

April 2026

THE STEPHENSON HOUSE NEWS



— For Friends, Volunteers, & History Lovers —

A Night of Clues, Costumes, and Clever Minds

The 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House invites you to join Professor Plum, Col. Mustard, and friends for a murder-mystery themed trivia night set in the 1940s sponsored by Benjamin Edwards Investments, John Morrissey and Besserman Law.

On Saturday, April 25, bring your smartest friends to the Edwardsville Moose Lodge (7371 Marine Rd.) to battle other teams as our quizmasters test your knowledge of Trivia Through the Decades.

Doors open at 6 p.m. for snacks and refreshments. Trivia begins at

7 p.m. The night will include cash prizes for 1st and 2nd place, a costume contest, and free soda, water, and beer (while it lasts).

The event benefits the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House, a hands-on living history museum bustling with activities that bring to life the early history of Illinois and tell the story of the family and the region in entertaining and engaging ways.

To reserve your table or for more information, visit:

www.stephensonhouse.org



We're Moving Toward Online Correspondence

With stamp prices rising to 95 cents in 2026, we will be shifting our correspondence to email. This change helps us keep costs down while continuing to direct our resources toward preservation, programming, and daily operations.

To receive your museum communications electronically, please send your preferred email address to stephensonhouse1820@yahoo.com.

Thank you for helping us stay connected in a sustainable way.



Volunteer Amy Mullane to be Honored by Illinois Association of Museums

We are thrilled to announce that long-time volunteer Amy Mullane has been selected to receive a prestigious Volunteer Award from the Illinois Association of Museums. This award specifically recognizes her extraordinary dedication and years of volunteer service to the museum community.

Amy was nominated for this honor by Site Director RoxAnn Raisner, who has worked closely with her for two decades. Amy has been a cornerstone of the house for 20 years, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to our mission and history. Her dedication goes far beyond typical volunteer duties; she frequently steps in to manage operations when the Director is away.

RoxAnn often jokingly refers to Amy as "the other half of her brain"—a testament to Amy's reliability, intelligence, and deep understanding of the House.

Beyond her hard work, Amy is a cherished friend and an overall amazing, giving person who embodies the spirit of our community.

Join the Celebration

The awards ceremony will be held online via Zoom on Tuesday, April 7, at 3:30 pm. The program is expected to last between 60 and 90 minutes, but volunteers will be recognized during the first half of



the ceremony for those who cannot stay for the entire duration.

We invite all our supporters and friends to sign on and help us celebrate Amy's incredible achievement.

- **Date:** Tuesday, April 7, 2026
- **Time:** 3:30 pm
- **Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85053654443>

Late Author Sid Denny's Work Receives State Honor

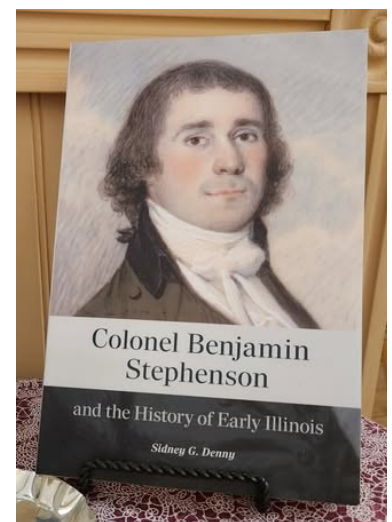
The legacy of Sid Denny continues to shine as his definitive work, *Colonel Benjamin Stephenson and the History of Early Illinois*, has been selected for a 2026 "Best of Illinois History" award from the Illinois State Historical Society (ISHS). This honor recognizes exceptional contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Illinois's past.

The award carries special significance for our museum following Sid's passing in June 2023. His meticulous research and deep

commitment to documenting early Illinois shaped a book that is essential to understanding Colonel Stephenson and the development of the Illinois Territory. This recognition stands as a meaningful tribute to his scholarship and the impact of his work.

