History will soon be on the move again with the start of the 2022 Historical Society’s History Tour season. Guests will enjoy nine different tours during the season while riding in air-conditioned comfort. For a description of the tours, please go to peoriahistoricalsociety.org. The tours will run Fridays and Saturdays from 10 to noon during June, July and August. For September and October, a second tour will be added on Saturdays from 12:45 to 2:45 p.m. Tickets are $20 per person and can be ordered through 309tix.com.

The very popular “Haunted Peoria” Tour will have four evening tours as well as the regular daytime offerings. All “Haunted Peoria” Tours generally sell out, so guests should sign up early.

Walking tours are also available. If you have a group of ten or more folks and would like to do a walking tour, just call the Peoria Historical Society office at 309-674-1921 Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Please call at least two weeks prior to the desired date to arrange a walking tour. The cost per person for these tours is $15.

Our guides are very personable, knowledgeable and experienced. Although all guides work from the same scripts, each guide brings personal flair to any given tour. Return guests are sure to enjoy a repeat tour as much as the first!

Speaking of guides, new volunteers are always welcome! Please contact Beth Johnson at 309-264-6119 to learn more about the process of becoming a certified guide for any of these nine tours. If interested, you will be provided a complete script to guide through the initial learning process for each tour. The second step is to buddy along with an experienced tour guide. Then if you feel confident and prepared, we’ll schedule you to be the guide for a tour with a regular guide along as backup. Once you complete this three-step process, you’re ready to give tours on your own.
From the President
Wow a year goes quickly! As my time as president of Peoria Historical Society comes to a close, I think back on seven exciting years of involvement. What started as giving some constructive feedback about a major fundraising event turned into a seat on the board, a few months serving as interim executive director, terms as treasurer, vice president and now concluding president. In that time we have set records for fundraising events, stopped borrowing on our line of credit, stopped taking distributions from the endowment fund, grown the endowment fund and begun the process of starting a capital campaign to fund the long-term needs of our historic homes and the organization. All of these things have been accomplished through the dedicated support of members like you. I conclude by thanking you for your commitment to PHS and look forward to continued success!
Zach Oyler, President

57th Annual Rennick Art Show
By Elizabeth Klise
The annual Rennick Art Show is back on the calendar for this May! With a new theme of “History Reimagined,” this year’s show will feature work that expresses any and all aspects of Peoria—past, present, and future. Now in its 57th season, the event is a Peoria Historical Society stalwart, and is being chaired this year by Elizabeth Klise and Dr. Mae Gilliland Wright. Any visual artist 18 years or older who is working in 2D art and has a Peoria-area connection is welcome to submit a registration request via the Peoria Historical Society website. The submission deadline is May 2, but early submissions are encouraged since space restrictions may limit the number of pieces accepted into the show. All work will be eligible for cash prizes ranging from $100 to $400.

The show will run May 5-28 in the Peoria Riverfront Museum Auditorium, 222 SW Washington Street. An opening reception will take place on Thursday, May 5 at 5:30 p.m. at the museum to recognize the artists, award winners, and show sponsors. For more details and a registration form, please visit www.peoriahistoricalsociety.org or call the Peoria Historical Society at 309-674-1921.

Board of Trustees welcomes Alexandria Lavin
By Kathy Ma
Alexandria Lavin was named to the Peoria Historical Society Board of Trustees in January to fill a retiring board member’s term. Alex received a degree in history with a minor in architecture from the University of Illinois in 2008. Her focus of study was architecture in the ancient world and World War II. In 2019, she received an executive certificate in nonprofit fund development from University of Notre Dame, College of Mendoza. The three-part course encompasses fundraising, principles of leading transformational nonprofits, and effective grant proposal writing, which Alex says she enjoys.

Alex and husband Nick Lavin have three children: Vivienne, 11; Charlotte, 10; and Declan, 8. Alex founded the Yellow Bear Foundation in 2017 and has raised more than $400,000 for primary immunodeficiency (PI). For the past five years she has participated in the Disney Princess Half Marathon and has raised almost $10,000 for Children’s Miracle Network.

“I look forward to the opportunity joining this board brings, combining my love of history together with my love of foundation work,” Alex said. “Peoria has a rich history and wonderful, giving people. I am excited to work with both in an effort to further the work the PHS board does in our community. Thank you for the opportunity.”

Welcome, Alex!

