

1982
2022

McHenry County Historical Society's Research Library

40 YEARS
OF SERVICE
(A Library History)

HOW do you transform a collection of "diaries, township records, land grants, warranty deeds, pictures, postcards, scrapbooks, clipping files, obits, census reports, local and county history books, letters, etc." into a research library?

(ASK A LIBRARIAN)

by Maggie Field Crane

One of our former museum administrator **Nancy Fike's** first projects in 1981, then a newly hired curator, was to start a research library and open it to the public.

Her goal was to create a place that would draw people in and make the museum more attractive.

She sent a letter to **Margaret Marchi** requesting her help, a few months after retiring as head librarian of the Woodstock Public Library. Of course, as anyone who knew her can attest, Margaret said yes and proceeded to do an excellent job. During the same period, she organized the library for the McHenry County Defenders, now known as the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County.

Nancy's letter was sent in June, and a short time later, in the "From the Curator" column that ran in the Summer/July 1981 Tracer, she was able to report: "The research library being established here to be opened to the public is moving along. Members of the McHenry County Genealogical Society have been indexing funeral records for us and gradually the library is being stocked with town and county histories, abstracts, oral histories, early club and organization records, an obituary file, census records (1840 - 1900) and microfilm, as well as scrapbooks, diaries, newspaper clippings, maps etc. A lot more volunteer help will be needed on this project if it is to be completed. Margaret Marchi of McHenry, the retired head of the Woodstock Public Library has been lending a hand in organizing the indexing methods we use."

Marchi spent the following months cataloging and organizing materials. Fike commented in the winter 1982 Tracer that **"while much of this material has been here for years, it has never been easy to get at. Starting a library, especially a specialized one like this, from the ground up, is not an easy task. The Society owes Mrs. Marchi a very great debt of gratitude."** Margaret did not work alone but had the help of volunteers Ida Howell and Marlene DiVerdi of Woodstock, and Nancy Grau of Huntley.



The opening of the library to the public coincided with the opening of the museum season in May 1982. Margaret (above, left) and her volunteers did not start with empty shelves and cabinets.

Since the Society was organized by **Dorothy McEachren** (above, right) and Lura Wandrack in 1963, collecting information was a top priority. As the fledgling Society moved from place to place in Woodstock, Dorothy's carefully chosen and curated newspaper clippings plus other donations came along.

It all started in Woodstock City Hall, located at what is now solely the Woodstock Opera House, in a room loaned by Mayor Thor Emricson. The first annual membership meeting featured Robert Brubaker, the Librarian at the Illinois State Historical Society.

In May 1964, an article in the Woodstock Sentinel solicited genealogical and historical information. That same year, the Society started to get requests for information. They also started asking for volunteer researchers and still need more.

Remodeling of city hall in 1966 bumped them to the old Dacy basement on the corner of East Judd and North Benton streets, just off the Woodstock Square. Thankfully, the Society was able to move in 1967 to the Odd Fellows building, adjacent to the State Bank of Woodstock on the Square.

The Society's annual meeting in 1972 was held at the museum's current headquarters, Union School - even though the site did not open as a public museum until 1976.

During early years in Union, first a young couple and then a custodian lived in the building. In 1979, the board decided the custodian's apartment should be used as a library. It did not quite work out that way. The apartment is now the office, while the library was in the adjacent room, known as the accession room. The school's music classroom first was used for the Sampler Lecture Series, but eventually the library moved there, where it is located today, and now expanding back into its original location.

(library history continues with HEROES story)

Please direct your library research inquiry, or to schedule a library appointment (required, in advance):

info@mchenrycountyhistory.org

or call 815/923-2267

We Appreciate Our Members! Join us today.
(research assistance is free to members)

This special publication, with enhanced excerpts from the fourth 2022 issue of the quarterly Tracer journal (a benefit of membership) was prepared to commemorate the 40th anniversary of our library.

Don Rose, Editor

Karen Parks, Board President

Museum's Public Hours: 1-4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday
And 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. most Saturdays through October
6422 Main Street - Union, Illinois 60180

Museum Staff

Administrator - Kurt Begalka

Exhibits Curator - Kira Stell Office Manager - Lela Olson

Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator - Janet Barron

mchenrycountyhistory.org

Facebook: McHenryCountyHistoricalSociety

Instagram: @mchenrycountyhistory

#McHenryCountyHistory

We are always in need of funding for projects to help us preserve and provide more material online. If you are able and wish to financially help support the library's preservation and digitization efforts or storage challenges, please ask for a copy of our current "wish list."

