



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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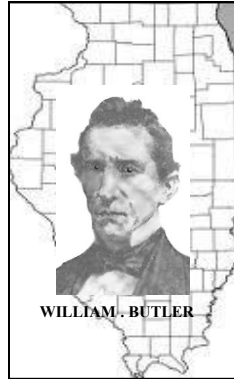
MARCH 2011

Historian to Share Findings March 15 on Butler Letters That May Provide Light on a Political Power Broker With Lincoln Ties

If William Butler doesn't instantly pop up on your list of famous Springfielders, you're not alone. Once one of the most prominent power brokers here, Butler's role in shaping Illinois and in propelling Lincoln into the presidency has been obscured by time, his political legacy left mainly for scholars to research.

But that could change on Tuesday, March 15, when James M. Cornelius, curator of the Lincoln Collection at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Li-

brary, shares new findings with the Society about Butler, information culled from a recently discovered cache of Butler's personal papers, some as late as the Civil War. The Cornelius presentation will be held at Springfield's Lincoln Library, 326 S. Seventh Street, at 7 p.m.



The program is free and open to the public.

Born in Adair County, Kentucky in 1797, Butler made his mark on history early, when at age 15, riding horseback, he successfully delivered vital messages from the Governor of Kentucky to General William Henry Harrison during the War of 1812.

After the war, he held several different jobs including working in an iron foundry in Tennessee

(Continued on page 7)

From the President's Podium

Grants to Promote Teaching, Learning History



DAVID W. SCOTT

At its February meeting, the Sangamon County Historical Society Board approved grants under its Projects Awards Program to five middle school teachers in the county. The purpose of the grants is "to promote a further interest in the wonderful history of Springfield and the area of Sangamon County." The projects that were funded and the teachers and their schools receiving the grants are found in an article on page 5.

This year there were five applications and last year, the first year such grants were offered, only two. All were funded. At this time the Board was willing to fund several of these projects despite the

fact that they were not related to history of our locality; rather, they broadly were to support the social sciences.

Elaine Birtch, a recent Society board member, and Mary Loken, an experienced Springfield school administrator, comprise the Projects Awards Committee. They have worked hard both years to encourage applications from throughout the county. Both, along with members of the Board, are interested in continuing this program of supporting the teaching and learning of history, and with perhaps some expansion to include the social sciences in general. Given

(Continued on page 4)

Also In This Issue:



SPRINGFIELD'S LINCOLN MAGNET SCHOOL was one of four area middle schools that will be receiving grants from the Society to support history education. See story, page 5.



IT'S UNANIMOUS: In an unanimous vote last month, members of the Society voted to change membership categories. More details on page 6.



STATEHOUSE SECRETS: February speaker and Statehouse art expert Mark Sorensen shows a photo of an Italian mural that has a near counterpart in the Capitol. Page 6.

No Record Yet.....3
Lincoln and God.....3

Yale Professor to Speak April 26

Prominent Historian John Mack Faragher to Help Mark Society's 50th Anniversary

An event marking the 50th anniversary of the Society's founding will be held on Tuesday, April 26: a reception for one of the nation's most prominent historians, John Mack Faragher.

This reception for Society members will start at 5:30 p.m. in the Public Affairs Center's private dining room on the University of Illinois-Springfield campus.

Dr. Faragher, director of the Howard R. Lamar Center for the Study of Frontiers and Borders at Yale University will give a public lecture at UIS's Brookens Auditorium at 7 p.m. The Brookens Auditorium is a short walk down a corridor connected to the reception area.

Dr. Faragher's connection to the Society and Sangamon County is his book, *Sugar Creek* (Yale University Press, 1986) that describes the settlement of southern Sangamon County from near Virden north along the creek to what is now Lake Springfield.



His other books include *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (1979); *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* (1992); *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (2000), with Robert V. Hine; *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (2005); and *Frontiers: A Short History of the American West* (2007), with Robert V. Hine.

Born in Phoenix, Arizona and raised in southern California, he attended the University of California, Riverside (B.A., 1967), and did social work, before coming to Yale (Ph.D., 1977). After 15 years as a professor at Mount Holyoke College he returned to Yale in 1993. He currently serves on the Executive Board of the Society of American Historians; the Editorial Board of the *Pacific Historical Review*, and the Advisory Board of the Autry National Center of the American West.



Historico, published 10 times a year, is the monthly bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Back issues are available on-line in PDF format at our website, www.sancohis.org. Updates, late-breaking news, features, and more are regularly posted on our website.

Event updates also can be found on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com). Log in and search for *Sangamon County Historical Society*.

