



Historico

The newsletter of the Sangamon County Historical Society
 308 E. Adams Street, Springfield, IL 62701
 www.sancohis.org 217.522.2500

October, 2006

Wednesday, October 11 5:00 PM

Board Meeting

Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room South

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Tuesday, October 17, 7:00 PM

Program

Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room North

The Panic of 1819—Its Cause and Significance in Illinois History

David Brady

A largely forgotten drama—the incredible impact on Illinois from a global climatic disaster, the eruption of the Indonesian Volcano Tambora in 1815—will be brought to life again by David Brady, a Springfield historian and a onetime recipient of the Studs Terkel award from the Illinois Humanities Council.

The ripple effects of the eruption were far reaching, so much so that life in what is now Sangamon County and other parts of Illinois was affected greatly. The event triggered rapid economic expansion in much of the country west of the Alleghenies. But, it was short lived, serving as a predecessor to an economic panic in 1819 and a resultant depression lasting until 1825. During the up and down upheaval, banking, agriculture, transportation, government and politics went through radical transformations—leading in part to major population shifts toward central and northern Illinois.

Brady, an employee of Prairie Archives, has a diversified background. Since graduation from Divernon schools, he has been a construction worker, a mechanic for John Deere operations and the owner of a blacksmith shop. He has written a book on Divernon and presented research papers for the Illinois State Historical Society, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Macoupin County Civil War Round Table and other organizations. He has focused much of his effort on Illinois frontier history, especially the role of Native Americans. Brady is a member of the Board of Directors of the Sangamon County Historical Society.

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Around Town

October 7 1:00 PM Iles House
Les McAlister *Sangamo Clocks*

October 12-13 IHPA
8th Annual Illinois History Conference
Prairie Capitol Convention Ctr.

October 13 ISHS
Centennial Awards Banquet
Chicago

October 19-21 Symposium
Museum of Funeral Customs
*Death and Loss in America:
Colonial Era to the Present*

October 26 7:00-9:00 PM UIS
Lincoln Legacy Lecture Series
Lincoln and America's Faith
Brookens Auditorium

Report on September program -

Phil Gonet, General Manager of CWLP from 1998-2003 gave a fascinating talk on the history of public utilities in Springfield. Though the Springfield Water Works Company began supplying public water from the Sangamon River in 1860, it was not until 1916, following the establishment of several private companies, that the City Water and Light Company name was used; and not until after the Supreme Court ruled in 1918, in a suit filed against the city by the Springfield Gas & Electric Company, that it was determined public bodies could own their own utility plants, establishing a precedent for public entities across the country. CWLP and CILCO then both supplied power to city customers until 1966, resulting in dual power lines often traveling the same routes.

Gonet went on to tell of the over-riding interest of both Willis and Charles Spaulding in providing clean water. Willis Spaulding, *the father of Lake*

We welcome new members!

Russell & Mary Barker
Stephen & Patricia Leonard
Randy & Kathy Culver Nickell

Springfield, hired his brother, Charles, as engineer for the plant on the newly created lake, and Charles proceeded to invent a filtration system, called the Spaulding Precipitator, that was sold throughout the world. That system was considered the standard until Dave Wyness, Superintendent of Waterworks, invented a clarifier with no moving parts in 1967, which is still used around the world.

Phil then asked his audiences to provide the answers to a multiple choice 'fact sheet': there are 2,011 public power companies in the US; no tax dollars are used in the CWLP budget; the average monthly CWLP electric bill is \$62.58; commercial customers provide 2/3 of CWLP revenue; and there are 1,114 miles of electric lines maintained by CWLP. The final question of the evening, to be awarded a prize was: "How many power poles does CWLP maintain"? The grand winner was Mary Larsen, who had reasoned that if there were 1,114 miles of lines, there were probably about 30 poles to a mile, so she answered, 33,420. Turns out there are another almost 6,000 poles for connections and turns out there, but she was the closest to 39,000 poles, so she took home shiny, new CWLP glasses from which to drink her CWLP clarified water.

Centennial Awards Banquet

This year's Illinois State Historical Society's Centennial Banquet will include awards to two Springfield businesses: State Journal-Register for 175 years and Security Bank for 100 years. Congratulations!

10th Annual

Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery

Don't forget the date—October
8 Noon to 4:00 pm!

(Best time to come is about 2:00)

Portrayals this year will include the 1st burial, children from the Home for the Friendless, an Underground Railroad conductor and Oak Ridge's dedication speaker to conclude Oak Ridge's 150th anniversary year.

In addition the Historama will feature historical groups, authors, games, music and a demonstration by the Museum of Funeral Customs.

Don't miss it!!

Rochester Cemetery Walk

October 15 1:00-4:00 pm
Rochester Cemetery
West Main St., Rochester, IL

The Stone house will feature craft demonstrations: quilting, spinning, weaving, rug hooking, hearth cooking and others.

SCHS membership for 2006-2007

If your name is not on this list, you have not renewed your membership for the current year, and this will be the last Historico you receive.!

Life Members

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R-Lou Barker
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 Mary R. Barringer
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 Mary Blumle
 Estella P. Booth
 Sallie I. Brittin
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 Dr. Vandella Brown
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 Diane Canavan
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 Susanne Wall
 Richard R. Wallin
 Betty Washko
 Ellen M. Whitney
 Wynn T. Wilkins
 Randall F. Witter

Membership time!

There are still several members who have not renewed for this year, and the time has come for action!

We have several exciting new projects in the works: again a holiday party for members only; two interesting spring programs scheduled in neighboring communities; a spring bus tour; a series of articles about the steam mills of Sangamon County- and much more! Join now and don't miss out!

