

More than Books

Lecture Series hops, skips, and jumps over America's past

Dr. Ed Finch isn't kidding when he wrote, in a recent press release, that this year's American History Lecture Series covers a diverse range of topics from America's past. The series kicks off next Tuesday, January 17, with a talk about race relations in early Illinois history circa 1870 to 1920. The lecturer is Mike Banghart, a Social Studies teacher at Freeport High School. Mr. Banghart will be introduced by Jim Winker, himself a frequent lecturer as well as co-founder of the series. If Jim vouches for Mike, that's good enough for me, and I am looking forward to his opening presentation.

On Monday, January 23, Eric Welch plans to examine how the United States Constitution's Second Amendment – the right to bear arms – has been interpreted over the past two hundred years. I met Eric when he was the highly-regarded director of the Highland Community College Library, and I'll bet many of Eric's former Highland colleagues will turn out for this lecture.

On Tuesday, January 31, Freeport fans of Ed Finch will have the opportunity to hear "The Civil War at Sea," a program in honor of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. Ed has given this talk across Illinois. He is scheduled to present it in April at the Great Lakes Naval Museum, which sounds like a really interesting place. I plan, during the Q & A segment of the program, to ask Ed to say a word or two about the museum.

The series continues on Wednesday, February 8, with Dr. Andy Dvorak discussing the changing role of collective bargaining since the passage of the Wagner Act of 1935. I surreptitiously googled the Wagner Act a.k.a. the National Labor Relations Act or NLRA, so that, now, I know just enough about it to be dangerous in the audience.

Andy is followed by another of his Highland Community College colleagues, Jim Phillips. On Thursday, February 16, Jim is tackling a history of Mormons in Illinois. Both Jim and Andy are Series regulars who enjoy an enthusiastic following.

Speaking of an enthusiastic following, you can't do better than to have George Buss on the program. George, who is nationally known as a Lincoln presenter, will speak on Thursday, February 23, about the famous nineteenth century sculptor Leonard Wells Volk. Volk was a cousin of Stephen A. Douglas and is recognized for his two life masks of Abraham Lincoln.

The series goes out on a high note with another favorite and fabulous lecturer, Dr. Martin Quirk. Dr. Quirk, who chairs the History Department of Rock Valley College, is wrapping this year's series up with a Tuesday, February 28, presentation about American relations with countries in Africa stretching from 1800 to 1945.

Did Ed tell the truth when he described this year's series as diverse or what?

Sponsored by the Freeport Public Library Foundation and the Stephenson County Museum, the lectures begin at 7 p.m. They are free of charge, and the cookies come with a money back guarantee.