



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

308 East Adams Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701 217-522-2500 [www.sancohis.org](http://www.sancohis.org)

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## What Lies Ahead for Law Office?

# Lincoln-Herndon Research Augurs Changes, Site Manager to Provide Details November 16

Thousands of tourists have made the pilgrimage to the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office in Springfield to see for themselves where Lincoln worked.

What they've viewed may be somewhat off the mark in terms of furnishings and layout, new research shows, something site manager Justin Blandford hopes to soon address.

Blandford, whose responsibilities also include the Old State Capitol and the Vachel Lindsay Home, will discuss the changes ahead when he speaks to the Sangamon County Historical Society on Tuesday, November 16.

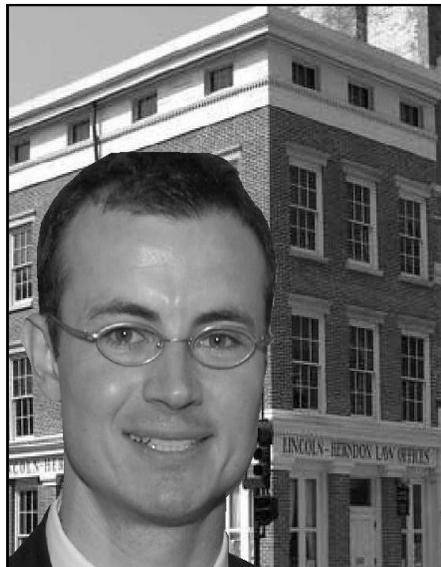
The meeting, at 7 p.m. at the Lincoln Library, 326 S. Seventh Street, Springfield, is free and open to the public.

A follow-up tour of the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office led by Blandford will be held on Saturday, November 20, at 10 a.m.

"The community owes a great debt to those who acted to save buildings like the one that housed the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office from the wrecking ball decades ago. Time has given us a chance to fine-tune what we know about what those offices looked like, and to make the needed

changes," he explains.

At the November 16 meeting, Blandford will detail historical evidence that suggests



**SITE MANAGER Justin Blandford**

the interior of the building on the corner of Sixth and Adams Streets looked quite a bit different in Lincoln's time than it does today. He will also share information on

Lincoln and on Seth Tinsley, the owner of the building who leased space to Stephen T. Logan and Lincoln, his junior partner, in 1841. Lincoln dissolved his partnership with Logan in 1844 and took William Herndon on as a junior partner, continuing to operate the law practice from the Tinsley building.

As site manager of three key historic buildings in Springfield, Blandford is responsible for a wide array of public history programs that have attracted both new audiences and new sources of funding. He is the driving force behind the initiative to restore the only remaining building that housed Lincoln's Springfield offices.

Blandford holds an undergraduate degree in history from Webster University, St. Louis, from which he was graduated in 1999 and is completing a Masters degree in history at the University of Illinois, Springfield.

In addition to being a life member of the Sangamon County Historical Society, Blandford is a board member of the Abraham Lincoln Association and secretary of the Rotary Club of Springfield Sunrise. He lives in Springfield with his wife, Holly Rae.

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Annual  
Members Only

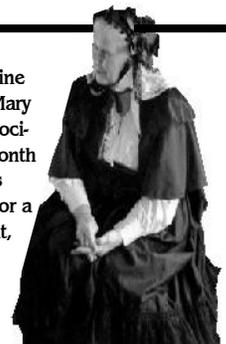
*Holiday  
Party*

December 14

*Details, registration form, page 7.*



**TEA AND HISTORY:** Elaine Birch (right) portrays Mary Freeman at a special Society tour and tea last month at the Freeman-Hughes House in Springfield. For a closer look at the event, see page 4.





DAVID W. SCOTT

## Visibility A Key Strategy In Society's Growth

It seems that organizations in the non-profit world are always seeking more members, income and publicity for their activities. They hope that greater visibility will lead to membership growth. This rule certainly applies to today's Sangamon County Historical Society. But rules have exceptions, and I found two in my own informal survey of what other central Illinois county historical societies are doing.

