



MCHS News

May 2021

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 9 No. 3

Historical Museum
715 N Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

The museum is currently closed for renovation.

Archival Library
801 N Main Street

Hours:

Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm

Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm

(Reservations recommended)

Library Phone:

618-656-7569

MCHS Connections:

Website:

madcohistory.org

E-mail:

info@madcohistory.org

Phone:

618-656-1294

About Us:

The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Recognizing the Work of Charlotte E. Johnson

The Illinois State Historical Society last month recognized the work of Charlotte E. Johnson, Alton, by presenting her with the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in documenting the stories of Black families in Illinois. Charlotte, a teacher by profession as well as by avocation, is not only an exceptional historian, but she is also generous in sharing the results of her research.

MCHS asked her to tell us about her work in this newsletter. Even given in brief, it is an impressive body of work that includes stories behind the Underground Railroad, the fate of all Edward Coles' freed slaves, her work to recognize the history of Rocky Fork Church and much more.

(continued on page 11)

Pictured at right is Charlotte E. Johnson with her recent ISHS award



THE NEED TO SEEK

BY CHARLOTTE E. JOHNSON

I have always been fascinated with the events of history: events that shaped lives and simply influenced the living of a single day. Throughout my formal education, however, the contributions of African Americans to those events were rarely mentioned. If it were not for Abe Lincoln, I would have wondered if the schools knew African Americans were here at all.

Growing up in Springfield, Illinois, my parents saw to it that my brother, my cousins, and I knew. They exposed us, and every other child within reach, to a smorgasbord of the "Colored" or "Negro" experience. Most of the time, I was a willing student. On occasion, the sermons were too long, or I did not understand the point behind the lecture, or I had stuffed myself with too many of the goodies arrayed for the ladies' polite enjoyment. Even then, however, I listened and learned because Mother's eyes saw everything, and Grandmother pinched fidgeting arms.



Charlotte and her brother, Alonzo H. Kenniebrew Jr., listening at Springfield, Illinois, circa 1936. (Charlotte Johnson)

From the *James Weldon Johnson Study Guide*, The Colored Women's Club, to the Urban League sponsored activities at the Frederick Douglass Community Center, we learned to take pride in ourselves and our heritage. We had fun along the way. When those 'nasty events' (race riots) started in Springfield, the NAACP fought for all people of color. Oh yes, even as a child, I heard about the riots and more. Publications like the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Negro Digest* were regular members of our household. They were read aloud and regularly discussed by children and adults. There were also many books on "race pride" and other topics in the home library. But for me, the most lasting impressions were the stories and memories of my father and grandfather.

Have you ever just sat and listened to the old folks? As the youngest of the cousins, I didn't have much choice. When Grandpap held court, I listened. I listened on the



Charlotte's "Grandpap" and grandmother, James Sherman Schultz and Catherine Doolin Schultz, in 1937, at Springfield, Illinois. (Charlotte Johnson)

continued page 4

ABOUT US

MCHS BOARD

Fred Faust, Pres
Lynn Engelman, V-Pres
Arnold Meyer, Treas
Tallin Curran, Sec
Leslie Bednar
Robert Clouse
Arno Ellis
Stephen Hansen
Candace Ladd
Lacy McDonald
Stephen Mudge
Jeff Pauk
Cindy Reinhardt

STAFF

Jon Parkin
Museum Superintendent

Mary Z. Rose
Archival Library Research
Manager

Carol Frisse
Archival Research Asst.

Tara Johnston
Archival Research Asst.

Jenn VanBibber
Curator

VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the Museum or the Archival Library. If interested, please call 618-656-7569.

MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our website, or at the Archival Library.

PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor
618-656-1294

MUSEUM & ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

In recent months, the Archival Library staff and interns have digitized and posted two collections to the Illinois Digital Archives website. The first consists of photographs of 89 Madison County school buildings. The photographs are from a scrapbook that has been a part of the Madison County Historical Society collections for many years, but the creator of the scrapbook is unknown. The photographs include large schools, but also many one room country schools from locations all over Madison County.

The second collection is "Private and Real: A Collection of Correspondence Between Women." It consists of 11 letters written between 1888-1892 between Anna "Ann" Howell of Chicago and her Monticello Female Seminary classmate, Hannah "Hallie" Wade of Alton. The letters, a window into the lives of women of that time, are frank, very personal, and revealing.

To view both of these online collections, go to: <http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/custom/byInstitution#M>

A Smithsonian Exhibit, *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America*, will be placed on display in the Madison County Administration Building lobby from July 17 – August 21. To supplement the exhibit, Museum Superintendent Jon Parkin and the staff will host Zoom lectures and presentations, a teacher workshop and create parallel local exhibits on voting.

There is a need for docents with this exhibit. Please contact the Library (618-656-7569) if you are able to volunteer. Watch local newspapers and the MCHS Facebook page for more information on this coming exhibit.

Curator Jenn VanBibber is working with SIUE intern Olivia Bromaghim to complete accessions of the materials recently donated by the Edwardsville Fire Department and enter information about them into *PastPerfect* index. (*PastPerfect* is a collection management software program used by museums and archival libraries.)

The Museum Department recently hired Tara Johnston as a new Archival Library



One of 89 school photos now posted on the Illinois Digital Archives website is Collinsville's Lincoln School circa 1918. The school, built in the late 1880s for African American grade school students was located at the corner of Goethe and Elm Streets. (A close inspection of the picture reveals a display of Red Cross symbols in the windows indicating 100% classroom participation in the Junior Red Cross.) Students had to travel to East St. Louis for high school until Collinsville High School was desegregated in 1940. (MCHS)

Research Assistant. Johnston accessions and catalogs donated archival materials. She has a bachelor's degree in Historical Preservation and impressive experience coming into the job. She previously worked at the Crisp Museum and interned at the National Archives in St. Louis.

One of many projects she is currently working on is converting handwritten records to the digitized *PastPerfect* museum program.

Under the supervision of Archival Library Manager Mary Rose, SIUE intern Derek Hefferly has been preparing an index of names in custody files of 19th century Probate Files for publication. Many people assume Probate Files are only about wills and estates, but they also recorded guardianships for minor children or incapacitated adults.

Congratulations are in order for Archival Library Research Assistant Carol Frisse. May 1 marked her 24th anniversary as an employee of the Madison County Museum and Archival Library. Frisse was a volunteer docent in the museum prior to that. For many years she has filled the Sunday afternoon slot where she has helped patrons who are unable to visit during the work week. She has become the "go-to" person for projects that require large-size scanning, but she does a bit of everything at the library from answering phones to helping patrons to supervising volunteers.

NOTICE

The Madison County Archival Library will be closed on
Sunday, May 30 for the Memorial Day Holiday

RECENT NEWS

Thank you, JoAnn!

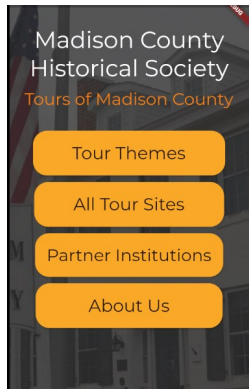
MCHS would like to thank retiring board member JoAnn Condellone of Collinsville for her work over the last two years. JoAnn served on numerous committees including the Interpretive Committee and Educational Outreach Committees where she will be missed. Fortunately the Society hasn't seen the last of JoAnn. She is an authority on Italian immigration, especially in the Collinsville area and will be the presenter for the August MCHS Online Speaker Series.

Donations Appreciated!

MCHS is very grateful for all the recent donations. Until the Society is able to hold in-person fundraisers, these donations allow work on the museum renovation to continue. Several significant donations have arrived since the last newsletter. Thank you!

Route 66 Driving Tour

A new app that provides a driving tour of Route 66 in Madison County is being developed by SIUE students and should be ready by summer. The MCHS Board was very impressed by the preview shown at the last meeting.



Online Speaker Series

The MCHS Speaker Series for the foreseeable future will be on the Society's website. Those that have seen the videos can question the presenters through the MCHS Facebook page.

There are currently three video programs on the MCHS website with a fourth scheduled in June (see information on page 16). The most recent program is on the Lynching of Robert Prager during WW I with author Peter Stehman of Collinsville.

