



Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 9744 Springfield, IL 62791-9744 | 217-525-1961 | schsoffice@gmail.com

www.sancohis.org | www.sangamoncountyhistory.org

September Program at Historic Clayville

Step Back in Time: An Evening at Historic Clayville

Tuesday, September 15

5:30 pm at Historic Clayville

12828 State Route 125,

Pleasant Plains, Illinois

The Sangamon County Historical Society will open its 2026–27 program year with a special evening at Clayville Historic Site, just east of Pleasant Plains, on Tuesday, September 15, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

This September program offers members and guests an opportunity not simply to hear about local history, but to experience it in the very place where so much of that history unfolded.

Clayville traces its beginnings to the Broadwell family, who settled along Richland Creek in 1820. The historic Broadwell Inn became an important stopping place along the stage coach route between Springfield and Beardstown and remains one of



Sangamon County's most significant early structures. The settlement took the name Clayville in honor of Henry Clay, reflecting the area's strong ties to Whig politics and the people and ideas that helped shape nineteenth-century Illinois.

The evening will also mark something of a homecoming for the Sangamon County Historical Society. Clayville's restoration was already underway when our Society was taking shape in the early 1960s, and SCHS was an early supporter of efforts to preserve and share the site with the public. More than six decades later, returning to Clayville provides a meaningful opportunity to celebrate that shared commitment to preserving Sangamon County's history.

Josh Pryer, President of the Pleasant Plains Historical Society, along with fellow board members and volunteers, will welcome SCHS members and guests and share the remarkable story of Clayville—from its early frontier and stagecoach years through (Cont. p. 4)



Highlights

Sept. Program

Sept. 15 at
Historic Clayville

Nov. Program

November 17 at
Lincoln Library -
Betsy Dollar

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If you have had a recent move, please remember to log into the website to update your address in the system, so you can stay up to date on Historico!

From the President's Desk



LINDA SCHNEIDER

As we start our 2026-27 year, an informal Board meeting was held on August 12 to discuss what issues/projects we should focus on in the coming year. Board recruitment was discussed and the need to add additional members to our Board. If you are interested in serving on the Board or have a recommendation of someone who you think would be interested, please reach out to me at either our email address - schsoffice@gmail.com or phone - 217-525-1961.

Throughout the summer, membership renewals have been coming in. We are grateful for those memberships which help support the mission and purpose of the Sangamon County Historical Society. Your membership dues help support the costs for our monthly programs which are free and open to the public, the printing and mailing costs of the SCHS monthly newsletter, the annual Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk, and the upkeep of our online encyclopedia of Sangamon County history maintained and edited by Mike Kienzler. Membership dues also support our annual grant program - information and photos of our 2026 grant recipients are included elsewhere in this newsletter. If you haven't had a chance to renew yet this year, I encourage you to either renew via our website at www.sancohis.org or mail a completed membership form located in this newsletter with your check to our mailing address - P.O. Box 9744, Springfield IL 62791-9744.

My sincerest thanks to our hardworking volunteer Board - Sarah Adams, Brian Barstead, Lee-Ann Burgener, Mary Alice Davis, Susan Helm, Kathy Hoffman, Cinda Klickna, Stephanie Martin, Dawn Phillips, Scott Pillsbury, Sam Sgro, Ruth Slottag and Ashley Yoggerst. Committees have been working throughout the summer finalizing plans for our 2026 Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk on Sunday, October 4, and our 2026-27 slate of programs. We begin our year at the historic Clayville site on Illinois Route 125 near Pleasant Plains on Tuesday, September 15 at 5:30 p.m. I hope to see you there!

Linda



2026-2027 Officers

President - Linda Schneider

Vice President - Scott Pillsbury

Past President - Cinda Klickna

Treasurer - Sam Sgro

Secretary - Sarah Adams

Directors

Term ending 2027

Brian Barstead
Mary Alice Davis
Susan Helm
Kathy Hoffman
Stephanie Martin
Ruth Slottag

Term ending 2028

Lee-Ann Burgener
Dawn Phillips
Ashley Yoggerst



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Winner, Certificate of Excellence, Illinois State Historical Society

You can download back issues of Historico in PDF format by going to our website: www.sancohis.org.

Send event announcements to: schshistorico@gmail.com

2026 Annual Meeting Recap



On June 16, 2026, the Sangamon County Historical Society held its Annual Meeting at the historic Pasfield House. Approximately 50 people enjoyed a dinner buffet and program which included awarding grants to three recipients. The 2026 grant recipients were: 1) Mary Frances of Untold Stories; 2) Tara Ryan-Walker of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum (AAHM); and 3) Tom Ryder, President, and Allicent Smith, Project Manager, Education Committee of the Dana-Thomas House Foundation.



