



The Society Story

Newsletter of the LaSalle County Historical Society

February 2011

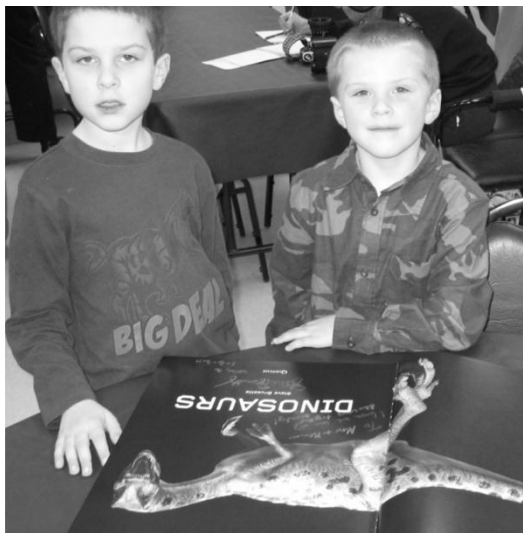


815-667-4861

Tyrannosaur Evolution Presented by Steve Brusatte

About 75 interested people of all ages attended the presentation given by Steve Brusatte on Thursday, January 6th. Brusatte is a former Ottawa resident who is currently a PhD candidate at Columbia University and the American Museum of Natural History in New York. He has written four books and over 30 papers on dinosaurs.

Brusatte stated that in the past twenty years a wealth of new information has become known about dinosaurs. Twenty years ago there were only five species of Tyrannosaur known; now there are twenty. In the past year 65 new dinosaur species were found. This is because more people are looking, and in more places. China was once mostly unavailable to researchers but has recently allowed more scientists into the country. Dinosaurs are found on every continent, including Antarctica.



Ben and Alex Johll of Spring Valley examine one of Brusatte's books at the LCHS dinosaur talk.

Living close relatives of dinosaurs are crocodiles and birds. Most Tyrannosaurs

probably had feathers of some kind, which were used for insulation. In Northeastern China a volcanic eruption quickly preserved a dinosaur's remains. Recent finds there show feathers on the fossilized remains.

No tyrannosaurs have been found that were over 30 years old. Scientists can date the bones by growth rings, like trees. Teenage T's had huge growth spurts between twelve and sixteen years of age. Growth then slowed during maturity.

Tyrannosaurs had huge teeth that could bite through bone, something few animals today can do. Experiments show that they probably could bite three times harder than any animal now living. Paleontologists today are working with other areas of science and using CT scans and engineering programs to gauge how fast and strong dinosaurs were.

Even though Tyrannosaurs are found on every continent, Tyrannosaurus Rex is found only in North America and Asia.

Tyrannosaur ancestors lived 165 million years ago, and were much smaller. 85 million years ago when other big dinosaurs went extinct, T Rex blossomed into giants. They were only seen during the last 20 million years of the dinosaur age. 65 million years ago T Rex became extinct.

Two of the best specimens of T Rex are within a short drive of LaSalle County, "Sue" at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, and "Jane" at the Burpee Museum of Natural History in Rockford.

Presidential Documents Displayed

In celebration of Presidents Day 2011 and the centennial of President Reagan's birth, the Illinois State Historical Society and the Ronald Reagan Museum at Eureka College will exhibit the Society's collection of presidential documents known as "The Block Documents" beginning February 1.

The exhibit, titled "Your Obedient Servants: The Joseph and Lucille Block Collection of Presidential Documents," will be on display in the Ronald Reagan Museum at Eureka College from January 15 through February 28. Eureka College is the alma mater of President Reagan, who graduated in 1932. Admission to the museum is free.

The collection includes handwritten notes and letters from several U.S Presidents, including Andrew Jackson, James Madison, John Tyler, James Buchanan, Benjamin Harrison, James Monroe, Abraham Lincoln, and several others. The signed Lincoln documents include a stay of execution, notes to Union Generals Grant and Meade, miscellaneous correspondence, and a pre-presidential response to a request for an autograph. The collection also includes several Currier and Ives lithographs pertaining to the contentious 1860 presidential election, where Lincoln the "Rail-splitter" was aligned to the abolition cause, which fueled the South to secession.

Hours for the exhibit are weekdays 8:00 am until 9:00 pm, and Saturday 10:00 am until 6:00 pm.

