



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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June Program Spotlight

Early Entertainment Venues in Springfield

By Cinda Ackerman Klickna

Throughout the 1800s and into the late 1900s, Springfield residents have been entertained at many opera houses, halls, saloons and movie theaters. The early established taverns were some of the first places to offer entertainment. The first amateur theatrical group was called the Springfield Thespian Society formed in 1836.

The American House on the southeast corner of Sixth and Adams was a luxury hotel built by Elijah Iles in 1837. The dining room became the site for many plays with the first one offered in 1838. During the 1850s



The Orpheum, located at 122 North Fifth Street, from 1927-1965. Courtesy of the Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library.

and 1860s, many halls were located around the public square (Old State Capitol) and offered plays, perfor-

mances, singers, lecturers, and even phrenologists, mesmerists, minstrels and pony shows.

This was the type of entertainment that citizens enjoyed, long before motion pictures led to the building of movie theaters. Some theaters were located on the second or third floors of buildings.

There was Cook's Hall where Lincoln once spoke, Burkhardt's Hall, Watson's Hall and Concert Hall.

The Metropolitan opened in 1856 and claimed to be the largest hall in the state. It stood on the west side of Third Street between Washington

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First Women School Principals in Springfield

By Mike Keinzler

Women served as principals in the Springfield public schools for the first time in the 1874-75 school year, but only following a debate in which some board members declared they opposed "so hazardous an experiment as the employment of lady principals."

The issue also led to an argument over whether women principals should

be paid the same as their male counterparts. Perversely, it was those who opposed the appointments who argued for equal pay.

At the time, Springfield had five public schools: a high school and one elementary school in each of the city's four electoral wards. The schools were part of city government, and the mayor, with consent of the city coun-

cil, appointed members of the school board. At the end of each school year, the school board appointed principals and teachers for the next year.

Up through the 1873-74 school year, school principals, who also had classroom teaching duties, had always been men. The rest of the elementary school teaching staffs were women.

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**Cast Your
Ballot for
Society Officers**



Hello Friends,

We hope you enjoy this special program issue which is packed with information from our rich past. Society board member and freelance writer Cinda Ackerman Klickna writes about some of the more colorful entertainment venues that were once in our community.

SangamonLink editor Mike Kienzler sheds light on how and why Springfield's first women school principals were appointed to their jobs. You can read more interesting stories on www.SangamonLink.org.

We thank Cinda and Mike for their contributions to this issue.

Vote for Society Officers and Board Members

With this issue we wrap up another season of Society business and activities. It's time to elect officers for the coming 2020-2021 Season. On May 13, Society board of directors voted to approve a slate of candidates for next year's officers and new and reappointed board members. Thank you to Mary Alice Davis and the nominating committee for preparing the slate. You can read about the candidates on pages 4 and 6, then

vote to approve or not by using the ballot on page 7.

Membership Renewal

Also on page 7 is a membership renewal form if you have not already renewed for the coming year. You must be a member in good standing for your vote to count in the election.

As the Society takes a hiatus during the summer, we will spend this time planning for next season. Because we are unable to hold our Annual Meeting in June as has been done in past years, we hope to be able to hold a similar event in the fall. The next issue of *Historico* will be published in August and will give you the details about upcoming programs and events.

Special Grants Program

The deadline for our Special Grants applications for projects that promote the rich history of our county has been extended to July 31, 2020. You can find the application form on our website www.sangamonhistory.org. Click on grants.

Stephanie J Martin

Entertainment (Cont'd from Page 1)

and Jefferson Streets and offered lectures, dance lessons, and entertainment in its hall that could seat 1200. In the 1890s Central Music Hall at Fourth and Jefferson was available to rent for performances and dances in its large second floor that could hold 1025 seats. The hardwood floor was perfect for dances. On the first floor was a flour and feed business.

The southeast corner of Sixth and Jefferson Streets, now the site of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, has a long history. A series of opera houses stood on the site from 1866 to 1924. The first was the Rudolph

Opera House, opened in December 1866 by Robert Rudolph. Newspaper articles described it as the "new and elegant temple of amusement." Rudolph was a master brewer at Kun Brewery, located near Walnut and Carpenter Streets.

In 1864 he married the wealthy Kun widow; they built a mansion at 511 W. Carpenter across from the brewery. The brewery was renamed the Rudolph Brewery. Two years later he built the opera house at the cost of \$125,000 (some records claim it cost \$160,000). He only lived another two years, and then the opera house was taken over by Jacob Bunn, Sr.

