



LA GRANGE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
444 S. La Grange Road La Grange IL 60525

2025 WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER
NOW AND THEN

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The support the LGAHS received in 2024 has been inspirational & motivating! Critical building improvements, educational programs, and events were made possible through generous contributions & countless volunteer hours. We attracted new audiences by forging relationships with area historical societies & expanded marketing to surrounding communities.

Here is a recap of some of the people and companies who have been instrumental in our 2024 successes:

- Dave Knecht Homes
- Ed Mattingly Paint
- Niego and Company
- Excel Window Tinting:
- The Illuminators

Community members actively participated as well:

- Alicia May, Alyssa Brands, Katy VanVliet
- Ed Mattingly
- Flagg Creek Heritage Society/ Robert Vial House
- Bands, Fiddlesticks, Southwater & The Stone Cats
- Tate's Ice Cream
- Heraty Christensen Group
- Cathy Bier & Witches
- Lynne Schaefer & Tootsie Roll
- Stephanie & Jim Boggess & Three Floyds Brewery
- Santas, home bakers & many volunteers for the holidays

The LGAHS is committed to our mission of providing a means and facility to study history, collect & preserve artifacts, and encourage education. We are proud to be the showcase facility at the Southern gateway to the Historic District..

The continued generosity & support from our members & the community makes it possible for us to think BIG and inspire future generations!

Remember, you don't have to go far to have fun!
Katherine Padgett

2025 AT A GLANCE

February 1st - March 1st

- The Sims Family Collection

March 26th 6:30 - 7:15 pm

- LGAHS Annual Membership Meeting

April 9th 7:00 - 8:30 pm

- The Perfect Pair ~ Wine & Chocolate

May 4th 1:00 - 3 pm

- The Vial House Exhibit Grand Opening

June TBD

- History Crawl
- Picnic in the Park Concert

Saturday July TBD

- Ice Cream Social
- Picnic in the Park Concert

August TBD

- Picnic in the Park Concert

September 14th

- Home & History Tour
- Final Picnic in the Park Concert

October TBD

- Witches Ride

November

- Getting Ready for the Holidays!

December 7th

- Holiday Open House & Bake Sale
- Photos with Santa

December 14th

- Sips & Sweets



MUSEUM NEWS

January is the time when we “reset” at the Vial House by evaluating the previous year and continue our planning for the upcoming year. New programs in 2025 include a display of the **Bernadine Sims Family Memorabilia Collection** & a presentation on the **Underground Railroad** by noted scholar, **Dr Larry McClellan** in honor of Black History Month. **“Whiskey & History”** will be entertaining & informative and a presentation by the **American Legion** will tell the story of Robert Coulter. **“The Perfect Pair”**, all about chocolate and wine, and a **private shopping night** at Vintage Charm will be fun events. A **4th concert** added to the Picnic in the Park series will provide another opportunity to hear excellent music under the stars free of charge. Just some of the things in the works!

Our very popular annual events including the **History Crawl**, the **Ice Cream Social**, the **Home & History Tour**, the **Witches Ride** and **Christmas events** along with **Sips & Sweets** will all be back this year. Follow us on Facebook & Instagram and keep an eye on our website lagrangehistory.org for dates, times & tickets.

🍀 Premium members and business partners will be invited to a champagne reception to celebrate the **Grand Opening of the permanent Vial House Exhibit** on Thursday May 1st. The Exhibit, depicting a timeline of the history of La Grange & La Grange Park, will open to the public on Saturday May 3rd.

🍀 We are pleased to announce **LGHS Board Member Christine Andino** has written a recently published book on the fascinating history of the Santa Fe Speedway. The book is available for \$25 at the Samuel Vial House or at the Robert Vial House. Congratulations Christine!

🍀 **“Behind the Scenes Tours”** will be offered to provide an opportunity to learn how a museum operates and to see many of the Vial House treasures & artifacts. A full size bear skin rug, a 1946 TV and a child size iron lung are just a few fascinating things we have! To arrange a tour contact sarahparkes@lagrangehistory.org for more information on dates, times & tickets.

NUTS AND BOLTS



Our magnificent 150 year old building is ship shape & ready for more adventures!

🍀 Several key projects are set to take place in 2025 such as the installation of decorative fencing around the Museum Park to boost safety and functionality. This new fencing, combined with revitalized landscaping, will further enhance the beauty of this outdoor space.

🍀 The Samuel Vial House is featured in the February 2025 edition of the **Greet La Grange** magazine as **House of the Month!** It's on Pg 21!



DID YOU KNOW...

