

# Lincoln Newsletter

A publication of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission

Beardstown, Illinois

First Quarter 2010

## Abraham Lincoln ~ inventor

We know Abraham Lincoln as a lawyer, politician, orator/rhetorician, but do we ever think of him as an inventor?

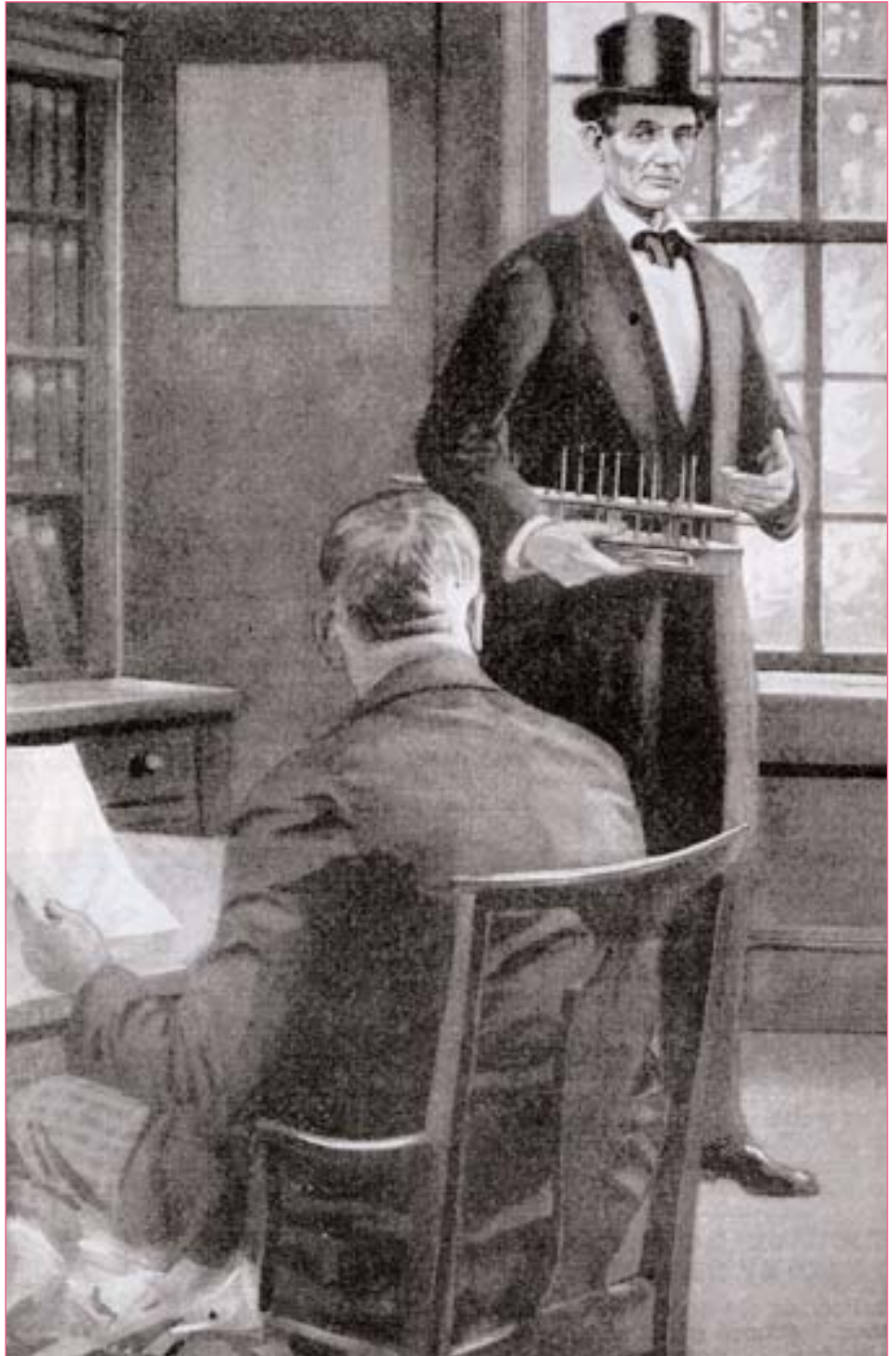
Lincoln is the only president to hold a patent. His invention was a device to bouy flatboats over sandbars.

We are familiar with Lincoln's interest in water travel, his trip on the steamboat *Talisman* up the Sangamon River from Beardstown and back, and his support of a canal system during his legislative career. This interest began in the early 1830s, when he freed a flatboat belonging to Denton Offutt from the Rutledge milldam at New Salem. Offutt was so impressed by Lincoln's cleverness that he declared that Lincoln would captain the steamboat he planned for the Sangamon. This boat was never built, but Offutt did hire Lincoln as clerk for the store that he opened in New Salem.

