



Edgar Lee Masters Museum

Preserving the memory of Edgar Lee Masters and his boyhood home in Petersburg
Friends Newsletter — Spring 2024



Party with the Poet Fundraiser

With heartfelt thanks to all who purchased tickets, donated and/or placed bids on auction items, along with our gracious hosts at Indian Creek Farmstead, our fundraiser brought in nearly \$5,000. Seventy-five attendees savored a delightful meal by Hamilton's Catering, accompanied by the exquisite desserts skillfully crafted by Red Barn Desserts. The proceeds will help to cover the cost of the next big ticket expense—a new roof.

Masters Back Porch Chautauqua

ELM Summer Lecture and Music Series

In its nearly 200-year history, Petersburg, Illinois has brushed shoulders with some of America's greatest personalities. Abraham Lincoln surveyed the town between 1835-1836, before moving to Springfield in 1837. At the turn of the 20th century, the town was the winter home to touring circus troops, who practiced their craft in the off seasons to the joy of locals. Buried on its outskirts are Ann Rutledge (Lincoln's love while residing in New Salem), B.F. Stephenson, founder of the Grand Army of the Republic, and Edgar Lee Masters, major 20th-century poet, who described Petersburg as his "heart's home."

Perhaps, most unique, was the Old Salem Chautauqua, which every year brought nationally and internationally renowned scientists, preachers, musicians, artists, historians, poets, statesmen and politicians to Petersburg. As local historian Raymond Montgomery details in *A Chautauqua to Remember: The Story of Old Salem*, thousands of Midwesterners flocked to Petersburg between 1898 and 1915 in the spirit of education, entertainment, and fellowship.

It is in that same spirit that the Edgar Lee Masters Museum and Home is hosting its first annual Masters' Back Porch Chautauqua series to be held on the 3rd Sunday of each month from May through September of 2024. The series will be held from 2-4 p.m. at 1st & 3rd Boutique and Wine Bar** located on the square at 105 S 7th St. Petersburg, IL. The ELM home will be open from 1:00 to 1:45 for tours. You can walk to the event from there.

Each month, the series will host an expert to discuss topics of local interest in literature, art, and history. A different local artist, writer, or musician will be featured each month as well for the general entertainment of the audience.

Please Note: all of the Masters on the Back Porch Chautauqua performances will take place on the 2nd floor of 1st & 3rd Boutique and Wine Bar, which does not have an elevator.



May 19th Chautauqua

Dr. **Ethan Stephenson**, an English professor at Richland Community College in Decatur and the visionary behind the Masters Back Porch Chautauqua summer series, will inaugurate the event with his captivating presentation titled "Homegoing" from Edgar Lee Masters's renowned work, *Spoon River Anthology*. Stephenson will delve into Masters's celebrated work, drawing parallels with Homer's *Odyssey*, as he intricately weaves the tales of his hometown through the lives of the characters laid to rest in the local cemetery.

J.D. Wilson, Springfield singer-songwriter and storyteller will perform original music and poetry about his life and travels. A transplant to Springfield from the Tar-heel state, Wilson is an introspective writer bringing a keen eye and wry sense of humor to the subjects he writes. His attention to detail and care for wordcraft is the hallmark of a master songwriter. Kicking off the series, Wilson embodies the spirit of the series as a multifaceted poet/songwriter who writes about the people and events of his community. [Sneak Preview of JD's music.](#)



Future Chautauqua Dates

- June 16 ~ Dr. Michael Wiant & Erin Connolly
- July 21 ~ Herbert K. Russell & Tom Irwin
- August 18 ~ Wild Columbine & Open Mic Poetry
- September 15 ~ Dr. Bailey Shaw & Whirled Peas

Friends of ELM

To ensure the sustainable care of the ELM home and continued support of Illinois arts and artisans, we encourage you to join or renew your Friends of Edgar Lee Masters Museum membership.

All donations, both in-kind and cash, to the Edgar Lee Masters Museum have contributed to routine expenses, such as covering utilities and insurance, as well as maintenance projects of the home. Past projects have included new siding, windows, exterior painting, a custom tool shed, antique bench repair, and most recently a new front porch.

This spring/summer we'll be continuing the landscape renovation started last year, with installation of some new native shrubbery and perennials. We're in the process of designing an outdoor interpretive sign that will be installed this summer. Indoors, we plan to install lighting in the display cabinets and give the exhibit labels a facelift. The significant upcoming project is a new roof for the house.

For your convenience--you can [join or renew online](#) from our secure website!!

Membership Levels

\$15 Writer
\$30 Editor
\$100 Nobel
\$ Other donation

By check:

Friends of Edgar Lee Masters Museum
PO Box 12
Petersburg, IL 62675

The Friends of Edgar Lee Masters Museum is a subcommittee of Edgar Lee Masters Museum, Inc. a 501c3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving the childhood home of Edgar Lee Masters while promoting Illinois history, poetry and the arts for present and future generations. All donations are tax deductible.

Museum is supported 100% by donations.

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