



STEPHENSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY LECTURES

March 27 and April 10



Wednesday, March 27, 2019

6:30PM

Presenter: Sharon Welton, Executive Director of Stephenson County Historical Society

“Looking Back at the Streets of Freeport: 1900-1980”

In 2017, the Stephenson County Historical Society and the Freeport Public Library received a grant from the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, for funding to digitize about 1500 35mm slides which were stored in the library's local history room. Since the equipment needed to view 35 mm slides has become obsolete, the project objective was to digitize the slides in order for people to continue to use and enjoy the images. The grant was funded, and the work began. We divided the slides into two groups. The first contains copies of images of Freeport starting around the turn of the century. The second group of images date to 1970-1980, and are attributed to, John Locascio, who was library director at the time. These slides take us down each street of Freeport's business district, creating a very complete record of Freeport during those years.

In this program we will present a slideshow of the most interesting images contained in the collection. We will compare the city views from 1900 through 1980. Comments are welcome and memories can be shared!

The complete set of digitized slides will be available to view at the library's local history room, and at the Stephenson County Historical Society's resource library.



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“Songs of the Centuries by Charissa Taylor Bass”

Charissa Taylor Bass was the youngest child of Oscar and Malvina Taylor. She was born in 1863, during the height of the Civil War. She was educated at a female academy in Philadelphia, and finished her art education in Paris. She became interested in the ancient art of illumination, which is the rich decorating of text. She began to study and practice this art after returning home from school. Her husband, Frank Bass, complained that Charissa gave all of her art away, and that he would like her to make something for him. So, in 1892, she started a project that would take her the next 28 years to complete. She named her finished work “The Songs of the Centuries.” It is a large, beautiful, leather-bound volume containing over 70 beautifully illuminated poems that span twelve centuries.

In 2018, the Stephenson County Historical Society received a grant from the Freeport Community Foundation for the preservation and digitization of the book. Now, visitors to the museum can see the original book housed in its new custom made case, and can also see all the pages of the book as they scroll through on a digital frame mounted above the book.

At this presentation, we will reveal the beautiful artwork contained in this masterpiece, and tell the story behind the pages.