

# 2025 Annual Report

---





# Our Team

---

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Robert Frenz, President

Lonni Oldham, Vice-President

Molly Walsh, Treasurer

Nancy Baker, Secretary

Arlyn Booth

Dawn Milarski

Dan Ring

Don Rose

Deb Silker

Caroline Sobolak

Ed Urban

Danny Fitte, Youth Liaison

## **STAFF**

Jolie Diepenhorst, Executive Director

Patrick McDonald, Director of Operations

Siobhan Heraty, Museum Curator

Kris Kenney, Librarian/Visitor Services

Russel O'Brien, Research Librarian

Cindy Simmons, Bookkeeper

# Vision And Mission

## Mission

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

## Vision

The McHenry County Historical Society & Museum endeavors to be a hub for collection, preservation, and educational outreach reflecting McHenry County's History.





# 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes

---

**Call to Order:** President Bob Frenz called the Annual Meeting of the McHenry County Historical Society to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Stage Left Cafe, 124 W. Van Buren St., Woodstock. President Frenz welcomed the members and led the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Minutes:** Don Rose moved to approve the minutes from the July 18, 2023 Annual Meeting. Laurie Cisneros seconded. All voted aye and the minutes were approved.

**Annual Report:** Copies of the 2023-24 Annual Report were distributed at the check-in table.

**Nancy Fike Scholarship Award:** The Nancy Fike Scholarship competition is open to any high school senior or college freshman who resides in McHenry County. The winner of this year's scholarship is Jacobs High School graduate Camryn Cook who was unable to attend the Annual Meeting because she is currently playing for the U.S. Rugby Team.

**Introduction of Board Members:** Bob Frenz introduced the following Board Members: Vice President Lonni Oldham, Don Rose, Outgoing President Karen Parks, Secretary Nancy Baker, Arlyn Booth, and Deb Silker. He also introduced Staff Members Lela Olson, Janet Barron, and Kira Stell.

**Election of Board Members:** Lonnia Oldham, Chairman of the Governance Committee, announced that votes were tallied and the membership has elected Nancy Baker to serve another 3 year term.

**Recognition of Outgoing President:** Karen Parks was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for her leadership as President for the past four years.

**Recognition of Honorary Directors:** Lonni Oldham reported that the bylaws provide for the recognition of honorary directors. She highlighted the qualifications and experience of three past board members—Henry Kenyon, Arlen Bird, and Kathy Bergan-Schmidt who were presented as Honorary Members of the Board of Directors.

**Adjournment:** It was moved and seconded to adjourn the Annual Meeting at 7:00PM

**Minutes prepared by Nancy Baker, Secretary**

# Director's Report

---



What an exciting time at MCHS! During the past year, we hired new staff, implemented new exhibitions and programs, opened the museum for visitors, painted the museum, secured several grants, welcomed new members, and enjoyed the history and community of McHenry County. I am thrilled to be here, and I think I can speak for the staff and volunteers when I say that they are equally happy to be here.

## **MUSEUM HOURS**

In January, for the first time, the doors opened year round. Museum hours have changed from Wednesday - Saturday, 1-4 PM, May-December (12 hours a week), to Tuesday - Friday, 9 AM-4 PM, and Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM (35 hours a week). When visitors open the door to the museum, they are now greeted by friendly staff and volunteers at the welcome desk with a kind hello and a "How can I help?" The buzzer is no longer needed.

## **PROGRAMMING**

Over the last nine months, we have successfully engaged the community in thirty-one programs, attracting over 800 visitors; when Heritage Fair is included, the total number rises to 1,141, and it's only July! We have many more events scheduled for the rest of the year and are excited to engage the public with more new and exciting programs.

## **MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

This year, we have been very successful at reaching new audiences, including families and young couples. We attribute the success of Museum Week and Tuesday for Tots to social media. It is an essential tool for nonprofits to engage new audiences. We increased our social media reach by over 1000 "friends". If you haven't already, please join our Facebook and Instagram pages to stay up-to-date with all the latest programs and news.

