



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

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MARCH 2024

## Historian to Share Look at Springfield, Circa 1850s

Historian Curtis Mann will take Society members and their guests on a walk back in time on Tuesday, March 19, when he shares what he's learned from looking through the daily diary of a Springfield man who faithfully recorded his 1850s comings and goings as well as the daily weather.

Mann, the recently retired head of the Sangamon Valley Collection at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library, discovered the diary penned by Edward W. Morse among the library stacks and in reading it recognized its value as a window into life here in the Lincoln era. Morse was a Springfield businessman. The diary was written in pencil.



**HISTORIAN** Curtis Mann will share his look at diarist's notes on Springfield life, people, weather and more, circa 1800s, when he speaks to he Society on March 19.



"Morse's diary provides fascinating details about Springfield and his employment as a store clerk," says Mann. "Later in the year, Morse begins a career as a traveling salesman and recounts his extensive trip selling medicine in southern Illinois." The diary covers 1856.

Mann has spent decades researching a variety of subjects relating to local, regional and state history. A past president of the Society, last June he became only the second person in the history of SCHS to be presented with the organization's Lifetime Achievement award. His talk, which is free and open to the public, begins at 5:30 p.m., and will be held in the Library's Carnegie Room.

## Competition Opens for Society's 2024 Grant Program

Individuals and organizations with an eye on preserving local history can apply now for a 2024 Sangamon County Historical Society Special Project Grant. The deadline for receiving applications for the competitive awards program is April 20. Winners will be announced in June at the Society's annual dinner.

The applications, for grants of up to \$1,000 for projects to preserve and promote interest in the history of Sangamon County history, will be reviewed by a committee and recommended to the Society's board for approval.

Winners will be notified by mail and invited to the annual dinner at which they will be able to provide additional details of their project which must be completed within a 12-month period. In line with the Society's mission, the grants must be used for permanent projects that help preserve and promote interest in Sangamon County history.

The grants cannot be used to underwrite book writing/publishing, private events, volunteers, or advertising.

In 2023, the Society gave grants to the Chatham Area Public Library to digitize a portion of 70 audio cassette tapes containing oral history interviews of senior residents; Central 3 Community First Project, Inc. to purchase display cases to secure artifacts at its restored First Black Firehouse Museum; Dana Thomas House Foundation and Springfield Art Association to host a program exhibit highlighting the work of nationally known artist and poet Leigh Gross Day; Temple B'rith Sholom for a bronze plaque memorializing the "Hebrew Ground" at Oak Ridge Cemetery; and the Springfield Art Association to restore a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century sofa once owned by Illinois Governor Augustus French, currently housed at Edwards Place.

Applications are available on line at the Society's website, [sangamonhistory.org](http://sangamonhistory.org). under "Grants." Completed forms can be submitted on line or mailed to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Special Projects Committee, P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744.



# From the President's Desk



CINDA KLICKNA

## Your Grant Fund Donations Make a Difference

Thank you to the members who have donated to the Sangamon County Historical Society Special Projects Grant fund. These grants help fund historic projects within the county that help our Society's mission of preserving and promoting interest in the history of Sangamon County.

We are still accepting donations and welcome any amounts so that we can provide needed resources to worthy projects.

Completed forms can be submitted online or mailed to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Special Projects Committee, P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. The deadline is April 20, 2024. Award winners will be announced just prior to our annual dinner at the Island Bay Yacht Club in June where they will be presented with their awards and given an opportunity to talk about their projects and goals.

\* \* \*

Mark your calendars for exciting programs this month and April, and May. (more information in this issue).

On March 19 we will be in our usual location at the Springfield Public Library with the presentation by historian Curtis Mann who always shares great stories.

April and May will provide new venues for

our programs. The First Black Firehouse, being restored, will be the site of our April 16 program with Ken Page sharing its history, the work being done to acquire artifacts, and the brave firemen who answered the call during the fiery 1908 race riot.

