

The Feature

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies

Spring, 2006

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SAC Director to Lead Group

IFFS Tour on May 13 to Provide Insight into Daily Life in the Village of New Salem

IFFS members and the public will get new and revised facts about life in the village of New Salem, Illinois as part of an IFFS walking tour of New Salem State Park on Saturday, May 13. The tour will begin at 1 p.m.

Robert Mazrim, director of the Sangamo Archaeological Center, will lead the group through the park discussing the history of the town including various archaeological excavations conducted at the park. These investigations include Joseph Booten's work in the 1930s prior to the reconstruction of the park's structures and Mazrim's investigations in 1995-1996. Mazrim's work in the 1990s revealed the location of two previously unknown house sites. The tour will also feature a report on the current work being conducted by the SAC in the eastern end of the park.

This tour will serve as a fundraiser to help underwrite future IFFS activities. Attendance will be limited to 40 people. The cost of tickets is \$20 for members and \$30 for the public. A reservation form is on the back page of this newsletter. Registration forms and checks must be received no later than May 7. For additional information call Curtis Mann at 753-4900 ext. 235.

The tour will begin at the site of the old mill and will last about an hour and a half.

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Iles Store Bulletin Still Available

Copies of "The Beginnings of a State Capital, Archaeological Excavations at the Elijah Iles Store Site in Springfield, Illinois," a bulletin detailing an archaeological salvage project conducted in 2003, are still available. The report, issued this past fall, is the latest in the Sangamo Archaeological Center bulletin series. Iles opened the first store in Springfield in 1821 at the southeast corner of 2nd and Jefferson Streets. The report, can be purchased at the Under the Prairie Museum bookstore or at Prairie Archives in downtown Springfield. The cost is \$12.

From the President's Desk.....Curtis Mann

I have several important and exciting items to share with IFFS Members.

After several months of waiting, IFFS received notification that it has been granted tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. Contributions made to this organization are now tax deductible. Activities such as grant applications which were held in limbo because of the wait can now proceed.

The Foundation will have its first annual meeting this June at which a new slate of officers and directors will be selected. The board currently consists of a president, treasurer and five directors. All of these offices will be open as well as the vacant office of secretary. I would encourage all current officers and directors to consider remaining on the board as well ask other IFFS members to join if interested.

Charter memberships will expire by June, 2006. I urge the original charter members to renew their memberships with the new individual fees of \$30 per year. A renewal form is located on the last page of this newsletter.

Through the generosity of several members, the Foundation will be able to make the final payment on the use agreement with the Sangamo Archaeological Center in the next few weeks. This agreement gave the Foundation members free admission to the Under the Prairie Museum as well as use of the bakery facility for programs. The IFFS board recently reaffirmed its continued support of the museum.

Work on the Wanborough project has been slowly progressing over the winter. Most of the artifacts found during the dig last September have been washed. A decision was made to complete the excavation of two units from the original dig before any analysis will be conducted on the artifacts. A return to the dig site was scheduled for this spring to complete the project but rain and other commitments forced its cancellation. The excavation team may return this summer or fall but no definite plans have been made.

The Foundation's treasury currently has about \$1,000 in it with \$300 of that reserved for use in the Wanborough project.

The Feature is the quarterly newsletter of the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies,

Box 1834, Springfield, 62706.

IFFS Officers and Directors, 2005-2006

Curtis Mann, *president*, David M. Brady, *treasurer*

Directors: Elaine Birtch, Bob Church, William Furry, Roger Whitaker, Vicky Whitaker

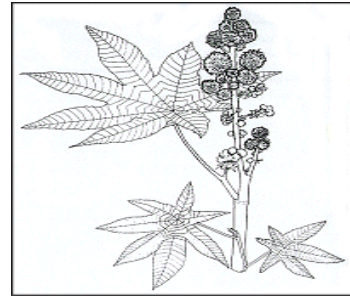
Did You Know?

Castor Bean Crop Spawns Early Illinois Oil Boom

Castor oil, the bane of several generations of children, was a major product of frontier Illinois. Well known for its medicinal properties, the oil was also used as a lighting source and lubricant.

Several county histories report castor beans were once grown in considerable quantities throughout the state especially in the southwestern counties of Madison and Randolph. John Mason Peck's *Gazetteer of Illinois* notes "large quantities of castor oil are annually manufactured in Illinois. A number of presses are in operation in Madison, Greene, Macoupin, St. Clair, Randolph and Edwards counties."

