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State Genealogical Society

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Newsletter

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A Tale of Old Records and New Technologies

On April 18, 1882 Samuel Widgery and Theresa Quirk were married in Cook County, Illinois and began their life together as husband and wife. The marriage was duly recorded in the office of the County Clerk of Cook County and 114 years later the marriage license that marked this momentous occasion in the life of two people still resides among the millions of other documents stored by the county clerk in a huge warehouse on the south side of Chicago.

Enter now the Illinois State Genealogical Society and the Illinois State Archives with an ambitious project to create a mainframe computer database to record every Illinois marriage prior to 1901. The Illinois Statewide Marriage Index project, begun in 1983, has now entered more than 750,000 marriages into a mainframe database maintained by the Secretary of State's Information Systems Services. The marriage of Samuel Widgery and Theresa Quirk in 1882 is one of them.

Through the efforts of many archives and data processing professionals and numerous ISGS volunteers, the old marriage records in Illinois courthouses are becoming more easily accessible than ever before.

During the first ten years of the marriage indexing project, data entry was accomplished by Illinois State Archives staff and by volunteers on mainframe terminals at the Archives Building. The number of volunteers who could be involved was limited. The development in 1993 of a Paradox runtime database application for entering marriage records on personal computers made it possible to involve many more volunteers. Anyone with an IBM-compatible personal computer with

1 megabyte of RAM and 4 megabytes of hard disk storage can now enter marriages and send data disks to the State Archives where they are processed and sent to the dataprocessing department for uploading to the mainframe computer database.

The success of this effort to involve personal computer users in data entry has given new impetus to the project. Chuck Cali, who supervises the Illinois State Archives' involvement in the project, sees this phase of the volunteer program as crucial to completion of the indexing project. Chuck and Ruth Hutchcraft of the State Archives have worked with Wanda Ayers of the ISGS to coordinate the data entry of about 50 volunteers. Photocopies or microfilms of the old marriage records are provided to volunteers. In some cases, volunteers are working in the courthouses to collect the necessary information.

The marriage of Samuel Widgery and Theresa Quirk was entered by volunteer Shirley Aleguas of Waverly, Illinois. The microfilm used for data entry in this case was shot from the original Cook County marriage records by the Genealogical Society of Utah. Shirley has the distinction of having entered more marriage records than any other volunteer using a personal computer.

The data disks created by Shirley Aleguas and other volunteers are sent to the Illinois State Archives where Barbara Heflin of the IRAD Unit converts the Paradox databases to fixed-length ASCII files, a standardized data format that can be read by a mainframe computer. The record for the marriage of Samuel Widg-

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Illinois State Military Museum Opens First Exhibition on General John A. "Black Jack" Logan



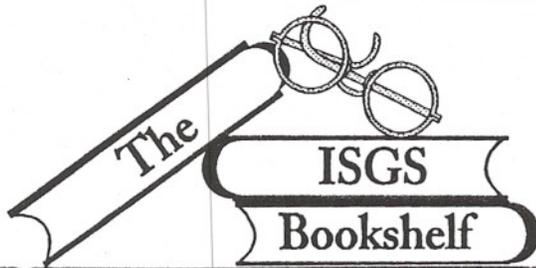
December 1 marked the opening of the first official exhibition of the Illinois State Military Museum. John A. "Black Jack" Logan, politician and Civil War general, is the focus of the exhibition. The exhibition is open to the public and set to run through May of 1996. It is located at Camp Lincoln, 1301 N. MacArthur Boulevard, Building #41, Springfield, IL.

The Museum, whose primary purpose is to preserve its collections, has been in "a state of complete re-organization," said its new curator, Mark Whitlock. Whitlock, a First Lieutenant in the National Guard, has a Bachelor's degree in Museum and Historic Sites Studies from Southern Illinois University and a Master's degree in Public History from Sangamon State University. His military and history background has been a valuable asset in his new position, which he began in June of 1995.