In May we again focus on African American individuals – those who served as Underground Railroad conductors.

Many are buried at Oak Ridge cemetery so our program will be held at the Central Illinois African American Museum, near the entrance of the cemetery.

One of the Underground Railroad conductors helped others and years later was killed by a lynch mob during the 1908 race riot.

Plan on an interesting program, a compelling story, and an actor portraying one of the conductors.

We already have programs set for next fall. So much amazing history exists in our own backyard.

We thank you for being members, for attending our many programs and events, and for helping to keep history alive.

*Cinda*



**Historico**, published 9 times a year (except July, August & December), is the official bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Springfield, Illinois.

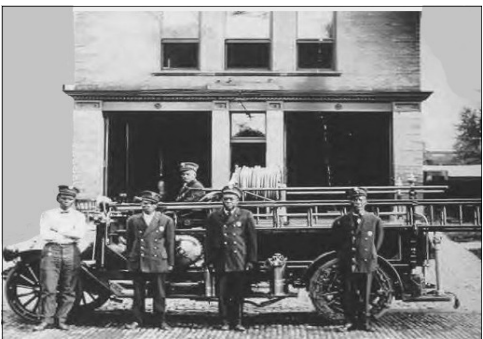
*Winner, Certificate of Excellence, Illinois State Historical Society.*

You can download back issues of *Historico* in PDF format by going to our website, [www.sangamohistory.org](http://www.sangamohistory.org) or [sancohis.org](http://sancohis.org). Catch us on Facebook and Twitter. Send event announcements to [historicoedi-](mailto:historicoedi-)

# Tours, Talks, More Ahead Plus Plans for Annual Dinner, Too

With a little help from Mother Nature, Society members and their guests will get a change of meeting scenery as we head into Spring and quickly jump into summer. April, May and June will switch to sites apart from our normal monthly meeting spot, the Carnegie Room at the City of Springfield's Lincoln Library.

April 16 will take us to the restored historic Engine House 5 at 1310 East Adams Street, for a tour and talk underscoring Springfield's long history of racial prejudice that branded it the city's "colored fire-



house" from its construction in 1901 until after the fire department made moves to racially integrate in the 1950s that included moving the fire company to a new building in 1954.

Our May 21 meeting will be at the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, 1440 Monument Avenue (just south of the Monument Avenue entrance to Oak Ridge Cemetery) for an as promised revisit to the state-wide effort honoring the legacy of Civil War era Underground Rail Road conductors including those buried at Oak Ridge.

The Society launched the first in a series of special dedication presentations last May that included installing the first gravesite "Freedom

Train" plaque created by the Tazewell County Genealogical and His-



torical Society which initiated the effort.

And take note: our fiscal year ends May 31. Dues for 2024-2025 will be due by that date. Our annual dinner will be Wednesday, June 12,



again at the Island Bay Yacht Club (above) where you'll be able to enjoy the beautiful water views, dine on delicious food, cast a vote for your favorite SCHS candidates and meet the winners of this year's Special Project Grant winners. Renewal and Annual Dinner reservation forms will be in the future editions of *Historico* and on-line.



## 2023-2024 OFFICERS

President.....Cinda Klickna  
 Past President....Susan Helm  
 Vice-Presidents.....Mary Alice Davis, Stephanie Martin, Ruth Slottag, Vicky Whitaker  
 Treasurer.....Jerry Smith  
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*Term Ending June 2024*

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 Kathy Hoffmann  
 Kathy Dehen

## DIRECTORS

*Term Ending June 2025*

Lee-Ann Burgener  
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 Larry Stone  
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## DIRECTORS

*Term Ending June 2026*

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 Scott Pillsbury  
 Linda Schneider  
 Ruth Slottag



Please make note of our official mailing address:

**SCHS**  
**Box 9744**  
**Springfield, Illinois,**  
**62791-9744**

# Meeting the Edwards

*History of Edwards Place*

- Built in 1833 by Thomas Houghan
  - The land was purchased from William Kelly – 80 acres
- Bought by Benjamin S. Edwards in 1843 for \$4,000
- Expansion and renovation in 1857



... And getting a history lesson in the process is what members of the Sangamon County Historical Society and guests received on Tuesday, February 20 in a program that explored the families that lived next door or close to the site that housed one of Springfield's most celebrated families and socialites: the home of Benjamin Edwards.

