



2025 MCHS ANNUAL APPEAL



This year, the 2025 Annual Appeal is using the Ramey Tablet, one of the Society's most treasured artifacts, as a symbol of the incredible on-going work accomplished by the Madison County Historical Society for over a century. We encourage you to give generously when information arrives in your mailbox this month.

Many of you recently paid 2025 membership dues, and we are grateful. However, the Society's campus of buildings with its valuable collections of artifacts, photographs, maps, books and other articles cannot survive on membership dues alone. There are utilities, maintenance costs, salaries for two employees, preservation supplies, publication expenses, and much more.

MCHS owns and operates the Madison County History Museum, the Madison County Archival Library, and provides outreach services throughout the county for programs and classroom instruction.

The Society hosts the MCHS Speaker Series (in its 13th season), organizes the Living History Days Festival in October, and a Family History Walk in September. It publishes six newsletters annually to keep members up-to-date on MCHS activities, but also to give them a taste of Madison County history. Please help us continue operations of the museum and library while also providing quality programming and publications to the Madison County community.

EGYPTIAN HUSTLERS, RED MEN, AND THE LAST MAN'S CLUB

by Cindy Reinhardt

There are many organization of the past which we might find unusual today. This newsletter explores four of them, with groups, like the Madison County Horse Thief Detective Society, reserved for another time.

I first learned of the Egyptian Hustlers when I saw a photograph of the Edwardsville Egyptian Hustlers on the wall of a museum in Okawville, Illinois. My curiosity was immediately engaged.

Organized in 1903, the Egyptian Hustlers were a group of Southern Illinois traveling salesmen. Southern Illinois became known as "Little Egypt" sometime in the early-mid 1800s. "Hustler," which can sometimes have a negative connotation today, carried a positive meaning a century ago, especially for salesmen.

In addition to salesmen, also called "drummers" in those days, membership was open to all who supported the goals of the group, including many St. Louis wholesale houses whose salesmen worked the Southern Illinois market. Their motto was "Let us make old Egypt shine."

As per its constitution, membership was open to "any white male person of good moral character, as buyer, seller, collector or advertiser of an article of commerce or representing a benevolent association or insurance company."

Primary goals were to promote business ethics and foster a feeling of goodwill among the traveling salesmen they often met along the road.

One of the things they are most remembered for are their annual meetings held between 1903 and 1930. These meetings, more like conventions or fairs, were held in Madison County four times, in Highland (1917), Collinsville (1918), Alton (1923), and Edwardsville (1925).



The Egyptian Hustlers' logo from the 1925 Annual Meeting program held in Edwardsville in 1925. (MCHS)

The two- or three-day events were filled with parades featuring the Hustlers in their red and white regalia, banquets, dancing, athletic competitions, etc., some which lasted into the wee hours of the morning. They were often described as loud, fun-filled events that resembled a Mardi Gras. These events attracted visitors from across the region, with crowds often exceeding 10,000 people.

Cont. Page 6

Library Hours
Mon. - Fri., 9 a. m. - 4 p. m.
Sunday 1 p. m. - 4 p. m.
Call for Museum Hours

**Madison County History Museum
and Library**
801 N. Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Contact us:
Library: 618-656-7569
Society: 618-656-1294
Email: info@madcohistory.org

RECENT NEWS

NEW TO MCHS BOARD

MCHS is pleased to welcome Doug May, Collinsville, to the MCHS Board. Doug grew up in Edwardsville, but he and his wife have lived in Collinsville for the past 25 years. He retired from U. S. Steel, Granite City, after 43 years with the company and now donates time to Steelworkers of America Retirees (SOAR). He is an avid photographer and also has experience with social media, website content, and other media skills that will be welcomed by the MCHS Board.

There is still an opening on the MCHS Board if you know someone who would make a good addition.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

MCHS is able to operate successfully due to an army of volunteers that do everything from serving as docents, indexing materials, gardening, painting, and even producing this newsletter. Have a skill you can share? Call 618-656-7569 to join the team!