Renovation Progress

The museum renovation continues to progress, although slowly. As many are aware, there are still unresolved issues with the roof which was replaced several years ago. The problem? It leaks. Additional testing has been done and yet another inspection to determine the exact cause of the problem so it can be addressed.

Unfortunately, the roof is holding up other phases of renovation since they cannot be completed until there is a sound roof.

While that is being resolved, members of the MCHS Interpretive Committee along with museum and library staff are making progress on future exhibit content and design.

Chautauqua Coming Back

Living History Days returns to Edwardsville's City Park on Saturday, September 11 from 3-6 p.m. The festival invites visitors to experience a vivid slice of history and learn how people in the early 20th century shared information, customs and values in a time before radio, television and internet.

In 2019, the festival re-enacted an 1898 Chautauqua with Mark Twain and friends. This year's event will represent a 1910 Chautauqua featuring Teddy Roosevelt along with reformer Jane Addams, muckraking journalist Ida B. Wells, and humorist Josh Billings. Re-enactors will portray TR and friends. Live music will be provided by the Edwardsville High School a capella group, the EHS orchestra and the Lewis and Clark Gospel Singers. Food vendors and other booths will be part of the program at the park. The Women Suffragists will also be demonstrating, demanding the right to vote.

In 2019, this event was made possible through a collaboration of local organizations: Madison County Historical Society, the Benjamin Stephenson House, the SIUE Meridan Society, the Edwardsville Public Library and the City of Edwardsville. This year, all of the above are joined by additional sponsors, MoJo Music and U. S. Bank.

Join the conversation and learn more at the MCHS Facebook Page:
Madison County Historical Society or
on the MCHS website: <https://madcohistory.org/>

2021 NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

(2021 Membership Year)

March - April ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

\$250+ Benefactor

Tallin & Jessica Curran
Robert Madoux

\$100 Patron/Corporate

Doug & Maxine Callies
Ted & Jeanne Elik
Roberta Mueller
Joyce Reising

\$50 Family

Leslie Bednar
Sid & Jane Denny
Carol Gocken
Highland Historical Society
Greg & Joan Mudge
Nick & Cheri Petrillo
Robert & Joyce Williams

\$35 Individual

Grace Bannon
Deborah Hawkins
Lana Hediger
John Lindsay
Meghan Schnell
Patricia Sommerfeldt
Jack Spudich
Adam Wendel

2021 ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

March - April ♦ Thank you for your generosity!

Jeanette Kampen
Larry & Betty Krapf

C. Douglas Meadows
Joseph Sims

Arnold Meyer

THE NEED TO SEEK (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)



Charlotte's mother and maternal aunts. From left: Her mother, Jessie Mae Schultz Kenniebrew Finley, and aunts, Rose Marie Schultz Ashford (the family historian) and Julia Ann Schultz, circa 1944. (Charlotte Johnson)

George Schultz and "His" Reunion in 1970, she presented us with little booklets of Grandpap's stories - those same ones she and I had stored so long ago. Grandpap told us about his parents, siblings, and children and the conditions they had lived through.

Aunt Marie was our family historian, the keeper of the stories. My simple request for a picture served as my initiation. The day after my innocent request, Aunt Marie announced in the Reunion business meeting that I was taking over her duties. Two weeks later, I received the picture, her book of family charts, and other papers. A month later, Aunt Marie was gone. I became the keeper of the stories. Soon after, I came to understand the true meaning of an extended family. People I had called kin all my life were related only by desire, common experiences, and geography.

With everyone's help, I began to pull apart and piece together all of the sprinkles. Each bit of information, every name, date, and place raised more questions, questions for which I needed answers. I learned by rereading the notes in the family books, Bibles, wills, and deeds. I visited home sites, county recorders' offices, libraries, small-town newspapers, family attics, basements, and the National Archives. Every picture, every scrap of paper, and every name became an important key to the story. In 1995, I finally pulled all the information together and published *Schultz: Matilda Shultz & "Hers," George Shultz & "His" Family Collection 1820-1995*. Since then, my work as Family Historian is primarily maintenance and sharing.

In each family, there are keys to be shared. Sometimes it's the keeper of the family Bible. And, sometimes, it's an old negative like the copies of a photo from an old negative

front porch, in the kitchen, at church suppers, around the radio, and I began to gather a storehouse of family memories. My mother asked Aunt Marie to write down some of Grandpap's stories. She did, and a short two months later, he was gone. It took Aunt Marie 25 years to transcribe those stories from her shorthand notes, which no one else could read. Finally, at the second

in my father's papers that had been passed hand to hand, opening the door to people I never knew existed. Taken in 1930, the picture is Daddy and his half-brother. The half-brother has children, and in 1993 we found each other. Again, every picture, every scrap of paper, and every name is an important key to a fuller, richer story.

Through the searching and sharing, I have broadened my knowledge of history, geography, law, family customs, and life in general. I have also managed to recruit my daughters and granddaughter into the process, and I convinced my husband that this is more than a hobby. Along the way, three phrases have helped to guide me: from my great grandfather, George Schultz, "If it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well;" from my mother, Jessie May Finley, "You can do anything if you try;" and from my father, Dr. Alonzo H. Kenniebrew, "Results beat all arguments."

Perhaps as a result of age, I now understand my behavior traits and those of others. This understanding and appreciation for "self" is one of the fundamentals I try to share with family, friends, and any child within reach. While a classroom teacher, I saw to it that a few doses of truth and African American history were mixed in with the choral music, general music, and related arts that I was employed to teach. As soon as a student tried to invoke the excuse "I can't" or "I don't know," or "because I am black or Indian or white or poor," I would hold court with tales of my family. The kids would listen, much as I did. When their excuses became requests for help or

celebrations of success, I knew they understood. Each one of them held the keys to and the gifts of a long line of survivors who made a way for them. Perhaps that way was paved by their ancestors stumbling off slave ships in the 1600s, then adapting to conditions they found and finally fighting toward acceptance of skill and worth. Whatever the influence of those bygone days, there remains the fascination, the questions, and the need to seek.



Charlotte's maternal great grandparents, Julie Ann Hawker Schultz and George Schultz, 1890. (Charlotte Johnson)



The Johnson family in 2004, Foster Township, Illinois. From left, Cyrus E. Johnson, Charlotte E. Johnson, Jennie Johnson McFadden and Judie M. Johnson; Upper row: Reneé B. Johnson (Charlotte Johnson; photo taken by Thornton Photography)

“GIRL, ALTON IS RICH WITH HISTORY”

"Girl, Alton is rich with history." When we visited my husband's family in Foster Township, Illinois, his mother, Mrs. Jennie C. Johnson, would always share some bit of history with me. My husband and I retired in 1991. He wanted to farm near his home place, so he built his barn and then my house, and we moved to Alton. I was anxious to find more of the "rich history" Mom Johnson had shared with me.

I found the brick streets laid by the Conley brothers and their brother-in-law Joseph Raglin. Joe also laid the first brick for College Avenue. I drove up and down the Seventh St. hill wondering how horses made it when the weather was clear or when it was icy and snowing. I looked for the work of the stonemason Banks family. Benjamin Banks helped build St Mary's Church; his crew constructed the Alton City Cemetery walls and Union Baptist Church's foundation. Madison Conley had a bad fall while working on College Avenue Presbyterian Church, imagining that shook me up a little bit.

It was a surprise to find how many organized Underground Railroad Routes had ties to one group of men, the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society of 1836. Some of the routes through Alton connected with the Jersey County, Lofton Prairie, and the Apple Creek Routes to Jacksonville, Illinois.

Who was Mr. Shadow? I've gathered five stories about freedom seekers he helped. Evidently, he was paid by the four businesses at Broadway and Central Street to watch the waterfront for anyone who needed help. He would then lead them to the tunnels that serviced those businesses—those tunnels connected to the Underground Railroad Stations at each building. If someone knows his name, please share.

Union Baptist Church was the site of the Illinois State Convention of Colored Citizens November 13-15, 1856. The purpose of this second statewide meeting was to create a plan for the repeal of the Illinois Black Codes. Two commissioners were voted to canvas the state explaining to people why the Black Codes should be repealed. The Commissioner for the Southern District was Rev. James Henry Johnson of Alton, Illinois. The laws were repealed in 1865.

