



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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VOLUME 59 NO. 7

SEPTEMBER 2023

Mark Your Calendars: A Fall Line-Up Not to be Missed!

With its traditional summer meeting hiatus over, the Sangamon County Historical Society jumps into fall with a series of programs and events sure to reflect the area's rich history:

- **Tuesday, September 19** provides a look at the rich stories behind items from Sangamon County now on display at the Illinois State Museum. (*Story this page*).
- **October** carries with it an early start to the month with the Society's Annual Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk on the first **Sunday, October 1** (See below) followed with a regular program meeting on **Tuesday, October 17** in the Carnegie Room at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library focusing on the men involved in the design and construction of *Fancy Point*, the 16-room mansion built for New Berlin farmer Wellington B. Huffaker in the 1860s, one of the largest homes in Sangamon County. (*See story, page 3*).
- On **Tuesday, November 14**, Society members and guests will head to the Springfield Art Association for a closer look at Susan Lawrence Dana's best friend, nationally-known artist, poet and photographer Leigh Gross Day whose scrapbooks are part of the Sangamon Valley Collection. (*Story, page 6*)

Interpreting Sangamon History: The Illinois State Museum Collection

The Sangamon County Historical Society kicks off its fall meeting season on Tuesday, September 19 with Illinois State Museum curator Erika Holst sharing stories and detailing the significance of several 19th and 20th century Sangamon County objects now housed in the Illinois State Museum in Springfield including early garments worn by members of the Enos family, a chair owned by a 1908 race riot victim, and a prayer book carried by a Lithuanian coal miner.



Holst

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

Holst has worked in the public history field for more

Continued on Page 7

Society's Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk Ready to Go on Sunday, October 1



With a little help from Mother Nature (who owes us one), the Society's free "Echoes of Yesteryear" Annual Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk will be held on Sunday, October 1.

"We're hoping for another round of fair weather," noted Cemetery Walk chair Mary Alice Davis as she went over plans for this year's fall event that last year saw the return of crowds to the popular outdoor history event in Springfield after being rained out the previous year.

Continued on Page 5



Annual Meeting, Election, Grants Update4 Calendar.....7



From the President's Desk



CINDA KLICKNA

Society Has Busy Year Ahead Not to be Missed

As the new President of the Sangamon County Historical Society, I look forward to a full year of programs and activities.

First, I must thank Susan Helm for leading our Society for the past year as president.

On top of the many hours she spends working on pollinator gardens, serving on other boards, and helping with grandchildren, she gave 110% to the Society. Fortunately, she will continue on the board and will be heading up our second program on the Underground Railroad conductors in May.

We have many exciting programs lined up this year. In September, Erica Holst with the Illinois State Museum will share some of the items from Sangamon County that are housed at the Museum.

On October 1, we once again will be hosting our annual Cemetery Walk, with characters in period dress, portraying key Springfield figures.

Also in October, Allicent Smith, will tell about the lives and legacies of Ernest Gehlman, a builder of many homes in Springfield, his work with E.E. Myer, architect, and their construction of Fancy Point, a rural home built in 1866 for her great-great grandfather, Wellington Huffaker.

In November we will focus on two women from Springfield, Leigh Gross Day, who became a nationally known poet and artist, and her friendship with Susan Lawrence Dana.

SangamonLink continues to draw many to the site – amazingly, as many as 14,000 hits occur monthly and is accessed by people throughout the world.

We hope you will attend the many programs we have planned throughout the year. If you have a program or speaker you'd like to suggest, please let us know.

And, thank you for being a member of the Sangamon County Historical Society.

Cinda



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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. Catch us on Facebook and Twitter. Send event announcements to historicoedi-

Coming October 17:

Trio Who Created Sangamon County's Fancy Point Mansion to Get a Closer Look

The Society will take a close look at three prominent 19th Century Sangamon County residents whose lives intertwined to make history, when it gathers for its Tuesday, October 17 program meeting at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library. The free program starts at 5:30 p.m. in the Library's Carnegie Room.