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Since the last newsletter, MCHS has held a genealogy workshop at the library for students from Metro East Lutheran High School (Cindy Reinhardt), provided a step-on guide for a tour bus from the Springfield Illinois area (Debbie Caulk), and providing a program for the Riverbend East Rotary Club (Steve Hansen).

Coming up is a classroom visit to Worden to talk to students about the difference between primary and secondary sources. MCHS is grateful for the invitations.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

After sending out reminder cards, many membership renewals have come in. Thank you! If you received a reminder postcard and have not responded yet, please send your 2025 membership dues as soon as possible.

GARAGE ROOF

The last of the insured repairs from last year's hailstorm is being completed this month. The garage roof was in very poor condition already, but high winds last month peeled some of the tin roof back creating a large opening.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Steve Hansen, our grantwriter, is working hard to obtain grants to help with maintenance and operating expenses for the museum and library. If you have knowledge of a company or group which supports local not-for-profit organizations like ours, please let us know by calling the library at 618-656-7569.

INTERPRETIVE PLAN PROGRESS

General themes for the first and second floor of the new museum exhibits have been announced as, "Why and How People Came" (first floor) and

"How People Lived" (second floor). General layouts have also been established. Next, details will be laid out to determine which artifacts will be exhibited where.

SOLAR PANELS

The solar panel installation on the library roof has been completed and the \$15,000 cost paid. MCHS expects a saving of \$7,000-\$8,000 annually from this investment.

NEWSLETTER SPONSORS

In the March newsletter, Cindy Reinhardt sponsored a memorial to her great aunt Louise Nicol Meier, her family's record keeper. The memorial mentioned Louise's parents, Gustav and Mary (Tribout) Nicol. Imagine her surprise when contacted regarding a possible kinship to MCHS member Don Halbe. As it turns out, they are third cousins, once removed, through the Tribout family of Madison and St. Clair counties. It's a small world!

Newsletter sponsors help pay publishing and postage expenses for the newsletter. The cost for a memorial ad in honor of someone special in your life is \$500. An annual corporate sponsorship is \$1,000.

Please contact editor Cindy Reinhardt if you are interested in sponsoring the *MCHS News*: 618-656-1294.

TEMPORARY MUSEUM CLOSURE

Please note the Madison County History Museum will be closed April 27-May 14 while current exhibits are removed and a new exhibit installed. The coming exhibit is "Quilts and Stitchery: Past and Present." (See article on page 7)

MCHS BOARD

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PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

Cindy Reinhardt, Editor
cindy.reinhardt@madcohistory.org

VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the Museum or the 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 a MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on the MCHS website, or at the Library.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

MCHS COMING EVENTS

The Madison County Historical Society presents



A Literary Salon

MCHS is stepping into the world of literature with a new program which it hopes will be a recurring event. "A Literary Salon" will be held at the Madison County History Museum in Edwardsville, Illinois, on Thursday, May 15 at 7:00 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

At the first program, Emeritus Professor Jeffrey Skoblow will present "Greatest Hits of the Romantic Era." Skoblow, who taught English Literature at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville for 31 years, also has acting credits which will contribute to an entertaining evening. Light refreshments and wine will be served.

Skoblow became a member of the MCHS Board of Directors in 2022. In that capacity, he has organized the annual Family History Walk, where participants walk through an Edwardsville neighborhood meeting residents from the

past. On behalf of MCHS, he also leads an educational program, "Write Your Own Story," every Thursday at the Main Street Community Center.

The MCHS Literary Salon will be held on the second floor of the 1836 Weir House (the MCHS museum building). It is not difficult to imagine similar literary events being held by the Weir family in the 1800s. Literary and musical entertainments, or poetry readings, like this one, were popular at that time in households with the social status enjoyed by the Weir family.

For additional information, call 618-656-7569 or visit the MCHS website at <https://madcohistory.org/>. The museum is located at 715 N. Main Street, Edwardsville, Illinois. A parking lot and entry to the building are at the back of the building. Reservations are not required.