Other oil mills were known to have existed in Clinton, Wayne, Wabash and Whiteside counties. John Adams's oil mill, located at Edwardsville, Illinois, was probably the largest in the state. He is reported to have produced thirty to forty thousand gallons of oil annually. An advertisement for 1827 states Adams was paying 75 cents per bushel for castor beans and would pay in cash or merchandise. The cities of Sparta and Chester also became important manufacturers of castor oil.



Salt Making Another Major Frontier Industry Here

Salt making was a major industry in frontier Illinois. Potent salt springs located west of Shawneetown, Illinois in Gallatin County, were first leased by the federal government to private operators in 1803. These springs, when properly worked, proved to be a valuable source of income. Ownership of all salt springs in the state passed from the United States to Illinois when it became a state in 1818. Three other active springs beside those in Gallatin County were located in Vermilion, Jackson and Bond counties.

The Bond County salt springs, probably the least studied of all operations, were located along Shoal Creek on 640 acres of land reserved from sale. Joel Smith first leased the salt springs from the federal government in 1818 for a term of three years. Illinois government officials, after taking control of the springs, sought back payment of the rent paid by Smith to the federal government as well as attempted to appoint someone to collect future rent. A digest of manufacturing establishments for Illinois in 1822 noted Smith's salt works employed three men and produced \$1,878 worth of salt.

In 1823, the state of Illinois rented the Shoal Creek salt springs to the firm of Montgomery and Gaylord for a period of four years following the expiration of Smith's lease. The terms of the lease, which is located at the Illinois State Archives, directed Montgomery and Gaylord to "dig or bore through earth and rock perpendicularly to the distance of 100 feet at least unless they shall sooner discover a sufficient quantity of salt water to keep constantly employed in boiling forty kettles of forty gallons each." They were also required to build a well curb tall enough to prevent water from Shoal Creek getting in.

The state of Illinois continued to lease the Shoal Creek Saline for a number of years until selling the land in 1840. Other operators reported to have made salt there include James Coyle and John Lee.

IFFS Charter members

Don Anderson
 Sally Anderson
 Elaine Birtch
 David Brady
 Daniel R. Buck
 Sally Cadagin
 Robert E. Church
 Ken Farnsworth
 William Furry
 Linda Garvert
 Joseph Ginter
 Mary Ginter
 Richard E. Hart

Tyler Lanterman
 Doris J. Leonard
 Judy Lott
 Curtis Mann
 John R. Paul
 Molly Schlich
 Dr. David Sumner
 Mrs. David Sumner
 Carl Volkmann
 Roger Whitaker
 Vicky Whitaker
 Sharon Zook

Regular Members

Nancy Chapin
 Steve Leonard
 Ron Mann

Dennis Naglich
 Peter Shrake
 Kent Weil

Institutional Members

Terry Harper (*Edwards County Historical Society*)
 John Hoffman (*Illinois Historical Survey*)
 Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library

IFFS MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

I'd like to become a member of the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies or renew my membership for 2006-2007. Enclosed is my check for \$30 made out to the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies. (Please mail this form and your check to: IFFS, Box 1834, Springfield, IL 62706. (If you prefer, you can fill out an application on line and pay electronically at our website, www.illinoisfrontier.org using Paypal. If you have any questions, please call Curtis Mann at 217-753-4900, ext. 235.

New Member **Renewal**

Today's date: _____

Name: _____
Street or Postal Address: _____
City: _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code:** _____
Telephone: (office) _____ **(home)** _____ **(cell)** _____
e-mail address: _____ **fax:** _____

I would prefer to receive the IFFS newsletter by regular mail.

IFFS New Salem Tour Registration Form

Enclosed is my check for _____ for _____ tickets for the May 13 tour of New Salem. (\$20 for members, \$30 for the public) made out to the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies. (Please mail this form and your check to: IFFS, Box 1834, Springfield, IL 62706. If you have any questions, please call Curtis Mann at 217-753-4900, ext. 235.

Name: _____
Street or Postal Address: _____
City: _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code:** _____
Telephone: (office) _____ **(home)** _____ **(cell)** _____
e-mail address: _____ **fax:** _____