



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

2026 SPRING NEWSLETTER

NOW AND THEN



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am grateful for the many glorious hours I've spent volunteering at the Historical Society over the last 9 years, historical excerpts are unending, many times being shared by our visitors who stop by because we are open 4 days a week! We recently captured the attention of so many who enjoyed Santa events, our 7 Christmas trees, and decorations by our local businesses and the La Grange Art League. Welcoming our visitors were our warm, knowledgeable staff, Sarah and Laurie, who always go the extra mile. It is so satisfying when I hear visitors plan to return for new exhibits, to research their home file, or to explore local history.

After our busy holiday season, the LGAHS hosted a lovely February exhibit honoring Black History Month. The exhibit showcased the doll collection and artwork on loan by Linda Valentine who grew up in La Grange. Also on loan were small items of furniture & artwork collected during my travels in Africa. Nationally known historian Larry McClellan returned for a sequel presentation about the Underground Railroad focusing on current research underway in nearby old Flagg Creek and Lyonsville.

On March 11th from 6-8PM the LGAHS will host an Open House birthday party celebrating the Pet Parade's 80th year. On March 19th the Samuel Vial House will also be the location for the La Grange Park Chamber of Commerce After Hours networking event from 5-7PM. Along with the gardens at the Samuel Vial House, we have 2 new fundraisers blooming on the horizon. Featuring 7 decades of history, "A Walk Through Time" is an exhibit that will boast many items from our wardrobe and accessioned collections. A grand opening special event fundraiser is planned for May 8th & 9th 2026. Also on our fundraising calendar is a summer event, "Sounds from Napa Valley", which will feature a violist and cellist from San Francisco, Napa Valley wines, and a tour of the Old Grace Lutheran Church. Expect tasty delights and libations at both events. More information will be forthcoming ~ keep up with us on social media and at lagrangehistory.org

How fortunate to have the beautiful Vial House with its repository of items and historical archives. It is the only historic home open to the public in the La Grange area. Please consider showing your support and enthusiasm for us by becoming a member or elevating your current membership. Our members embody the spirit of community that defines our museum. Last year membership dues generated over \$8000. Your support matters to us!

You don't have to go far to have fun!
My very best to you dear readers,
Katherine H. Padgett, President

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 11th

6:00-8:00 pm

Pet Parade 80th Birthday
Party Open House

March 25th

6:00-6:30pm

LGAHS Annual Meeting

May 8th & 9th

A Walk Through Time
Grand Opening Event
for the 2026 Exhibit

May 30th

LGAHS In the
80th Annual Pet Parade

July 20th

LGAHS Annual
Ice Cream Social

August 7th

Sounds from Napa Valley

Viola & Cello Visiting Artists
Concert Hosted at the Home
of Katherine & Marcus Padgett



On behalf of the LGAHS
we extend our
heartfelt thanks to

**The Karen Iwanowski
Memorial Fund**

for its generous support
of our End-of-Year Appeal



MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



What began in the 1970's as Women's History Week, became a month long nationally recognized observance in 1987 to address the absence of women from the historical record. The month highlights how women have influenced history not only through landmark achievements, but also through sustained civic, professional, and community leadership. From nationally recognized achievements to decades of community involvement, below are just a few of the women who have played a vital role in building and sustaining the institutions that define the village of La Grange today.

In 1915, **Esculine Thirsk**, who lived at 225 South Madison Street, received a rare national honor when she was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson as sponsor of the U.S. Navy submarine tender USS Bushnell. At a time when women could not vote and held few public roles, ship sponsorship was a highly visible and symbolic position. Esculine's appointment represents one of the earliest nationally recognized public roles held by a La Grange woman, reflecting how local women contributed to civic and national life well before formal political rights were granted.

