

MCHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT



2023

2024

6422 Main Street
PO Box 434
Union, IL 60180

Board of Directors

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Bob Frenz - Vice President

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Staff

Anna Pivoras

Executive Director

(July 2023)

Wayne Duerkes, PhD

Executive Director

(October 2023 - June 2024)

Kira Stell

Curator

Lela Olson

Office Manager

Janet Barron

Volunteer & Outreach

Manager

Cindy Simmons

Bookkeeper

Rachel Seidner, MLIS

Research Librarian

Executive

Once again it is my privilege as your Board President to report that the condition of your society is strong. We have made great progress this year. Trying to cover everything that has happened is nearly impossible but I will give it my best go at it:)

As you enter the museum doors you will see a beautifully executed completed museum store. Not only are there tons of items, these items are also on line - thanks to our Office Manager, Lela Olson. If you go around the museum store you will see our curator, Kira Stell's newest exhibits: "Electrifying McHenry County", "Beginnings of Wonder Lake" and quilt exhibit.

What will be very visible beginning right after Heritage Fair is some major construction at the museum beginning July 15th. We will be getting a new roof and some new Heating/Cooling units. They estimate to be completed in 10 days, if we have great weather. The museum will maintain our regular hours but be ready for it to be noisy.

Other changes are less noticeable to the casual observer but listed in the committee reports such as the updated library research procedure, educational school tours, historic sites activities and membership streamlining with our CRM. In addition, our Volunteer & Outreach Manager, Janet Barron, has been hard at work getting out our monthly Newsletters, doing social media outreach on Facebook, Instagram, etc. and creating a new museum brochure. There is a new website in the works as well as a self guided tour of the museum.

As a subcommittee of the Executive Committee, I would like to thank the Strategic Planning Committee as they monitored the hard work of the board committees toward the goals and tactics during the second year of the 2022-25 Strategic Plan. The board of directors reviewed the progress and set additional goals moving forward. We will begin the development of our next strategic plan in late fall so if any-one is interested in helping with this, please contact Lonni Oldham, chair. Additionally, the committee facilitated communication improvements, the development of an MCHS Business Plan, and major project timelines.

I need to send out a round of applause to our dedicated staff, board and volunteers who have all contributed to a very productive year. Thank you:)

Karen Parks, President

Financial

For our 60th Anniversary this past year, we challenged our members to raise \$60,000 in donations. We had an overwhelming positive response, raising \$55,818.57, largest annual appeal total. With our members continued financial support we can fulfill our mission of preserving and sharing McHenry County's rich heritage for generations to come. We continue to have major expenses related to repairs and maintenance of our historical buildings. This next year we will be replacing the roof on the main museum building and replacing an HVAC system. The pie chart breaks down our revenue and expenses for the 2023-24 fiscal year. The Board of Directors has approved the 2024-2025 budget with projected revenue at \$430,242.00 and expenses at 430,124.70.

McEachern Charitable Trust

In 1992, The McHenry County Historical Society became the beneficiary of the Dorothy and Malcolm perpetual trust. Under the terms of the perpetual trust, the Society has the right to receive the earned income but does not own the assets held in trust. The Northern Trust company is the trustee and investment manager for the trust. As of June 2024, the market value was \$4,104,916.41

McHenry County Historical Society Endowment

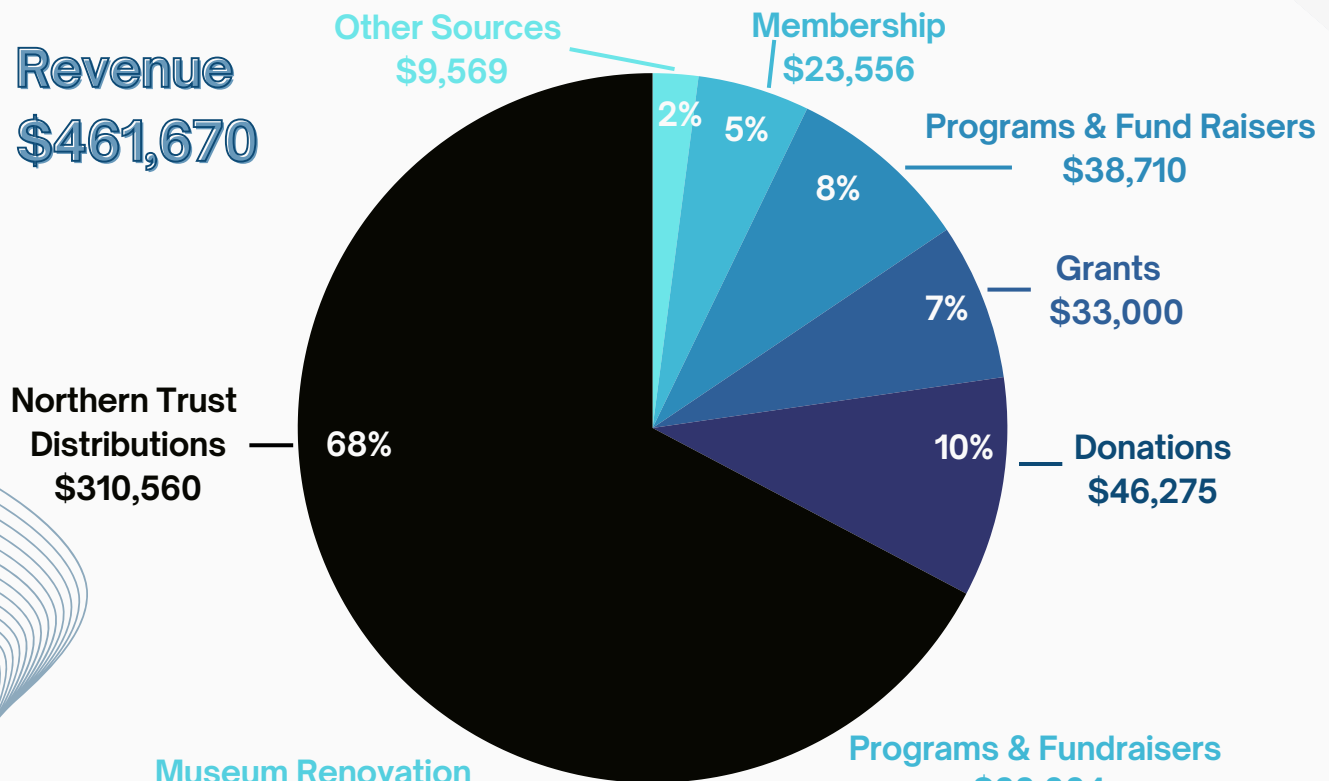
In 2002 The Society established an endowment fund. Investment revenue is utilized by the Society at the Board discretion for operating purposes. The endowment is managed by The Northern Trust company. As of June 2024, the market value was \$2,025,408.40

