



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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JANUARY, 2012

Double Punch Programs to Kick Off 2012 Meeting Season!

JANUARY 10: Thomas Houghan's Secret Past: An Early Springfield Scandal



WICKED SPRINGFIELD author Erika Holst provides an update on Thomas Houghan whose home later became famous as Edwards Place.

Before Edwards Place was Edwards Place, it was Houghan's House, where prominent local physician Thomas Houghan lived with his wife and stepson from 1833-1843. But Dr. Houghan was concealing a scandalous secret...one that would erupt in the 1860s, affecting the lives of dozens of Springfield's most prominent citizens.

Erika Holst, curator of the Italiante mansion purchased by Benjamin and Helen Edwards, that now serves as headquarters for the Springfield Art Association, and author of *Wicked Springfield: Crime, Corruption and Scandal During the Lincoln Era*, will fill in the details for Society members when she speaks in the SAA gallery starting at 5:30 p.m. Edwards was the son of Ninian Edwards, the First Territorial Governor of Illinois. His brother was married to Mary Todd Lincoln's older sister. The Lincolns

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JANUARY 17: History Buff Pete Ellertsen: the Dulcimer Man

As soon as the first (and last) steamboat made it up the Sangamon River to Springfield in 1832, it was greeted by a parody of a popular minstrel show tune.

American popular music, like almost everything else in the popular culture of the day, followed the roads and rivers.

Pete Ellertsen, an amateur musician and volunteer interpreter at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, will share some tunes of the era and accompany himself on the Appalachian dulcimer when he performs at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 17, in the Carnegie Room at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Public Li-

brary, 326 South Seventh Street.

A retired journalism teacher at Benedictine University Springfield, Ellertsen has written "Clar de Steamboat: A Minstrel Show Tune, Springfield's Small-Beer Poets and the Voyage of the Talisman" and other articles on music history in *Illinois Heritage* and other magazines.

Tentative playlist for the January 17 meeting includes *Clar de Kitchen*, *Johnny Booker*, *My Horses Ain't Hungry*, *Boatman Dance*, *Old Woman of Our Town*, *Going Down to Cairo*, and *El-anoy (Way Down Upon the Wabash)*.



MUSICIAN Pete Ellertsen

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50TH CELEBRATION WRAPUP: Strawbridge House, decorated for the holidays, helped the Society wrap up its 50th year in a special setting. See photos (by Donna Catlin) on pages 4 and 5



NANCY CHAPIN

Society Names Sam Wheeler Executive Coordinator

Since the inception of the Sangamon Valley Collection at Lincoln Library, the Society has benefited from the help and support of the librarians.

Ed Russo, **Linda Garvert** and **Curtis Mann** essentially took turns serving on the Board and providing guidance, continuity and expertise to the Society for almost 40 years.

Unfortunately one of the side effects of the city's budget crisis has been to cut back library staff to the point that Curtis Mann no longer has time to serve on the Board; nor can Linda as schedules are in constant flux for remaining staff. This, coupled with the closing of Robinson's Advertising, left the Society with a difficult void to fill.

We put out a request to the historical community for a part time coordinator; were thrilled with the response; and delighted to have **Sam Wheeler** take on the role.



Sam Wheeler

The Society has contracted with Sam Wheeler to be our Executive Coordinator. Sam currently works full time as a researcher for the Papers of Abraham Lincoln and will be helping us on the side. Sam studied with former member, **Phil Paludan** at UIS and went on to study with **John Simon** at

SIU while completing his Ph.D. in history. His enthusiasm is contagious and his background will be a wonderful asset for the Society, We anticipate great things to come and look forward to exciting projects ahead!

We will now get to work on our various means of communication so that they are truly working for us and then try and get the Society itself ready for the exciting future.

We are planning a joint meeting with the First Presbyterian Church on February 16 with Sam pre-

senting a talk on Abraham Lincoln's religious views. Watch for the details!

A Year-End Special Thanks!

● **Don Springer** and his committee who made a very special event of the Old Settler's picnic at Pioneer Park in November—and to **Bill Gaule** who made the dessert auction a wonderful, financial success!



● **Marion Leach** (left, manning the Society's table at Iles House during the recent historic homes tour) for continuing to be a real 'go to' person who can be counted on to mail the *Historicos*;

sell books; run errands, etc. etc.

● **Carolyn Moore**, **Sue Massie** and their committee for a wonderful holiday party at the Strawbridge House – and absolute awe at **Kent Massie's** incredible work in hand lettering over 100 ornaments for the occasion! (See the ornament and other holiday photos on pages 4 and 5).