Years later, in 1848, Lincoln witnessed the captain of a steamship bouying the vessel over a shoal in the Detroit River as his family returned to Springfield from Washington, D.C., when he was a member of the House of Representatives. This experience inspired him to design a device involving inflatable chambers that would enable a boat to be lifted over shallow water areas without the necessity of offloading cargo, as he had had to do in the Rutledge milldam incident.

In October and November of 1848, Lincoln wrote a description of this invention and with the help of a Springfield mechanic, Walter Davis, built a model which today resides in the Smithsonian Institution. Lincoln whittled parts of the model himself, spending both home time and office time on the task, to the likely annoyance of his law partner, William Herndon.

On March 10, 1849, Lincoln submitted his application, accompanied by the model, to the U.S. Patent Office. On May 22, 1849, the application was approved as Patent Number 6469.



**Abraham Lincoln shows a model of his invention to law partner William H. Herndon. According to various sources, Herndon did not think much of Lincoln's invention. This image first appeared in a March, 1924, *Popular Mechanics* article.**

His early years on the farm had given Lincoln a mechanical turn of mind. Although he was anxious to leave the “life of the plow,” his youthful experiences provided him with practical knowledge. We are aware of tales of his whittling on the porch of the National Hotel in Beardstown when the Eighth Circuit met here, but there are also accounts of his examining tools when he stayed at farmhouses during his travels on the circuit. It was his practicality that led to his invention.

In his book, *Lincoln the Inventor*, Jason Emerson discusses the importance of this invention:

“...[the invention] showed the mechanical genius of his mind and his way of thinking and analyzing, his penchant for expanding his learning and understanding disciplines other than politics, his fidelity to the political belief of internal improvements, his attempts at scholarly lecturing, and his admiration and fostering of invention and innovation as president. To understand Lincoln the inventor is to better understand Lincoln the man.”

(Emerson, Jason. *Lincoln the Inventor*. Carbondale: SIU, 2009).

### Commissioners

Suzanne McClure, Chairman  
217-323-3442

Paula Woods, Vice Chairman  
217-323-4514

Connie Foley, Secretary  
217-323-5205

Ann Chelette, Treasurer  
217-323-2559

Arline Bley  
217-323-2323

Leigh Morris  
217-371-3148

Dale Robertson  
217-323-3344

The Old Lincoln Courtroom  
&  
Museum Commission  
PO Box 381, Beardstown IL 62618  
Web: LincolnInBeardstown.org

## New look for commission as new year dawns

It is a new year and a new look for the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission.

Upon the completion of his first term as a commissioner and serving as the first chairman, the Beardstown City Council reappointed Leigh Morris to a second four-year term.

Commissioners George Bell and Tina Rohn did not seek reappointment. The commission regrets the loss of these fine commissioners, but is pleased to welcome Connie Foley and Dale Robertson to four-year terms in their stead.

The four remaining seats are filled by current commissioners Arline Bley, Ann Chelette, Suzanne McClure and Paula M. Woods, who were reappointed in 2009 to four-year terms.

Commission officers for the ensuing term are: Suzanne McClure – chairman; Paula Woods – vice chairman; Connie Foley – secretary, and Ann Chelette – treasurer.

Committee coordinators were appointed as follows:

Budget Committee: Ann Chelette; Building & Grounds Committee: Dale Robertson; Display Committee: Connie Foley; Friends of the Courtroom Committee and Foundation Establishment Committee: Suzanne McClure; Suzanne McClure; Newsletter Committee and Publicity Committee: Leigh Morris, and Volunteer Committee: Paula Woods.

The commission requests that anyone interested in assisting on any of these committees or helping with receptions and other events for 2010, contact Suzanne McClure or any commissioner to volunteer.

The needs and activities of the commission are many, and the commission relies on volunteer staff to efficiently accomplish its goals of ensuring that the site is open, available and interesting for guests who visit. With your support, these goals will be achieved.

## Trivia night set for Sept. 18

Bigger and better – that is what is in store when you participate in the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission’s Second Annual Trivia Night.

This year’s event will be held on Saturday, Sept. 18, at the Beardstown Elks, 205 E. Second St.

The event will feature 10 categories. The theme will be announced later this year.

The fee to participate in the trivia event is the standard \$10 per person. Teams may have up to 10 players.

Participants may purchase food at a nominal charge. The meal will include coffee and iced tea. Cocktails, beer and wine will be available at additional cost.

Mark your calendar and start putting your team together.

Complete reservation information will be in the next issue.