Talking about the "The Lives and Legacies of Architect E.E. Myers, Builder Ernest F. Gehlmann and Farmer Wellington B. Huffaker" will be Huffaker's great-great granddaughter, Allicent Huffaker Smith, a retired Springfield School District 186 teacher whose love of history extends not only to her family, but also to the broader community. The New Berlin resident served on the Dana Thomas House Foundation for six years and continues on its Education Committee. She has been a docent at Dana Thomas House for the past 10 years.



SMITH

Born in Morgan County in 1829 and raised on the family farm, at around age 20, Wellington B. Huffaker left Illinois to become one of the *Forty-niners*, pioneers who flocked to California during the 1848-1855 Gold Rush in search of a fortune. After spending almost a year in California, mostly hauling freight, he came home without a fortune, returning via the Isthmus of Panama, the Gulf of Mexico, and New Orleans. Huffaker married Lucinda Meacham, daughter of an early settler of Sangamon County and in 1857, bought a 160 acre farm near New Berlin for \$12 an acre, by 1859 expanding his farming and stock raising operation to encompass 2,066 acres, becoming one of most prosperous men in Sangamon County.

In 1866, Springfield architect Elijah E. Myers and contractor Ernst Gehlmann were tapped to design and build a new residence for the Huffakers to be named *Fancy Point*. It would be one of the largest homes in Sangamon County.

The mansion had 16 rooms, including two connecting parlors that were each about 25 feet long and 17 feet wide. The private rooms for the family could be completely shut off from the public rooms. A local legend says that a team of four horses and a wagon once drove through the down-

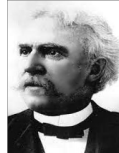
stairs parlors. Myers would later enter his Italianate design for *Fancy Point* into a design competition at the 1865 Paris Exhibition in France and won a prize.

By the mid 1800s, both Myers and Gehlmann were already prominent in Springfield and beyond. Myers was a leading architect of government buildings in the latter half of the 19th century and the only architect to design the capitol buildings of three U.S. states: Michigan, Texas and Colorado. He also designed buildings in Mexico and Brazil and multiple courthouses, churches, hospitals, and city halls throughout the United States.

Gehlmann, the contractor, arrived in Springfield from Germany in 1849. Some of his work included rebuilding the Chatterton Opera House in 1879 and remodeling the St. Nicholas Hotel. He also built many of the luxury homes in and around Springfield for prominent community leaders including James Conkling, George and Jacob Bunn, Dr. George Pasfield, Milton Hay, and R. L. Herndon.

For *Fancy Point* (below), Gehlmann used the finest materials, including marble and mahogany, constructing a Renaissance Revival style secretary from the wood of a walnut tree that grew on the property.

Gehlmann made the secretary very large to fit into the grand new house he had built for the Wellington Huffaker family. Because the secretary is almost ten feet tall, historians guess that the rooms probably had 12-foot ceilings. The historically significant piece of furniture is now in the Illinois State Museum in Springfield.



MANSION MAKERS:
from top: Huffaker,
Myers, Gehlmann.



2023-2024 OFFICERS

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Annual Dinner at Yacht Club a Hit, New Officers Elected for 2023-2024

Members and guests of the Society wine and dined their way through the organization's annual dinner on June 13 on the covered patio of Island Bay Yacht Club overlooking Lake Springfield, pausing only to get a financial update, elect officers and pay tribute to one of its past presidents, Curtis Mann, on his retirement as director of the City of Springfield Lincoln Library Sangamon Valley Collection, a major center for historical research.

Mann received the Society's Lifetime Achievement Award, a rare honor given out only once in 2018 to the late educator and historian, G. Cullom Davis,

Davis was recognized for creating an oral history program at Sangamon State University that helped preserve the county's rich history and inspired others to take the same path.