Attending an event sponsored by the historical society in a neighboring county, I asked the women at the table displaying county-related historical books to give me a membership brochure. It might contain, I thought, information about programs and membership dues that could provide ideas for our own society and perhaps have a format we might draw on if we ever wanted to redo our own brochure.

This society had no brochure. I found the same lack of basic information for the general public in another county. Thus it was not surprising to find that this historical society had low membership, sometime only ten people in attendance at infrequent and weak programs, and a self-perpetuating leadership with no ambitions for growth and antagonistic to the separately organized county museum.

What a contrast Champaign County provides to our own!

There has been much discussion within our own society that we need to make more effort to become better known within the county and strive for growth; yet membership has remained level for the past five years. Membership averages around 320; the number each year of new members about equals the number

of those who do not renew. Actually, the number of members whose renewal comes up each year in the spring has averaged only about 240, as the Society has had in the past five years some 80 life members. The final membership figures for the 2010-2011 year are not yet in—late renewals keep arriving and people are joining for the first time—so it might be higher than in recent years, particularly given the extensive efforts currently being made by Nancy Chapin and her membership committee to bring in renewals. This committee will make recommendations to the Board over the coming months designed to increase members. Yet to significantly increase membership is seldom easy. Each group is in essence competing with dozens of other related groups, all seeking to maintain and increase membership and income.

Increasing the Society's visibility among the general public is part of a growth strategy. We gained such visibility for the October 19, 2010 monthly program on the Rabbit Row neighborhood. That day's edition of the *State Journal-Register* had a front page article on the topic and the speaker thanks to the efforts of Vicky Whitaker, who is in charge of publicity for the Society and is the editor of the *Historico*. Turnout was substantially higher than it would have been without the article.

With more visibility, income, and members, the Society can do more and thus better carry out its public-spirited purpose—to perpetuate and create interest in the history of Springfield and Sangamon County.

*David*



**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](http://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](http://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 522-2500 or write to us at 308 East Adams Street, Springfield, 62701.

*For Historic Preservation*

# Landmarks Illinois Gives Oxtoby Lifetime Achievement Award

Landmarks Illinois, a leading state-wide voice for historic preservation, has honored Carolyn Oxtoby with a lifetime achievement award in historic preservation. The award was presented at the organization's annual awards ceremony on Saturday, October 23 at The Chicago Club, Chicago.

Oxtoby, a member of the Sangamon County Historical Society board and a life member, was singled out for the honor in recognition of the three decades she has spent "saving historic buildings in Springfield, particularly in its downtown, where commercial buildings have often been threatened with demolition and replacement." Among the specific areas and buildings downtown cited by the preservation group were the 200 block of South Sixth Street, buildings on the south side of the Old State Capital Plaza, the Fisher-Latham Block on Sixth Street, and the Hoogland Center for the Arts.

Oxtoby was among nine outstanding projects, individuals and organizations presented with the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Awards, named in honor of the Chicago philanthropist.

Like the seal of Illinois Landmarks, the award is in the shape of the LaSalle Street entrance to the old Chicago Stock

Exchange, an architectural masterpiece designed by Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan and constructed in 1894 that was demolished in 1971. Efforts to save the building, though unsuccessful, gave rise to Landmarks Illinois that has gone on to champion other successful preservation efforts.



**HONORED: Carolyn Oxtoby with her award from Landmarks Illinois for lifetime achievement in historic preservation. The award was presented last month in Chicago.**

*(Photo by Diane Alexander White).*

## NOVEMBER 2010 MEMBERSHIP, DONOR REPORT

The Sangamon County Historical Society is pleased to add the following donors, and new members.

### DONORS

*John A. Barker, David Barringer*

### LIFE MEMBERS

*E. George Myers, Carolyn Oxtoby*

### SUSTAINING

*William H. Siles*

### INDIVIDUAL

*Mary Ann Langston, Ken Lazar, Sharon L. Miner, Kenneth C. Mitchell, Annie Rieken, Gerald Smith, Michelle Terril, Tri-City Public Library District*

### FAMILY

*Susan Nelson & Rick Fiddymont, Ronald & Ann Tucker*



## EXECUTIVE BOARD

**President.....**David W. Scott  
**Vice-President.....**Vicki Megginson  
**Secretary.....**Pam VanAlstine  
**Treasurer.....**Paul R. Mueller  
**Past President.....**Nancy Chapin