The Society will present the award during its Awards Luncheon on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. in Springfield. Though Sid is no longer here to accept the honor, his work continues to guide historians and supporters of the

Stephenson House, ensuring the stories he preserved will endure for generations.



Big News: We've Won an Innovation Award!

This spring brings a special piece of news for the Stephenson House. The Illinois Association of Museums has selected our museum to receive an Innovation Award. This recognition highlights the creative work happening behind the scenes to connect our 1820 home with audiences far beyond Edwardsville.

Over the past few years, many of you have watched our digital outreach evolve—from educational videos on YouTube to a more

intentional, cross-platform approach. Last year, we made the decision to expand that effort, bringing the same energy and creativity to all of our social media channels.

The impact has been remarkable. Our Facebook community in December grew from 2,500 followers to more than 30,000 in just a few days, and we're now approaching 48,000. This growth has not only broadened our reach but has also created new revenue streams that directly support preservation work and educational programming at the museum. Most importantly, it has allowed us to share history and humor with millions of people who may never have had the chance to visit

in person.

We would be delighted to have you join us online at the ceremony.

When: Tuesday, April 7 at 3:30 pm

Zoom Link:

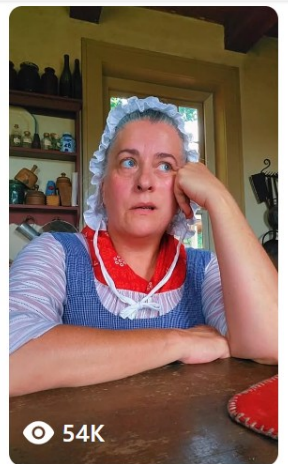
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85053654443>

The Innovation Awards will be presented midway through the program (approximately 4:00–4:30), so you're welcome to join at that time if your schedule is tight.

Thank you for supporting the Stephenson House, sharing our content, and helping us bring history to life for a growing and enthusiastic community.



1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House



If you've visited the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House lately, you may have noticed something: our wooden benches—the ones that have welcomed school groups, tour guests, weary parents, and costumed interpreters for more than twenty years—are finally showing their age. After decades of sun, rain, and thousands of visitors, these hardworking benches are beginning to weaken and wear. They've served us well, but it's time to refresh or retire them.

That's where our community comes in.

The Stephenson House is looking for individuals or groups who might be searching for a meaningful project: Eagle Scout candidates, Girl Scout Gold Award candidates, local

A New Place to Sit: Stephenson House Seeks Volunteers to Build Replacement Benches



carpenters, woodworking clubs, or anyone with the skills and heart to help. The project would involve building several sturdy, historically appropriate wooden benches for the museum grounds—pieces that will serve visitors for years to come.

As a small nonprofit museum, our budget is limited, and

donated labor or materials would make an enormous difference. A project like this not only supports the daily needs of the museum but also becomes part of the visitor experience. Every tour, every school field trip, every community event would benefit from the craftsmanship and generosity of the volunteers who step forward.

If you or someone you know is looking for a project that blends history, craftsmanship, and community service, we would love to talk. Your work could become a lasting part of the House's story.

Craft Your Own Piece of History: The "FAN"tastic Workshop



There is a quiet, timeless elegance in the flick of a folding fan—a gesture that has defined style for centuries. On Saturday, April 18, we're hosting an intimate workshop where you can reconnect with the artistry of the 18th and 19th centuries by embellishing a historical treasure with your own hands.

From 9:30 am to 2:00 pm, you'll work with custom-printed designs inspired by authentic museum pieces, transforming a beautiful base into a finished accessory that looks right at

home in a period ballroom. Whether you're preparing for the Jewels Ball, a historical reenactment, or simply want a unique, conversation-starting piece for your modern wardrobe, this session is designed for everyone.

If you enjoy the finer details, bring along your own sewing kit to help finish your design. However, if you aren't a sewist, don't worry—we will have plenty of no-sew options available so you can still walk away with a stunning finished piece.



