

The Charlemagne

St. Charles History Museum
Quarterly Newsletter

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WINTER 2019

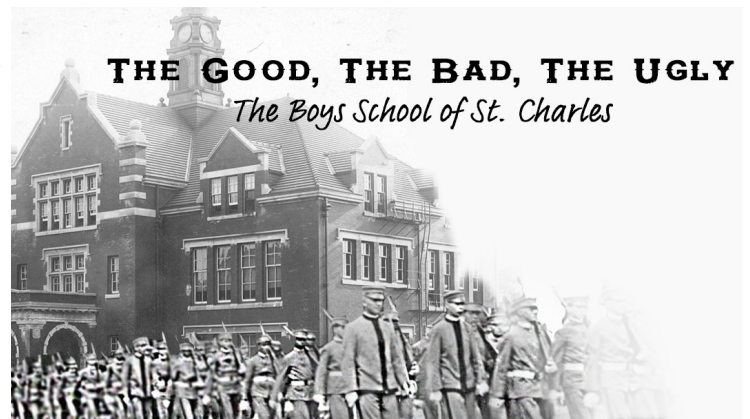
New Exhibit Explores History of the Boys School by Tim Kirsininkas Marketing & Public Engagement Manager

The St. Charles History Museum's new temporary exhibit, *The Good, the Bad, the Ugly: The Boys School of St. Charles*, explores the history of the local reformatory school and its impact on the boys who attended it.

In 1902, the Illinois State Home for Delinquent Boys (today existing as the Illinois Youth Center - St. Charles) was established by John "Bet-a-Million" Gates, Samuel Allenton, and Henry Weaver. The men believed that delinquent young men could be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society in a home-like setting that focused on schooling, hard work, and discipline.

While the school helped most boys find their way, others remained unchanged, choosing to continue a life of crime. One such example is the famous Midwest Gangster Lester Gillis, also known as "Baby Face Nelson", who resided at the school during his teen years and went on to become Public Enemy No. 1 in October of 1934. The exhibit explores some of the most interesting stories from the school's 100-plus years of history.

We unveiled the new exhibit with a special opening reception on Friday, October 25. We set an all-time attendance record for an opening reception with over 65 members, supporters, and employees of the school both past and present joining us.



Established in 1902, the Boys School exists today as the Illinois Youth Center-St. Charles.



Over 60 Museum Members and supporters joined us for the opening reception of "The Good, The Bad, The Ugly" on Oct. 25.

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St. CHARLES
HISTORY MUSEUM

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Alison Costanzo
Executive Director

Amanda Helfers
Collections & Exhibitions Manager

Tim Kirsininkas
*Marketing & Public
Engagement Manager*

Museum Hours

Tuesday - Saturday
11 am - 4 pm

Closed Sunday-Monday

About Us

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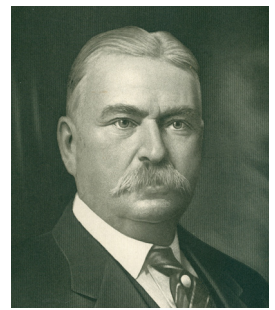


Boys School Opening (Cont.)

"We are so thankful for the amazing outpouring of support we received at the opening of this new exhibit," said Executive Director Alison Costanzo. "We were especially honored to have so many school and Youth Center employees to share in this celebration of their historic facility."

"We receive a lot of questions about the Boys School from our visitors here at the Museum, and this is a topic we've wanted to explore for quite some time," said Collections and Exhibitions Manager Amanda Helfers. "We are especially grateful for all of the assistance from employees of the facility we received in putting this exhibit together."

The exhibit will be on display through the end of the year. For more information, visit us at www.stcmuseum.org or call us at (630) 584-6967.



Boys School co-founder John "Bet-a-Million" Gates



Former Boys School resident and Public Enemy No. 1, "Baby Face Nelson", in his 1931 mugshot.



Curator Amanda Helfers talks to the audience at the exhibit unveiling.



A visitor inspects land deeds from 1902 on loan from the IYC-St. Charles.

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Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING
Mike Corbett, Advisor

History Starts with You on Giving Tuesday

#GIVINGTUESDAY
Tuesday, December 3rd

When St. Charles' earliest settlers arrived in the Fox River valley 185 years ago, they shared a collective dream: they wanted to come together to build a community that they could call their own. A place where people could depend on one another. A place where they knew their children would be proud to live and someday call their own.