I found so many stories told about the Enos Apartments. The truth is that in preparation for building a home, in 1857, Mr. Hanson built the required coal cellar and a wine cellar. These two cellars we know were used for the Underground Railroad. Mr. Hanson was an Underground Railroad Conductor. He also manufactured equipment to excavate dirt for basements in the Hunters Town area and beyond. He and his equipment were drafted by the Union Army to help with the Civil War. When the war was over, he returned to Alton and finally built his two-story home. The building was completed in 1868, the first year he received a property tax bill for the house. So, all those stories I heard or been told about the Enos Apartments and escaping slaves are wrong.

Archer Alexander was a man determined to be free. He became the face of the Emancipation Memorial in Washington, D. C. After escaping, Archer Alexander befriended and came to work just outside of St. Louis for Rev. William



Jennie Cornelia Keene Johnson aka "Mom Johnson," Charlotte's mother-in-law, who told her stories of Alton history, circa 1970s. (Charlotte Johnson)

Greenleaf Eliot. Eliot was the founder of Washington University and, as a Unitarian minister, held services in Alton. After several attempts to capture him, Alexander moved to Alton until after the Civil War ended. Eliot became the chairman of the Emancipation Memorial committee and asked Alexander if he would pose with Abraham Lincoln for the statue, which he did. In recent years, DNA genealogy has identified Archer Alexander as a great-great-grandfather of the boxer, Muhammed Ali.

I celebrated the planning and daring of a man who could think on his feet when I learned of emptying the St Louis Arsenal. When the boat loaded with arms arrived in Alton, they rang the fire bell. The community came running. When they were told what was needed, the people carried the armaments from the boat uphill to the waiting train. The train was soon on the way to Springfield, Illinois, and the Union cause.

In 1886, Augustine Tolton, a man born into slavery, became the first known Colored man from the United States to be ordained a Roman Catholic priest. Rev. Tolten grew up in Quincy, Illinois, and upon ordination, was assigned to the Diocese of Alton, Illinois. Specifically, he was assigned to St. Peter Church in Quincy, Illinois.

I was surprised to find out there had been diversity in the Western Military Academy student body. Two Native American students and Rodney Fong, an Asian American young man from Hawaii, were appointed by their perspective senators in 1960. Rodney's father, Hiram Fong, was the first Asian American elected to the U.S. Senate. All three young men went on to college.

Peace and quiet surround you in the Oriental Garden at Gordon Moore Park. Dr. Sadig Mohuddin led the efforts to create the Garden with gifts of support from Alton and St. Louis Pakistani communities.

The Federal Lead Company hired workers from Mexico. They built homes for the worker's families and established a community. The first annual party of the Mexico Social Club took place at Alton Park on October 10, 1892.

I applauded the Alton community's Herculean efforts when Amanda Kitchen was brought to Alton by her white half-brother without her freedom papers. Although he said he would send them to her, he did not. Their father reported her as a runaway and sent slave catchers looking for her. When they found her in Alton, the hunters demanded \$1,200. Citizens of Alton, including Mrs. Lizzie Jacobs, a Colored woman who contributed \$100, helped raise the funds needed and secure Amanda's freedom.

Scott Bibb was upset when his children were assigned to attend a school outside of their neighborhood. In 1895 he filed a lawsuit. Alton's Colored community worked to support the suit through hearing after hearing. Eleven years later, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled in favor of Bibb. His son had already moved to St Louis to attend school, and his daughter was by then 18 years old. After a few days in her assigned third-grade class, she did

Alton History - Continued on Page 9

EARLY AFRICAN AMERICANS OF MADISON COUNTY

Samuel and Louvisia Vanderburg

- Samuel was born in 1775 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Louvisia was born in 1783 in Kaskaskia, Illinois.
- Their first child was born in 1806 in Madison County.
- As required by the Black Laws, Louvisia registered in 1815 at the Madison county seat in Edwardsville.

James Suggs/Singleton and Phillis Singleton

- James was born in 1770.
- He came to Illinois from Maryland.
- James was manumitted by John Edgar in Kaskaskia, Illinois.
- Phillis was born in 1760.
- She was manumitted by Captain Ogle of St. Clair County, Illinois, (Captain Ogle came from Virginia to an area near present-day O'Fallon, Illinois, where he freed all of his slaves in 1789.)
- In 1815, James and Phillis registered their family in Madison County at the County seat.
- They were members of Bethel Baptist Church near Collinsville. The church was an active Underground Railroad Station. Their sons, Isaac, Edward, and Oliver, were very involved in the Underground Railroad until their work was uncovered.
 - James took Isaac to Alton in a spring wagon covered with vegetables. Isaac went on to Canada and was never heard from again.
 - Edward was also taken under cover of vegetables to Edwardsville, Illinois.
 - Oliver was taken to Springfield, Illinois.
 - In 2001, Doralyn Singleton, granddaughter of Oliver, shared an extensive family tree and folder of materials regarding her ancestry. Copies of these materials were given to the Madison County Archival Library.

William and Phoebe Barton

- William Charles was born in New York in 1775.
- He was freed by John Adria of Kentucky around 1800.
- William Charles had two sons when he met Phoebe.
- Phoebe was born in Virginia in 1775.
- Phoebe was freed by Col. John Ogle of St. Clair County, Illinois.
- William Charles and Phoebe moved to Alton.
- They registered in Edwardsville in 1815.
- They were present when the African Baptist Church (later, Union Baptist Church) was founded in 1836.
- In 1839, they founded the Lower Alton Colored AME Church, which held its first meetings in their home.



William Charles Barton
(Wilbert Barton)

- William Charles became a licensed preacher and deacon at the Piasa Baptist Church.

Rev. John Livingston and Phillis Vanderburg Livingston

- They were married, Sept. 28, 1830, in Madison County, Illinois.
- Rev. Livingston was the first known ordained colored Baptist minister in the state of Illinois. For a number of years, he was the only one, for this reason, he was known as the "Father" of African Baptist Churches in Illinois.
- He organized the following churches: Salem Baptist Church in Olga Creek, Mt. Zion Baptist Church at Ridge Prairie in Pin Oak Township, African Baptist Church in Alton (Union), Mt. Emory Baptist Church in Jacksonville, African Baptist Church in Springfield (Zion), Antioch Baptist Church in Illinois Town, Carlinville Baptist Church, Collinsville Baptist Church, and Belleville Baptist Church.
- In 1839, he organized the Colored Baptist Association and Friends to Humanity.
- By 1849 churches from Cairo to Chicago had joined the association.
- Rev. Livingston resigned from the Wood River Association to organize the Mt. Olive Association of Southern Illinois.



Rev. John Livingston
(Jessie Mae Finley)

Pricilla Baltimore

- Pricilla Baltimore was the Harriet Tubman of the near west.
- She lived in St Louis, Missouri, where she was very well respected and allowed to take slaves to church meetings.
- In 1825 she took 11 families to a meeting in a woody area near today's Brooklyn, Illinois, where she founded a Freedom Village settlement.
- In 1829, the Rev. William Paul Quinn came to Freedom Village, organizing the people into an AME Church and Underground Railroad community.
- Pricilla brought Rev. Quinn to Alton, where he organized the lower Alton AME Church.
- She then took him to Rocky Fork, and he organized the freedom seekers there into a "group."
- The establishment of these churches and groups constituted an Underground Railroad



Priscilla Baltimore
(Charlotte Johnson)

EARLY AFRICAN AMERICANS OF MADISON COUNTY

route from St Louis, Missouri to Jersey County, Illinois.

- Passengers on this route were met by members of the Lofton Prairie Anti-Slavery Society in Jersey County and then passed on to the Dover and Apple Creek routes.

Rev. Henry Livingston

- Rev. Livingston led the organization of Wesley Chapel African Methodist Episcopal in Edwardsville, Illinois.
- The church met in a log cabin near Cahokia Creek.
- There were seven charter members and three trustees.
- The church is now located at 418 Aldrup St., Edwardsville, Illinois.