Annual Membership dues are:

Individuals: \$17.50, Family: \$25, Sustaining: \$50
Individual Life Membership, one-time payment of \$250
Family Life Member, one-time payment of \$400.

For a membership form and/or additional information, contact the Society at 525-1961 or write to us at P.O. Box 1834, Springfield, IL 62705 or schsoffice@gmail.com.

Still Counting and Not Quite Out

The February 11 attempt to break the Guinness World Record for persons simultaneously reading aloud from the same document—in this case the 150th anniversary of Lincoln’s Farewell Address in Springfield—fell short of its mark, a preliminary count shows. The record for that category is 223,363 at 909 venues across the country which was set in 2006 when school children read a passage from *Charlotte’s Web*. As of late February, *The State Journal-Register*, whose parent company, Gatehouse Media, was one of the sponsors of the February 11 event, received verification of about 13,000 individuals from 13 states and 105 sites, but more verifications are anticipated. In addition to Gatehouse, the read-in was co-sponsored by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

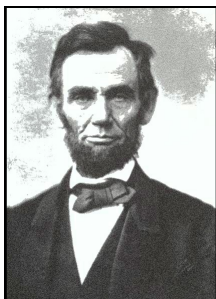


“Flight” About to Land at Museum

There’s still time to catch “*Flight*,” a new play that will touch down on the stage of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum’s Union Theater in Springfield starting March 17. The play will give audiences a chance to celebrate the African-American oral tradition of storytelling as it passed from generation to generation. And that’s what playwright Charlayne Woodard had in mind when she wrote the multi-character drama about a young mother living on a Georgia plantation in 1858. Suddenly sold, she leaves behind her husband and their five year-old son. Through a magical evening of storytelling, music, and dance, the enslaved community comes together, not only to comfort the father and son, but to heal and strengthen themselves. “*Flight*” will be performed at the Union Theater on Thursday, March 17 through Saturday, March 19, 7:30 p.m. and on Thursday, March 24 to Saturday, March 26 at 7:30 p.m. with a performance on Sunday, March 27 at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$12 general admission, \$10 for museum members. For more information, see www.alplm.org.

“Lincoln and God” to be Focus of Luncheon Speech

Civil War historian Robert J. Miller will speak on “*Lincoln and God, Religion and the 16th President*” at Noon on April 16 at a luncheon at the President Abraham Lincoln



Hotel in Springfield. His talk will follow the Union Veterans of the Civil War and the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States 55th annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony—the Abraham Lincoln Death Day Observance commemorating the 146th anniversary of President Lincoln’s death—at Oakridge Cemetery. Representatives from around the country will converge on the Lincoln Tomb site at 10 a.m. for a wreath presentation ceremony, followed at Noon by the luncheon. Father Miller has taught Church History in the Deacon & Lay Ministry Formation programs of the Chicago Archdiocese. From 2003-2006, he held official positions in the Civil War Round Table of Chicago culminating

in helping lead two battlefield tours, and becoming the group’s president in 2005-06. From January – June 2006, he took a sabbatical at Notre Dame University, taking courses in spirituality and, fulfilling a long-held dream, completed his sixth book, entitled “*Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the American Civil War*.” For more information and tickets, call 636-274-4567 or contact Robert Pretrovic at rpetro7776@aol.com.

MARCH 2011 DONOR REPORT

The Society appreciates and thanks the following who have made donations this month:

DONATIONS:

Phyllis Brissenden in honor of Charles Chapin’s 90th birthday
Susan and Charles Hammond in honor of Charles Chapin’s 90th birthday



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BOARD MEETINGS

2nd Wednesday, Lincoln Library, 5 p.m.

April 13, May 11, June 8

Support for History Education In Line With Society's Goals

(Continued from page 1)

the upward trend in applications and greater awareness of these grants, there is optimism that the number of applications will increase.

When I am in a discussion of what the Society might do that it is not now doing, or not doing much, getting more involved in education almost always comes up. That the Society ought to have such involvement is reflected in the constitution approved upon formation of the Society in 1961. The constitu-

tion created six standing committees; one of which was an education committee, charges with being "responsible for work with schools and children". Later lists of committees in the Society's newsletter did not include an education committee. Other matters proved to be of higher priority and during the founding years of the Society - which I define as the decade of the 1960s - involvement with schools and students was very sporadic. The society's newsletter of April 1963 announced an essay contest on some facet of local history, stating that "pictures of the pioneers, their homes and related scenes are encouraged". A Rochester student won first place for an essay on the Power farm.