# Director's Report

---



## **GRANTS**

This year has been an excellent year for grants for MCHS. We applied for and received a \$5000 emergency grant from the Community Foundation for McHenry County, as well as a mission grant of \$20,000 to be used for a new exhibition called McHenry Memories. The DAR awarded us a \$500 grant for collections work, and the Illinois Humanities selected MCHS for a \$1,500 grant to support a new pilot program called Community Conversations, which aims to bring people and communities together.

## **FINANCES**

With all the programming and new museum hours, there has been an uptick in memberships, annual fund donations, and general donations. The annual fund has raised \$35,727.78 so far this year, and general donations are at \$25,249.03. We can't thank you enough for your support. Additionally, this year's Heritage Fair was a huge success; we raised \$7,790 in just one day!

## **BUILDING**

The museum did receive a refresh over the past year. The ceiling is now black, the walls are off-white, and the floor received a new wax job. (Our new cleaning company does a fantastic job of keeping things dusted, swept, mopped, and overall clean.) There have been a few changes to exhibits and a few more to come, but you will notice the very large 1903 floor map of McHenry County. It is a wonderful way to engage visitors, of all ages. As a staff we are excited by the changes and increased visitorship.

## **STAFF**

An entirely new administrative staff sits in the museum offices, and we are committed to supporting the Society's mission and are pleased to contribute to the community. Every staff member holds an M.A. degree in either history or library science and is eager to move the mission of the organization forward. We are excited to welcome visitors into the museum, research library, and offices.

# President's Report

---



I am happy to report to you tonight that the state of our Society is strong.

Treasurer Molly Walsh will report that despite many unforeseen challenges we finished the 2024-25 fiscal year in sound financial condition. After a number of years of decline – thanks in no small part to the pandemic – our membership is again rebounding. Events, programming, and exhibits have won over a large year around audience.

As you can see tonight, our entire facility has a new, improved appearance. Our Research Library continues to aid the community in its variety of research requests.

Volunteers are the life-blood of any non-profit organization. Visitor Services Coordinator, Kris Kenney, reports that we now have over 75 volunteers assisting with our many activities.

To what may we attribute all this good news? As lovers of history, we all know that one constant in life is change. As you are aware, we have completely turned over our full-time staff since we last met. Your Board of Directors recognized this as an opportunity to positively change the direction of the organization. This process began last fall with the hiring of Jolie Diepenhorst as our new Executive Director. Jolie brought the energy, enthusiasm, and fresh ideas that we truly needed, especially at that time. Together with the team she has assembled – Patrick McDonald as Operations Director, Siobhan Heraty as Curator, and Kris Kenney, both in the library and as Visitor Services Coordinator – they have brought excitement and renewed interest to MCHS. Coupled with our returning part-time employees – Cindy Simmons, our bookkeeper, and Russ O'Brien in the library – we have a strong staff working together on behalf of our members.

Lastly, I would like to thank my predecessor, Karen Parks, for leading our Board and helping to steer the Society through the four very difficult years from 2020 to 2024. Karen is leaving the BOD but will graciously continue to serve on some committees.



# Financial

---

We continue to receive generous donor support from our members. The total amount of member donations was \$74,166.87, up \$28,000 from last fiscal year. Even with an increase in our revenue our expenses have outpaced our revenue. This is due to unbudgeted expenses primarily for repairs and maintenance of our historic buildings. This past year, in March, the building experienced an electrical surge that damaged the HVAC system. This event caused a loss of heat in the museum for multiple weeks. Fortunately, the Society received a \$5000 emergency grant from the Community Foundation for McHenry County and donations towards repairs.