Elijah and Diza Richardson

- Elijah and Diza Richardson moved with their family to Illinois from Tennessee in 1834.
- Elijah was a blacksmith.
- Their children were Alfred, Ailey, Lucinda, and Mary.
- The family attended First Baptist Church but did not feel comfortable. Elijah, a freeman, spoke of his concerns with the pastor. A committee was formed, and Rev. John Livingston was invited to speak with them about forming the Alton African Baptist Church (later Union Baptist Church), founded in 1836. Rev. Livingston was the first pastor. Since Elijah could read and write, he took minutes of the Church meetings.
- Elijah was also the person who wrote letters for Robert Crawford to Edwards Coles.

John and Mary Jones

- John was born free in South Carolina.
- Mary was the daughter of Elijah and Diza Richardson.
- John moved from Memphis, Tennessee, to Alton to marry Mary Richardson.
- John was so upset with the Illinois Black Codes that he changed his name from John Bromfield to John Jones. He felt that "John Jones" could be any man. He vowed to have the Laws changed. He moved his wife and daughter to Chicago in 1845, where, as a master tailor, he opened a tailoring shop. He became very wealthy.
- He wrote and published a small pamphlet, *Black Laws Of Illinois, and why they should be repealed*. His efforts led to the repeal of the Black Laws in 1865.
- John and Mary were successful Underground Railroad Station Managers. Their route was the State of Illinois to Canada.



John Jones
(Charlotte Johnson)

Erasmus and Eliza Jane Green

- Erasmus and Eliza Jane Green came to Sugar Creek (Rocky Fork) in 1858 as part of the Methodist Movement.
- Erasmus worked to organize Bethel AME Church with the group Rev. William Paul Quinn had formed in 1839.
- Erasmus enlisted in the Union Army in 1863, returning home in 1865.
- While in the army, Erasmus met A. J. Hindman and later asked him to come to Rocky Fork to help build the church.
- In 1869 Erasmus and A. J. built the first Bethel AME church building.



Erasmus Green
(Evelyn Hyndman Johnson)

London and Agga Jane Parks

- London was born in North Carolina in 1797.
- Agga Jane was born in 1799 in Maryland.
- They were freed in Perry County, Illinois, on Oct. 3, 1830, by John Hutchings.
- The Parks registered their family, including children Jeremiah, James, John, and Simeon, at the Madison County Court in 1837 after moving to Alton.
- In Alton, they started buying property. Every two years, they would sell off the oldest land at a profit.
- They were founding members of the Lower Alton AME Church.
- In 1842, the Parks purchased 48 acres from John Lenox for \$150 and moved to Rocky Fork.
- They became founding members of The Rocky Fork Bethel AME Church; London was a trustee.
- In 1865, the Parks deeded land for the church building in exchange for \$1.00.
- Later they sold their land to Mr. Webster and moved north near Jerseyville to help with a new AME Church.
- London was a speaker at the Emancipation Proclamation celebration held in Jerseyville, Illinois.
- Agga Jane died at Delphi, Illinois, in 1880 at the age of 104. She was returned to Rocky Fork for burial.

Peter and Lavine Baker

- They registered their family in Madison County in 1835.
- Peter was an indentured person in Prairie du Rocher, Randolph, Illinois.
- Lavine Crome was born in Jefferson County, Illinois, in 1813.

EARLY AFRICAN AMERICANS OF MADISON COUNTY

- Charles Townsend, the great-great-grandson of Peter Baker, said, "the old folks all spoke French when the children were around."
- Peter and Lavine were founding members of the Colored AME Church in Alton.
- They moved to Rocky Fork in 1856 and purchased land from London and Jane Parks, and A.T. Hawley.
- Peter and Lavine later moved to Jerseyville to help spread the AME word. Services were held at the Diamond School, which Dr. Diamond built for any child, regardless of color, to attend.
- Peter Baker and Dr. Diamond both spoke at the celebration of the repeal of the Illinois Black Laws, held in Brighton, Illinois. It is estimated that more than 3,000 people attended.

Rev. Emanuel and Margaret Wilkerson

- The Wilkersons moved to Upper Alton in 1829.
- He was very important in the Methodist movement and the AME Church.
- He founded AME Churches in Belleville, Greenville, and Collinsville.

-Their son Rev. Daniel Wilkerson was pastor of New Bethel AME Church at Rocky Fork and later founded Wilkerson Chapel in Sorento, Illinois.



Emanuel Wilkerson
(Charlotte Johnson)

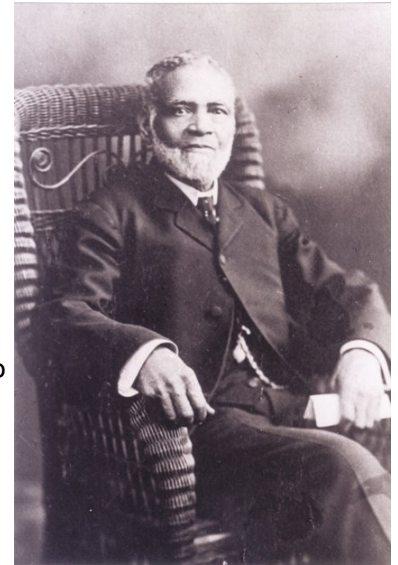
Conway and Frances Barbour

- Conway was born in Virginia in 1817.
- Frances was born in Kentucky in 1816.
- Conway was determined to be recognized as an entrepreneur. After working as a waiter on a steamboat, he opened the Mercantile Restaurant at the Alton Union Station in 1864. In 1865, Conway added a Billiard Saloon. In 1866 he opened a second restaurant called 5th Avenue. He next opened a restaurant on The Belle of Alton steamboat.
- Growing weary of Alton, he moved to Arkansas and entered politics.
- Frances remained in Alton to raise their four children and managed their education.
- Two of their daughters became teachers in Alton in 1898.
 - Fannie Barbour was the first teacher/principal of Douglas School in Alton, Illinois.
 - Florence was the first teacher/principal at Lovejoy School in Alton, Illinois.

Isaac and Elisabeth Kelly

- Isaac was born in 1821 in Putnam County. His white half-brother made arrangements for him to move to Alton.

- Elizabeth Sexton was born in Tennessee. Her father was Thomas Sexton. She moved to Pin Oak Township with her family.
- Isaac and Elisabeth Kelly were married on Oct. 31, 1850.
- Isaac was a successful barber in Alton.
- He served as one of the United Brothers of Friendship organizers, a fraternal order dedicated to Underground Railroad activities. His was the North Star Route, named for the Masonic Lodge in Chicago.
- Isaac Kelly was a well-respected community leader. Thomas Dimmock named Kelly as the first Trustee of the Lovejoy gravesite.
- Isaac and Elisabeth had four children:
 - Their daughters were Lucy Kelly and Elizabeth Sophronia Kelly Jackson.
 - James L. Kelly was a telegraph operator for the Illinois Central Railroad at Carbondale. He learned to be a telegraph operator while hanging around Alton Union Station.
 - William E. Kelly, a graduate of Shurtleff College in Alton, Illinois, was the first teacher/principal at Lincoln School in Edwardsville, Illinois.



Isaac Kelly (Committee of Black Pioneers of the Alton Museum of History and Art)

James and Elenora Johnson

- James Henry Johnson was born in Albemarle County, Virginia, in 1810.
- Elenora was born in New Tennessee, Missouri, in 1810. Her father was Thomas Madden, a Deputy Surveyor for the Louisiana Purchase.
- James Henry and Elenora Johnson moved to Chouteau Township, Illinois, in 1840 with their family.
- James Henry was invited to come to Alton by John Mason Peck of Madison County, Illinois. Peck was seeking preachers for the Illinois Colored Baptist Church movement. I think Robert Crawford of Pin Oak told Peck about James Henry, the son of John.
- The Johnson family joined African Baptist Church (later Union Baptist) in Alton. James Henry became an assistant minister in the church and a very prominent member of the Colored Wood River Baptist and Friends to Humanity Association.
- In 1845 the Johnson Family moved to Foster Township to help with Salem Baptist Church and School.
- In 1850 James Henry and Elenora purchased the land which established today's Johnson Sesquicentennial Farm.