Board of Trustees welcomes Gale Thetford
By Shelly Lehman
Peoria attorney Gale Thetford joined the Peoria Historical Society Board of Trustees in January. President Zach Oyler appointed Gale to a partial term that ends in May. The former Peoria City Councilwoman serves on the Illinois Central College Board of Trustees and is vice president of the Heartland Health Services Board of Directors.

“I am very interested in historical preservation and have supported the various older neighborhoods and their efforts to maintain properties and promote their historical significance,” Gale said. “I live in a beautiful older home built in 1931, and I believe that many prior efforts to improve Peoria and its landscape did not adequately, if at all, take into account the importance of maintaining our historical buildings and neighborhoods. I also have extensive experience in serving on boards, both elected and nonprofit, and I welcome this opportunity to assist the Peoria Historical Society in its efforts.”

Welcome, Gale!
History Talks: Back on the Circuit
By Maureen Naughtin

After two years of limited in-person educational outreach (although some presentations were given virtually), our talented and experienced group of history experts are back on the in-person circuit, providing their audiences with interesting and important Peoria history. Below is a brief list of those presentations that have happened recently.

Students at Rolling Acres School were the fortunate recipients of a PHS program given by Corey Curtis on Feb. 15. Corey spoke about the history of the abolition movement in Peoria, focusing on the roles Moses and Lucy Pettengill had within the movement. Corey’s presentation was the perfect fit for the Rolling Acres class as it studied the Underground Railroad and worked on sewing Underground Railroad communication quilts. In fact, the finished quilt was displayed when Corey gave his talk on the same subject at the Pettengill-Morron Historic House Museum on Feb. 27.

That's the Spirit: Roll Out the Barrel was the engaging title of Bernie Drake’s presentation on Peoria’s distilling history given to patrons of the Chillicothe Public Library on March 10. Our area’s premier expert on distilling, Bernie spoke to an enthusiastic audience who did exceptionally well on Bernie’s traditional pre-presentation quiz. Additionally, curator Maureen Naughtin supplemented the program by showing and briefly talking about a handful of PHS artifacts associated with Peoria’s distilling history. These artifacts included Almiran Cole’s copper yeast jug and a “whiskey thief”, which assisted gaugers with the task of determining the proof of the alcohol – essential information for taxing purposes.

Finally, patrons of the Peoria Public Library North Branch marked Women’s History Month on March 21 with Beth Johnson and Marilyn Leyland as they spoke about Powerful Peoria Women: Then and Now. Adapting their popular bus tour on notable Peoria women, Marilyn and Beth focused on those women who, through their words and actions, created the most change for women. Highlighted were three very important Peoria women, all of whom are inductees of the National Women’s Hall of Fame - Lydia Moss Bradley, Betty Friedan and Nancy Brinker.

The Peoria Historical Society is thrilled to have its history experts back on the speaking circuit.

We offer a wide range of topics. If your group/organization is interested in a history presentation, please call the office.

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Honoring Notables from Springdale Cemetery
By Maureen Naughtin

Honoring Notables of Springdale Cemetery is a project of the Springdale Cemetery Public Awareness Committee, a group which focuses on bringing greater community attention to the historic cemetery and its notable “residents.” In partnership with the Peoria Riverfront Museum, and with the Peoria Historical Society, the Public Awareness Committee has prepared and will continue to prepare specific cases that highlight historic figures.

The first case, hosted by the Peoria Riverfront Museum, highlighted Lucie Tyng, educator, temperance leader and early suffragette.

PHS curated the second case found in the lobby of the Peoria Public Main Library. Dr. George Zeller, an innovative psychiatrist who advocated for compassionate health care for the mentally ill, is currently featured. A medical bag and two saddle bags belonging to Dr. Zeller are on display.

PHS will continue highlighting notable Springdale residents with cases at the Lakeview Branch and at the North Branch of the Peoria Public Library in April and June. April’s case at Lakeview will feature Almiran Cole, who is credited with opening the area’s first distillery. A copper yeast jug reputedly belonging to Cole will be central to the case. In June at North, Lydia Moss Bradley will grace the case.
The Hall of Stone
By H Wayne Wilson

The cornerstone for Peoria City Hall was put in place 125 years ago. With this year being the quasquicentennial, it’s appropriate to look back at the origins of the building that was added to the national Register of Historic Places in 1973.

- The mayor at the time, having never previously erected a building, got the construction bid.
- The cost of the finished structure was more than twice the original estimate.
- Some citizens objected because a popular landmark was demolished so it could be built.
- Other individuals thought it showed preference for a particular brand of beer.
- A judge predicted the city would grow to 200,000 within 50 years of its opening.

