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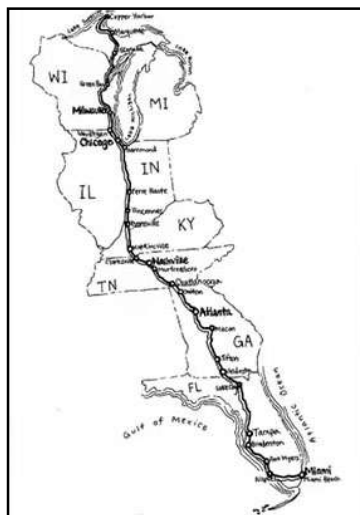
The Midland Authors' April 15 program will commemorate the 250th anniversary of American independence and the Declaration of Independence. It will be at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Richard J. Daley Library, Room 1-470 on the first floor. The event will be both in-person and virtual. The program is sponsored by the Midland Authors and the UIC Chapter of the State University Annuitants Association. To attend in person, register with: Debbie Matthews, debmatt18@gmail.com. The event includes a tour of UIC's special collections of historical documents at 6 p.m. A reception will be at 6:30 p.m., and the program starts at 7 p.m., with a panel chaired by UIC Professor Emeritus **Dick Simpson**. Speakers will be UIC Law Professor Ann Lousin on Thomas Paine; Emmy Award-winning Documentary Writer and Producer **Milton Nieuwsma** on "Inventing America: Conversations with the Founders"; Illinois America 250 Commission commissioner Dorene Wiese on broken treaties with Illinois tribes over 150 years, and Author **Marlene Targ Brill** on **Jane Addams'** contributions to continuing the American Revolution. ... **Michael Haupt** was a content contributor and the narrator for Chicago Executive (Pal-Waukee) Airport's video about its history. The video, "Chicago Executive Airport Celebrates Its 100-Year Anniversary," is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FK2v1z92EE> ... **Dan Dinello** wrote a feature story published on the website Informed Comment: "American Reich: Kristi Noem's DHS is the Department of Homeland Subjugation." ... **Mia P. Manansala**, who was on the Midland Authors' mystery writing panel program on Jan. 10, 2023, has made her young adult novel debut with *Death in the Cards* about a high school Tarot reader working to solve a mysterious disappearance. ... **Rebecca Makkai**,

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'A great American highway with a great story to tell'



ABOVE: Christopher Clott presents a program about historic Highway 41 at the Midland Authors Jan. 28 program. (Photo by Walter Podrazik) BELOW: A map of U.S. 41 Clott displayed at the program.



BY LITERARY LICENSE
STAFF

At the Jan. 28 Midland Authors program at Chicago's Harold Washington Library Center, author **Christopher Clott** took the audience of 65 (on a cold and icy night) on a slide show narrative through the eight states featured in his new book, *Unearthing Highway 41: An American Journey*.

It was the official book launch for the book.

Going from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to the southern tip of Florida, Clott shared images of the old and the new, from gleaming fresh office towers to resilient local businesses (a drive in-theater, a tiny post office). His enthusiastic insight: "Put aside your

electronics and take the time to see and visit the real America, up and down this century-old highway."

In the Chicago area, southbound U.S. 41 runs from Skokie Road, Lincoln Avenue and Foster Avenue on the north to Du Sable Lake Shore Drive (which Clott said is "Chicago's front yard" and then heads off on other streets to the south, including Calumet Avenue.

"Highway 41 is a great American road," Clott said. "There is a story to tell here. ... It's a book about the road but it is also mainly a book about the people and places all along the road."

On the northern part of what is now Highway 41, long before there was a highway there was a

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winner of the Midland Authors 2016 Adult Fiction award, reviewed *Eye of the Monkey* for the Nov. 23 New York Times Book Review. ... **Susan Orlean**, winner of the Midland Authors 2019 Richard Frisbie Award for Adult Nonfiction, has a new memoir out, *Joyride*. ... On Dec. 28, George Bilgere selected **Jim Daniels'** poem "Anthem" for his daily Poetry Town online feature. ... Midland Authors members are invited to an Oct. 23-25, 2026, event held by Torists International S.S., a Sherlock Holmes Scion Society in Chicago, honoring former Midland Authors President **Vincent Starrett**, who in 1934 was one of the founders of the Baker Street Irregulars (See **Robert Loerzel's** Literary Lore column, Literary License, December 2016/ January 2017) and the Hounds of Baskerville (sic). All events will be at White Pines Golf Club 500 W. Jefferson, Bensenville, Illinois. Starrett wrote three seminal works about Sherlock Holmes, *The Unique Hamlet*, *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and the sonnet, "221B." He also edited *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*, among many other contributions. He authored many mysteries, poems and essays, and wrote the "Books Alive" column at the Chicago Tribune for over 25 years and earned the sobriquet "the last bookman." Eight speakers will present at the "And It Is Always 1895" conference on Oct. 24. Also, all conference attendees will be invited to attend the annual Hounds of the Baskerville dinner, an invitation-only event. In addition to helping Sherlockians appreciate the role Starrett played in the Sherlockian world, the goal is to raise funds for an endowment to maintain Starrett's gravesite at Graceland Cemetery in Chicago. The organization plans a rededication of the site on Oct. 25. Group rates have been arranged at the Courtyard by Marriott-Wood Dale, for less than \$130 per night, breakfast included. The rate will be available from two days before through two days after. The link for registration for the hotel will be emailed to those who register for the conference. For more information: starrett1895@gmail.com.

Highway 41

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Midland Authors Treasurer Greg Borzo introduces author Christopher Clott at the Midland Authors Jan. 28 program. (Photo by Walter Podrazik)

path from which one might have seen bison, Clott said.