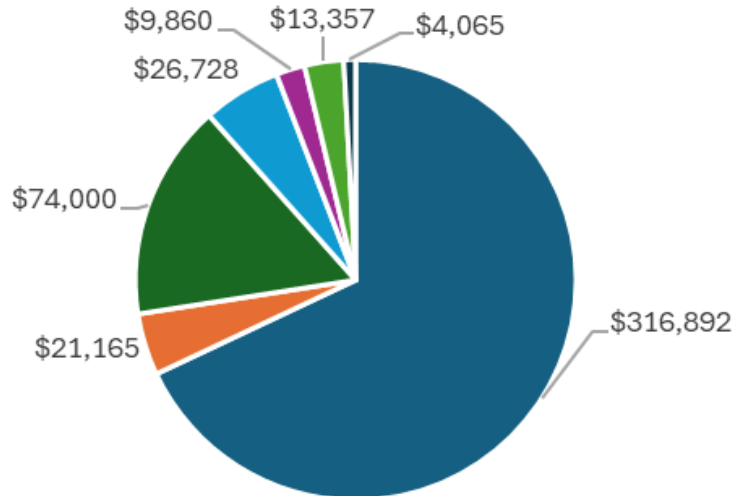
The pie chart below is a detailed overview of the Society’s performance over this fiscal year, detailing our revenue and expenses. In addition, listed is the market value as of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, of the Society’s investments. The Board has approved a 2025 -26 budget of total revenue at \$473,497 and expenses at \$486,578,49.

## INVESTMENTS

<b>McEachren Charitable Trust</b>	<b>\$4,223,886.20</b>
<b>MCHS Endowment</b>	<b>\$2,046,286.41</b>
<b>Anderson</b>	<b>\$989,951.53</b>

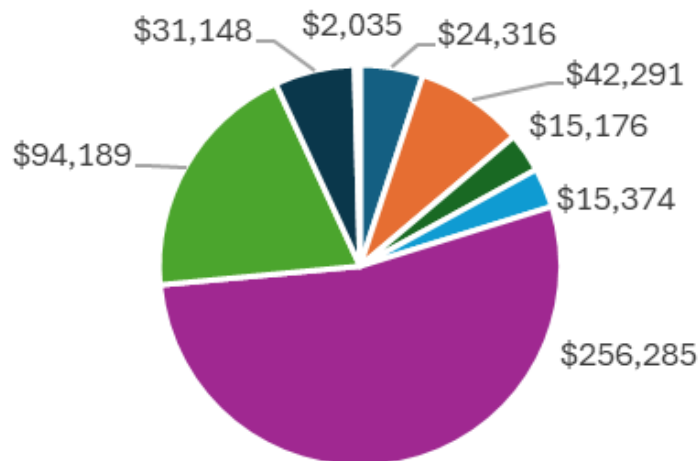
# Financial

## Total Revenue \$466,077



- Northern Trust Distributions - 68%
- Donations - 16%
- Grants & Restrictive Donations - 2%
- Miscellaneous Income - 0.5%
- Membership - 4.5%
- Programs and Fundraisers - 6%
- Collections Restrictive Fund - 3%

## Total Expenses \$480,805



- Utilities - 5%
- Museum Renovation - 3%
- Salaries & Benefits - 53%
- Exhibits & Collections - 6%
- Building Repair & Maintenance - 9%
- Programs & Fundraisers - 3%
- Operational Expenses - 20%
- Miscellaneous Expenses - 1%

# Education



The Education Committee hosted many events over the last fiscal year including Heritage Fair and Cider Fest where we provided activities for children and families. These events were followed by the annual Christmas Tree decorating at the Woodstock Opera House with an Around the World theme in December.

We hosted field trips throughout the fiscal year with 43 third graders from Greenwood Elementary School, 80 third graders from Woodstock District 200, and 12 special needs adults from Belvidere.

We managed the new Tuesday for Tots program, that includes story time, play time and craft time. The program has been so successful, we hope to continue it.

We returned to the classroom this year with a Pack your Wagon program at Prairiewood Elementary School in Woodstock.

We planned and engaged in two teacher round tables with Marengo/Riley School District and Woodstock School District. We wanted to give them an idea of what is included in a field trip to the museum. From these meetings we a better understanding of what we can offer in the classroom and we can better meet the needs of our community schools.

We met with an educator from Milwaukee County Historical Society who shared her programs and gave us a lot to think about as we begin to plan our push in programs for schools. - Gail Perkins, Education Chair

Pack Your Wagon



Tuesdays for Tots



Tuesdays for Tots

Tuesdays for Tots



Teacher Round Table

# Membership

---



## 2024-2025 Membership Goals:

- 1) Develop a plan to increase the value of a MCHS membership
- 2) Review, analyze and report membership data
- 3) Increase membership to 650 members

The McHenry County Historical Society is excited to report an increase in membership this year. Our new Executive Director, Jolie Diepenhorst suggested a Membership Drive event in January, and we have been moving forward and growing ever since. The positive impact of being open year round, social media, marketing and providing new and interesting programs and events has made a significant difference. So far in 2025 we have 149 new members! A special thanks to our staff and volunteers for making this happen.

