

The Charlemagne

St. Charles History Museum
Quarterly Newsletter

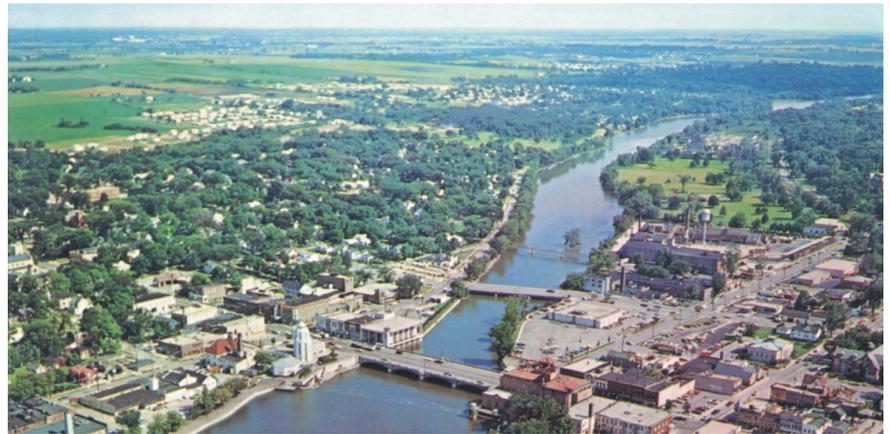
VOL. 40 - ISSUE 2
SUMMER 2019

Preservation Month - A Celebration of our City's History

by *Tim Kirsininkas*
Marketing Manager

May is designated as National Historic Preservation month, and the St. Charles History Museum will be holding a variety of events and programs in recognition and celebration of the occasion. "This Place Matters" is a national campaign by the National Trust that encourages people to celebrate the places that are meaningful to them and to their communities.

In recognition of our city's 185th Anniversary this year, we have planned a variety of programs throughout the month of May that highlight the importance of preserving the vibrant history of St. Charles and celebrate our defining historic sites and stories. We invite you to attend all of our Preservation Month events and learn more about the St. Charles story:



Historic Landscapes with Carol Yetken

Pottawatomie Community Center - 8 North Ave.
Saturday, May 11 - 10 a.m.

Join Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley and Carol Yetken, Landscape Architect and Historian of CYLA Design for a discussion of the history of Illinois public parks. The program will explore the history of Pottawatomie Park, and will conclude with a short walking tour of the park.

Pottawatomie Neighborhood Historic House Walk

Pottawatomie Park

Saturday, May 18 - Tours Depart 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

On Saturday, May 18, the History Museum and Park District will partner to hold a Historic House Walk through the charming Pottawatomie neighborhood. Tours begin at 11 a.m. in Pottawatomie Park, with tours departing every half hour until 3 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided, courtesy of Nothing Bundt Cakes in Geneva.

#ThisPlaceMatters



St. CHARLES
HISTORY MUSEUM

IN THIS ISSUE:

Letter from the Board.....	3	Murder Mystery.....	6
Letter from Museum Director ...	4	Foodie Fest.....	7
Collection News.....	5	Limited Edition Items.....	7

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Staff

Alison Costanzo
Executive Director

Amanda Helfers
Collections & Exhibitions Manager

Tim Kirsininkas
Marketing Manager

Jessica McCann
Visitor Engagement Coordinator

Museum Hours

Tuesday - Saturday
11 am - 4 pm

Closed Sunday-Monday

About Us

Phone: 630.584.6967
E-mail: info@stcmuseum.org
stcmuseum.org

215 E Main St
St. Charles, IL 60174



Preservation Month (Continued)

Living History Presentation - The 8th Illinois Cavalry

St. Charles History Museum - 215 E. Main St.
Saturday, May 25 - 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

On Saturday, May 25, during the St. Charles Fine Arts Show, the St. Charles History Museum will hold a living history presentation at the Museum. Civil War reenactors will provide information on the 8th Illinois Cavalry, which trained in St. Charles. Drop by anytime during Museum hours to visit the 8th Illinois Cavalry's camp and learn more about this unique St. Charles connection to the Civil War.

For more information and to register for these events, visit www.stcmuseum.org/events or contact the St. Charles History Museum at (630) 584-6967.

Special thanks to our community partners for their support in planning and promoting Preservation Month: St. Charles Historic Commission, St. Charles Public Library, St. Charles Park District, and Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley.



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VOL. 40

Learning from St. Charles' Past to Build its Future

How fortunate we are to live in St. Charles; a community with such rich history and unique stories. The cornerstones of our City's mission statement are Heritage, Community, Service, and Opportunity. It is important to note that heritage is distinctly positioned first on the list, and for good reason. In order to build a successful future, a community must be in touch with and fully understand its past. President Theodore Roosevelt once said it best, "The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future."

For those of us who call St. Charles home, we can learn from the people who settled here before us and their stories; their strengths, dreams, decisions and accomplishments, sprinkled with their struggles and disappointments. Consider that someday, we will be part of a future story with our own legacies.