If you had told these settlers when they first arrived that their small riverfront trading post would have one day blossomed into a bustling city with charming neighborhoods, beautiful parks, booming businesses, and stunning architecture, they may have never been able to imagine such a future. But, they would have most certainly been filled with the same sense of community pride that we feel for St. Charles today.

Consider this: what is the legacy of St. Charles that we want to leave behind for future generations? What amazing things will happen in our community over the next 185 years? In the future, will St. Charles schoolchildren still be learning about St. Charles' history as a Civil War training ground, about the lasting legacies of the Baker and Norris families, and what we accomplished as a community in 2019 and beyond?

At the St. Charles History Museum, we are the keepers and stewards of our community's rich history. Our archives contain artifacts and photos that document the dreams, the decisions, and the accomplishments of everyone who has come before us. By collecting and presenting these artifacts, we aim to preserve the story of St. Charles for generations to come.

However, we can't do it alone. We are in the process of reorganizing and cataloging each one of the over 15,000 objects in our collection to ensure that St. Charles' history remains accessible well into the future. Nearly 75% of our



Lester & Dellora Norris and Col. Edward J. Baker - three of the most influential and generous figures in St. Charles History

annual operating expenses are paid for through the generous support and donations of our members and donors. We encourage you to help support our mission through our #GivingTuesday end-of-year fundraising campaign.

Members and supporters alike are encouraged to give whatever they can to help us reach our goal of raising \$10,000 before the year is over. When you donate to the Museum, you are helping to build the collective lasting legacy of our beautiful community and of all those who have come before us.

All donations over \$50 receive a complimentary year-long membership to the St. Charles History Museum, complete with 10% discounts in our gift shop, advance notice on upcoming events, programs, and exhibits, and access to exclusive members-only events.

We encourage you to help us reach our cumulative annual fundraising goal, and to get active, get involved, and be a part of our lasting legacy. History starts with you!

What's your legacy?



Your support of the Museum's efforts allows us to preserve St. Charles' story for generations to come.

Learn more and donate at
stcmuseum.org/givingtuesday

Letter from the Board

Stories of St. Charles Echo Far and Wide

by Tom Anderson

What did you first hear about St. Charles before moving here? What are some of your earliest memories of our beautiful community? One of the most amazing things about our City is how all of our individual stories connect and intertwine to make St. Charles what it is today. Each of your neighbors who live here has their own distinct story to tell.

My wife Cris, who is from Brazil, remembers a long train ride 48 years ago while she was a graduate student at BYU to visit a friend here in St. Charles. Her friend lived on a farm, but today there aren't many of those left around our city.

I am a lifelong St. Charles resident, and in my travels, I have met many people from all over who have some kind of personal connection to this City. Even back in the 50s, a woman in Florida told me she had her honeymoon at the Hotel Baker, fittingly nicknamed "The Honeymoon Hotel". Acquaintances in Chicago told me they had fond memories of fun family picnics at Pottawatomie Park.

When I went off to Augustana College in Rock Island, St. Charles would bring different memories to mind for people. When I would introduce myself and mentioned I was from St. Charles, I would pause and say, "They let me out on good behavior." It always got a laugh because kids from all over Illinois were told by their parents, "behave yourself, or you'll be sent to St. Charles."

That of course, was in reference to the St. Charles Boys School, which we are exploring in our fall temporary exhibit that is on display through the end of the year.



Tom and Cris Anderson

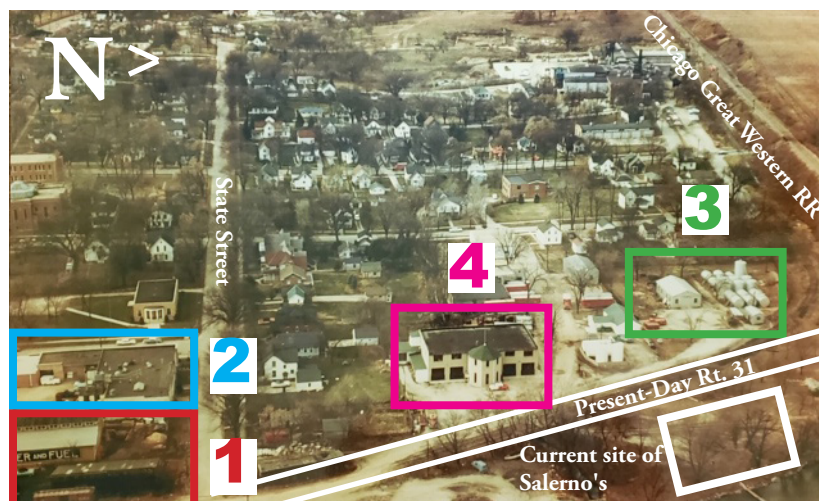
I remember what St. Charles was like in the 1950s, and the City has certainly come a long way since then. But it is important to remember that this community belongs to all of us, whether you are a lifelong resident like me or a recent transplant. If you are new here, we encourage you to stop by the Museum and learn a bit about the story of St. Charles and get acquainted with "The Pride of the Fox".

