



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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Looking Back:

February Program to Eye Story Behind Neighborhood's Change

Edwards Place curator Sarah Adams will be providing a new dimension to what's known about the people and houses in the broader Enos Park neighborhood in which the historic home sits when she shares her research with Sangamon County Historical Society members and their guests at its Tuesday, February 20 monthly program meeting.

The free presentation, open to the public, starts at 5:30 p.m. in the Carnegie Room, City of Springfield's Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

Adams has been researching a period of rapid transition—from the mid 1800s when the area, once on the rural fringe of Springfield, was known for its large homes on huge tracts of land that housed some of Springfield's most promi-

nent and affluent social, business, legal and political leaders like the Edwards—to its eventual urbanization.

Within a few decades, from the mid 1800s to the early 1900s, most of the area's extensive properties were sold off, the large homes demolished to make way for construction of affordable tract housing on small plots for workers flowing into Springfield's rapidly expanding manufacturing and industrial base.

Saved From Destruction

The Edwards Place mansion, between North Fourth and North Fifth Streets, was the exception, today a museum owned and operated by the Springfield Art Association which is headquartered on the site.

(Continued on page 6)



When the Weather Outside Is Frightful, Here's What We Do



December's weather was so balmy, the deep freeze that hit the area last month caught most by surprise. The Sangamon County Historical Society was no exception. Our January 16 program wound up on one of the coldest days so far. But as in the past, it didn't stop an audience full of history buffs from showing up at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library that has the added advantage of underground parking. (See pages 4 and 5). Several years ago, a program, ironically about the History of Local Weather featuring the State's weather chief, drew a packed house despite a heavy snowstorm. Mother Nature also played havoc with

two Oak Ridge Cemetery Walks, thunderstorms prompting cancellation. Our program planners also keep a watchful eye on tornado warnings after two twisters plowed through the city in 2006. If you're concerned about the weather, best bet is to check the zipper of cancellations at the bottom of local television stations, announcements on radio and our websites and of course the recorded announcement on our phone, 1-217-725-1961.

Hopefully we won't need to post a cancellation, but in any event, it will be posted before you grab your coat, boots and car keys.

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**INSIDE
DANA THOMAS
HOUSE**



From the President's Desk

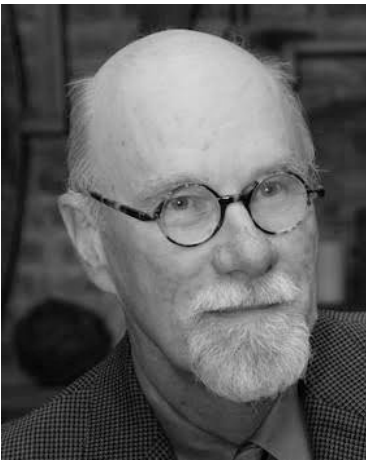


CINDA KLICKNA

More In 2024 Plus a Place for Family Research

Snowy, icy, cold days are upon us, but history. Fortunately, due to the Society's that hasn't stopped brave souls from work to create the Sangamon Valley Collection, sources are possible to provide venturing out.

At our January 16 program, led by Michael Jackson, over 50 people attended.