**DINNER FOR YOU &
FUNDRAISER FOR MCHS
IT'S A WIN-WIN!**



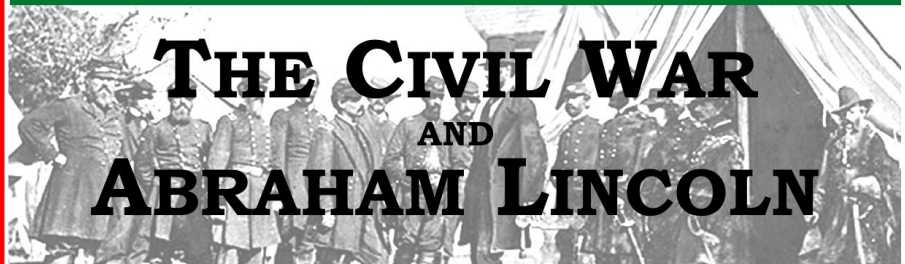
**SUNDAY, JUNE 1
11 A.M. - 3 P.M.**

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**Fried chicken, mashed potatoes &
gravy, corn, green beans, bread,
salad, & beverage. Homemade des-
serts sold separately.**

MCHS SUMMER HISTORY CAMP JULY 14-17, 2025



Registration Open Now!

\$150 online registration at:

<https://www.roe41.org/o/mcroe41/page/student-events>

Information at madcohistory.org or call 618-656-7569.

MCHS Summer History Camp is staffed by professional teachers and educators. Transportation is on school buses with experienced bus drivers. Fee includes snacks, entry fees, and educational materials.

Campers should bring a daily lunch.

**NEWSLETTER SPONSOR
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MOUND BUILDERS EMPIRE: MONKS OF CAHOKIA



Notice the detail of different masks, etc. in this photo of the Monks of Cahokia (MCHS)

Described as “mystical” and “mysterious,” this short-lived group was organized in 1912 by a group of Edwardsville businessmen. Their original goal was to provide entertainment and funds for the Madison County Centennial celebration. After 1912, they continued to raise money, but with the goal of promoting the purchase of Cahokia Mounds as a protected federal or state site.

Using as inspiration the Trappist Monks who lived atop Monks Mound for less than a decade in the early 1800s, the “Monks of Cahokia” dressed in flowing black robes with masks and cowls so no one could identify its members. A shield with the roman numerals “MCMXII” recognizing the 1912 Centennial embellished each robe. In parades, the monks carried flaming torches, which added to the mystic appeal.

Even though it was black, their apparel, probably not originally expected to be worn more than once, brought unfortunate comparisons to the Ku Klux Klan in newspapers across the country. Locally, the Belleville Catholic Diocese protested the “monk costumes.”

Once a year, they hired special trains to take them to Cahokia Mounds for secret initiation ceremonies. Residents for miles

around could see the fires and torches atop Monks Mound. Many wanted to see what was going on, but guards surrounded the perimeter keeping the hundreds of curiosity seekers at bay. The organization eventual had nearly 400 members from Madison and St. Clair Counties.

The Monks marched in parades and provided entertainment at local festivals throughout the county. They organized a band, held a Humbug Circus (one using local talent), and, in 1914 and 1915, they presented two sold out minstrel shows at the Wildey Theatre. At that time, the Wildey Theatre had more than 1,000 seats, but the popular shows had to turn people away.

They disbanded, or as one former member related in 1963, “just fizzled out.” The last minutes for the organization, dated March 13, 1916, were found in the personal papers of Simon Kellerman Jr. in 1963. They were donated to the Madison County Historical Society.

The Monks placed a heavy emphasis on having fun, but along the way, newspaper articles of the time credited them with planting a seed of awareness. The Cahokia Mounds site was purchased by the State of Illinois in 1923.