And, if you are a retired librarian, experienced researcher, or have library experience and extra time, please consider volunteering.

Your time will provide benefits to many others.

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

We endeavor to be a hub for collection, preservation and educational outreach reflecting McHenry County's history.

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Founded in 1963 - Museum opened in 1976
(An Illinois nonprofit 501(c)3 Corporation)
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Our purpose is to acquire, catalog, and preserve documentary materials that relate to McHenry County history and its people. These materials may be made available to members for free and to the public for a research fee.

Historic treasures unique to our research library:

(See printed **GEMS IN OUR LIBRARY** flyer for a peek, in color!)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• McHenry County maps and atlases• Surveyors' notebooks• Original color Sanborn atlases• Civil War diaries by McHenry County soldiers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many one-room school ledgers• Local businesses' ledgers• Title abstracts• Township tax ledgers• Don Peasley collection |
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RESOURCES TO EXPLORE @

mchenrycountyhistory.org/research-library

- Research Library Guidelines
- Historic Links
- Researcher's Resource Guide
- Vertical File Headings List
- Biographical File Headings List
- Bibliography of McHenry County History Materials
- How to Research Your Property

Digital Collections available directly via **/research-library** link above:

- Newspapers from Richmond, Marengo, McHenry, and Woodstock up to 1923
- McHenry Star newspapers 1988-1998
- File headings for all 4 vertical files:
 - **school**
 - **community**
 - **subject**
 - **biographical**
- An index to all obituaries collected for 60 years
- Digital scrapbook collection (coming soon)

GEMS

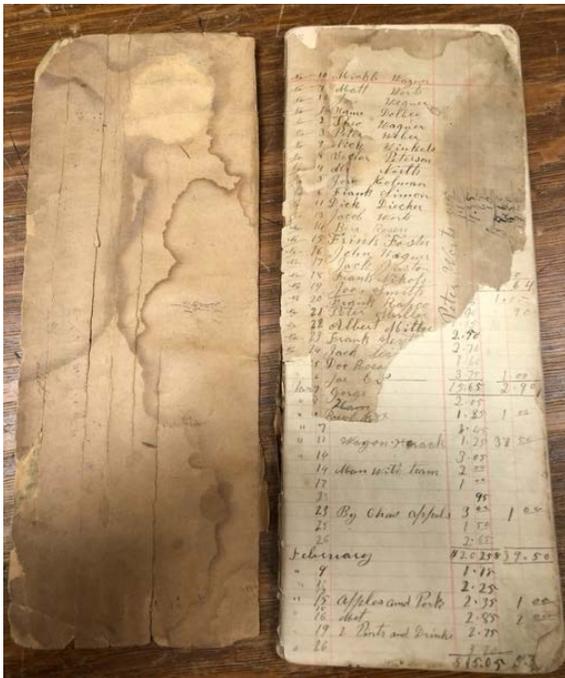
by Maggie Field Crane

IN OUR LIBRARY

Ledgers

Deep in the "catacombs" (a former shower room turned storage area behind the museum stage), sit more than 300 **township tax ledgers** dating from 1850s to the 1870s. Early county tax collectors recorded the value of land, buildings, farm animals and other personal property. After the county microfilmed them, the state of Illinois gave permission to destroy the originals. However, then Deputy Treasurer Glenda Miller could not bear for that to happen. She offered them to the historical society.

Soon after those ledgers arrived, Nancy Fike used them to discover details about the Gannon family, who's restored 1843 log cabin sits on the museum campus. They are used to look for the history of houses or land, as well as for genealogy research about early settlers.



Buffalo House BUSINESS LEDGER

In Lily Lake, a tavern and hotel opened in 1901. The Buffalo House is long gone, but its memory lives on in a 6-by-15-inch business ledger (above) where owners logged everything from patrons' liquor and tobacco purchases to supplies. The Society has launched a conservation initiative that encourages the public to "adopt" an historic McHenry County book held within its collection. This ledger is but one adoptee. Details here:

<https://mchenrycountyhistory.org/adopt-a-book>

Also, the library has **school ledgers** from many one-room country schools that list pupil attendance or teacher's evaluations of both students and the school building. These can be used for family history and offer ideas and insights for programs in the West Harmony School building, relocated to the museum campus in Union.