EARLY AFRICAN AMERICANS OF MADISON COUNTY



*A reunion of the James and Elenora Johnson family in 1904 at Oakleaf Farm.
(Charlotte Johnson)*

- James Henry was a missionary for the Illinois Baptist Association and founded churches in Piasa, Jerseyville, Shipman, and Bunker Hill.
- He became pastor at Salem and Union Baptist Churches.
- At the 1856 Illinois State Convention of Colored Citizens, which met at Union Baptist Church, he was elected to canvas the southern part of Illinois to explain why the Black Laws should be repealed. He also collected data on health and housing conditions.
- James Henry died in 1863, two years before the Black Laws he worked to repeal were ended.
- James Henry and Elenora had 11 children.
 - Rev. James Parker Johnson was pastor at Salem Baptist Church, Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Godfrey, Alton's Union Baptist Church, and Provident Baptist Church in Chicago. Like his father, James Parker was also an active member of the Wood River Baptist Association as an organizer of Sunday Schools. He was also a farmer.
 - Thomas Johnson was the first and only teacher at Salem Baptist Church School. Thomas graduated from Shurtleff College in 1873. He married Lucy Taylor, who had been one of his students at Salem.

- Thomas and Lucy's grandson, Dr. Ralph Johnson Bunche, was the United Nations Under-Secretary-General who in 1950 became the first Negro to receive the Noble Peace Prize.

Robert (R. J.) and Sarah Robinson

- R. J. Robinson was born free in Winchester, Virginia, on March 18, 1818.
- His grandfathers were Lord Fairfax and Colonel Nevel.
- Sarah Wiggins was born in Washington, D. C.
- The Robinson family moved to Upper Alton in 1841.
- R. J. purchased a barber-shop on Second Street from Isaac Mann.
- In 1843, R. J. was pastor of Union Baptist Church.
- Rev. and Mrs. Robinson later moved to Foster Township to help set up a school at Salem Baptist Church.
- Rev. Robinson was a delegate to the 1853 Illinois Colored State Convention, where he was appointed Chairman.
- In Alton, he and Ned White opened the Alton Saloon at Third and Piasa. The restaurant served "Fresh Baltimore Oysters," ice cream, soda, lemonade, strawberries, raspberries, and melons.
- In 1856 he was a delegate to the Illinois State Convention of Colored Citizens in Alton.
- The Wood River Baptist Association employed Rev. Robinson to create and implement a plan for free day-schools and eight Sabbath Schools in eight different cities. While doing this, he traveled more than 2,103 miles, preaching, lecturing, and visiting 245 families.



*Rev. Robert Johnson
(Marilyn Wainio)*

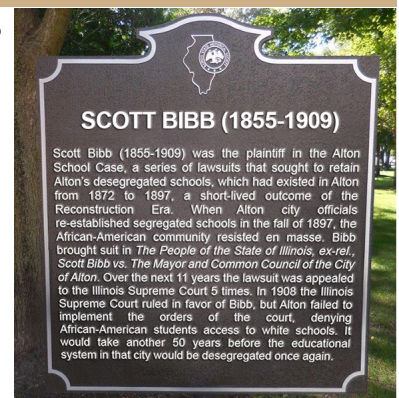
ALTON HISTORY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

not return to school. The Alton School Board failed to implement the Supreme Court ruling for any other students.

Fifty years after the Scott Bibb decision, Elijah Conley filed a lawsuit seeking needed services for his disabled son. Those services were only available at a white grade school, not at his. A community committee was formed to integrate the grade schools, and each member became a target for intimidation. A cross was burnt near the Conley home; there were violent, nasty calls and drive-bys. Elijah Conley was a carpenter, but suddenly, his line of credit was closed. To feed his family, he had to move out of town. The committee continued their work. One person told me that it was too painful to talk about even decades later. The Alton NAACP

called on the National NAACP for help. Thurgood Marshall, Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, sent Attorney Ming to file for an injunction in Madison County Circuit Court. The suit sought to withhold all state funds to the Alton School district because Negroes were

An Illinois State Historical Society Marker in Alton recognizes the significance of the Scott Bibb Case. (LCCC)



Alton History - Continued on Page 15

EDWARD COLES: THE 2ND GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS AND THE PEOPLE HE FREED

In 2001, the Madison County Historical Museum received a request from the Albemarle County (Virginia) Historical Society to show the exhibit, *Edwards Coles: The 2nd Governor of Illinois* at the Madison County Museum. Kurt Leichtle and Bruce Carveth, of Albemarle County, were preparing the exhibit and were seeking information on the freed people Edward Coles brought to Madison County. At that time, I was a member of the Madison County Historical Society Board of Directors. I was known to have been in contact with the Albemarle County Historical Society while researching Edward Coles. Janet Collins, the Madison County Historical Society Board President, asked if I would serve as the contact person with the Albemarle Historical Society. I agreed, and Kurt came to Illinois to speak with me and follow up on his leads.

I went to the opening of the exhibit in Virginia and told Bruce that it looked very interesting, although I questioned the map showing the land Edward Coles gave to his freed people. Everything I had read said the land was in Pin Oak Township, but the parcel numbers did not match. I asked a friend, Bill Brown, to look into it and sent him the Pin Oak map and the parcel numbers of the land Edward Coles purchased. Bill called and kindly told me that land purchased by Edward Coles was in present-day Knox County, which in 1819 was part of Madison County. I questioned him again and again on these findings. Bill knew me well enough to say, "Charlotte E., the soil is in Township 12, Knox County, not Township 4, Madison County." Bill was the Director of the Defense Mapping Agency. Unfortunately, by the time I checked and double-checked with the Knox County Clerk, Bill had passed away. After his services, I stood by his grave to apologize for giving him a hard time. From that experience, I came to realize how strong years of misinformation could be. So, now I check and check again, always asking, "What are the facts?"

Coles' Freed Slaves

Ralph Crawford (45 y) was overseer on the Coles Rockfish plantation in Nelson County, Virginia. In 1815, he made three trips to the "New West" with Edward Coles, who was looking for a place to free his slaves. When the time came, Ralph was in charge of moving the group from Rockfish plantation to Brownsville, Pennsylvania. They met Coles, who traveled ahead to purchase items for the trip down the Ohio River. At Louisville, Kentucky, Coles left the group in order to be in Edwardsville on time. A Mr. Green traveled with the group from Pittsburgh to Louisville. At Louisville, he went south to his home in Madison County, Kentucky. Five of the freed persons also left. One, a woman with an eight-year-old son, went to work for Mr. Green.

Ralph led the rest of the group on The Buffalo Trace, which was in 1819 the main road from Louisville, Kentucky to St Louis, Missouri. At Vincennes, Indiana, the group traveled the Goshen Road arriving in Pin Oak Township close to their estimated arrival dates in July.

On the trip from Virginia, Edward Coles, Tom Cobbs, and Robert Crawford had each been sick with "the fever." After safely leading everyone to Illinois, Ralph Crawford died from "the fever" in October 1819.

Kate Crawford (43 y) was the wife of Ralph Crawford. Edward Coles hired her as a cook for the group.

Besty Crawford (16 y) was Kate Crawford's daughter. In 1826 Besty married Jess Price, a farmer in Pin Oak. Jess became involved with the Wood River Baptist Association. Besty and Jess were members of Mt. Zion

Baptist Church before leaving Pin Oak to travel with Rev. John Livingston. In Jacksonville, Illinois, they helped organize Mt. Emory Baptist Church. In 1844, they moved to Springfield to help organize the African Baptist Church (Zion). Jess was a licentiate of the church. They lived in Springfield until 1851, when they left to work with the Wood River Baptist Association Sunday School program.

Mary Crawford (11 y) was Kate Crawford's daughter. At 26, she was listed as a widow in the Madison County census.

Thomas Crawford (13 y) was Kate Crawford's son.

William Crawford (9 y) was Kate Crawford's son. He died of cholera.

Polly Crawford (16/17 y) was sister to Ralph Crawford. She found work as a clerk in the store at the Ebenezer Methodist Campgrounds. In 1822, Polly married in Pin Oak to Michael Lee, a farmer from Maryland. They had three daughters, Mary Lee, Martha Lee, and Susan Lee. Michael died in 1859.

Robert Crawford (25 y) was Ralph and Polly Crawford's brother. In Pin Oak, he took on the job Edward Coles had offered Ralph. At first, he belonged to the Methodist Church. People came from far around when they knew Robert would be preaching on the banks of Silver Creek. In 1826 he married his widowed sister-in-law, Kate. In 1832 they sold the land in Knox County that had been given to them by Edward Coles and purchased Illinois Public Domain lands in Pin Oak Township, Madison County. Robert became involved with the Wood River Baptist Association in 1839 and a year later was the pastor at Ridge Prairie. In 1843 Kate and Robert sold 180 acres of land to Isaac Prickett.