Helen E. Barber Olson lived at 628 S. Catherine after moving to La Grange in 1940. She served the La Grange community in many roles & was elected Village Commissioner at a time when few women held municipal office. She was instrumental in establishing La Grange Community Hospital, later serving in its Auxiliary & as a charter member of the Hospital Life Members Association as a long-serving member who provided significant volunteer service and financial support. Helen was active in the American Legion Auxiliary, the Women's Club of La Grange, served as secretary of First Congregational Church and retired as executive secretary of the West Suburban Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Leona Woods Marshall Libby was born in 1919 and grew up on her family's farm located at 641 N. Stone. After graduating from LT at the age of 14, Leona went on to earn a degree in Physics from the University of Chicago at age 18. She continued her education at the University of Chicago where she earned her PhD in chemistry. In 1942 at the age of 23, Leona became a pioneering scientist in the male dominated field of nuclear physics when she was recruited by Enrico Fermi to join the Manhattan Project. She became the only female on a fifty-member team whose work included building and operating Chicago Pile-1, the world's first nuclear reactor. Leona developed interests in environmental science and engineering and published prolifically, garnering multiple honors as part of her long and distinguished career in academia

Elected Village President of La Grange in 2005, **Elizabeth (Liz) McNeily Asperger** was the first woman to hold the office in the Village's then 125-year history. A trained real estate attorney, she practiced law for 16 years and previously served on the Economic Development Commission, Police and Fire Commission, and the Village Board. During her presidency from 2005–2013, she led major downtown redevelopment and preservation efforts, including redevelopment of the Triangle properties, construction of the Village Hall parking structure and plaza, renovation of the Stone Avenue Train Station, and preservation of the La Grange movie theater through a public/private partnership. Liz has described the La Grange of today as the result of sustained planning and coordinated effort among residents, business owners, elected officials, volunteers, and village staff.

The stories continue at the Vial House this March with a special display highlighting notable women of La Grange ~ please stop in to see it!



MUSEUM NEWS



ADDITIONS TO THE LGAHS COLLECTIONS

We recently shared with our community that LGAHS is interested in acquiring tin toys of all vintages to add to our artifacts collection. We have some remarkable examples from various time periods and one of our most prized is a limousine (pictured here) from the 1920's complete with a limo driver and a license plate, hand restored from a crumpled bit of tin to its current glory by our LGAHS president, Katherine Padgett.

After a conversation with an LGAHS member, a surprise package arrived at our doorstep containing a child's coffee set from the 1940's and a collection of unusual tin construction toys heavy equipment in bright yellow, complete with movable parts pictured here.



TIN TOYS



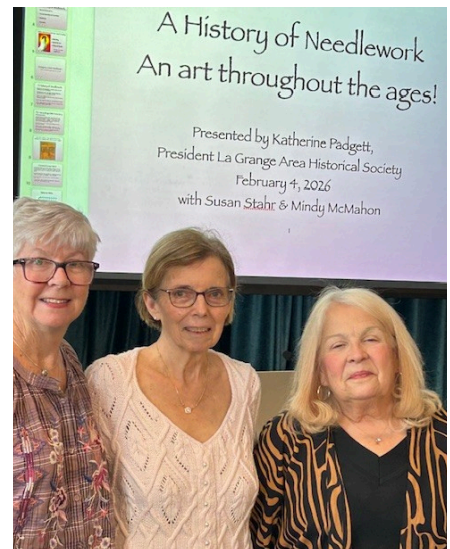
CROSS STITCH COLLECTION

LGAHS is honored to receive the counted cross-stitch collection personally created over a lifetime by longtime La Grange resident Susan Stahr. A February 4th program at Plymouth Place, "History of Needlework ~ An Art Through the Ages" was presented by LGAHS President Katherine Paddgett and Mindy McMahon of the Hinsdale Embroidery Guild, highlighting Susan's needlework, the history of embroidery, and audience participation. Selected examples of Susan's work are now on display at the Samuel Vial House Museum and will remain on exhibit at Plymouth Place through March.

A TREASURE HUNT

LGAHS is interested in improving and expanding our collections with specific things such as kitchen items from the 1950's, clothing from the 60's & 70's, toys and iconic pieces from any era are needed. If you have items you'd like us to consider for the collection, please contact us at lagrangehistory.org. and if possible, email a photo.

While we would love to accept every donation offered, we are space challenged at the museum and we are not always able to do so. When we can, however, you can be sure your item will be well cared for. The things you have treasured are part of our collective history and we would love to have the opportunity to share them with the community!



Mindy, Susan and Katherine

ANOTHER GREAT WAY TO SUPPORT LGAHS

Many employers offer matching gift programs for non profit donations ~ it's an easy way to increase the impact of your support for the La Grange Area Historical Society. Check with your employer to see if matching funds are available and how to apply them to your contribution. please contact sarah.parkes@lagrangehistory.org to coordinate your gift.



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444 S. La Grange Rd.
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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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SAVE THE DATES

