



Historico

The newsletter of the Sangamon County Historical Society
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December, 2008/January, 2009

Holiday Party 6 PM at Temple B'rith Sholom December 16



On December 16 at 6 pm the Society will meet at Temple B'rith Sholom, 1004 South Fourth Street, to celebrate the holiday season. Rabbi Michael Datz will

share details of the history of the congregation which is celebrating its 150th anniversary. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. A members-only event, the cost is \$10 per person. For reservations, submit the form on page 3 by December 10. Easy parking is available off Fourth Street on the south side of the handicapped accessible Temple.

The "Springfield Hebrew Congregation," the oldest Jewish congregation in Central Illinois, was founded in 1858. Services were originally conducted in rented quarters. On Sept. 10, 1876, the first Jewish house of worship in Springfield was dedicated on property located on North Fifth Street. In 1917 the building on the present site was completed and dedicated, a new charter was obtained, and the official name of the congregation became Temple B'rith Sholom.

Cemetery Walk Revisited Online

At the November SCHS program, Springfield High School students Krystal McDonald and Shelby Heimerichs with their teacher Danielle Fox described their newly designed web page which retraces the 2008 Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk. Designed for young children, the page allows the viewer to see each character and read his or her testimony with a mouse click. The address of the Webmaster Class project is:

www.shs.springfield.k12.il.us/ishs_development/projects/walkthrough/index.html



Meet Nellie Grant at Lincoln Library 7 PM January 20

Nellie, the only daughter of Ulysses S. Grant, grew up during the Civil War actually watching some of her father's battles. After he became president, she was married in an elaborate White House wedding. She became an international celebrity who was admired for her beauty, grace, children, and charity. So how is it that she now rests in Oak Ridge Cemetery close to Lincoln? And how is it that the Skinner House in tiny Griggsville, Illinois, has a display of her photo albums, medals, inscribed books, souvenirs from her parents, and other memorabilia?

Gary Vitale, past SCHS board member and a member of the faculty at Springfield College/Benedictine University, was curious about Nellie and what became of her. He will be prepared to answer these questions and others at the January 20, 2009, program meeting in the Carnegie Room at Lincoln Library. His presentation, entitled "A Simple American Girl: How a White House Bride Ended Up in Springfield, Illinois, and Some of Her Mementos in Tiny Griggsville," will include projected photographs and graphic displays as well as a lecture. GV

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Note from Nancy

You will note on page four that Dave Scott will be heading up a Long Range Planning Committee. Times, interests, and focus change, and we felt it was time to review what we are doing and see if that is what we think we would like to be doing in the future!

We are a very different organization now than our originators imagined. They carefully wrote the Constitution to ensure that at least once a year we included the public in something that we did. As time has evolved, all of our meetings are open to the public with the exception of our holiday party and those meetings requiring very limited access.

While early in our existence there was a great deal of member activity with several publications, carefully structured tours, and special events such as the Long Nine Anniversary Dinner which commemorated the designation of Springfield as the state capital 125 years before. Today we seem to be a much more passive membership content to have someone simply address us. This may or may not be a desirable pattern for the future. A younger membership pool might be more interested in activities such as geo-caching or other forms of approaching history. It seems the right time for this review as our 50th anniversary is coming up in just a few years.

Ideally I would love to see a couple of past officers on the committee, a couple of long time members, a couple of members under 50, and a couple of just concerned members. If you fit any of those categories, please consider joining the committee. In the meantime we hope to see you at the holiday party to honor the 150th anniversary of Temple B'rith Sholom. It should not only be fun but an interesting and educational experience!

Happy Holidays, *Nancy*

November Program Featured Old Man, Old Books, Old Stories



John Paul and Mary Frances Lavin

John Paul's lecture to the members of the Society on November 18 lived up to its title in almost every respect. He indeed told many old stories about many old books, but he certainly did not present himself as an old man. On the contrary, John filled his remarks with large quantities of self-deprecating humor and wit, and he combined these charming traits with his limitless knowledge of the book business he has been involved in for the past thirty years.

John began by giving the audience several basic guidelines for determining the value of an old book. He admitted that he could not ascertain the value of every book but

did know when a book was likely to be rare. He told of the huge price variations for books listed on the various Internet sites and warned that a higher priced book did not always represent a better value. John then traced the history of the book from the incunabula of the 1400's to the modern day hardback with the colorful dust jacket. He also described the development of paper from the rag paper of the early period to the use of wood pulp for paper in modern times.