### Special Winter Museum Hours

Saturday, Jan. 30

Saturday Feb. 27

Saturday, March 27

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 31

Sunday, Feb. 28

Sunday, March 28

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Bring your family and friends on the last full weekend of January, February and March to enjoy the story of Abraham Lincoln in Beardstown and the countless historical artifacts displayed in the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum rooms.

And don’t forget to visit our gift shop. We have many new items at great prices.

*See you at the museum!*

# Friends thank supporters, looks ahead at 2010

Each year, our Friends of the Courtroom faithfully mail their annual contributions of \$25, \$50, \$100, \$500 and some larger contributions to our site.

These friends' names are listed on the Wall of Honor located just outside the courtroom. The monies are spent for gift shop purchases, stipends for research, display cases, storage cabinets, archival storage and display supplies, mileage for expert consultants, Wayside Exhibit expenses, and many many other necessities too numerous to name.

The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission is pleased to call the following people our "Friends":

Claude L. Alber  
Tom & Leigh Ann Allen  
AmerenCIPS  
M. Lee Arenz  
Arnold Family Farms

Beardstown Dairy Queen  
Beardstown Elks Lodge 1007  
Beardstown E & M Corporation  
Beardstown Newspapers, Inc.  
Beardstown Sanitary District  
George & Mary Bell  
Benny's Pizza – Antonio Vitale  
Benton & Associates, Inc.  
Arline Bley  
Birdsley Electric – Mr. & Mrs. Doug Birdsley  
Donald L. & Deloris Boice  
Brandt Consolidated  
Judy Briggs  
Mr. & Mrs. H.O. Brownback  
Charles & Jean Buie  
Bob & Carol Burget  
Jeanne Burrus  
Cargil Meat Solutions  
Cass Cable TV, Inc.  
Cass County Abstract Company  
David & Althea Carls

Jess & Ann Chelette  
Don & Blanche Chapman  
Civil War Preservation Trust  
Mrs. Dennis Cluney  
Nancy Cowen  
Atty. Marc & Sally Dahman  
Patricia Day  
Delphos Herald, Inc – Murray Cohen, President  
Joseph A. DeSollar  
Richard Dick  
Mike & Phyllis Dour  
Jane Fearnayhough  
Mrs. David Finney  
First National Bank of Arenzville  
First National Bank of Beardstown  
First State Bank of Beardstown  
Sue Ralston Fletcher  
Ted & Carol Flowers  
Mr. & Mrs. Ross Foley  
Mr. & Mrs. Roy L. French  
Jack & Mary Gist  
Glenn & Patricia Hankins  
Richard A. & Robin S. Hanks  
Judge Bobby G. & Greta L. Hardwick  
Mary A. Hardwick  
Steve & Nora Heiderscheit  
Carl J. & Anna Marie Hood  
Ross & June Houston  
Robert H. Huss  
Illinois Forest Products – Kevin & Chris Massie  
A.C. Jones Trucking, Inc  
Atty. Robert A. & Rebecca A. Jones  
Dr. Sembu & Amutha Kanthilal  
Sue Kindred – Star Café  
Richard Kinstle  
Sylvia Wintermeyer Kinstle  
Judge Carson & Carol Klitz  
Kiwanis Club of Beardstown  
Ethel E. Knippenberg  
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Korsmeyer  
Mr. & Mrs. Willard J. Korsmeyer  
Krell Quickprint & Advertising Specialties – Chuck Krell  
Brent & Mindy Krumboltz  
Dorothy Lamb  
Irene E. Lamkin  
Fairy E. Launer  
Bill & Dot Leistriz  
Dale H. & Wyllia Lovekamp  
Eva Lynn

## Friends of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum

Yes, I wish to become a Friend as follows:

- Mr. Lincoln's Friend: Annual Gift \$25.00  
 Mr. Lincoln's Bar: Annual Gift \$50.00  
 Mr. Lincoln's Barristers: Annual Gift \$100.00  
 Mr. Lincoln's Judges Chambers: Annual Gift \$500.00

I would prefer to become a lifetime member of Mr. Lincoln's Supreme Court.  
My pledge is in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Method of Contribution

- My Annual Gift is enclosed: Amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_
- I'd like to make my annual gift in two equal installments.  
[Mr. Lincoln's Barristers; Mr. Lincoln's Judges Chambers;  
Mr. Lincoln's Supreme Court only]

Installments will be due March 1 and September 1

- I'd like to make my annual gift in four equal quarterly installments.  
[Mr. Lincoln's Supreme Court only]

Installments will be due March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward your payment to:

Friends of the Old Lincoln Courtroom and Museum  
1 Pine Lane  
Beardstown, IL 62618

**Check here if this is a renewal of your membership** \_\_\_\_\_

# Help celebrate Lincoln's Birthday at the courtroom on Feb. 13



Feb. 12 will mark the 201st anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth and we are having a birthday party on Feb. 13 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum.