Winners of the Society's Special Project Grants for 2023 were among the guests and had an opportunity to explain how the funding will be used. Annual elections were also held, with Cinda Klickna moving up to the presidency for 2023-24 with an option to seek a second term next year. Susan Helm, who served as president for 2022-2023 did not seek re-election but will continue to serve on the executive board as past-president. Voters unanimously elected the slate. The new list of officers and directors for 2023-2024 can be found on page 3.



ROOM WITH A VIEW: Dinner attendees, checking in at right, chose their own view of Lake Springfield at Island Bay as they dined, voted, and congratulated grant winners and more.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE Chair Mary Alice Davis (left) presented the slate for 23-24. At right, in one of her first acts as president, Cinda Klickna presented outgoing president Susan Helm with a certificate of thanks, housed in a butterfly tote symbolic of her work in re-establishing the historic Monarch butterfly flyway stopping point in Springfield.



HONORED FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT: Curtis Mann holds the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award presented to him at the dinner in recognition of his efforts to advance and help spread the region's knowledge and understanding of local history. A past president of the Society, Mann retired in June after 30 years as head of the Sangamon Valley Collection at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library. Mann is only the second person in the Society's 62 year history to be so honored.

Society Names Winners of Its Special Project Grants for 2023

Five nonprofit organizations received grants from the Sangamon County Historical Society to fund special projects that help preserve and promote local history

The grant awards were announced June 13, at the Society's annual meeting at Island Bay Yacht Club.

Awards were presented to the following organizations:

Chatham Area Public Library: \$1,000 to digitize a portion of 70 audio cassette tapes that contain oral history interviews conducted from senior residents in the community who reminisced about growing up in the 1920s and beyond. Once digitized, the recordings will be transcribed

and then stored online at the Illinois Digital Archives in the Chatham Area History collection.

Central 3 Community First Project, Inc. - \$1,000 to purchase several additional display cases to secure artifacts and loaned possessions being collected for exhibit at their restored First Black Firehouse Museum in Springfield.

Dana Thomas Foundation and Springfield Art Association - \$1,000 to host a presentation on the work of nationally known artist and poet Leigh Gross Day and her friendship with Susan Lawrence Dana. Day was a life-long Springfield resident.

Temple B'rith Sholom - \$1,000 for a bronze plaque to recognize and memorialize the location "Hebrew Ground" within Block 5 of Oak Ridge Cemetery. The plaque will honor the final resting place of 342 Jewish settlers of Springfield including the first Rabbi in Springfield.

Springfield Art Association - \$1,000 to restore a mid-19th century sofa once owned by Illinois Governor Augustus French, who served as governor from 1846-1853. The sofa has been on display at Edwards Place, but needs to be reupholstered so that it can be utilized by visitors who cannot stand for long periods of time.

All projects are required to be completed between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.



Oakridge Cemetery Walk Sunday, October 1

(Continued from page 1)

“We have a terrific team of costumed re-enactors ready to go, portraying historic figures at seven grave sites,” she noted. “In addition, the 10th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry Band will be playing at the starting point for the enjoyment of tour-takers.”

Directions to the parking area will be posted on signs at both entrances to Oak Ridge.

Those planning to take the tour will be transported by bus to the first stop and picked up after the last site for the trip back to the starting point adjacent to the Bell Tower and parking area across from the base of Lincoln’s tomb.

While waiting for the bus or after taking the tour, they can listen to the band, purchase snacks and be able to see a replica of Lincoln’s funeral hearse provided by the P.J. Stabb Family Funeral home which had it recreated for the Lincoln Funeral reenactment in Springfield in May 2023 marking the 150th anniversary of the President’s funeral. (The original hearse was destroyed by fire in 1887). Tours will start at Noon to 4 p.m. with the last bus departing at 3:15 p.m.).