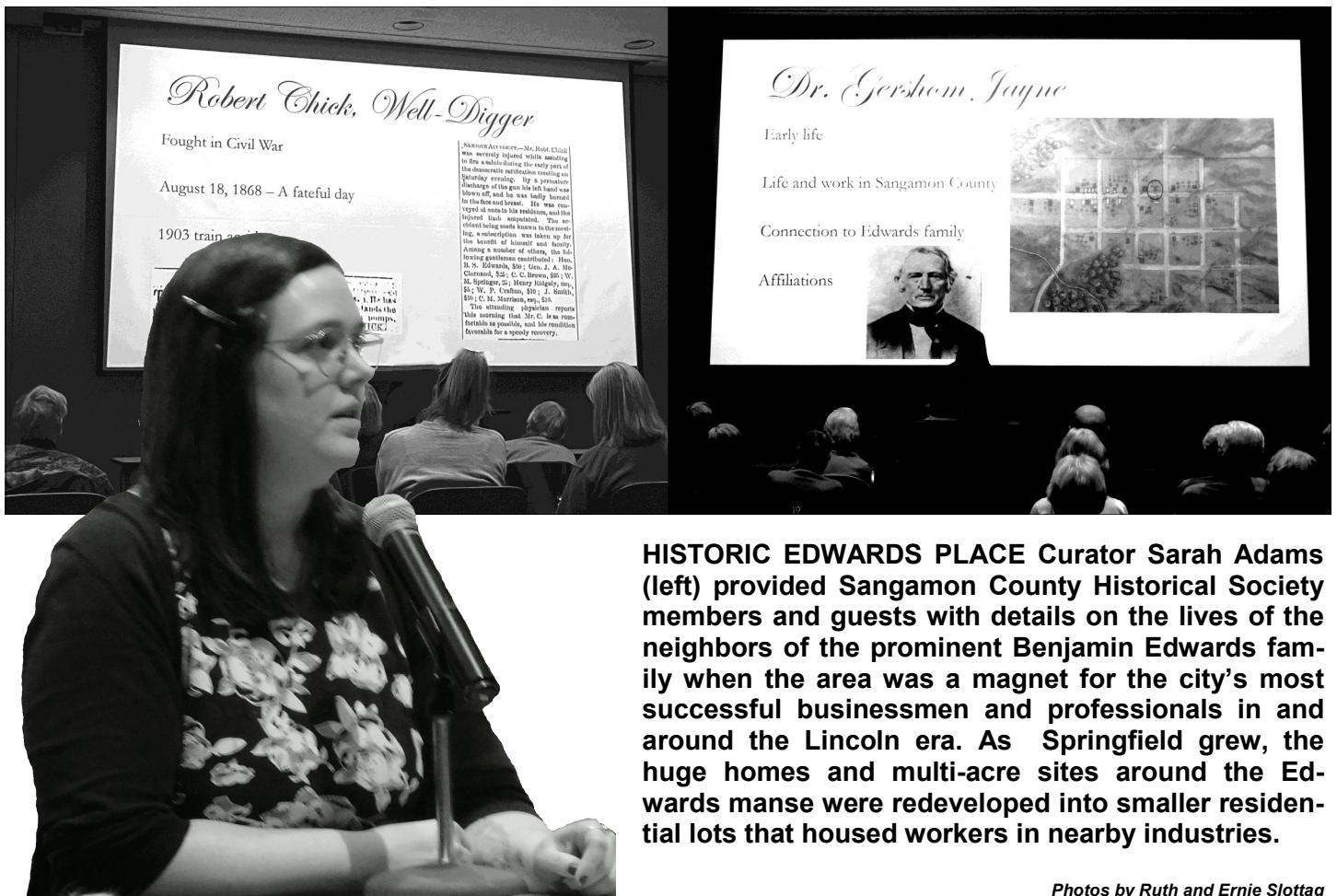
Serving as guide was Sarah Adams, curator of the Edwards Place Historic Site who took attendees through the neighborhood of what was once the city's most elite address, housing in addition to the Edwards family, doctors, lawyers and prominent business leaders whose homes rivaled each other in splendor.