A special thanks to Patrick McDonald our Director of Operations for coordinating communication with membership through Neon, our Customer Relations Management program.

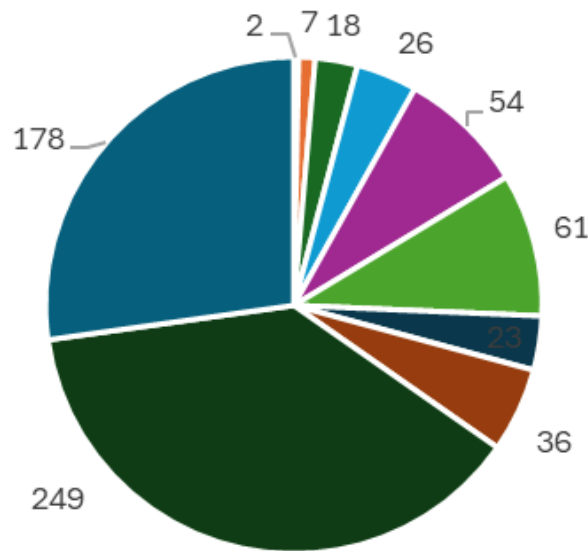
Our goal is to continue to increase our membership by providing frequent, new, creative and engaging programs to reach all age groups. Please bring a friend and encourage others to join us in sharing local history. Remember to take advantage of your membership benefits by submitting a research request, reading the Tracer, enjoying free admission to the museum and reduced program fees. Let us know if you have any suggestions or comments. And thank YOU for being a valued member of the McHenry County Historical Society.

- Deb Silker, Membership Chair

# Membership



Current Memberships By Categories



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ■ Student Memberships - 0.46%                  | ■ Organizational Members - 1.07%                 |
| ■ Governmental Memberships - 2.74%             | ■ Members in Lifetime Couple Memberships - 3.96% |
| ■ Individual Lifetime Members - 8.22%          | ■ Members in Household Memberships - 9.3%        |
| ■ Members in Couple Memberships - 3.5%         | ■ Individual Members - 5.48%                     |
| ■ Members in Senior Couple Memberships - 37.9% | ■ Individual Senior Members - 27.09%             |

# Lifetime Members

---



Libbie Aavang  
Melodie Archer  
Nancy Baker  
Steve Baker  
Janet Beck  
Barbara Bennett  
Kathleen Bergan-Schmidt  
Judy Beth-Hervert  
Arlyn Booth  
Ann Bormett  
Rick 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  
Bill Howenstine  
Nancy Hudson  
Genevieve  
Hughes  
Nancy Irwin  
Jim Keenan  
Marlene Keenan  
Stanley Korwin  
John Krendger  
Bob Lueders  
Mary E Maurer  
Arden Miller  
Sherry Mueller  
Doug Noe  
Mary Noe  
Lonni Oldham  
Molly Oldham  
Marlene Olson  
Peggy Palmquist  
Karen Parks  
James Peard  
Peter Perkind  
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  
Jeff Varda  
Ilene Wiedmann

# Deceased Members

---



## In Memorium

Don Hildebrand

Jan Knight

Orrin Kinney

Gene Limbaugh

Jean Nigbor

Gorge Partlo

Emile Peters

Richard Schwebke

Linda Stengel

Thomas Thennes

If you know of any other member who passed away this fiscal year omitted from the list, please phone or email the office.

# Historic Sites

---



In the past year, the committee has seen a slowdown in new plaque opportunities. The Committee sent out 4 “Hello” letters and continued to dutifully follow up on past “Hello” letters. We received only 1 completed application. We had only 1 site evaluation: Queen Anne Eckert Cemetery, Queen Anne Road, Woodstock. While this site is rich in history, the property was obtained in very poor condition. The Committee is giving the new owners some time with the site so it can be refurbished and ready for plaquing soon.