Plats

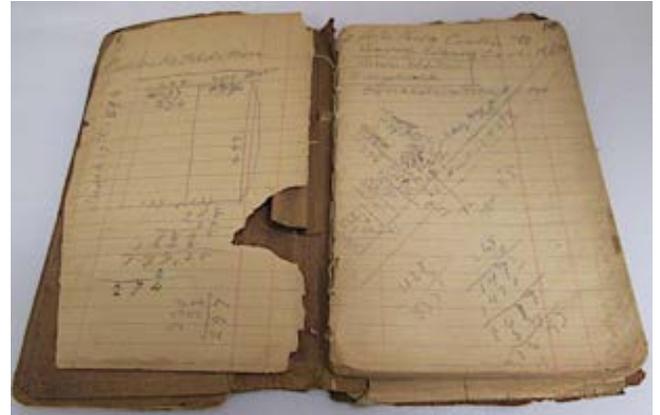
McHenry County Recorder of Deeds Phyllis Walters rescued **early road and subdivision plats** after they were digitized by her office. There are 14 huge, two-

foot square, three-inch deep, volumes that detail property transfers and new developments from 1854 to 1962. They were donated to the library in 1993 (press clipping below).



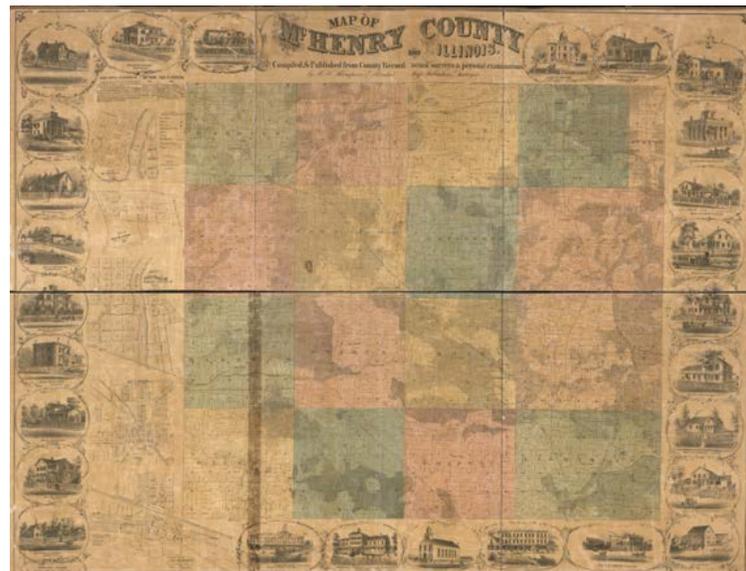
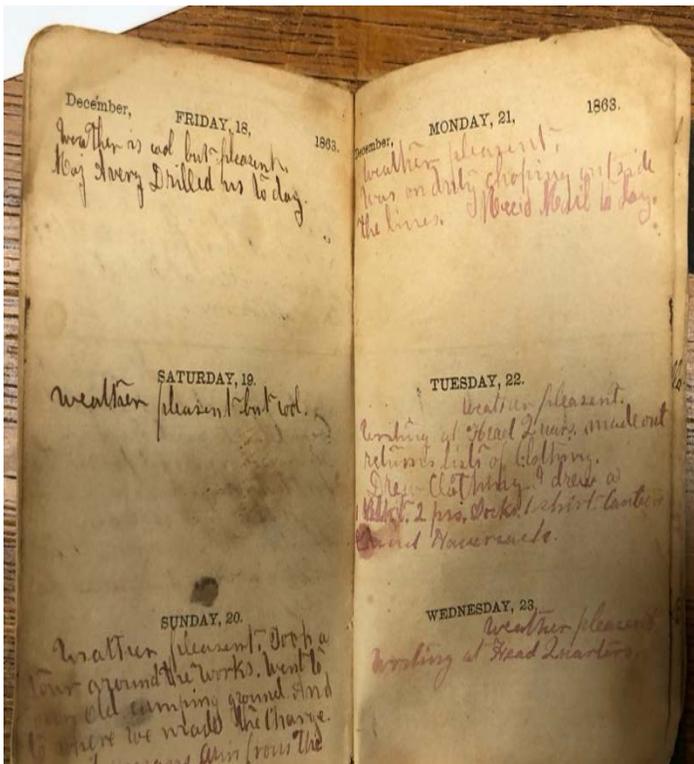
Notes

