

THE PRAIRIE PICAYUNE

Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site Newsletter

Vol. 13 No. 7 E-mail - newsalem.hna@illinois.gov Phone 217/632-4000 March, 2008

WHAT'S NEW AT NEW SALEM?

❖ DEADLINE FOR THE PICAYUNE

PLEASE note that the deadline for submissions to the *Prairie Picayune* is the 20th of each month (except for December and February – which are combined with November and January).

In the past the deadline has been extended and/or ignored for any number of reasons but the logistics of getting the newsletter out on a timely basis have gotten more complicated over the past year or so. So, from now on, if your information is not received by the 20th of the preceding month, it will not appear in that month's issue. Apologies in advance to any and all for problems that this may cause.

❖ NEW ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Volunteer John Blankenberger is taking on a new role as associate editor of the *Prairie Picayune*. You'll be seeing more articles and features from John in this issue and future editions. If you'd like to contact him directly, you will find John's e-mail address in the "Let Us Hear from YOU!" section of the newsletter.

❖ CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

Remember, we are having a daily schedule of events in the village starting weekends in May 2008!

Then, in June, July and August, these events will take place daily throughout the week. Interpreters will be discussing everything from cooking to

operation of the carding mill. Any topic that is related to the village can be interpreted! The scheduled events will take place at the various log homes, barns, pastures, gardens, smokehouses, etc. throughout the village. They can range from 15 minutes in length to one hour

In order to implement this interpretive schedule, *we need the assistance of our volunteers!* Many of our volunteers have specific knowledge and talent pertaining to the village. Volunteers can be scheduled to interpret any aspect of village daily life. If you would be interested in sharing your knowledge and talent or have ideas, please call Mary Ann at (217) 632-4000.

❖ LINCOLN BICENTENNIAL MEETING

Don't forget - There will be an open meeting on April 6, 2008 at the Visitor Center Conference Room at 2:00 PM. We are looking into ideas for a special event to celebrate the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial here at New Salem and are hoping anyone wanting to be involved in the "meeting of the minds" can attend.

If you are unable to make the meeting and feel you have some viable ideas, feel free to call or email Don Ferricks: don.ferricks@illinois.gov or Jane Carrington: jane.carrington@illinois.gov, Both can be reached by phone at 217-632-4000.

We Need You (And Some More Folks)

John Blankenberger

We all know that we are beginning the celebration of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday. You have been invited to submit suggestions for how we might celebrate the year. I would suggest one thing we can do together. Let's "pack the

THANKS FOR HELPING NEW SALEM COME TO LIFE!

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village" as often as possible. By that I mean that we should try as hard as possible to have an interpreter in every building as often as possible. If you are a volunteer you know that visitors love it when there is a volunteer in a building. Many spend time talking with you, asking questions and becoming involved in the New Salem experience. On the other hand, you see their disappointment when a building is "closed" and they are only able to see what they can over the gates and through the door.

You have seen here in the *Prairie Picayune* that there are Continuing Education Sessions coming up for veteran and new volunteers. Everyone who is associated with New Salem knows how entertaining and informative Charlie Starling is. Here is a chance to spend time with him to enhance your knowledge of what life was like in New Salem. The cost is right - no charge. These sessions can help get us in the right frames of mind to welcome visitors to the village again.

You may not feel drawn to the sessions and that is okay. But I encourage you to volunteer for as many days as you can. I think there will be more visitors over the next few months than we normally have because of all the publicity surrounding the 200th Birthday Celebration. Let's make those visitors feel welcome to New Salem with a lot of people "to home" as my grandmother used to say. Wouldn't it be nice to hear people saying as they leave, "New Salem is a great place to visit. The volunteers make it a really make it come to life." They already do that. I have heard it. But this year is special and we can make our celebration a year-long event at New Salem by an extra effort to have a large "presence" in the village. The buildings are wonderful, but they come truly come alive when there are interpreters giving them a voice.

Also, we need **more** volunteers. Tell folks about the volunteer program. Share with them how much fun it is to share New Salem and Abraham Lincoln with folks from all over the world. Invite them to the training sessions. I know young families are busy, but wouldn't it be fun to see

families with children in the homes just as there were in Mr. Lincoln's time? There is no need to have concerns about a lack of knowledge. The training program prepares volunteers well for their roles. Many think we do first person interpretation, but dispel that fear. Encourage some friendly folks to join Mr. Lincoln's neighborhood.