# Place Neighbors...

Today, mainly all that remains in the area is the Edwards Place mansion, now a historic site owned and operated by the Springfield Art Association which has its headquarters on the property, an early 1900s gift from Edward's daughter for use as an art school and gallery.

The original house (left) was expanded and remodeled into an Italianate villa in the 1850s and was the site of lavish dinner parties, summer picnics and Lincoln-era political rallies.

The Edwards family occupied the home until the early 1900s. The Springfield Art Association added an art gallery in the late 1930s which it expanded in 1968, an art studio in the late 1940s and an annex in the 1990s.



**HISTORIC EDWARDS PLACE** Curator Sarah Adams (left) provided Sangamon County Historical Society members and guests with details on the lives of the neighbors of the prominent Benjamin Edwards family when the area was a magnet for the city's most successful businessmen and professionals in and around the Lincoln era. As Springfield grew, the huge homes and multi-acre sites around the Edwards manse were redeveloped into smaller residential lots that housed workers in nearby industries.

Photos by Ruth and Ernie Slottag

# State Museum Seeks Your Connection to Route 66

Have a connection to Route 66?

The Illinois State Museum wants to hear from you...and record your recollections!

The effort is part of a National Parks Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program to support the preservation of the most significant and representative historic Route 66 buildings, structures, road segments, and cultural landscapes in the eight states including Illinois through which the route passes. Toward that effort, the Illinois State Museum is looking for individuals who:

- Have memories of driving on Route 66, or traveling with family or for business.
- Were involved or whose families were involved in operating a restaurant, hotel, or auto service business along the route.
- Participated in the building, maintenance

or rerouting of the Mother Road. • Have any other firsthand experiences with Route 66 that they would like to share.

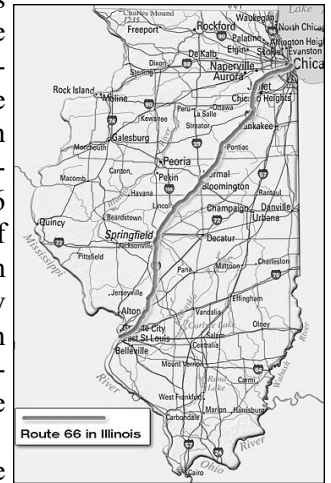
The historic roadway, which passed through Springfield, operated between 1926 and was decommissioned in 1985.

“Interview participants will be asked to sign a permission form granting rights to conduct and preserve the interview for legal use to the public,” notes SCHS member Judy Wagenblast, Illinois State Museum Route 66 Project Coordinator. “Monetary compensation is not offered,” she adds.

The 30 to 60 minute interviews will be done online using software similar to Zoom, so access to a computer with internet, microphone, and camera is preferred, says Wagenblast. “In-person interviews can be arranged for those without computer access.”

The interviews will take place during the first half of this year. Video recordings of the interviews and transcriptions will be made available to the public on an online database in 2026 as part of the 100th anniversary celebration of the Historic Route 66.

For more information or to arrange for an interview, contact Wagenblast at [jwagenblastp@gmail.com](mailto:jwagenblastp@gmail.com) or call 217-494-2952.