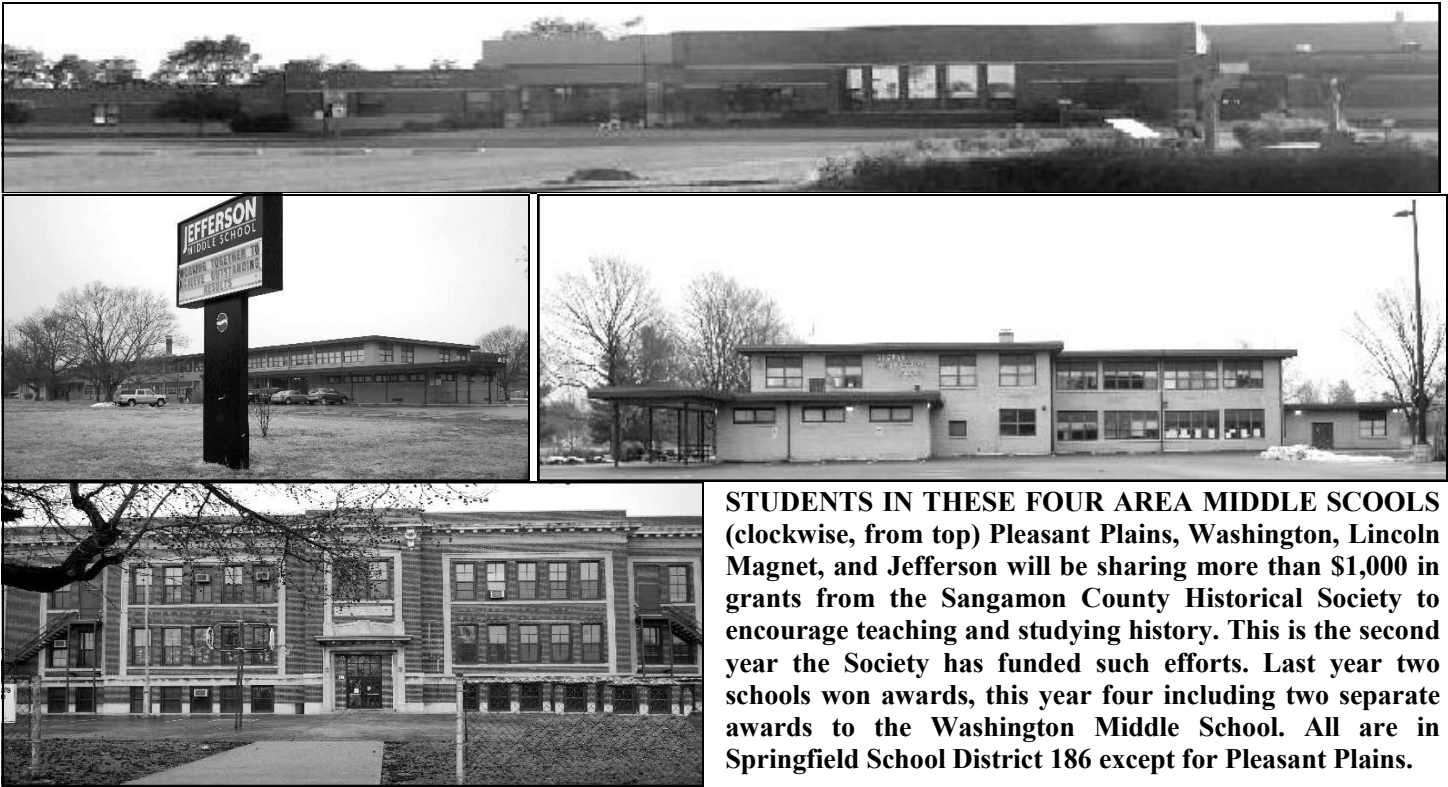
About the same time, under the leadership of Dr. Floyd Barringer, high schools in the county were invited to get students to participate in a project to record the graves of the old cemeteries "before they are lost forever." Barringer had noted that in other counties, students had become involved in such projects. We need a similar approach today; that is, to find out what other counties are doing in regard to education.

Yet there are many constraints in doing more to promote the teaching and learning of local history. Our Society does not have a museum. A major involvement with schools for many local societies is a class visit to the county museum. Teachers are busy and have many pressures on their time. Although history remains a required subject in the public schools, reading, math, writing and science are state and national priorities for testing. Still there are a variety of specialized requirements that would lend themselves to projects fundable by the Society. (See Illinois State Board of Education *Social Science Mandates*). Perhaps some of our publications could be revised and used for history lessons or a member who is a teacher could provide advice on developing lesson plans and other materials teachers could fit into their social science curricula.