I will leave you with a new recent photograph that was donated to the Museum by my late friend, Don Soderquist. Find the photo and details below.

P.S. Remember to visit our Gift Shop this holiday season for all of your St. Charles gift-giving needs!

- Tom S. Anderson, Board Member

- Joshels Lumber and Fuel (1) with railroad boxcars and sidings.
- Colonial Ice Cream plant (2), and the business my grandfather Simon started in 1901.
- Storage tanks for the McCornack Oil Company (3). One of their old gas stations is now our History Museum today.



This photo, providing a unique look at some St. Charles industry and businesses, just came to the Museum courtesy of Don Soderquist. Carl, his father, built their company's building pictured front and center and started their company. c. 1950s

In the center of the photo is the building at 303 north on Route 31 (4), where Dick Pond Athletics is today. At this time, that building was Carl E. Soderquist and Sons construction garage. The company built road and highway bridges and constructed the bridge on Route 25, two blocks north of E. Main Street near downtown as well as the Illinois Street bridge.

Volunteer Shares Civil War and Investigative Knowledge

It's not every day that a volunteer with such in-depth knowledge and training as Rich Becker comes into the Museum and asks to help out. A former forensic investigator and recent St. Charles transplant, Rich is a former Chicago Police Officer who brings an impressive resume of investigative fieldwork experience into our Museum's research team.

Recently retired from the force, Rich now has time to dedicate to one of his true passions: Civil War history. When he joined the Museum's research team back in the spring, Rich took a look through our Civil War archive and was intrigued by a pair of photos featuring St. Charles' Camp Kane, a Civil War training ground that existed on much of the land that is Langum Park today. Rich knew that these two photos would be key in uncovering a question that has lingered for us for quite some time here at the St. Charles History Museum, that being, what was the exact size and location of Camp Kane?

Through several weeks of land surveys, GPS plotting, and comparison between present-day photographs and geological surveys, Rich was able to map out the exact size and scope of the Camp utilizing one photo looking north and one looking south, pinpointing the exact location in which both photographs were taken.



One of two photographs (this one looking south) that Rich used to pinpoint the size and location of Camp Kane.



Volunteer Researcher Rich Becker leads a lecture on his findings at the Museum on Oct. 9.

From there, Rich delved into the history of one of the legendary regiments that trained at that location, the 8th Illinois Cavalry. That specific regiment has been credited with firing the first shot at the Battle of Gettysburg, as well as playing a crucial role in the fight against the Confederacy during the Union's campaigns throughout the south.

"The 8th was a hugely historical regiment," Rich said. "They were very involved in pivotal moments of the war that affected the future of our nation."

During his research, Rich found that over 2,400 soldiers and approximately 1,400 horses were placed on furlough in St. Charles at one point during the war. This suggested that the original suspected size of Camp Kane would have had to have been much larger in order to accommodate that many troops and their campsites, as well as to provide ample room for drills and exercises. Rich's investigation into the Museum's photographs proved that. On the southern end of the camp, Rich spotted and surveyed geologic and man-made structures consistent with the northern edge of Geneva, meaning that Camp Kane would have logically stretched from present-day Langum Park in St. Charles, following the edge of the riverbank along Route 25 all the way down to Geneva's Bennett Park.

"Camp Kane was the starting point for many men who would go on to do great things," Rich said. "I look forward to following up on this research and uncovering new finds in the future."

Community News

Thompson Unveils New Look, With Nods to History

In August, the Museum staff had the privilege of attending the ribbon cutting and open house for the newly renovated Thompson Middle School. Since 1926, the building has served as a key component in the St. Charles School system. Originally opened as the new St. Charles Community High School, the school was later named in honor of the influential Chamber of Commerce President and School District Superintendent George E. Thompson. The building switched to a middle school in the late 1970s after the opening of the new Dunham Road facility that is St. Charles East High School today.

After the recent closing of Haines Middle School, the building now functions as the singular middle school facility for students on the west side of St. Charles. District 303 recently completed a top-to-bottom overhaul and renovation of the building, bringing ample amounts of natural light, new state-of-the-art classrooms and technology, new heating and cooling systems, and updated furniture and facilities.