The Committee provided a letter of support to the Crystal Lake Historic Preservation Commission in support of saving the Tarpley House (a.k.a Gates House) on the St. Mary’s Episcopal Church property, 210 McHenry Ave, Crystal Lake. This joint effort of the community brought about a recommended landmark status and a delay of demolition. While the final landmark status has yet to be voted upon by the City of Crystal Lake, we are hopeful that it will remain a part of Crystal Lake’s history. On October 14, 2024, the Historic Sites Committee visited the Black Point Estate and Gardens in Lake Geneva, WI, via boat for a tour of the 19th century Queen Anne-style summer retreat of the Chicago Beer Baron, Conrad Seipp and family. After climbing 120 steps from the pier up to the house, a great time was had by all.

In January 2025, the Committee invited Jolie Diepenhorst, new MCHS Executive Director to their meeting for an informal meet and greet. The Committee enjoyed meeting Jolie and listening to her ideas and input. With Jolie’s assistance, the Committee now has a formal email address and updated business cards which has helped streamline plaque applications, provide formal communications and assist with research inquiries on landmarked properties such as the Charles H. Hibbard House (The Cupola House) in Marengo and the Hall House in Harvard.

The Committee is looking forward to having a booth at the 2025 Cider Fest to help raise awareness of our committee and create more interest in historic site preservation.

The Committee performed a price check for our plaques to ensure that our plaque recipients are receiving the best price for their plaques. We compared several companies in the area and our current plaque provider is still the best price around.

# Historic Sites

---



The Committee has been actively updating and maintaining the newly created Attempted Plaque listing (listing past “Hello” letter sites). This has helped the Committee revisit properties which have changed owners as well as prevent excessive “Hello” letter attempts.

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

-Mimi Bierman, Chair & Secretary



# Governance

---



In 2024-2025, the Governance Committee spearheaded the board's goal of transitioning from a managing board to a governing board. As a managing board, the board was more hands-on and operational, while a governing board is more strategic and oversight focused. To begin the transition, the responsibilities of the board and the responsibilities of the Executive Director and staff were reviewed and revised. Based on this analysis, the restructuring of the MCHS Board Standing Committees was undertaken with a concentration on governing. As a result, some board committees not within the definition of governing became volunteer/advisory committees under the direction of the Executive Director. The committees were Membership, Collections, and Education. In June, bylaw revisions related to Standing Committees were presented to the board for review. These bylaw changes are to be approved by the membership at the Annual Meeting on July 29, 2025. The Governance Committee continues to focus on best practices in governing and is looking forward to a more efficient board and committees.

The Governance Committee was pleased to nominate 2025-2028 Board of Directors: current Board Members Arlyn Booth, Lonni Oldham, and Caroline Sobolak , plus new candidates Dawn Milarski and Jeff Varda.

Dawn Milarski grew up in Ringwood, New Jersey, a town founded in 1740 with a rich history that sparked Dawn's love for historical properties. Finding her way to Illinois in 1996 with her two daughters, while attending the College of Lake County, Dawn worked in social services for the college's Women's Center. She served on the Women's Center Board of Directors and the CLC Health and Safety Board for 12 years. In 2014 she moved to McHenry County and became a full-time artist, farmer and small business owner. She continues to be active in local charities and grassroots organizations. In 2022 she began her career creating the Hebron Historical Society and as an elected official in the Village of Hebron. She is a board member of the Linn Hebron Cemetery and the Hebron Cemetery, and she is also training to be a Cemetery Sexton. Dawn enjoys educating the public about the early settlers of McHenry County through local cemetery walks and sharing histories on local social media. "Time will tell the stories we will make. It is my goal to both learn and teach the future generation how we got here."

# Governance

---



Jeff Varda lives in McHenry. He is a recently retired McHenry High School teacher and counselor who is still active in coaching chess and golf. He has a special interest in history and in supporting children. He volunteers with many community and county causes: Field Supervisor National Louis University, Volunteer for McHenry County Chess Association, which he founded, Former Chairperson McHenry Landmark Commission, Head of Non-Profit Friends of McHenry Golf providing golf for kids in District 15, Former CASA Volunteer, Chair of DEI/Immigration committee of Indivisible McHenry County, and Member McHenry Area Historical Society.

