

Lincoln Newsletter

A publication of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission

Beardstown, Illinois
Second Quarter 2009

First lady coming to Beardstown

Mary Todd Lincoln will receive guests during her special visit to Beardstown on Saturday, June 13, at a tea to be held at the Café from Yesterday, beginning at 2:00 p.m.

Reservations must be received by June 6. Call Paula Woods at 1-217-323-4514. Tickets are \$6.00

Mrs. Lincoln, who will be portrayed by Pam Brown of Springfield, will discuss life in the Lincoln household.

Mary Ann Todd was born on Dec. 13, 1818, in Lexington, Ky. She was one of seven children born to Robert S. Todd and his wife, Eliza Parker Todd. The Todd's were a prominent family in Lexington. Mrs. Lincoln's mother passed away in 1825, and her father remarried the following year.

Mrs. Lincoln excelled in school. She appeared in school plays and learned to speak French fluently. Mrs. Lincoln was ambitious, scholarly and an excellent conversationalist.

In 1839, Mrs. Lincoln moved to Springfield to live at the home of her older sister, Elizabeth Edwards. Mrs. Lincoln, who stood about 5 feet, 2 inches, was active and popular in Springfield's society. She dated people like Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln won her heart, and the two were married in 1842.

Over the next 11 years, the couple had four children. They were Robert (1843-1926), Edward ("Eddie") 1846-1850, William ("Willie") 1850-1862, and Thomas ("Tad") 1853-1871. Sadly, Robert was the only child of the Lincolns to live to adulthood. Mrs. Lincoln was known as a very loving and caring mother. She was very devoted to her family.



In 1844, the Lincolns bought a home in Springfield at the corner of Eighth and Jackson streets. In February, 1861, the Lincolns left Springfield for Washington, D.C., where Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16th president on March 4, 1861.

As first lady, Mrs. Lincoln spent a good deal of time refurbishing the White House. She also made many trips to hospitals to take food, flowers, etc., to injured soldiers. She read to the soldiers, wrote them letters and once raised \$1,000 for the Christmas dinner at a military hospital. Tad often accompanied her on these visits to see the soldiers (Willie had died in the

White House early in 1862 and Robert was away at college). Additionally, Mrs. Lincoln provided support for the Contraband Relief Association which helped blacks who came to the North during the Civil War.

She was opposed to slavery and strongly supported her husband's pro-Union policies, although many of her relatives chose to side with the South in the war. Several relatives died fighting for the Confederacy. Mrs. Lincoln caused controversy as first lady; she made both friends and enemies during her husband's presidency.

Five days after Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Abraham and Mrs. Lincoln attended a performance of "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre. It was that night when John Wilkes Booth shot the president as Mary held his hand during the play. It was a tragedy from which Mrs. Lincoln never fully recovered.

In May of 1865, Mrs. Lincoln, Robert and Tad left Washington to live in Chicago. In 1868, Mrs. Lincoln and Tad left the United States and lived in Europe until 1871. Tad died in Chicago shortly after the two returned to the United States, and again Mrs. Lincoln mourned a loved one.

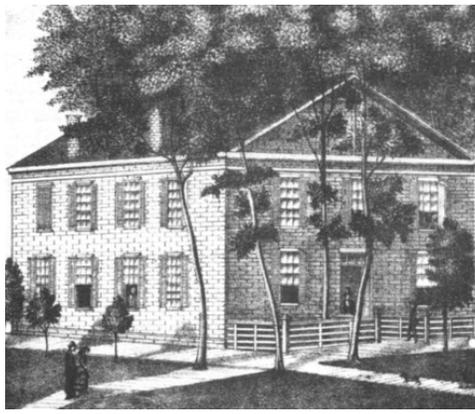
Mrs. Lincoln continued to travel often, and her behavior and irrational fears became an increasing concern to Robert. He began to fear for his mother's well-being, and he instigated an insanity hearing. Various witnesses testified to Mrs. Lincoln's erratic behavior and habits. Mrs. Lincoln was declared insane by a jury of 12 men. The court admitted that "the disease was of unknown duration; the cause is

unknown.” Mrs. Lincoln spent a little less than four months in Bellevue, a private sanitarium located in Batavia, Ill.

In September of 1875, Mrs. Lincoln went to Springfield to live with her sister’s family. In 1876, a second jury found her sane. Later, she traveled again to Europe and spent most of her time in France. Her health was in a state of decline, and she again visited health spas. She most likely was suffering from undiagnosed diabetes in addition to spinal arthritis and other ailments. She had suffered from migraine headaches for years and years.