While the building now will look entirely different to former alumni



A worker installs the school facade, which is still visible in the main lobby today.

of the school, many design elements of the exterior remain and retain the school's original look, including the original entryway sign that is still visible in the school lobby. One of the more impressive elements of historical

preservation is the reappearance of the former stage archway that now serves as the centerpiece of the building's cafeteria. The archway had previously been covered up by several renovation projects over the years, but is now brightly illuminated front and center for students and staff to enjoy.

At the school's re-opening, the Museum was proud to provide artifacts and photos for the new display cases. Included on display in the building's main lobby were a schoolteacher's dress from the late 1800s, as well as a St. Charles High Letterman Jacket and Drill Team uniform, plus trophies, programs, and merchandise from the school's past, all part of the Museum collection.

The historic Thompson building has now begun the next chapter of its impressive lifespan, and will continue to be a quality centerpiece of the St. Charles school system for decades to come.



The original auditorium stage arch now serves as a centerpiece for the building's new cafeteria.

Philanthropist Bob Norris Passes Away at Age 90



Bob Norris
Photo: Tee Cross Ranch

Born in St. Charles in 1929 to Lester and Dellora Norris, Bob Norris built his own distinct legacy out west. Following in his parents' footsteps of philanthropy, Norris continued the tradition of giving back to his hometowns, creating a legacy in Colorado and Arizona. Norris also led an interesting life. After moving to Colorado and taking up ranching in the

1950s, Norris was asked to be one of the first "Marlboro Man" models, appearing in ads for the cigarette brand around the country for years. Ironically, Norris never smoked a day in his life. Norris even helped save and nurse an abandoned elephant back to health on his ranch in the 1980s, a story which was documented in the 2001 novel, *A Cowboy and his Elephant*.

Museum Welcomes New Faces and Committee Members

Over the past few months, the Museum has welcomed several new individuals who are excited to help out at the Museum and help advance our mission of preserving St. Charles history. Meet some of the new faces around the Museum:



Sarah Czarnecki has joined the Museum staff as our new Collections Intern. Sarah is currently studying anthropology and history at Elgin Community College alongside her general education courses. She plans to pursue a degree in archaeology and will be assisting our Collections and Exhibitions Manager Amanda Helfers in our ongoing collections organization project.

Mattine Gallentine joined the Museum as an actor for our Grave Reminders Cemetery Walks and volunteered to join the Museum's Membership Committee. She has been the CEO of her own company, MG Computer Training and Technology since 2000, and assists small business owners all over the U.S. with tech needs.



Kim Lawson is the Owner and Manager of LaMesa Modern Mexican and has joined our Fundraising Committee. She has been a St. Charles resident for 15 years and immediately fell in love with the community. Kim is often involved in local causes and charity events, and is helping the Museum in planning several new and exciting fundraisers for 2020.

Sam Segura has been a part of our volunteer research team for several months and recently joined our Membership committee. Sam has previous experience in coordinating the membership program for Brookfield Zoo and is excited to contribute new ideas for our membership program, including new perks and updating the members section of our website.



Welcome New & Returning Members

Charles & Sue Peterson - Robert & Kathleen Andrini - Leon London -
St. Charles Park District - Leo Michelotti - Jacqueline Carlson -
Deborah Mulrooney - Janice Amos - Linda Kirsininkas - Jon Morgan -
Jo Anne Granquist - Margaret Williams - Rich & Betsy Anderson - Richard Weals -
Darlene Riebe - Deanna Banner - Mike & Nancy Hill - Daniel Campbell - Louis Dries

Have you renewed? If your address label has a star by your name, your membership is up for renewal.

Be sure to renew today!
stcmuseum.org/membership

Museum News

New Membership Perks Coming Soon

It's an exciting time to be a member of the St. Charles History Museum! Members are a part of the collective history of our beautiful city, and in addition to the knowledge that you are playing a part in supporting our mission, we are sure to provide a variety of perks in return of your financial support.

Currently, Museum members receive the following perks:

- 10% off all purchases in The Curious Fox Gift Shop
- A subscription to our quarterly newsletter, *The Charlemagne*
- Discounts on select Museum programs and research requests
- Advance notice about upcoming exhibits and access to VIP exhibit opening receptions
- Access to exclusive members-only events and programs

COMING SOON!