Nancy



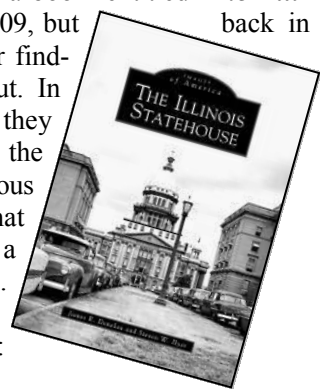
Historico, published 10 times a year, is the monthly bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Back issues are always available on-line in PDF format at our website, www.sancohis.org. We are in the process of redesigning our website. Look for more information in the future. Event updates also can be found on our **Facebook** page (www.facebook.com) and **Twitter**. (www.twitter.com). Log in and search for *Sangamon County Historical Society*.

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor



Shower of Snakes and Other County News From the Past...On Line!

James R. Donelan and Steven W. Dyer authored a book entitled *The Illinois Statehouse* published by Arcadia Publishing in 2009, but back in 2001 they put up a website that included most of their findings, with wonderful color photos, worth checking out. In addition they have included various resource materials they used; of particular interest are newspaper items from the *Journal and Register*. The stories so printed are a delicious sample of life over the years. I'll bet you didn't know that snakes once fell from the sky in Sangamon County! For a fun read, go to www.ilstatehouse.com/Springfield.htm. And if you know of other interesting websites featuring Sangamon County, please let us know: schs1961@gmail.com.



Search Now Underway to Fill Seats on the Society's Board

Know someone you think might be a great board member? Thinking about it yourself? Now is the time to let us know. We're looking for dynamic, history-loving individuals who are willing to give their time, share ideas and focus their energy on helping plan and work on a variety of Society projects and programs. Send a resume to Vicky Whitaker (vwhitaker@gmail.com) who is chairing the Nominating Committee this year.

Libraries of Ashland and Pleasant Plains Need Help With Archives

The Prairie Skies District Public Libraries of Ashland and Pleasant Plains need help archiving its historical collections, says Anna Stone, a board member with the Prairie Skies District Public Libraries that serve those communities.

"Our libraries have historical collections that are just in boxes and need to be catalogued and archived properly. Would anyone be interested in going through the papers? Is there a historical librarian interested in helping to sort them out? We have archival supplies - sleeves, folders, boxes - to put the contents in, but nothing has been done with the collections." Most of the documents have been donated by some of the old area families over the years, Stone explains. The libraries cover Sangamon, Menard and Cass county. With renewed interest in genealogy, the libraries have gotten requests for old documents. To volunteer or for more information, drop a line to Stone at annastone@gmail.com.

OFFICERS

- President.....Nancy Chapin
- Secretary.....Carolyn Moore
- Treasurer.....Paul R. Mueller
- Past President.....David Scott

DIRECTORS

Term Ending June 2012

- James H. Beaumont
- Donna Catlin
- Jacqueline Jackson
- Ruth Slottag
- Roger Whitaker

Term Ending 2013

- Linda Bee
- Bruce Beeman
- Claire Eberle
- Elaine Hoff
- Carolyn Oxtoby

Term Ending 2014

- Mary Alice Davis
- Kathy Hoffmann
- Brenda J. Holmes
- Doug Polite

JANUARY MEMBERSHIP and DONATIONS REPORT

The Society welcomes the following new members:

- Erika Holst
- Rex & Rebecca Finley
- Judy Inslee
- William Bright
- Susan Weitekamp & Ted Forystek
- Gift of Membership from Paul Mueller for:
 - Marty & Carolyn Mueller
 - Linda Mueller
- Gift of membership from Linda Bee for:
 - Brian Replogle

Gift of membership from Mary Alice Davis for:

- Marlene Rinehart
- Laura Demick

Gift of membership from Brenda Holmes for:

- Randy Miller
- David Holmes

The Society extends its appreciation to the following donors:

- Francie Staggs
- Susan Weitekamp & Ted Forystek in memory of W. Hughes Diller, Jr.

50
YEARS

Holiday Party Wraps Up

December 13, 2012 Strawbridge House, Springfield



50th Anniversary Celebration



Some 90 members and guests attended the Society's holiday party at Strawbridge House in Springfield, on Tuesday, December 13, ignoring rainy weather that was quickly brushed aside as they stepped inside the historic house on the University of Illinois at Springfield campus. Cozy fireplaces, delicious food prepared and served by the University catering staff, and good fellowship added to the warmth of the event. This year, the annual holiday party wrapped up the Society's 50th anniversary activities. In honor of the occasion, each guest received a hand-lettered gold-colored ornament celebrating the 50th. The ornaments were made by Kent Massie, whose wife Sue and Carolyn Moore and their committee handled the arrangements and decorated the house for the party. *Donna Catlin photos.*



“Historic Christmas” House Tour A Hit, Society a Co-Sponsor

HUNDREDS of visitors toured five historic Springfield Homes the afternoon of December 17 for a look back at the way Christmas was celebrated here in 1860. The Society was one of the event’s co-sponsors and had displays at both the Elijah Iles House and Pasfield House, where the free self-tours concluded. Also on the tour was the Lincoln Home, the Vachel Lindsay Home and Edwards Place. At each stop, visitors were treated to



costumed guides, entertainment and refreshments. The Sound Celebration Chorus of the Springfield-based Sweet Adelines stopped at each site to give a cappella renditions of period Christmas music, capping their performance at Pasfield House (above) where host and Society Life Member Tony Leone provided food and refreshments for all of the volunteers from the five homes.