The road and subdivision plats mentioned above include handwritten notes from early McHenry County Surveyors such as John Brink, Charles Hopkins Tryon and his great nephews Charles Leon and George Leslie Tryon. In addition to the large volumes, there are more than 80 small **notebooks that the county surveyors took with them into the field**, taking notes that were the basis for the information in the plat books. An open notebook example appears below, along with two of the tattered covers. Many of these notebooks are candidates for the Adopt-A-Book program, described at left. **We invite your kind participation.**



Diaries

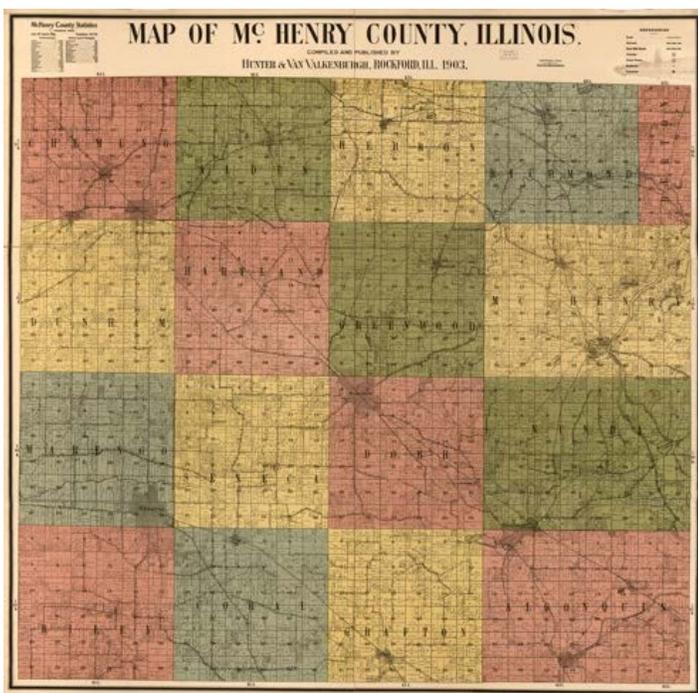
Our collection includes many handwritten personal diaries, including some from Civil War soldiers, like this example (next page) from 1863.



Maps

The museum owns two of the three known paper copies of the **1903 county landownership map** (above). The Library of Congress owns the third! Since they are so rare, both have been recently restored as part of the Adopt-A-Book program. The maps are intended to be hung on a wall and are comparable to the not-quite-as-rare but still spectacular 1862 map of McHenry County which was restored a few years ago.

John M. Van Osdel was the architect for both the Cook County Court House that was lost in the Great Fire in 1871 and the old Court House on the Woodstock Square built in 1857. The library's subject files include the Van Osdel's original specifications plus some of the original bids submitted by contractors for the 1857 courthouse.



What's a Special Library?

In library-world parlance, the MCHS Research Library is considered a special library, since it is not a public, academic, or school library. Many of the holdings are unique since very few of its books can be bought at bookstores and books make up only a small percentage of the collection. Due to space limitations, nearly every item is specifically related to McHenry County. There are several other things that make "special" the correct adjective:

Subject Files

In the 59 years since Dorothy started clipping newspapers, the articles had to be identified by subject and date, then organized into file folders. Hundreds of folders packed into dozens of file cabinets. The vertical files have other documents such as letters, flyers, booklets, & photographs. There are now **subject vertical files, biographical files, obituaries, community files and school files**. Not all files are vertical. Typical upright files hold up to 8 ½ by 14-inch legal file folders, so maps, blueprints, & similar documents are housed in large, flat files.

The Old Court House documents mentioned earlier are an example of what vertical files hold. Information about businesses, clubs and organizations, parades, and events such as Harvard Milk Days and the McHenry County Fair and much more can be found there. The extensive **file headings lists** we maintain are available via links near the bottom of **this** webpage:

mchenrycountyhistory.org/research-library

Dorothy continued her clipping until shortly before her death in 1992. Tres Gehrke and Mary Tittle succeeded Dorothy, and Pat Merritt is still clipping today, after taking over in 1997. Many other volunteers have helped in their endeavors.

Surname and other indices

Folks old enough to be familiar with the library card catalog were taught to search under author, title, and subject. This is adequate to find a book on, for instance, World War II, but it is not very easy to find individuals just by using the card catalog. As mentioned in the timeline, the idea of indexing the contents of county histories and plat books pre-dated the formal formation of the Research Library. The first indexes were typed and put into report folders and placed on the shelf next to the item. Nancy Fike introduced the idea of a separate card for each individual so that as new books are indexed, the information is added to the card along with the source. Stalwart volunteers Ginny Boss and Nancy Reczek continue to index materials today.