I encourage members with ideas about how the Society can get more involved with history education in the schools to write me at the Society office, Box 1834, Springfield, 62705 or e-mail me at <schs1961@gmail.com>

David





STUDENTS IN THESE FOUR AREA MIDDLE SCHOOLS (clockwise, from top) Pleasant Plains, Washington, Lincoln Magnet, and Jefferson will be sharing more than \$1,000 in grants from the Sangamon County Historical Society to encourage teaching and studying history. This is the second year the Society has funded such efforts. Last year two schools won awards, this year four including two separate awards to the Washington Middle School. All are in Springfield School District 186 except for Pleasant Plains.

Society Awards Over \$1,000 to Encourage, Expand History Teaching and Learning

Four area middle schools will share more than \$1,000 in grants from the Sangamon County Historical Society for a variety of projects designed to expand and improve teaching history.

The awards will be presented to representatives of each school at a ceremony to be held on Tuesday, March 15 as part of the Society's regular program meeting at the city's Lincoln Library, 326 S. Seventh Street, Springfield. The meeting starts at 7 p.m.

Here's a quick look at the winning projects:

SCHOOL: *Lincoln Magnet Middle School*, Springfield.

GRANT: \$250

HOW THE MONEY WILL BE

USED: Funds will help build a research library to aid students working on five-to seven page entries for the Illinois History Fair. The students will also be creating a display board, pod-

cast, or movie in conjunction with their project.

TEACHER: Jodi Mitts.

SCHOOL: *Pleasant Plains Middle School*, Pleasant Plains.

GRANT: \$250

HOW THE MONEY WILL BE

USED: To pay for printing material used for reference and guides in conjunction with sixth grade curriculum units focusing on Clayville.

TEACHER: Debbie Green

SCHOOL: *Jefferson Middle School*, Springfield.

GRANT: \$279.79

HOW THE MONEY WILL BE

USED: For purchase of materials to engage students in simulations, reader's theaters, games and books that will promote fluent readers while discovering facts of history.

TEACHER: Teresa Huffman.

SCHOOL: *Washington Middle School*, Springfield.

GRANT: \$220.

HOW THE MONEY WILL BE

USED: Purchase 10 Opposing View Points books to be used as part of a program in which students complete a research paper and then engage in classroom debate to improve critical thinking and writing skills.

TEACHER: Gail Spengler Neely

SCHOOL: *Washington Middle School*, Springfield

GRANT: \$202

HOW THE MONEY WILL BE

USED: To purchase 15 Research Paper Handbooks to show students how to write and complete a research paper on the social issue of their choice.

TEACHER: Emily Hunsley



HOT TOPICS: Society members and guests started the new year with a little music when music historian R. Todd Cranson (left, chatting with audience members) discussed Civil War music and more at the January 18 program meeting, offering recorded samples laced with period insights. Cranson is director of the UIS Springfield band and chamber orchestra and artistic director of the Vintage Brass Band of Springfield. Last month, State Historical Society president Mark Sorensen (right), a former Illinois State Archives assistant director, shows audience members a photo of a historic Turin, Italy enclosed shopping mall decorated with a fresco nearly identical to a one in the Capitol. Sorensen took members on a slide tour of statehouse art works and renovations. *Donna Catlin photos.*

Members Give Nod to Membership Category Changes

In a unanimous vote on February 15, members of the Society approved a Constitutional change in the organization's membership categories. As a result, starting in June there will be five classes of membership:

Household Member (combining the current individual and family membership).

Sustaining Household Member – a person or persons who make a donation in an amount determined by the board in addition to the household membership dues.

Life Household Membership – Life membership fee paid in one payment.

Not-for-profit Organization

Corporations

The latter two, non-for profit organizations and corporate members, are new categories.

The proposal, recommended by the Society's membership committee and modified by the board, was announced January 18 and described in detail in the February edition of *Historico*. At the vote at Iles House held prior to the Society's monthly program meeting, there were no objections or discussion on the amendment.



REVIEWING THE PROPOSAL: President David Scott calls for questions and comments about the proposed Constitutional change on membership categories prior to a vote on February 15. The measure passed unanimously. *Donna Catlin photo*

The vote paves the way for the board to institute a new dues structure, approved earlier this year subject to the then pending constitutional change. Under the plan, Household Member dues will be \$25, the same as the previous Family Member level that was merged into the new category.

Dues will rise from \$17.50 to \$25 for those now holding individual memberships, but there will be a \$20

early renewal incentive rate at least for the next two years to help offset the increase. Not-for Profits will pay \$20, receiving the newsletter and renewal notices only. Corporate dues will start at \$250.