Anderson Fund

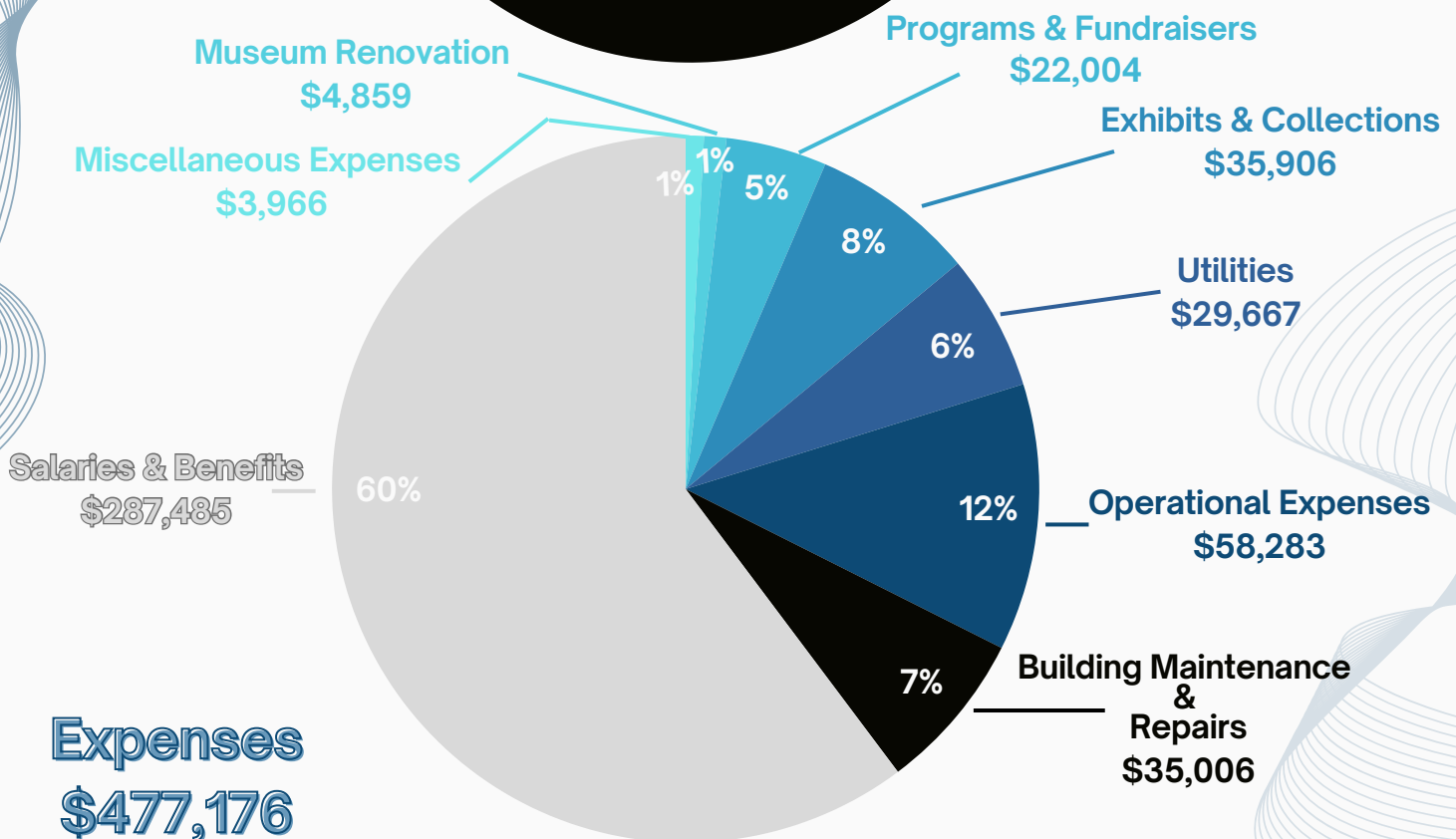
In 2016, the estate of Glen and Norma Anderson bequeathed 909,095.09 to the McHenry County Historical Society. The Fund is managed by The Northern Trust Company. \$289,000 has been withdrawn for the maintenance and improvement of the collection. As of June 2024, the market value was 976,903.71.

Financial

Revenue
\$461,670



Expenses
\$477,176



Buildings

Several much needed exterior projects including the repair, and repainting of various exterior building details, improved exterior lighting, and improved drainage on the south side of the museum were included in the budget for FY 23/24. The reality proved to be considerably different as staff discovered issues that needed immediate attention (unsafe electric and leaking plumbing) which led to identification of additional problems which also needed to be corrected. The good news is that this work was completed before anything catastrophic occurred. The bad news is that other maintenance had to be postponed.

The Building Committee had long been aware that the flat roofs and roof mounted HVAC equipment which were installed at the museum in the early to mid 1990s have been on borrowed time. Last fall, one of the heat exchangers in Eckert Hall quit running, parts were not readily available, and the repair would be very expensive. The difficult decision was made to abandon the heat exchanger, perform only the absolute minimum leak repairs, and replace roofing and HVAC equipment in FY 24/25. (Thankfully, it was a mild winter!) Bids were obtained and work will begin this July.

Staff continues to look for grant opportunities and creative solutions to make the most of the existing space. In FY 23/24, a wall was installed in the curator's office to create additional storage space and a structural engineer was hired to determine the feasibility of increasing the loading bearing capacity of the second floor storeroom to accommodate modular shelving.

The list of building projects continues to grow and project sponsors are needed. The Pringle School needs major drainage and tuckpointing improvements. Wood shingled roofs and wood windows need repairs at Pringle School, Perkins Hall, and West Harmony School, and the Perkins Hall foundation needs to be tuckpointed. The log cabin also needs major repairs—the porch roof (not original) was removed to prevent it from collapsing due to rotted timbers, the chinking needs to be replaced, and the cabin roof should be replaced soon.

Building priorities for the museum over the next few years include upgrading the fire alarm system, improving handicapped accessibility, improving aesthetics to enhance the museum image, improving drainage and developing a master plan for future improvements.

The Building Committee always has a need for volunteers who are knowledgeable in some aspect of building design, site design, and construction (historic and otherwise)—whether it is to perform a single project, advise on engineering or architectural issues, or participate on the committee. If you are willing to share time, talent, or expertise, contact Volunteer and Outreach Manager Janet Barron or Building Committee chairman Nancy Baker.

Nancy Baker
Building Committee Chairman

Collections

Collections Assessment Program (CAP) 1-year Progress Report

In 2023, Exhibits Curator Kira Stell applied to participate in the Collections Assessment Program (CAP). CAP is an overarching study of an institution's conditions, policies, and procedures related to collections care. It includes a review of collections storage, exhibition environments, and staff and volunteer collections training. CAP assists organizations like MCHS by providing recommendations and priorities for collections, facilitating the development of a long-range preservation plan, and serving as a fundraising tool for future collections projects.

The 1-year CAP follow-up consultation was held in early 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to report on the progress of our CAP recommendations and ask further questions if needed. The Zoom consultation was attended by Melissa Amundsen, collections assessor, Charles Quagliana, building assessor, exhibits curator Kira Stell, executive director Wayne Duerkes, and several MCHS board members.

Kira Stell reported the following collections CAP recommendations have been completed.

- Fire extinguishers containing the chemical CTC have been removed from the collection and disposed of by a hazardous waste company.
- MCHS acquired additional data loggers to monitor temperature and humidity levels for exhibit spaces, the Research library, and offsite storage.
- MCHS applied UV film to museum entrance to reduce light exposure into McEachren exhibits.
- A Collections Assistant was funded for the summer of 2023 to continue cataloging the biographical collection in the Research Library.
- MCHS added additional shelving and oversized files in the Research Library for additional storage and created a Library Workroom for volunteers and patrons.

