

# Oglesby Mansion News



GOVERNOR OGLESBY MANSION, INC.

SPRING 2026

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[www.OglesbyMansion.org](http://www.OglesbyMansion.org)

**Please visit us on  
Facebook or at our  
website.**

## Message from President Davis

Greetings from the Governor Oglesby Mansion & Museum. We here at the 'mansion' would like to thank all those who helped make 2025 a successful year.

We are in the final stretch of our winter 'shut down' which included some needed repairs by the Macon County Conservation District. Jerry Culp and his staff have done a great job of keeping the Oglesby Mansion well-maintained. It is one of central Illinois' most attractive and original nineteenth century homes.

Looking to the 2026 season, Vice-President and Mansion Historian, Bill Horton has been busy producing our most attended event: President Grant Visits Decatur. Bill and his re-enactors will educate groups of Macon County fifth graders on President Grant's visit. We always look forward to seeing the children's eyes light up as they enter the mansion and take in the history surrounding them.

Also this spring we will be continuing the Carolyn and Robert Ogan Speaking Series with a presentation by UIS professor Dr. Devin Hunt. Dr. Hunt will speak on the social and cultural effects of the Colombian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair-1893) on Chicago and the Midwest in general. Our connection to this event was the awarding of a blue ribbon to Mrs. Oglesby. A plaque commemorating the achievement hangs in the master bedroom.

In May the Oglesby Mansion once again will be participating in the History of the Heartland Showcase. This event is spearheaded by Ayn Owens and will include many historic and noteworthy sites in and around Macon County. Keep your eyes on our Facebook page and the Macon County Conservation District's website for updates on events and happenings. We look forward to seeing you often at our 2026 events

Sincerely,

--Dave Davis, President



## Governor Oglesby's Books

Richard James Oglesby (1824-1899) led a life in many ways similar to Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). Both were born in Kentucky and eventually came to central Illinois and were well known in Decatur. Both had a minimal formal education but became lawyers and politicians. They were each well-known and popular for their skills in giving speeches. These two men became friends and were greatly involved in the changes and progress that brought Illinois from the frontier, pioneer times to a powerful entity.

As a current member of the Board of Directors of the Oglesby Mansion, I am privileged to be able to visit the Mansion and wander among the artifacts and memories of Governor Oglesby. From the first time I have been enthralled by the library. The original part of the house built by Richard Oglesby and his second wife, Emma (Gillett) Keays Oglesby in 1874, this room has been maintained the most of any part of the house. The shutters were made by Monte Holl to replicate the original ones as seen in photographs of the time. The original woodwork and fireplace mantle were in good shape by the time renovations of the interior of the house were started in 1978. The parquet floor, composed of 3,000 pieces of geometrically cut wood, was repaired and restored. The wallpaper in the library was deteriorated and in many places the plaster was revealed. With some further investigation, it was decided that it was the original wallpaper and should be preserved. It wasn't until 1998 that Ed Walker, an instructor at Millikin University, was able to restore and repair the wallpaper, so that no damage can be seen, giving us a glimpse of what the Oglesbys also saw. The glass doors on the bookcases were installed in recent times to protect the books, but there is evidence that it was intended to have similar doors, but that it was never completed when the home was built.

Now I'd like to turn our attention to the focus of the library – the books. All the books came from Oglehurst (the last home of the Governor) and were a part of the Oglesby Library. According to a survey completed in 2006 (over 20 years ago) by Stacy Poland, Tami Arntzen, and Brent Wielt, the inventory of books in the Mansion totaled 560. Most of the books are centered in the library but are also distributed throughout the house. The inventory list included the author, the title, the year published, the subject, any inscription, the condition of each book, and the location within the house. For a bibliophile, like me, the inventory list is fascinating. The subject categories include fiction, non-fiction, epistles, essays, religious poetry, poetry, indexes, serial publications, reference, anthologies, hymn books, and narratives. Some books were not categorized. While many of the books surely belonged to Governor Oglesby, others belonged to his wife, children, and various other family members.