We are currently in the process of working on some exciting new membership perks! Stay tuned as we work to unveil the following:

- Members-only behind-the-scenes tours of our collections and archives
- Invitations to brand-new membership mixer events
- Access to the NEW Members-only section of our website, which will allow you to keep up with all the latest research updates the Museum staff is working on and exclusive looks at unique items and photos from our collection.

To learn more about how to become a Member of the St. Charles History Museum, visit www.stcmuseum.org/membership. If you are an existing Museum member and would like to learn more about your membership perks, contact Marketing & Public Engagement Manager Tim Kirsininkas at (630) 584-6967 or email tkirsininkas@stcmuseum.org.



75% of our Museum budget is paid for through membership dues, allowing us to educate visitors of all ages about St. Charles.



Museum members enjoy exclusive access and discounts to a wide variety of events and programs every year.

Featured Archive Photo - Arcada Recreation Center



This year, St. Charles welcomed the new establishments Pollyanna Brewing and Flagship on the Fox into the space located at 100 S. Riverside Avenue, which formerly housed a bowling alley and recreation center pictured here in the late 1920s or 1930s. The recreation center was operated by the owners of the Arcada Theatre. The bowling alley floors pictured in the photo here were converted into table tops for Pollyanna's Lemont location.

Museum Participates in Fundraiser for WWII Documentary

Museum staff was proud to participate in an advance screening and fundraiser for *The Girl Who Wore Freedom* on Sunday, November 17 at Pheasant Run Resort. *The Girl Who Wore Freedom* is a feature-length documentary telling the story of the people of Normandy, France and the lasting legacy of the American GIs who stormed the beaches on D-Day and helped grant them their freedom from the rule of Nazi Germany.

At the event, the Museum's display table featured artifacts from our extensive World War II collection and information about the Howard Aircraft Corporation, which was headquartered at DuPage Airport during the war years and manufactured small aircraft to contribute to the war effort.

The screening event featured guest of honor Walter C. Nogulich of Niles, who stormed the beaches at Normandy on June 6, 1944 and earned the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his actions and bravery during the invasion effort. The event was complemented by the support of hundreds of visitors and reenactors who played a part in transporting visitors back to 1944 France. The Museum was incredibly proud to take part in this celebration of local World War II heroes.

The film is nearing completion, and the producers need your help to complete the film. For more information and to stay up to date on all the film's latest news, visit www.normandystories.com.



Marketing Manager Tim Kirsininkas and his sister, Marketing Intern Cory Kirsininkas dedicated the Museum table to their grand uncle Pvt. Edward Krygowki, KIA in the Battle of Guadalcanal.

Museum and Whiskey Society to Partner on Dec. 7 Fundraiser

The Fox Valley Whiskey Society and St. Charles History Museum will partner to hold a "Party Like It's 1933" Whiskey Tasting and Fundraiser at the St. Charles History Museum on Saturday, December 7 from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. The event will take attendees back to 1933, the year alcohol prohibition through the 18th amendment was repealed, and also the same year that the St. Charles History Museum was established.



Representatives from the Fox Valley Whiskey society will provide samples of whiskeys popular for the time and with historic connections to the Prohibition Era such as Old Forester, Woodford Reserve, Old Overholt and Four Roses. Whiskey Society and Museum representatives will combine the event with a historical presentation on each of the types of whiskeys available for tasting and the Fox Valley's connections to the Prohibition Era. The event will also feature a 50/50 split-the-pot raffle to support the Museum's efforts and charcuterie provided by LaMesa Modern Mexican in St. Charles. Tickets to the event are \$50 and are available for purchase through the Museum website or foxvalleywhiskeysociety.com.

Gift Shop News

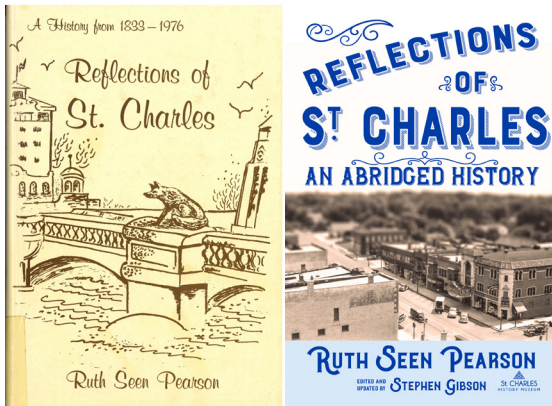
Photo Calendar and 'Reflections' Among New Items

We are excited to be adding numerous items to The Curious Fox Gift Shop, just in time for your holiday gift-giving needs. New items include new wood coasters, shot glasses, St. Charles hats, a wide variety of drinkware and home accessories, and more. This year, we will also be selling a historic photo wall calendar, which includes some of our favorite photos from our Museum archives. Once again we will also be offering our limited-edition holiday ornaments and St. Charles-themed poster.