Collections

2023-2024 Collections Projects

- Expansion of textile storage into the exhibit curator's office was completed in the fall of 2023. A wall was built to separate the exhibit curator's office from the creation of an additional textile storage (Textile 3). Textile 3 storage now contains all the clothing boxes that were stored in Textile 1 storage. Textile 1 only contains clothing racks and has room for future growth. The doll collection that was stored in 3D storage has also been relocated to Textile 3. This new storage location will provide a better climate control environment for the dolls. There is also room in Textile 3 for future growth. The exhibit curator's office has been reorganized to hold artifact donations waiting to be cataloged, exhibit and collections supplies, exhibits that are in production, and a backlog of artifacts that need to be cataloged on PastPerfect, our collections database.
- Last summer, Heather Jensen was hired for a 10-day collections project to inventory the doll collection in preparation of relocating the collection to Textile 3 storage. Heather's remaining time was spent on reviewing the board games for potential deaccessioning. Melissa Amundsen, our CAP collections assessor, identified the board games as an overcrowded area.
- Last summer, Stephanie Carreno was hired as a Research Library Collections Assistant for a 10-week project to continue inventorying and cataloging the biographical collection on PastPerfect. The biographical collection is frequently used for genealogy research. A total of 400 photographs and genealogical items in the Research Library were cataloged on PastPerfect.
- The Collections Committee has completed the Archival Hanger project for the women's clothing racks from the 1840s-1990s. This consisted of 8 clothing racks with 700 garments on them. This project entailed switching out current clothing hangers to archival ones. Archival hangers save space and help the clothing hang better on the racks. In the next fiscal year, the committee will shift the Archival Hanger project to the men's clothing racks. A total of \$769 was raised from the "Hung up on Hangers" fundraiser to purchase these archival hangers.

Collections

2023-2024: Accessioned Artifacts:

269. Sample of accessioned artifacts: piece of original Woodstock Opera House portico (1890), photograph of Frisch's Resort in Cary (1900s), Lincoln one-room school bell (Pistakee Bay), West McHenry State Bank ledger (1912), Marengo High School diploma of James Murphy (1916), hand painted tea set (1920s), Woodstock High School graduation photograph of Ernest Bates (1932), applique crib quilt (1942), Union School 1st grade class photograph (1948), Boy Scout uniform worn by Jerry Beebe, Marengo Troop #663 (1957), United States Airforce uniform worn by Robert Reed of Woodstock (1970), Crystal Lake street guide (1974), Woodstock Moose Lodge cookbook (1980s), ticket for the Chicago premiere of the movie Groundhog Day (1993), map of Woodstock in 1902 (printed in 1995), and Marengo Society for Historic Preservation calendar (2013).

2023-2024 Deaccessioned Artifacts:

515. Sample of deaccessioned artifacts: photograph of Woodstock 1872 fire (duplicate), Lester Edinger newspaper clipping scrapbook, 1930s (digitized), Women's Marengo Club booklet, 1936 (duplicate), McCall's clothing pattern, 1960s (duplicate), pair of brown seed earrings, 1960s (poor condition), Marengo Women's Auxiliary scrapbook, 1960-1980 (digitized), Harvard Milk Days booklet, 1978 (duplicate), Woodstock VFW news booklet, 1996 (duplicate), Marengo Community High School postcard (duplicate), First National Bank of McHenry calendar (duplicate), rubber army toy truck (poor condition), doll teapot & tea cup (poor condition), Kent Fire extinguisher (hazard to staff & collection), cribbage board (poor condition), and McHenry County Women in Action scrapbook (digitized).

Kira Stell
Curator

Education

This report was written to review the 2023-2024 year of the Education Committee. We have seven members: Kathy Betke, Laurie Cisneros, Pam Dean, Trudie Dryer, Judy Beth Hervert, Karen Parks and Gail Perkins, chair. We usually met monthly, with a second meeting in February to work on fieldtrip procedures. We cleaned and organized the Education Workroom at the Washington House, and now meet there. All our supplies and materials are stored in that room – and now they are visible, and easily accessible. This makes planning much simpler knowing what we have and where it is.

FIELDTRIPS

This year fieldtrips were a focus of our committee. We hosted four fieldtrips, one each from Marengo, McHenry, Woodstock, and Crystal Lake. We had a total of 213 students come through, with 25 chaperones (teachers, assistants and parents). Each student and chaperone are given a free family pass for coming to the fieldtrip. The passes are marked so who uses them can be tracked. We believe that we will have more requests for fieldtrips once the website is updated. The education committee were the docents for each visit. We also used a few extra volunteers: Nancy F., Don S. and Darlene L.

After doing some research, we created new forms. We started with new procedures for requesting a fieldtrip and for the museum's response to the request. The position of fieldtrip coordinator (from our committee) was created to keep the fieldtrip communication open and alleviate the office staff having to do it. A Fieldtrip Request Form that is filled out by the requesting adult and submitted to the fieldtrip coordinator was created which has helped us plan each fieldtrip knowing the specific information shared on the form. All these steps have helped to really keep our fieldtrips on track.

As we reflected on each fieldtrip, we often came up with improvements for the next time. For example – in the cabin the toy Jacob's Ladder was added to give the kids a chance to experience something the children of that era might have played with. Also, because we had a summer group coming, we decided to add making pickles to support the pickle exhibit!

We also created a survey that is filled out by each adult supervisor at each fieldtrip. This survey gives us data as to how we are doing and areas we can improve. We use these surveys when we reflect on and review each fieldtrip.

An intern from NIU has been working with Wayne and Kira to write up information on each of the exhibits. This information is then used by the docents. This helps us be consistent with the information we share. For each group, the docent adjusts the amount of information and the wording used to meet the level of the students visiting. Having retired teachers on the committee as our docents has made this a simple task!

In addition, we purchased and personalized smocks for docents to wear so we stand out in the group to answer questions and give guidance.

Education

HERITAGE FAIR

Educational activities are planned and run by the committee. This year, these activities will include cake walk, shaving station, wool carding, rag rug making, and using a wringer and tubs to wash clothes. These activities will run from 11-2 during the Heritage Fair.

DOLE MANSION and CRAFTING

Our committee member, Pam Dean, creates crafts and provides them for children to take home when they visit the Dole Mansion. Trudie Dreyer is the docent at the Dole.

CHRISTMAS

The Education Committee plans and decorates the MCHS tree in the Opera House. This year's theme was candy, and our member, Kathy Betke, came up with great ornaments. The committee helped make them, and then set up and decorated the tree. It turned out beautiful!

The museum's Christmas Open House had most of the education committee on the floor helping out. In addition, a paper craft, created and provided by Pam Dean, was handed out to each of the children who came through.

CIDERFEST

Our review of the Ciderfest concluded that the children's activities should be more front and center. We plan to implement this idea at this year's Heritage Fair.

It has been a busy and fun year for the Education Committee. We believe we have had a very successful year and look forward to the future.