Despite these perceived obstacles and misjudgments, city leaders had the foresight to construct a building that remains a focal point for downtown. And the Peoria City Hall still stands out amongst the newer construction that skies above it. One of the reasons it has maintained its grandeur after more than 120 years of service is the stone. It’s red sandstone from the eastern shores of Lake Superior that was quarried by prison inmates. The stone gives city hall a protective-like yet picturesque 16-inch exterior wall.

A New Building from a Sour Economy

The national economic downturn of the early 1890s did not encourage new ventures, but that didn’t stop Peoria Mayor Philo Miles from pushing forward with plans for a new city hall. The city hall at the time was a two-story building constructed in 1859 that was not sufficient for a city approaching 100,000 in population. Miles was confident Peoria could handle the expense because the fiscal condition of Peoria was somewhat better than that of the country, which was dealing with lingering effects of the economic depression of 1892. The liquor and railroad industries were providing local jobs. And with a brand-new park district and the soon-to-form Bradley Polytechnic Institute, Mayor Miles was inspired enough on June 4, 1894, to announce plans for the new city headquarters. It was to include offices for the mayor, public works, police and fire departments and even the harbormaster. But to make room for the four-story city hall, the popular Market House had to be leveled. The city’s covered outdoor produce market was a popular place to catch up on the latest hearsay. So, the plans for progress met some resistance when the public first learned of the building. Despite some protest, construction began at 419 Fulton St. in 1895 based on the design of architects Reeves and Bailie of Peoria. It was to be built in the Flemish Renaissance style. In what might raise some eyebrows today, the newly elected mayor of Peoria, William Allen, received the contract for construction even though he had never supervised the erection of any building up to that point. One of the biggest challenges his crews would face was the transfer of the bell from the old city hall to the new edifice. The bell was used to warn of fires and other disasters as well as to mark civic events. But at 4,300 pounds, taking the bell down and raising it to the roof line of the new building was not an option. Instead, work teams slid the bell across a suspended series of planks from the roof of the old building to the new copper cupola bell tower. The placement of the cornerstone on Nov. 2, 1897, came with the usual pomp and predictions. Dignitaries spoke of the image the new building would create, but none went further than Judge Nicholas Worthington. There must have been a fog on that fall day near the end of the 19th century, for the judge envisioned the city 50 years later as having 200,000 residents.

Picturesque Peoria through the Artist’s Lens: PHS Exhibit at Peoria Public Library

By Maureen Naughtin

The Peoria Historical Society has the fortunate opportunity to annually exhibit in the gallery space at the Peoria Public Main Library for one month. In March, PHS presented Picturesque Peoria through the Artist’s Lens – an art exhibit showcasing a variety of works by artists, past and present, who have captured the beauty of Peoria. The exhibit was organized to celebrate Peoria’s distinctive location along the Illinois River, its functional and attractive bridges, its historic parks, its iconic city structures and the area’s idyllic rural scenes. In addition to the stunning oils, watercolors and prints on display, informational panels helped educate guests on the history of these celebrated icons. Most of the artwork on display was from the PHS collection with some contemporary works provided compliments of the artists.
Cost Overruns

By the end of 1898, the building was complete, but at a cost of $234,592 – more than twice the estimated cost. This was due in part to improvements involving stone for the interior – Italian marble wainscoting and American marble floor tile. Even with the cost overrun, construction of the new city hall was completed without incurring new debt. The dedication was a two-day affair. City officials and people involved with the building of city hall celebrated with a dinner the night of Jan. 4, 1899. The public had its turn the next day, as a parade of fire engines followed the popular Spencer’s Band from the main firehouse to city hall to mark the start of an open house. The man who led the dedication of the building was Civil War veteran John Warner, who had recently been elected to his eighth non-consecutive term as mayor (mayors served two-year terms back then). In his speech, he understood the long-lasting impact the new building would have when he said, “This building will stand as a monument to the zeal and energy of the present and be enjoyed by those who may not remember that we ever existed.” Shortly after the dedication, the design of the entrances to city hall raised concerns about alcohol. Above each entrance was an orb, or globe, with a stone banner surrounding it at an angle. The appearance closely resembled that of the trademark for Schlitz beer. The rumors spread, most notably one that suggested the granite balls were advertisements for the beer at taxpayer expense. Former Mayor Allen, who had built the orbs, said he had just followed the plans. The architects said the drafter, Jesse Watson, had drawn them into the plans but they didn’t know why. But in the end, it was Watson who cleared the air – he saw the building in a dream and the balls were just there.