Mrs. Lincoln returned to the United States in 1880 and again went to the Edwards’ home in Springfield to live. She was slowly going blind. Robert visited her in 1881. Mrs. Lincoln stayed by herself in her shaded room in the Edwards’ house. Her health continued to deteriorate. On July 16, 1882, Mrs. Lincoln passed away at the age of 63. The exact cause of death may have been a stroke. The doctor wrote “paralysis” on the death certificate.

Mrs. Lincoln is buried next to her husband in the Lincoln Tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. She was buried with the ring Lincoln had given her in 1842. It was quite thin from wear, but the words “Love is Eternal” were still visible.



Judge Brannan selects Lincoln Courtroom

On Feb. 27, the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum observed another historical day.

Thomas J. Brannan, a lifelong resident of Beardstown, chose the Old Lincoln Courtroom as the site for his installation and swearing-in as an associate judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit, State of Illinois.

With over 50 additional chairs brought into the courtroom, the swearing-in ceremony was standing room only.

Virtually all of the judges of the Eighth Judicial Circuit of the State of Illinois were present, together with Justice Rita B. Garman of the Illinois Supreme Court and Justice Thomas R. Appleton of the Fourth District Appellate Court.

Also in attendance as a special guest was Senior Federal District Judge Richard H. Mills, formerly of Virginia, Ill., and attorney Milton McClure, Sr. (ret), who robed Judge Brannan.

Judge Brannan had previously practiced law in the cities of Beardstown and Virginia for 36 years with the firm of McClure, Brannan, & Thomas. All three of Judge Brannan’s children, their spouses and his granddaughter were present for the event, together with many other members of his family and friends.

Following the hour-long ceremony, a reception was held in Judge Brannan’s honor, hosted by the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission.

Built in 1844 at a cost of about \$10,000, Cass County government moved into the building in 1845. It remained the seat of county government until 1874. (See story on page 4.)

Lincoln Bicentennial Events Calendar

April 25: Heritage Days, Beardstown City Square Visit the Old Lincoln Courthouse, 101 W. Third Street.

May 23: Wayside Exhibit Walk-around, Beardstown Alumni Weekend 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Stop by the Old Lincoln Courthouse to pick up a map. Visit the planned sites of the Looking for Lincoln Wayside Exhibits. Interpreters will be present at each site to explain each story board.

June 13: Mary Todd Lincoln Tea, Café from Yesterday, 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$6.00. Reservations due June 6. Pam Brown of Springfield will portray Mary Todd Lincoln

September 19: Trivia Night, Beardstown Elks Lodge 1007 More information to come

For further information and to make reservations for events, please contact Paula Woods at 1-217-323-4514 or PMW41@casscomm.com.

Naturally, your first priority will be our events. However, the place to get the information on the rest of the bicentennial celebration events is at the official Lincoln Bicentennial Web site:

www.lincolnbicentennial.gov

Check it out today.

Commissioners

Leigh Morris, Chairman
217-323-9409

Suzanne McClure, Secretary
217-323-3442

Ann Chelette, Treasurer
217-

Arline Bley
217-323-2323

George Bell
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217-323-1173

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217-323-4514

The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission
1 Pine Lane, Beardstown IL 62618
www.lincolninbeardstown.org

Friends of the Courtroom report

The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission thanks the loyal "Friends," who faithfully send their monetary donations each year.

These donations help print this newsletter, help fund projects in development for the site and have enabled the commission to move several projects to completion.

If you haven't joined the "Friends of the Courtroom", please fill in the form on this page and mail it today, and please remember to include your e-mail address.

2009 donations are now being accepted.