Fieldtrips at the McHenry County Historical Society and Museum



Education

Goal/Objective/Tactics Review

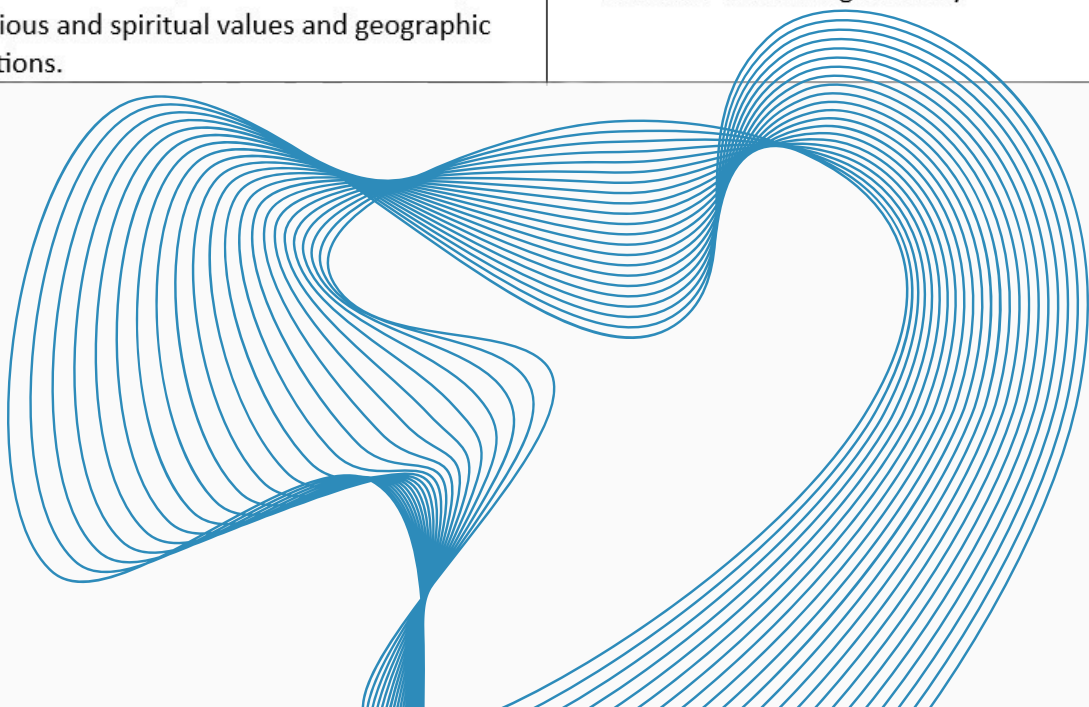
Goal C – OUTREACH Engage people of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds in the rich history of McHenry County.

Objective 6 – Use a variety of methods to enhance our offerings, to meet the needs of our culturally diverse community.

	Tactics (Planned Action):	How we are currently addressing this planned action:
A	<p>Provide digital access to more of our collection in various ways.</p> <p>Suggested goals:</p> <p>Create a hands-on component to as many exhibits as possible.</p> <p>Written reports for docents; First for exhibits, then each community for fieldtrips</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A format is needed from staff so that all QR codes are consistent • This goal is beyond where we are currently. We need. Reports of information on the various exhibits for docents so they present the information consistently. They will tweak what they say based on the age of the group, but the info will always be the same. • Once these reports are done, then each community should have an info packet on what is specific to that community (like Marengo) so when they <u>visit</u> we can connect them with the history of THEIR community
B	<p>Find ways to utilize our historic buildings more effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample one of Riley Church shared with Laurie (Photos by Joe) Not sure if Perkins Hall is done – written part was done by Deb. Photos? • Could we have meetings or gatherings at the different sites? • Scavenger hunt visiting the historic buildings beyond the museum campus?

Education

C	Maximize participation through virtual and online options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until the Website is updated this cannot be done virtually or online. • Currently doing communication for fieldtrips through calls and email between school and FT Coordinator. Without website being up to date, teachers can get only limited info on what we offer
D	Develop and implement an outreach plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach Plan is being developed by staff. • Previously, education expected to work with membership since both were tasked with creating this – until it was taken over by staff. • Should be initiated with staff, then education • We have created new Fieldtrip forms, Outline of jobs, surveys and updated scavenger hunt
E	Identify our diverse communities and find ways to connect. Diverse communities are defined as different ethnic and racial backgrounds, ages, physical and cognitive abilities, family status, sexual orientations, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values and geographic locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting with members of community (Hispanic, African American, Native American). Is in the works which education will participate in to try to develop a variety of exhibits and activities addressing diversity



Education

F	Find voices at many levels, gain their interest and their involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education committee has worked to better our fieldtrips. They have included Landmark photos, for their visit Marengo materials, for their visit • The docents (ed committee members) adjust their presentations to be appropriate for the group that is visiting – making sure to talk at their level • The docents have been engaging students in each of the exhibit areas • Each group of adult supervisors is given a survey before they leave. We use thie data from these surveys to reflect on and improve upon our fieldtrips
G	Review and update Interpretive Plan (IP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Plan needs to be completed, by director (We received copy of old IP which needs to be updated.
H	Implement strategies, in concert with IP, to increase participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No updated IP yet. • Increase participation through fieldtrips. (An updated website will greatly improve our number of fieldtrips)
I	Routinely assess and respond to audience interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of surveys from fieldtrips' adult participants • Conversations during fieldtrips • Reflection with docents after fieldtrip

Governance

In addition to the Governance Committee's duties and responsibilities, the Committee set four goals for 2023-2024: to provide Board training, to identify Board and Staff roles/responsibilities, to monitor McHenry County Historical Society policies, and to maintain an Institutional Archive. The Committee continues to implement these goals and to focus on best practices in the field critical to the future of the Society.

Nomination for 2024-2027 Board of Directors is the renewal term of current Board Director, Nancy Baker. Nancy has a long history with the Society. She is the Board Secretary, and she masterfully chairs the Building and Grounds Committee.

On behalf of the Society, the Governance Committee extends a thank you to Board Directors Carol Fiandalo, Mary McCann and Paula Reigns for their valuable contributions as they step down from the Board.

In special recognition for their extraordinary service, former Directors Henry Kenyon, Cathy Bergan Schmidt and Arlen Bird have been appointed Lifetime Honorary Board of Directors. Henry served three terms before retiring in 2023. He was always an on-the-ready docent and a strong supporter of the Research Library and the Education Committee. Cathy joined the Board in the 1990's retiring in 2023. She held many offices and miraculously brought the Membership Committee into the computer age. Arlen Bird served multiple terms in the 1980's-1990's. Arlen was a dedicated fundraiser and docent but is best known for being the driving force of the Heritage Quilters, for running the quilt fabric sales and for being in the renowned 2004 MCHS Calendar.

Lonni Oldham
Governance Committee Chair

HISTORIC SITES

This past year, the committee has seen an active shift in new plaque opportunities. The committee currently contains 6 members.

The Committee has been dutifully following up on past “Hello” letters along with assisting homeowners with applications still in progress (we are anticipating an additional 2 applications in 2024). We received 3 completed applications. We have had 3 site evaluations, only one of which did not pass the Committee, 215 N. Main Street, Algonquin. The remaining 2 sites have passed both the Committee and the Board and are scheduled for private plaquing ceremonies:

1) Plaque #93, The Claude & Ede Brown House, 1924, scheduled for July 7, 2024.



2) Plaque #94, The Jonathan F. Wolcott Homestead, 1855, scheduled for June 9, 2024.