The Surname Index just might be the most important item in the library.

Digital Projects

Visiting a library is wonderful. But, you don't always need to, especially with today's technology. We're moving along on a strong digitization pace.

Scrapbooks

Since history never stops, the need for space to house the collection increases. Also, time is unkind to paper, especially newspaper. When space ran out on the shelves in the stacks, action was needed. Many interesting and creative personally crafted scrap and memory books have been donated over the years, and quite a few are composed of a lifetime of newspaper clippings pasted with a variety of glues, mucilages and cements onto soft construction-paper. From a long-term storage perspective, that's pretty much the worst scrapbooking method, especially when the scrapbooks are stored in warm, humid conditions. Back then, there weren't many choices.



The papers and other flat objects people compiled into their masterpieces are often fascinating and rich with local, national and world history.

One enterprising woman pasted her clippings onto old wallpaper sample books. Many scrapbooks have been indexed but are so fragile that the paper flakes and the book falls apart when being viewed. The project to scan them in house started in 2016 and is nearing completion. We're planning to offer online availability for our members at some point. Digitization of other collections is being considered. Please let us know what your interests are & if you have items to donate.

Newspapers

The Newspaper Digitization project begun in 2016 has resulted in Richmond newspapers such as the Richmond Gazette, Marengo newspapers, including the Marengo Republican-News, and McHenry Star newspapers being available online at:

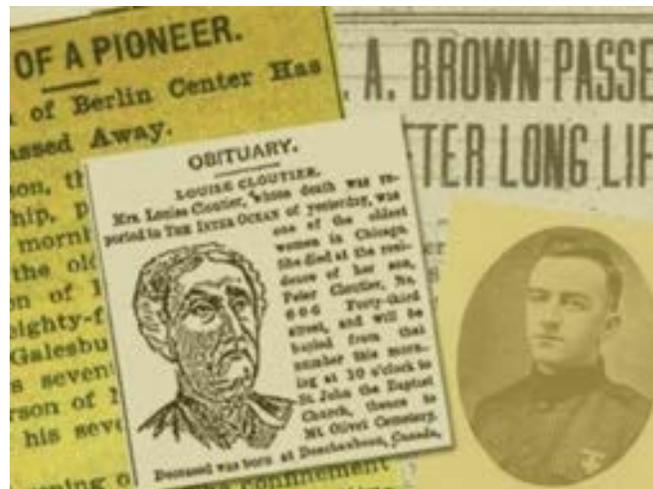
newspapers.mchenrycountyhistory.org

The Woodstock Sentinel is being digitized, with about half of the issues completed and available online.

Obituaries

Over the years, many volunteers have clipped and organized Death Notices of McHenry County residents from many different community newspapers. There are many thousands, housed in 72 card catalog sized drawers, but no additional paper clippings will be added. Instead, since 2019, Trudie Dreyer has been capturing the obituaries digitally and saving them to the library's server. Trudie has also started

scanning the paper obits and adding them to the server. It's a long and winding road, but well worth the effort. Obits are valuable sources of family information.



We offer copies of obituaries for \$5 each. Details available here:

mchenrycountyhistory.org/local-death-notice-mchenry-county-illinois

Oral Histories

The voices of Dorothy McEachren, Nancy Fike, Grace Moline, Bob Frenz, Chester Nelson and others, can be heard on cassette tapes -not as subjects, but as interviewers. Several hundred people have been interviewed, some describing their childhood in the 19th century, others recounting experiences in the wars of the 20th century.

Unfortunately, magnetic tape deteriorates over time, so these are being transferred into digital files for safekeeping. Summer interns started the project several years ago which is being restarted after a Covid hiatus.

Images

The McHenry County Historical Society & Museum archives are rich with an abundance of **images**. There are film negatives, glass plates, photographs, daguerreotypes, tintypes, slides, advertising, illustrations, and postcards ... boxes of postcards. A high percentage of questions include requests for images of people or buildings or businesses. In recent years, images have become a popular tool for outreach to the community.



Exhibit Curator Kira Stell sends out Facebook posts of photos from the postcard collection several times a week and gets excellent responses. She uses a wide variety of photos in the weekly "Picture This" feature in the Woodstock Independent. Kurt Begalka uses an image from the collection for his column in the Northwest Herald and archival images run in the Daily Herald's "Picture the Past" feature. There is a fee for use of the images, depending on whether they are used for personal, educational, or commercial purposes, so there is a fundraising aspect, as well.