Special recognition was given to the Barringer family for their support of the annual Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk. The first cemetery walk was based on Dr. Floyd Barringer's book, "A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery." His wife, Winifred, served on the first walk committee. Since that time, all four of the Barringer children - Judith, Dave, Doug and Dan - and nephew, Justin, have participated in the annual event. They are the ones that very capably coordinate the parking of visitor cars and welcome guests to the cemetery.



Also recognized with a special award was Mary Alice Davis who has served as chairman of the "Echoes of Yesteryear: A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery" committee for the past 10 years -- from 2015 through 2025. She was the driving force to bring it back after it went into hiatus in 2008. To reinstate the walk, Mary Alice worked very closely with Mike Lelys, then Executive Director of the cemetery. She recruited a committee of a half dozen members to select the historic individuals to portray, write scripts, select talented actors from the local theater community, and to promote and execute the many details to recreate the Society's gift to our community.

The 2026-27 Board slate was introduced and Board members and officers remain the same as the preceding year.

Article by Linda Schneider

All photographs by Ernie Slottag



September Program, Cont.

periods of restoration, uncertainty and renewal. Their work represents the very heart of grassroots historic preservation: not simply saving buildings, but preserving the stories, character and sense of place that connect one generation to the next.

Guests will also learn about the tremendous community and volunteer effort that helped rescue Clayville after years of deterioration and

continues today through the dedication of those who care for its historic buildings and grounds. But Clayville is far from a place frozen in the past. Today, the historic grounds remain an active part of the community, welcoming visitors for educational programs, festivals, tours and special events. In fact, guests are encouraged to look ahead to Clayville's

upcoming Fall Festival, a seasonal highlight that brings the site to life with demonstrations, activities, and family-friendly programming that celebrates the region's heritage. Its historic barn, pavilion and grounds are also available for weddings, private gatherings, business events and other venue rentals, offering a wonderfully distinctive setting where new memories can become part of Clayville's continuing story.

Clayville's story is ultimately one of community —of people recognizing that a piece of their history was worth saving and then rolling up their sleeves to save it.

Please join us for what promises to be a memorable September evening as we step outside our usual meeting room and into the history itself.

Article by Dawn Phillips

2026 Grant Recipients

Three grants were awarded by the SCHS to fund special projects that help preserve and promote local history. The grant awards were announced June 16, at the Society's annual meeting. Awards were presented to the following:

Untold Histories – \$150 to add the death date to the gravestone of James Edward Thompson, who is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. Thompson was an African American 1908 Race Riot survivor and grocery store owner on the East side of Springfield. He went on to be an active leader in Springfield.

Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum – \$1,000 to digitize and preserve the extensive collection of photographs belonging to the Osby family, one of the oldest

African American families in Springfield. The collection includes family snapshots and images from various photography studios across central Illinois. The goal is to provide online access to these photos to help identify the photos.

Dana Thomas House Foundation - \$1,000 to reprint their booklet titled "Historic Dana-Thomas House Neighborhood Walking Tour" and to develop an app to enhance the visitor experience of both the Dana Thomas House and Susan's neighborhood. The booklet brings the neighborhood alive and highlights the people who lived in Susan's neighborhood. The app will be an educational tool about Susan Lawrence Dana and her family, Frank Lloyd Wright, the Dana Thomas House, and the prominent people who once lived near Susan.

Echoes of Yesteryear: A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery

“Echoes of Yesteryear: A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery” will be held from noon to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, October 4 at Oak Ridge Cemetery, 1441 Monument Avenue in Springfield. (The last tour begins at 3 p.m.)

“This year’s Cemetery Walk will provide visitors with a glimpse into the history and heritage of Springfield and Sangamon County,” said Susan Helm, chair of the cemetery walk. Actors dressed in period costumes will portray six individuals who are representative of everyday life in the 1800s and 1900s. The personal stories of each historic figure will be interpreted at his or her respective gravesite in the cemetery. These authentic stories, which have been thoroughly researched, will take the audience back to an earlier time and provide insight into their lives.

Elizabeth Graham (1892-1982) was teacher at Springfield High School and a close friend of Susan Wilcox as well as a mentor of Vachel Lindsey. Both are buried here about 15 feet apart.

John L. Lewis (1880-1969) served as president of the United Mine Workers for 40 years and was one of the 20th century’s controversial union leaders. As a lobbyist he helped secure passage of the nation’s first workers compensation law by the Illinois General Assembly.

Augusta Senf (1871-1964) is buried in the area that holds the graves of dozens of children who died young. Three or four of the infant children belonged to Max and Augusta Senf, who were immigrants from Germany.

