



AUGUST 2025

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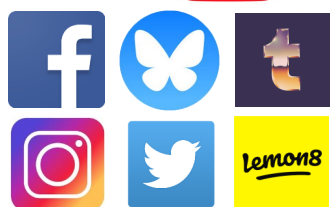
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A Newsletter for the volunteers & friends of the Stephenson House



Timeless Walls: A Journey Through the Oldest Houses in Illinois

Illinois is known for its rich history—home to Abraham Lincoln, the rise of Chicago, and the beating heart of the Midwest. But beyond the famous landmarks and towering skylines lie quiet witnesses to centuries gone by: the oldest houses in Illinois.

These homes, built with hand-hewn beams and bricks fired in backyard kilns, have seen Native American trading routes evolve into highways and frontier towns grow into cities. Step inside and you'll find not just antique architecture, but real-life stories of pioneers, politicians, laborers, and families—each one leaving its mark.

Let's take a tour of some of the oldest and most fascinating houses in Illinois.

1. **Martin-Boismenu House** (c. 1790) – East Carondelet



This simple French Colonial home is

one of the oldest surviving buildings in the state. Built using vertical timber post-on-sill construction, it's a beautiful example of French settler architecture from the late 18th century.

Imagine living here before Illinois was even a state—where the Mississippi River was your main highway, and neighbors were a horseback ride away.

2. **Creole House** (c. 1800) – Prairie du Rocher



Tucked away in one of the oldest European settlements in the Mississippi Valley, the Creole House is a rare gem. Built in the French style with a wrap-around gallery and exposed beams, it transports visitors back to a time when Prairie du Rocher was a

(Houses Continued on page 2)

(Houses, Continued from page 1)

vibrant frontier outpost.

3. **Pierre Menard Home** (c. 1802) – Near Kaskaskia

This stately home belonged to Pierre Menard, the first lieutenant governor of Illinois. Blending French Colonial design with early American elegance, the home reflects both wealth and regional influence. From its wide porches to its elegant proportions, it tells the story of leadership during Illinois' earliest years of statehood.



4. **Log Cabin House** (1805) – Edwardsville

Built by Thomas Kirkpatrick, the first settler and justice of the peace in Madison County, this is be-

lieved to be the oldest standing structure in Edwardsville. Though modest, its presence reminds us that history isn't always grand—it's often built by quiet determination and brick-by-brick perseverance.

5. **Nicholas Jarrot Mansion** (1807–1810) – Cahokia

A bold statement in early American Federal architecture, this mansion was built by Nicholas Jarrot, a French-born fur trader and politician. While other homes clung to French colonial roots, this house reached forward—showing off the shift toward American style and sensibility in the new territory.



6. **James Lemen House** (c. 1810) – Near Waterloo

Believed to be the oldest brick house in Monroe County, this home belonged to a family deeply involved in religious reform and the fight against slavery. More than just bricks and mortar, it stands as a symbol of conscience and courage.



7. **Robinson-Stewart House** (1814) – Carmi

Serving as Carmi's oldest building, this Federal-style home once

housed political meetings, parties, and generations of stories. Its longevity speaks to the care and craftsmanship of its builders—ordinary people living extraordinary lives in a young America.

8. **Daniel Tolman House** (1819) – Edwardsville

Another early Edwardsville structure, the Tolman House is a rare survivor from Illinois' early settlement years. Built with local materials, it remains a quiet testament to the town's resilient beginnings.



9. **Col. Benjamin Stephenson House** (1820) – Edwardsville

One of the most beautifully restored Federal-style homes in the state, this brick house belonged to Colonel Benjamin Stephenson, an influential figure in Illinois politics. The house now serves as a muse-

(Houses, Continued on page 4)

From the Garden: Fig Tree

By Carol Gardner

Fig Tree (*Ficus carica*)

Our 'Chicago Hardy' fig tree is tucked into the corner of the vegetable garden.

Native to SW Asia and the Mediterranean region, figs have been cultivated since ancient times. In ancient Greece athletes used figs as training food. Winners were even crowned with fig leaf wreaths, the first Olympic medals. Today the fruit is grown and enjoyed across the globe.

