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# COOK-WITTER REPORT

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## Robert E. Cook, CAE

It is with great sorrow we announce the passing of Robert E. Cook, CAE. Bob was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, partner, mentor and friend. After almost 92 amazingly full and faithful years of life on earth, Bob entered into the eternal joy of his Master and Savior on Thursday, February 9, at 1:15 AM (MST), his physical body unable to recover from heart surgery.

Having grown up in Chicago and graduating from Wheaton College, Bob came to Springfield in 1949 and worked with the Taxpayer's Federation of Illinois until 1956 when he was asked to be the first Executive Director and first full-time staff member of

the Illinois Association of Real Estate Boards later to be known as the Illinois Association of Realtors. While with the Realtors, Bob orchestrated the planning and construction of the association's first office building, the Illinois Realtors Plaza (at Capitol City Shopping Center), started the Realtors' Political Action Committee (RPAC) and grew the staff to 26. He was the main spokesperson for real estate at the Illinois Capitol. He was the Speaker of the Illinois 3rd House (the lobbyist's organization) in 1973.

In 1984, Cook retired from the Illinois Association of Realtors and pursued his primary passion in association management -- lobbying the state legislature. In 1985, he co-founded the lobbying organization of Cook-Witter, Inc. which today represents over 15 statewide associations before the Illinois General Assembly. In 1995, Bob left

Springfield to be with the majority of his family in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Bob, a devout Christian, was very active in his church, Cherry Hills Baptist, as well as numerous faith based and missionary organizations here and abroad. He was one of the founding members of the Illi-



Left to right: Randy Witter, President and Co-founder of Cook-Witter, Inc.; Robert Cook, Co-founder; and Bruce Kinnett, Vice President.

nois Society of Association Executives and actively participated in the American Society of Association Executives where he earned the Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation and was awarded the Key Person Award. He also served on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce "Committee of 100".

Bob's faith was shared by his family. Jean, his wife of 67 years; Robin, his son and daughters Cindy, Terri and Judy (deceased).



# Illinois History's Best Friend

Not many people get their dream job, but Samuel Wheeler says he did last July. That's when Illinois Historic Preservation Agency trustees appointed him state historian, a position based at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield. "I'm the main cheerleader for Illinois history," Wheeler says.

Even though he's a Springfield native, Wheeler didn't know much about Abraham Lincoln until college. "The photographs of the aftermath of the (Civil War's) Battle of Antietam were the things that did it for me," he says. "I had never seen photographs like that and I was horrified by corpses, three to four days after a battle." He began studying the Civil War in classes and on his own. "Abraham Lincoln, this guy from my hometown, emerged to me as this critical figure of the Civil War."

Working at the Old State Capitol (OSC) in Springfield, where Lincoln worked as a lawyer, lawmaker, and president-elect, sparked his love for our state's history. "As an undergrad, I got to give summer tours at the OSC and Lincoln-Herndon law office. That was absolutely pivotal in my career. I probably wouldn't be sitting here if I hadn't had that experience. That led me to teaching (Illinois history), heavy research, and getting a ph.D."

With specialties in Illinois history and the life and times of Abraham Lincoln, Wheeler thinks his position as state historian is a great fit. "At the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, that is our mission," he says. His responsibilities include answering history questions for Illinois' 56 historic sites and directing research and collections at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM). There he oversees its extensive Lincoln collection, oral history department, acquisitions, and the Papers of Abraham Lincoln.



*Sam Wheeler, Illinois state historian. Photo courtesy of the ALPLM*

The latter is a project that began in 1985; its current goal is to archive every document Lincoln wrote or read. The Papers is a "very important project... We have not stopped making progress on that mission one day," Wheeler says. Part of his job is applying for federal grants to help finance the Papers. Those, private donations from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation, and money from IHPA and the University of Illinois Springfield comprise funding for the project, which is secure for this fiscal year, according to Wheeler. "The IHPA and ALPLM are committed to keeping that project funded and going."

The last couple years have been tumultuous for the ALPLM, a division of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. There were disagreements over authority. But Wheeler says it's a new day and he is committed to getting the ALPLM and IHPA past those troubles. "I applied (for the state historian position) because I saw us moving in



*This glove worn by Baseball Hall of Famer and favorite St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Stan Musial will be in the ALPLM's Cubs vs. Cardinals: The Rivalry exhibition. Photo by Milo Stewart, Jr./National Baseball Hall of Fame.*

## Illinois History's Best Friend

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a new direction and I was excited about it. I wanted to play a part in steering this organization in a positive direction,” Wheeler says.