WEIRD RITES NEAR MAN-MADE HILL

**Ghostly Shadows Alarm
the Countryside.**

**FAMOUS MONKS' MOUND
SCENE OF STRANGE RITUAL**

**No Signs Left to Furnish a Clue to
the Uncanny Visitors Who Passed
Night in Solemn Ceremonial.**

*Headlines in the Brooklyn (NY)
Citizen on July 6, 1913, following
Monks of Cahokia initiation.
(newspapers.com)*

IMPROVED ORDER OF RED MEN

The Improved Order of Red Men (IORM) is considered America's oldest continuing fraternal organization, but it hasn't had lodges in Madison County for some time. It was originally called the Sons of Liberty in 1765, but was given its current name in 1834. Illinois was one of 46 states with a Great State Council. The organization also had a women's auxiliary called the Degree of Pocahontas. Lodges were first formed in Madison County circa 1890 and by 1900 there were lodges in Collinsville, Edwardsville, Granite City, Alton and other Madison County communities.

Typical for the time, the organization was originally for white men only. However, its rituals and regalia mimicked perceived Native American customs. Although it is unknown how large membership levels were locally, in 1936 the national organization had half a million members (down to 15,000 in 2011). It is unknown when local lodges disbanded, but there are few references to the organization after World War II.

Often one of the reasons fraternal organizations formed was for insurance. For a few cents weekly, a member could become eligible for disability or death



benefits. The IORM promoted patriotism, provided social programs for members, and had a charitable component.

The Red Men had an official symbol often used on gravestones to indicate membership in the organization. The initials TOTE stand for "Totem of Eagles," and the initials FFC for "Freedom, Friendship, and Charity."

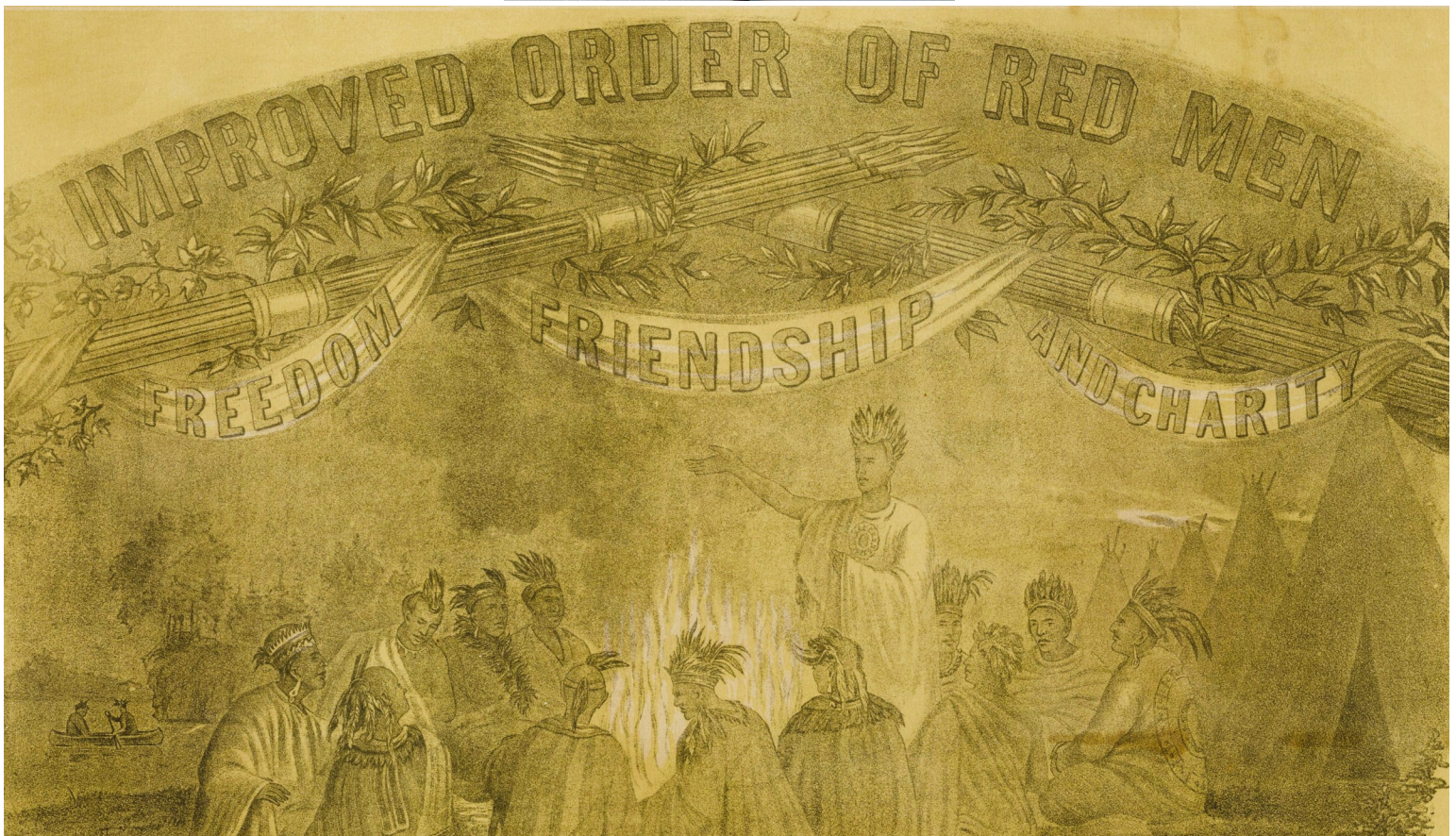
The IORM still exists in some parts of the country, although not nearly on the scale of years past. The organization has a museum and library in Waco, Texas.