New Salem Fiber Guild

The New Salem Fiber Guild took a daring and long overdue step on Saturday, January 19, by electing new officers. Phyllis Hitchcock takes over as president, Lucy Collebrusco as secretary and Carol Anne Ortery as newsletter editor. Barbara Brown continues as treasurer.

The group also reviewed their plans for the year in light of Dave Hedrick's retirement and the realignment of staff for the village.

For information about membership, contact any one of the four. The group meets every other month (Jan., March, May, July, Sept., and Nov.) on the third Saturday.

“All in a Day's Work” Help Needed

Both the Ann Rutledge Quilters and the Merry Band Fiber Guild have agreed to help with the display of quilts and textiles in the Time Walk of the Visitor Center for this event on Saturday, June 28, from 9 AM to 5 PM. They are also planning to demonstrate different aspects of quilting and fiber preparation during the day.

More volunteers are needed to demonstrate other activities that would have gone on during an "average day" in the village. Please check your calendars and give Jane Carrington a call or email at jane.carrington@illinois.gov,

New Salem Library

Submitted by Barbara Brown

Cataloguing of the New Salem library is about two thirds finished and "temporary" catalogs have been prepared for use in the library. On the checkout shelf, you'll find a folder with book titles catalogued so far, a subject catalog for books catalogued and a third catalog listed by author. A searchable catalog may be available in the near future. Please do not remove the catalogs from the library room. Barbara Brown will also search the catalog for you if you email your request to her at bj-brown7@wiu.edu. She'd also like to hear your comments and suggestions.

Now is also a good time for volunteers and staff to go through their books at home and return items they've borrowed in years past. Simply put them on the "returned books" shelf inside the door -- no questions asked.

The library is available to staff and volunteers whenever the visitor center is open. See a staff member or the person at the visitor desk to open the room. Please protect this important resource which helps us to better interpret the village. Borrow books, enjoy the books, but please return them in a timely manner so that others may also use them, and lock the door to the room when it's not in use.

26TH ANNUAL

NEW SALEM HAMMER IN!

The 26th Annual Hammer In will be April 12 and 13, 2008. Times are 10am - 4pm each day. The event will be held at Lincoln's New Salem maintenance shop. **This year's Event Demonstrators will be Elmer Rousch and Lynda Metcalfe of Brasstown NC.**

Registration:

\$10.00 per day if received by March 29th

Registration for New Salem Volunteers: Free but meal is \$5. Late registration or at the door: \$15.00

Contact 632-4000 to make reservations for more information contact Allen Ortery at bluestoneforge@gmail.com

Free coffee and donuts will be provided each morning. A free chicken dinner will be provided to each PAID registrant on Saturday evening. Meals for volunteers and late registrants will be \$5.00. We must know if you want a meal so we know how much food to order.



BOX OFFICE HOURS

Box Office opens May 10, 2008

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Performance Night Hours: 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.

TICKETS (All performances)

\$12 Adult, \$10 Seniors, \$7 Children (under 12)

For reservations and to order, call 217-632-5440 or 1-800-710-9290.

"AND THEN THERE WERE NONE (TEN LITTLE INDIANS)"

by Agatha Christie

Opens May 23 -25 & 29 - 31, 2008

"KISS ME KATE"

Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter,
Book by Bella and Samuel Spewack,
directed by Sean -Edward Hall
June 6 - 8, 12 - 15, 2008

SONGWRITERS CIRCLE

JUNE 20 & 21, 20

Paul Ingle, Tom Irwin, Ben Bedford and other regional area musician/songwriters sit in a group and take turns singing their original songs. May center around Sangamon/Menard County theme.

THANKS FOR HELPING NEW SALEM COME TO LIFE!

"JOHN BROWN'S BODY"

by Stephen Vincent Benet,
opens June 27 - 29, July 3 - 6, 2008

"Dyed in the Wool"

July 11 & 12, 2008

American Folk Music with a Celtic Edge, Dyed in the Wool is a band with a unique mix of American Folk and Celtic traditions. John Devens, Julia Dusek-Devens, Jim White, and Meghan McKown come from a diverse set of backgrounds to form this lively group.