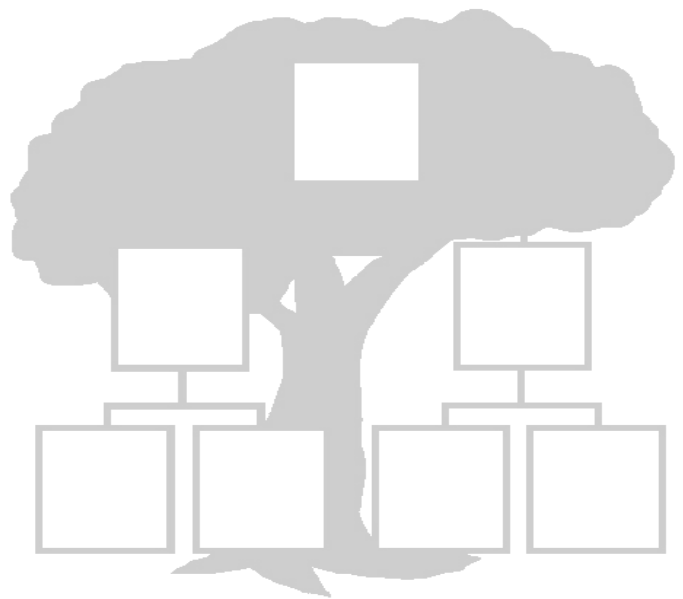


Jackson

Jackson, the project manager for the restoration of the Dana-Thomas State Historic Site, told the story of the six-year effort to restore the house back in the 1980s.

* * *

We look forward to upcoming programs and continue to help many who call or write to our Society. We have had requests to use some of our photos, help in doing genealogy or finding old family



to those who make inquiries.

Mark your calendars for our line up of monthly programs throughout 2024.

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-

Historian Curtis Mann to Share His Close Look at Springfielder's Diary

March will bring another step back in time for Society members and guests when on Tuesday, March 19, an expert in local history shares what he's learned from reading a diary left-behind by a mid-1800s Springfielder.

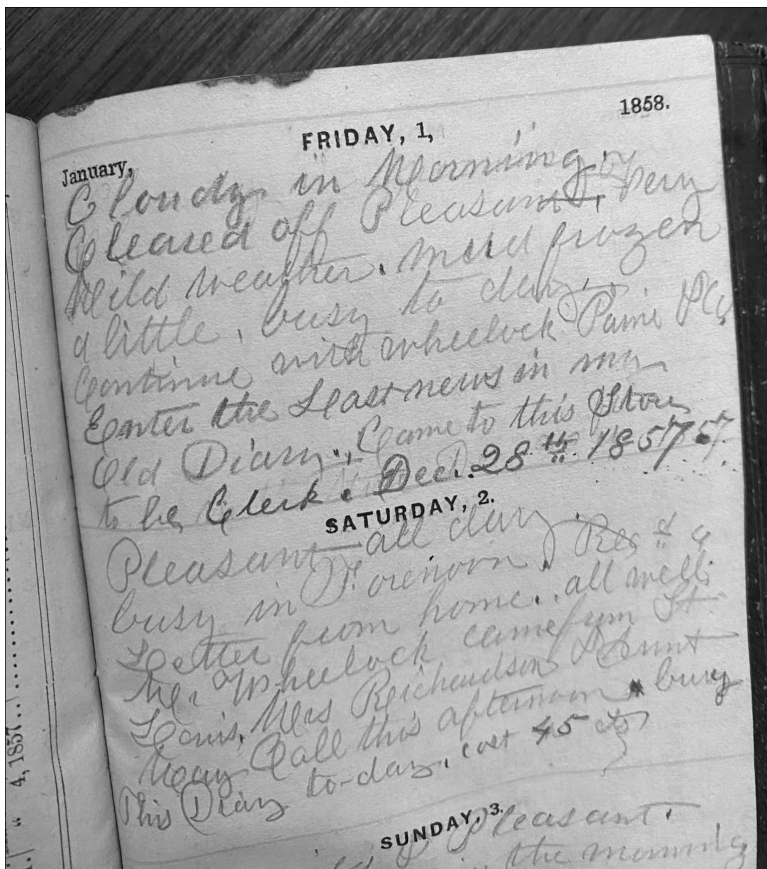
The expert is historian Curtis Mann who recently retired as head of the Sangamon Valley Collection at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library. Mann is also a past president of the Society and the city's historian. His presentation, open to the public, begins at 5:30 p.m. in the Carnegie Room, City of Springfield's Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

What caught Mann's eye was a transcription of a diary kept by Edward W. Morse, a Springfield resident who made note of the daily weather as well as his daily activities in 1856. The transcription was donated to the Library several years ago and later posted on an Illinois history site.