Stone of a Different Sort

Stonework that predates city hall now sits on the first floor of the building. Peoria sculptor Fritz Triebel was inspired by an 1850 poem from India. “Love Knows No Caste” shows Lallu the servant and Dosse, the daughter of a Brahmin, attempting to hold back their love because of the caste system. Triebel created the sculpture from Carrara marble in Italy in 1889. It was displayed at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 but didn’t make city hall home until 1976. When the exterior walls needed repair some 90 years after construction, the city turned to an old source. Contractors did not want the new stone to differ in appearance from the original, so the red sandstone they used for the repairs came from the same quarry near Lake Superior that supplied the original stone.

Remembering Liz Dusenbery

By Mary Hamm

Liz volunteered at the Pettengill-Morron House Museum as a docent for over 30 years and was deeply involved in the Peoria Historical Society. She graciously gave tours and was an expert polisher of Jean Morron’s silver! She was a piano teacher and played Christmas music for the visitors at P-M during the Holiday Home Tours. She treated fellow volunteers to homemade ice cream on her lovely front porch during the summer. While there, we enjoyed seeing her variety of watermelon-themed collectables.

She passed away on June 27, 2021 and her beloved husband, Peter, passed away on Feb. 26, 2022. A Celebration of Life will be held at the Peoria Women’s Club at 4 p.m. on May 21. Memorial donations may be made to the Peoria Historical Society and the Peoria Humane Society.

In Memory of George Johnson

George M. Johnson M.D., 70, died Jan. 6, 2022. George moved to Peoria in January 2013 for a position with the OSF Children’s Hospital as an Infectious Disease Specialist. George attended Hope College in Michigan and completed his ID fellowship in Minnesota, so he had a fondness for winters and the Midwest. George loved Peoria and the Peoria Historical Society. He volunteered at the Pettengill-Morron House Museum and wherever his wife asked him to help. He spent hours during the 2020 shutdown pulling weeds, picking up fallen branches and cleaning up the back gardens at P-M House Museum. He leaves behind his loving wife Colleen Otto Johnson, Executive Director of the Peoria Historical Society.

Chris Coulter Remembered

By Marilyn Leyland

Volunteer Chris Coulter’s recent death reminds all of the value of digitizing, preserving and appreciating history. He spent countless hours at PHS with former curator Robert Killion, photographing artifacts and then digitizing photographs and documents and posting items on Facebook. Fascinated by fonts, he created numerous posters for PHS and for events at Flanagan House Museum, where he also volunteered. He also generously shared his talents with the Tremont Historical Society, the Museums of the Diocese of Peoria, Special Collections at Bradley’s library, the Smithsonian Institution and numerous individuals. As “Chris Traugott” he posted regularly on Facebook. Gone too soon at age 53.
Celebrate Independence Day at Flanagan House!

By Leann Johnson

Continue the tradition and join Peoria Historical Society at the John C. Flanagan House Museum for July 4, 2022 Independence Day festivities. Fortunately, there will be fireworks over the river this year and we invite you to enjoy the evening with us on top of the bluff overlooking the magnificent river view! The historic house museum will be open for tours and other 4th of July activities. Invite your family and friends. Bring your folding chairs and blankets and picnic basket. Refreshments and snacks will be available for purchase. Space is limited. Entry fee is $5 per adult and $2 for each child under 12. House tours are half-price at $5 per adult and free for children under 12. The John C. Flanagan House Museum is located at 942 NE Glen Oak Ave. All proceeds benefit the Peoria Historical Society in sharing and preserving our area’s history.

Watch for more details on social media and www.peoriahistoricalsociety.org.

Pettengill-Morron House Upscale Porch Sale

By Mary Hamm

Pettengill-Morron House Museum is having its “Upscale Porch Sale” during the Moss Avenue Antique Sale and Festival on June 11. Shop from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the porch and in our gift shop for unique treasures. We have something for everyone!

Pettengill-Morron House Museum is taking reservations for weddings, bridal showers, birthday parties, meetings and any special event. Indoors or out, we give you our personal attention to make sure that your event is special. For more information and booking availability, please call the Peoria Historical Society at 309-674-1921.

Welcome New Members!