The LGHS has 526 adult & children's books in our collection including an original copy of “Eight Cousins” inscribed by Louisa May Alcott in 1874.

The La Grange Womens Club began the first lending library in 1896 with a bookcase purchased for \$16, a library table for \$11 and 100 books donated by its members.

Land for the 1st La Grange Public Library was purchased at 75 South 5th Avenue, aka La Grange Rd & today is the location of Milk Money Brewing.

The library was built with a \$12,500 grant from Andrew Carnegie, one of the “Robber Barons” of the Gilded Age. Carnegie amassed his wealth as an industrialist & is considered the “Father of Modern Philanthropy” having donated over \$56 million to build 2,509 libraries between 1881 & 1919.

The La Grange Public Library opened its doors on January 10th 1905.





Meet a Vial House Hero ~ Ed Thoele

by Jeannine McLaughlin

On a beautiful day in 2005 Ed & his wife Cathy drove into the parking lot of the LGAHS. Ed had recently retired after 22 years as a computer administrator at Com Ed & as history was a newly discovered passion, he was interested in volunteering. Upon hearing those magical words, "computer administrator," a volunteer abruptly & brazenly took his hand & asked him to look at our computer. Some might say, "The rest is history," but it was the beginning of a new chapter in Ed's life and the life of the Society.

Ed's impact on LGAHS is far reaching & has greatly enhanced LGAHS functioning as a museum and as a research center. His first step was to install a new computer obtained through a grant arranged by Board Member Pat Koslowski. Ed sourced a provider who specialized in non-profit sites for \$60 per year, a fee that he personally paid for the next 15 years. In addition to his expertise, Ed has generously provided equipment to LGAHS over the years. In 2009, 2015 and 2022, Ed donated new computers, a laptop and equipment for 2 scanning stations. He has purchased Microsoft Office Suite software to keep the Museum up to date, purchased an SSL license for secured connections and pays the license renewal fee each year. Ed has devoted hundreds of hours processing photographs & transcribing handwritten records of the La Grange and La Grange Park census, making them accessible and searchable as Excel spreadsheets.

Ed's contributions to LGAHS go well beyond his technical work. Pursuing his love of history, Ed has researched & produced Power Points on the history & contributions of civic organizations, such as the Womens' Club. Most recently, Ed transcribed the National Archive records of F. D. Cossitt's claim for Civil War losses into a PDF file & a hardcover book. Another project Ed undertook was scanning a photocopy of the Civil War diary of George Childress, a relative of a La Grange resident & edited it into 2 easily read PDF files and a paperback book.

Ed served as a Board Member for eighteen years, including two successive terms as Treasurer. He created a non-profit PayPal account for registrations & donations. Additionally, trimming branches, painting the back porch & with his wife Cathy, cleaning up the Carriage Walk along La Grange Rd. were chores done without fanfare. We often find that the unsung heroes of the Society are the friends & family of our volunteers. Cathy, for example, would arrive early prior to events to make sure the Museum was in good order & has been most generous with financial support to the LGAHS.

Ed continues to assist the LGAHS with technical issues. He troubleshoots the equipment and backs up scanned items & documents & creates redundancies to ensure the safety of the records. We turn to Ed knowing that within his copious notes & volumes of research, he has answers to our questions! In 2023, Ed was named Emeritus Board Member, a much deserved honor, recognizing his lasting contributions and his long and devoted service to the LGAHS.



On behalf of the LGAHS, a special thank you to all of our members who contributed to the End of the Year Appeal!

Kenette Bledsoe
Csilla DePue
Donovan Family
Joe & Helen Dunn
John & Roxanne Garlanger
Kathleen Hegeman
Susan Johnston
Gwyn Jones
Margaret Kasin
Law, Ware, Shedd, Murphy Foundation

Karen Lynch
Barb Manning
Mary Ann Nesslar
Marcus & Katherine Padgett
Edmund Pelletiere
James Regan
Victoria Roe
Dorothy Schmidt
Rebecca Sonce
Ed & Cathy Thoele



La Grange Area Historical Society
444 S. La Grange Rd.
La Grange, IL 60525

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit 52
La Grange, IL 60525

Vial House Museum Hours: Wed 9:30AM ~ Noon * Thurs ~ Sat: 11:00AM - 2:00PM
Contact Us: www.lagrangehistory.org * Info@lagrangehistory.org

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Laurie Gibbons	Museum Concierge

Save The Date!

*The
Perfect
Wine Pair
& Chocolate
Tasting*

**April 9th
7-8:30 pm**

lagrangehistory.org