Road work brings changes to Burgoo Festival

The realignment of Route 178 through Utica will bring some changes to the Burgoo Festival in October. At a meeting with the LCHS Board of Directors on Thursday,

January 20, Herb Jung, IDOT Construction Engineer for the Utica Realignment Project, gave details on when and how the Museum and the festival would be affected. The major change will be the loss of Mill Street, Utica's main business district, for the event. Vehicle traffic will be routed along the street instead of bypassing the downtown area, as in the past. This means a number of our vendors will have to be moved, as well as changing where village merchants will display their wares.

Traffic patterns and parking were discussed, with some ideas to alleviate the congestion at Interstate 80 and Route 178. Overpass work on the interchange will narrow the road there to two lanes, so alternate routes and parking options are being evaluated.

The Museum Board plans to work closely with IDOT and the Village of North Utica to make sure the event goes as smoothly as possible.

IDOT plans another informational meeting with Village officials, businesses, and other interested members of the community on February 3, at 6:00 p.m. at the Village Hall on South Clark, in Utica.



LCHS Board members Arnie Bandstra, Stan Dziedzic, Mary Whipple and OJ Stoutner look over the IDOT realignment maps.

School Program Set for Spring

The Aitken School Program has been set for April 18 through May 20, 2011.

Fourth Grade classes and their escorts are invited to enjoy a day exploring times past at the Museum Complex in Utica. A full-day visit will include a session in the Aitken One-room School, with lessons as experienced about 1900; a scavenger hunt in the museum; a visit to the Barn; a demonstration in the Blacksmith Shop; and demonstrators of old time crafts such as weaving, quilting or basket making.

Volunteers are always welcome for this fun-filled experience. Docents, guides and demonstrators are needed. Please call the Museum at 667-4861 to join in the fun.

Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War

February 4, 1861

Several southern states convene in Montgomery, Alabama to form the Confederate States of America. The Electoral College electors meet and officially elect Abraham Lincoln president.

February 8, 1861

Confederate States of America adopt a constitution.

February 9, 1861

Jefferson Davis elected president of CSA, notified February 10. Davis had hoped for a military appointment. He was a West Point graduate and served in the Mexican War plus as Secretary of War.

February 11, 1861

Abraham Lincoln says farewell to the people of Springfield and departs to Washington.

Lincoln exhibit in Ottawa

Abraham Lincoln is coming to the Ottawa Scouting Museum at 1100 Canal Street in Ottawa, Illinois.

A world-class traveling exhibit featuring reproduction artifacts from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois will be on display at the museum from February 5 - April 11, 2011.

Titled "Abraham Lincoln: Self-Made in America," the exhibit was created by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of America's greatest president.

The exhibit covers Lincoln's childhood, his self-education, his careers as a surveyor and lawyer, his family life, the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, the 1860 Presidential election, the Civil War, the 13th Amendment, the Emancipation Proclamation, his assassination, and other important periods and events in his life.

The exhibit will travel the nation through December 2012. Mollie Perrot, Executive Director of the Ottawa Scouting Museum, stated "The Ottawa Scouting Museum is the first stop on this historic tour. We feel that is appropriate, considering Ottawa was the site of the first Lincoln-Douglas debates in 1858."

Contact Mollie Perrot at 815/326-2864 or the Ottawa Scouting Museum at 815-431-9353 for hours and details.



Docents Needed

Volunteers are needed for staffing the Museum on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, noon to 4:00 pm. This is a fun opportunity to serve the Historical Society and often meet some interesting people as they learn about our history. Please call the Museum at 815-667-4861 if you can help.

The volunteers will greet visitors and welcome them to the Museum, offer tourism materials and give directions to area points of interest. A willingness to help is the only requirement.

Calendar of Events - 2011

February 16, Civil War Round Table -Ottawa High Cafeteria - Drew Jessen - Civil War Flags

January 15 - February 28 - Presidential Documents exhibit at Eureka College

February 5 - April 11 - "Abe Lincoln, Self Made in America," Ottawa Scouting Museum

October 9, 2011 - 42nd Annual Burgoo Festival

Watch our newsletter, our website www.LasalleCountyMuseum.org or find us on Facebook for information on programs and events for the coming year.

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McPherson tombstone story finished

The December 2010 issue of *The Society Story* carries an article about the mysterious tombstone in the Museum's back yard.

It shed some light on the provenance of the stone, the history of the main players in the mystery, and highlighted a couple of anomalies.

Due to a technical glitch, one piece of the story was omitted.

The last piece of the puzzle remains a tantalizing question.

Did Mrs. McCollem, who donated the stone (which she found in the backyard of a house she purchased), know whether Harvey was buried in the home's backyard, under the tombstone? Where is Harvey buried?

Many thanks to Jim Collins of the LaSalle County Genealogy Guild in Ottawa for contributing archival information for this article.