*The Pretzs' historic home in the central historic district.
Photo - St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission*

My husband Tom and I live in a home located in the St. Charles Central Historic District. After moving in 14 years ago, we decided to research the history of our home. We learned that our house was originally the barn of a Civil War veteran, later used as George Ferson's feed and grain store and eventually moved by Ferson's daughter who converted it into a house. With the help of the St. Charles History Museum and the many resources available for research, we were able to uncover the stories of our home's original owners, and its distinct ties to early settlers of St. Charles.

Since joining the Museum Board of Directors last September, I have enjoyed working with the hard-working Board, staff, and volunteers to better plan in telling about St. Charles history and stories. We want to foster a curiosity in people of all ages through exhibits, programs and presentations.

The Museum is now engaged in an important strategic planning process as we look to the future ourselves. Our goal is to continue to be a relevant, fun, enlightening, inclusive, and accessible fixture in our community. And we want you to be a part of our collective history! We invite you to attend one of our many events or programs, volunteer, visit the museum, or become a member. Catch a glimpse into our City's amazing history as we help build our future together.

- Pat Pretz, Board Member

Letter from the Director

by Alison Costanzo

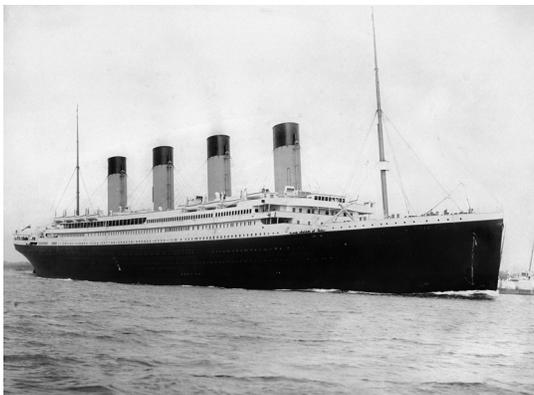
Dear Friends of the Museum,

As summer returns to St. Charles, we have so many exciting events planned! The month of May is Preservation Month, and new this year, we have added a variety of events and programs in recognition of the occasion. We are very excited to work with our community partners once again as we come together to celebrate the rich history and stories of our beautiful hometown.

From educational programs on the history of St. Charles' homes and parks, to our historic house walk, to our living history presentation at the Museum during the St. Charles Fine Arts Show, there's so much to learn about this great city, and we invite you to join us and take part in our month-long celebration of local history. Special thanks to the St. Charles Public Library, St. Charles Park District, St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission, and Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley for their help in planning these great Preservation Month programs.



Living history Civil War reenactors will be at the Museum on May 25.



The RMS Titanic sails into St. Charles for this summer's temporary exhibit.

At the beginning of June, we will be unveiling our new exhibit, *Tip of the Iceberg: St. Charles' Ties to the Titanic*, which will explore some of the unique stories of the passengers aboard the ship, including one survivor, Alice Berg Johnson, who lived in St. Charles at the time of the sinking. We look forward to sharing her story and our city's connection to the most infamous disaster in maritime history.

On June 22, our popular St. Charles Foodie Fest returns with a new twist, as we'll be "Rockin' on the Rooftop" into the summer night. The event will be from 5 - 9 p.m., and we are pleased to announce that the talented group *Rosie and the Rivets* has been booked as our headline entertainment! This year, we also plan to open the event to restaurants from our surrounding communities, so be sure to join us for a true taste of the finest foods the Fox Valley has to offer! For more

information, turn to page 7 of the newsletter.

We are also in the process of planning a few more fun events during the summer months, including "Sounds of St. Charles - Music at the Museum", three extended-hours evening events, and a special "history happy hour" cruise aboard the St. Charles Paddlewheel Riverboats. Follow us on social media or head to our website and sign up for our eNewsletter to stay up-to-date on everything we have planned this summer!

Our strategic planning process continues to move forward as we evaluate our plan for the future. We have completed our first round of surveys and held a community focus group, and we currently have a first draft of our new comprehensive Strategic Plan, which is under review by our Board of Directors. If you have feedback you would like to share or ideas for the Museum's future, let us know! This is your History Museum, and we want it to reflect your community with pride and passion. Have a great summer St. Charles, we hope to see you around the Museum soon!

-Alison Costanzo, Executive Director

Collections Organization Moving Ahead

by Amanda Helfers
Collections & Exhibitions Manager

With our limited space, big strides have been made with our collection. Over the past few months, we have been working to better organize our items in the museum collection. Just a few weeks ago, I put together a project timeline on how long the collection project would take with our current resources. The final number? 6 ½ to 7 years. Though this number may seem intimidating, this is important work that must be done carefully and deliberately. In order to do this project the right way, including organizing all storage spaces for easy access, properly inventorying each document and artifact, photographing or scanning each item, and then adding it all into a searchable database, we realized that it will take a lot more time than anticipated.



When complete, the project will sort our entire collection (left) into a neat and organized system like the one pictured on the right at the Aurora Regional Fire Museum.

