



NOVEMBER 2024

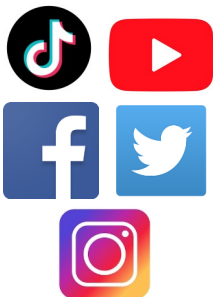
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Follow us!



The Christmas Candlelight Tours

Step back in time at the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House as we usher in the holiday season during the annual Christmas Candlelight Tours on November 30 from 5-8 pm. The historic home will be aglow in candlelight and bedecked in early 19th-century decorations, immersing visitors in a truly interactive historical experience.



A variety of activities are planned to showcase the stories of those who lived at Stephenson House in the early 1820s. Guests enjoy a leisurely visit through traditionally decorated rooms as historical interpreters discuss the history of the house and the Christmas customs of the past. Get a taste of homemade gingerbread made from an 1803 recipe baked in the kitchen hearth, learn a simple country dance in the dining room, sing carols around the parlor's 1820 pianoforte, as well as enjoy vignettes in the servant's quarters, master bedroom, and children's bedroom.

Tickets must be purchased online (www.stephensonhouse.org) in advance for a specific time. The first tour starts at 5:00 p.m. with the last tour at 7:40 p.m. Cost per person is \$15. Visitors

need to arrive 10 minutes before the start of their specific tour time to check in at the gift shop. Tours begin promptly in the courtyard every 20 minutes with an introduction by a costumed docent, after which visitors may tour at their leisure. Please note, there are no hard-copy tickets for this event. The online receipt you receive when purchasing tickets from our website is your ticket and will need to be presented in the gift shop upon arrival at the event.

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday and event preparations, Stephenson House will not be open during the day from November 28-December 1.



Join Us for a Shape Note Sing

Stephenson House will host the St. Louis Shape Note Singers for a sing at the museum on Saturday, November 23 from 1-3 pm. Shape note singing is a form of acapella singing popular in this region in the 1820s. The tunes are religious in nature, in four-part harmony. The music to be used comes from *The Missouri Harmony* book originally published in St. Louis in 1820, the same year construction on Stephenson House began.

The sing is free and open to the public but space is limited to 15 guests so reservations are required. While observers are welcome, this is not a performance but a participation event. Music books (loaners) will be available for those wanting to join the sing.

To RSVP visit <https://stephensonhouse.org/online-store/ols/products/an-afternoon-of-shape-note-singing>

NOTE: There are no hard-copy tickets for this event. The online receipt from our website is your ticket and will need to be presented in the gift shop upon arrival at the event. Please get in touch with the site if you are unable to attend after reserving seats so your tickets may be offered to someone else.



Want to support Stephenson House when you shop online?

PayPal Giving Fund

Set us as your favorite charity, then click to donate \$1 each time you check out with @PayPal. It's easy:
paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1651866

IT'S AN EASY WAY TO LEND YOUR SUPPORT!



From the Garden: Saving Seeds



by Debbie Rathert,
Master Gardener / Master Naturalist

With cooler weather upon us, it's time to start collecting and harvesting seeds. This is a fun way to save money and ensure that you have plenty of plants for next spring. I'm most familiar with collecting seeds from flowers and some vegetables. There are a few general things to remember when collecting seeds:

1. Ensure that the seed pods are ripe and ready to harvest, usually turning from green to brown/black. This means that there is little moisture left in the seeds, and the seeds will be viable, ready to germinate. Moisture is an enemy to seeds, so be sure they are dry and kept dry after harvesting. Harvest on a dry day.
2. You can harvest the seeds from flowers by opening the pod and collecting the seeds on the spot or by cutting the dried stems, placing them in a paper bag, and processing at a later time. The paper bags should be kept dry.
3. Allow the seeds to dry for several days before storing them. If any moisture remains, the seeds may become moldy and not germinate.
4. Seeds are best stored in a cool, dry place in airtight containers. Ziplock bags can also be used if kept tightly sealed. Avoid extreme temperatures.

The ideal temperature for seed storage is between 32° and 41°F, so a refrigerator makes a convenient storage place.