Above left is the national seal of the IORM. Below left is an example of an IORM grave marker.

Below are graphics from the Livingston, Illinois IORM charter. It states that the Livingston Charter was for the Yemis Tribe #398 in the Great Council of Illinois.

*It states, "The **Brothers** are enjoined to hold steadfast the principles of **FREEDOM, FRIENDSHIP AND CHARITY** to the end, that the progress and influence of **REDMANSHIP** may be promoted and the memory and virtues of the Race upon whose history, traditions, and customs our beloved **Order's** founded be perpetuated."*



EDWARDSVILLE LAST MAN'S CLUB

In 1977, Dick Norrish of the *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, wrote, "One of the most exclusive clubs in Edwardsville has been dissolved. But for the Last Man's Club, composed entirely of veterans of World War I, the end was inevitable. It was planned that way back in 1945 when the group was chartered."

When organized, membership in the Last Man's Club was open to members of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled Veterans living in or near Edwardsville on or before December 31, 1944. Enrollment remained open for about a year before being closed. Initially, there were 69 members. The group met annually on the Sunday before George Washington's birthday when they attended church en masse, then held a dinner with candles lit to honor each deceased member.

They were to meet annually until there was only one survivor who then, alone, would drink a toast to his departed comrades from a bottle of wine purchased at the time of their first meeting. As the men aged and sometimes moved away, it became difficult for many to attend due to distance or physical abilities. Only four Last Men opted to drop out of the organization which was especially close-knit due to their shared experiences.

The group never reached its goal of a "last man" standing, deciding instead to disband as standing alone didn't hold as much appeal. At a final meeting in 1977, with most of the men in their 80s, for the first time they invited their wives, as well as the widows of those who had died. At the final meeting, 14 Last Men were in attendance of the 20 members who remained. The last members were E. L. Alexander, Hilbert Brockmeier, George Berlemann, Wayne Cox, E. H. Cheney, Andrew Foehrkalb, Orville Harris, Joseph Kelleher Sr., Joseph Kesl Jr., Henry Kreuter Jr.,



First officers in the Edwardsville Last Man's Club, appointed in 1945, were (front row, from left) Elmer Stahlhut, vice-president; Hilbert Brockmeier, president; Henry Pape, secretary. (back row, from left) Joseph Kelleher, historian; Harry H. Norris, chaplain; John Dierkes, keeper of the wine, and Dennis Hentz, treasurer. (MCHS)

Edward Lee, Edward McDonald, Otto Nemnich, Emil Paul, William Remm, Robert Rosenthal, Louis Schmidt, E. P. Schneider, Alfred Theuer, and Joseph C. Wetzel.