On behalf of the Society, the Governance Committee extends a huge thank you and much appreciation to Karen Parks for her valuable contributions as she steps down from the board. Karen became a board member in 2020 and within the year was elected president. She served two terms as president leading the Society through a time of many challenges and improvements. She also chaired the Education Committee, reinvigorating and expanding educational offering.

Something new for the board was recommended by Executive Director Jolie Diepenhorst: a Youth Liaison Board Member. Recognizing the benefits of a youthful perspective, the Governance Committee presented a Youth Liaison job description to the board for approval. In May, Danny Fitte, a college student from Lake in the Hills was appointed as the first Youth Liaison to the Board.

-Lonni Oldham  
Governance Committee Chair



# Building & Grounds

---



FY 24/25 brought the much needed replacement of museum flat roofs along with roof drainage improvements. During the process, it was discovered that there were actually two roof decks over Eckert Hall plus at least three layers of roofing material. This certainly helped explain many years of chasing roof leaks! The Board of Directors is very grateful for the leadership and expertise of committee member and volunteer Rob Cisneros on this project.

The roof mounted furnaces and AC units which were installed in the early to mid 1990s were also replaced. When the museum addition was constructed in 1992, Deicke Hall was not included in the central system and was instead heated by a gas fired heater hung from the ceiling. The new system was upgraded to include Deicke Hall and the old heater was removed, allowing for better airflow and temperature control year round. Unfortunately, in March 2025 an electrical power surge caused significant damage to the heating system resulting in costly repairs which were not covered by the warranties. To prevent this from happening again, surge protection equipment were added.

The 50 year old ceiling tiles in Eckert Hall had become an eyesore after years of leaks and mis-matched replacement tiles. Space planning consultants and the architect that participated in the Collection Assessment Program both recommended replacing or painting the tiles with a dark color. During the winter, while the museum was closed, a painting contractor was hired to paint the existing ceiling black. Combined with other efforts to refresh and reimagine exhibits in Eckert Hall, the result is remarkable!

Of course the list of building projects continues to grow and project sponsors are needed. Pringle School still 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, chinking needs to be replaced, and the cabin roof should be replaced soon. The furnace in the Washington Street house is over 30 years old and is operating on borrowed time.

# Building & Grounds

---



Building priorities for the museum over the next few years must include upgrading the fire alarm system, improving handicapped accessibility, improving aesthetics to enhance the museum image and experience, and improving drainage and developing a master plan for future improvements. During the coming year, expect to see sidewalk and exterior lighting upgrades and paint improvements while the Committee continues to plan for the future.

The Building Committee always has a need for volunteers who are knowledgeable in some aspect of building design, engineering, 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 Executive Director Jolie Diepenhorst or Committee Chairman Nancy Baker.

## Library

---

### **Personnel Changes:**

- The paid part-time librarian, Rachel Seidner, resigned in July 2024. With several months of the Community Foundation grant funding left, Russell O'Brien stepped in to answer our research requests, and after the grant money was expended, stayed on as MCHS staff at 20 hours per week. As of April 1, 2025, Visitor Services Coordinator Kris Kenney's hours were increased to 28 to be divided equally between Visitor Services and the Research Library, for the purpose of learning about administering our library. (Kris had been deputy director of several area public libraries). Both positions will be funded for FY2025-26.
- Long-time volunteer Pat Merritt decided 25 years of clipping newspapers and maintaining our vertical files was enough. Volunteers Dave Sippel and Liz Kidera now work on the vertical files.
- Board member Deb Silker joined our volunteer ranks doing several big projects at home.

### **Accessions:**

- The biggest incoming item was 13 boxes of negatives from the Elgin Courier-News, which are being processed and will be accessioned.
- The Joyce Perbix Year of the Barn slide collection was weeded and is now housed in the library.

# Library

---



- Trudy Schuch Smith's 13 binders in hard copy and digital files were received, via former board member Marlene Keenan.