With Bunn in charge, the name was changed to the Bunn Opera House and operated until it was destroyed by fire in 1876. It was rebuilt, but in 1878, Bunn was forced to sell when his private bank failed. George W. Chatterton Sr. purchased the property and gave the management of it to his son George Jr. They hired an architect from New York to redesign the theater into a majestic building.

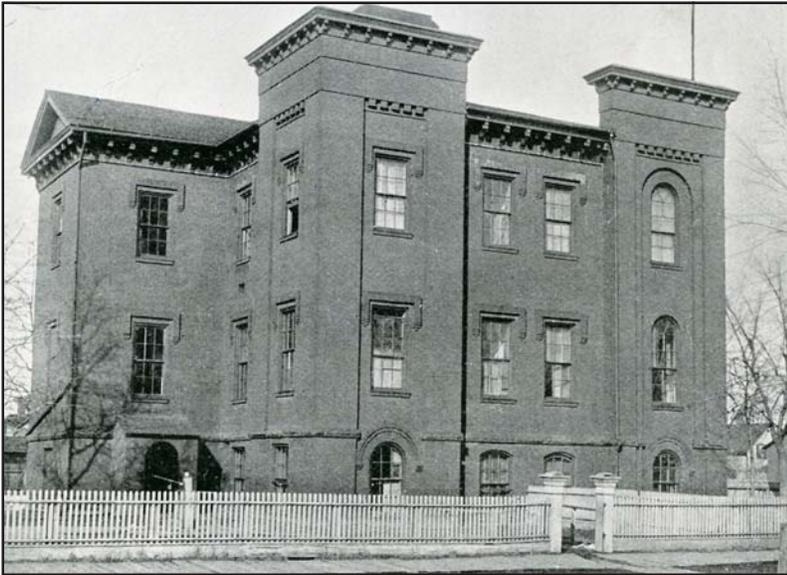
Called Chatterton's Opera House, it was surrounded by saloons, stores, etc. From the street view, no one could imagine what the opera house was like inside. When it opened on September 10, 1879, people discov-

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Historico, published 10 times a year (except July and December), is the official bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Winner, Certificate of Excellence, Illinois State Historical Society. You can download back issues of *Historico* in PDF format by going to our website, sangamonhistory.org or sancohis.org. Send event announcements to historicoeditor@gmail.com.

Ruth Slottag, *Historico* Substitute Editor



*Lincoln School in 1892, formerly Fourth Ward School
Pictorial History of Springfield 1892, Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library.*

On June 6, 1874, however, the nine-member board voted 5-4 to name two women as principals for the next year: Estella Hughes to replace Charles Wilcutt as principal of the Third Ward school and Carrie Moore to replace A.M. Gardner in the Fourth Ward. Both women previously had been teachers and assistant principals at the same schools.

The votes caused a vociferous, controversy. The uproar played out in the columns of the city’s two main newspapers, the Illinois State Journal and the Illinois State Register, and at an “indignation meeting” sponsored by those who thought Gardner should have been retained in Ward Four.

Some newspaper letter writers claimed that the board’s majority, led by Dr. D.M. Griffith, wanted mainly to oust Gardner. Wilcutt’s firing, they said, was simply cover for the anti-Gardner effort. The suggestion was that Griffith felt Gardner had gone too far in punishing a student

Clearly, however, the main point of contention was whether “ladies” were up to the job of principal. Among those who – somewhat surprisingly, in his case – argued “no” was John M. Palmer, who was

appointed to the school board in April 1873, just three months after he stepped down as governor of Illinois.

One of Palmer’s first initiatives on the board had been to lead the effort to close Springfield’s segregated “colored school” and admit African-American students to the ward and high schools. That change also was to take effect in the 1874-75 school year, though it apparently played no role in the principal controversy. The Journal summarized arguments about the principal changes.

“Gov. Palmer and Mr. Johnston expressed the opinion that the placing of lads entirely under the government of women was dangerous. Women were good teachers, but they did not believe (women) were fitting examples to the elder boys under the immediate direction of lady principals. The philosophy of life required the combined example of both sexes in moulding the character of the youth. Both gentlemen were opposed to so hazardous an experiment as the employment of lady principals.”