Tour takers will stop at seven graves to hear about the lives and accomplishments of:

Edgar Shanklin, co-founder of Shanklin Manufacturing, whose premier product (at right) was the Guy’s Dropper carbide lamp, invented by Springfield miner Frank Guy and widely used in coal mines from about 1913 until the 1930s. Shanklin died in 1926.



Erma Garrison Templeman, the first woman to practice law in Sangamon County and founder of the first Springfield Business and Professional Women’s Club and later the Illinois Federation of Busi-



ness and Professional Women, serving as state PRW president from 1927 to 1929. Templeman, who died in 1974, was in the first volume ever published of *Who’s Who Among American Women*.

Thorne Deuel: Director of the Illinois State Museum from 1938 to 1963, Deuel, who died in 1984, oversaw unprecedented expansion of the museum, including its move into the present building. Named Museum Chief, the post was re-titled “Museum Director” during his tenure.



Edna Dye Weaver: First woman to own an auto dealership in Springfield targeted by an extortionist who threatened to burn down the dealership’s garage. Weaver, who died in 1934, was prominent in local social circles, the American Red Cross and local charities.

Herbert Georg operated Herbert Georg Studio in Springfield for 53 years, but his reputation extended well-beyond the city limits including serving as still photographer for Cecil B. De-Mille’s movie, “The Greatest Show on Earth.” The year he died, 1964, his work was exhibited at the World’s Fair in New York City. Among his activities were serving as superintendent of the Professional Art Show



at the Illinois State Fair and president of the Circus Fans Association of America Hall of Fame.

Reverend Rudolph Shoultz: A leading figure in Springfield and its African-American community for more than 30 years, Reverend Shoultz, who died in 2000, served as Pastor of Union Baptist Church, one of the oldest and largest black churches in the city. Active in ministerial and civic affairs at the state and local levels and an advocate for equal housing, employment and education for blacks and other minorities. Among his accomplishments at Union Baptist were a major expansion of the size of the congregation, remodeling of the church and construction of an education building. He served on the Oak Ridge Cemetery board and was a member of the Illinois Housing Redevelopment Authority and the Illinois Human Rights Commission.



Dr. Don Deal: Dr. Deal opened his medical practice in Springfield in 1906 and is historically noted for performing the first blood transfusion ever undertaken in Sangamon County. In the 1920s, Dr. Deal, who died in 1952, foresaw Springfield’s emergence as a medical center. An accomplished public speaker, especially on health issues, he was also active in community organizations. He was a charter member and a president of the Springfield Rotary Club.



Leigh Gross Day and Susan Dana:

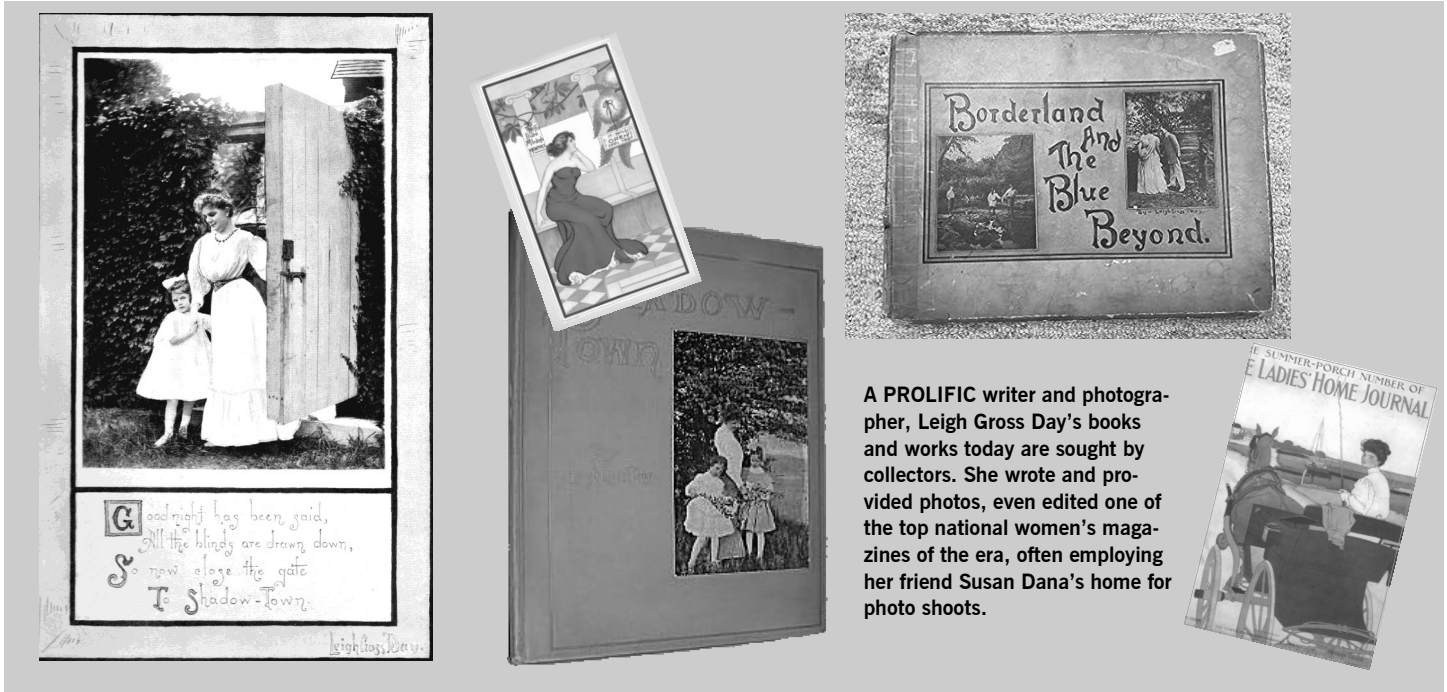
November 14 Program to Explore How Photos, Art and Friendship Provided Bond for Two Nationally Famous Springfield Women

The Society, in conjunction with the Springfield Art Association and the Dana Thomas House Foundation, takes another turn exploring the roots of some of Sangamon County's most prominent history-laced families with a program and exhibit on Tuesday, November 14 focusing on nationally-known Springfield poet, artist and photographer Leigh Gross Day and her equally famous life-long friend, Susan Lawrence Dana.

The program will be held in the gallery of the Springfield Art Association/Edwards Place Historic Home complex at 700 North Seventh Street, Springfield, starting at 5:30 p.m.

Society and current Dana Thomas House Foundation president Cinda Klickna, former Foundation board member and current DTHF Education Committee member Allicent Smith and Betsy Dollar, executive director of the Springfield Art Association will discuss and show some of the professional photographer, poet and author's life and works.

In June, the Society awarded the Dana Thomas Foundation and Springfield Art Association \$1,000 as part of its Special Project Grants enabling the three organizations to host a program and exhibit of Day's work and her connection to Dana. Many of Day's photographs were shot at the Dana Thomas House.



Klickna and Smith had an opportunity to meet two of Day's granddaughters, Kitsie Demby and Barbara Sutton, who shared stories of their family and Susan Lawrence Dana, and allowed photographs of Day's scrapbooks and art portfolios to be reproduced. These will be shown during the presentation. The artwork by Susan Lawrence Dana, called *Effect in Blue* will also be shared.

Day, daughter of Judge Eugene Gross and his wife, Susan Zimmerman Gross, grew up in the same Aristocracy Hill neighborhood as Susan Lawrence Dana. Eugene Gross was a close friend of Susan Dana's father, Rheuna Lawrence Dana. The two young girls stayed friends into adulthood, with Day, by then a professional photographer, often using Susan's yard as backdrop for her work.

Day's stories, poems, and sketches appeared in several leading publications of the period, including *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *Woman's Home Companion*. She was on the staff of the *Burr-McIntosh Monthly*, published from 1903-1910. Her written work included *In Shadow Town* published in 1907 and *Borderland and the Blue Beyond* in 1908.