"The diary appears to have been written in pencil according to the digital scan," says Mann and shows, at the minimum that Morse was literate and appears to have had some education.

Morse worked as a store clerk in Wheelock Paine & Company, a book store and bindery on the east side of Springfield's public square. The store eventually changed its name to Paine, Booraem & Company and then finally Booraem & Bacon, the diary shows, Whitlock was not one to mention customer names, says Mann, but he does provide details on family members he visited in Springfield as well as the names of people he called on or with which he had tea.

Mann will be focusing on elements of the diary that provides some context to the owner's everyday activities, views and eventual career as a patent medicine agent who traveled across Illinois. A Portland, Maine native, Whitlock died in 1916 in Mt. Vernon, Illinois.



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*Society Members, Guests Get a Close Look
on the Steps Taken to Save
An Architectural Gem*



Frigid winter weather didn't hamper Sangamon County Historical Society members and guests from turning out on Tuesday, January 16 to see and hear an expert talk about the steps taken to restore Dana Thomas House to its 1910 architectural splendor.

They were not disappointed.

Armed with a powerpoint of Doug Carr photos that tracked its restoration, guest speaker Mike Jackson, one of the nation's most prominent preservation architects, took the audience through the steps taken to restore and preserve the Springfield mansion designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

Springfield-based Jackson, a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, served as the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer in Illinois from 2009 to 2013, and from 1983 to 2013 oversaw and was actively involved in reviewing thousands of

Illinois historic properties undergoing renovation including serving as project manager for the Dana Thomas restoration, a six-year effort.

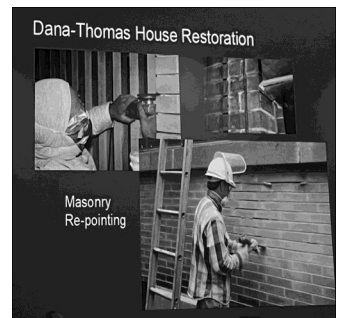
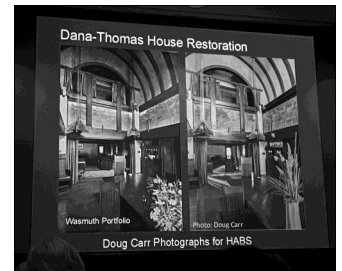
A Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Jackson is an active member of the Association for Preservation Technology and co-chairs its Codes and Standards Technical Committee. He also directs the APT Building Technology Heritage Library, a free online archive of pre-1964 architectural and builder guides, technical manuals, catalogs and building codes.

Active in Upstairs Downtown, the national movement for downtown revitalization through an economics and design training program, he holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Masters in Historic Preservation from Columbia University in New York.



NATURAL RESOURCE; Springfield-based Mike Jackson, one of the nation's most prominent preservation architects, provided a visual tour of the six-year effort to preserve Dana Thomas House, the Springfield mansion designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1910. The house, now a popular tourist attraction, was architecturally ahead of its time as was most if not all of Wright's designs. Program goers braved frigid weather to hear and see the presentation held in the Carnegie Room at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library. Below, Jackson chats with attendees following his presentation. At right, samples of the work done to restore the sprawling home over a six-year period. Springfield photographer Doug Carr captured the transformation in and out throughout the process.

Meeting photos by Ernie Slottag.



A Historic Springfield Neighborhood's Transition to Get a Closer Look

(Continued from page 1)

Erected in 1833, the building underwent several additions and renovations paralleling decades of changes in fashion, occupancy and use. It remains the oldest house in Springfield on its original foundation.

Once Federal Land

Edwards Place sits on what was once an 80 acre tract of federal land acquired by William Kelly—an early Springfield settler—who in 1823 paid \$1.25 an acre for the site.

In June 1832, Kelly sold his acres to Thomas Houghan who constructed a brick story-and-a-half Greek revival dwelling, its footprint still discernible underneath the many subsequent additions to the house.