Griffith denied any personal objection to either Gardner or Wilcutt. The main reason for replacing the two men with women, he said, was to save money – female principals in the ward schools

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OFFICERS

- President Vicky Whitaker
- Vice-President Stephanie Martin
- Secretary Mary Mucciante
- Treasurer Jerry Smith
- Past President Ruth Slottag

DIRECTORS

Term Ending 2020

- Pete Harbison
- Susan Helm
- Eugene Walker
- Roger Whitaker
- Elaine Hoff

Term Ending 2021

- Mary Alice Davis
- Kathy Hoffmann
- Sue Massie
- Doug Polite
- Cinda Klickna

Term Ending 2022

- Jennie Battles
- Kathy Dehen
- Mary Schaefer
- Larry Stone
- Angela Weiss

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- Legal: Bruce Beeman
- Special Projects: Elaine Hoff
- Finance: Doug Polite, Larry Stone
- Membership: Stephanie Martin
- Nominating: Mary Alice Davis
- Hospitality: Marion Leach
- Publicity and Marketing: Ruth Slottag
- Oral History Project: Angela Weiss
- Publications: Roger Whitaker
- Programs & Special Events: Mary Alice Davis, Vicky Whitaker
- Social Media: Mary Schaefer

STAFF

- Mike Kienzler, SangamonLink.org Editor

Meet the Candidates

Members of the Society are to vote on four officers and five board candidates who are seeking three-year terms ending in 2023. The slate was advanced by the nominating committee and approved by the board on May 13. Because we are unable to hold an Annual meeting in June, all members who have paid their dues as of May 31, 2020 are eligible to vote. Please use the ballot on Page 7 and indicate your selection, then mail it to the address on the ballot or E-mail your vote to schs@gmail.com and give your name.

Officer Nominees

For President, Stephanie Martin



Martin, a librarian in the Sangamon Valley Collection at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library, earned her bachelor's degree in American Studies from Knox College in Galesburg, a master's in Historical Administration from Eastern Illinois University and a master's in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is president of the Springfield Jaycees. Martin previously served on the Illinois Bicentennial Coordinating Committee of Springfield.

For Vice President, Susan Helm

Helm is retired from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine where she served as Director of Marketing. She joined the Society in 2016 and has served on the Publicity and Marketing Committee. She has served on several community boards including the Springfield Junior League, Old State Capitol Art Fair, Festival of Trees, Friends of Memorial Medical Center, Lincoln Memorial Garden, Springfield Road Runners Club, and the University of Illinois Sangamon County Extension Horticulture Committee. She directs a trail run at Lincoln Memorial Garden.



For Secretary, Elaine Hoff



Born, raised and receiving her education in Michigan, Elaine Hoff taught special education in Michigan and northern Illinois before moving to Springfield in 1967. For most of her professional life she worked in the field of disability rights, most recently as policy advisor for the Illinois Attorney General, retiring in 2003. Hoff has been affiliated with a number of disability rights organizations, founding a local group addressing needs of "kids at risk" and an organization that advocated for gifted children's programs. She was first elected to the board for a three-year term in 2011 and has chaired the Society's Special Projects Committee since 2014.

For Treasurer, Jerry Smith

Smith, who is a Springfield native, is seeking his sixth term as Treasurer. He earned an associate's degree from Springfield College in Illinois and pursued studies in business administration at Southern Illinois University. For most of 35 years, he traveled the United States opening and managing various hotels in Florida, Colorado, Ohio, Indiana, North Carolina, Montana, Maryland, Alabama, and finally back to Springfield to retire. After returning "home" in 2006, he managed the conversion of the Springfield Renaissance Hotel to the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel for three years. He volunteers at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Pleasant Plains Historical Society's historic site, Clayville.



BOARD CANDIDATES

Three-Year Terms Ending in 2023



Sarah Adams – Adams is the Curator of Collections and Interpretation at historic Edwards Place and the Springfield Art Association. She has worked in the museum field since 2012 with a focus on history and anthropology. Adam's research interests include 19th century history, religious culture, women's history, and historic foodways. She holds a bachelor's degree in religious studies from Western Illinois University and a master's in museum studies from the University of Kansas.

Vincent Chappelle – A native of Chicago's south side, Chappelle has had a lifelong interest in history Africana history. He serves on the board of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, where he has worked as a docent, archivist and historical researcher since the Spring of 2018. Chappelle has served on the Sangamon Experience Advisory Board, assistant to the executive director of the Garvey-Tubman Arts and Research Center, and the Illinois History Collaborative (Young Professionals Historical Network). He pursued a bachelor's degree in Africana Studies at Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina.



Entertainment *cont'd.*

ered a beautiful hall. The main floor could seat 600; there were two tiers of box seats with red plush seats. The balcony with wooden seats could hold 900 people. The hall was surrounded with gilt and cherubs and a large chandelier hung from the middle of the ceiling.