Welcome Back for 2009

Mr. Lincoln's Friend Annual Gift \$25.00

Donald L. & Deloris Boice
Cass County Abstract Company
Donna P. Finney
Glenn & Patricia Hankins
Sue Kindred/Star Café
Earl E. & Doris K. McKenzie
Dale Robertson

Mr. Lincoln's Bar Annual Gift \$50.00

Marc & Sally Dahman

Mr. Lincoln's Barristers Annual Gift \$100.00

Judy T. Briggs
Bob & Carol Burget
Glenn & Jane Fearneyhough
Robert H. Huss
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Korsmeyer
Mr. & Mrs. Willard J. Korsmeyer
Irene E. Lamkin
Fairy Launer
Mr. & Mrs., L. Milton McClure
Leigh & Norma Morris

Mr. Lincoln's Judges Chambers Annual Gift \$500.00

Mary A. Hardwick

New for 2009

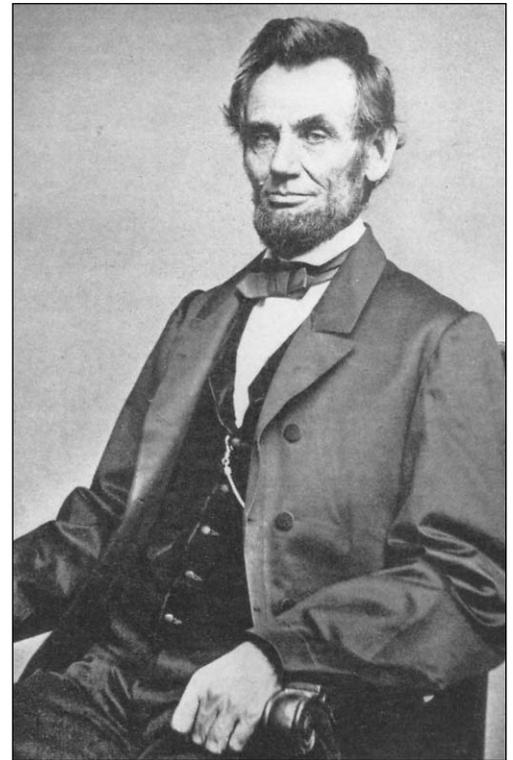
Mr. Lincoln's Friend Annual Gift \$25.00

Patricia A. Day
Mike & Cristy Nordsiek

Mr. Lincoln's Bar Annual Gift \$50.00

Charles & Jean Buie

*Join the Friends of the Old
Lincoln Courtroom & Museum
today to help make certain this
treasure is here tomorrow.*



Friends of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum

Yes, I wish to become a Friend as follows:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Lincoln's Friend: | Annual Gift \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Lincoln's Bar: | Annual Gift \$50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Lincoln's Barristers: | Annual Gift \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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 _____

Beardstown loses county seat

By Leigh Morris

From the moment the county seat returned to Beardstown, Virginians were determined to get it back. Their first effort came in 1857, when State Rep. Samuel Christy, M.D., won approval for legislation that put the county seat question to a vote on Nov. 3, 1857.

In an election marked with enough fraud to make a ward heeler proud, Beardstown won the election. Virginia bided its time until 1867, when it got another act of the legislature authorizing a county seat vote on April 2 of that year.

This time, Virginia had a clear majority. Beardstown challenged the results and a Circuit Court judge ruled against Virginia.

Subsequently, a new state constitution was adopted that included a provision favoring the location of county seats in a central location. This was followed by legislation that specified how a vote would be taken on the question of the county seat's location. Since Virginia is nearly at the geographical center of the county, her residents figured this was their time.

Putting the question on the ballot proved to be an arduous task. Virginia's supporters had to secure petitions signed by at least two-fifths of those who had voted in the presidential election of 1868. The necessary signatures were gathered and the vote was set for Nov. 12, 1872.

A new city hall?

One of the issues facing voters was the lack of space in the county courthouse in Beardstown. Should Beardstown retain the county seat, most likely all county residents would be taxed to pay the cost of building larger quarters for county government.

However, what would voters think if they would get a new courthouse at no cost simply by returning the county seat to Virginia? A group of Virginia's leaders would find out.

Jacob Dunaway, Samuel Petefish,

Ignatius Skiles, Charles Crandall and other leading Virginians decided to tilt things in Virginia's favor by building a new courthouse on the city's east square – officially known as Washington Fountain Square.

Since these men did not have any authority to build a county courthouse, they officially referred to their building as the new Virginia city hall. They also made it clear it would be donated to the county when the seat of government was returned to Virginia.

The Peoria construction firm of Jobst & Pierce erected the two-story brick courthouse in 1872, though it would not be fully equipped until the county seat question was settled.

In the night

Though the results of the Nov. 12, 1872, election showed Virginia had won by 128 votes, Beardstown officials managed to secure a temporary injunction to prevent the removal of the county records from their city. They contended a number of young men who voted were not legally naturalized citizens.