We'll keep the atmosphere relaxed, pausing midway for a lunch break. The cost is \$45 per person, which covers all your fan materials. Space is limited to just 8 guests (16+). We can't wait to see the history you'll create.

**Register online at
www.stephensonhouse.org**

From Regency to "Bridgerton": A Day at the Modiste



Walking into the museum this past Saturday felt less like entering a historic site and more like stepping into a bustling 19th-century modiste's shop. We hosted our first Jewels Ball workshop, "The Whole Look," and it was the perfect "kick-off" for our upcoming season of elegance.

Led by the talented RoseEllen Osborne, the day was a whirlwind of silk, accessories, and laughter. RoseEllen guided a fantastic group of attendees through the nuanced world of early 1800s fashion, specifically into the differences between historically accurate Regency attire and the "enhanced" fantasy of Bridgerton style.

It's All in the Foundation

One of the biggest takeaways of the day? Beauty—at least in early 1800s—starts from the inside out. We took a look at underpinnings, exploring how corsets and corded petticoats are the true secret to achieving that iconic high-waisted silhouette. Without the right foundation, the dress simply

doesn't "speak" the right historical language!

The Magic of the Makeover

Perhaps the most fun was watching RoseEllen demonstrate how to recreate a look on a budget. We learned how a single, simple dress can be transformed into multiple outfits just by changing the accessories or the placement of a ribbon.

The room was overflowing with:

- Glittering tiaras and jewelry
- Trims and silk fabrics
- Dress forms
- And corsets and petticoats



Preparing for the Jewels Ball

For just \$45, our guests spent the entire day immersed in the art of the ensemble. But this wasn't just a one-off class; it was the official start of a series of workshops designed to get everyone ready for the Jewels Ball! We proved that you don't need a royal treasury to look like a "Diamond of the Season"—with a few clever tricks and the right knowledge, a fashionable



look is within anyone's reach.

If you missed out this time around, don't fret! Because of the workshops overall success and the sheer amount of fun we had, we will be offering another "The Whole Look" workshop in May.

Keep a close eye on our social media and the next newsletter for the official date. This is the first step in making sure your wardrobe is ready for the Ball, and you won't want to miss it!



A Note From the Director

I'm so happy to be back in the fold this month, though "back" doesn't quite cover the gratitude I'm feeling. As many of you know, I was away on medical leave during March. Stepping away from the House is never easy, but seeing so many of you step up to the plate in my absence was truly humbling. To the staff and volunteers who kept the gears turning and the doors open: thank you. I am deeply grateful to belong to such a dedicated community.

You'll notice we look a little different this month! For years, this publication was known as *The Volunteer* or *The Spectator*. While those names served us well, they felt a bit like they only told part of the story. We've renamed it *The Stephenson House News* because this space belongs to everyone—our tireless volunteers, our Friends of the House, and every single person who simply loves history. You'll still find your favorite fixtures here, from our monthly

calendar and site needs to deep-dive history articles, but under a name that includes all of us.

Speaking of "all of us," I have to talk about our recent "video shenanigans." It has been such a joy to hear how much you're enjoying our forays into Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. What started as a bit of historical fun has turned into a major win for the museum. Since December, our Facebook following alone has skyrocketed from 2,500 to over 47,000!

That growth isn't just about the numbers; it's about sustainability. We are actually generating revenue through our Facebook content, which goes directly toward supporting the House. To keep those "algorithm gods" happy, we need your help: every time you like, comment, or share one of our Reels, you are helping a small museum in southern Illinois reach the world. So, please—keep



watching, keep sharing, and keep engaging!

Finally, as we look toward a busy season, we are looking for friendly faces to join us on-site. Whether you have a passion for giving tours, a green thumb for our gardens, or the skills to help us build new benches, we need you. Our programming and events simply don't happen without the hands and hearts of our volunteers.

Thank you for sticking by us, for watching our silly videos, and for keeping the history of this House alive.

Warmly,

RoxAnn



Help Fuel the Fun at Trivia Night!