**Fiction: 182, Non-fiction: 310, Epistles: 1, Essays: 1, Religious poetry: 1, Poetry: 16, Indexes: 6, Serial publications: 6, Reference: 1, Anthologies: 8, Hymn books: 1 and Narratives: 4**

Most of the books were published and printed in the 1800's. The oldest books I could see were from 1803, Volumes I, II, and IV of "The Works of The Right Honorable Lady," by Mary Wortley Montagu, which were in poor condition. (Where's volume III?) This was followed by the ten-volume set of "The Works of Francis Bacon," published in 1824 and in fair condition. These books were not categorized. After that we have the five-volume set of "The Works of William Robertson," published in 1825, and in poor condition at the time of the inventory.

The most recently published books I could find were done in 1927 – "Splendor" by Ben Ames Williams, fiction in fair condition, 1930 – "The Edwardians" by V. Sackville-West, fiction in fair condition; 1937 – "Italia Settentrionale" no author, and in fair condition. These books were published after Governor Oglesby's death but must have belonged to his widow and family.

I think the study of this library can continue as we look further into what the Governor and his family read and enjoyed.

*by David Kent Coy, Board Member*

## Spring Cleaning

The Oglesby Board voted to hire Peerless to come and do a deep cleaning. They included Jody cleaning each crystal of the chandeliers by hand!! We are very proud to take care of the legacy of the governor in his gorgeous mansion.



## Volunteer Opportunities

If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity to assist us in maintaining the Mansion and Museum... We want to talk to YOU! We will get you involved in several activities and duties! Call 217-791-1385 for more information.

## Future Events

### Tour the Oglesby Mansion

The Governor Richard J. Oglesby Mansion is open for tours.

**Sunday, March 29**

2pm-4pm—Open House

**Sunday, April 26**

2pm-4pm—Open House, Guest Speaker at 2pm

**Sunday, May 31**

2pm-4pm—Open House

**Sunday, September 27**

2pm-4pm—Open House

**Sunday, October 29**

2pm-4pm—Open House

**Sunday, November 29**

2pm-4pm—Open House

A suggested donation of \$5 per adult and \$2 per child is requested. We appreciate the preparation made by our board, volunteers, Macon County Conservation District, and the Garden Club of Decatur.

**We appreciate the preparation made by our board, volunteers, Macon County Conservation District, and the Garden Club of Decatur for our 2026 season!!!**

**Saturday, May 16—2pm-4pm**

History of the Heartland History Showcase with free trolley rides

**June, July, and August** we are open the last Sunday of each month AND each Wednesday and Saturday—2pm-4pm

**Sunday, December 6—1pm-4pm**

Christmas Tea

**Reminder**—The mansion is available for rental for business meetings, intimate luncheons or dinners, baby showers, receptions, etc. Our rates are very reasonable! For more information, call (217) 855-8616.

# THE GOVERNOR OGLESBY MANSION, INC.

FOUR TWENTY ONE WEST WILLIAM STREET  
DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62522



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Put Governor Oglesby Mansion in your will.



[DecaturLegacy.org](http://DecaturLegacy.org)

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DECATUR LEGACY!**

Gov. Oglesby Mansion is a member of the Decatur Legacy! In your Estate Planning remember the Mansion for a gift. Gifts of this nature will secure the Mansion's future!

## I care about preserving Macon County history!

Enclosed is my contribution

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Please acknowledge my support as:

- Life Membership (\$1,000.00)  
*May be paid in 2 \$500.00 installments.*
- Patron Membership (\$500.00/year)
- Sustaining Membership (\$100.00/year)
- Family Membership (\$50.00/year)
- Individual Membership (\$38.00/year)

- Enclosed is my company's matching gift form.
- Please contact us about making gifts to the Mansion's endowment fund, bequests and other planned giving opportunities.
- I wish to remain anonymous.

Governor Oglesby Mansion, Inc.  
421 W. William St.  
Decatur, IL 62522

*Thank you for supporting the Oglesby Mansion.*