Everyone is welcome to attend and several activities are planned for the children of our community.

At 1:00 p.m. there will be an Abraham Lincoln look-alike contest for ages 1-year through 12 years old (prizes awarded for first, second and third place). This will take place in the courtroom.

There also will be art activities for children.

## **Lincoln ~ born in Kentucky**

Lincoln was born on Feb. 12, 1809, the son of Thomas and Nancy (née Hanks) Lincoln.

Yes, he was born in a one-room log cabin that measured 16 feet by 18 feet. It had a dirt floor and no glass windows.

The cabin stood on the 300-acre Sinking Spring Farm near Elizabethtown, Ky. However, the farm proved to have rather poor land, unable to produce crops sufficient to support a fami-

ly. In 1811, Lincoln's father purchased a smaller farm with better soil.

The first Lincoln to arrive in America was Samuel. He came from England in 1637, settling in Hingham, Mass. America agreed with Samuel, who was a successful businessman, as well as the father of 11 children.

Lincoln's great-great-grandfather Mordecai, became a wealthy landowner in Pennsylvania and a leading member of society. His son John moved to Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, establishing himself as a prosperous farmer. In turn, John gave his son Abraham 210 acres of the richest soil

in Virginia.

Abraham decided to seek his fortune on the frontier. Thus, he sold his land and took his wife and five children to Kentucky. In a matter of a few years, John owned more than 5,500 acres of the richest land in Kentucky.

Then in 1786 tragedy struck. Abraham and his three sons – Mordecai, Josiah and Thomas (Lincoln's father) – were busy planting corn when a small band of Indians attacked.

Abraham lay dead. Josiah was sent to a settlement for help while Mordecai ran into their cabin. Meanwhile, Thomas, who was just 8 years old, sat next to his father's lifeless body. While in the cabin, Mordecai saw an Indian sneaking toward Thomas. Mordecai grabbed a rifle, aimed at a silver trinket on the Indian's chest and fired. The warrior fell.

Under the law of that time, Mordecai inherited all of his father's estate. He went on to become a wealthy and respected member of Kentucky society.

Fate dealt Thomas a much different hand. Denied any inheritance, he was forced to earn the money needed to buy his first farm through manual

Atty. & Mrs. L. Milton  
McClure

Atty. Milton McClure, Sr.

Chris D. McFail

Lisa McGrath

Earl E. & Doris K. McKenzie

Steve & Cathy Megginson

Mr. & Mrs. O'Neil Meyer

Leigh & Norma Morris

Mr. & Mrs. Mark D. Mulconrey

Warren R. Musch

Seth J. Norburg

Mike & Cristy Nordsiek

David Parish

Joyce L. Potts

Thomas & Elizabeth Prather

Judge Fred W. Reither

Dale & Toni Reller

Dale L. Robertson

Tina Rohn

Steve & Cathy Rolf

Brian "Petie" Ruch

State Bank of Ashland

Mr. & Mrs. Woody Sudbrink

Senator John M. Sullivan

Charles & Judy Taylor

Robert R. & Ruth W. Teel

Jim & Representative Jil Tracy

Marty & Megan Turner

Virginia N. Turner

Steven Twaddle

L.K. Vredenburg Lumber Co.

Mike Wakeland

Walker Nursing Home – Virginia

Walmart

Mayor Robert L. & Nancie R.

Walters

Was Tyson's Drive-In Restaurant

Don & Shirlee Wessler

Paula M. Woods

William M. & Jean Yaple

To add your name to the list of "Friends of the Courtroom" please complete the application form on the previous page (or a facsimile) and mail to:

Suzanne McClure

1 Pine Lane

Beardstown IL 62618

Thank you.

labor or occasional carpentry jobs.

Thomas was highly regarded by his neighbors, who frequently referred to him as “honest.”

Less is known about Lincoln’s mother’s family. The Hankses did move from Virginia to Kentucky in 1779 or 1780. Though uneducated, they were considered to be respected farmers.

Nancy was born in the 1780s, but Lincoln believed she was illegitimate. Lincoln’s law partner, William H. Herndon, quoted Lincoln as saying to him that Nancy was “the illegitimate daughter of Lucy Hanks and a well-bred Virginia farmer or planter.” It is likely that Nancy’s legitimacy will never be known, though no wedding certificate for Lucy has ever been located.

### **On to Indiana**

In 1816, Thomas moved his family to southern Indiana. Lincoln later recalled this was “partly on account of slavery; but chiefly on account of the difficulty in land titles in Ky.”