We're brewing up something special for our

upcoming Trivia Through the Decades fundraiser — and we need your help to make our raffle and silent auction shine!

We're seeking donations of coffee and coffee-related items (beans, mugs, gift cards, accessories) and lottery tickets for our big raffle.

We're also collecting items for

the Silent Auction at the same event. Ideal contributions include themed gift baskets, gift cards, gift certificates, small art pieces, and tickets to area events.

If you have something to give but aren't sure it's appropriate, please call the museum at 618-692-1818 and ask for Amy or RoxAnn — they'll be happy to help.

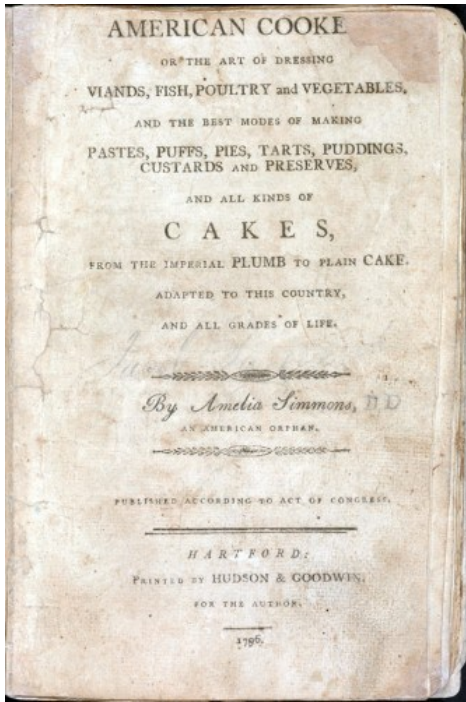
Donations can be dropped off at

the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House during regular hours:

- Thursdays–Saturdays, 10 AM–3 PM
- Sundays, 12–3 PM

Please bring all donations by April 17 so we can prepare the raffle and auction displays in time for Trivia Night.

Your generosity helps keep history lively — and caffeinated!



In April, as gardens begin to stir and the museum hearth glows with spring demonstrations, we're spotlighting a bright, humble dish from one of the most influential cookbooks in U.S. history: *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons, first published in 1796. Recognized as the earliest known cookbook written by an American author, Simmons's work helped shape a distinctly American culinary identity by adapting English traditions to ingredients readily available in the new United States.

The Original Recipe

Among the pages of *American Cookery* appears a simple yet elegant entry titled "Carrot Pudding." Simmons wrote:

Carrot Pudding.

A coffee cup full of boiled and strained carrots, 5 eggs, sugar and butter of each 2 oz. cinnamon and rose water to

From the Hearth: Carrot Pudding in American Cookery (1796)

your taste, baked in a deep dish without paste, 1 hour.

This brief instruction is typical of late-18th-century recipe writing. Cooks were expected to rely on experience rather than precise measurements, using household objects like coffee cups and trusting their judgment for texture and doneness. The result would have been a smooth, custard-style pudding—lightly sweet, gently spiced, and baked until just set.

Why Carrot Pudding for Spring

Carrots stored beautifully through the winter, making them one of the few vegetables still available in early spring. Their natural sweetness also made them a practical stand-in for sugar.

What This Recipe Reveals About Early American Cooking

This single recipe opens a window into several aspects of early American foodways:

- Resourcefulness

Carrots, pumpkins, and squash were economical, reliable ingredients that bridged the gap between winter and spring.

- A Transitional Cuisine

The dish blends English pudding traditions with American-grown produce,

reflecting a nation beginning to define its own culinary voice.

- Flavor Preferences of the Era
Rose water, now uncommon in American kitchens, was a standard aromatic in 18th-century desserts.

- Technique Over Precision

Instructions like "bake in a deep dish" assume the cook already knows what that means in their own kitchen—how deep, how hot, and how long.