A long central table contained the blaze of 45 candles representing their 45 departed comrades as glasses of red wine were raised in a final toast.

EGYPTIAN HUSTLERS (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

Railroads offered special excursion rates to make it easier to travel to the meetings. It wouldn't be wrong to say that Southern Illinois towns "hustled" to be chosen for the following year's meeting.

MCHS has a program from the Edwardsville meeting in its library collections. These were elaborate multi-page "magazines" with a profile of the host city, dozens of portraits of members, a bit of humor, and interesting advertisements, especially for hotels in towns where salesmen might be likely to stay. An advertisement for the Illinois Traction System said visitors "Don't Hafta Hustle" because Edwardsville was a *TRACTION* city and "fast, frequent trains are carrying the boys to and from the celebration."

In addition to an annual meeting, the Hustlers also held mid-year dances for their members, often in St. Louis. The celebration wasn't as elaborate as the Annual Meeting, but still provided a fun evening for members.

The first gathering for the Egyptian Hustlers, in 1903, was held in Murphysboro where 700 members of the then four-month-old organization met for two days of fun. By-laws dictated they were "not to talk shop under pain of a penalty." The organization's last annual meeting was held in Sparta, Illinois, in 1930, with the last mid-year dance in Belleville in 1931. In 1941, there was an unsuccessful meeting for the purpose of reviving it. A small fair was held at Marrison, but likely not repeated due to World War II.

PROGRAM

FRIDAY, JUNE 12

Events

- 10:00 A. M.—School Children's and High School Parade.
All bands in School Children's Parade.
- 10:00 A. M.—Burial Fund Meeting.
- 11:00 A. M.—Street stunts.
- 12:00 Noon to 1:00 P. M.—Hustlers' Band.
- 2:00 P. M.—Field and Athletic Events.
- 2:00 to 3:00 P. M.—Edwardsville Band. Field Events.
- 3:30 P. M.—Rube Band on streets.
- 4:00 P. M.—Exhibition by Hickville Fire Department.
- 5:00 P. M.—Kangaroo Court in Session.
- 5:00 to 6:00 P. M.—Edwardsville Band.
- 6:00 to 7:00 P. M.—Hustlers' Band.
- 6:30 P. M.—Farmers' and Stock Raisers' Banquet. Get information from Hustlers' Headquarters as to place of meeting.
- 8:00 P. M.—Burlesque Circus Parade.
- 9:30 P. M. AND HENCE 4th.—Grand Street Dance and Mardi Gras. Everybody welcome. Everybody mask.

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

- 9:00 A. M.—Hustlers' Business Meeting.
- Afternoon and Evening—Something doing all the time.
DANCING.

A schedule for one day of the Annual Meeting of the Egyptian Hustlers at the 1925 Edwardsville gathering (MCHS)



QUILTS & STITCHERY

PAST AND PRESENT

The work of three talented seamstresses will be featured in an exhibit at the Madison County History Museum beginning May 14 through the end of July. In addition to pieces they've made, the women are also needlework and quilt collectors and will include some of those pieces.

Donna Caban Bisset, Mary Grose, and Candace Ladd, each found their way to quilting in different ways.

Bisset, a native of Edwardsville, was surrounded by her mother and two sisters who were outstanding seamstresses. Feeling a bit intimidated, she didn't take up sewing until the early 1970s when she received a Singer Sewing Machine for Christmas.

"Mary (her sister) came for a week," Bisset said, "and taught me how to lay pattern, baste, and pin material. I finished two blouses—that I liked and actually wore."

She regularly sewed for her family, then expanded her needlework to include crewel, and counted cross-stitch, as well as returning to embroidery which she had learned in 4-H.

Remembering the remarkable quilts made by her Grandma Augsburger, she decided to learn how to make them.

"I signed up for a six week/12 hour course on quilting and ended up with a wall hanging of four different blocks—all from scratch," said Bisset.