Photo credit:
Jennifer Baker

HISTORIC SITES

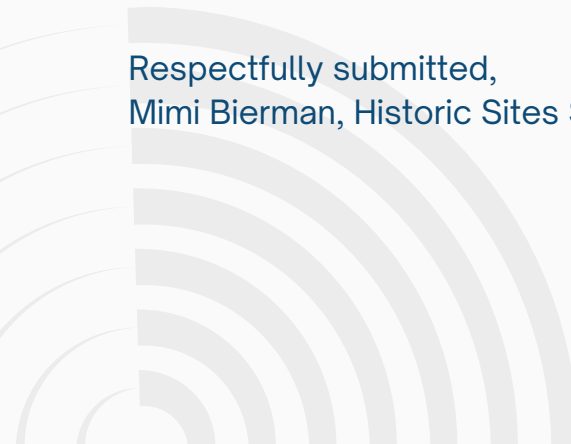
In May 2023, preservation concerns arose for the John A. Kennedy House (a.k.a Kennedy Way Station), plaque #8. The current owner, McHenry County Conservation District has denied admittance to the MCHS Historic Sites Committee for evaluation of the current state of the building. The Committee's fear is that the John A. Kennedy House will suffer the same fate as the William Coventry House, which will eventually be demolition by neglect. In December 2023, with hopes of preventing this same outcome, the Committee took the opportunity to nominate the John A. Kennedy House (a.k.a Kennedy Way Station) for the 2024 Most Endangered list via Landmark Illinois. There has been no update on the status of this nomination.

The committee finished collaborating with Naturally McHenry County in early 2024 on the interactive listing and map of all the plaqued historic sites, which is now active online through the Naturally McHenry County website and app.

In February 2024, the Committee invited Wayne Duerkes, new MCHS Executive Director to their meeting for an informal meet and greet. The Committee enjoyed meeting Wayne and listening to his ideas and input. We also used this time to bridge the gap of communication between the Committee and MCHS and provide a fresh start to the various obstacles of the past 2 years. The Committee also took the time to create a Plaque Ceremony To-Do list, and an Attempted Plaque listing (listing past Hello letter sites), both in efforts to help streamline planning, delineate responsibilities as well as minimize miscommunication in the future.

In the coming year, we look forward to educating the general public and raising their consciousness of historic preservation while continuing to plaque new sites.

Respectfully submitted,
Mimi Bierman, Historic Sites Secretary



Library

Dear Members of the Board of Directors,

I am pleased to present the accomplishments of the McHenry County Historical Society & Museum (MCHS) Research Library for the fiscal year 2023-2024. Throughout the year, our team has worked diligently to enhance our research capabilities, strengthen community outreach, and ensure the preservation of our valuable historical collections.

Research and Collections Management:

- As of June 30, 2024, there were **110 requests this fiscal year** (JUL-DEC 2023: 5 JAN-MAY 2024: 53). The **total revenue earned was \$2,328** (JUL-DEC 2023: \$1,063, JAN-MAY 2024: \$1,265).
- **Created a Research Request Log to track inquiries, payments, researchers systematically, and other pertinent details.** This log includes data from the past three years (2021-2024), facilitating comprehensive assessment and review.
- **Updated Research Library Guidelines and pricing systems and drafted essential policies, including Digital Preservation and Collection Development Policies, Digitization Projects and Planner Guide, Born Digital Archive guides, and a Research Library Deed of Gift form.**
- Attended the 2023 American Library Association annual conference in Chicago, focusing on local history and genealogy. Networked to identify regional resources beneficial to MCHS.
- Assessed digitization needs and projects, including technology, equipment, storage, and Content Management Systems.
- Applied for the ISHRAB Historical Records Grant to secure funding for the Oral History Project. **Raised \$7,000+ during the November 2023 Giving Tuesday Campaign** and initiated the NEH Foundations Grant application to support digital foundation and cataloging interns.
- Initiated comprehensive inventory processes for each collection, utilizing Excel spreadsheets stored in the R: Drive for text searchable convenience. Completed inventories for collections such as Flat Files, Phonebooks, Tax Records, Title of Abstracts, and Yearbooks.
 - All folder collections in Library 1 are inventoried, as are the Flat Files (Arlyn) and Don Peasley Collection (Maggie).
 - Also, 75% of the materials that are located in the Catacombs (Brandon).

Library

- **Brought on board and trained five new research volunteers:** Sofia M. (Weeding Duplicates - Bio Files), Betsy I. (Transcription - Frank Eckert Journals), Brandon C. (Inventory, Scanning/Digitization), Janet M. (Transcription, MS Excel, Obituaries, Funeral Cards/Records), Mary O. (Transcription - Andruss Civil War Diaries).
- Utilize Facebook and Instagram to build a collection of born-digital materials (i.e., Solar Eclipse April 8, 2024, Cicadas May/June 2024).
- **Established payment process in Neon** for ease of payment and data/invoice tracking.

Digital Preservation and Outreach:

- **Awarded \$2,000 for my proposal to the ISHRAB Historical Records Grant** Program. The grant award will go towards greater accessibility and digitization of the MCHS Oral History Collection. The funds will be awarded around July 1, 2024.
- **Collaborated with CorpIT to establish the R: Drive server for research data storage**, ensuring organized file naming conventions and folder organization.
- Engaged in outreach efforts, including meetings with organizations like the McHenry County Genealogical Society and writing cross-promotional and call-to-action posts on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.
- **Launched a research blog** to educate and inform the community about the Research Library, further enhancing outreach efforts.
- **Create Facebook and Instagram posts: calls to action, research adventures, events, etc.** Connect posts across departments (Museum Store, Events, Exhibits, etc.). Helped increase museum membership, interest, visitors, research requests, etc., in the 20-40 age demographic.
 - This year's Museum Opening -Night at the Museum was the most diverse age range in recent history, with many stating it was their first time. Many mentioned social media as a way to learn about MCHS and what resources and events are available.

Library

Community Partnerships:

- Assisted Raices Latinas with their project by providing guidance, documentation, and support. Contributed Release of Ownership, Metadata forms, Born Digital Archive materials, and project assessments. Shared copies of MCHS Digital Preservation & Collection Development Policies to aid their endeavors.

In conclusion, the past fiscal year has been marked by significant progress and achievements in research, collections management, digital preservation, and community engagement. These efforts reflect our commitment to preserving McHenry County's rich history and fostering meaningful connections within our community.

Thank you for your continued support and guidance as we work towards our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Rachel Seidner, MLIS
Research Librarian

Library

Accomplishments:

The Two Biggest:

1. Rachel, our part-time paid librarian, has been with us for a year! We have received the Community Foundation for McHenry County's Mission Grant funding for her second year as Research Librarian. The third year and following is up to us. She has gotten the research request process under control and is doing most of the requests, leaving those volunteers who formerly did requests, which had priority, free to do other projects. Rachel answered 98 requests and total revenue from requests was \$1,776 as of May 30. Rachel also modernized our photocopy and scan fee schedule and established a payment process through NEON. Rachel has also researched how we can best move more of our collection into digital form and is writing an NEH Foundations Grant application which will hopefully get that objective funded. Rachel also launched a blog to promote research efforts via social media and community archiving.
2. The new flat file cabinets have been filled and older flat files shifted some. The township section of the flat files now has a printed copy of their drawer contents in the drawer as well. The subject, biographical, and community files have been shifted to fill the former school files space, which was freed when the school files moved to the 8 new vertical file drawers. The bookshelf shifting is almost done. Shelf reading (looking for "lost" items and making sure all is in call number order) was done along the way, as was cleaning, making preservation and vinyl binder needs lists, reversing those items that should be shelved on their spines, and other overdue tasks.