## DIRECTORS

### Term Ending June 2011

Jack Alexander,  
Connie Locher Bussard,  
John Huther  
Don Springer  
Jane Vetter

### Term Ending 2012

Tim Krell  
Carolyn Moore  
Donna Catlin  
Roger Whitaker  
James H. Beaumont

### Term Ending 2013

Linda Bee  
Bruce Beeman  
Claire Eberle  
Carolyn Oxtoby  
Jane Treadwell

## Presidential Appointees to the Board

Richard Carlson  
Constitutional Committee chair  
Vicky Whitaker  
Publicity chair, *Historico* Editor

### Honorary Director

William Hughes Diller Jr.

## BOARD MEETINGS

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

**November 10,  
December 8, January 12, February 9,  
March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8**

## Tea Time Provides Rare Look into Springfield's Past

From the moment a person stepped onto the porch of the historic Freeman-Hughes House with its inviting wicker furniture and received the warm greeting of owner Mary Ann Langston, one felt they had found an oasis in the hustle and bustle of 21<sup>st</sup> century Springfield.

Langston's gracious hospitality and meticulous care of this 19<sup>th</sup> century Springfield house gave those participating in last month's Sangamon County Historical Society house tour and tea, a fascinating look backwards to another era.

### Two Opportunities

Langston generously offered the Society a rare opportunity to offer a public tour the historic home not once, but twice, on October 7 and again, on October 10. Advance reservations were required.

"The massive Victorian bedroom furniture was an exquisite treat to view, as was all the period furniture and other original furnishings to the house," observed Society program chair Carolyn Moore. "The 1842 wedding gown on display was a marvelous piece of vintage nuptial needlework. Every nook and cranny held something interesting to discover. In each room of the house were volunteers who shared information relevant to the historic surroundings."

### On National Register

Built in 1878 by Clarkson W. Freeman, the house was eventually passed to a nephew, Arthur Freeman Hughes, whose widow sold the property to Dr. and Mrs. Floyd Barringer. Passionate about local history, the Barringers lovingly restored the Italianate-style home with its intricate Carpenter-Gothic trim. Langston, who purchased the home from the Barringer family, has preserved its furnishings and antiques. The Freeman-Hughes House is listed on the National Register.

As part of the tour, a three-course tea was served, consisting of scones and tea breads, three selections of tea sandwiches, and an array of pastries, all complemented by Lady Grey tea.

A sit-down tea was served in the dining room on Thursday. On Sunday, with the event drawing a capacity crowd, tea was served in both parlors and the library.

### Greeted in Costume

Society member Elaine Birtch donned period costume to portray Mary Freeman, wife of Clarkson Freeman, who built the house in 1878. Freeman died in 1917. His

widow lived there until her death in 1928, after which it was passed on to their nephew, Arthur Freeman Hughes.

Twenty members of the Society volunteered to make the event a success, handling a variety of jobs that included serving as docents guiding visitors around the house, serving as kitchen staff, and serving even as parking attendants.

### Volunteers Lend a Hand

In addition to Birtch (who also donated a gorgeous flower arrangement purchased especially for the teas), they included Dan Barringer, Dave Barringer, Lisa Sabo, Doug Barringer, Judith Barringer, Elaine Jana Cappelin, Sylvia Brewer, Connie Locher-Bussard, Nancy Chapin, Cathy Caughlin, Claire Eberle, Susie Hammond, Jane Treadwell, Pam Van Alstine, Jane Vetter, Bill Vetter, Katie Huther, John Huther and Carolyn Moore.



**OF THE ERA: Costumed Society member Elaine Birtch (top right), sets the tone for the tea. Above, left, the home's Victorian era bedroom and at center, right, a wedding dress, circa 1842, worn by Clarkson Freeman's sister that was on display. At right, Mary Ann Langston. (back to camera) greets visitors to her home in the East Parlor.**



# “Rabbit Row” Talk Draws Crowd, Models Too

History buffs came out in force for the Society’s October 19 meeting to hear author Ken Mitchell talk about “Rabbit Row,” the neighborhood where his father grew up at a time when it was dominated by the now gone Reservoir Park.