"THE ELEPHANT MAN"

by Bernard Pomerance,
July 18 - 20, 24 - 26, 2008

"TWO BY TWO"

Music by Richard Rodgers,
Book by Peter Stone,
Lyrics by Martin Charnin,
Based on the play "The Flowering Peach"
by Clifford Odets,
August 8 - 10, 14 - 17, 2008

"ANNE OF GREEN GABLES"

by Alice Chadwick,
director Kelly Bassett ,
August 22 - 24, 28 - 30, 2008

Cradle Quilt Workshop

Nine volunteers gathered January 12 to make new quilts for the cradles at Lincoln's New Salem. The women, led by Phyllis Hitchcock, created about a dozen new quilts to replace the

aging cradle covers now in use. Look for bright new colors on the smallest beds in the village this summer.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS!

Carol Hupp Barbara Archer
Charlene Koelling Kay Claussen
Marc Miller

APRIL BIRTHDAYS!

Barbara Raycraft Fred Wassell
Linda Williams Carol White
Ann Schaddell Nick Hinds
Jane Carrington

1809 BIRTHDAYS?

Submitted by Carol Jenkins Shafer

There's no question that many, many people are born each and every year. Therefore the odds of more than one important person being born in a given year are pretty good. According to one site on the internet, 1809 was the birth year not only of Abraham Lincoln but also of Louis Braille (who invented the reading/writing system used by the blind), explorer Kit Carson, author Oliver Wendell Holmes, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Cyrus McCormick (of harvester fame), composer Felix Mendelssohn, author/poet Edgar Allen Poe, and Hannibal Hamilton (Lincoln's 1st Vice President).

However, in what I find to be a most intriguing coincidence, Lincoln shared not only a birth year but also his birthday (February 12, 1809) with another man who was to change the world. While Nancy Hanks Lincoln was giving birth to little Abraham, Robert and Susannah Wedgwood Darwin were welcoming their son, Charles, into the world in Shrewsbury, England.

Of course, young Charles Darwin's was in many different from Lincoln's. The son and grandson of medical men, he was educated at Edinburgh and Cambridge – a far cry from Lincoln's

backwoods schooling. Darwin's mother was the daughter of Josiah Wedgwood of the famous Wedgwood pottery company. Her dowry was probably worth more than Thomas Lincoln lifetime's earnings. But in another odd turn of events, Darwin's mother died when the boy was 8 years old! Abe, of course, was only 9 when Nancy died.

In 1831, the same year that Lincoln came to New Salem, Charles Darwin set sail on the *HMS Beagle*, bound to explore the coast of South America and Pacific Islands, including the Galapagos Islands. On this five-year voyage, Darwin collected scientific evidence to support the theory of evolution through natural selection. Lincoln spent those five years and one more at New Salem where he learned many of the skills that would serve him later in life (politician, military commander, and government employee).

Darwin's groundbreaking (and controversial) book, *The Origin of Species*, was published in 1859. The next year, 1860, Lincoln came to national prominence in an election that saw a new political party, the Republicans, come into power.

Did Lincoln know about the theory of evolution? A visitor asked me that question many years ago. I don't know that anyone knows the answer to that. Did he read the book or read newspapers accounts about it? He certainly could have, but there were a great many other things demanding his attention at that time. Almost certainly, Lincoln would never have formed an opinion on the theoretical relationship between man and monkey since it was not until 1871 that Darwin's *The Descent of Man* theorized that man & apes shared a common ancestor. What is certain is that the impact these two men had on their world was profound and the echoes of that impact continues to reverberate in our world today.

Continuing Education Sessions

Agriculture: 1830 through 1840

- ☞ March 22, 2008: 9 AM – 12 Noon
- ☞ Cost - Free
- ☞ Charlie Starling
- ☞ Visitor Center Conference Room

When the village of New Salem was established in 1829, ninety-five percent (95%) of the Illinois population was directly involved in agriculture. Charlie says, "I would be right smart and well pleased if you care to join us in the broad study of daily life on the Illinois frontier."

Discussion on Education and Teaching during the New Salem period

- ☞ March 22, 2008 from 1 PM. – ?
- ☞ Cost - Free
- ☞ Charlie Starling
- ☞ Visitor Center Conference Room

Hints on Interpretation

- ☞ April 26, 2008 from 9 AM. – 12 Noon
- ☞ Cost - Free
- ☞ Charlie Starling
- ☞ Visitor Center. Conference Room

Seasoned interpreters will share their hints and ideas about interpretation along with their good and bad experiences that will be helpful to any new volunteer.

1830's Finance & Money

- ☞ May 3, 2008 from 9 AM. – 12 Noon
- ☞ Cost - Free
- ☞ Charlie Starling
- ☞ Visitor Center Conference Room

An inside look at what was happening on the national, state and local scenes.