Each time the injunction was about to expire, Beardstown's lawyers would secure an extension.

Then on Nov. 3, 1874, Circuit Judge Lyman Lacy affirmed the election results as certified by the canvassing board and declared Virginia the new county seat. Still, the injunction prevented the records from being removed from Beardstown.

Incredibly, Beardstown's lawyers neglected to secure another extension of the injunction. This was discovered by one of Virginia's attorneys, who advised his clients the injunction would expire at midnight on

Wednesday, Nov. 25, 1874.

Robert Hall secretly organized a trusted group of fellow Virginians to bring the records to their city when the injunction expired. They hitched a sturdy team to a large wagon and, with a small contingent of horsemen, Don Murray drove the wagon through the cold, clear night to Beardstown, arriving at the courthouse shortly after midnight.

Meanwhile, Circuit Judge John Savage and Cass County Clerk James Black, both Virginia residents, had prepared the records for loading into the wagon. The men worked quickly but silently and soon slipped undetected out of town and back to Virginia. People in Beardstown did not discover the missing records until late morning.

Beardstown's attorneys quickly secured another injunction, which prevented county officials from doing business in Virginia. This move only delayed the inevitable. In June, the Illinois Supreme Court dissolved the injunction. All furnishings and other county property were ordered to be moved from the courthouse in Beardstown to Virginia.



Cass County resident and noted architect James Black designed the new county jail, which was erected on Virginia's West Washington Street in 1876 at a cost of \$14,000. This photo was taken in 1900.



Final Waysides heading for town

The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission is pleased to announce the final six Wayside story boards are nearly complete and will be ready for delivery in May.

These attractive displays will be lasting tributes to Abraham Lincoln, as well as excursion stops for many tourists to our community and state.

In our last newsletter, it was mentioned that we had a shortfall of \$800 for the boards. There also has been added expense for poles needed for two signs and traveling expenses to pick up the exhibits. Because of the shortfall, the final acknowledgement for the seventh board will include "Friends of the Courtroom." We are grateful to all of the Friends for their help in accomplishing this most important project.

The Wayside exhibits are well worth the tremendous amount of time involved in seeing them to completion.

Remember to visit the sites where the seven exhibits are to be located when you visit Beardstown and take the walking tour on Alumni Weekend, Saturday, May 23.

Some of the storyboards will probably not be in place at that time, but interpreters will be stationed at the locations to show facsimiles and read narratives of the exhibits.

Welcome to the Wayside!

Museum Hours

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday through Saturday

Visit the Gift Shop.
Many new and sale items.

Meet the commissioners Suzanne McClure

A bio by and about Suzanne McClure.

Suzanne McClure was born Sept. 19, 1950, at St. Clara's Hospital in Lincoln, Ill. St. Clara's Hospital was subsequently razed.

She lived with her parents and two older brothers on the family farm near Kenney, Ill.

Suzanne went to elementary school in two locations in Kenney. Her first three years were spent in the Old Grade School, which was subsequently razed. Years four through eight were spent in the Old Kenney High School, which has long since been abandoned and will certainly be razed. She didn't attend kindergarten; however, the building later used for kindergarten where various other school activities were held has since been razed.

High school days were spent at Clinton Community High School in Clinton, Ill. The location of that complex is now vacant, the school having been razed and another facility having been build in another location.

Since graduating with her bachelor's in home economics with a business and retailing concentration, she moved to Decatur, where she worked for the Myers Brothers department store. Although, the university still stands (as far as we know), the Myers Brothers business is no longer in existence.

Suzanne moved to Springfield, where she was a marketer for the IBM Corporation. The house where she lived has now been razed, and she isn't sure where they've moved the IBM office.

In October of 1996, Suzanne married L. Milton McClure in Beardstown, with whom she still resides. She and her husband have four children and four grandchildren, all of whom can still be located.

Suzanne serves in many capacities at the First United Methodist Church in Beardstown. She formerly served on the Beardstown School Board, where she was a 10-year survivor. During her tenure on the board, the original high

school was razed and a new building was built.

Mrs. McClure began her tenure on the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission at its inception in 2005. She was elected secretary for the commission in which capacity she still serves. Based upon her past experience, she recommends that you visit the site at your earliest convenience.

Upon retirement and after her health has departed, she is planning to return to St. Clara's Manor, a nursing home built upon the site of her birth hospital in hopes that it will remain standing until her death.