## Getting Your Kicks Left Its Imprint on History

As the Federal Highway Administration on its website points out, “*Get your kicks on Route 66!*” left a lasting impact.

“At one time or another most of us have heard this 1946 song written by Bobby Troup and sung by the unforgettable Nat King Cole. But many of us also remember the theme song composed by Nelson Riddle that accompanied a popular 1960s television series entitled *Route 66*, that followed three young men driving around America working odd jobs and helping folks in need,” the FHA says.

The series, which ran from 1960 to 1964 and continued in syndicated reruns for decades, helped immortalize this road, it notes.

But its history really dates back to the early 1900s when Cyrus Avery, a Tulsa, Oklahoma realtor and owner of a coal company, began acquiring oil leases.

“With the need to reach the barren

lands around him and the need for a roadway from the Midwest to the western lands connecting cities along the way, the road became a reality. With John Woodruff of Springfield, Missouri, Avery promoted the idea of bringing prosperity to Tulsa and other points west.”

Unlike the straight Lincoln Highway, Route 66 did not follow a linear course, the FHA says. “Its diagonal course linked hundreds of rural communities from Chicago to Kansas and on to Los Angeles, enabling farmers to transport grain and produce. By the 1930s the trucking industry was using Route 66, an easier drive across the prairie lands and milder climates than the northern routes.”

Adding to its popularity was author John Steinbeck who proclaimed Route 66 the Mother Road in his 1939 book *The Grapes of Wrath*. Like Route 40 and the National Road, Route 66 has shared the title *The Main Street of*

*America*. With all this attention plus the popularity of the automobile, the filling stations were built with clear association to particular petroleum companies.

Restaurants, souvenir shops and auto camps sprung up. Landmarks of all kinds were built and the road was at its peak of popularity, says the FHA.

“Post-Depression and post-World War II families, equipped with jobs, money and an automobile, planned cross-country road trips via Route 66 to see all the sites.”

In 1956, the Federal Aid Highway Act was passed. The Act provided a financial umbrella to underwrite the national interstate and defense highway system.

By 1970 nearly all of the original Route 66 was replaced by a modern four-lane highway.

And with that, “the popularity of the old road began to decline,” the federal agency points out.

# Calendar

## A Heads Up Guide to Area History Events

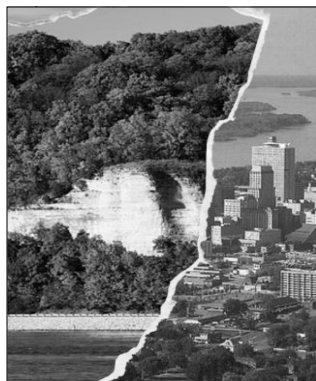
Send announcements, information, photos and illustrations to [historicoeditor@gmail.com](mailto:historicoeditor@gmail.com). You can still see a list and links to all the Zoom programs the Society offered during the Pandemic on-site meeting shut-down, by going to the SCHS website, [sangamonhistory.org](http://sangamonhistory.org).

**Tuesday, March 19: *The Weather and a Little More: The 1858 Diary of Edward W. Morse.*** Historian Curtis Mann shares with SCHS members and guests what he's learned from the contents of an 1858 diary penned by a Springfielder who religiously recorded not only the weather but also daily life. Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield. It's free and open to the public. **Time:** 5:30 p.m.

**Tuesday March 26, Illinois Womens Artist Project 2024** Lincoln Land Community College's Academy of Life Long Learning sponsors this free presentation featuring Kristan H. McKinsey, Director of the Illinois Women Artists Project at Bradley University who with colleagues has amassed a catalog of hundreds of Illinois women artists—many unknown outside their community—who made artistic expression as their primary life's career. She will explain how the project evolved from a group who searched for historically significant women whose histories had never been widely shared. Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield. *Free but registration requested.* Call 217-786-2261. **Time:** 10 a.m.

