

The Charlemagne

215 East Main Street - St. Charles, Illinois 60174 - (630) 584-6967

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ST. CHARLES
HERITAGE CENTER

How to Train Your Pigeon

by Elaine Higham

Keeping pigeons is a pleasing, rewarding, and often exciting experience. If you are just beginning this *fascinating* adventure, you are now at the threshold of such pleasures as cheering your brood of racers home, marveling at the many colors of a show pigeon's plumage, and, *of course*, standing in awe of the miracle of life as young squabs scratch their way through a shell barrier into our world. Pigeon keeping and racing used to be a staple in St. Charles, with citizens winning multiple long and short distance races against other bird keepers with their meticulously cared for pets. Though we typically think of pigeons as unwanted menaces, the process of breeding, raising, and racing is almost a lost art, and should not be forgotten.

Pigeon fanciers of the early twentieth century paid up to \$150 dollars for purebred birds, with an eye toward health, color, and disposition, as well as a special connection with the animal. Once you have selected your bird, the next step is the coop. Traditionally pigeon houses were constructed using nothing more than plywood, chicken wire, and the builder's ingenuity. Four square feet were allotted for each pair of birds, and ample floor space and perches were provided. Anywhere warm and dry is best, so a garden shed or garage corner, will do the trick. Drafts are the pigeon's nemesis, so avoid any area well ventilated just to be safe.

All animals need to eat, and pigeons are no exception. A recommended seed mix was 30% peas, 30% kafir, 30% corn, and 10% hard red wheat. Green leafy vegetables were also given to keep the birds healthy, so cabbage, spinach, and the other food can be saved for your pets.

Pigeons mate and then build a nest together. Keepers often used clay bowls baked specifically for the purpose, and provided their pets with tobacco stems and twigs for nesting material. Pigeons like to make several nests a year in new locations with entirely new materials. A pair of pigeons will lay up to fourteen eggs a year, so you will have plenty of birds in no time at all.

The benefit to owning pigeons, besides companionship, is the thrill of racing them. Training is rather easy, and hasn't changed much over the years. Simply take your selected pigeon to a point some distance away from your home and let it go. Hopefully it will come back. If not, you'll have plenty of others to try. If the bird does return, take it out again, further this time, and repeat until the bird has built up strength and endurance. Pigeon keepers used to have trouble encouraging their birds to fly quickly, and had a variety of methods, from castor-oil to special baths.

For the early citizens of St. Charles, pigeon racing and breeding was a lovely pastime. Full of love and caring towards animals and their peculiar, yet charming habits, many individuals learned about the wonder of life. This enjoyment can be yours, and it is certainly a tradition worth maintaining.

Photo right - Pigeon racing enthusiast, and former St. Charles resident, Alphonse Meuleman poses with his prize winning pigeon. The pigeon won second place in 1924, 1925 and 1926 for the 500-mile race from Nebraska to St. Charles, making the trip in just one day.

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Happy 90th Birthday to Melvin Peterson!



Heritage Center Volunteer and former Board member, Melvin Peterson, shown here with his wife Ruth, celebrated his 90th birthday on February 26, 2011. Melvin and his family hosted an afternoon get together with family and friends at Bethlehem Lutheran Church on Sunday February 27th.

Spring Cleaning?

This spring while you are doing your cleaning be on the lookout for artifacts that the Heritage Center may be able to use. We are always looking for yearbooks from St. Charles schools, photos, or anything made by the local businesses that have called St. Charles home. Please call 630-584-6967 with any questions.

On behalf of the St. Charles Heritage Center and the Center's Fundraising Committee, I would like to thank everyone who helped make the *1st Annual St. Charles Heritage Ball* an overwhelming success.

The tremendous participation and generous support from the community resulted in over \$23,000 being raised for the St. Charles History Museum in downtown St. Charles!

The Heritage Ball was established with two goals in mind. The first goal was to annually celebrate a major contributor to our town's glorious history. What better way to start this tradition than by recognizing the St. Charles Park District's 100th anniversary? The second goal was to generate revenue for the Heritage Center in order that our museum and its different programs can continue to grow and prosper.

We are all proud of St. Charles and its accomplishments over the past 177 years. The museum is a cornerstone of our community and plays a vital role in the collection, preservation and presentation of St. Charles history. The 2nd Annual Ball is already in the planning stage. We welcome and encourage participation from the entire community. If you would like to be a part of this special event please contact the St. Charles Heritage Center at (630) 584-6967.

Brian Henry
Fundraising Chair
St. Charles Heritage Center

New Donations to the Museum

Thank you to everyone who has donated historical items to the St. Charles History Museum. We have received some very interesting new donations this year for our museum exhibits as well as items to enhance our historical archives.

An anonymous donor gave several images from the Chicago and Great Western Railway showing scenes of the St. Charles area from the 1940s. These scenes are of the CGW depot that was located in the block of Cedar and North 8th Avenues (below).

Also included in this donation are photos of the spur line which ran from Geneva to St. Charles along the present day Route 31.

New donations also include papers and letters that belonged to Mayor Langum given by his granddaughter **Carole Knoell**. **Jim Gricunas** gave a 1926 Pottawatomie yearbook from the St. Charles Community High School. **Adam Gibbons** donated bound editions of the 1935-36 St. Charles X-ray, the high school newspaper.



Thursday Evening Lectures

This year for the first two Thursday Evening Lectures we will be partnering with the St. Charles Park District and the St. Charles Public Library for the St. Charles Park District's Centennial Speakers Series. Subjects will address events that helped shape the parks in their first hundred years. We hope you will join us on the following evenings for these interesting programs.