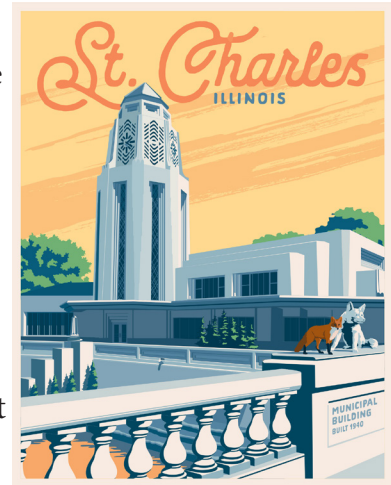


Our photo calendar (above) and limited-edition tourism poster (below) highlight our new gift shop items.

We are especially excited to unveil the newly updated *Reflections of St. Charles: An Abridged History*. The last edition of the book was released in 1976, and is one of the most comprehensive resources for St. Charles history. This new edition has been edited and annotated by former Museum Board member and Vice President of the St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission Steve Gibson, who has worked on documenting St. Charles history since the original release.



“In editing this book, I've had the chance to deepen and widen my experience and knowledge of St. Charles history,” Gibson said. “I hope that through the publication of this book, I have a chance to impact that history into the future.”



Reflections offers an in-depth look at the story of St. Charles, from its founding up until today.

Pre-orders for the book and calendar are available now in the Gift Shop and on our website, and printed copies will be available for purchase by the end of November. Check back on our website and social media for more details about the book's release.

Give the Gift of a Legacy Brick This Holiday



Our Museum Legacy Walkway is coming together! The first batch of brick pavers were installed in front of the Museum in August, with more coming soon. Each brick is 4x8 inches and can fit three lines of 13 characters each. Bricks start at \$125, and are the perfect way to pay tribute to friends and family members or to commemorate your love for St. Charles and its rich history. For more information and to order your brick, visit stcmuseum.org/brickpaver or stop in our Gift Shop.

Museum Snapshots

Spooky Stories and Historic Walks Highlight Fall Events



Local artist Rita Grendze installed her site-specific work "Synapses 4 - Community" on the Museum roof as part of the St. Charles ArtsFest in September.



Our talented cast of actors at North Cemetery for the Grave Reminders Walk on September 28. Attendees had the chance to "meet" some of St. Charles' most influential historic figures.



Tim Kirsininkas and Amanda Helpers lead a tour group as part of the Mystery History Downtown Walking Tour on October 3.



Keyboardist Scott Stevenson and the Ryan Carney Cello Trio performed as part of our Music at the Museum series.

Warmest Holiday Wishes from All of Us at the Museum!



Santa Claus is welcomed to St. Charles on the roof of the Municipal Building, c. 1940s

On behalf of all of us at the St. Charles History Museum, we would like to thank all of our members, supporters, visitors, and volunteers for making 2019 a great year. We look forward to growing with you as we continue to make history in 2020 and beyond!

Thank you!

Upcoming Events and Programs

stcmuseum.org/events



Holiday Hotspot Open House

Saturday, Nov. 30 - 12-8 p.m.
Heading out to the St. Charles Electric Lights Parade? Stop in to the Museum to warm up with us! Cookies, cider, crafts, music, facepainting and more will be offered.



Annual Member & Volunteer Holiday Party

Friday, Dec. 6 - 5-8 p.m.
Join us for a special evening of food, drinks, and celebration inspired in part by our new temporary exhibit. Music also to be performed on our historic 1924 Cable Piano.



Party Like Its 1933 Whiskey Tasting & Fundraiser

Saturday, Dec. 7 - 7-9 p.m.
We're taking it back to the end of Prohibition in this fundraiser co-hosted by the Fox Valley Whiskey society. Sample and learn about whiskeys popular around the prohibition era and enjoy food samples from local restaurants.



Music at the Museum: Brad Conroy

Friday, Feb. 21 - 6-8 p.m.
Enjoy an evening of music, drinks, and appetizers as we welcome local guitarist Brad Conroy to the Museum for our first music performance of 2020. Doors open at 6 p.m. with the performance beginning at 6:30.

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

COLLECT • PRESERVE • PRESENT

HISTORY MUSEUM
St. CHARLES