Ann Chelette

Ann and her husband Jess moved in late 2007 from Decatur to the farmhouse on the Chandlerville Road, where she grew up.

Ann graduated from Beardstown High School in 1966, from Decatur Memorial Hospital School of Nursing in 1969 and from Millikin University in 1970. She attended graduate school at the University of Texas, El Paso, and Sangamon State University, Springfield. In 2007, Ann retired from school nursing in Decatur as Coordinator of School Health Services, an administrative position she held for 20 years.

Ann serves on the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission, where she is a volunteer interpreter, and is a member of P.E.O. Chapter GU, Exchange Club and Rainbow Garden Club. She serves as a Cass County election judge and a substitute teacher in Beardstown and Virginia secondary schools. Ann and Jess are members of St. John's Lutheran Church and trained Stephen Ministers. Their daughters reside with their husbands in Sacramento and Redondo Beach, Calif., and in Decatur.

*Make your reservations for
the Tea with Mrs. Lincoln
by June 6.
Call 1-217-323-4514*

Faye Hoenes

(Note: Faye serves as the director of the Gift Shop

Faye Hoenes and her husband, Ron, and three sons moved to 1209 State St., Beardstown in 1971. They have six grandsons and two granddaughters.

Originally from Taylor, Mo., Faye graduated from college at what is now Truman State University in Kirksville, Mo., moved to the Kansas City area, then to Columbia, Mo., and on to Phoenix, Ariz., and finally settled in Beardstown.

Since coming to Beardstown, Faye had been involved in Cub Scouts as den leader; school as room mother, and later as substitute teacher. Currently, she is involved with the Exchange Club, Investment Club (currently The Beardstown Ladies), Habitat for Humanity, and Lincoln Courtroom & Museum. She worked for Dr. Stephens and Dr. Tanner for a total of 20 years. The last four years, she has worked for Winston Tax Service from the end of January to April 15.

Faye and Ron have a large garden each year. She cans or freezes the produce. She enjoys hiking on their land and looking for mushrooms. She has a farm background and loves to drive the tractor. She does some knitting and crocheting, some sewing and mending (not as much since the boys have grown up).

Other: Exchange Club: Charter member of Beardstown, served as president one year and treasurer for four years, chairman of Community Service for several years, Membership Committee several times; and on the Americanism Committee. Attended most district conventions, some national conventions and participated in most of the annual bowling event. Sews award patches on the banners.

Investment Club: Belonged to Learn & Earn and served as financial partner. Later, joined the Beardstown Ladies BPW Investment Club, serving as secretary and currently as senior partner (president).

Habitat for Humanity: Served on the Board of Directors for three years.

Also chaired the Family Selection Committee for one year and served as secretary for 2 years.

Lincoln Courtroom & Museum: Gift Shop director

Northeast Missouri State Teachers College - bachelor of science in education, 1963

We moved to accommodate Ron's Air Force service, work and school.

Leigh Morris

Suzie McClure's biography is a tough act to follow.

Leigh was born at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elgin, Ill., on Oct. 28, 1947. The hospital is gone and the building has been razed. However, historians do not believe Suzie McClure was ever there.

Leigh's dad, Gene, was a native of Mississippi, and his mother, Dorothy Fast, grew up on a farm near Beardstown.

Leigh grew up in Lisle Township in Northern Illinois, but spent much time on his grandparents' farm on Six Corners Road east of Beardstown. When Leigh was 13, his grandfather (also Leigh) taught him to drive a truck. It is believed that truck has been scrapped.

Leigh graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in history from Aurora College (they changed the name to Aurora University after Leigh graduated) in 1969. He then worked as a reporter for the *Chicago Today* (formerly the *Chicago's American*). This afternoon daily newspaper folded in 1974.

Leigh was with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois for 12 years, attaining the position of manager of Public Affairs. Then, he was named director of Public Relations with Children's Health System of Wisconsin. After 12 years in that position, he worked as a consultant and freelance writer.

Leigh and his wife, Norma, moved to Cass County in 2000. He joined the public relations staff of AmerenCIPS in 2001 and is now the senior communications executive for the Ameren Illinois Utilities.

As a few people know, Leigh is devoted to Studebakers (they stopped

making motor vehicles in 1966) and currently owns a 1955 Studebaker Commander. He is a former national director and the current chairman of the Chapter Chartering and Information Committee for the Studebaker Drivers Club. He chaired the organization's 2000 international meeting.