Edwards Place Curator to Detail Former Owner’s Secret Past

(Continued from page 1)

and other dignitaries were frequent guests at the Edwards home, the site of numerous lavish dinner parties and other events.

The house was occupied by members of the Edwards family until 1909. It was donated to the then newly formed Springfield Art Association in 1908 for use as a gallery and classroom space.

Holst’s book was published in 2010 by The History Press. She has been involved in a variety of museum and history projects throughout Illinois including the David Davis Mansion State Historic Site and the McLean County Museum of History, Bloomington; the Cuneo Museum, Vernon Hills; Dickson Mounds, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, the Illinois State Museum and the Lincoln Presidential Library. Edwards Place is located at 700 North Fourth Street.

WINTER-SPRING PROGRAM CALENDAR

Mark your calendars now! The Society has a range of programs set for the months ahead. Here’s what’s planned as of now:

Tuesday, January 10:

“Thomas Houghans Secret Past: An Early Springfield Scandal.” Speaker: Erika Holst. 5:30 p.m., Edwards Place, 700 North Fourth Street, Springfield.

Tuesday, January 17:

Pete Ellertsen: the Dulcimer Man. 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

Thursday, February 16:

“Christianizing Lincoln: Historical Memory and the Religious Views of Abraham Lincoln.” Speaker: Samuel P. Wheeler. 5:30 p.m., First Presbyterian Church Seventh and Capitol Street, Springfield.

Tuesday, March 20:

“Circus History in Illinois” Speaker: Tara McAndrew 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

Tuesday, April 17:

“The Sangamon Country and the War of 1812.” Speaker: David Brady. 5:30 p.m. Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield.