Library

Digital Projects-

1. Volunteer Trudie Dreyer continues yeoman's work making our obituary card collection a digital one. She keeps up with current obituary additions and, working backwards chronologically, has brought the digital collection back to 2012. The digital obit collection numbers more than 17,000. She has also undertaken to add any obit that should have been in the file but wasn't. She and Dianne Brooks are cleaning up the obituary index as well and lately Trudie is also adding information from the funeral card collection to the obituary files and then turning the funeral cards over to be added to the biographical files. New volunteer Janet Mitchell is helping with the funeral cards.
2. Volunteer Gail Hayes continues scanning our scrapbook collection. The digitized scrapbook collection now numbers 328. John Stanley of Wauconda continues to get the scrapbooks loaded into our database as soon as Gail finishes with them! New remote access software had to be installed so that John could access Gail's work. John is teaching Rachel how to process this ResCarta data as well. This database has been public for a year.
3. Roy Havlik's Northern Digital Preservation Specialists in Wisconsin digitized the Wonder Lake Star this fiscal year for us. We estimate we are about halfway through our quest to digitize our newspapers. We have at least two more Star newspapers and three Sun newspapers to go. Quotes for each Star are ca. \$11,000. Looking for sponsors!
4. The cassette tape digitizing project continues. Rachel wrote an ISHRAB Historic Records Grant application for "Voices of our Past" which will allow for increasing the digitization of our cassette tapes and other AV materials with the goal of preservation, use, and access. Some need transcribing from oral to written form as well. She got a personal call from Dave Joens May 30, telling her we were awarded \$2,000 for this project. This project was also the recipient of \$7,000+ on Giving Tuesday. Volunteers Maggie Crane and Ed Bormett worked on this project for the past two years but digitizing them started as far back as 2016. Maggie has added 40 of the digital versions to PastPerfect so far. After the cassette tapes, microtapes, VHS tapes, reel to reel film, etc. are still waiting. LONG way to go to migrate all vulnerable materials to digital format! New volunteer Brandon Cipolla has produced a keyword searchable Excel list of all of them, including those never in the card catalog or PastPerfect.
5. Rachel had Brandon also inventory various parts of the library collection, such as the postcards, township assessors' ledgers, sheet music, titles abstracts, phonebooks, high school yearbooks, etc. All these sub-collections are represented in the card catalog or PastPerfect but Brandon's inventories also contain preservation needs assessment. All our inventories, new and old, have been added to the R drive Rachel had CorpIT add to our computers so that next time it crashes, we won't lose all our work.

Library

Preservation-

Items preserved this year:

1. Adopted:
 - a. One of our surveyors' notebooks on Fox River Grove by Linda Stengele in honor of her husband and her son
2. Others:
 - a. Coe's surveying instructions
 - b. the Greenwood cookbook
 - c. Leavey Civil War diary (all 6 Civil War soldiers' diaries in MCHS' possession are now preserved)

Accessions-

Kira counted 269 items accessioned this year, 150 of which are housed in the library. A couple major recent additions were the 1847-1849 chancery court documents and the Riley Methodist church bulletins.

CAP Grant Projects-

Recommendations affecting the library:

1. A digital policy is in draft form.

More of Our Volunteers and Their Activities-

Dianne Brooks is helping Trudie with the obit collection. She has also finished transcribing the handwritten court documents table of contents 1837-1877 and is indexing the names in the pages she has typed.

Nancy Reczek and Nancy Haskins resigned but new volunteer Betsy Iverson is working on the surname index card project with Ginny Boss. The end to this project may be in sight.

Betsy Iverson has also taken over transcribing the 7 volume Floyd Eckert diary before it is accessioned.

Janet Mitchell has typed a handwritten index to the chancery court document and added case numbers. Maggie Crane has also completed organizing and identifying the whole office collection of Don Peasley but intends to go through a second time weeding more, sleeving the photos, and adding them to PastPerfect. Other veteran volunteers continue their service to the library: Pat Merritt clips and files in our vertical files, Barb Pfannkuche catalogs our incoming books, and Dave Sippel is taking duplicates out of the subject vertical files. New volunteer Sofia Morales is now working on taking duplicates out of the biographical vertical files.

Library

Miscellaneous

1. A silent auction was organized and hosted for Heritage Fair and Cider Fest. The proceeds were much higher for Heritage Fair than for Cider Fest.
2. We planned and hosted the 40th anniversary of the research library celebration on Sept. 8. Maggie wrote two articles for Volume 4, 2021-2022 of the Tracer, which Don added images to and placed on the website, Craig presented 4 people's stories which he had researched in our library, and tours were given, during which our projects were explained. Sponsored preservation projects and the sponsors were also featured.
3. The 3 wall maps have been hung at last thanks to MCHS volunteers Ken and Casey. The Orsolini bed has been retired as the oversize map location!

Goals for Next Year

1. Finish shifting the collection into the new shelving and cabinetry.
2. Finalize a digital collection and preservation policy with procedures to begin to deal with the digital deluge in an intelligent, consistent manner.
3. To create a long-term preservation list, with an estimate of funding needed.
4. To create "adoption" lists for potential donors.
5. To continue the preservation and newspaper digitization progress.
6. Update the library section of the website.
7. Start the digitization of the organizations' records.

Committee members

Committee members: Maggie Crane, Don Rose, Marcia Poedtke, Kathy Bergan Schmidt, Kira Stell, and Rachel Seidner

**Arlyn Booth
Research Library Committee Chair**



Membership

2023-2024 Membership Committee Goals:

- Develop and implement a plan to increase the value of a MCHS membership.
- Develop a consistent membership workflow.
- Develop and implement a plan to keep members without emails informed.
- Review, analyze and report membership data.

It has been a transitional year for the McHenry County Historical Society Membership Committee. We have made significant progress on our membership goals. After brainstorming, the staff developed local procedures and timelines for Neon, our Customer Relations Management program. Along with Neon's automated system, the staff has implemented a consistent membership workflow. This includes: welcoming new members, reaching out to lapsed members and sending out membership cards and information. Our membership numbers have remained around 600 throughout the year. We saw an increase in life members over the past year. A total of seventy one life members received the commemorative metallic life membership cards at the 60th Anniversary celebration in November.

Members without emails now consistently receive monthly newsletters and other MCHS information by mail. The staff reports membership data at the monthly Board Meetings. In addition, membership information is being analyzed to help us improve the value of membership, retain our current members, gain new members and plan for the future. We are learning that Neon provides many helpful tools to gather and interpret this information which is essential as we move forward. A very special thanks to our staff, Janet Barron, Wayne Duerkes and Lela Olson, for developing and implementing these membership operational goals.

