

## Bicentennial symposium celebrates 200+ years of Illinois history

No celebration is complete without cake and the state's bicentennial commemoration, hosted by the University of Illinois Springfield and sponsored by the UIS Alumni SAGE Society and The Illinois State Historical Society, had a slice for everyone!

The symposium, held in the university's brand-new student union, featured six presenters who focused on different aspects of Prairie State history, from pre-Columbian Native American archaeology to 21st century immigration.

More than 200 guests attended the one-day event, which ISHS president Leah Axelrod called "the most engaging Illinois history symposium I've ever attended." The four symposium presenters—Michael Wiant, Bill Kemp, Devin Hunter, and Bob Sampson—engaged the audience in morning and afternoon sessions, and two UIS professors—Drs. Hinda Seif and Tiffany Saunders—served up relevant topics for the SAGE Society's "Lunch and Learn" luncheon.

In the morning session Michael Wiant delivered a talk titled "Ten Things Every Immigrant (and Everyone Else) Should Know about the First



**UIS and the ISHS prepare to cut the bicentennial cake for the Illinois History Symposium and SAGE Luncheon at the new UIS Student Union. Left to right: Bill Kemp, Robert Sampson, Leah Axelrod, Michael Wiant, UIS Chancellor Susan Koch, Rich Berning, Tiffany Saunders, Devin Hunter, Springfield Mayor Jim Langfelder, Pam VanAlstine.**

*Photos by Marilyn Kok, UIS photographer.*

Illinoisans," which explored what we ought to know about the people who first inhabited the Prairie State, and Bill Kemp focused on "Lincoln's Lost Speech," a oration given in



**UIS Professor Devin Hunter and student Ciara Koepke discussed student projects in Public History.**

Bloomington in 1856 that set Lincoln on his path to the presidency. The afternoon sessions including Dr. Devin Hunter, professor of public history at UIS, who discussed how his students are exploring their discipline in new ways, and Dr. Robert Sampson, associate professor of history at Millikin University, who gave us all a bicentennial exam focused on “What Every Illinoisan Needs to Know about the First 200 Years of Illinois History.”

The bicentennial event was free and open to the public, although there was a fee to attend the luncheon. Among the symposium guests were UIS Chancellor Susan Koch and Springfield mayor Jim Langfelder.

With any luck, you won't have to wait another 200 years for a piece of cake. Plan now to join us in the spring at UIS for the next Illinois History Symposium, which will focus on teaching, practicing and promoting public history.

Michael Wiant's topic was “Ten Things Every Immigrant Should Know about the First Illinoisans”; Dr. Hinda Seif presented at the Lunch and Learn program about “A Nation of Immigrants: Historical Perspectives on Immigration to the Land of Lincoln”; Bill Kemp's topic was “Lincoln's Lost Speech”; and Dr. Tiffany Saunders talked about “The African Diaspora: Communities Descended and Emigrated from Africa's Peoples to the Prairie State.”

More than 200 people attended the bicentennial programs at UIS.



*Michael Wiant*



*Dr. Tiffany Saunders*



*Bill Kemp*



*Dr. Hinda Seif*

## Author's resolution to boost Illinois state song passes House

Chicago author Stan “Tex” Banash (center) was honored in the Gallery of the Illinois House of Representatives near the end of the regular House session when HR 184, a resolution he drafted and arranged for State Rep. Michael P. McAuliffe (left) (R-Chicago) to introduce, was passed by the Illinois House. The resolution encourages the playing of “Illinois,” the Illinois state song, at official government events as well as at commencement exercises and other major functions at schools within the state university system. At time of passage, members of the Illinois House were led in singing “Illinois” by State Rep. Terri Bryant (right) (R-Murphysboro). Afterward, letters with copies of the resolution were sent to university presidents and chairpersons of the boards of trustees by Rep. McAuliffe. Banash has been boosting state pride and state history since publication of his book, *Roadside History of Illinois*, several years ago. His effort takes on special significance as Illinois celebrated its bicentennial on December 3, 2018. Similarly, Banash drafted a resolution that recognized December 3 as Statehood Day in Illinois. That resolution, converted to a House bill, is now under consideration by the Illinois Senate as a commemorative state holiday.

