

“Give while you live!”

Lincoln home site unveils new historical marker

By William Furry

A new historical marker unveiled February 12 within the complex of the Abraham Lincoln Home National Historic Site is remarkable in several ways. First, it identifies and calls attention to the boyhood home of Julius Rosenwald, the one-time president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, who grew up in the neighborhood and lived across the street for the Lincoln home; and, secondly, it celebrates the life of one of America's greatest philanthropists, who was inspired by Lincoln to help build more than 5,000 schools in the segregated South from 1910 to 1932.

The unveiling included a morning of commentary about Rosenwald and his benefactions, held in the Lincoln Home Visitors Center. Several speakers told of Rosenwald and his family history in Springfield and how he became a multi-millionaire in the retail business and took over the Sears & Roebuck Company as it became the greatest mail-order retailer in earth 20th century history. Others told of Rosenwald's meeting with Booker T. Washington, the first president of the Tuskegee Institute, and Rosenwald's commitment thereafter to build schools in the South for African American children, the grandchildren of former slaves.

Others spoke of Rosenwald's donations to and sponsorships of Russian refugees. A Jew himself, Rosenwald also



sponsored and helped build many Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) facilities around country, including one on the south side of Chicago that is now a landmark. Throughout his life Rosenwald encourage others to use their money to do good, living his motto of “Give while you live.”

The unveiling of the new historic marker in the Lincoln Home complex is also significant because it is the first to celebrate the life of an individual who grew up in the Lincoln neighborhood after 1860, the “theme year” of the site. Rosenwald died in 1932.

William Furry of Petersburg is the executive director of the Illinois State Historical Society.

IN MEMORY OF

RODNEY O. DAVIS (1932-2019)

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF HISTORY, KNOX COLLEGE

CO-DIRECTOR OF THE LINCOLN STUDIES CENTER

RECIPIENT OF ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

BILL AND MARY SHEPHERD, LAKE BLUFF

SUSAN AND STEPHEN BAILEY, GALESBURG

MARLOW COWLEY, GALESBURG

MARY ELSA STEVENS, GALESBURG

RUTH AND LARRY GRAHAM, GALESBURG

WILLIAM FURRY AND PAULA ROMANAU, PETERSBURG

Lincoln turns 211

The “High Holy Days” were celebrated in Springfield with plenty of activities, culminating in the Abraham Lincoln Association’s annual birthday banquet at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel. Former Illinois Congressman Ray LaHood, who served in as United States Secretary of Transportation during the Obama administration, was keynote speak for the banquet. LaHood spoke passionately about bringing coalitions together to support the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, noting that four directors in sixteen years is too many to provide cohesion and direction for the institution. He also vowed to find a good use for “the Hat,” a controversial subject on which much ink has been spilled in recent months. Referring to the stove-pipe-hat-of-dubious-provenance, which was sold to museum for \$6 million, he said “There has to be a good use for it within the museum.”

A highlight of the banquet was the awarding of the ALA’s first lifetime achievement award to Dr. Wayne Temple, the legendary 96-year-old Lincoln and Illinois history scholar whose books about the 16th President are in every reputable library in the nation. Receiving the ALA’s “Lincoln the Lawyer” award was Peoria attorney



ALA president Bob Willard (left) and Guy Fraker (right) presents the Lincoln the Lawyer Award to Tim Bertschy.

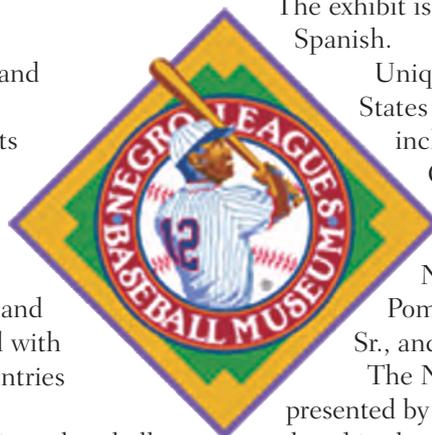
Tim Bertschy. Highlights throughout the day also included the unveiling of a new historical marker designating the boyhood home of Julius Rosenwald, who grew up in the Lincoln Home Neighborhood and went on to help construct more than 5,000 schools for African-American children in the segregated South between 1910 and 1930. (See related article in this issue.)

Negro Leagues Beisbol exhibit coming to AAHM

By Carolyn Farrar

Beginning April 11, the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum (AAHM) presents the traveling exhibit “Negro Leagues Beisbol,” a production of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. The exhibit runs through June 23, and will explore the rich history and connections of African American baseball with Hispanic cultures, communities, and countries beginning in the late 1800s.

The exhibit features profiles of significant baseball players, a timeline of American and Hispanic baseball history, and detailed baseball history of several countries.



The exhibit is bilingual, presented in both English and Spanish.

Unique stories of athletes with ties to the United States and Hispanic countries will be featured. They include Minnie Minoso, Willard Brown, Oscar Charleston, Ray Dandridge, Martin Dihigo, “Rube” Foster, Josh Gibson, “Pancho” Herrera, Monte Irvin, Jose Mendez, Emilio Navarro, “Buck” O’Neil, “Satchel Paige, Alex Pompez, Pat Scantlebury, Pedrio Sierra, Luis Tiant, Sr., and Willie Wells.

The Negro Leagues’ Springfield connection will be presented by Josh Johnson, who lived in Springfield and played in the Negro Leagues, and by highlights of events and games played in Springfield and central Illinois.

Sangamon Experience opens at UIS

A crowd of nearly 300 gathered on January 30 at the University of Illinois Springfield for a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the grand opening of the Sangamon Experience, a 3,500-square-foot exhibit devoted to the cultural, economic, and community history of Sangamon County.

The exhibit, which plans to be interactive and a community-building resource for the historical footprint of Sangamon County (Sangamon, Menard, Christian, Logan, Christian, Cass, and other counties in the region), was the brainchild of an anonymous donor family and a task force charged with documenting local history and exploring ways to incorporate new stories into the narrative.

Dr. Devin Hunter, a member of the UIS history faculty who teaches a course in public history at UIS, has been the academic advisor and developer of the exhibit, but the university plans to hire a full-time curator to take the Sangamon Experience to the next level, which will focus on changing exhibits, collecting histories, and implementing a long-range plan.

UIS Chancellor Susan Koch expressed her desire to see the



The official ribbon cutting for the Sangamon Experience.

All photos courtesy of the University of Illinois Springfield.

Sangamon Experience create opportunities for teaching excellence and to bring the university and local communities together. ISHS executive director William Furry, who spoke at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, said he “hoped the Sangamon Experience would be more than a repository for stories” and that it would inspire other counties to tell their own.



UIS History Professor Devin Hunter.



The exhibit space has several galleries that focus on Sangamon County and Springfield history.

“This is a model of how to bring our histories together in a meaningful way that can touch all who view it. It will be a wonderful resource for today’s students and future generations, but also for older folks who might never have had the opportunity to learn about the history of our land,” he said.

The Sangamon Experience exhibit is located on the first floor of the university’s Public Affairs Center, and is open during regular university hours. Admission is free.