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## **IWU Professor to Help Bring Local Irish History to Bloomington**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. --April Schultz, Illinois Wesleyan University associate professor and chair of history and director of American Studies, will speak on the general history of emigration from Ireland in the nineteenth century at a history conference titled, "Erin's Daughters: Irish Servant Girls in Illinois," on Saturday, Oct. 27 at the McLean County Museum of History and the David Davis Mansion State Historic Site in Bloomington. Other speakers will address immigration to Illinois, Irish women servants in the United States, and the local history of Irish women servants in McLean County.

The Outreach Committee, composed of Schultz; historians from Illinois State University; Marcia Young, site manager of the David Davis Mansion; and Greg Koos of the McLean County Historical Society, organized the event. The purpose of the committee is to bring history -- especially local history -- to the larger public. This is the first big event planned by the committee.

"This committee is a great opportunity for historians at the two universities to work together with the public historians in our community," Schultz said. "Our history students have had very fruitful internships at both the David Davis Mansion and the Historical Society, so this is a terrific extension of our relationship with those institutions in an effort to bring the expertise of both academic and public historians to community-wide events."

The conference also will feature Maureen Murphy, a noted Irish-American scholar who has edited five books and published more than 50 articles on Irish studies. Irish America magazine has twice named her as one of the top 100 Irish-Americans.

The Department of History at Illinois State University, the David Davis Mansion, the McLean County Museum of History and the Department of History at Illinois Wesleyan University also will sponsor the program. It is funded through the Illinois Humanities Council, a state agency, and The National Endowment for the Humanities.

The daylong event will begin with a series of lectures and discussions at the museum and will conclude that afternoon with a program of interpretive theater at the mansion. Participants will discover the contributions to Illinois history of young Irish women who worked as servants in the homes of Bloomington and Normal's wealthy and emerging middle-class. These women, having left Ireland in the wake of the Famine (1845-1850), faced both poverty and discrimination once they arrived in the country, but through hard work and, for many, marriage, they were slowly able to secure for themselves and their children a better future. Many of their descendants continue to live in the area, although perhaps few are aware of the hard struggle that these women faced.

All conference activities are free, including admission to the conference, a catered lunch and the mansion theater program. A digital database of Irish settlers in McLean County (1860-1880) will

be provided to all registrants. Pre-registration is required for all conference activities and seating is limited to 100 participants.

For more information regarding registration, please contact Koos at 309/827-0428.