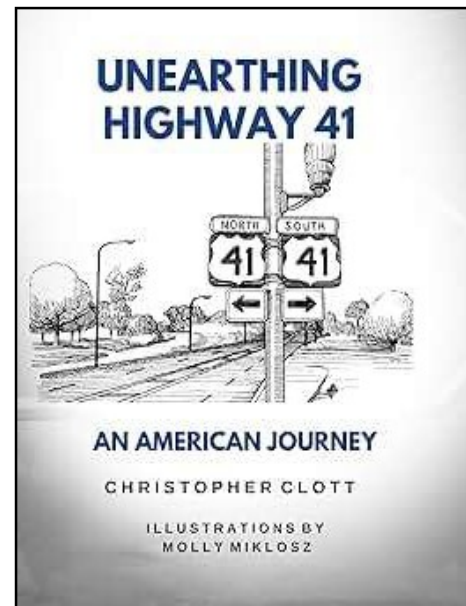
"The trail of the road was used extensively by indigenous people, long before there were ever any Europeans," he said.

The road's history also is linked to the history of the Civil War, he said.

"There are many statues, cemeteries and museums," Clott said.

Numerous Civil War battles were fought along what is now the highway, and it also was a route for the Underground Railroad and for the Great Migration, he said.

The official southern end of Route 41 is in a Miami neighborhood where many skyscrapers have gone up, but Clott said he thought the official southern end



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Society of Midland Authors members can now pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal. To make a donation, visit our home page at www.midlandauthors.org and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

Midland Authors presents a panel discussion:
Memor and Narrative Storytelling During COVID
featuring Michele Weldon, Gerry Plecki and Rebecca Johns Trissler
Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 6 p.m.
at Sulzer Regional Library, 4455 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago
Free and open to all.



Michele Weldon



Gerry Plecki



Rebecca Johns Trissler

Michele Weldon is an assistant professor emerita at her alma mater, the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism, where she taught for 18 years. The author of seven award-winning books, including most recently *The Time We Have: Essays on Pandemic Living* (2024), she has been a senior leader with The OpEd Project since 2011, a global initiative to increase the diversity of voice in public discourse. Weldon began her editorial career as managing editor at North Shore magazine. She then worked as a market editor for ADWEEK magazine and later Fairchild Publications. She was a columnist and feature writer for the Dallas Times Herald and has been a regular contributor to newspapers, websites, magazines and radio such as CNN, The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, Time, NBC, MSNBC (now MS NOW), Huffington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago magazine, Chicago Parent, the Los Angeles Times, Newsweek, Writer's Digest, West Suburban Living and hundreds more, including academic publications such as Harvard's Nieman Narrative Digest. She has given more than 200 keynotes on issues related to gender, popular culture and media.

Gerry Plecki recently completed his fourth term as SMA president, and he is a current a member of the Board of Directors. This will be the fifth year he has coordinated SMA's annual Book Awards Competition. Gerry received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1979 and was awarded an NEH postdoctoral fellowship at New York University. He then worked as an associate professor at Clemson University, where he taught English and cinema studies. Later, he taught graduate research methodology at the United States Sports Academy in Daphne, Alabama. He has written many articles on music and film criticism. His previous books were *Robert Altman*, which was an authoritative analysis of the director's films, and *Singing in the Rain: The Definitive Story of Woodstock at Fifty*, which was published in July 2019. His latest book, *Test Positive: Surviving COVID-19 in the Reign of Trump*, was published in 2020.

Rebecca Johns Trissler is the editor of *Virus City: Chicago 2020-2021* and the author of two novels (*Icebergs*, a PEN/Hemingway Finalist, and *The Countess*). Her work has appeared in The Atlantic, Ploughshares, StoryQuarterly, the Mississippi Review, the Harvard Review, Printer's Row Journal, the Chicago Tribune, Cosmopolitan, Mademoiselle, Ladies' Home Journal, Bride's, Parents, Parenting, Self, Health, and Seventeen, among others. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the Missouri School of Journalism, she is an associate professor of creative writing and associate dean in the College of Liberal and Social Sciences at DePaul University.

Highway 41

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should be on the Atlantic Ocean, just as the northern end is on the shore of Lake Superior. The highway officially ended at the Atlantic from 1952 to 1999, but was changed, he said.

Meanwhile, the highway shows a wide range of the way people live and is a guide to the past, he said.

“Travel on Route 41 to see to past, the present and very possibly the future,” Clott said.

Traveling the road himself, Clott said he learned “how complicated things are in this country.”

Clott said he was inspired to write the book because he grew up near the highway. Taking trips along the road 30 years ago, he thought it would be an interesting road to write about. He said he gathered information about the road over time.

“My wife said, ‘Are you ever going to do anything with all that?’” he said. “We had to put this all together. It was a labor of love.”

Afterward, Midland Authors Treasurer **Greg Borzo** said, “We had a great program and a great turnout.”

“My wife Cindy and I really enjoyed the program,” said Midland Authors Board Member **Christopher Lynch**. “I thought the audio/visual setup was very professional. I was very impressed!”

Contributing: Walter Podrazik, Greg Borzo and Thomas Frisbie



ABOVE: Christopher Clott speaks at the Midland Authors’ Jan 28. program. (Photo by Greg Borzo). LEFT: A sign Clott displayed showing the road’s northern end.

The entire Midland Authors Jan. 28 program with Christopher Clott can be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/live/3fllSqdJ-sE?si=Meu2wYIh-5y4gYwD>

Literary Largesse

Member dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but Midland

Authors always needs additional money to support programs such as the awards at the annual May book awards banquet.

Thanks to **Richard F. Bales** and **Timothy Gilfoyle** and **Mary Rose Alexander**, who made recent contributions.