporation, Preservation Inc., to preserve the historic site.

Pre-registration for the tour is not required.

Parking will be on the campus lot at Sixth Street and Keys, directly across from the Becker Library.



FOR THE TOUR, park on the paved campus lot on the east side of Sixth Street and proceed west across Sixth to the Becker Library from which the Music Conservatory tour will start at 5:30 p.m.



THE WAY IT WAS: St. Ursula's Hall Conservatory of Music, its main floor and gallery filled to capacity, in July 1909.

SHAPING UP: Restoration is on-going at the St. Ursula's Hall Conservatory of Music with its ornate pillars, curved balconies and massive stained glass window. The building, like several others of its era on the Ursuline campus, was designed by William Henry Conway who in 1898 was the first Springfield-based architect to be awarded membership in the American Institute of Architects. Conway also designed St. Patrick's Church in Springfield, Sacred Heart Academy and other houses of worship around Sangamon County.



Talented Organist Shares Story Of Tough Hunt for Church Organs

Society Gets Visual Tour, Story Behind Bequests from Andrew Carnegie



MAPPED: William Furry adds another pin to the map of Carnegie-financed church organs found in Illinois.

Society members got a rare glimpse into the world of difficult historical research on February 21 when professional organist Paula Pugh Romanoux, armed with a powerpoint and personal memories, shared her joys and disappointments with the audience in detailing how she has been trying to track the fate of the thousands of organs purchased by churches across the United States and elsewhere with funds donated by famed industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie at the beginning of the 20th century.

Carnegie's name is more commonly associated with public libraries. He funded construction of more than 100 in Illinois communities alone including Springfield. But his donations on the musical side are lesser known, in fact, painfully undocumented, Romanoux told SCHS members, in a visual presentation of the organs he did finance, interwoven with personal reflections of both joy and sadness on the loss of some of the instruments and, in many cases the history that went with them.

Romanoux, and her husband, William Furry, have devoted much of their free time visiting churches across Illinois and nearby states, photographing what is left for a book she plans to write about the Carnegie financed musical instruments. Her efforts include contacting or being contacted by other musicians and history-bent organ fans supplying her with leads and information on locating the "lost" generation of Carnegie-financed organs.

Furry, executive director of the Illinois State Historical Society, has even created a map (above) of the Carnegie-financed organs they've found on their trips across the state whose pins visually underscore how many of the instruments she has already identified just in Illinois.

Illinois had two companies among the seven manufacturers who built church organs in the Carnegie era, she noted. The Hinners Organ Company in Pekin ceased to build reed and pipe organs in 1936 and finally closed in 1942. The other, Wicks Organ Company in Highland, is still in business. Carnegie didn't dictate what company to use, but did require all but his initial recipient congregations to come up with half the cost of the instrument.



CARNEGIE ORGAN history sleuth and professional organist Paula Pugh Romanoux (above) provided SCHS members with a visual look at several Illinois church organs funded in part by famed industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie including the Hook & Hastings pipe organ (shown behind her) at the Virginia Church of Christ (formerly the First Christian Church, Virginia) on which she practiced as a young teenager.

Calendar on 7:

A Heads Up Guide to Area History Events



Send announcements, information, photos and illustrations to historicoeditor@gmail.com. You can still see a list and links to all the Zoom programs the Society offered during the Pandemic on-site meeting shut-down, by going to the SCHS website, sangamonhistory.org.

Wednesday, March 1: Edwards Place Season Opener.

The historic home, at 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield, is owned and operated by the Springfield Art Association. Interpreted to 1857 with examples of Victorian furniture



NOW AND THEN: Edwards Place today and in its early years.

including many pieces that belonged to the Edwards family, it is the oldest house in Springfield on its original foundation. Constructed in 1833, it underwent several additions and renovations in its 190-year history in response to changes in fashion, occupancy and use. Public tours are given Tuesdays through Fridays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. with a \$5 charge for adults and free for children 10 and under.

Tuesday, March 21: SCHS Members-Only Tour, St. Ursuline Academy Conservatory of Music Restoration Project.

Society members will get a first hand look at the restoration work now underway on the former Ursuline



Academy's Conservatory of Music building in Springfield being restored to its original beauty as part of a massive undertaking to preserve an important part of Springfield's history. Tour takers should park on the campus lot on the

east side of Sixth Street at Keys Avenue and gather at the Becker Library across the street, from which the tour will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 25: Seasons of History Fashion Show.

The Springfield Art Association provides a look at fashions spanning 500 years in a fashion parade through the parlors

of Edwards Place, 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield with models donning summer gowns, winter coats, and more. The historical clothing item, both from original and reproduction garments, will give guests an opportunity to learn about each piece as the model comes through the procession, with close-up vantage points to view detail work on each piece. The fashion show begins at 1 p.m. Tickets are \$15 per person.



Now Through Friday, March 31: Arts Through the Ages.

Springfield's African American History Museum continues its display of Spring-



field School District 186 student art work celebrating Black history, through month's end, Noon to 4 p.m., Tuesdays through Saturdays at the AAHM, 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield. Free.

Thursday, April 20.

Deadline for Submitting SCHS Special Project Grant applications. See story, page 3 for details.

Sangamon County Historical Society
P.O. Box 9744,
Springfield, IL 62791-9744
Return Service Requested

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 777
Springfield, Illinois

Sangamon County Historical Society 2022-2023 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. *PLEASE PRINT.*

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 \$ _____

MARCH 2023

MARCH 2023

MARCH 2023

MARCH 2023