To him, that means taking advantage of Illinois’ upcoming anniversary – its bicentennial in 2018. He wants to use the “enthusiasm and public awareness” of the event to promote the state’s past. “Illinois history is so complex,” Wheeler says. “It’s important history, and a microcosm of U.S. history...It’s not all rosy. We’ve had dark, dark moments. There are so many lessons in Illinois history: not giving up, triumphing over those things.”

To promote it, Wheeler implemented an ongoing program at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in January called the “Illinois History Forum.” It’s a series of free, public discussions held every other month by experts. While discussions about history books are planned for 2017, Wheeler says future ones will cover films and exhibitions, too.

An exhibition about the state’s historic sites is also planned at the ALPLM for the bicentennial year. “Our historic sites are woven together to tell that story of Illinois history,” Wheeler says. “We want to have a traveling component that comes out of that exhibit, which is ambitious. And that will be available for the sites.”

As state historian, he has a non-voting seat on the Illinois Bicentennial Commission, a group appointed by the governor to plan the event’s commemorations. Wheeler provides the Commission with historical information and suggestions for the bicentennial.

The IHPA and ALPLM may be in for a change. If Governor Bruce Rauner’s FY2018 budget is approved, the ALPLM, now under the umbrella of the IHPA, would become a standalone agency. The remainder of the IHPA would merge with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, which would oversee the state’s historic sites.



*These shoes, worn by former Chicago Cubs pitcher Greg Maddux when he won his 300th game in 2004, will be in the baseball exhibition, too. Photo by Milo Stewart, Jr./National Baseball Hall of Fame.*

## The ALPLM Plays Ball

Behind state historian Samuel Wheeler’s chair is a book shelf packed with tomes on baseball, its history, and – arguably, two of the state’s favorite teams. It’s all research for a new exhibition launching in March at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum about the 125-year rivalry between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Chicago Cubs. “It’s an Illinois story,” Wheeler says.

“We’ve worked with the National Baseball Hall of Fame (on it), we’re working with the Cards and Cubs, and we’ll have more than 100 original objects on display from the vaults of (those three groups) that have never been on display before,” he says. The exhibit walks visitors through a history of each franchise.

“This will feature more interactive elements than any ALPLM temporary exhibit,” according to Wheeler. “We want fans to be able to participate in the rivalry. We’ve worked with Sony Playstation to feature two gaming stations that will allow fans to play Home Run Derby as a Cardinal or a Cub via the immensely popular video game MLB: The Show 2017.”

Wheeler has been traveling to each team’s fan shows to promote the exhibition. This winter he attended the Cardinal Caravan and the Cubs convention in Chicago. “We had ten to fifteen thousand Cubs fans we hung out with all weekend promoting this exhibition. There was so much excitement,” he says.

The exhibition opens on March 24 and runs through the rest of the year.



## What Wheeler Wants You to Know about Illinois History

From teaching history to university students and talking about it as state historian, Wheeler has realized there are some things a lot of Illinoisans don't know about our history.

One is the important roles geography and the environment played in Illinois' development. "We're at the crossroads of the nation," he explains. "Illinois history is the story of a transportation hub and it did not begin with O'Hare (he laughs). The transportation hub has always been there because of our strategic location: the Great Lakes, the river system, the roads, the canals, the railroads, and air travel." Environmentally, our rich soil, resulting from glaciation, made us "so important in terms of agriculture."

A lot of people don't know about abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy, either. Lovejoy was a Presbyterian pastor who lived in Alton, a largely pro-slavery area, like most of southern Illinois. He printed anti-slavery materials. A pro-slavery mob destroyed his press and killed Lovejoy in 1837. "The Lovejoy story is a very important one to Illinois history," Wheeler says. "It meant a lot of Abraham Lincoln. He knew the horror of that Lovejoy incident. Lincoln's protest statement in the Illinois legislature over slavery is tied up with all of this. Lincoln's early reliance on the rule of law and the rejection of mob rule is wrapped up in Lovejoy, and certainly in Lincoln's political career he knew Owen Lovejoy, Elijah's brother."



## Illinois Bicentennial Commission

The Commission's first meeting was January 12 at the Old State Capitol in Springfield. So far, it has a grand gala planned for December 3, 2018 – the exact date of Illinois' two hundredth anniversary as a state. "The gala will feature Illinois leaders and celebrities in entertainment, music, comedy, politics," according to its website. For more information about the Commission and bicentennial events, visit: [www.illinois200.com](http://www.illinois200.com)