The topic touched a raw nerve with some of the many more than 120 members of the audience at the Lincoln Library, Springfield, who mourned the loss of this once sprawling north side recreational complex that shaped the neighborhood and also served as the city’s reservoir.

The park and reservoir – built in the late 1800s – were demolished in the late 1920s and early 1930s in part to make way for construction of Lanphier High School and because the old reservoir was deemed unnecessary once Lake Springfield was built to serve as the city’s new, larger water source. Loss of the park prompted at least two former “Rabbit Row” residents to turn their memories into scale models. Both were on display at the meeting.

Mitchell (*bottom right*), who penned his father’s story, “Growing Up on Rabbit Row,” distributed maps of the park and the neighborhood that provided fodder for family tales he related in his book. In his talk, dotted by reminiscences from audience members, he included some grizzly details of life and death in the working class, ethnically mixed neighborhood and good times, such as annual “Rabbit Row” summer reunions, originally men-only gatherings, where he met “all my father’s friends.”

Mitchell said he felt like “part journalist, part detective, and part historian” in researching and writing his book, much of which was based on videoed conversations with his father. An insurance executive, Mitchell also gives seminars on recording family and personal history.

Though he was unable to attend, Sherman resident Howard Hoehn (*top left*) loaned the Society a model of Reservoir Park that he constructed from memory. Hoehn was among those interviewed by Mitchell when he was researching his book. A second model (*center left*), built by the late Bob O’Brien and a fellow north end neighbor, was brought to the meeting by Dave and Kayla O’Brien, his son and daughter-in-law. “He was a big North ender,” Mrs. O’Brien recalled, and had the model on display in his basement. The model is in the process of being refurbished by a Society member.



Photos by Donna Catlin



## Fun Ahead for All

# November, December Events With A Historical Flavor

November and December will bring plenty to do and see in terms of history for families and individuals getting into the holiday spirit. Here's a sampling:

**November 20-28, Festival of Trees,** Orr Building, State Fairgrounds, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily except Thanksgiving (4 p.m. to 8 p.m.) and final Sunday, November, 28 (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Hundreds of trees and other holiday fare created by local organizations including the Sangamon County Historical Society. Be sure to look for our tree saluting 19<sup>th</sup> century leaders and historic sites. Admission fee.

**December 3: Dana Thomas House**

**Foundation Christmas Party,** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Open to the public. Admission fee. Call 788-9452 for information.

**December 4, Candlelight Christmas Tour,** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Elijah Iles House. Tour the house in its holiday candlelight ambiance. Tour Christmas trees from various eras and ornaments from historic periods. Free and open to the public.

**December 11, Candlelight Christmas Tour,** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Elijah Iles House. Tour the house in its holiday candlelight ambiance. See Christmas trees from various eras and ornaments from historic periods. Free and open to the public.

**December 11, "A Clayville Christmas,"** Clayville Historical Site. (See [www.clayville.org](http://www.clayville.org) for details).

**December 17: Dana Thomas House Family Night,** 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. The house will be decorated for the holidays in the grand manner of Susan Lawrence Dana. Father Christmas will be on hand to meet the kiddies. Live music. Suggested donation: \$1.

**December 19: Dana Thomas House, Luminaria Sunday,** 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. More than 1,000 candles in paper sacks will line the ledges and walkways around the house.



**STRAWBRIDGE WELCOME:** Society president David Scott (right, photo left) gets a welcome to Strawbridge Shepherd House October 23 from "Elijah Iles" during Old Settles Day. The Society was among several history organizations represented at the event held by the Iles House Foundation which is restoring the historic home. At right, a Civil War era-style band gets set to play.

