

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

St. Charles Heritage Center
215 E. Main St.
St. Charles, IL 60174
630-584-6967 Phone
630-584-6077 Fax
Natalie Gacek, Director

The St. Charles Heritage Center, in conjunction with the St. Charles Public Library, will be presenting the third installment of the Thursday Evening Lecture Series on Thursday September 8.

The program will be held in the Carnegie Room at the St. Charles Public Library and will begin at 7:00 pm. In connection with the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War the topic for this presentation will be “Mary Lincoln and the Spiritualists” presented by Valerie Gugala. After the death of her son Willie, Mary Lincoln held séances in the White House to try to contact him and other deceased relatives. Why did Mary (any many other bereaved families) believe in the spiritualist movement? What happened at these séances? Did Abraham Lincoln ever attend one? Later while Mary was living in Batavia at Bellevue Place she visited St. Charles resident and Spiritualist, Caroline Howard.

Valerie Gugala is a historian and actress who has been studying Abraham and Mary Lincoln for as long as she can remember, and performing as and speaking about Mary Lincoln for almost 15 years. Her research has taken her through numerous books and biographies, as well as the Chicago History Museum, the Illinois State Historical Library Archives, the (former) Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

As one of the founders of Mary Lincoln's Coterie, a group devoted to the memory of Mary Lincoln, she has helped to organize weekends of events in Springfield to commemorate the anniversary of Mary Lincoln's death. This year, Valerie was honored to be asked to perform at the Lincoln Home visitor's center, and to deliver the eulogy at the annual memorial service for Mary Lincoln.

Valerie is a member of the Association of Lincoln Presenters, and she was nominated by them as the “Best Mary Lincoln Presenter” in 2006, 2007 and 2008. In 2009 and 2010, she was nominated for the “Best Lincoln Team” award along side her acting partner Kari Jones for their new show “Divided: Mary Lincoln and Emilie Todd Helm”

Valerie resides in Bartlett, Illinois with her husband Brian, their teenagers Melanie & Steven, and their cat Dexter. Besides her work as Mary Lincoln, she is the theatre producer and director for the Bartlett Park District community theatre, and she appears on stage throughout the Chicago area as part of the acting troupe of “The Mystery Shop” a traveling interactive murder mystery theatre company.

This event is free and open to the public; donations to the Heritage Center are appreciated. We look forward to seeing you at this interesting lecture. If you have any questions, please call the History Museum, 630-584-6967.

The St. Charles Heritage Center operates the St. Charles History Museum and Gift Shop located at 215 E. Main Street. The Museum and Gift Shop are open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. For more information please call 630-584-6967, visit the website www.stcmuseum.org or check us out on Facebook.

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