Stressing the importance of the dust jacket, John said the dust jack represents 50% to 80% of the value of a modern book. He also discussed the fact that a book with an author inscription is less valuable than a book with just an author signature. According to him a good mathematical formula for determining the value of a book is rarity times demand.

John spent the remainder of the evening determining the value of the many books that the members of the audience brought with them. The members came away from the program with a renewed interest in and appreciation for the books and memories of reading that we all cherish as educated adults. CV

**Board Meeting
(No December Meeting)
January 14, 2009, 5 PM
Lincoln Library Carnegie
Room South**

OFFICERS

President
Nancy L. Chapin
Vice President
David Scott
Past President
Carolyn Moore
Secretary
Curtis Mann
Treasurer
John Huther

Directors to 2009

R-Lou Barker
Dan Buck
Susan Hammond
Tim Krell
Sarah H. Thomas

Directors to 2010

Elaine Birtch
Kim Efird
Carol Schwend Smith
Sue Wall
Martha Wolters

Directors to 2011

Jack Alexander
Connie Locher Bussard
Sally Cadagin
Jack Navins
Jane Vetter

Honorary Director

William Hughes
Diller, Jr.

HISTORICO CONTRIBUTORS

David Brady
Charles Chapin
Nancy Chapin
John Huther
David Scott
Gary Vitale
Carl Volkmann
Roberta Volkmann

WEBMASTER

Terry Cameron



SCHS Winter Programs at a Glance

December 16, 2008	Holiday Party	6 pm Temple B'rith Sholom
January 20, 2009	"A Simple American Girl: How a White House Bride Ended Up in Springfield, Illinois, and Some of Her Mementoes in Tiny Griggsville" presented by Gary Vitale	7 pm Lincoln Library Carnegie Room North
February 17, 2009	Preview of new introductory film at Lincoln's Home and performance by Robert Davis as Jamieson Jenkins	7 pm Lincoln Visitor's Center
March 7, 2009	Tour of architecture and art in Willard Ice Building	10 am Willard Ice Building; members only; reservations required
March 17, 2009	"Breweries in Sangamon County" presented by Curtis Mann	7 pm Lincoln Library Carnegie Room North



Stocking Stuffers for the History Buff

Still holiday shopping? Consider ordering gifts from the SCHS. Packets of note cards with photos of downtown Springfield in the 1930's are available for \$5.00 each or two for \$8.00. A DVD of the ninth annual cemetery walk (2005) can be purchased for \$5.00.

Booklets to suit a variety of interests have been published by the Society. *Summer of Rage* by James Krohe, Jr is of special interest during this year of commemoration of the 1908 Race Riots. Other booklets with such topics as coal mining to the Illinois Watch Company to the Ursuline Sisters are all available for \$3.00 for members and \$4.00 for non-members.

Why not buy a gift membership to the SCHS for that special friend? Membership holiday gift cards are available from the SCHS office.

If you are searching for a unique gift for the history buff who has everything, consider a copy of *Prairie of Promise* by Edward Russo. Autographed by the author, the book is available for \$75.00 or \$60.00 for members.

To order a gift or to obtain a complete list of publications, call the SCHS office at 522-2500.

Holiday Party-Temple B'rith Sholom December 16, 6 PM

Please make reservations for _____ guest(s) at \$10 each. Total enclosed _____

Name _____

Make check payable to: The Sangamon County Historical Society
And mail to: 308 East Adams Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Deadline December 10

DONATIONS

Mark & Jackie Hansen (In Memory of Dr. Floyd Barringer)
 Robert Lanphier
 Paul Schanbacher

MEMBERSHIPS

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP:
 Citizens for Davlin
 E. George Myers
NEW MEMBERS:
 Norma Brantley
 Helen E. Brooks
 Aislin S. Nickey
 Martine Paludan

Society Long Range Planning Committee Forming

Society President Nancy Chapin announced the formation of a Long Range Planning Committee at the Board meeting on November 12. She appointed Society Vice-President David Scott as the Chairman of the Committee.