Carol Brody
Cheryl Budzinski
David and Sharon Byrkit
Chadwick Family Fund
Melissa Entzminger
Carole Gilfillan
Barry and Lianne Gray
Fred and Liz Hoy
Roger and Lanel Huber
Gary Kuzniar
Sharlyn Munns
Daniel and Katherine Musisi
Camilla and Ron Rabjohns
Christine Reynolds
Pricilla Slaughter
James and Beth Smittkamp
Sue Swanson
Matthew Swearinger
Bridget Burke and Pat Whitten
Scott Williams

‘Nymphs and Satyr,’ Temperance, and the Rest of the Story

Kathy Ma presents the third and final installment of the story of the “Nymphs and Satyr” painting, which can be viewed at the WTVP studio, 101 State St., Peoria.

Although Peoria was a center for alcohol production, it had many advocates of the Temperance Movement, which sought to curb production and consumption of alcohol. A well-known member of the movement was Carrie Nation, who was renowned for smashing up joints with her hatchet and being arrested on more than one occasion. However, when Carrie came to Peoria in February 1901, she left her hatchet at home. Even though she did not smash up any joints here, she was quite the attraction. Carrie even stopped by one of Peoria’s best-known establishments of the day: Pete Weast’s Golden Palace. Weast, always the showman, actually paid Nation to make an appearance in the hope of drawing a crowd, which it did. To further the show, when Carrie was demanding the painting be taken down due to its “inappropriate content,” Weast is reported to have made a $50 donation to her cause, but didn’t take the painting down.

After Weast retired around 1908 he stored his painting in a barn loft for several years. Later, it was moved back into the building in which it had been found ... later becoming Brady’s Tap owned by Jim Brady who took it over from Robert McClugage. It last operated under the name the Elbow Room. Rather than make a hole in the wall big enough to remove the painting again, a new wall was built in front of it where it would remain hidden from view for years. In 1959 the space became a storage room for Schaffer Fur Co., and the Niagara entrance was sealed.

The painting was forgotten until 1970 when Weast’s old saloon building and others were razed to make way for the new addition to Illinois Bell. After rediscovery, the painting was crated up and stored at Federal Warehouse. It became the property of Weast’s daughter Maude Mae Weast Sadler of Los Angeles. It was to be shipped to her, but Joe Kelly, past president of the Creve Coeur Club, talked Mrs. Sadler into gifting it to the Peoria Historical Society with the provision it be displayed in the Creve Coeur Club when its new building was complete. It subsequently hung in the club’s Stag Bar on the main floor beginning around 1972. When the old clubhouse no longer existed, the painting was moved to storage at Federal Warehouse until Tom Leiter, past president of Peoria Historical Society, requested it be loaned to him for his building, where the Apollo Theater is now located and where it was a focal point at the now-closed Richard’s on Main bar. It was on loan there until Peoria Historical Society installed the piece at WTVP on May 19, 2021.
Pass along your passion for history and become a Peoria Historical Society Membership Sponsor. Someone you know has the same interest in “preserving, sharing, and celebrating the stories of the Peoria area.” Your gift of membership not only helps further the PHS mission but encourages others to do the same. Please use the form below or go online to peoriahistoricalsociety.org for a printable membership form and add a note that you’re sponsoring the new member when you submit the form.

Thanks for your continued support.

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**Become a PHS Membership Sponsor!**

Yes, I would like to sponsor a one-year membership to the Peoria Historical Society.

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Address ________________________________________

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**Sponsor Information**

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Please mail this completed form to the

Peoria Historical Society
611 SW Washington St.
Peoria, IL 61602

Thank you! The new member will receive a special “Welcome to PHS” note in your name.
Peoria Historical Society
611 SW Washington Street
Peoria, IL 61602

Office Hours: 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Tuesday-Friday
Phone: 309-674-1921
Fax: 309-674-1882
adminphs@peoriahistoricalsociety.org
www.peoriahistoricalsociety.org
Find us on Facebook

Special Collections Center
Bradley University Library
Bradley Avenue at Glenwood
Office Hours: 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday
Phone: 309-677-2822

John C. Flanagan House Museum
942 NE Glen Oak Avenue
Peoria, IL 61603
Phone: 309-674-1921
Open for Tours - see website

Pettengill-Morron House Museum
1212 W. Moss Avenue
Peoria, IL 61606
Phone: 309-674-1921
Open for Tours:
Thursday, 10-2
Some Sundays - see website
Cost: $10 adults
$5 high school & college
$3 children 6-12
Tours by appointment.
$20 minimum