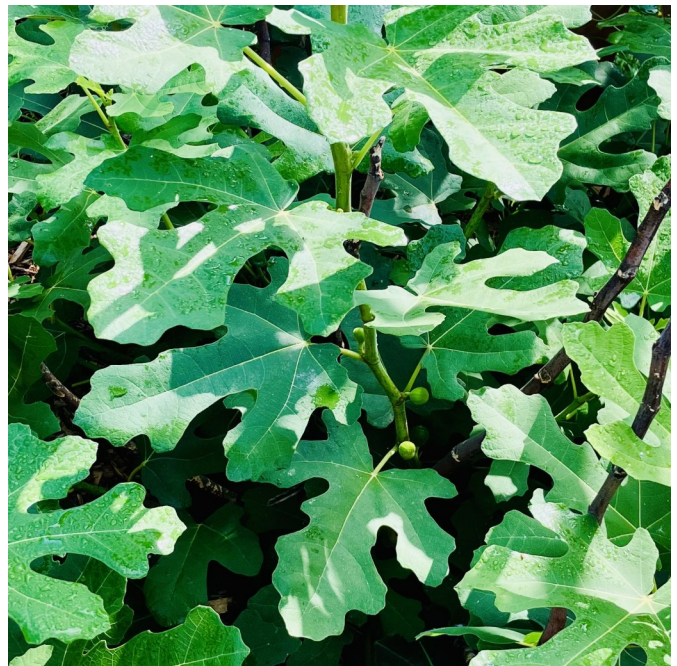
The fig tree is known for its large lobed leaves and sweet tear-shaped fruit which appear in late summer or fall. Crunchy edible seeds inside the fruit provide a unique texture. The fruit is a good source of fiber and other nutrients.

Throughout history figs have been used as sweeteners, eaten fresh, dried, and used to make jams and other desserts.

Thomas Jefferson had a particular passion for figs. He even brought cuttings of the 'Marseilles' fig from France to his home at Monticello.



Photos by Master Gardener, Michelle Collins



(Houses, Continued from page 2)

um and offers a powerful glimpse into both frontier life and early government.

Its walls hold more than just period furniture—they hold the echoes of debates, family dinners, laughter, and legacy.

10. **Black Homestead Farm** (1821) – Greene County

This early farmhouse is the oldest known home in Greene County and still stands on its original rural site. Far from the cities, it reflects the everyday heroism of farming families who weathered the seasons and shaped Illinois' agricultural foundation.



Why These Houses Matter

Each of these homes is more than wood and

brick—they're time capsules. They remind us that history is not just made by famous names, but by the quiet courage of settlers, builders, mothers, fathers, and workers who lived through change, hardship, and hope.

These buildings connect us to the past in the most human way possible: through homes. They're where children took their first steps, where meals were shared by candlelight, and where Illinois grew up, one family at a time.

Did You Know?

Illinois became a state in 1818, which means some of these homes were already standing when the first governor took office!

Whether you're a history lover, architecture buff, or just someone who loves a good story—these homes offer something special: a doorway into the soul of Illinois.

Join Us for Sid's Book Launch

Join us for a special evening celebrating the legacy of Sidney G. Denny and the posthumous publication of his book, *Colonel Benjamin Stephenson and the History of Early Illinois*.

The event will take place on Thursday, August 21 at 6:30 p.m. at the Edwardsville Public Library.

Come explore the fascinating history of one of Edwardsville's founding figures and honor the work of a dedicated historian whose passion lives on through the pages of this remarkable book.

COME & JOIN US FOR A

BOOK LAUNCH EVENT

● *Sid Denny*

For
His Posthumous
Released Title:

"
Colonel
Benjamin
Stephenson
and the
History of
Early Illinois "
"

Thursday, August 21, 6:30 p.m.
at The Edwardsville Public Library



Colonel Benjamin
Stephenson

and the History of Early Illinois

Sidney G. Denny

Co-hosted by The Benjamin Stephenson House and the Edwardsville Public Library

News & Needs

Thank You...

...*Diane Lasseigne* for generously providing a selection of hats and educational materials for our school tour program.

...*Peggy Emling* for kindly supplying snacks for the students of Mrs. Lucy's Academy.

...*Pat Peverly* for donating both water and snacks to keep Mrs. Lucy's Academy participants refreshed.

...*dedicated instructors and volunteers* whose time and talents made Mrs. Lucy's Academy a success.

...*Jeanne Spencer* for the lovely transferware dishware now enhancing the house's historical displays.