**Friday, March 29 Victorian Game Night at Edwards Place.** This new event and Historic Edwards Place (700 North Fourth Street) fundraiser will feature six stations of Victorian era card and dice games for people to learn and play. Some will be familiar to the modern person, like draw poker and a version of blackjack, and some may be entirely new, like Hazard and Whist. Prizes will be given to the top players! Tickets, at \$65 per person, include heavy hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine, and a signature cocktail, and the program. **Time:** 6:30 p.m.-10 p.m.. For information, call 1-217-523-2631

**April 1-April 4: Rivers and Rights:** Illinois State Museum sponsored Illinois Riverbend to Memphis Bus Tour. Registration is now underway for this four day, three night tour that explores the Illinois connection to the American Civil Rights Movement while taking in the towns and natural landscape that line the Mississippi River. *For registration and fee information* (ranging from \$877 to \$999 covering hotel and transportation costs) call 217-524-4222.



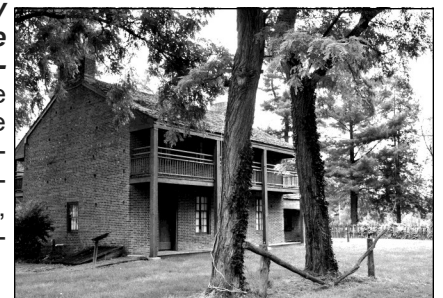
**Saturday, April 13: *Let's Be Frank, Perfectly Frank:*** That's the title of a presentation to be given by nationally prominent Frank Lloyd Wright expert and master storyteller Tim Totten when he speaks at a fundraising dinner sponsored by the Dana-Thomas House Foundation. Totten will weave a story of love, loss, and the Emperor of Japan as he recounts the personal triumphs and tragedies of Frank Lloyd Wright. Reservations due by April 1; P.O. Box 7123 Springfield, Il. 62791 or at [dana-thomas.org/special-events](http://dana-thomas.org/special-events) Tickets for the event, from at the Inn at 853 in Springfield, are \$100 per person. **Time:** 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. *For reservations and information* call 217-782-6776.

**Tuesday, April 16 Sangamon County Historical Society Tour, Historic Engine House 5** at 1310 East Adams Street, Springfield, A tour and talk underscoring Springfield's long history of racial segregation that designated it the city's "colored firehouse" from its construction in 1901 until after the fire department made moves in the 1950s to racially integrate the department, moving the fire company to a new building. The site has been restored and now serves as a museum. **Time:** 5:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, May 21: Honoring the Legacy of Civil War Underground Rail Road Conductors.** Members and guests of the Sangamon County Historical Society will gather at the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, 1440 Monument Avenue (just south of the Monument Avenue entrance to Oak Ridge Cemetery) for an promised return program about the state-wide effort honoring the legacy of Civil War era Underground Rail Road conductors including those buried at Oak Ridge. The Society installed the first grave plaque last May. **Time:** 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, June 12: SCHS Annual Dinner** Island Bay Yacht Club , 5:30 p.m. Ticket and reservation information will appear in future editions of *Historico* and on-line,

**Saturday, September 21 and Sunday, September 22: 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Broadwell Inn at Clayville.** Look for future details here as the Pleasant Plains Historical Society, which operates the historic site, develops the celebration's full schedule.



***Sangamon County Historical Society***  
P.O. Box 9744,  
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**Sangamon County Historical Society 2023-2024 MEMBERSHIP/*MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form***

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. Our membership year runs from June 1 to May 31. All memberships cover adults and children 16 and over living at the same address. Be sure to list their full names. *PLEASE PRINT.*

Your Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse/Significant Other First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's maiden name where applicable \_\_\_\_\_ Your e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Your address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State , Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Full Names of other family members included in your membership:

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

— This is a GIFT (Name of recipient, mailing and e-mail address):

— I am adding a donation to the Society in addition to my membership in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**MARCH 2024      MARCH 2024      MARCH 2024      MARCH 2024      MARCH 2024**