5. There are as many ways to collect seeds as there are plants. Some of the seeds that are collected at the Benjamin Stephenson House are listed here.
 - a. Flowers, like **zinnias, marigolds, and cosmos** are very easy and readily available for seed collection. Simply press the dried flower back and forth between your fingers and the seeds will easily release. Zinnia seeds are pointy and resemble arrowheads. Marigold and cosmos seeds are thin and long.
 - b. **Salvia** seeds are held deep within the spent flower petal. If you harvest too soon, the seeds will still be white. If you wait too long, the seeds will fall out of the spent petals to the ground. You may need to check at different times to find the dark, almost black seeds that almost resemble mouse droppings!
 - c. **Hyacinth bean** seeds are large seeds contained in pods. Hyacinth bean is a legume, so the pods are just like a vegetable bean pod. The seeds themselves resemble little Oreo cookies! These seeds should be harvested once the purple pods start to turn brown and leathery.
 - d. **Tobacco** seeds are so tiny, that one little seed capsule can contain 100s of seeds. Just open the brown, spent flower seed pod and collect the dust-sized brown seeds. Tobacco seeds can drop to the ground and self-seed, so you may see volunteers in the spring without any help from you!
 - e. **Milkweed** seeds are usually attached to feathery, white down. This down helps distribute the seeds in the wind. To collect milkweed seeds, wait for the rather large pods to start to split, or test the pods by pressing on the 'seam' of the pod. If it readily opens, it's time to harvest. You will want to dry the seeds

(Continued on page 5)

Greetings from the President

Good Day and Happy Autumnal Equinox!

Forgive my absence for the last two New Moons. As young people say, Life has been Lífing. I hope everyone is enjoying the leaves changing and the cool evening breezes. You all know ... The Stephenson House has had a lot of wonderful happenings and events.



We have a beautiful new Garden Fence (to the dismay of our deer and other woodland animals), The Sid Denny Memorial Antique Auction was a success, Our Paranormal Ghost Hunts have started off with a bang, and our Annual Mourning Col. Stephenson Exhibit and other Mourning Events have been a blast. As we go through our fall season and winter season don't let that deter you from participating and volunteering. Benjamin, Lucy, and their whole household never stopped during the cooler months and neither do we. So, stay connected for even more.

We have one more Guided Paranormal Ghost Hunt on November 9th. It is sold out so as soon as you see another one pop up get your ticket ASAP! We have a lot of activity here but trust me, they are all nice and well-adjusted ghosts.

On November 30th we have our Annual Christmas Candlelight Tour. This is one of my favorite events and it is a great way to have folks submerge themselves into The House (and the 1820's) in one evening. Tell all your friends and if you are not working that night, get your tickets! And also, make sure you have a wonderful and fun time with your family this month!

This is Truly Yours,

Lady Blue



Sewing Saturday

Come sew with us November 16.

The house's interpretive wardrobe is in need of a few new day caps and large neckerchiefs. We need your help sewing them. Join us for a relaxing day of sewing on Saturday, November 16 at 11 am. We'll provide the setting, fabric, patterns, & pizza, you bring a sewing kit (or use what we have). Please let the director know if you plan to help.

(From the Garden, Continued from page 3)

before storing them. Just make sure they are in some kind of breathable container, so they don't blow away. Milkweed seeds need a cold stratification, as do many of our native plants. (See below.)

- f. **Sunflower** seeds are probably the most familiar seed to many. The flower head should be brown on the back and seeds should be loose. To harvest them, simply run your finger across the big flower seed head and collect the seeds. Some of the seeds may seem very thin and probably won't germinate so when planting, use the fattest seeds. You'd better hurry to collect these seeds as the birds are serious competitors!

6. Cold stratification is a process meant to mimic mother nature. As seeds drop to the ground, some plants, (like most natives), need to go through a cold period (i.e. winter) to germinate. This natural cold period of freeze-thaw cycles slowly softens the seed coat so that the seed can germinate in the spring. We can mimic this process by placing the seeds in the refrigerator for a period of time. The

time frame varies by plant and can range from one to four months. Check out this article (<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/good-growing/2022-01-27-seed-stratification-what-seeds-require-cold-treatment>) to find out more about cold stratification.

7. Make sure to label your collected seeds with the name of the plant, the date collected, and where you collected the seeds.

8. Collected seeds, if stored properly, can last for years. And even those purchased seed packets with expiration dates don't magically expire on the date stamped on the package. You may just need to plant more seeds than usual to get enough seeds to germinate if they are a little older. Some seeds are known to have lasted for 100 years. Perform a simple germination test (<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/ilriverhort/2017-02-03-test-seed-viability>) to know if your seeds are viable.

So, get out there in this nice weather and collect some seeds! It's fun, it's thrifty, and it's a good excuse to be outdoors.