In June of 1843, Houghan sold his house and surrounding 15 acres to Benjamin S. Edwards for \$4,000. By the mid-1850s, the Edwards family was looking to upgrade their house to bring the exterior up to the latest style as well as refurbish the interior.

Benjamin Edwards was now in his late 30s, a highly successful attorney and an influential man in town. He wanted a home that reflected his social and professional status.

Plans for the remodel were drawn up by the architectural firm Boyington and Wheelock of Chicago, signifying the family's desire for high-style architecture. The Italianate villa they envisioned had a three-story tower in front and a large, circular staircase in the center of the house.

Edwards was the youngest son of Governor Ninian Edwards and brother-in-law of Mary Lincoln's sister Elizabeth. In the mid 1800s, their home became the site of lavish dinner parties, summer picnics and Lincoln era political rallies, the family occupied the home until the early 1900s.

Changing Neighborhood

In the decades that followed, the shift in Springfield's growing population and industrial base played out on the city's north end, sealing the fate of many of the large homes around Edwards Place that were eventually razed

to make way for smaller, single-family house developments on small lots.

The Edwards property was spared by fate and function.

Art Club to the Rescue

The death of Helen Kissick Dodge Edwards in 1909, matriarch of Edwards Place and widow of Benjamin Edwards, marked the end of 60 years of residence by the family.

It also marked the year the Springfield Amateur Art Study Club was formed by eight Springfield women caught up in the spirit of a broader movement of the era that believed that all of society could be elevated through exposure to and understanding of the arts.

Initially the club met at the home of one of its members, but by 1913, had grown to nearly 100 people and needed a permanent place to meet and work. To that end, Elizabeth Capps, co-founder of the club, approached Helen Edward's daughter, Alice Edwards Ferguson, seeking permission to rent two rooms of Edwards Place for club use.

Alice countered by offering the entire mansion to the art club as classroom, gallery, and meeting space.

According to Springfield Art Association records, on September 30, 1913, the Springfield Art Club was incorporated, securing a charter from the State of Illinois. Over the next

three months Edwards Place was renovated and redecorated in preparation for the 1914 exhibition of famed impressionist artist C. Arnold Slade's work.

Slade was known for his brilliantly colored landscapes, genre scenes, and biblical depictions.

The opening was attended by an estimated 1,000 people. In aspiring to be to Springfield what the Art Institute is to Chicago, in many ways, it succeeded: many of the leading names in American art could be found in the lectures and exhibitions offered by the Art Association in its early days. It changed its name to the Springfield Art Association in 1922. During that time Edwards Place was used as an art school and gallery until the 1940s. After the 1937 construction of a "fire proof" gallery was added on the west side of the house, plans were laid to restore the parlors of Edwards Place to a 19th century appearance. Meanwhile, the SAA campus continued to expand.

In the 1949, the Condell Studio of Art was completed and classes moved out of Edwards Place. An addition was made to the Condell Studio in 1963 to accommodate the popular ceramics classes. The ceramics lab was moved to an annex in 1991 and the metals lab was added in its place. The gallery was expanded to the current size in 1968.

A Generous Gift That Continues to Enrich Springfield's Community

It was through the generosity of Alice Edwards Ferguson, Helen Edward's daughter, that Springfield today has both a restored historic site and an arts complex.

It could have easily turned out differently.

The first child to born at Edwards Place in 1844, when Alice turned 20, she married banker Benjamin Ferguson. Rather than move out on their own, the newlywed couple decided to move in with her parents. They stayed for 19 years.

Their decision to live in the home was a matter of personal preference rather than necessity, historians say. Her husband was working his way up through Springfield Marine Bank at the same time operating a successful glass and china business. They had the means to have their own house, just not the desire.