In 1845, they moved to Vandalia, Illinois and he became pastor of a church there until 1850 when they moved to



A portion of the exhibit: Edward Coles: The 2nd Governor of Illinois and the People He Freed at the Madison Archival Library in 2002. (Charlotte Johnson)

...AND THE PEOPLE HE FREED (CONTINUED)

Hurricane Church in Montgomery County east of Litchfield. After Kate's death, Robert married a woman named Cordelia, who had two sons. Later in life, when Robert found himself alone, he arranged with Archie Pettiford and his wife, a young couple, in his church. Robert would give them his farm in exchange for a lifetime home. He died Aug. 29, 1870, naming Ellen Morrison, Mahala Willis, Susan White, and Samuel Lee, three nieces and a nephew in his will.

Thomas Cobb (38/40 y) was a cousin to the Crawford brothers. After he came to Pin Oak, he obtained work at the brick company in Edwardsville. He did not work there long since he did not have the correct shoes and injured his feet. Thomas was helping to put out a barn fire on Coles' farm and reinjured his feet. They became infected and were both amputated. A short time later, he fell into a public well and died. When the new well was dug a year later, the dirt was used to fill in the old well.

Nancy Gaines (16/17 y) was a cousin to Tom Cobb. She died from "the fever" soon after arriving in Pin Oak.

Manuel, Sukey, and their family did not move into Pin Oak and were not immediately given their freedom. Edward Coles had made arrangements for them to stay at the Thomas Hempstead farm near Edwardsville. Hempstead was a friend of Edward Coles. Sukey had given birth to a new baby, and they remained on the Hempstead Farm for two months. Then Thomas took them to his father, Rev. Stephen Hempstead's farm on Fee Fee Road in Creve Coeur, Missouri. Two months later, Sukey's baby died and

was buried in the Hempstead family cemetery.

Manuel found a house to rent in St Louis. The family moved there on Oct. 23, 1819. With limited funds, Manuel asked if he could work for Dr. Walker to pay the expense of his family's illnesses. Dr. Walker, a cousin of Edward Coles, agreed. A year later, Sukey kicked Manuel out because of his drinking. Edward Coles sold him and purchased a house on Morgan St. in St Louis, Missouri for Sukey and her children, and she now accepted her freedom papers. Coles supported the family until the children were grown. Sukey died before 1939.

A May 1839 note written by Edward Coles tells of Sukey's children:

Frankey married and moved to Illinois Town (East St Louis);

Alfred was on an exploring expedition to the South Seas;

Elizabeth was living with Mrs. Flinney in St Louis. She received \$5 a month and \$5 rent from her mother's home;

Wilson was bound by the courts to McCullough brick makers in St Louis;

Lucinda (12) lived with an old free woman in St Louis;

Emily (10) moved to Illinois with her sister Frankey;

Jake died in a steamboat accident.

Exhibit materials from the exhibit *Edward Coles: The 2nd Governor of Illinois and the People He Freed* may be found at both the Albemarle County (Virginia) Historical Society and the Madison County Archival Library.

CHARLOTTE JOHNSON (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

In presenting the award to Johnson, ISHS stressed how Johnson has "cast her shadow across southwest central Illinois for nearly fifty years as a researcher, genealogist, historian, and teacher." The Society called her a virtual "encyclopedia of African American history."

Although retired as an educator, Johnson continues to teach others about the history of African American families, especially throughout Illinois. "Johnson is being recognized for her knowledge and expertise," said ISHS Director William Furry, "but her reputation as a historical resource and her generosity as a researcher are hallmarks of the letters in support of her nomination."

In one of those letters, Alley Ringhausen of the Great Rivers Land Trust said he came to work with Johnson on the Rocky Fork Creek Network to Freedom Site several years ago. He readily admits that although he had experience in preservation and archeological research, he knew little about black history.

"Charlotte changed all that," he said. "Charlotte acted as teacher, mentor, and historian and guided Great Rivers Trust through the process of tracking the history of the Rocky Fork Community. Her collection of historic photos, letters, notes, and articles is second only to the knowledge

she carries in her mind. It is information she willingly shares with those around her."

Similar sentiments were echoed by others who wrote letters of support of the nomination including Dr. Dale Chapman and Dr. Linda Chapman who worked with her and Curator Jim Price to build an extraordinary exhibit on the Rocky Fork Church at Lewis and Clark Community College in 2014.

Dr. Wesley Robinson-McNeese called on Johnson's expertise when writing a book about African American physicians in Springfield. "She is a skilled and knowledgeable historian," he said, "who has shared her expertise liberally, especially with members of the central and southern Illinois region. Her body of work is extensive. Her reputation in research is impeccable, and she is well respected by her peers."

Johnson, who grew up in Springfield, Illinois, taught choral music in Chicago and Minneapolis before moving to her husband's hometown of Alton where she became involved in the Black Pioneers of the Alton Museum of Art and History.

Never one to rest on her laurels, Johnson continues to teach and explore the lessons of the past, while in many respects also living in history. Her home is on land that overlooks property that has been in the Johnson family since 1845.



BETHEL ROCKY FORK AME CHURCH - LET THE CHURCH SAY AMEN!

By Charlotte E. Johnson

My research on Rocky Fork was more involved than most of my work. I needed to prove that it was an Underground Railroad refuge community. I had to trace the people back to where they came from and how they came to Rocky Fork. I followed the same work plan as usual, but looked for the mention of an owner's name, a state or county, a plantation, what kind of work the person did, a remembered event, or a waterway mentioned by the person or found in their documents. These were all clues to check out. I searched for state Slave Census, bills-of-sale, slave deeds, wills, slave hunter lists, and daily work account books. On a large plantation, these account books were called Day Books. They often fit in the shirt pocket of the Overseer. He kept the record of work production, babies born and their parentage, those who tried to run away, and those who died.

I was asked to write the history of Rocky Fork by my sister-in-law. I thought it should come from the members of the church, not me. Then I read an article in the paper that Godfrey was planning to build a crosstown road through Rocky Fork. There was a map showing where they planned to make this happen. I immediately drove out there to make sure I was right. The road would go straight through the Peter Baker Cemetery. I said a little prayer.

Now, I felt that I needed to write the story so it would not be lost. I drove to the home of Evelyn Hyndman Johnson and told her I had a change in attitude, and I asked her with whom I should be speaking? We made up a list, and then she showed me a family treasure. It was a book of clippings that her grandmother had collected. Her grandmother was Mary Ann Green Hyndman. She had written a *North Side News* column for an Alton newspaper from 1903 to 1925. Most of the clippings detailed life in Rocky Fork. Evelyn and Mary Johnson Hyndman went with me to visit the people on the list. The people knew of me, but they didn't know me so, I needed an introduction.

During this time, the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998, Public Law 105-203, passed. As soon as they were available, I sent for the nomination forms, and my daughter Reneé helped me fill them out. One of the requirements was a Letter of Ownership. Since most of the land was now part of the Warren Levis Boy Scout Camp, Don A. Kinney, Scout Executive of Trails West Council, provided it. Due to the current ownership, the nomination was initially titled *Camp Warren Levis*. Two years later, Alley Ringhausen of Great Rivers Land Trust organized a committee to study the Rocky Fork area as a Historic District. He asked me if I would revise my nomination to include more of Rocky Fork; I told him, yes, but he would have to obtain all the additional Letters of Ownership. In 2005, the revised nomination was titled "*Rocky Fork an Underground Railroad Community*". In 2018 Godfrey Mayor McCormick told me that the plans had been dropped for the crosstown road. "Thank you."