From the Hearth: Roast Turkey & Pumpkin Pudding



We love experimenting with recipes from historical cookbooks, especially those available during the Stephenson family's occupation of the house. They give us a hands-on perspective of how our ancestors used various kitchen tools to prepare meals in an open hearth. One of our favorite items in our 1820 kitchen is the reflector oven. It cooks meat to perfection without drying it out and does a fine job baking in most cases. The following recipes come from "The Virginia Housewife Or, Methodical Cook" written by Mary Randolph in 1824. It was so successful that it was republished nineteen times before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. These are easy recipes to recreate in a modern kitchen and perfect for Thanksgiving. You never know, they could be part of a new family tradition. If you do try them, let us know how it goes.

If you'd like to check out some of our experiments in the 1820 kitchen, visit our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/1820ColBenjaminStephensonHouse>) playlist, "From the Hearth."

TO ROAST A TURKEY.

Make the forcemeat thus: take the crumb of a loaf of bread, a quarter of a pound of beef suet shred fine, a

little sausage meat or veal scraped and pounded very fine, nutmeg, pepper, and salt to your taste; mix it lightly with three eggs, stuff the craw with it, spit it, and lay it down a good distance from the fire, which should be clear and brisk; dust and baste it several times with cold lard; it makes the froth stronger than basting it with the hot out of the dripping pan, and makes the turkey rise better; when it is enough, froth it up as before, dish it, and pour on the same gravy as for the boiled turkey, or bread sauce; garnish with lemon and pickles, and serve it up; if it be of a middle size, it will require one hour and a quarter to roast.

PUMPKIN PUDDING.

Stew a fine sweet pumpkin till soft and dry; rub it through a sieve, mix with the pulp six eggs quite light, a quarter of a pound of butter, half a pint of new milk, some pounded ginger and nutmeg, a wine glass of brandy, and sugar to your taste. Should it be too liquid, stew it a little drier, put a paste round the edges, and in the bottom of a shallow dish or plate-pour in the mixture, cut some thin bits of paste, twist them, and lay them across the top, and bake it nicely.

***Modern adaptation available at*

<https://virginiahousewifeproject.wordpress.com/2020/11/25/pumpkin-pudding/>

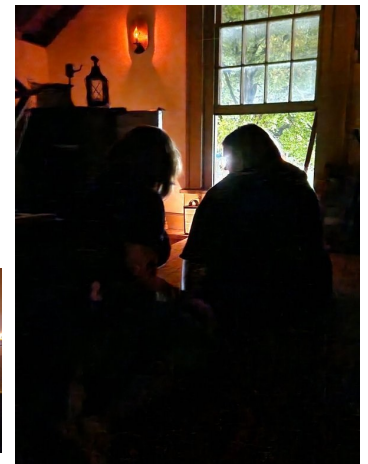


Photo courtesy of "The Virginia House-wife Project"

October Happenings



It's was a busy month! There was so much going on in October including mourning tours, Living History Days, hands-on history activities in the kitchen, a field trip of 100 1st graders from Carlinville Primary School and the paranormal ghost hunt on the 12th. We hope you had the chance to stop by for a visit.



Upcoming Events, Tours & Activities

- November 6, Master Gardener Luncheon, 11:00 am
- November 9, Guided Paranormal Ghost Hunt (**SOLD OUT**), 6 pm-12 am
- November 10, House Closed
- November 16, Sewing Saturday, 11 am, Volunteer help needed!
- November 21 & 22, Decorating the House for the Christmas Candlelight Tours, 10 am– 3 pm. Volunteers needed!
- November 23, St. Louis Shape Note Singers, 1-3 pm
- November 28-December 1, House Closed
- November 30, Christmas Candlelight Tours, 5-8 pm

News & Needs

Needs...

- 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.
- Aprons and day caps for the interpretive wardrobe
- volunteers to help with house tours, gift shop, garden & grounds, grant writing & research, special event, as well as seamstresses to sew clothing for the volunteer wardrobe





Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

					1	2
					RoxAnn's Vacation	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
RoxAnn's Vacation			Master Gardener Luncheon 11:00 am			Paranormal Ghost Hunt 6 pm-12 am
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
House Closed						 Sewing Saturday 11 am
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
				Decorating for Christmas Candlelight	Decorating for Christmas Candlelight	St. Louis Shape Note Singers 1-3 pm
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
				Thanksgiving 	House Closed	Christmas Candlelight Tours 5-8 pm House Closed

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*

Doug Piper, *Treasurer*

Rachel Harris, *Secretary*

Paul Brazier

Elizabeth Edwards

Sean Goding

Rachel Hill

Stacey Lipe

Andrea Miracle

Kathleen Schmidt

Jason Stacey

Jaelyn Wallace

Leslie Wood



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