Thomas did despise slavery, but also found it extremely difficult to compete against landowners who worked their land with slaves. He also had various problems regarding land titles.

Thomas and his family carved out a new home from the heavily timbered wilderness of this portion of Indiana.

Just before his eighth birthday, young Lincoln spotted a flock of turkeys outside their log cabin home. He took aim with a rifle and killed one of the birds. However, Lincoln did not have a taste for killing and would later recall that from that February day in 1817, he had “never since pulled a trigger on any larger game.”

In 1818, Lincoln’s mother came down with the “milk sickness.” Though people realized it was connected with milk, they did not know the cause. Later, it was learned that the illness occurred when people drank milk from cows that had eaten the highly poisonous white snakeroot plant. It generally claimed the lives of victims within seven days of drinking tainted milk. Nancy died on Oct. 5. Her death had a profound impact on young Lincoln and may have bolstered

his already strong distaste for violence and cruelty.

Within a year, Thomas went back to Kentucky in search of a bride. He found Sarah Bush Johnson, a widow in search of a husband.

Sarah’s arrival had a profound and positive impact on young Lincoln.

Lincoln reportedly told a relative that Sarah had been his best friend and then added, “...no man could love a mother more than he loved her.”

It was in Indiana that Lincoln attended school, developing a love of reading and a thirst for knowledge.

However, Lincoln grew more distant from his father. Perhaps some of this alienation was due to the fact that Thomas was emotionally unable to give his son the affection and support he needed following Nancy’s sudden death.

When Lincoln became a teenager, he and his father developed sharp differences over religion.

Then there was the issue of work. Thomas assigned heavy chores to his son, leading to much unhappiness on Lincoln’s part. He even developed a reputation for laziness because of his preference for reading.

As a matter of fact, Lincoln grew rapidly once he was 12, reaching a height of six feet by the time he was 16. This rapid growth took a toll, leaving young Lincoln with little energy for work.

### **Illinois**

Ever eager to be away from his father, Lincoln in 1828 accepted an offer from local merchant James Gentry to accompany his son, Allen, on the trip to New Orleans. The pair took a flatboat load of goods for sale in the Crescent City. It was a grand adven-



**A log cabin typical of the early 19th century.**

ture, but Lincoln did return home and gave his earnings to his father.

Despite a failed attempt to join a steamboat crew, Lincoln remained with his family, helping them in 1830 to move from Indiana to Macon County, Illinois.

Lincoln had grown into manhood. Though he did not know what he wanted, he was certain of one thing – he would never follow in his father’s footsteps.

Opportunity came in an offer from an unscrupulous businessman named Denton Offutt, who asked Lincoln and John Hanks to take a flatboat load of goods to New Orleans. That chance allowed Lincoln to leave his father’s home once and for all.

And upon Illinois’ fertile prairie, Abraham Lincoln found himself and a nation found a leader.

### **Did you know?**

According to the federal government, the holiday celebrated on Feb. 15 of this year is officially “Washington’s Birthday,” though nearly all Americans refer to it as “Presidents’ Day.”

This notion gained in popularity when Congress moved the holiday to the third Monday of February. However, Congress never adopted “Presidents’ Day.”

Lincoln’s Birthday, which falls on Feb. 12, was never a federal holiday. It continues to be an official holiday in a number of states, including Illinois and in neighboring Indiana.

# Mary Todd Lincoln portrayal coming to Beardstown on April 10

On April 10, Pam Brown of Springfield will bring her monologue based on Mary Todd Lincoln leaving the White House to Beardstown.



The performance will be held in the Courtroom at 7:00 p.m.

with a reception to follow.

Some readers will recall Brown's presentation of Mary Lincoln at the Tea with Mary Todd Lincoln last June.

Asked about the motivation behind and

inspiration for this piece, Brown staid it was a selfish one: "I wanted to continue being Mary as long as I could" after closing the play *The Last of Mrs. Lincoln*.

Knowing Ken Bradbury's interest in Lincoln, she approached him about writing a "one woman show for Mary. . . something that encompassed her love for Mr. Lincoln and her many losses of life in her life." Bradbury, having seen *The Last of Mrs. Lincoln*, was intrigued by the prospect. The monologue he wrote is based on Brown's research into the life of Mrs. Lincoln.

Brown has presented her monologue at the Old State Capitol in Springfield and will be presenting a revised version of it this year. Beardstown will be one of the first places outside the state capital where she will be performing.

Active in the Springfield theater scene, Brown has a broad background in drama, directing *Our American Cousin* at the Hoagland Center last spring.

Further details about this event will be forthcoming.