Married in 1886 to George Edward Day, a Springfield businessman, she died in 1910 at age 48 and was buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery. Her husband died in 1919 at age 65 and is also buried at Oak Ridge.

Calendar

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.

Tuesday, September 12: **Deadline for Signing Up for the September 20-23 Illinois State Museum Trip to New Harmony, Indiana.**

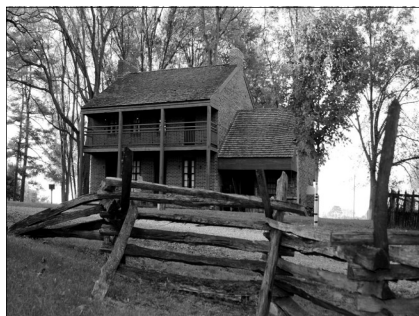


Join members of the Museum Society for a three-day, two-night motor coach trip crossing over the state line of southern Illinois into southern Indiana for a look at the architecture, natural beauty and creativity of the community, New Harmony, the small historic town that during the early part of the

19th century, was the site of two attempts to establish Utopian communities. For registration information and trip details, call 1-217-494-2952.

Saturday, September 16 and Sunday, September 17: **Clayville Fall Festival**, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Turn back the clock for a visit to this restored 1820's stage-coach stop in West Central Illinois site at 12828 State Route 125, Pleasant Plains, operated by the Pleasant Plains Historical Society. The free, annual event includes demonstrations of the era by local craftspeople, and tours of the many restored buildings on the site.



Tuesday, September 19: Interpreting Sangamon History: The Illinois State Museum Collection. 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street. Curator Erika Holst shares stories of historic Sangamon County items in the Museum Collection. Free.

Sunday, October 1: SCHS Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk.



Noon to 4 p.m. (last bus leaves at 3:15 p.m.). Free. (See story, page 1.)

Tuesday, October 17: "The Lives and Legacies of Architect E.E. Myers, Builder Ernest F. Gehlmann and Farmer Wellington B. Huffaker," 5:30 p.m. Allient Huffaker Smith takes a close look at three prominent 19th Century Sangamon County residents including Huffaker, her great-great grandfather, whose lives intertwined to make local history in this presentation for members and guests of the Sangamon County Historical Society, Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street. Free. (Details, page 3)

Saturday, October 21: 12th Annual African American History Museum Fundraising Gala, 6 p.m., Northfield Inn and Suites Conference Center, 3280 Northfield Drive, Springfield. Tickets \$65, Students \$32. For information call 1-217-391-6323.

Tuesday, November 14: Leigh Gross Day and Susan Lawrence Dana: Bonded by Photos, Art, and Friendship. 5:30 p.m. Springfield Art Association/Edwards Place Historic Home complex at 700 North Seventh Street, Springfield. A panel of experts explores the friendship and work of nationally-known Springfield poet, artist and photographer Leigh Gross Day and her equally famous life-long friend, Susan Lawrence Dana in a program being held in conjunction with the Springfield Art Association and the Dana Thomas House Foundation. (Details, page 6).

September Meeting to Focus on State Museum's Sangamon Collection

(Continued from page 1)

than 20 years, during which time she has curated more than a dozen exhibitions and written several articles and books including *Wicked Springfield: Crime, Corruption, and Scandal During the Lincoln Era*; *Edwards Place*,

A Springfield Treasure; and *Historic Houses of Lincoln's Illinois*.

Holst holds a Master of Arts degree from the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture at the University of Delaware and a Bachelor of Arts from Illinois Wesleyan University.

Her most recent project, an exhibit "Growing Up X," an exploration of the toys, technology, and cultural touchstones that shaped Generation X opens at the Illinois State Museum-Lockport in northeastern Illinois on November 17.

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Sangamon County Historical Society 2023-2024 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 living at the same address. Be sure to list their full 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 \$ _____

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