She continued, "I loved the freedom of quilt making; choosing my own patterns, colors, sizes." She says she makes quilts of all sizes and for all occasions.

Candace Ladd began stitching embroidery designs when she was only 7 years old.

"My grandmother, Freida Klenke Ladd, helped my sister, Toni, and me pick out some simple iron-on transfer animal designs and taught us how to stitch them. My younger sister

was two at the time and I think Grandma was helping to keep us busy and out of Mother's hair."

Regardless of the original intention, the project created a life-long love of needlework for Ladd. After she and her sister had completed six squares, her grandmother pieced a quilt for each of them using the blocks, and Ladd's great-grandmother quilted them. This example of children's handwork is included in the exhibit.

Like Bisset, Ladd first learned to sew clothing and worked on crewel embroidery. In the early 1980s she began piecing quilts, finding the work satisfying, and the results both practical as well as attractive.

Mary Grose was in middle school when she learned to sew on an old Singer Sewing machine, the kind with a leg control lever.

"I continued to sew clothes for myself off and on for many years," she said.

When Grose and her husband, Jeffrey, moved to Edwardsville from Los Angeles in 1987, she discovered a quilt shop at Cottonwood Mall that offered classes. She made her first sampler quilt there.

"My first real quilt was for our daughter Hana's first birthday," said Grose. "Like all the quilts since then, Jeffrey has been my in-house artistic consultant. He has chosen some of the fabric, made designs, and helped me with color choices."

Like many quilters, Grose has had most of her fabrics for decades and can select from her stash.

"I am drawn to old quilts and Amish and Gee's Bend designs," said Grose. "I appreciate quilts that are made from necessity and from fabrics that are at hand."

The quilt exhibit will be open during regular museum hours or by appointment for groups.



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MCHS CALENDAR

KATHRYN HARRIS AS HARRIET TUBMAN

Kathryn Harris began portraying Harriet Tubman more than 30 years. On Sunday, June 22, she will bring her presentation to Edwardsville as part of the MCHS Speaker Series. "Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People," will be performed at 2 p.m. on June 22 at the Main Street Community Center in Edwardsville.

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Maryland in 1822 and escaped to Pennsylvania where she lived as a freewoman dedicated to the abolition of slavery. As a conductor on the Underground Railroad she led approximately 70 African American enslaved people to freedom in the North. It was dangerous work, since if caught, as a Black woman, she could have been returned to slavery or killed.

Before her retirement, Harris was the director of library services at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, from 1990-2013. She made the study of Harriet Tubman her life-time avocation. She shared that scholarship with others by representing Tubman in over 300 presentations to organizations, school groups, and others over the last three decades.

MCHS is grateful that Harris is bringing this program to Edwardsville. This is a wonderful opportunity for students of all ages to learn the fabulous story of Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People.

MUSEUM EXHIBITS

CLOSING APRIL 27
Buildings of a Bygone Era
Route 66 in Madison County

(MUSEUM CLOSED APRIL 27 - MAY 13)

NEW EXHIBIT
MAY 14 - JULY 31

Quilting & Stitchery: Past & Present
(For details see page 7)

EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

A Literary Salon
Thursday, May 15, 7 p.m.
(2nd floor Weir House
(For details see page 3)

Chicken Dinner Benefit for MCHS
Sunday, June 1, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Edwardsville Moose Lodge
(For details see page 3)

June MCHS Speaker Series
Sunday, June 22 - 2 p.m.
Kathryn Harris as Harriet Tubman
Main Street Community Center

MCHS Summer History Camp
July 14-17
Children 9-12
Reservations Required
(For details see page 3)

An Old-Fashioned County Picnic
Saturday, July 19
At Oakdale near Grantfork
(reservations required- details to come)

2025 MCHS SPEAKER SERIES



Sunday, June 22 at 2 p.m.

HARRIET TUBMAN
THE MOSES OF HER PEOPLE

Presenter: Kathryn Harris

Free Event - Open to the Public
Main Street Community Center, 1003 N. Main Street, Edwardsville, Illinois