Don Peasley Collection

Speaking of images, this talented gentleman, photographer, and public relations expert chronicled the people and events of Woodstock and McHenry County from 1947 until his death in 2013. He attended parades, annual meetings, fundraisers, groundbreaking, celebrations, beauty pageants, ribbon-cuttings, and first day Little League games. He photographed businesspeople, cows, buildings, signs, tractors, state basketball champions, politicians, barns, the Woodstock Square and more.



Don grew up on a farm, served his country in the Navy in World War II, and was the sportswriter for the Champaign Urbana Courier before coming to work for John Strohm's Woodstock Journal. After that newspaper ceased publication, he created the Don Peasley & Associates public relations firm, continuing to promote all three interests - **farming, veterans, and sports** - through his extensive clientele.

Don started by donating a small number of photos to the Society in 1991. In 2001, after a significant fundraising effort, the nucleus of the Don Peasley Collection was created when more than 5,000 of his negatives were printed and added to the museum collection. He continued to work, and during his final years, our own Don Rose spent many weeks with Don, his assistant Maribeth, and his daughters Sarah and Mary, to insure safe transfer of his life's work (photographs, negatives, files, papers, newspaper scrapbooks), which he donated to the Society. Our work with his collection will continue.



The man, and his body of work, are irreplaceable.



OUR LIBRARY GIANT

AND OTHER HEROES by Maggie Field Crane

Margaret Marchi wasn't quite 5 feet tall, but she was mighty. No wonder when former McHenry County Historical Society Administrator Nancy Fike decided to organize a new research library and open it to the public, she asked Marchi for help.

I worked with Margaret for nine years before her retirement. She was my boss, mentor, and immediate predecessor, teaching me everything I know about being a librarian, especially being mindful of the consequences when making decisions and never saying "I never" or "I always."

Margaret was head librarian from 1962 until Jan. 17, 1981. She left the library at 1 p.m. that afternoon, carrying her coffee mug and leaving everything at the library to me. Yikes! The library board had hired her to fill the need for a professionally trained (master's degree in library science) librarian to make a good library into a great one. She had exceptional skills with developing the library board and training library staff to work well with the public.

A few years before she retired, I returned from a library conference and told her we needed to start planning for computerizing the library. "Oh no, we don't," she replied. "I'm too old to learn computers. I'll leave that for you." So, I found it ironic that when she organized both the MCHS and McHenry County Defenders libraries she used both spreadsheets and word processing software.

I get nostalgic finding catalog cards in the museum library typed on Margaret's typewriter. I recognize them immediately since Margaret typed cards for the Woodstock Public Library's Local History Index even before doing the same at the museum. She started with the three oldest county plat maps/atlasses, then moved on to some special Woodstock histories and newspaper editions including a long list of obituaries in the 1937 80th Anniversary edition of the Woodstock Sentinel. She did all this at home before she retired.

I started working at the library in 1971, after promising Margaret that I would work here at least one year. One day, as a fairly new employee, I was straightening up after a patron and found a magazine that wasn't familiar. "Where should I put this?" I asked her. She replied, "In the Margaret Marchi Reading Room, of course." "Where is that?" I continued. With a grin, she told me to put it by the easy chairs in the front room by the new books. This was a single round coffee table surrounded by four chairs facing outward. I never forgot that conversation. So, it was with great pleasure that I was able to suggest to the library board that they name the large area by the tall new windows in the 1987 addition the Margaret Marchi Reading Room. After the 2001 addition and renovation, the sign was moved to the current location.

There are circa 1890 tables dating from the original library in the Woodstock Opera House, three walls of display cases, for new magazines, and a fireplace. Another great memory I have is when a man came up to the reference desk, pointed at the Margaret Marchi Reading Room sign and asked, "Who is that Margaret Marchi?" I pointed to the small woman standing next to him and said, "Here she is, would you like to meet her?"

Margaret Marchi and I are not the only Woodstock librarians to volunteer at the museum. Lura Wandrack was the longest-serving head librarian at Woodstock Public Library, serving from 1911 to 1948. She is often considered the co-founder of the Society along with Dorothy McEachren. Lura "cataloged" acquisitions until her death in 1969. Lura lived in Algonquin before coming to Woodstock and donated many artifacts and photos from both places.

In 1976, Margaret Marchi loaned Woodstock library's photos so that Chester Nelson could copy them for the MCHS library. Most of the photographs were available because of Lura's work developing the Local History Collection at the Woodstock library.

