



# The Year 2023 in Review



## 1917 Race Massacre Marker Dedication

It was a day blessed by the ancestors. On July 2, 2023, at 2:00pm, exactly 106 years from the date of the horrific activities of 1917, a symbol of hope was dedicated at the Wyvetter Hoover Younger Higher Education Center (Younger HEC) In East St. Louis, Illinois. A 300-lb historical marker was erected in commemoration of the 1917 Race Massacre that took place in the city.

A program organized by vice-president Dr. Andrew Theising and Executive Director Jaye P. Willis galvanized the over 100 spectators for the event. The speakers included the president of the Southern Illinois University (SIU) System, Dr. Dan Mahony, SIU Edwardsville (SIUE) Chancellor Dr. James Minor, E. St. Louis NAACP president Robin Carey Boyd, former Illinois State Representative LaToya Greenwood, former city Mayor, Alvin Parks, Jr., and Dr. William Shannon, Illinois State Historical Society, who also spoke on the William Pomeroy grant. Remarks from Society founder, Reginald Petty were given, as well as an inspirational poem by East St. Louis Poet Laurette Dr. Eugene Redmond. The marker was dedicated with a ritual water blessing by Fr. Joseph A., Brown, SJ, PhD, who was also the chairman of the East St. Louis 1917 Centennial Commission and Cultural Initiative. Other members of the commission, as well as civic and church groups and members of the city’s Pan-Hellenic Council attended in support of the event. The Society thanked Dr. Tim Staples, Executive Director, SIUE East St. Louis campus, Dr. William Retzlaff, SIUE Vice-Chancellor for Administration, and Illinois Community College Board Executive Director Leonard Cruise, Younger HEC campus, for their support.

In the days preceding the event, Dr. Shannon and E.D. Willis were interviewed on St. Louis Public Radio. E.D. Willis was interviewed by Deion Broxton of KMOV Channel 4 news. After the event, Dr. Minor was interviewed by KSDK Channel 5 news. E.D. Willis and Society founder Petty were highlighted on the front page of the Belleville News Democrat newspaper with a positive article.

## Mission Statement

To promote program support, educational outreach and public awareness of East Saint Louis, Illinois’ history to its citizens, researchers and visitors.

## Vision

The Society will create educational programming for the community and visitors to include exhibits, workshops, lectures, hands-on crafting, tours, artistic performances, and sporting events. The Society will engage the community in cultural observances, motivational speaking, fundraisers, and contests. The Society will work collaboratively with other community centric organizations for community events.



## You can help by Joining Our Mission

If you would like to support the East St. Louis Historical Society by making annual or one-time monetary contributions, we have several ways for you to do so, including postal mail and PayPal.

Checks or money orders may be made out to the East St. Louis Historical Society and mailed to:

P.O. Box 641  
East St. Louis, IL 62202

Members of the Historical Society make annual donations to the organization at one of the following levels -

- Friend** (\$15—\$99)
- Supporter** (\$100—\$399)
- Gallery** (\$400 - \$699)
- Exhibition** (\$700—\$999)
- Curator** (\$1000 and above)

## Historic Site Bus Tours

# GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION



## The Society Leads Two Historic Sites Bus Tours

The Society received requests from two regional organizations to provide mini tours of the historical markers related to the 1917 Race Massacre and other local history locations in East St. Louis, Illinois.

On September 18, 2023, the Society hosted the Grand Victoria Foundation (GVF) on a limited tour with over 20 members. The tour was conducted by Board Secretary Billie Turner, Vice President Dr. Andrew Theising, and Executive Director Jaye P. Willis. We toured the markers on the Wyvetter H. Younge Higher Education Campus (Younge HEC), as well as highlighted sites like Friendship Church, Lincoln Park, the Mary Brown Center, the old Cosmo Club, House of Miles, and the Katherine Dunham Center. We ended at the Malcolm Martin observatory. The GVF was most appreciative and complimentary of the tour.

On September 20, 2023, the Society hosted the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees on a mini tour of the historical markers on the Younge HEC. More than 10 Trustees joined the tour, including SIU System President Dr. Dan Mahony. The tour was led by Dr. William Shannon, Dr. Andrew Theising, and Executive Director Jaye P. Willis. One of the trustees shared "I grew up in this community but had never heard of the riot. Thank you for sharing this information." That statement underscores the reason for our existence and is a charge for us to make sure that our history is made public and relevant for our youth, citizens, and anyone wanting to learn about our great city. That is our mission statement.



## The Society Meets with School District 189

On December 6, 2023, several Board of Directors met with members of School District 189 to discuss ways to incorporate East St. Louis history into the school curriculum. The discussions were very informative and hopeful for a great collaboration. The first request was for "fun facts" on the schools named for East St. Louisans which are targeted for display in the first quarter of the year. Board members will also speak with teachers on East St. Louis history and develop other activities to enrich history for the students and teachers. The next meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2024.

### East St. Louis Historical Society

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