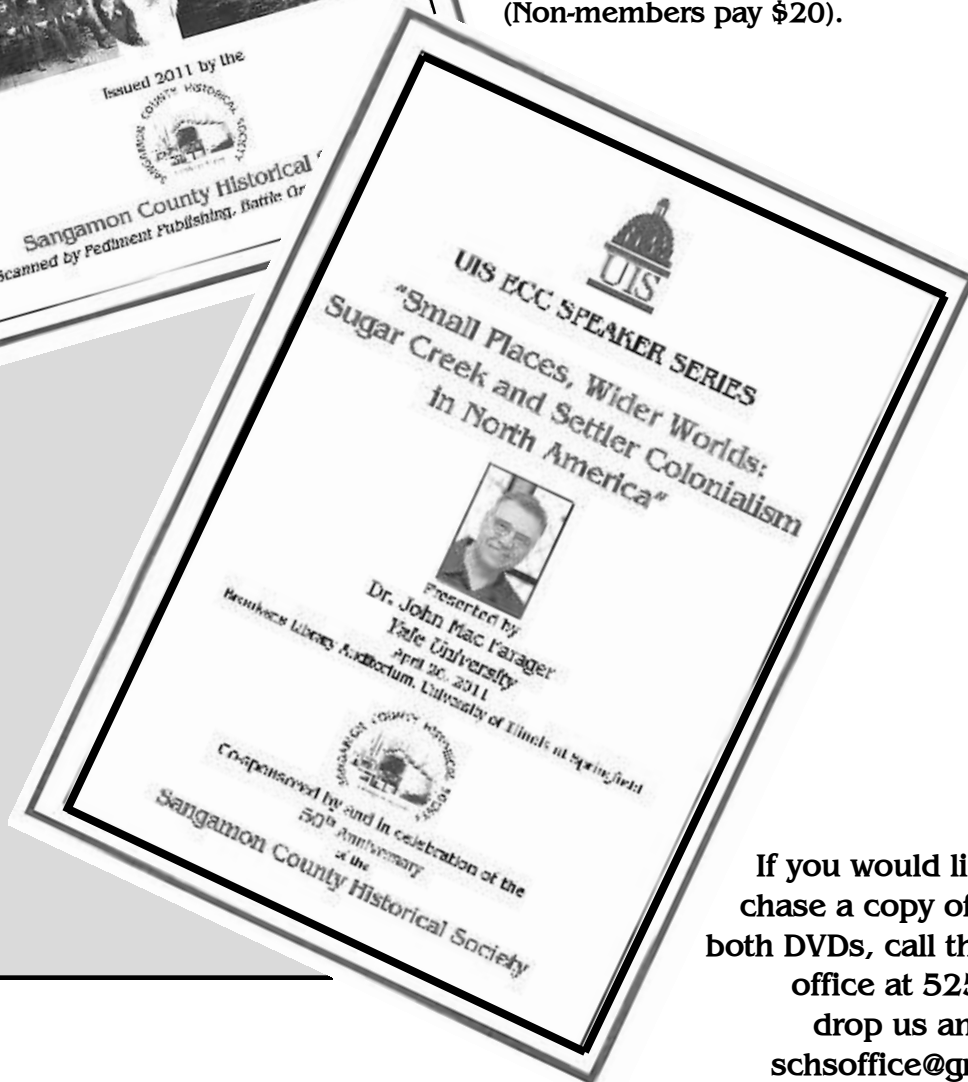
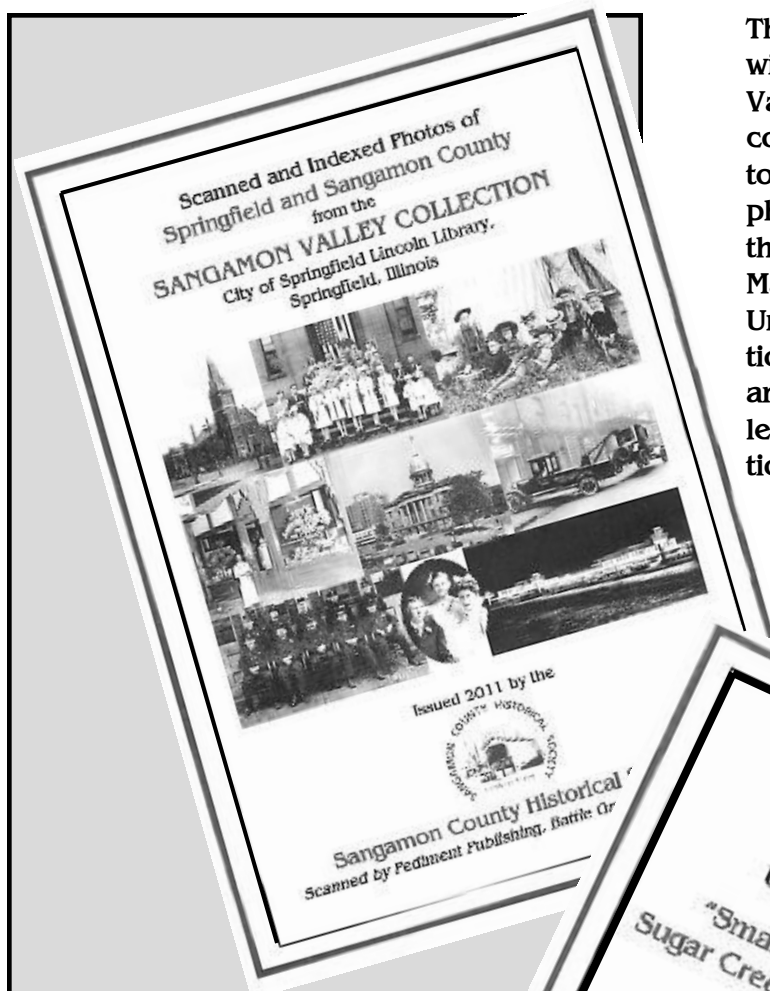
Tuesday, May 15:

Trip to Power Farm, Cantrall, Illinois. 6 p.m. Power Farm owned by Harry and Susie Estill.

NOW AVAILABLE ON DVD!

The Society has just issued two new DVDs, one with over 1,000 photos from the Sangamon Valley Collection at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library and those brought in by the public to be scanned for the State Journal-Register photo history book series. The other DVD is the lecture Yale University Professor Dr. John Mac Farager made on April 26, 2011 at the University of Illinois at Springfield in celebration of the Society's 50th anniversary. These are two must-have additions to your DVD collection! They also make great birthday, graduation and housewarming gifts!

Society members can purchase these DVDs at a discounted price of \$15 each. (Non-members pay \$20).



If you would like to purchase a copy of either or both DVDs, call the Society office at 525-1961 or drop us an e-mail at schsoffice@gmail.com.

Sangamon County Historical Society
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Winter Advisory for Snowbirds

If you plan to spend time away from home this winter, please either call or e-mail the office and ask us to hold your ***Historicos*** or give us your address and the dates you will be there. Our arrangement with the Post Office means that ***Historicos*** will not be forwarded with your other mail but will be returned to us at the full First Class postage price! We need your help to save that money!