...*Meg Solon* for adding a reproduction dress, cap, stockings, and neckerchief to our volunteer wardrobe collection.

...*Jamie Wilger* for skillfully crafting three day caps and a neckerchief for our interpreters to wear.

Needs...

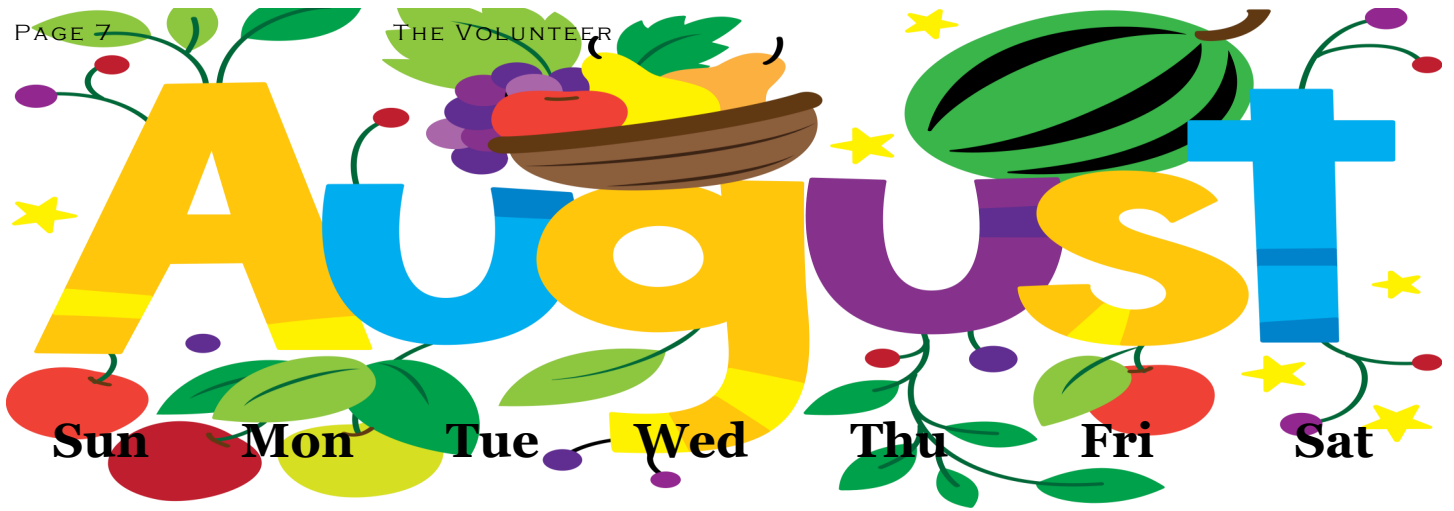
- Volunteers to help at the museum giving tours, covering the gift shop, and cleaning.
- Someone to split firewood.
- Do you need service hours? We can help! There are a variety of jobs and projects we'd love to have help with.
- Please return Volunteer Training binders, if you have one.

Wanted...

- **Summer/Fall/Spring Internship Alert!**
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

Upcoming Events, Tours & Activities

- August 3, **An Afternoon of Court Whist**, 1-3. Join us for a genteel afternoon of Court Whist, a lively historic card game played with charm and strategy. Light refreshments included.
\$5 per person, Ages 18+, Space limited to 16
Reserve online; receipt serves as your ticket.
- August 21, **Book Launch: *Colonel Benjamin Stephenson and the History of Early Illinois***, 6:30 pm, Edwardsville Public Library, Free to the public.



					1	2
3 An Afternoon of Court Whist 1-3 pm	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 Book Launch 6:30 pm	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

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
\$25

Stephenson Family Friend
\$50

Landmark Friend
\$100

Heritage Friend
\$250

Living History Friend
\$500

Founding Friend
\$1,000 or more

**Corporate membership information
available upon request.**

Our Board of Directors & Staff

Muriel Jones, *President*

RoxAnn Raisner, *Site Director*

Peggy Emling, *Vice President*

Phil Stack, *Bookkeeper*

Rachel Hill, *Treasurer*

Stacey Lipe *Secretary*

Sean Goding

Andrea Miracle

Kathleen Schmidt

Jason Stacey

Jaclyn Wallace

Leslie Wood



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