Joe Gomes (1859-1919) was a balloonist who often traveled with a big show or circus and make daily ascensions. He later gave it up for a less hazardous occupation as an entertainer singing in vaudeville and minstrel shows.

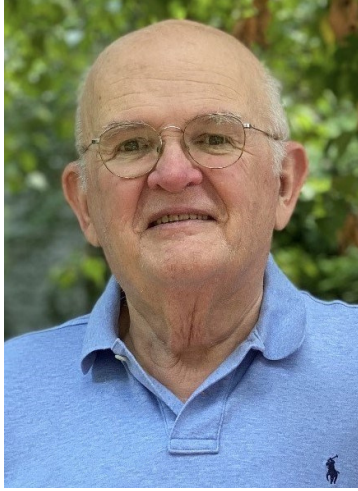
Josephine Snowden Meek (1890-1979) was in line to be valedictorian of Springfield High School’s graduating class until her last semester, when her grades suspiciously slipped and a white male was named valedictorian. Meek was the mother of activist/singer Vesta Nichols and grandmother of Dr. Victoria Nichols Johnson.

Robert Preston Taylor (1876-1951) was the first African American to graduate from Lincoln College of Law. He worked for the Illinois State Museum as a taxidermist, carpenter, reparatory, exhibits technician and custodian. His civic activities included the Lincoln chorus and Civic Orchestra.

The event is free and open to the public, although donations are accepted. Parking will be available in designated areas of the cemetery.

Attendees will be transported by bus to the first gravesite, then walk to the other gravesites before boarding the bus back to the parking area. The walk is approximately 1/2 mile. Refreshments will be available for purchase by the Sangamon County Historical Society.

In Memoriam: Roger Whitaker



Roger Whitaker passed away on August 2 in his home. He was a Life member and past president of the Society. Roger served on the Society board for 15-plus years and as President from 2012-2014. He helped bring the Society into the 21st century by being its first Web Server Manager and Webmaster.

Roger was employed as chief engineer for Long Elevator Company/Kone Elevator Company. He loved history and traced his family back to the 14th century and beyond to its Viking roots.

He also was a ham radio operator and 60+ year member of the American Radio Relay League.

He is survived by his wife Victoria Katz Whitaker, five children, ten grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and a sister.

A private graveside ceremony will be held in Virginia, Ill. Condolences may be left at www.butlerspringfield.com.

SangamonLink Stories: Recognizing Labor Day

As owner, editor and publisher of the Illinois Tradesman, **Robert E. Woodmansee** (1864-1952) was one of Springfield's leading trade unionists for more than 50 years.

Woodmansee worked in the editorial and circulation departments of the Illinois State Journal before he acquired the weekly Tradesman, which reported union news and supported labor issues, in 1897. The paper was almost immediately endorsed by the Springfield Federation of Labor.

He continued to operate the paper until 1948, when he sold it to the labor federation.

Woodmansee also was a member of the Springfield School Board from 1916 until 1948 and served as president of the board in 1937.



Sangamon County's first labor strike (1872-1873) failed, but it was only the first step in a coming struggle between business owners and the growing power of unionized workers.

The issue in December 1872 was a demand by the county's coal miners for a raise in the rate they were paid per bushel of coal. An estimated 400 miners from the five mines operating in the Springfield area met at Oak Ridge Park (today's Lincoln Park) at 10 a.m. on Dec. 13, 1872.

Calendar

A Heads Up Guide to Area History Events

Save the Date!



Send announcements, information, photos and illustrations to schshistorico@gmail.com.



Sept 12: World History Game Night

Registration required.
Ancient board games - includes food/drink. 21+
www.edwardsplace.org
217-523-2631

Historic Edwards Place



Sept. 19-20: Edwards Place Fine Art Fair

2-day free art market.
www.springfieldart.org
217-523-2631

Springfield Art Association

Sept. 30: Bourbon Done Wright

Registration required.
Bourbon tasting at Motorheads.

www.dana-thomas.org

Dana-Thomas House Foundation



Dana-Thomas House Foundation

Oct 8: Mourning Customs in America

Free history lecture from Carla Sofka
www.edwardsplace.org
217-523-2631

Historic Edwards Place



Sangamon County Historical Society 2025-2026 MEMBERSHIP/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, P.O. 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 _____

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 \$ _____

Sangamon County Historical Society
P.O. Box 9744,
Springfield, IL 62791-9744
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FALL PROGRAMS

September 15
Historic Clayville

October 4
Echoes of Yesteryear Cemetery Walk

November 17
Betsy Dollar - Christmas at Marshall Fields

Want to get involved?



Consider joining a committee. It's a great way to give back while preserving and promoting Sangamon County history.

Committees:

Programs/Special Events
Membership
Grants
Cemetery Walk
Finance