Chatterton's was where famous actors and actresses performed. Touring companies often arrived by train into Springfield to give performances. There were plays that drew huge crowds, and on nights of plays livery cabs lined up on the street to drop off well-dressed patrons. Literary figures such as Henry Ward Beecher (in 1877 and 1886), Oscar Wilde (1882), and Mark Twain (1885) to name a few, presented lectures. There were minstrels, musical performers, and bands such as John Philip Sousa's 60-member band that performed here six times.

For over 45 years Chatterton's provided great entertainment for Springfield. When the building was condemned as unsafe, it closed; its last night was May 13, 1924.

The early 1900s saw the addition of many theaters, some staying in existence for decades. A popular venue that opened in 1907 was the Majestic Theater on South Fifth Street between Capitol and Jackson. It could seat 1500. Starting as a venue for serious theater, it became a vaudeville house in 1914 and then switched to movies in the 1920s. Jack Benny, Will Rogers and other stars performed there. The Majestic became the Roxy Theater in the 1935 and showed movies until 1978. It was torn down in 1979.

Probably the most recognized theater was the Orpheum, built in 1927 at 122 North Fifth Street. The Orpheum was a lavishly decorated



*The Senate at 509 E. Monroe from 1929-1983.
Courtesy of the Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library.*

palace designed by E.P. Ruppert of the Chicago firm, R. Levine and Co. for \$2 million. The lobby was 50 feet high, surrounded by mirrors. Embellished plaster relief work and large Doric columns were painted in ivory and gold. Bronze benches with red upholstered cushions sat below oil paintings. Two grand, red carpeted staircases on each side of the marble-floored lobby led to the balcony. The auditorium could seat 2,700 people. A \$50,000 organ was installed. Sparkling chandeliers hung in the lobby, foyer, and the ballroom. In addition to the theater, there were 18 stores, a pool hall, a 12-lane bowling alley, a café, a ballroom and lounges. Many of the rooms were furnished with expensive carpeting, antique furniture and chandeliers.

Famous stars of the time came to perform, and the theater showed the latest movies, their titles advertised in large letters lit with electric lights on the huge marquee in front of the building. The facade had huge columns and a large sign with Orpheum spelled out in vertical letters.

In 1965 the Orpheum met a sad and tragic end. It was bought by the Illinois National Bank for \$600,000 and demolished to make room for drive-through bank lanes.

The Kerasotes Brothers, Gus and Louis, were instrumental in opening theaters in Springfield starting with a nickel-odeon called The Royal at Sixth and Monroe (1909-1920), followed by the Savoy, Sixth near Jefferson (1912), the Strand, and the Senate.

The Strand opened in 1921 on the southeast corner of Sixth and Washington in the former First National Bank Building and sported a grand organ that could reproduce sounds of a

steamboat whistle, hooves of horses pounding on the ground, etc. It closed in the mid-1960s.

The Senate at 509 East Monroe had started as The Gaiety in 1907. Kerasotes bought it in 1929 and renamed it the Senate. It closed its doors in 1983.

In the 1940s, '50s and '60s downtown drew crowds to the movie theaters. There were up to seven to choose from: the Orpheum, Tivoli, Lincoln and Roxy were on Fifth Street, the Strand on Sixth Street, the State on Washington Street and the Senate on Monroe Street. The area became known as Theater Row.

There were also other theaters around town. South Town on South Grand Avenue and 11th opened in 1915 as the Empress, was renamed South Town in 1939, and closed in 1959. The original marquee is still in existence and advertises stained glass for the studio now in the building. The Pantheon at Ninth and North Grand operated from 1926-1964, and the Esquire on S. MacArthur near South Grand from 1937-2004.

Springfield has been a mecca of theaters and halls that provided entertainment for many throughout the years.

Pete Harbison is a life-long resident of the Springfield area, has deep ties to the community. His father Shelby Harbison moved here after World War II and eventually became general manager of WTAX radio. The younger Harbison, a 1974 graduate of Springfield High School, worked at WCIL radio from 1981-1983, while earning a bachelor's degree in communications from Southern Illinois University and pursuing graduate work. Pete Harbison worked in Education Services at the Illinois Historical Preservation Agency from 1985-2016. He volunteers with the Oral History Department at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.



Mary Mucciante retired from the Illinois Department of Human Services in 2015 after 43 years in State government. She serves on the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library Board of Trustees. She is a member and current Chaplain of the Springfield Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution. Mucciante holds memberships in the General Society of Mayflower Descendants in Illinois, Illinois Women in Leadership and the Lincoln Land Community College's Academy of Life Long Learning. She earned a bachelor's degree in legal studies and a master's in public administration from the University of Illinois Springfield.