Dr. Linda Chapman and Jim Price approached me about Lewis & Clark Community College presenting a Rocky Fork exhibit. They asked if I would prepare a timeline. Jim Price was the curator of the exhibit, and many other staff members were involved. Reneé B. Johnson, my daughter, was responsible for the written words, and Jennie Johnson McFadden, my granddaughter, copied my family charts so that Jim could read and reproduce them. I helped where I could. Jim worked his magic, and I think that we each were pleased with our participation. The exhibit ran from February 12 to March 27, 2014, and has a lasting effect on those who attended and through curriculum materials available online at: www.lc.edu/rockyfork

Photographs from the opening of the exhibit, "Let the Church Say Amen" at Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC). From top: 1) A replica of the Bethel Rocky Fork AME Church with listening stations to the right. 2) Visitors at the exhibit opening taking photographs of the Green Family Tree. 3) Reneé B. Johnson, who worked with her mother to gather information for the exhibit, visits with attendees at the exhibit opening. 4) Dr. Dale Chapman, then president of LCCC, greets Clementine Kennedy, the oldest living member of the Rocky Fork congregation. 5) From above, a small portion of the crowd at the exhibit opening.



LET THE CHURCH SAY AMEN - EXHIBIT LABEL - By Reneé B. Johnson

Birth. Marriage. Family. Work. Church. Death.

Ordinary people living their lives. This is the collective history of the Rocky Fork area. From those in bondage seeking freedom to those seeking a welcome and opportunity, people came to this place simply to live their lives and raise their children. Generation after generation they called this place "home."

The United States in 1839 was a land divided and dividing along both racial and philosophical lines. In Illinois, there was a confusing web of laws discouraging to freedom seekers and free people of color; yet the dignity of freedom might still be wrest from the land. There were men who were of the mind that even Negroes deserved land, opportunity and sovereignty over their own lives. Here is where Rocky Fork came to be.

For some time, the area that would become known as Rocky Fork is believed to have been a passageway for freedom seekers. By 1830, the area was well within the Underground Railroad route overseen by the faithful African Methodist Episcopal member, Priscilla Baltimore. Mother Baltimore was known as "The Moses of the West" after leading more than 300 to freedom, many through Rocky Fork. Landowners Andrew T. Hawley and Don Alonzo Spaulding were the type of men who put their beliefs into action. They had land to clear and to work. They and their families were active abolitionist believed to be Underground Railroad agents. They offered work, and the potential to acquire land. Some freedom seekers chose to settle in the area.

In 1839, Mother Baltimore brought circuit-riding AME Minister William Paul Quinn to meet with the people at Rocky Fork. Rev. Quinn gathered the people together as an AME Church group before continuing in his westward mission. Through Rev Quinn's efforts, the call for a spiritual leader for the Rocky Fork gathering reached Erasmus Green. Rev. Green answered that call in 1857. By 1869, he had helped raise the first building to house the New Bethel Rocky Fork AME Church, the center of a community.



Photos from the Rocky Fork Exhibit include (above) from left: Linda Chapman, Jim Price, Evelyn Hyndman Johnson and Harold Johnson. Jim Price was the exhibit curator and Evelyn Johnson first asked Charlotte to research Rocky Fork Church. Below, students are shown inside the replica church at the exhibit. (LCCC)

SELECTED PROJECTS OF CHARLOTTE E. JOHNSON

A JOURNEY THROUGH BLACK HISTORY IN SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS - 2020-PRESENT



Since 2020, my daughter Reneé and I have written a series of blog posts for the Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau. The posts have already been picked up by other outlets spreading the history to additional audiences.

Find it here: <https://www.riversandroutes.com/blog/post/join-us-on-a-journey-through-black-history-in-southwest-illinois/>

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN ILLINOIS - 2008

The State of Illinois Office of Tourism was planning an Underground Railroad Heritage Trail. Ann Walker of Trails2Legacies applied for and received a grant to work on the project. She asked me to work with her. I told her to save me for when she hit "brick walls," and I started researching. I pulled out my map and the phonebook and began canvassing each county for Underground Railroad activities. Ann called on me for information on 17 counties. Our work resulted in *Slave History Areas in Illinois*, a spreadsheet showing Underground Railroad efforts.

Published by the Illinois Tourism Development Office, 500 East Monroe St., Springfield, Illinois, 62701

FOSTERBURG SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION - 2007

The celebration committee asked me to update the history of Fosterburg. I agreed but told them that with their help, I would prepare a photo exhibit. Fosterburg citizens helped me collect over 1500 photos. For the celebration, I compiled a timeline and prepared 30 display panels on Fosterburg history and showcasing 20 families. Joy Paul gathered additional information and prepared more display panels. Altogether, it was a grand display. Many of the panels are on display at the recently established Fosterburg Township Museum.



SELECTED PROJECTS OF CHARLOTTE E. JOHNSON (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES: SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH - 2013



As far as I know, Salem Baptist Church is the only African American Church in Madison County listed on The National Register of Historic Places. In 1978 I was visiting the Johnson farm at Wood Station. I found that my husband's mother was saving a surprise for me. She had received the

book, *Trabelin' On* from her sister. It was a gold mine of information. In the appendix was a list of all the early Colored Baptist churches. It included the date when each was organized, the state and, who organized them. I now had documentation of the 1819 Salem Baptist Church. The Church was organized by Rev. James Welch, a traveling companion of Rev. James Mason Peck. They had been sent to "The New West" by the Baptist General Convention of New York. They were assigned to St Louis, Missouri, but traveled throughout the area to document resources, people, and opportunities. Rev. Welch found Colored believers at the George Stewart family farm north of Alton, Illinois.

From the Stewart family and others in the area, Rev. Welch formed Salem Baptist Church. Churches were formed of groups of people, not necessarily brick and mortar locations. R. J. Robinson and Charles Barton were left in charge of the new Church. Rev. Welch continued in his work and registered Salem Baptist Church with The Baptist Archives.

In 2001 Rev. Margo Swift, Assistant Pastor at Salem Baptist Church, came by to speak with me. She and a committee at the Church had been working on a National Register application. They had received a rejection letter stating that they had not shown why the Church was significant. All I could think was how dare they! I told Rev. Swift to let me see what I could do. Two years later, the Historic Preservation Committee chair sent me a list of people who might advise me on the application. One name stood out, Ruth Keenoy. I was reminded of my mother-in-laws's family name, Keen. I shared my efforts with Ruth, and we were on our way. She noted that I had written 30 pages on the Church's significance when usually the review committee wanted ten or less. Thomas Raglin, a member of the Church, drew up the floor plans. We submitted the revised forms and awaited the vote of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency committee. The state committee had to accept the nomination and then forward it to the National Park Service for final approval. Members of the state committee told me that the Register wasn't accepting churches at that time, but the social history was very compelling. The Keeper of the List added Salem Baptist Church to the National Register of Historic Places on Dec. 31, 2013.

Find it here: [Salem Baptist Church Reference #13001004 www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm)

FAMILY TIES IN NEW PHILADELPHIA, ILLINOIS (PIKE COUNTY) - 2020

I was asked to be a speaker in the New Philadelphia Association Likes Online Lecture series.

With my granddaughter standing outside the window telling me how to use Zoom, I presented my research on three of my husband's great aunts. Each of them had married and lived in Hadley Township, Pike County. The Zoom experience and the sharing of information were great fun.

Find it here: newphiladelphaii.org/2020/06/11/charlotte-e-johnson-spoke-on-june-9-2020-recording-here/

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN MADISON COUNTY, ILLINOIS - 2003

The Madison County Archival Library's librarians asked me to prepare two display panels on early African Americans in Madison County. Interested in the search, I agreed. I began by asking each of the county's African American churches for copies of their anniversary programs. Some of the churches invited me to speak about the project. Materials were made available. People across the county, including those raised in the nearly forgotten Kerr Island and Newport areas, shared pictures and more. They made introductions, letting their friends know I would be calling. The exhibit took shape with 40 panels and an exhibit catalog. All exhibit materials were donated to the Madison County Archival Library.



Exhibits like the one above in 2003 were often covered by local newspapers. This photo and an accompanying article appeared in the Alton Telegraph on February 3, 2003.