For the dedicated historians in our midst, it should be noted that April 10 will mark the 140th anniversary of a fateful decision that made the outbreak of hostilities between North and South inevitable.

By March 2, 1861, all forts, naval yards and arsenals in the Confederacy had been seized without incident except Fort Pickens in Florida, two small Florida forts and Fort Sumter at Charleston, S.C.

The following day, Confederate Brig. Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard, known as the Napoleon of the South, took command of forces at Charleston.

The next day, Lincoln was inaugurated. Pledging to "hold, occupy, and possess" federal property, Lincoln said in his inaugural address: "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourself the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend' it."

The situation at Charleston grew more tense until April 10. Acting under orders from the Confederate War Department, Beauregard demanded the surrender of Fort Sumter. Should the Union forces under the command of Major Robert Anderson refuse, Beauregard had the authority to attack the fort and "reduce it."

Anderson refused. Beauregard launched a relentless assault on April 12. Anderson was forced to surrender on April 14.

This battle encouraged Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas to join the Confederacy.

The War Between the States had commenced as well as what would become a long national nightmare.

# Commission sets 2010 events

## Saturday, Feb. 13

Join in Lincoln's 201st Birthday Party Celebration. Activities will include a Lincoln look-alike contest for children starting at 1:00 p.m., plus art activities and other birthday surprises. Connie Foley will coordinate this afternoon of fun at the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum. Watch for more details in the newspapers and online ([LincolnIn-Beardstown.org](http://LincolnIn-Beardstown.org))

## Saturday, April, 10

Pam Brown, noted Mary Todd Lincoln portrayer, will present "Mrs. Lincoln Leaves the White House." The soliloquy of Mrs. Lincoln's thoughts as she packed to leave after the assassination will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum. Contact Paula Woods for reservations at 217-323-4514.

## Saturday, May 7

The anniversary of the Almanac Trial will be coordinated by Paula Woods and Ann Chelette. An essay contest for young people will be held to help mark this important event and Beardstown's historic site. Winning essays will be read in the courtroom on May 7. Watch for details.

## Saturday, Sept 18

The Second Annual Trivia Night will bring trivia experts to the Beardstown Elks Lodge on Sept. 18 for fun, food and friendly warfare. Start gathering teams of 10 or fewer and plan to join the frivolity. Leigh Morris will coordinate these fun-filled festivities.

## Saturday, Dec. 18

The Friends of the Courtroom are the quiet strength of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum. The commission will honor their faithful support by hosting a "Christmas with Our Friends" reception at the Old Lincoln Courthouse & Museum. Suzanne McClure will have the details closer to the date.

# Meet the commissioners

## Connie Foley

My name is Connie Foley, and I am very pleased to have been appointed to the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission. My reasons for wanting to be on the commission were twofold: First, I am very proud of the museum and the history that is contained within it; second, tourism is extremely important to our city and the museum is a definite attraction for Beardstown and I would like to be part of developing and maintaining this important historical site.

Since I retired from teaching kindergarten for the Triopia School District in 2007, where I was employed for 24 years, I have been trying to give back to the community, which has been so good to my family and me. We are members of St. John's Lutheran Church, where I serve on the Education Committee, am a member of Ladies Aid and am a part of the Comfort Quilt program. I volunteer in the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum gift shop, served on the Evening with Lincoln event, the Mary Todd Lincoln Tea, the reception given after the Wayside Exhibits dedication, and serve on the Vintage Clothing Committee for the museum. I am a member of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, where I have held several offices, am in the Beardstown Ladies Investment Club and am a member of the Retired Teachers Association.

After retiring from 31 years of being a teacher, I started a second career by becoming a Realtor for the DeSollar & Wessler Bros. Agency in Beardstown. My educational background includes a bachelor of science degree in elementary education from Eastern Illinois University and an master of science degree in elementary education (concentration in early childhood) from Western Illinois University. I have been married to my husband Ross for 43 years and have two sons, Larry and Scott; two wonderful daughters-in-law, Melissa and Kristen, and two beautiful granddaughters, Sydney and Emma. We have lived in Beardstown since

1973 and look forward to many more years.

## Dale Robertson

I was born May 17, 1970, the eldest son of Robert and Dorothea "Dee" (Fines) Robertson. I have one brother, Dan Robertson. I have lived in the Beardstown area all my life, except for my first two years, during which time we lived in Griggsville while my father was doing construction work in that area. I graduated from Beardstown High School in 1988 and attended Illinois College for four years, where I majored in music.