Ruth Slottag is a past president of the Society. A public relations and communications professional for more than 30 years, she retired from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine's Public Affairs Office, and is now a partner in Slottag Communications. Before joining SIU, she served as public relations director for the Illinois Association of Park Districts. Slottag is a past chair of the Springfield International Visitors Commission, a past president of the Central Illinois Public Relations Society of America, and served on the Illinois Bicentennial Commission. She currently is Regent of the Sergeant Caleb Hopkins Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution. Slottag holds a bachelor's degree in speech communication from Western Illinois University and a master's in communication from the University of Illinois Springfield.



Principals *(Cont'd from Page 3)*

were to be paid \$90 a month under the school salary schedule, while male principals received \$125. In that case, the former principals' supporters asked, why weren't male principals also replaced in the First and Second Ward schools?

In a letter to the editor published in the Journal, a pro-Gardner citizen (he or she signed the letter "Parent") asked the other obvious question:

"Why this great difference in salary? The lady Principals of the Third and Fourth Wards are expected to teach the same number of children (probably more) as their male predecessors did; they will be on duty the same number of hours, days and weeks that the former Principals were; and in all respects they are selected to fill the places and do the duties of male Principals. ... Their education and experience are equal, doubtless, to the requirements of their male co-laborers, in other words. Then why this discrimination against the ladies? If the lady Principals are fitted for the positions to which they have been appointed, by all means pay them

the same salaries as male teachers of the same grade."

Gardner's backers also pointed out that a majority of Fourth Ward voters (only men could vote at the time, of course) had signed petitions supporting Gardner's retention as principal, but the ward's two school board representatives, Griffith and E.P. Burlingham, voted to fire him. People attending the July 16 "indignation meeting" passed a resolution calling for both to resign.

"(By) their arrogant tone to the people and dictatorial course pursued (they) have shown themselves unworthy public servants and forfeited our confidence and respect as such," the resolution said.

None of the majority school board members took the meeting's advice, and the dispute faded well before school began that fall. Wilcutt opened a private school for the 1874-75 school year, and both he and Gardner were teaching in the Sangamon County Normal School (the county teachers' training school) in June 1875.

Carrie Moore worked only one year as Fourth Ward principal. She returned to the teaching ranks in 1875-76 and

remained a teacher at the ward school and then McClernand School until at least 1890. She was replaced as Fourth Ward principal by a man.

Estella Hughes had been a Springfield teacher for about 15 years when she was named Third Ward principal. She apparently showed some administrative talent before that – when women were ruled eligible to serve as county school superintendents in 1873, a letter to the Journal suggested she be considered. "Her experience, quickness of perception and other necessary qualifications make her peculiarly fit," the anonymous writer said. There's no indication Hughes considered the idea, and Sangamon County didn't get its first female county superintendent until 1892.

Hughes remained Third Ward principal through the 1877-78 school year. In 1880, a newspaper article said she was principal of the intermediate grades at the Bettie Stuart Institute, a prestigious private school for girls. She returned to the public schools as an elementary teacher at Edwards School for a period, then moved to Bloomington sometime in the 1880s.

Official Ballot

Sangamon County Historical Society

2020-2021 Officers and Board Members

Slate of Candidates recommended by the Sangamon County Historical Society Board of Directors

(See Page 4 and 6 for candidate biographies.)

Officers

President - Stephanie Martin
 Vice President - Susan Helm
 Secretary - Elaine Hoff
 Treasurer - Jerry Smith

Board Members - 3-Year Terms

Sarah Adams
 Vincent Chappelle
 Pete Harbison
 Mary Mucciante
 Ruth Slottag

Yes, I approve

No, I disapprove

Write In vote: _____

Vote and mail this ballot to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744
 or E-mail your vote to *schs@gmail.org* and give your name.

Sangamon County Historical Society MEMBERSHIP/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. You may also join or renew on line by going to sangamonhistory.org. Our membership year runs from June 1 to May 31. All memberships—except Business/Corporate and College/University students—cover adults and children 16 and over at the same address. Be sure to include their names.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone _____

Cell: _____ E-mail _____



Status

- New Member
- Renewal
- 2020-2021 Gift of Membership

from: _____

Phone

2020-2021 Membership Levels

Except for business and college/university student memberships, all levels listed below cover adults and children 16 and over living at the same address. Please list their names in the space below:

- Regular Membership - \$30 College /University Student (Individual)- \$20
- Pioneer Level - \$100 Settlers Level - \$250
- Trailblazer Level - \$500 Lifetime - \$700

I am adding a donation of \$ _____

Sangamon County Historical Society

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