This under-appreciated facility houses numerous Logan artifacts, ranging from a fake cigar presumably used to carry secret messages to photographs and correspondence to antique furniture owned by Logan. In light of this, Logan was the ideal subject for the first exhibition. Whitlock, the only full-time employee of the Museum, is being assisted with the creation of this exhibit by graduate students in History at the University of Illinois at Springfield. In addition, the Museum has an extensive battle flag collection dating from the Mexican War, as well as military artifacts from the Revolutionary War to

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✉ You are invited to send publication notices to: Karl Moore, P.O. Box 291, Pawnee, IL 62558. Please indicate title, price, postage and handling, and where the book is available. The Newsletter policy states that we do not use one-family items, publications, etc.

✉ The Society would appreciate copies of books for review in the *Quarterly*. Please send them to ISGS, P.O. Box 10195, Springfield, IL 62791-0195. Include the same information needed for the *Newsletter*.

Sangamon County

Sangamon County Deed & Misc. Record Index 1822-1832. Contains the grantors (sellers), grantees (buyers), volume and page of Sangamon County, Illinois land for years 1822-1832. Divided into 2 parts, alphabetical listing of grantors and same for grantees. Over 2100 entries. \$12.00 (includes postage). Order from: Sangamon County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 1829, Springfield, IL 62705-1829.

Tazewell County

1861 Pekin City Directory (Reprint). \$12.00.

Tazewell County Naturalizations A - L (1839-1909). \$14.00. Order either of these volumes from: Tazewell County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 312, Pekin, IL 61555-0312. Include payment by check or money order.

Winnebago County

Records of Court Street Methodist Episcopal Church of Rockford, Illinois. Contains

over 500 pages of Probationers, Baptisms, Marriages, Memberships, some death notices, and a surname index. Covers 1854-1925. Paperback, \$45 plus \$4 postage & handling. Order from: Kishwaukee Genealogists, P.O. Box 5503, Rockford, IL 61125.

Southern Illinois

The French Colony in the Mid-Mississippi Valley. By Margaret Kimball Brown and Lawrie Cena Dean. Personal accounts of the lives of this region's first European settlers. Full color photographs, illustrations, and early maps show French dress, household items, architecture, and the growing communities they established. 36 pages, 50 maps, photographs, and illustrations in full color and B & W. \$9.95 paper. IL residents add 6.25% sales tax. Shipping is \$1.75 for first book and 50 cents for each additional book. Order from: American Kestrel Books, American Resources Group, Ltd., 127 North Washington Street, Carbondale, IL 62901. Phone: 618-529-2741; Fax: 618-457-5070.

Out-of-State

Iowa

Guthrie County, Iowa Records, Volume 1. 900 page book with every name index contains births, marriages, deaths, census records (federal and state), military records, news items, obituaries, World War I records, cemetery records, and many other Iowa records. \$48.00. Available from: Sherry Foresman, 2787 335th Street, Menlo, IA 50164.

1995 Fall Conference Syllabus Available

There are only a few of the syllabi left from the fall conference this year that was held in Carlinville. The syllabus, entitled, *A Sampler of Genealogy at Its Best*, is available to members for \$6.00, \$8.00 for nonmembers. If you're interested in getting this publication, send a check for the correct amount to the office in Springfield.

John A. Logan Exhibition

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the present. A resource/reference library is also being developed from books in the collection.

Since Whitlock took over as Curator, 700 square feet of exhibition space has been created, as well as office and collections storage space in the former barracks building. The Museum has also purchased and installed archival shelving, track lighting for the exhibit area and new

carpeting in an attempt to make the collection more accessible to the public. Accessioning continues as the Museum plans to expand its scope to include exhibitions. Exhibitions will be on a rotating basis to ensure the public of variety and give the visitor a reason to return. The Museum will not have any permanent displays until it moves to its future site.

The future site of the Museum is a turn-of-the-century, castle-like, culver stone structure, formerly a commissary building, located on the grounds of Camp Lincoln. The Museum is working in co-

operation with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency on the project. The timetable to convert the existing structure into a museum is estimated at five years and will cost approximately \$1 million. Some funding will come from State appropriations; however, corporate and public support for the ambitious project will be vital to its success. Donations may be made to the Illinois National Guard and Militia Historical Society. For additional information on the Illinois State Military Museum and its Logan exhibition, contact the Museum at 217/782-9365.