I am self-employed with my father's business, Robertson Construction Co., a heavy-equipment construction company founded by my father in 1959. We have done work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the state of Illinois, and the state of Missouri. Working for these organizations meant we never had to advertise. We would get on lists and they would notify us when projects to bid on were available. We headquartered at our farm on Gum Town Road in Sangamon Valley, near Chandlerville, after my father bought this land in 1972. We built a number of levees in this area, including the Hager Slough, Panther Creek, Job's Creek and Lost Creek levees, as well as other earth-moving work.

Over the years, people sometimes confused us with my uncle's business, W.L. Robertson and Sons Construction, which my cousins now own and operate. Currently, we are selling our equipment. In June of 2008, we sold our farm. But my father keeps busy by serving on the board of directors at the First National Bank of Beardstown.

I am a member of First United Methodist Church of Beardstown, where I sing in the choir and sometimes play the organ and piano, even though I was diagnosed with Stargardt's, a rare eye disease that affects central vision. I currently serve on the board of the Cass County Historical and Genealogical Society. My roots in this part of Illinois go back a good dis-

tance: My great-grandfather, Alexander Robertson, a native of Perthshire, Scotland, settled east of Jacksonville, near the village of Orleans, in 1821. His son, Charles, bought some property along the Illinois River from Thomas Beard and Enoch March in 1828, one year before Beardstown was founded.

## From the Lincoln Log

**Jan. 1, 1841** – On this "fatal first of Jan. '41," Lincoln passes through an emotional crisis, the exact nature of which is unknown. One story is that he failed to appear at his own wedding; but more probably he broke his engagement with Mary Todd. Whatever the occurrence, result was acute mental anguish.

**Jan. 23, 1841** – Lincoln writes to his law partner Congressman John T. Stuart and discusses Stuart's possible bid for re-election. In the second half of the letter, Lincoln reveals that he is suffering an intense bout of depression as he writes, "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on the earth. Whether I shall ever be better I can not tell; I awfully forebode I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible; I must die or be better, it appears to me."

**Feb. 19, 1841** – Lincoln votes for Hardin of Morgan's amendment to Cass County boundary bill. He opposes move to extend Menard County boundaries.

**Feb. 27, 1841** – At Robert Irwin & Co., bank and general store, Lincoln opens a personal account with a balance of \$32.50 in credit.

To learn more about Abraham Lincoln's day-to-day life, visit the Lincoln Log Web site ([TheLincolnLog.org](http://TheLincolnLog.org)).

# Commission honors Friends at Jan. 18 reception

The annual Friends of the Courtroom Reception was held on the evening of Jan. 18, in the Lincoln Courtroom.

Guests included Friends of the Courtroom, city and county officials, courtroom and museum volunteers and docents, and commission members.

Commission Chairman Suzanne McClure acknowledged and thanked the Friends of the Courtroom for their financial support of the many facets of museum life.

The commission has been enabled to establish and provide for Beardstown's remarkable Wayside Exhibits, museum display renovations, remodeling of the Gift Shop and other areas, consultations by state historical staff, and archival supplies thanks to the generous annual support of the Friends.

McClure recognized outgoing Commissioners George Bell and Tina Rohn for their years of valuable service, and introduced new commissioners Connie Foley and Dale Robertson.

Foley, chairman of the Display Committee, thanked Melanie Schroll, Dottie Gholson, Ellie Meyer, and Alice Lou Gramann for their insight and labor in the ongoing renovation of the Vintage Clothing room.





# Susan Parish remembered

On Saturday, Oct. 3, the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission, along with the Board of Directors of the Beardstown Houston Memorial Library, hosted a Dedication of Memorials to honor Susan Ritter Parish.

Parish was remembered as a valued friend to the Library, to the Lincoln Courtroom & Museum and to the entire Beardstown community.

After more than 30 years of service to the Beardstown Public School system, Parish retired and dedicated herself to the genealogy of her family and to the accurate pursuit of historical information about the Beardstown area.

She served her community by volunteering at the library and as a docent of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum. Guests who visited the Lincoln Courtroom & Museum were welcomed and “taught” by Parish as she led them through the historic rooms where Abraham Lincoln practiced law 150 years before.

In 2006, she was appointed by the Beardstown City Council to serve as a commissioner for the site, and was the first “Commissioner Emeritus” for the historic Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission.

In part, the resolution of Oct. 27, 2008, read:

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Commissioners of the Old Lincoln Courtroom and Museum Commission that to honor the selfless service of the said Susan Parish and her faithful and conscientious devotion to duty as a Commissioner of said Commission and Chair of its Bicentennial Celebration and service on its committee of volunteers, the Old Lincoln Courtroom and Museum Commission does hereby appoint Susan Parish as its first Commissioner Emeritus, and directs this Certificate be given to the Said Commissioner Emeritus Susan Parish in sincere appreciation for her loyalty, dedication, and countless hundreds of hours of service, and

FURTHER, in sincere appreciation

for the outstanding performance and many contributions as a Commissioner of the Old Lincoln Courtroom and Museum Commission a copy of this Resolution shall be provided to the City Council of the City of Beardstown with a request that it be incorporated into the Minutes of said City Council and retained by the Old Lincoln Courtroom and Museum Commission as a part of its permanent records in honor of Susan Parish, Commissioner Emeritus.