Bringing It Into the Museum

For interpreters and educators, Carrot Pudding is a wonderful teaching tool. It invites conversations about:

- seasonal food availability
- the evolution of American desserts

- the shift from English to American culinary identity

It also reminds us that historic recipes—even short ones—often require skill, intuition, and a practiced hand.



News & Needs

Needs...

- We are looking for a few items to help set the scene for our upcoming Trivia Night. If you have any of the following you'd be willing to lend us, please let us know:

Wooden free-standing coat rack

Man's fedora or Sherlock Holmes-style hat

1940s-style typewriter or telephone

CLUE game weapons

Donations of coffee, coffee related items and lottery tickets for the raffle at Trivia Night.

Silent Auction items for Trivia Night

- We're currently seeking volunteers to help during weekend hours and assist with group

tours. If you've been thinking about getting involved, now is a wonderful time to join us.

- If you have any Volunteer Training binders, house clothing, or sewing patterns checked out, please bring them back at your earliest convenience. These materials are essential for training our newest team members and keeping our programs running smoothly.

Wanted...

- **Fall 2026 & Spring 2027 Internship Available!**

Make history come alive at the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House! We have three internships available:

1. Videographer – Film stories & events
2. Social Media – Share history with style
3. Admin – Learn museum & nonprofit ops

Apply now: <https://stephensonhouse.org/internships-%26-volunteers-1>

Upcoming Events, Tours & Activities

- April 5, **Museum Closed for Easter**
- April 11, **Trivia Planning Committee Meeting**, 3 pm, at the House with a Zoom option
- April 12, **Jewels Ball Committee Meeting**, 3 pm, at the House with a Zoom option
- April 16, **School Tour**, 9:30-11:30 am, 25+/- 4th graders
- April 17, **School Tour**, 9:30-11:30 am, 25+/- 4th graders
- April 18, **'FAN'tastic: Crafting the Historic Fan**, 9:30 am-2 pm
- April 25, **Trivia Through the Decades**, 7 pm
- April 25 & 26, **Museum closed** during the day due to offsite fundraiser
- April 30, **School Tour**, 9:30-11:30 am, 25+/- 5th graders



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

			1	2	3	4
5 MUSEUM CLOSED EASTER	6	7	8	9	10	11 Trivia Planning Committee Meeting 3 pm
12 Jewels Ball Committee Meeting 3 pm	13	14	15	16 School Tour 9:30 am	17 School Tour 9:30 am	18 'Fan'tastic Workshop 9:30 am
19	20	21	22	23	24	25 TRIVIA NIGHT 7PM
26 MUSEUM CLOSED	27	28	29	30 School Tour 9:30 am		

Be Our Friend...

*Renew your membership or become a new Friend.
Fill out and mail the following information to us.*

YES! I want to help. Enclosed is my contribution:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State & ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____ Membership Level: _____

Please send me information about volunteering at Stephenson House.

Checks should be made payable to the:

Friends of the Col. Benjamin Stephenson House

Payments may also be made in our online store:

www.stephensonhouse.org

**Memberships are from January to December.* Benefits of membership are extended to an individual and his/her immediate family. We accept cash, check or credit card donations. Memberships are extended for monetary donations only. The Friends of Col. Benjamin Stephenson House is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization FIN 37-1395804



Send your membership to the

**Friends of the Col. Benjamin
Stephenson House**

P.O. Box 754

Edwardsville, IL 62025



Membership Levels

Friend of Ben & Lucy

\$30

Stephenson Family Friend

\$60

Landmark Friend

\$125

Heritage Friend

\$275

Living History Friend

\$600

Founding Friend

\$1,000 or more

Our Board of Directors & Staff

Peggy Emling, *Co- President*

RoxAnn Raisner, *Site Director*

Stacey Lipe, *Co-President*

Phil Stack, *Bookkeeper*

Rachel Hill, *Treasurer*

Leslie Wood, *Secretary*

Elizabeth Edwards

Sean Goding

Andrea Miracle

Robert 'Buddy' Paulett

Jaclyn Wallace

Leslie Wood



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618-692-1818