



Historico

The newsletter of the Sangamon County Historical Society
 308 E. Adams Street, Springfield, IL 62701
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APRIL, 2006

April 12, Wednesday, 5:00 pm

Board Meeting

Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room South

April 18, Tuesday, 7:00 PM

Program

Lincoln Library Carnegie Room North

The Rebirth of Downtown Springfield

Carolyn Oxtoby and Victoria Clemons

Major happenings in the progressive efforts to bring new life to downtown Springfield will be highlighted by Carolyn Oxtoby, a principal figure in the city's redevelopment and preservation community, and Victoria Clemons, the executive director of Downtown Springfield Inc.

Mrs. Oxtoby, known in many circles as the "Angel of Sixth Street," has been in the vanguard for many years of undertakings successfully designed to maintain the viability of downtown Springfield. The owner of Oxtoby Properties, she has been instrumental in well-known projects that include, among other initiatives, the restoration (in tandem with Jim and Edith Myers) of the Lincoln law offices, the ongoing rehabilitation of nineteenth century commercial buildings in the downtown area and the construction for the Merrill Lynch addition. As a civic leader, she has held numerous leadership roles. They have included president of the League of Women Voters, founder and president of City Day School, president of Downtown Rotary, president of the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau, president of the Urban League Community Development Corporation and service as a Leland Grove alderman. Among her numerous awards, she was honored in 1998 as the Copley First Citizen.

Miss Clemons, a 1980 graduate of Springfield High School, has been Downtown Springfield executive director since August 2004. Before that, she held various positions in Illinois government during a span covering more than twenty years. Her roles included work on the staff of the General Assembly and duties as legislative director for the Illinois Department of Labor and then the Illinois Lottery.

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Around Town

April 8

11:00 - 2:30 PM Old State Capitol
'Opening Day' Vintage Base Ball
The St. Louis Perfectos
Vintage Base Ball Club

April 15 Vachel Lindsay Home
2:30 PM Poets in the Parlor
Bud Bartlett

Report on March Program

A small group of Springfieldians braved the aftermath of the previous night's blizzard to hear a fascinating story about the formation and evolution of the Rail Charity Golf Classic.

Carol Lohman described the role of her husband, Walter "Bud" Lohman, and his friends Jacob Bunn and Leonard Sapp in bringing the Ladies Professional Golf Association tournament to Springfield. The first year of the event, 1976, was particularly difficult, since the Rail pro had just resigned. Carol and other volunteers helped manage the fledgling tournament, which drew several well-known female golfers. The winner received the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Trophy (the only year for that prize), and the purse was \$100,000. But the organizers were left with substantial debt and needed to find increased funding to support the Labor Day weekend tournament.

Sandra Dehner-Wheeler spoke about events before and during her lengthy career as executive director. The core of volunteers had formed a not-for-profit organization, the Rail Charity Golf Classic, to seek funding for the purse and operational expenses. After volunteering for two years, she worked in the office for \$5 an hour. In 1979 the directors conducted a nationwide search for an executive

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John Chapin

As reported in our March issue, John Chapin was the last surviving founder of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Sadly, John died on March 1, leaving his brothers, Chick and Sam, and a large family of children and grandchildren.

Forty-five years ago, in April of 1961, John was one of twelve charter organizers of our society. In a later oral history he remembered early meetings at the Oak Ridge Cemetery home of George Cashman. John served as our Secretary-Treasurer in 1964-'66, and as vice-President/Program chairman in 1966-'67. His presidency the next year was an unusually busy time, as citizens celebrated the sesquicentennial of Illinois statehood and the State Historical Library's move into the restored Old State Capitol.

John's valedictory address at our June, 1968 annual meeting portrayed "Colonel E.D. Baker: The Gray Eagle of Springfield". Chapin had a long time interest in Baker, who was Lincoln's Whig ally and fellow lawyer. After his presidential term John helped arrange publication of Helen Blankmeyer's popular history, The Sangamon Country, and also moderated a panel discussion of the statehood sesquicentennial.

Our longest serving member and a keen student of local history, John Chapin was a valued friend of the society.

Cullom Davis

Book Review

April 6, 5:30 P.M.
LaSorella Restaurant
3325 Robbins Road

"Early Settlers in Rochester, IL"

By Sally Schaefer
Dinner & review \$15.00 for members
(\$18.00 for non-members)
To reserve your place, mail check to:
SCHS, 308 E. Adams ('01)

*Anniversary of the Donner Party
departure*

April 17: 6:00-8:00 PM Iles House

Though the Donner party left Springfield on April 16, we will be celebrating the anniversary of that departure on April 17 with a program and reception at the Iles House hosted by SCHS.

Please join us for a spring tour of the house, a program and light refreshments!

John Chapin Memorials

At its March meeting the Board voted to place all memorials received in memory of John Chapin in the Publication Fund to go towards the publication of a new history of Sangamon County that is in the planning stages for the state's bicentennial anniversary in 2018 in recognition of John's interest in preserving County history.

The following memorial gifts have been gratefully received.

- Michael & Blanca Bernasek
- Charles & Susan Hammond
- John & Catherine Huther
- Jan & Kent Janssen
- Victor & Barbara Lary
- Debra & Nathan Northup
- Georgia L. Northrup
- Linda M. Oberreiter
- Mary Marada & Theresa Power
- Karen & Les Pope
- Elmore & Nancy Snyder
- Don Tracy
- Carol Evans & Tony Vallejo
- Betty Tabor Woods

The President's Corner

It seems that at the beginning of this term, there were many issues to resolve, actions that needed to be taken and various activities that had to be done. Our Board acted on them decisively for which I am happy and grateful. Some activities were routine functions of the Society while others are new, such as the cooperative functions with Iles House, with the latest one being that of the forthcoming commemoration at Iles House on April 17 of the anniversary of the Donner Party's departure for the West Coast 160 years ago. A trip that led them into a tragic and an unprecedented fate.