Leigh is the secretary and past master of Virginia Masonic Lodge No. 544. He has held numerous offices in the Scottish Rite Masonic organization and is a recipient of the 33rd Degree. He is the editor of the *Rite Lights* magazine and a columnist for *Northern Lights* magazine. He is a member of Ansar Shrine, the Illinois Valley Shrine Club and Beardstown Elks Lodge No. 1007.

Leigh writes a weekly history column for the *Cass County Star-Gazette* and is a contributor to the *Illinois Heritage* magazine, *First & Fastest* magazine and other publications.

Leigh is a member of the Cass County Crime Stoppers and the Cass County Historical & Genealogical Society Boards of Directors. He also is a member of the Illinois Traction Society, Central Electric Railfans Association, Shore Line Interurban Historical Society and the Antique Studebaker Club.

Leigh is one of the original members of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission, serving as the chairman.

Leigh and Norma have two children and two grandsons.

Due to current economic conditions, he has no plans to retire.

NOTE: This feature will continue in the next issue.

By Leigh Morris

Have you renewed your Friends of the Courtroom membership? Or have you yet to join?

We need your support.

Please see page 3 for membership details.

Beardstown's immigrant mayor

"All of our people all over the country – except the pure-blooded Indians – are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, including even those who came over here on the Mayflower," President Franklin D. Roosevelt told a campaign audience in 1944.

Roosevelt's observation most certainly applied to Cass County and the rest of Central Illinois. Take one of the most famous family names from our early history – the name of Arenz.

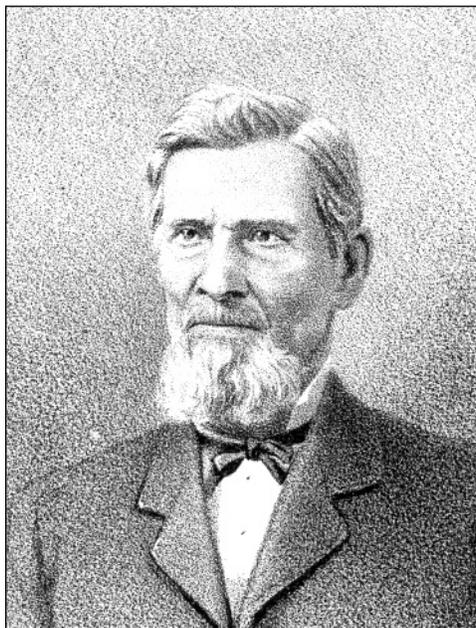
People naturally and correctly associate the Arenz family name with Arenzville. Many may not realize the name Arenz also is a part of Beardstown's history.

Of special interest is John A. Arenz. This man was born on Oct. 28, 1810 (though some references indicate he was born in 1811), in Blankenburg, Province of the Rhine, Prussia. Young Arenz was intelligent and eager to learn. He was schooled in the languages, music, engineering and drawing.

His education gained for him a position as a surveyor for the Prussian government. He went on to attend college and then a seminary. Eventually, he became a teacher and soon a school principal. He might have spent his life as an educator had his elder brother, Francis, not come to the United States. Not only had Francis come to America in 1827, but found his way to Central Illinois.

At Francis' urging, John came to the United States in 1835, arriving in Baltimore on the sailing ship *Bremen*. He then journeyed to Wheeling, which was part of Virginia at that time. From there, he traveled on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to St. Louis, and finally to Central Illinois.

John's first job was working as a surveyor for the ill-fated Beardstown and Sangamon Canal Company. It was no coincidence that Francis was president of the enterprise. Though the survey was very favorable and the project had the strong support of Abraham Lincoln, the project failed for numer-



John A. Arenz, Beardstown's first mayor.

ous reasons – not the least of which being the inability of the promoters to raise the needed funds.

Eager to perfect his English skills, John then took a position with a mercantile in Springfield, where he remained until 1838. It was then he joined his brother. The two laid out the village of Arenzville, opened a sawmill, a gristmill and a general store.

However, John had developed a taste for politics. Attracted by the philosophy of Henry Clay and the Whig Party, John in 1844 became editor of a campaign paper that supported Clay for president. This German language paper, *Illinois Adler Und Demokratischer Whig*, was published in Springfield. The following year, he played a leading role in the successful struggle to move the Three-Mile Territory (which included Arenzville) from Morgan to Cass county.