COMMITTEE ON BLACK PIONEERS AND 20TH CENTURY AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS IN ALTON - 2000

Once upon a time, there was an active Committee on Black Pioneers at the Alton Museum of History and Art. The group was organized in 1987 by Charlene Gill and Ara Conley. The Committee collected materials on African Americans in and around Alton. Every year there was a well-attended exhibit and program. From 1996 onward, I assisted with each of those exhibits. In 2000 the subject for

SELECTED PROJECTS OF CHARLOTTE E. JOHNSON (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

the exhibition was to be 20th Century African American Leaders in Alton. The Committee interviewed people and asked them to fill out information sheets. I researched and reported on the early people who could not provide information themselves. The exhibit was a grand success, and I was asked to compile an Exhibit Catalogue. *20th Century African American Leaders in Alton* was published in 2000. Copies are in the collection of the Hayner Genealogy and Local History Library and the Madison County Archival Library.

Unfortunately, the Alton Museum of History and Art's leadership has not always understood the Committee's purpose or valued and supported the unique collection gathered through the Committee's efforts. As a member of the Committee, Thomas Raglan was the first to introduce the idea of a statue honoring Miles Davis. The Committee on Black Pioneers was dissolved in 2008. The Committee on Black Pioneers provided a positive voice for a long-neglected part of Alton history and created an unrivaled repository of local African American history. Details of the Alton story once found, preserved, and catalogued are now lost forever through mismanagement and marginalization.

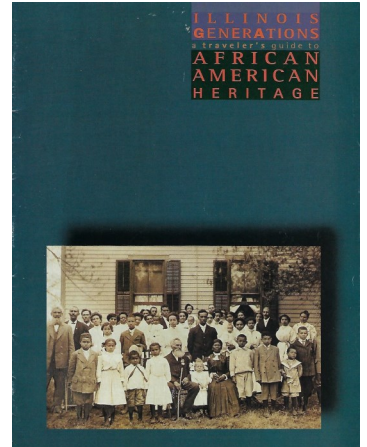
ILLINOIS STATE LIBRARY – ILLINOIS AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE GUIDE - 1999

I was asked to be a member of the Advisory Committee for the Guide. Two months later, I learned that I had been named co-chairman. I never met my co-chair. Having already contributed information about Alton, I needed to know more about what was being contributed by others. I found a large map of Illinois counties and went one by one, collecting anything about African American history and culture in each. The Librarian assigned to edit the materials didn't seem to know very much about African American history. She made changes to names, places, and events. They were so tired of my corrections and complaints that I did not see *The Guide* before it went to press. Through this project, I learned more about Illinois and how the game is played politically.

www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/isl/id/9983/rec/1

ILLINOIS GENERATIONS: A TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE - 1993

A friend I worked with at Shore High School in Chicago was collecting materials for this guide. She called me for information about Alton, which I was pleased to share. Then things took a special turn. I had received an invitation to the opening reception but did not plan to attend. That night I received a call from a cousin who worked for the ad agency asking for my help. The cover picture, commissioned at the cost of \$25,000, had been unveiled at the reception, but the graphic designer didn't like it. My cousin asked if I had a picture showing generations. She knew I did, so I sent her three. The designer called to ask about background colors and permissions for use. I told her she did not need to contact anyone else. There were two runs of the *Guide*. It was given to participants at the 85th NAACP Convention in Chicago in 1994 and made available at visitor's centers across Illinois.



Interestingly, it was not distributed in Alton. This issue is the best travel guide I have seen for Illinois. I donated copies to both the Hayner Library Local History Collection and the Madison County Archival Library.

The cover photo commemorates the 50th Wedding Anniversary celebration of James and Matilda Ballinger. The celebration and photo took place at their home at Wood Station, just north of Alton, in 1810. It shows three generations of the Ballinger family, including my then 10-year old father-in-law.

Published by Performance Media, and Chicago Sun Times Features, Inc. Sponsors: The DuSable Museum, Illinois Bureau of Tourism, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, R. J. Dale Advertising and Public Relations.

ALTON HISTORY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

being segregated in the grade schools. From this action came the Corridor Plan. Interestingly, the Alton High School was always integrated, but the students were not always treated fairly. Nor are they today.

There is so much more: this is not the end of the fascinating, rich Alton area history I have found. I will save some for another time. In finding this history, I became concerned about the history of negative thinking I saw and heard in public institutions, private businesses, and personal conversations. I realized that there was not one Alton: there was a "black Alton" and a "white Alton." They tolerated each other, but they only had surface-level respect for each other. I began to understand how history could stand still. People were telling the same story over and over. They either did not know if it was true, or they did not care. I realized that they

might not know the city's history nor their own. Today because of Ancestry and other programs, there is more interest in personal history and genealogy. The old folks are once again being asked to share. However, the attitude of staying in your lane and the acceptance of "less-than" or "whatever" is still prevalent today in Alton. As long as there are people with negative attitudes, misinformation, and a lack of understanding, we will need to keep working to make Alton, Illinois, a better place to live.

I will keep seeking the stories behind the truth, sharing the knowledge, and encouraging both pride and acceptance of self. I envision that the blinders of 1836, 1865, 1956, and 2019 will blow away one day. Then I hope the history taught in our schools, homes, and community will be the full and rich and fascinating truth.

SEEKING THE TRUTH - A BRIEF MASTER CLASS FROM HISTORIAN CHARLOTTE E. JOHNSON

I have been told many stories about places, people and events. Some of those stories were not the truth. People had repeated these stories so much that they are taken for the truth. The following is the guide I outlined for myself when I am seeking the facts of a story.

Preparation - When I am researching a story on-site, I carry my working bag. In the bag is my camera, a tape recorder with extra tapes, paper, pencils, and maps. I try to keep a log of my activities and a source sheet.

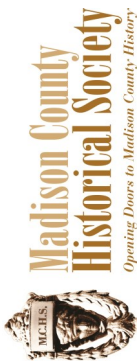
Oral History - My first calls are to the local city hall and the library. I ask, "Who knows the most about the Underground Railroad in your area?" Then, I call the history and genealogical society. I ask the same question, "Who knows the most about the Underground Railroad in your area?" I call those people and ask if they will share with me. Usually, they are popping like popcorn to let you know how much they know.

Written Stories - After talking with the local experts, it is time to comb the libraries. I usually start with the county history books; I like the pictures. Then I check the files and the historical and genealogical societies' newsletters. Then I check out the US Federal Census for the area (taken every ten years since 1790), the county census (some are every five years between the Federal Census). Maps, diaries, obituaries, newspaper archives, church histories, family history, and anything else I might find, including online sources. Those sources for Illinois may include Ancestry.com, Illinois State Library, Illinois State Archive, and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

Legal Records - The records of the County Clerk are full of wonderful information. It is easy to get distracted, so this is when I really try to stay on track. I search for court cases that deal with the Underground Railroad, lawsuits, deeds, wills, probate records, Negro registrations, Negro emancipations, indenture records, building permits, maps, and public land sales.

Process - Once I have a collection of materials, I lay out everything I have gathered and make a checklist to see if I have enough facts to support the story. Then I know what more I should look for and I go back to the internet. I search every name, place, and event for anything I do not have. After all this searching, I write up what I have found. I ask myself if it answers who, what, where, when, and how? If I feel good about the write-up and the sources to support it, I'll use it. If I feel that something is missing, I talk it through with Renee, my daughter, or take a driving trip to learn more.

PERMIT STD
Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #9
Edwardsville, IL
62025



801 N. Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

WHO
WHAT
WHERE
WHEN
HOW

Madison County Historical Society

ONLINE
SPEAKER
2021 SERIES



JUNE ONLINE SPEAKER SERIES

SIUE's Gehring Site will be the topic of the June Online Speaker Series presented by Dr. Julie Zimmermann, a professor in the Archaeology Department at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. MCHS invites the public to watch the video of this program on the MCHS website beginning June 10. Questions about the program can be directed to the presenter through the MCHS Facebook Page.

Since 2009, Zimmermann has been directing the archaeology field school at the Gehring Site on the campus of SIUE. This program will discuss what has been found at the site where Zimmermann's primary research interest is with the Middle Woodland (Hopewell) occupation. Although virtually all archaeological time periods are represented at the site, Mississippian has been the most prominent.

Julie Zimmermann, PhD

**Hoping for Hopewell, but Settling
for Mississippian:
SIUE Investigations at the Gehring Site**

SUN
JUNE 13

To join or renew MCHS membership, go to <https://madcohistory.org/membership/> or send a check to MCHS, P. O. Box 422, Edwardsville, IL 62025.; For additional information, call 618-656-1294.