Just send your membership check to: 308 E. Adams, '01

New Book!

Take a look at our books at the Cemetery Walk on October 8th! We have a brand new one: Dick Hart's Lincoln's Springfield: The Underground Railroad.

The President's Corner -

It really is a small world.

Ronald C. White, one of the top American history scholars in the country, partly because of his work on Abraham Lincoln, will be in Springfield soon to speak on Lincoln's faith in God. Along with Mark Noll, another Lincoln scholar, White will examine aspects of Lincoln's religiosity from 7 to 9 p.m. on October 26 at the University of Illinois at Springfield's Brookens Auditorium. The event, part of the Lincoln Legacy Lecture Series, is sponsored by UIS's Center for State Policy and Leadership and professor Phillip Paludan, the Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair of Lincoln Studies. The event is free and open to the public.

Ron White is someone I know quite well. I know him not only as an authority on Lincoln, but as a good friend who has sat next to me year after year at the annual Rose Bowl football game in Pasadena, California, on New Year's Day. I have been to most of the Rose Bowl contests since 1990, and, more often than not, Ron has been at my side. Believe me, he could lecture on college football too.

How did this come about? Well, Ron and Jeff Prugh, my old roommate in journalism school and life-long buddy, were high school students at the same time during the 1950s in Glendale, California. They emerged from those days as close friends. Decades later, Jeff, who spent part of his journalism career as a sportswriter for the *Los Angeles Times*, was able to line up tickets each year to the Rose Bowl game. Two of those tickets always were available for Ron and me. Our friendship blossomed, even though Ron, a true California guy, rooted hard for the West Coast team each year while I pulled just as hard for the squad from the Big Ten Conference.

I remember vividly the years in the early 1990s when Ron—a Presbyterian minister and current research fellow at the Huntington Library near Pasadena—first took a serious interest in Lincoln. During his early research forays into Springfield, he stayed at my home. His effort finally paid off when national recognition was accorded his book a few years back on Lincoln's second inaugural address. Now, Ron is working on a biography of Lincoln for Random House, to be published in 2009, the year of Lincoln's 200th birthday. The bio will include a deep look at Lincoln's faith.

Taylor Pensoneau

County History

Curtis Mann is heading up a special project to bring out a new, comprehensive county history. There has not been such a publication since 1912, and one is long overdue!

Towards that end, one of the first projects was to list important dates, and it was thought that you might find them interesting.

We will list a few in each issue of the Historico.

YEARS TO REMEMBER

1818—Illinois became the 21st state. (Campbell)

1821—Sangamon County was created by the state. (Campbell)

1821—Sangamon County covered 4,000 square miles. (Russo)

1824—Sangamon County boundaries were reduced. (Campbell)

1825—Springfield was named the county seat. (Campbell)

1825—County Court House moved from northwest corner of Second & Jefferson to northeast corner of Sixth & Adams. (Hart)

Sources: Bruce A. Campbell, *The Sangamon Saga: 200 Years: An Illustrated Bicentennial History of Sangamon County*, 1976; Edward J. Russo, *Prairie of Promise: Springfield and Sangamon County*, 1983; Richard E. Hart, compiler, *Lincoln's Springfield: The Public Square (1823-1865)*, 2004.



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<i>Fall program Schedule</i>		
October 8 Noon—4:00 pm	<i>10th Annual Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery</i>	
November 21	<i>Revitalizing Union Station and Union Square Park,</i> 7:00 Lincoln Library, Carnegie Room North	Anthony Rubano
December 20	<i>History for the Holidays: Governor Yates Mansion</i>	<i>Members only</i>

History in the Making

SAM BRUNK, Jr., longtime Ball township farmer and retired state employee, is compiling a biographical listing (most with pictures) of those buried in the David Brunk cemetery, which is located 50 yards north of Lakeshore Drive on East Orchard Lane. His cemetery project is part of a larger David Brunk family history, but the cemetery listing itself should be a fine addition to the Sangamon Valley Collection. He currently has the information on his computer and in a three ring loose-leaf binder.

* * *

CAROLYN (SCHS Board Vice-president) and husband, R.L. MOORE, long-time Rochester residents who once owned the historic Kensington House in Rochester, are trying to locate where Martin Van Buren stayed on June 17, 1842, when the former president was traveling

west to stump for the Democrat party. According to the *Illinois Register*, a party of both Loco focos (Democrats) and Whigs entertained the President while gala preparations were planned for his entry into Springfield, next day. Chief entertainer was an up-and-coming Whig lawyer, Abraham Lincoln. The Moores have narrowed their search to three likely houses. Their dream is to designate a small soon-to-be-repaired bridge near the house as the Lincoln-Van Buren Bridge.

* * *

DICK HART, one of the movers and shakers behind the Iles House restoration and a long-time Springfield preservationist (he also led the German Settlers Row project), is working on a history of Ball Township. Dick's series of articles on the underground railroad in Springfield have been running in the Abraham Lincoln Association newsletter.

And currently SCHS is in the process of creating a book from them that will be available for purchase at the Cemetery Walk

* * *

JANICE PETERCHAK (SCHS Board member and past president) is completing a biography of Springfield resident and SCHS member Walter E. Hanson, a World War II Navy veteran who, after the war, earned engineering degrees at the University of Illinois and, for several years, served as Illinois' bridge engineer. Today, the Springfield firm he founded with two partners and now called, Hanson Professional Services, directs engineering and architectural projects throughout the world out of offices in major American cities. Jan's biographical essay on Hanson will appear in the December issue of *Structure* magazine.

Gary Vitale