Life memberships will be increased substantially: from the current \$250 to \$700 for an individual and \$500 for a Family. Sustaining membership will also rise, from \$50 to \$100. The new rates take effect July 1.

Historian to Detail Significance of William Butler Letters

(Continued from page 1)

and as a clerk on a steamboat. But one of the most important positions in terms of his future would be as a deputy in the office of the Adair County circuit clerk. It was there he met a young lawyer, Stephen T. Logan, a fellow Kentuckian, who would later move to Springfield with his wife and children and begin what would become an illustrious legal career. Logan served as an Illinois Circuit Court judge from 1835 to 1837, Abraham Lincoln's second law partner (1841-1844) and a State representative from 1842 to 1846.

Butler, meanwhile, bought a farm for his father in Sangamon County in 1828 and moved to Springfield, where in 1832 he married Elizabeth Rickard. In 1836, his old friend, now Judge Logan, appointed Butler clerk of the circuit court, a post he held until 1841, when he resigned. Describing Butler in the 1904 edition of *Past and Present of the City of Springfield and Sangamon County*, biographer Joseph Wallace noted that "from that time forward for 30 years, he was an active and influential citizen of the state, prominent in political circles in which his wise judgment and sound counsel were eagerly sought."

Wallace noted that Butler was "an excellent judge of men and character. Before Abraham Lincoln became a leader in the political life of the Nation or even the state, William Butler became a friend of the young lawyer, recognized his ability, believed in his power and had faith in his future. He gave him a home in his own family when he came to Springfield to practice law and Mr. Lincoln remained a member of the household until the day of his marriage."

Wallace adds that Butler -- in conjunction with David Davis, O. H. Browning, and Stephen T. Logan-- was largely instrumental in placing

Lincoln in nomination for the presidency in Chicago in 1860. Though he never sought office, in 1859 Butler was appointed State treasurer to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of the previous incumbent. In 1860, he was elected to the office for another two years.

Butler might have become just another historical footnote had it not been for circumstance. Soon after the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for troops to defend the Union. The War Department dispatched General William Tecumseh Sherman to Springfield, to select a site for a military training camp. Illinois Governor Richard Yates asked Butler to assist the general. The men found an ideal

this area and in 1997 was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

* * *

A native of Minneapolis, presenter Cornelius received degrees from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For ten years he worked as an editor in New York City, at Doubleday, Random House, and *Collier's Encyclopedia*, then for eight years at the University of Illinois Library's Illinois Historical and Lincoln Collections.

At the ALPLM Cornelius says he hears from scores of people every month who seek information about specific pieces of *Lincolniana* -- most of it mundane, some of it wonderful;



GUEST SPEAKER James Cornelius who will discuss findings from a newly discovered cache of letters from William Butler.

location six miles outside of Springfield with a high ground for camping purposes and a lower, more-level area for drills and training, as well as space for a cemetery. General Sherman was pleased with the site and named it Camp Butler to honor his companion. Today, the Camp Butler National Cemetery is part of the historic sites in

buys or accepts donations of manuscripts, books, and relics for the collection; helps to organize and write the museum exhibits; speaks to private and public gatherings; arranges to lend artifacts to other museums; and publishes short reviews and essays on Lincoln and his times. He and his wife Anne have two teenage daughters.

Sangamon County Historical Society
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End Notes

Welcome Mat Still Out for Office Volunteers

If you'd like to help out, or just man the Society's new office at 123 S. 7th Street any Monday, Wednesday, or Friday morning from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., the Society would like to hear from you. Occasionally Marion Leach, our office manager, needs to be somewhere else and we need someone in the office. Lots of history to review while you are there!!! Contact us at 525-1961 or schsoffice@gmail.com.



Photo Contest Now on Facebook

Check out our Facebook page! We have a new Mercury Studio photo contest there. Prize to the best identifier!

Forwarding Your Mail? Please Let Us Know!

If you are going on a trip and having your mail forwarded to you, please call the Society's office at 525-1961. Mailed issues of *Historico* cannot be forwarded and are returned to the office with a full postage charge.



2011 Calendar

PROGRAM MEETINGS

Tuesday, March 15

"Lincoln's Friend: William Butler"

James Cornelius

Tuesday, April 26

SCHS 50th Anniversary Reception, 5:30 p.m.

John Mack Faragher lecture, 7 p.m., UIS

Tuesday, May 17

History and Tour, Lincoln Memorial Garden

Jim Matheis, Executive Director

Tuesday, June 21

Annual Meeting

All program meetings are held at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Public Library, 326 S. Seventh Street, Springfield unless otherwise noted.