John's first public office was that of justice of the peace in 1843. Initially, he was elected to serve in Morgan County, but his office transferred to Cass County when the the Three-Mile Territory moved to Cass, as well. He became a notary public in 1850. John also held such offices as town trustee, town treasurer and school director. However, the best was yet to come.

It was in 1850 when Beardstown's

municipal government was reorganized. Instead of a president and trustees, the city now would have a mayor and aldermen. The popular John Arenz had previously moved to Beardstown from Arenzville. He was a natural choice to be the city's first mayor.

Arenz' mayoral term proved short (one year, to be exact), as he was elected to served as a county judge. He held that esteemed position for eight years.

Before retirement, Arenz found himself playing the principal role in the ongoing melodrama that pitted Beardstown against Virginia over which community would have the dubious honor of serving as the seat of county government. After regaining prize in 1845, Beardstown was forced to fend off repeated challenges from rival Virginia.

As a result of action by the state legislature, the county seat question again was put to a vote on April 2, 1867. Though Virginia appeared to be the clear winner, protests were quickly raised. Nothing about this struggle ever proved to be clear, simple or concise.

To settle the matter, three judges were selected to decide the case. Not only was Arenz one of those judges, but served as the presiding judge. After a thorough review, the justices rejected Virginia's poll books and with those books went Virginia's claim to to be county seat.

Beardstown kept the county seat for a few more years. And the people of Beardstown were so pleased by John Arenz' services that they serenaded him. No doubt, Arenz was pleased that he was not called upon in a few more years when the county seat question again came to a rapid boil.

Like so many other immigrants, Arenz realized the American dream.

Lincoln: Did you know?

Memorize these points and you'll really impress the tourists.

- Christened "Abraham," it was not unusual that Lincoln was called "Abe." After all, "Honest Abe for President" does sound better as a campaign slogan than "Honest Abraham for President." Nonetheless, Lincoln disliked the "Abe" nickname.

- Lincoln made his first political speech when he was 21-years-old. It took place in the summer of 1830 in front of Renshaw's store in the village of Decatur. Two legislative candidates had addressed the crowd, but failed to follow the custom of the day by providing those assembled with something to drink. Lincoln's friends urged him to offer a response, thinking Lincoln would ridicule the two candidates for their breach of etiquette. Instead, Lincoln presented a well-reasoned argument for improving the Sangamon.

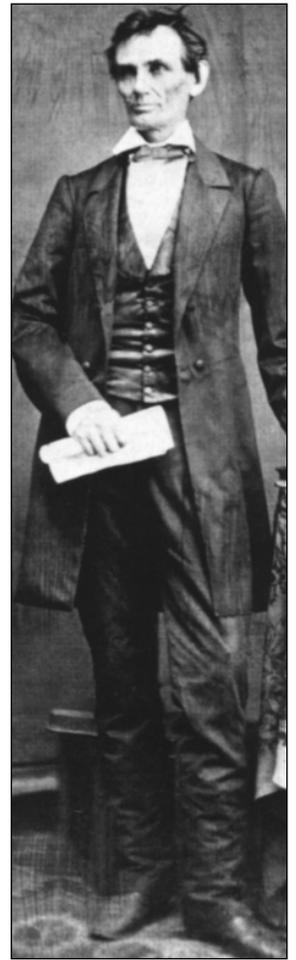
- It has always been thought Lincoln only owned one home, and that was in Springfield. Today, the Lincoln home is one of the city's leading Lincoln sites. However, recently released research findings indicate that he owned a house in New Salem. He also owned farmland in Iowa and Illinois.

- Contrary to legend, Lincoln only lost one election on a direct vote of the people. In 1832, he finished eighth in a field of 13 candidates seeking four seats in the Illinois General Assembly.

- Though it is widely believed that Lincoln's friendship with Ann Rutledge developed into a romance, there is not one mention of her name in any of the thousands of pages of Lincoln's correspondence. Many years later, Lincoln's friend Isaac Cogdal recalled visiting with Lincoln after his election to the presidency. During their conversation, Ann Rutledge's name was raised. Cogdal asked if it were true that Lincoln had once loved the young women. "It is true – true indeed I did," Lincoln said, according to Cogdal.

- Lincoln is the only American president to have received a patent. The patent was for a device that used "adjustable buoyant chambers" to lift steamboats over shoals.

- Lincoln was the tallest American president, standing six feet and four inches in height.



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