The first phase of the project is a large one that will help significantly with freeing up space as we move our Probate and Civil cases collection to a new off-site storage facility. This will free up a large number of storage carts and space to allow us to begin the next phase. The second phase consists of moving boxes around for better organization. New shelves were built along our back wall in the upstairs archive which will now house the photograph collection and scrapbook collection. Once those have been moved, other subjects can be moved for better organization. During the third phase, boxes that have been hiding behind the Probate carts will be pulled out and sorted by subject matter. This step will take about 6 months to complete as there are a lot of boxes that have not been gone through and filed since the move into our current building in 2000.



Intern Amelia Deering works on the collection in 2018.

These first three phases will take about a year to complete (possibly earlier with seasonal interns and volunteers), but are major first steps in this important project. We'd like to extend a big thank you to Kathy Brens for her continued financial support and sponsoring the first six months of a new storage unit!

If you would also like to be involved in the project through financial donation or by volunteering your time, feel free to reach out at info@stcmuseum.org or my direct email amandahelfers@stcmuseum.org. We will also be looking for volunteers to help us move the Probate and Civil Cases collection to our new storage unit. Since we currently have not set a date yet, check your emails and our social media pages in the weeks to come if you would like to offer help!

Museum News

Murder Mystery Night Draws a Packed House

Our “Murder on the Bayou” Murder Mystery Night on April 12 at Pheasant Run Resort was a huge success! The house was packed with over 70 supporters in attendance. The event had a unique St. Charles-themed twist, as the plot focused on the dealings of the will and estate of actual St. Charles resident Herbert Crane (1861-1943) and his family.

"We are so excited and grateful for all the support we received in putting on this fundraiser," said Executive Director Alison Costanzo. "This time, we tried to do something a little different, and we are very pleased with how everything turned out. We look forward to working together with our community partners to put more events like this on in the future."



A colorful cast of characters served as the prime suspects for Murder on the Bayou.

We would like to thank Dennis Brown and the talented members of Vero Voce for their help in facilitating the event. We also would like to extend a sincere thank you to Pheasant Run Resort, Paragon Flowers, and Kathy Brens (in loving memory of Jack Brens) for their help in supporting the event.



The crowd was all ears as the last will and testament of Herbert Crane was read.



The winner of our costume contest won a free stay at Pheasant Run Resort!

Foodie Fest 2019: Rockin' on the Rooftop

We are excited to announce that the Best of St. Charles Foodie Fest will be returning this summer for its fourth year, this time with some new and exciting twists! This year, we'll be "Rockin' on the Rooftop" on **June 22 from 5-9 p.m.** *Rosie and the Rivets* will be our headline act as we'll be rocking with some classics into the summer night! This year, we are also expanding the event to include restaurants from all around the Fox River valley for some extra foodie fun. Your ticket allows you to sample some of the finest foods of the Fox River valley, and helps support the Museum in the process.



50s-style rock group *Rosie and the Rivets* will headline "Rockin' on the Rooftop".



Enjoy food samples from a wide variety of local restaurants.

New this year, tickets to the event will be available for purchase in three different tiers. The \$30 ticket gets you three tastings and one drink, the \$50 ticket gets you five tastings and two drinks, and for \$60 enjoy all-you-can-eat tastings and two drinks! In addition, make sure to purchase your tickets for our 50/50 raffle and enjoy great prizes through our live auction. Top prizes include wine baskets and gift cards, activity packages, a unique diamond necklace, and a trip to Nashville!

Tickets are available to purchase online at stcmuseum.org or by visiting the museum. We hope you'll join us for this celebration of the finest foods of the Fox Valley! Stay tuned for more details as we get closer to the event. Special thanks to our beverage sponsors Global Brew Tap House, Vintage 53, and Riverlands Brewing as well as our current food sponsors Puebla and Nothing Bundt Cakes.

Celebrate St. Charles with Limited Edition Items



Limited edition items celebrating St. Charles' 185th Anniversary, including clothing, glassware, and more available now in the Curious Fox Gift Shop!



Historic Preservation Around Every Corner

When in St. Charles and traveling on Riverside Avenue just south of Main Street, you may have noticed what appears to be a strange sculpture behind the BMO Harris Bank building. This is no artist's work, but rather an important historical piece of St. Charles' history. So...what exactly is that...thing?

This large metal object standing on a concrete pedestal next to the bank's parking lot is a mill waterwheel that dates back to 1884. The wheel was uncovered during the foundation work on the building, which opened in 1965. The wheel once belonged to one of St. Charles' first mills, and was used to generate power for a paper mill that stood on the same piece of land that the bank now occupies.

Mills in St. Charles and its surrounding communities played an important role in the growth and development of the Fox River valley, and the close proximity of the river allowed factories to easily harness the power of the river's flow, especially following the construction of the community dams in the early 1900s.

Rather than dispose of this historic piece of our city's history, the decision was made to put the wheel on display as a nod to the community's humble beginnings. The salvaging of this piece of history highlights the importance of places and objects in telling the story of our collective past.



Mayor Fred Norris (center) at the dedication of the historic waterwheel.

St. Charles, IL 60174
215 E. Main St.

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HISTORY MUSEUM

St. CHARLES