We continue to look at ways to increase the value of a McHenry County Historical Society membership while keeping the membership costs at the current levels. The membership survey this year gave us some of your preferences and thoughts, and we are always open to hearing comments and suggestions. We know that you value the importance of our mission to share and preserve McHenry County History. In addition, we hope you take advantage of your membership benefits by submitting a research request, reading the Tracer, visiting the museum to view the new exhibits, and attending events and/or programs. Our hope is that you would "bring a friend" and encourage others to join us in our mission to share and preserve local history. Again, thank YOU for being a valued member of the McHenry County Historical Society.

Deb Silker
Membership Chair

Membership

Life Members

Libbie Aavang
Melodie Archer
Nancy Baker
Steve Baker
Janet Beck
Barbara Bennett
Kathleen Bergan-Schmidt
Judy Beth-Hervert
Arlyn Booth
Ann Bormett
Edwin Colton
Aastri Cunat
Trudie Dreyer
John Eickstadt
Mike Evans
Nancy Fike
Avis Fisher
Jeff Fisher
Sean Foley
David Gervais
Lori Geske
Carol Halma
Peggy Hart
Chehalis Hegner

Jan Hervert
Nellie Hohnsen
Nancy Hudson
Genevieve Hughes
Nancy Irwin
Jim Keenan
Marlene Keenan
Jan Knight
Stanley Korwin
John Krenger
Judith Lovaas
Bob Lueders
Mary Maurer
Arden Miller
Sherry Mueller
Doug Noe
Mary Noe
Lonni Oldham
Molly Oldham
Marlene Olson
Peggy Palmquist
Karen Parks
James Peard
Peter Perkins
Judy Porter

Cindy Powers
Dan Powers
Jim Prindiville
Mary Ellen Prindiville
Donald Purn
Laura Rice
Judy Rogers
Don Rose
Tracie Rose
Chuck Ruth
Brian Sager
Jude Schmidt
Lawrence Schmidt
Marti Schmidt
Dale Shriver
Deb Silker
John Silker
Megan Sommer
Susan Tauck
Theodore Thayer
Mary Thennes
Richard Thennes
Cindy Thompson
Ilene Wiedemann

MCHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S HISTORY ORIGIN STORY & TIMELINE

The McHenry County Historical Society was founded by Dorothy McEachren in 1963.

Having previously lived on a farm in Huntley, she took an interest in the rapid disappearance of McHenry County's agricultural roots. Realizing there was a need to preserve this county's past, local organizations were invited to send delegates to a meeting for the purpose of founding a county-wide historical society. Seventy individuals attended the first organizational meeting held on October 23, 1963.

The first organizational meeting of the McHenry County Historical Society was held on October 23, 1963, at the Woodstock Opera House. From left, bottom row: Dorothy McEachren, president, and G. Watson Lowe, vice president. Top row: Floyd Eckert, Robert Olson, and Henry Nell Jr., treasurer.

A second meeting of the McHenry County Historical Society was held in November of 1963 at the Woodstock Opera House. It was decided to incorporate as a not-for-profit organization, and interim officers were chosen to serve until the first annual meeting was held the following May. The official charter for the McHenry County Historical Society was received and dated November 26, 1963. Over six hundred individuals joined the historical society as charter members before the March 1, 1964 deadline.

Shortly after the founding of the Historical Society, local citizens were encouraged to donate items of historical value pertaining to the county. The collection consisted of almost 350 items by the first annual meeting on May 18, 1964. These early donations to the Historical Society included one-room school ledgers, hand-made quilts, bustled dresses, 19th-century photographs, family genealogies, old city and telephone directories, and many items from the Civil War.

The City Council of Woodstock generously loaned the Historical Society the use of an office on the second floor of the Opera House to house its growing collection. Miss Lura Wandrack of Woodstock spent many hours cataloging the hundreds of items that had been donated. By 1966 the Historical Society had moved its headquarters to Jefferson Street and was housed in the basement of the First National Bank in Woodstock. The Historical Society did not move to its present location until 1971, when it purchased the former Union School.

1960s

1963 - Founded by Dorothy McEachren.

1963, October - Seventy individuals attended the first organizational meeting held.

1963, November 26 - The official charter for the McHenry County Historical Society was received and dated.

1964, March 1 - Over six hundred individuals joined the historical society as charter members before the March 1 deadline.

1964, May 18 - The collection consisted of almost 350 items by the first annual meeting held on May 18. These early donations to the historical society included one-room school ledgers, hand-made quilts, bustled dresses, 19th-century photographs, family genealogies, old city and telephone directories, and many items from the Civil War.

Mayor Thore Emricson and the City Council of Woodstock generously loaned the historical society the use of an office on the second floor of the Opera House to house its growing collection.

Miss Lura Wandrack of Woodstock spent many hours cataloging the hundreds of items that had been donated. Miss Lura Wandrack, who had been librarian in Woodstock for many years.

1966 - The historical society had moved its headquarters to Jefferson Street and was housed in the basement of the First National Bank in Woodstock. Rent is \$35 a month.

1967, August 3 – Dedication of the Gannon log cabin in its new location at the fairgrounds in Woodstock. Luke Gannon's grandson, Edward, donated the cabin in 1964. This was the first project undertaken by the McHenry County Historical Society: the removal, restoration, and preservation of the only freestanding log cabin in McHenry County.

1967, September 17 – The second project was the dedication of the Gillilan marker at the intersection of Route 31 and Car-AL Road in Algonquin. The Gillilan family was the first white settlers in McHenry County.

1970s

1971, November 22 - 1870 School in Union - Society's big Bid of 20k by Society accepted. Sold at public auction for 20, and Society successfully purchased the old Union School.

1972, May - Ceremonial of turning over the keys took place at Annual Meeting,

1976. July 4 - The Society's Museum in Union, Ill., officially opened to the public.

1974 - Tracer began.

1978 - Cider Fest

1980s

1980 - McHenry County Historical Society Plaquing Program

1981 - First plaque to be Fred Hatch Farm east of Spring Grove & site of first upright silo (1873) In US. Arnold Kattner Farm, Spring Grove. The first tower silo in America was erected by Fred L. Hatch and his father, Lewis in 1873 in Burton Township.

2nd Site: Site of original 1844 Richmond Mill Site, 3 was 1850 Congregational Church in Algonquin circa 1868., 1843: Log Cabin 5th Plaque Cold Springs School House in Bull Valley, built 1870.

1981 - Nancy Fike appointed director after 9 years on Board.

1981, May 7 - Re-dedication and plaquing ceremony of the Log Cabin on the grounds of the MCHS. Moved to Fairgrounds 1964.

1982 – A local history research library was added to the museum. A local history research library was created within the museum to house a growing collection of documentary artifacts.

1983 - First Quilt Project to commemorate 20 years of Society. Blocks from each township showing history peculiar to that township.

1986 - First Sampler Series

1986: - Museum's 10th anniversary

1987 - Display Case in memory of Henry Marlowe

1988 - Acquisition of the West Harmony School, an 1895 one-room schoolhouse now used for c.1900 school programs at our museum location in Union.

1990s

1990 - Dedication was held for the restoration of the 1895 West Harmony one-room school, which had been donated by Riley School District 18, and moved to the museum grounds.

1991 - Nancy Fike located Eight shovels used in various groundbreakings ventured and donated to the museum. Several had inscriptions to show when they were used such as a 1961 date on the shovel that helped launch the swimming pool at Emricson Park in Woodstock. Agricultural Equipment, second floor used for storage. Lois Deicke & McEachren.