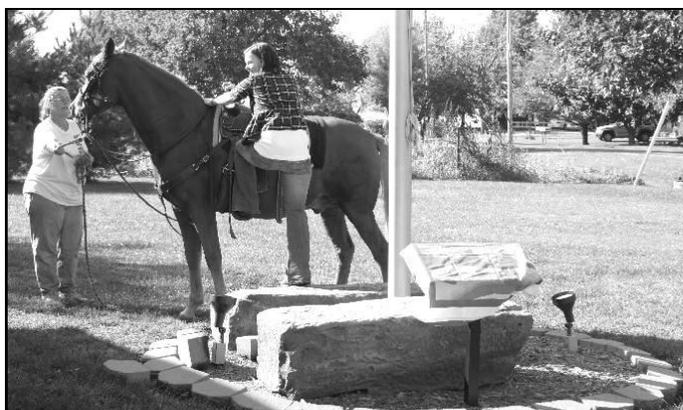
## Buffalo Moves Mounting Stones to Village Hall, Adds Historic Plaque and Flag Pole

The village of Buffalo turned back the clock Saturday, October 9, paying homage to its history when it dedicated two mounting stones. In earlier times, the stones were used to make it easier to mount horses and board horse-drawn carriages.

A plaque explaining

their use was unveiled in a ceremony at the village hall at 600 South Main Street, where the heavy stones have been placed.

The new site also includes a special flagpole. The mounting stones were donated to the village by a local family, said Village President Bill Vetter.



**STEPPING UP:** An unidentified rider tests out the mounting stones put on display last month outside the Village Hall in Buffalo. The stones were once used to help rides mount their horses.

## At Brinkerhoff Home, December 14

# Annual Members-Only Holiday Party in a Historic Setting

The Sangamon County Historical Society will be holding its annual Holiday Party on Tuesday, December 14 at the historic Brinkerhoff Home in Springfield.

The event, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., is open only to Society members. Tickets are \$12.50 and must be ordered no later than December 9. (See the reservation form, below).

"We're delighted that Carol Jean Frasse will again be catering the event with a

delicious mix of substantial hors d'oeuvres," said chair Jane Vetter. Frasse, a Society life member, created last year's holiday party menu and also provided the fall themed box dinner at the Soci-



**PARTY SITE: The Brinkerhoff Home.**

ety's September meeting at Clayville.

Often referred to as "the Castle," the Brinkerhoff Home at 1500 North Fifth Street, was designed by noted architect Elijah Myers and completed in 1869 for

prominent Springfield businessman George Brinkerhoff and his family. In 1929, the house was transferred to the Ursuline Convent and was the original site for the Ursuline's Springfield junior college.

Ravaged by time and Mother Nature, by the late 1970s, it appeared to be a candidate for the wrecking ball.

Preservationists stepped in, formed a non-profit corporation, and over several years restored the Brinkerhoff Home to its original grandeur.

Now on the National Register of Historic Places, it is a popular site for community and private special events.

### *Reservation Form*

## *Annual Sangamon County Historical Society*

### *Members-Only*

*Tuesday, December 14*

# *Holiday Party*

**Reserve by phone at 522-2500. All checks should be made payable to the Sangamon County Historical Society and mailed to the Society at 308 East Adams Street, Springfield, Illinois, 62701 and must be received with the form below no later than Thursday, December 9**



Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ tickets to the Sangamon County Historical Society annual Holiday Party.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

***Sangamon County Historical Society***  
**308 East Adams Street**  
**Springfield, Illinois 62701**  
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### ***e-mail Updates Require Your Input!***

The Society has contracted with an e-mail service to enable us to send you attractive notices of upcoming events and area activities. If you haven't done so already, please send your e-mail address to [ras1915@xanadoo.com](mailto:ras1915@xanadoo.com)

Don't miss out on this terrific new way to learn about events as they come up! Also check our website, [www.sancohis.org](http://www.sancohis.org) and our **Facebook** page for updates and special events!

### **Help Us Avoid Forwarding Fees**

Is your mail forwarded because you live part of the year here and spend time at a vacation home or otherwise stay at a different address for a few months? Are you moving? Please let our office know your temporary or new address, since the post office does not forward bulk mail, the method we use to send you **Historico**. Instead, it is returned to us with a substantial penalty attached, something we'd like to avoid..



**2010-2011 Calendar**

### **PROGRAM MEETINGS**

**Tuesday, November 16**

*Tuesday, January 17*

*Tuesday, February 15*

*Tuesday, March 15*

*Tuesday, April 19*

*Tuesday, May 17*

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

**Tuesday, December 14**

*Annual Members Only*

*Holiday Party*

*Brinkerhoff Home, Springfield*