We seek volunteers for the Committee which will recommend directions for the Society in the coming years from current Board members, previous Board members and officers as well as other members. Those interested should get in contact with Nancy (483-2376 or nchapin@springnet1.com) or David (787-5729 or dwscott17@comcast.net).



Divernon is geographically located on a transportation corridor now called the Edwards Trace between points of early civilization. It was this ancient trail that brought the Anglo-Americans into central Illinois. The name of this corridor has changed over the years, but Divernon has been a point of entry from the South into Sangamon County for hundreds of years.

Divernon owes as much to its existence to geology as geography. Agriculture is still supreme in this rural setting of the township due to the rich soils. With this richness and the vision of men like D. L. Wing and C. G. Brown, Divernon was born as a village in 1886 on the railroad nicknamed the Wing Road. It would exist for a short time as an agricultural community caring for the needs of the local farmer.

With the opening in 1900 of Madison Coal Company # 6 mine, coal became the economic machine. Divernon became a boomtown. The village entered the industrial age. The mine employed over 800 men at its peak, and the village reached a population of nearly 3,000. All of this energy and money made Divernon a very lively place to live. Twelve taverns, eight grocery stores, two bakeries, confectioneries, dry goods, sporting goods, an opera house, a theater, and a pool hall with indoor roller skating were a few of many places where residents spent their time and money. The ethic for Divernon during the boom was work hard and play hard.

This all came to an abrupt stop in June of 1925 when old #6 closed. Almost overnight Divernon lost two-thirds of its population. People looked to Springfield for employment, and so began Divernon's present state as a bedroom community. Its citizens looked inward to themselves as they passed through the hard times of the mine closing and the Great Depression. This imbedded a great sense of loyalty for their community among those who survived. Today with a population of

around 1200, Divernon is a place where its citizens enjoy a relaxed quiet setting in which their children can grow. In this the 21st century, 29,800 vehicles travel daily through Divernon Township on Interstate 55 this modern version of the ancient trail.
 DB

John Huther Seeks Washington Park Memories

I am writing a Washington Park history for the SCHS publication series. I have read Park Board minutes and news articles to determine when specific improvements and changes were undertaken and how the park has been used through the years. But I would also like to include a section on people's recollections. Nancy and Charles Chapin, for example, remember horseback riding in the park. Does anyone remember other things such as: Fences around park borders? Boating in the park? Playing baseball or other games? Attending outdoor concerts or theater? Dancing in the Pavilion? Drinking water from the old iron spring? Where two adjoining wading pools were located? Where a refreshment stand was located? What the 1930s, 40s, 50s, or 60s were like in the park?

If you have recollections of things like this or other events, I would like to hear of them. My email is huther@global.net. My phone number is 787-0323. JH

HOLIDAY GREETINGS TO ALL!



The Story(s) of the Proud Raven Totem Pole

When Roberta Volkmann led thirty Society members on a tour of the Statehouse statuary in October, she related the story that was published in the State Journal Register on August 26, 1983, of the origin of the Proud Raven Totem Pole outside the Illinois State Museum. It read:

“[Tlingit Indians on Tongass Island, Alaska] often erected poles to mark special events.....So it was with the Proud Raven pole. Yahl-jeeyi, a Tlingit chief of the Raven clan, was very proud of the fact that one of his family had been the first in the area to see a white man, probably an explorer or a trader. In about the year 1883 Yahl-jeeji commissioned a carver, Thleda, to make a totem pole commemorating the event. It was to have the clan emblem, the raven, at the bottom and a white man at the top.

The carver needed a model for the white man. Someone in the village produced a picture which had been given to him by the commanding officer of the Army Post on Tongass Island from 1868 to 1870. There is little doubt that this picture was one of Abraham Lincoln.

To preserve the emblems of the Proud Raven pole, an Indian carver in the 1930s made three reproductions. The pole standing [in front of the Museum] is a fiberglass cast of one of those reproductions which was presented to the Museum in 1945. The carved sections are on display on the second floor.”