Today, a third librarian from WPL volunteers at the Research Library. Trudie Dreyer retired twice from there after 28 years as reference and technical services librarian. She is taking the MCHS obituary collection into the 21st century by capturing online death notices and

scanning older paper obituaries. Working backwards chronologically, she is tackling 2016 now.

Barbara Pfannkuche took over the cataloging of the Research Library's collection from Margaret Marchi in 2002, a task she is still doing today. She served on the Rural Woodstock Public Library District Board of Trustees from its inception in 1977 until 2019. Barb was the director of the Nippersink Library District and retired from the Round Lake Public Library District in 2000.

Henry Kenyon started as a librarian at McHenry Junior High in 1956, moved to Parkland Junior High from 1971 to 1993, and McHenry Public Library from 1991 until retiring in 2011. Few people may be aware that he also worked with me at Woodstock Public Library from 1973 to 1978. He is on the Library Committee and has been a volunteer researcher since he joined the museum board in 2013.

Marlene DiVerdi, Woodstock Library desk assistant, helped Margaret Marchi to set up the library during the spring of 1982.

There is no requirement to be connected to the Woodstock library to volunteer at MCHS Research Library. Arlyn Booth, 2020 "Everyday Hero" honoree, has taken the library up a notch (or two). Arlyn grew up in Crystal Lake and retired as the map librarian at the Illinois State Library in Springfield. Since she started in 2013, she has completely indexed and organized the dozens of drawers of maps, plat books, diplomas, oversized marriage certificates, etc. in the flat files plus the atlases and rolled documents housed nearby. She has spearheaded the efforts to restore the 1862 and 1903 maps and has shepherded several other conservation endeavors. An expert in using land and tax records to find the histories of properties, she wrote the web page "How to Research Your Property" on the MCHS website (mchenrycountyhistory.org/how-research-your-property-0)

Under Arlyn's leadership as chair of the Library Committee, she helps set board policies and supervises the work of volunteers. The job description for the library committee chairman that she wrote includes more than a page of responsibilities, and the list of library tasks needed to be completed is even longer.

Still, her greatest talent is that of researcher. The answers that she finds for any questions from the public (and museum staff) are accurate, thorough, and documented. After the complete reorganization of the space started in 2017, Arlyn's latest effort is expanding the shelving and files in the current library and making space in the former acquisitions room for use by members of the public who come in for research help.

By the way, I'm the one who recruited her. You're welcome.

Speaking of researchers, Craig Pfannkuche doesn't have a master's degree in library science, but he is a very important contributor to the excellence of the library. I suppose that being married to a professional librarian counts. Since the early 1990s, at the end of his career teaching high school history, he has been answering queries from across the country. Many of his response letters are kept in the vertical subject and biography files, creating another source for researchers. Craig doesn't limit himself to the Research Library resources, but travels to other libraries and museums to find the answers. He uses his knowledge of photography, historic background details, and genealogy to track down families of the subjects in old photographs. He then tries to return them to the family or closest museum.

Other professional librarians are currently volunteering. For example, Dianne Brooks, who is experienced in cataloging and indexing in special and public libraries in the Chicago suburbs, is working on obituaries with Trudie Dreyer. Newly minted librarian Dave Sippel from Crystal Lake, Marengo, and Lake in the Hills is working with the newspaper collection and helping put subject file headings on the website.

My thanks to the folks that clipped and filed the newspaper articles in the "McHenry County Historical Society Subject Files." Yes, there are separate folders with this heading in the vertical files. Thank you also to volunteers who indexed The Tracer magazine articles. I appreciate the ease of access that the website provides me, so thanks to anyone who helped design it and helps keep it up to date.

I am deliberately not naming everyone's name, not only so that I don't forget someone, but also because it takes many people to keep all this history together and accessible.

LIBRARY TIMELINE

by Maggie Field Crane

Since the May 1982 inauguration of the MCHS Research Library, many items have been donated, cataloged, and researched.

Some highlights:

1983: McHenry County Illinois Genealogical Society volunteers help others research on Wednesday afternoons.

1986: MCHS offers family history record forms to be filed permanently in the library.

1987: Nancy Grau cross indexes all the names in the biography files and adds them to the surname Index, that currently includes names from the 1968 History of McHenry County, the 1862 county map, and the 1872 atlas/plat book.