Talking about tragic events, I would like to say a little about the severe tornadoes that we recently experienced in Springfield. I would consider the recent tornadoes of March 19 to be a historic event for Sangamon County for having swathed Springfield and surrounding areas with devastating damage to many homes, businesses, trees, electric posts and others on its path. I don't recall having such a tornado or any significant tornado at all visiting Springfield in the nearly forty years that I could think of. Coming as a pair of tornadoes, only minutes apart from each other that began at 8:20 p.m. that Sunday, they were both rated as F2s with 120 mph winds. In the Fujita Scale rating that ranges from F0 to F5, F2 indicates a wind speed of 113-157 mph. The tornadoes were over a half-mile wide at times with damage paths 5.5 and 4 miles long, respectively. There was power outage to more than 90% of the City Water Light and Power customers, with 1,741 damaged buildings, 1,548 of which were residential.

Perhaps the series of catastrophic natural events that have taken place in the recent past and up to now worldwide such as the Tsunami in Asia, Hurricane Katrina at the Gulf Coast, our recent local severe tornado followed only a day later on March 20 by Cyclone Larry in Innisfail, Australia, a Category 5 storm with winds of up to 180 mph and with damages that looked like an atomic bomb had been dropped on the place, along with smaller storms in between, are strong confirmation in my opinion of the weather changes occurring because of the Greenhouse gases effect that is warming our planet and causing the changing weather pattern.

At a more limited level, our own Society has become a victim of these weather changes when on March 21, right after the first day of Spring and only two days from the destructive tornado, winter had returned with a heavy snowfall in the early morning hours that resulted in the cancellation of school classes and the warning to people to stay home as much as possible. As a result, our March 21 program meeting had the lowest ever number of attendance that I know of; exactly twelve people, including the two speakers and four members of our Board and Committees. In appreciation for these hardy souls, I would like to recognize their names: Daniel Buck, W. Hughes Diller, Jr., Carol Lohman, Dick McLane, Jennifer Murphy, Janice Petterchak, Don Springer, Susanne Wall, Barbara Weitekamp, Bill Wheeler and Sandra Dehner-Wheeler. Despite the small attendance, we had a good and interesting program as we have had in the past and which I personally enjoyed.

Before I end, let me give a brief reminder to everyone to please not forget to sign up for the May 13 bus trip to tour the "*Prairie Home*", built in 1865 by Marquis de Lafayette Funk near Shirley, Illinois, and Funk's Grove where the trees used for the house were felled, before the seats get taken up. Knowing what to expect, I know you will not regret coming. – VRP.



IHSH Call for Papers

The Illinois State Historical Society's Symposium Committee announces a call for papers on the theme "Knowledge on the Prairie," for presentation at the 2007 Illinois History Symposium. Papers, panels, presentations, and video documentaries on all aspects of Illinois history will be reviewed, with special consideration

given to topics and presentations focusing on teaching in the classroom. Proposals are welcome from scholars, graduate students, teachers, amateur historians, filmmakers, museum curators, librarians, and genealogists. Proposals should include a one-page description of the proposed topic, a list of primary sources to be used, and the presenter's curriculum vitae. Deadline for proposals is June 30, 2006. The 2007 Illinois History

Symposium will be held in conjunction with Illinois State University's 150th anniversary on the campus in Normal. For more information about the symposium, call the IHSH office at 217-525-2781.

We Welcome New Members

Dr. & Mrs. Stanley Burris
Glenda Tjelta

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



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Spring Calendar

April 17:	Donner Party Departure Anniversary program and reception	Iles House
April 18:	<i>The Rebirth of Downtown Springfield</i> ,	Carolyn Oxtoby and Victoria Clemons
May 13:	Tour of 'Prairie Home' and Funk's Grove	
May 16:	<i>Matthew S. Marsh's 1836 Map of Sangamon County</i> ,	Thomas F. Schwartz
June 20	Annual Meeting, Sangamo Club	Janice Petterchak

March Program report continued -

director to supervise the growing event. A non-golfer, she applied for the position and was hired in the fall of 1979. The first tournament under her direction was won by Nancy Lopez—also the first to make a profit. State Farm of Bloomington began its sponsorship in 1993. The purse for her final tournament was more than \$2 million. Quite a

Bus tour to Funk's 'Prairie Home', gem museum and grove May 13th



In addition to the maple syrup production at Funk's grove, there is a lovely chapel, a unique cemetery and a nature center where the bus will stop first. The bus will then go to the home and gem museum complex where there will be tours. 'Prairie Home' was built in 1865, housed two generations of the Funk family, and is preserved as a sample of life in the late 19th century. The gem and mineral museum showcases the vast collection of Layette Funk II, grandson of the home's builder. Box lunches will be served on the porch, overlooking the gardens which should be in full color in May. Please make your lunch choice on the form below.

The tour will leave from the Stratton building parking lot at 9:00 AM and return at 5:00 PM. Cost is \$35.00 for members and \$40.00 for non-members.

The bus is almost half filled already, so if you wish to go on this bus trip, please put your reservation in soon.

May 13th Bus tour to Funk's 'Prairie Home', gem museum and grove

Member \$35.00 ____ Non-member \$40.00 ____

Name _____ Phone number _____

Lunch choice (Please circle choice)

- 1) Ham on whole wheat; 2) Chicken salad on croissant; 3) Veggie in a pita pocket

Mail to: SCHS, 308 E. Adams, Springfield, IL 62702