



# HISTORICO

## Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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### A Special Message: Keeping You, But Not History, at a Distance

Until the crisis is passed and we can resume a normal meeting schedule, the Society will continue to post video programs online and feature them in *Historico*. *Historico* is also posted online at sangamonhistory.org if you wish to view it digitally.

### Springfield Project and Lindsay Memorial Bridge

By Lance Warren  
Burns & McDonnell

The original idea for constructing a lake in Springfield with a sufficient fresh water supply, facilities for water sports, and adjacent lake side cottages began with a report published in 1925 by a local city planner named Myron H. West. It was not until 1928 that the City of Springfield seriously considered West's recommendations. In the same year, the City retained two engineering firms to conduct an extensive study, provide a report for a proposed impounded water supply and determine the best process and location for its construction. The two firms consisted of Pearse, Greeley & Hansen of Chicago, Illinois and Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company based in Kansas City, Missouri. Both firms' reports confirmed that the current source of water supply was grossly

inadequate to sustain the City's growing needs and that a new lake should be established in the Sugar Creek Valley of approximately ten billion gallons. In 1929 Burns & McDonnell was selected to design the lake along with an accompanying assortment of other structures and facilities. Later the firm was again engaged to design the Fox Road Bridge, which was renamed the Vachel Lindsay Memorial Bridge.

In 1930 the project's proposed financing was presented to the voters of Springfield in the form of a bond issue with a price tag of \$2,500,000. Sixty percent of the voters overwhelmingly supported the initiative. Soon after, about 116 tracts of land controlled by 110 owners was purchased for the new lake site followed by additional engineering studies, surveys, designs and finally, construction. Ultimate-

ly, the Lake Springfield Project, as it became known, consisted of constructing two dams for enclosing the Lake along with an accompanying spillway, six new highway bridges, the reconstruction of one railroad bridge, and twenty-five modifications to existing highways including relocation of seven miles of nearby State Route 106.

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It's membership renewal time! Thank you for supporting the Society this past year. I've enjoyed the video presentations and *Historico* articles as we adapted. I hope you have found them worthy of support. We will get back to in person programming for 2021-2022. I would like to thank Lance Warren for a great video presentation and article about Burns & McDonnell's designs for Lake Springfield and the Vachel Lindsay Bridge. Congratulations to the LLCC Academy of Lifelong Learning on a successful Sangamon County Big Read! Thank you for bringing this program to our area and including the Society in the activities. I will be talking online with Sangamon Experience in June about the Society and the Sangamon Valley Collection. The Society will not be holding our Annual Meeting again this year, but we are planning a gathering for the fall. Board candidates will be named in the June *Historico* along with a ballot to be mailed in.

*Stephanie J Martin*

## Burns & McDonnell

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Numerous changes were made to telephone power lines, along with twenty-five miles of additional roads, approximately twelve miles of sewers, a water purification plant, light and power services plant, a large bathing beach and beach house, bank protection around the Lake perimeter, and a large tree nursery (300,000 trees) for reforesting denuded areas adjacent to the Lake. The new Lake consisted of approximately 70 miles of shoreline and 4,300 acres of marginal lands. The water impounded forming the Lake amounted to 6,000-acre feet or 21.6 billion gallons.

Spaulding Dam, dedicated in honor of the Commissioner of Public Property, Willis J. Spaulding and one of the two dams designed by Burns & McDonnell for the project, was the principle structure for holding the waters of Springfield Lake in check. Spaulding played a

key role in his leadership and advocacy for the Lake Springfield Project. The Spaulding Dam was designed as an earth structure 2,000 feet long and 55 feet high. It included five automatic drum gates under a spillway bridge to enable the passage of flood waters and to ensure the level of the Lake would not vary more than 12 inches during a flood.

Among the many impressive structures designed by Burns & McDonnell for the Lake Springfield Project was the Vachel Lindsay Memorial Bridge. The bridge was named in honor of Springfield's own famed poet who died in 1931. The bridges' structure was designed to simulate a multiple arch bridge consisting of a series of cantilevers with heavy counter weighted abutments. Exclusive of the abutments there were 11 spans making the structure 1,394 feet long and 34 feet 10 inches wide. Spanning the length of the bridge

was a roadway of 22 feet in width plus two 5-foot sidewalks on the perimeters. At its highest point, the bridge was approximately 52 ½ feet above the valley floor and 32 ½ feet above the normal water surfaces of the lake.

The Lindsay bridge was designed to join the Recreation Point to the west of the Lake and serve to preserve one of the historic roads across the Sugar Creek Valley. The architectural decoration on the bridge's façade was subdued and generally followed classical precedents. Along with several other impressive bridges architected for Springfield Lake this was the first time Burns & McDonnell had designed this kind of structure. Because of the Vachel Lindsay Memorial Bridges' outstanding design, construction, and aesthetic beauty it continues to be an architectural treasure and crown jewel of Lake Springfield.

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Stephanie Martin, *Historico* Editor

## Burns & McDonnell

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Overall, Burns & McDonnell was responsible for designing each of the major structures of Lake Springfield and served as the consultant throughout the entire construction process lasting over three years. Burns & McDonnell junior partner (co-owner) Clarence S. Timanus supervised the entire project and at the time of the Lake's dedication provided one of the keynote speeches. At the time of the Lake's completion, it constituted the largest artificial body of water in the State of Illinois.

Lake Springfield was filled with water to its normal level in May 1935 and was dedicated and opened to the public a few months later in July.



### OFFICERS

President.....Stephanie Martin  
Vice-President.....Susan Helm  
Secretary.....Elaine Hoff  
Treasurer.....Jerry Smith  
Past-President.....Vicky Whitaker

## Membership Renewal

The Society's membership year runs from June through May. The membership renewal form is on the back of the newsletter. The Society appreciates your continued support.

### Fall 2021

The Society will not host an Annual Meeting in June, but has planned a gathering for September at Clayville Historic Site. The 2021 grantees will present about their projects at this event.

The Annual Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk is planned for Sunday, October 3rd.

## New Brochure Highlights Historic Sites

The Shine a Light Project group that presented for our February video and the Central 3 Community First Project, Inc have completed a brochure highlighting Firehouse No. 5, the Lincoln Colored Home, and the Judge Taylor House/ Ambidexter Institute. The brochure is available at the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum.



## New Members

Phillip & Katie Hepp

Chet Brandt

### DIRECTORS

#### Term Ending 2021

Mary Alice Davis  
Kathy Hoffmann  
Sue Massie  
Doug Polite  
Cinda Klickna

#### Term Ending 2022

Larry Stone  
Kathy Dehen  
Mary Schafer  
Angela Weiss  
Jennie Battles

#### Term Ending 2023

Sarah Adams  
Vincent Chappelle  
Pete Harbison  
Mary Mucciante  
Ruth Slottag

Please make note of our official mailing address:

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**Sangamon County Historical Society**  
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## 2021-2022 SCHS MEMBERSHIP FORM

*(Please Print)*

### SELECT THE MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

Regular Membership - \$30     Pioneer - \$100     Settler - \$250     Trailblazer - \$500  
 Lifetime Membership - \$700 (*one time fee*)     College/University Student (individual) - \$20.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Significant Other Name (where applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Maiden Name (where applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Full Names of others included in your membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*This is a GIFT for: (Name of Recipient, Mailing Address (Street, City, State, Zip))* \_\_\_\_\_

*I am adding a donation of \$* \_\_\_\_\_.

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744

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