When the couple finally moved out, they moved into a house they built right next door, one with everything a young Victorian could want including Tiffany windows and elephant hide wallpaper. Benjamin died from a heart attack while at his desk at the bank in 1903 at age of 67. Alice lived until 1921 and is buried at Oak Ridge. Their mansion was torn down in 1997.



NEIGHBORS: Alice Edwards Ferguson and her husband built a home next door to her parents. It was torn down in 1997.

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.

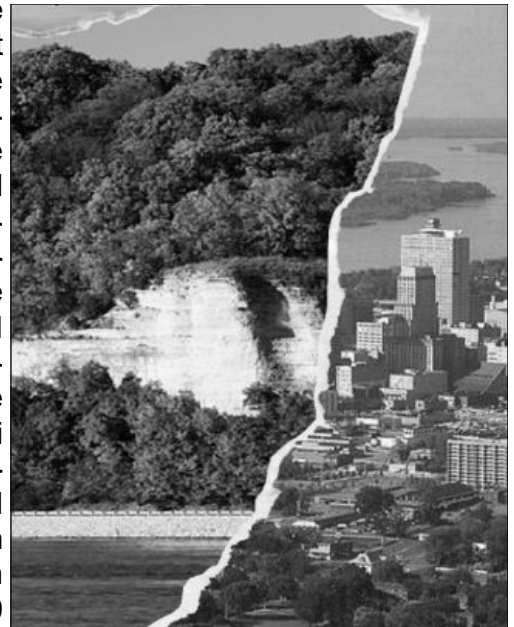
Tuesday, February 20: Meet the Neighbors and by that we mean the well-heeled neighbors and house staff of the Benjamin Edwards family that in the mid-1850s bought and revamped a home on what is now 700 Edwards Place to become a show-place and destination for Springfield's elite. Today it's a restored historic house owned and operated by the Springfield Art Association. Its curator, Sarah Adams, takes a closer-look at some of the neighbors and staff who added to the area's aura when she speaks to members of the Sangamon County Historical Society and their guests gathered at the Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield. Free and open to the public. **Time:** 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 19: The Weather and a Little More: The 1858 Diary of Edward W. Morse. Back in the days when jotting something down required paper, pencil or pen in hand, you could almost guarantee it might become a somewhat permanent record as opposed to today when that message--tapped on a PC or cell phone, can vanish in a keystroke. The old-fashioned approach gets a whole new dimension at the hands of historian Curtis Mann when he talks about the contents of an 1858 diary penned by a Springfielder who religiously recorded not only the daily weather but so much more. Don't miss this slice of life report on what Mann learned when he speaks to Sangamon County Historical Society members and guests in a program in the Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield. It's free and open to the public. **Time:** 5:30 p.m.

Friday, March 29 Victorian Game Night at Edwards Place This new fun event and Historic Edwards Place fundraiser will feature six stations of Victorian era card and dice games for people to learn and play. Some will be familiar to the modern person, like draw poker and a version of blackjack,

and some may be entirely new, like Hazard and Whist. Prizes will be given to the top players! Tickets, at \$65 per person, include heavy hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine, and a signature cocktail, and the program. **Time:** 6:30 p.m.-10 p.m. Edwards Place is located at 700 North Fourth Street. For information, call 1-217-523-2631.\

April 1- April 4: Rivers and Rights: Illinois State Museum sponsored Illinois Riverbend to Memphis Bus Tour. Registration is now underway for this four day, three night tour that explores the Illinois connection to the American Civil Rights Movement while taking in the towns and natural landscape that line the Mississippi River. For registration and fee information (ranging from \$877 to \$999 covering hotel and transportation costs) call 217-524-4222.



Saturday, April 13: Let's Be Frank, Perfectly Frank: That's the title of a presentation to be given by nationally prominent Frank Lloyd Wright expert and master storyteller Tim Totten when he speaks at a fundraising dinner sponsored by the Dana-Thomas House Foundation. Tickets for the event, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Inn at 853 in Springfield, are \$100 per person. For reservations and information call 217-782-6776.

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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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