NOTE: Class size is limited to 30 people. Registration will be on a first-come; first-serve basis. Call Lincoln's New Salem office at 217-632-4000 to sign up.

BOOK CORNER

Following in Lincoln's Footsteps: A Complete Annotated Reference to Hundreds of Historical Sites Visited by Abraham Lincoln.

Recommended by John Blankenberger

I was "keeping store" in Second Berry Lincoln. It was not a particularly busy day so when a couple came in I struck up a conversation with them. We visited for a while and I noted how quiet the gentleman was, but he seemed to be absorbed in what was all around him. At some point the lady said: "My husband has written books about Lincoln." However he did not tell me more. They left after a bit as I got busy with other visitors.

I remembered them later and I looked in the visitors' register to see if I could identify my mysterious "author." I thought they had said they were from Texas and I found a name that might be him on the register - Ralph Gary. Since then I have seen his name in the local papers as a guest speaker for various Lincoln events. I thought more than once that I probably should have recognized Mr. Gary in the store. But I am not a Lincoln expert, and unfortunately I do not know all those who are Lincoln scholars.

I went to the Internet and searched for a book by Mr. Gary. I found *Following in Lincoln's Footsteps - A Complete Annotated Reference to Hundreds of Historical Sites Visited by Abraham Lincoln*. I ordered it and found that I had indeed found a book written by my humble visitor. The book jacket told me more about him. "Ralph Gary, an attorney, is a member of the Lincoln Forum, the Abraham Lincoln Association and the Surratt Society. He lives near Fort Worth, Texas." The jacket also contained review by Rhode Island Supreme Court Justice Frank J. Williams, Chair, The Lincoln Forum. He gave high praise to Mr. Gary: "Ralph Gary's guide to all of the sites relating to Abraham Lincoln is by

far the most comprehensive and useful guide for those who study Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War." This was followed by a review by Harold Holzer, Co-Chair, U.S. Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and author of *Dear Mr. Lincoln*. His comments included, "Engagingly written and well organized, the book belongs in the glove compartment or bookshelf of every Lincoln enthusiast who wants either a map of Lincoln's path through life, or a delightful review of the way he lived."

I started to read immediately noted that those acknowledged included "Historians Jim Patton and Charlie Starlin[g] at New Salem, especially the latter for his personal tour of the area to little-known sites." This sparked my interest. I actually knew two of the men acknowledged by the author. I wondered what I would find as I read on. I hoped to learn some interesting and accurate things because I expected that all those acknowledged must be as qualified as these two men are.

What I found was that Mr. Gary takes the reader on a trip through every state that Mr. Lincoln visited, a state by state tour, Arkansas to Wisconsin. Within each state he visits each city and tells the story of Mr. Lincoln's connection to that town, village or city. For example in the 173 pages devoted to Illinois, Mr. Gary lists 164 "cities" (by my count) between Albany and Winchester. He visited places we know like Clary's Grove, New Salem and Petersburg. He tells the New Salem story with a broader view than just the park. He visited places all around the area and tells us how they are related to the New Salem village. In this section, just as he does through the entire book, he gives directions so that the traveler can drive right to the site. For the traveler who wants to find a Lincoln site this is a wonderful companion. But he also tells those who want to study Lincoln more in depth where Lincoln documents are housed in each city or location. For cities like Springfield where there is so much Lincoln history, he divides the city up geographically so the visitor can easily tour one section at a time, and can make a plan to visit the

sites. He intersperses in the "tour" the historical significance of each place. He tells us why Lincoln visited there and what we should find on our trip.

After I read Mr. Gary's book I wanted to take off on a tour, especially of my native Indiana and my adopted Illinois. With this guide I could learn so much more about the man I have come to know as a young man in New Salem. By experiencing New Salem I learned more about Mr. Lincoln's early years than I had by reading about him. I knew that, with Mr. Gary's guide, I could gain similar knowledge by visiting other places that made him famous and that he has made famous. I hope to back a bag, take off and soon find myself "Following in Lincoln's Footsteps."

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Send your articles, letters, book reviews, and comments email at cshafer@gcctv.com or johnblankenberger@sbcglobal.net. Include "Pic" or "New Salem" in the subject line. Or send it to "New Salem Volunteer Newsletter," PO Box 471, Athens, Illinois 62613 c/o Carol Jenkins Shafer. Please include your phone number and/or address in case we have questions or need to clarify something. Please try to plan ahead. We'd like to have submissions by the 20th whenever possible to ensure mailing by the 1st of the next month.