Helen Grau of Huntley indexes a series of World War II scrapbooks. Tres Gehrke of Marengo, Huntley and Woodstock starts clipping newspapers. Peggy Stuntz of Marengo works on a system to streamline the vertical files (filled with those newspaper clippings).

1989: Volunteers named above continue their projects while Margaret Marchi catalogs books and Ramona Martin, Norma Anderson, Mary Weaver, and Shirley Hensel assist.

1992: The construction of the McEachren Annex and Diecke Hall addition provides additional space. The library is moved from the accession room to the old music room. It is a very good thing. Too much weight on the floor of what originally was an 1870 classroom, was causing it to sink.

1993: Nancy Grau describes the library in the history that she has written for the 30th anniversary of the Society: "The vertical file of businesses, schools, and various other subjects takes up nearly one whole wall. The biography file is spilling over into its 29th drawer. Books of local interest have been augmented by a large group

of abstracts, information from insurance and real estate firms, and several immense county plat books."

1997: Pat Merritt innocently comes into the library to do research and is recruited by Nancy Fike to clip newspapers. Pat still comes into the library each week to keep the files up to date.

1998: The McHenry County Treasurer donates 300+ tax collectors' records dating from 1843-1869 after they were microfilmed. Deputy Treasurer Glenda Miller could not bear to have them destroyed.

2001: Nancy Fike tells Don Peasley "Our research library is in its best organizational shape ever. Newspapers get clipped, obituaries are filed, specialized projects like the identification of hundreds of World War service people are undertaken, and cataloging and documenting materials is up to date, accomplished by volunteers."

2002: Library Committee members Pat Nelson, Craig Pfannkuche, Pat Merritt, Margaret Marchi, Elaine Obenchain, Nancy Grau, Rod Poppe, Nancy Fike and Kathleen Bergen Schmidt revise guidelines for the use of Society sources for personal, nonprofit, or commercial purposes.

The Society and McHenry County public libraries team up to offer a family museum explorer card that is checked out for two weeks from the local library and used as a free pass into the museum.

Retired librarian Barbara Pfannkuche of Wonder Lake succeeds Margaret Marchi as library cataloger. Barb deserves our gratitude for 20 years of typing cards for what may be one of the last actual card catalogs in McHenry County.

2003: Mert Sarvey is honored by MCHS and MCIGS for his work as "Indexer Extraordinaire" for spending many hours at microfilm machines indexing deaths, marriages, marriage notices, and census records. For several years, he also spent five hours a day, five days a week indexing in the library working on the surname index and indexing the Tracer. Since that time, the research library surname index is affectionately nicknamed the Mert Sarvey Index.

2010: Technology consultant Don Rose and Museum Curator Grace Moline work together to develop a dynamic new website for the Society.

The Research Library's web page is designed as the first stop for history hunters.

2016: The Library Committee undertakes two digitization projects simultaneously, scrapbooks and newspapers, but use two different strategies. The Technology Committee helps to choose the proper scanner for the scrapbooks and volunteer Gail Hayes begins scanning each page, using optical character recognition software to translate the image into text. The result is a digital scrapbook that can be searched by using words (and names). The newspaper digitation project is too large to be done alone. The Library Committee approaches the county genealogical society, other public libraries, and community organizations. The Richmond Gazette is the first to be sent to Northern Micrographics in La Crosse, Wis. for scanning. The company went out of business in 2021.

2016: The county recorder's office donates its Mortgager, Grantor and Grantee Index and their cabinet to the Society. Administrator Kurt Begalka and board member Rob Cisneros used Kurt's truck and sheer determination to muscle the shelf through hairpin turns and over two ramps to get it back into a library annex behind the stage.

2017: The Research Library is reorganized, partly to make room for more artifacts in cold storage above the McEachren museum gallery and partly to house most library materials in just two places, the library, and the catacombs. New five-drawer vertical file cabinets are purchased to replace the current four-drawer units and new shelves are purchased. Some new shelves are obtained gratis from Marengo Union Public Library District.

2021: An Adopt-a-Book program is launched to restore and conserve valuable materials that were falling apart. Once the cost of mending, surface cleaning, page rehinging, stabilizing covers and other needed repairs is estimated, individuals or groups pay the amount and are given an adoption certificate. The ledger of the Buffalo House tavern in Lily Lake is one of the first adoptees.

2022: Some museum staff offices are relocated, opening the former accession room for library expansion, as a workroom. The library committee organizes a 40th Anniversary **Research Library Celebration** with help from museum staff and prepares this special history brochure. The event occurs September 8th.