Charles Chapin, however, recalled that his father, Roger E. Chapin, told a different story about the origin of the totem pole. In his weekly letters written to his sons who were serving in World War II, the senior Chapin described the involvement of his good friend and State Historian Jay Monaghan in the acquisition of the Proud Raven totem pole. Following are excerpts from two of those letters:

May 7, 1945:

“Jay Monaghan, who published the book ‘Diplomat in Carpet Slippers’ which I mentioned to you last week, left Saturday



night for the Aleutian Islands to acquire from an Indian tribe a 150 foot totem pole with a likeness of Abraham Lincoln carved on it. The ancestors of this tribe had been captured and taken into slavery by another Indian tribe at the time of the Civil War. Shortly after the capture, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation and when the captors learned about it they thought it applied to their Indian slaves and promptly released them. In memory of their liberation they erected this totem pole and the carving on it was the first statue to be erected to Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Monaghan will get the details of the story on his trip and if he succeeds in bringing the trophy home with him I will report on it later to you. “

October 1, 1945

“The totem pole with the statue of Lincoln on top arrived some time ago and last week was formally unveiled in the Hall of Flags in the Centennial Building. Sunday I took Grandmother down to see it. Originally it was a 46 foot pole. The lower 8 feet were devoted to the usual totem pole carvings, the top 8 feet is said to be a statue of Lincoln. The shaft between was plain. In the Aleutians where the pole came from it was a corner post to a building which from the picture must have been an Indian night club or something on that order. Here in the Centennial Building they have cut off the top and bottom sections, displaying each in a glass cage. The center part has probably been sold to the telephone people. The statue of Lincoln looks like he had had Indian ancestors on both sides. In fact, he looks like old Chief

Rainwater himself-masquerading as Lincoln. The statue has a closer resemblance, however, than the Amish fakir I told you about last week.”

The plaque on the wall outside the Museum adds more detail to the Proud Raven story. It reads:

“Replica of the 51 foot tall Proud Raven commemorative pole erected in the mid 1880s in a Tlingit Indian village on Tongass Island, Alaska. Although the original pole deteriorated, the Tlingit had several copies carved. One of these, acquired through the efforts of W. C. Hurst and Jay Monaghan was presented to the Illinois State Museum by the Mid-Day Luncheon Club of Springfield in 1945. The fiberglass replica erected at the entrance to the Museum in 1966 is an exact copy of the original pole. The figure at the top was carved after a photograph of Abraham Lincoln. The figures at the base of the pole are a bear’s head and the winged figure of the Proud Raven and his son.”

The top and bottom sections of the donated pole referred to by Roger Chapin remain in the collection of the Illinois State Museum.

Sangamon County Genealogical Society Closing

On behalf of the Sangamon County Genealogical Society Board, President David Dixon announced that after 40 years, the Society will close on December 31, 2008. All of their publications will be sold at half price until December 15, 2008, at which time the Decatur Genealogical Society will begin selling the remaining publications. The research materials in the Society’s headquarters have been divided among the various libraries in Sangamon County. Contact the Society at PO Box 1829, Springfield, Illinois 62705-1829 or Dbutton2@aol.com.

Sangamon County Historical Society
308 E. Adams Street
Springfield IL 62701



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DECEMBER and JANUARY

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

12-5	Evening candlelight tours of decorated Iles House	6 to 8:30 pm Elijah Iles House
12-7	Lincoln Park Historic Tour; featuring Ursuline Sisters' Chapel and five homes; proceeds benefit Springfield Parks Foundation's Lincoln Park lagoon restoration	12 to 5 pm six area locations; ticket information-725-3228 or www.lpnaspringfield.org
	Holiday Celebration 1850's Style with community carol sing	7 pm First Presbyterian Church
12-12	Evening candlelight tours of decorated Iles House	6 to 8:30 pm Elijah Iles House
12-13	Christmas at the Lindsay House-featuring Kevin Purcell, Virginia Hosking, and the Teaching Academy of Lanphier High School	10 am to 4 pm Vachel Lindsay House
	Evening candlelight tours of decorated Iles House	6 to 8:30 pm Elijah Iles House
12-16	SCHS Holiday Party (see page 1)	6 pm Temple B'rith Sholom
12-31	1850's Holiday Ball	7 to 10 pm Old State Capitol
1-20	SCHS monthly program: Nellie Grant by Gary Vitale (see page 1)	7 pm Lincoln Library Carnegie Room
1-31	Early Lincoln Birthday Celebration with Jay Unger and Molly Mason, the 10 th Cavalry Band , and Springfield International Folk Dancers	8 pm Sangamon Auditorium; tickets 206-6160 or www.uis.edu/sangamonauditorium/onstage .