Numerous memorial gifts were presented to the Houston Memorial Library to honor Parish. The library board has directed that these gifts be used in the improvement and maintenance of the Local History Room at

the library.

Special memorial gifts were given to the Houston Memorial Library by the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission. These gifts included a photograph of Abraham Lincoln taken by Matthew B. Brady, which will be mounted in or near the Local History Room of the library.

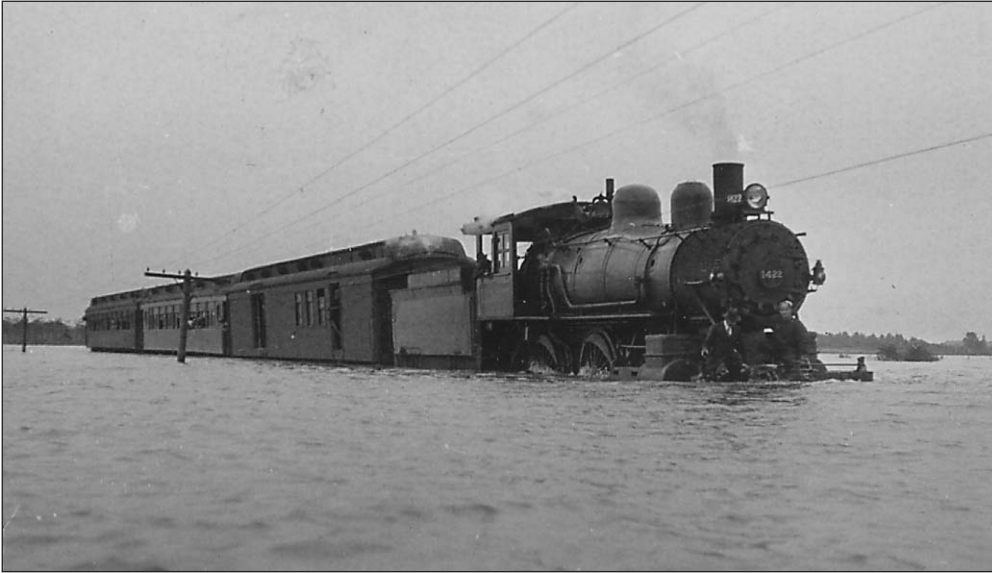
In addition, the book *Lincoln: The Presidential Archives* was donated to the library in Parish’s memory by the commission. This excellent book contains removable Lincoln documents and will remain as an “in-library” resource.

The entire local community is invited to browse through the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum and to visit the Beardstown Houston Memorial Library with the newly designated Local History Room to view the honors to Susan Ritter Parish.

**Susan Parish played a key role in making the Wayside Exhibits a reality for Beardstown, such as this one in Schmoldt Park. The exhibits will serve as a lasting reminder of her service.**



## Who am I?



Few people gave it a second thought when the rains began in September of 1926. It always rains in September. Besides, the threat of real floods comes in the spring not the fall.

However, this time the rains would not stop. Fields flooded while normally placid streams were transformed into raging torrents. The Sangamon,

Spoon and La Moine rivers spilled their banks. The Illinois River hit 22.3 feet at Beardstown in the middle of September. There was momentary hope as the waters slowly receded during the remainder of the month.

Optimism vanished with the arrival of October. The rains grew heavier. Rivers and creeks again were on the

rise. On Tuesday, Oct. 12, 1926, the Illinois River reached 26.6-feet, surpassing the record set in 1922 by 18 inches. Levees all along the Illinois were breached. Roads were closed, rail lines severed and a number of people were forced from their homes.

Still, folks along the Illinois and its tributaries are made of stern stuff. Most refused to give in to the flood waters.

This photo was taken on Oct. 6, 1926. Here you see one of my trains: a steam locomotive and tender, a combination Railway Post Office/baggage car and two passenger coaches.

Yes, water covered our rails for several miles, but people depended on us for the mail, vital supplies and transportation. So, we never quit running.

Yes, I am a railroad. What is my name?

The first person to bring the correct answer to our Gift Shop will receive a 10 percent discount off their purchase. Good luck.

**Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission**  
**Suzanne McClure, Secretary**  
**1 Pine Lane**  
**Beardstown IL 62618**