Thursday April 21

The Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the most popular "alphabet agency" programs of the New Deal era. This presentation will explore the work and educational opportunities available to young men in the CCC between 1933 and 1942, and place the program within a local as well as global context.

Thursday May 19

The Federal Arts Project: How Illinois Artists Survived the Great Depression

From the Great Crash of 1929, America's economy remained devastated for over a decade. President Roosevelt's New Deal programs put the nation back to work and eventually included employment for artists. Come learn what the Illinois Art Project entailed, the role Chicago played and how citizens disliked the idea of people creating artwork in exchange for a government paycheck.

Remember the St. Charles Heritage Center! Donations to the Heritage Center are completely tax deductible and help us to provide our many educational programs for adults and children. These programs include:

- Book Club
- JHS Programs
- Thursday Evening Lecture
- Grave Reminders

Do you have some time on your hands and aren't sure what to do? How about volunteering for the Heritage Center Fundraising Committee and help us plan our 2nd Annual St. Charles Heritage Ball? The Committee meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 4pm at the St. Charles History Museum - Please join us!

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to those who have renewed your 2011 Membership!

If your newsletter has a red smiley face on the front that means your membership has expired and this will be the last newsletter sent to you. Please contact the museum about renewing your membership today.

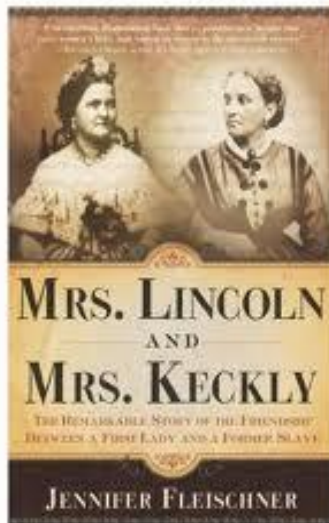
Passport Time

Spring has (finally) sprung! With the change in weather we are reminded that soon there will be plenty of free time for youngsters in this area. If you know any children ages 4 and up you might be interested in the Kane-DuPage Regional Museum Association's program - *Passport to Adventure*. Each year KDRMA puts together a Passport book of all of the museums, nature centers, zoos, and arboretums in Kane and DuPage Counties. The books are free and can be picked up at the St. Charles History Museum or the St. Charles Library beginning Memorial Day Weekend. The program runs from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Participants who visit more than 7 sites in the book are eligible for a prize! With over 60 sites listed in the Passport, there is something there for everyone. These books also make a great resource for the rest of the year because they have the location, hours, and cost for all of the sites! For more information on KDRMA or the Passport book, visit their facebook site www.facebook.com/kdrmapassport

St. Charles Heritage Center Book Club

The St. Charles Heritage Center Book Club will be meeting on Tuesday, May 3rd to discuss Jennifer Fleischer's book *Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly: The Remarkable Story of the Friendship Between a First Lady and a Former Slave*.

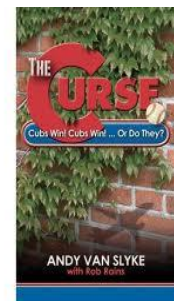
A lively historical portrait set against the turbulent backdrop of the antebellum South, the Civil War, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the early Reconstruction period explores the remarkable friendship between two very different women-First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln and her mulatto dressmaker and confidante, Elizabeth Keckly, a former slave.



The St. Charles Heritage Center Book Club meets on the first Tuesday of every other month. All are welcome to join in any of the discussions. Upcoming book selections include:

July 5th - *The Third Rail* by Michael Harvey

September 6th - *The Curse: Cubs Win! Cubs Win! Or Do They?* by Andy Van Slyke and Rob Rains



St. Charles Heritage Center & History Museum

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Hours of Operation
Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 4pm

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Are you on facebook?
So is the Heritage Center!

Check out the Heritage Center's new facebook Fan Page and join as a fan. Fans get weekly updates about the goings on at the Heritage Center, reminders about programs, and special discount alerts for our gift shop. You can link to our facebook page from our website www.stcmuseum.org or by searching St. Charles Heritage Center on facebook.

April

- 16 **Junior Historical Society meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 1-2:30 p.m.
- 11 **Thursday Evening Lecture**, St. Charles Public Library, 7 p.m. Free to members, donations appreciated.
- 20 **Education Committee meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 10 a.m.
- 27 **Fundraising Committee meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 4 p.m.
- 27 **Board of Directors meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 5 p.m.

May

- 3 **Book Club**, St. Charles Public Library, 7 p.m.
- 11 **Joe K. Anderson Roundtable**, Pottawatomie Park Community Center, 12-1:30 p.m.
- 14 **Junior Historical Society meeting**, Trip to the Field Museum of Natural History
- 19 **Thursday Evening Lecture**, St. Charles Public Library, 7 p.m. Free to members, donations appreciated.
- 18 **Education Committee meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 10 a.m.
- 25 **Fundraising Committee meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 4 p.m.
- 25 **Board of Directors meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 5 p.m.

June

- 4 **Junior Historical Society meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 1-2:30 p.m.
- 15 **Education Committee meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 10 a.m.
- 22 **Fundraising Committee meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 4 p.m.
- 22 **Board of Directors meeting**, St. Charles History Museum, 5 p.m.

Program dates and times are subject to change, please call to confirm all events (630) 584-6967



From our vast photo archives - Sisters Jessie and Marion Miller, also known as the "Wandering Minstrels", are shown here with their guitar and banjo. The sisters entertained and delighted audiences in St. Charles with their musical abilities. They were the daughters of the local paper mill owner, Charles and his wife May Tuck Miller.