1992 - Open House honoring Dorothy McEachren's 90th birthday on August 4

1992, March - Grace Moline was hired as Exhibits Curator and Coordinator.

1993 - Dedicate the new McEachren Annex-Deicke Hall addition on May 6, 1993.

Nearly 8,000 square feet of exhibit and storage space. Addition to the museum consisting of an upper floor for storage and two large exhibit rooms, one for general history and the other called Deicke Hall, to house the Society's collection of agricultural tools and equipment.

1993 - Bowman Dairy Wagon

1994 - Between 1980-1994, 46 historic sites and structures were awarded private efforts at historic preservation.

1994 - Grand opening ceremony for the newly restored Orsolini tourist cabin. One of McHenry County's few remaining tourist cabin from Alex Orsolini family of Richmond.

The 1948 cabin was relocated from Richmond to Union, disassembled, then reassembled inside the museum, where it was restored and furnished to the early 1950s.

1995 - Publication of McHenry County in the 20th century

1996, June - MCHS names 1885 Seneca Township town hall in Franklinville Perkins Hall after Don Perkins, Seneca Township Road commissioner from 1955-1995.

1997 - "Barn Again! Year of the Barn" Smithsonian traveling exhibit initiates a countywide barn awareness program.

1997, May - Joint Council of Historic Groups established.

June 1997: Dedication of the newly restored Gannon log cabin at MCHS museum.

1997, August - Ann Bormett hired as first office manager.

1998 - MCHS names Small Institution of the Year by the Illinois Association of Museums

1999 - Purchase Schuette building, located at 6504 Main St. in Union, for \$145,000.

2000s

2001, June - Don Peasley collection donated.

2002, January - Nancy Irwin hired as office manager.

2002 - Jim Tonyan of McHenry donated 45,000 to purchase and renovate the old school bus bought from Marengo-Union District 154. Retired C.L. resident Bill Dysart is one of several volunteers Hank Nell of McHenry in preparing the bus.

2002, November - The Society acquires Pringle School, 1867 limestone one-room school.

2009 - Acquired the 1898 Riley Methodist Church for \$1.

2010s

2010, June - The Society acquires an Italianate Bay window from an 1870s home in Richmond. The bay window is moved to the museum and restored.

2010, April 29 - Two 127-year-old cottonwood trees, removed because of disease in

2007, were sculpted by Marengo woodcarver Mike Bihlmaier and unveiled to the public.

2010, Oct. 9 - Business Diamond Jubilee recognizes 47 countywide businesses in operation for 75 + years at Starline Gallery in Harvard.

2011 - We helped create the Northern Illinois Quilt Fest in cooperation with many fine people across all six Northern Illinois counties.

2011 - Grace Moline, exhibit curator of the MCHS, receives the 2011 Professional of the Year Award from the Illinois Association of Museums.

2012, January - Kira (Halvey) Stell hired as exhibits curator.

2012, August - Kurt Begalka hired as administrator

2013 - Collections Committee created

2013 - Internet cabling project launched, expanding computer access and bolstering security.

2013, May - Nancy Roozée hired to replace retiring Office Manager Nancy Irwin.

2013 - 1,400 students from eight schools visited the campus, spurred by \$100 per school transportation subsidy – underwritten by a \$5,000 Community Foundation for McHenry County grant.

2013, November - Historical Society celebrates 50 years.

2014 - First Appraisal Event held at the museum

2014 - Received \$9,330 in grants from the Community Foundation for McHenry County to fund a collection internship and do modifications/repairs to the Schuette Building.

2014, April - Camp Algonquin named to Landmark Illinois' 10 Most Endangered list. MCHS works with the county conservation district to save a handful of the 50-plus buildings on the former fresh air camp.

2014 - The McHenry County "Independants" 1858 baseball team forms

2014 - Car show debuts at Heritage Fair

2015, May - McHenry County awards landmark status given to the William F. Coventry house and barn in Harvard.

2015 - MCHS saves the 1931 Harmony School from demolition.

2016 - Circuit rider sing-along at Riley Methodist Church.

2016 - Wisconsin Supper Clubs Sampler Lecture sets an attendance record, with some 170 people packing into Eckert Hall.

2016 - MCHS maintained its streak with Landmarks Illinois, having a hand in getting our fifth straight structure listed to the state's Most Endangered list. If you are keeping score, they are, in order: The Mineola in Fox Lake, Camp Algonquin, Harmony School, the Coventry farmstead and the Lakewood Farms in Wauconda.

2016 - About 100 people showed up on the Woodstock Square June 16 for our Perkins Players' re-enactment of Socialist Eugene Debs release in 1895 from the McHenry County Jail.

2017 - Nancy Roozée named as a Woman of Distinction by Shaw Media

2017 - Newspaper digitization program begins

2017, September - Pistakee Lake boat tour, narrated by Craig Pfannkuche, overcomes technological difficulties with two separate pontoon boats and sells out.

2017 – 150th Anniversary celebration of the 1867 Pringle School.

2017 – Initiated participation in the self-evaluation program for small history organizations based on best practices in the field, Standards and Excellence Program (StEPs)

2018, October - Society sells The James, its aging mobile museum, for \$2,300. The buyer intends to use it as a camper.

2018 - Pringle School fundraising efforts last year enabled us to hire consultant Beth Baranski of Baranski Hammer Moretta & Sheehy Architects & Planners in Galena to analyze and evaluate the 1867 school.

2018 - We continued to make progress with our textile collection. With the help of Collections Assistant Emily Dattilo, we now have an estimated 95 percent of the museum's textile collection updated, documented, and added to our digital inventory.

2020s

2020 - We've added to our roster of digitized newspapers, with the help of a \$5,000 grant from RAILS, or the regional library system – brokered by the McHenry Area Public Library.

2020 - COVID devastates the museum schedule starting in March, forcing major changes in how the museum operates.

2020, January 28 - Society sells the Schuette Building for \$130,000 to Clausen Tavern owner Niko Kanakaris.

2021, March - MCHS hires Studio GWA of Rockford to conduct a museum building space analysis.

2021, June 15 - MCHS buys the 1936 brick bungalow at 17618 Washington St., directly east of the museum in Union, for \$220,000.

2021 - Former curator and Historic Sites Committee Chair Grace Moline dies suddenly. Veteran quilter Carol Sek also passes away that year.

2021, September - Lela Olson hired as Office Manager

2022, April - Cindy Simmons hired as Bookkeeper

2022, June - Janet Barron is hired as Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

2022 - It was a particularly devastating year for the society when it came to volunteer deaths. We lost Don Bellm, Frank Boxleitner, Wilson "Bill" Dysart, Robert Hughes, Hazel Kniebusch, Alan Levitt, Doris Marsh, Victor Meuch, Dorothy Otis, Jack Paul, Jim Schmid, Josephine "Jo" Smith, Janice Webb, Jean Wilson, Pearl Willhammer, Judy Wojtynek, and Jim Wyman.

2022, February – Neon One management system adopted

2023 – MCHS participates in Collections Assessment Program (CAP)

2023, May - Rachel Seidner, MLIS hired as our first professional Research Librarian

2023, July - Anna Pivoras hired as Executive Director

2023 – MCHS celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the Society

2023, October - Wayne Duerkes, PhD hired as Executive Director



We engage and educate current and future generations by preserving and sharing McHenry County's history.