## **Research:**

- Statistics show that the number of requests in the last half of this fiscal year doubled over the same time period last year. Revenue did not increase accordingly as most requests were from members who do not pay the research fee.
- After studying the reports, Kris made changes to procedures including adding reference interviews for incoming requests trying to ascertain what patrons really want to know and limit the "give me everything" type of requests. Non-members will continue to pay for the first hour of research and an additional \$30 charge for every hour more than the 1st hour spent by staff or volunteers will be assessed. Members will be limited to 3 one-hour requests or 1 three-hour request free and after that limit is reached in one year, members will be charged the same as non-members.
- After many years on the project to-do list, staff surveyed the 17 township assessors to ascertain which ones had historic house photo collections for the purpose of aiding in our numerous property research requests. Over half responded and a chart with the gathered information was created for researchers' internal use.

## **Digital Projects Underway:**

- The Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board (ISHRAB) matching grant oral history project is complete. The \$2,000 grant funding was spent on getting 44 digital audio files transcribed by GoTranscript. The \$7,500 Giving Tuesday fund was spent on equipment for accomplishing that grant and paying our intern, Brandon Cippola. Maggie Crane, working on this project from the start, administered the grant after Rachel's departure. The transcriptions and audio files are posted to the website under ResCarta. There are still 34 oral histories audio files ready for transcription and 50 interviews by Grace Moline, and 15 by Nancy Fike in tape form already transcribed. There are 260 other tapes that are digitized that include MCHS programs and other miscellany in addition to oral histories. When the cassette tapes are complete, there is a need to digitize the aged reel to reel magnetic tapes and VHS tapes. **Opportunities for sponsorship of this progress abound!**
- Volunteer Trudie Dreyer and her obituary volunteers Dianne Brooks, Janet Mitchell, and Barb Sova have arrived at the 21,000 milestone of digital obituaries. Since 2019, Trudie has added current obits as digital only and converted about 1/4 of our cards.

# Library

---



- Our personal and club scrapbook collection now numbers 338 files.
- We have switched to scanning organizational records. Volunteer Gail Hayes has scanned 46 volumes. John Stanley, of Wauconda, continues to help us put ResCarta files on our website.
- Progress on the newspaper digitization project has been halted due to the death of our vendor, Roy Havlik, the owner/operator of Northern Digital Preservation Specialists. In October, Roy picked up the Algonquin Sun, the Woodstock Sun, and other miscellaneous titles. We had restricted fund money of \$6,800 for the project. In January, Linda Havlik reported her husband passed in December. She intends to finish the project without him. We await word still. In the meantime, a volunteer from Marengo High School interested in history is confirming numbers of the three remaining Star and Sun newspapers, should we get to digitize them in the future. He will be inventorying a couple more Don Peasley newspapers as well.

## **Preservation:**

- Linda Eder donated money to preserve John Brink's survey notebook #8 with his Civil War notes in it. Kathy Bergan-Schmidt donated money to preserve Woodstock Patriotic Food Demonstration Recipes of 1918. MCHS funded the preservation of the 1890s Colby farm implement store's sales ledger, the 1846 county tax ledger, and two more volumes of pre-1850 county tax ledgers, thus spending a total of \$3,710 total for the six volumes.
- We now have a list of all the unique volumes on the main library shelves that need professional treatment and a list of the post-1850 township tax ledgers that need preservation. Many, many opportunities exist to help preserve the items entrusted to us for the education of future generations!

## **Other Volunteers and Their Projects:**

- Ginny Boss continues transferring names to our surname card index, our invaluable supplement to the card catalog.
- Betsy Iverson is transcribing the handwritten 7-volume Floyd Eckert diary.
- Mary Osten is finished transcribing the 3-volume Andruss Civil War diary.
- Barb Pfannkuche continues to catalog our incoming books.
- Dianne Brooks is also working on the court document index in addition to obituaries.

## **Biggest Issues Facing Us:**

- Work space and computer time to keep all volunteers engaged and productive.
- Funding to retain Kris.
- Moving forward with a digital collection under a yet-to-be-written digital collection and preservation policy.

# Collection & Exhibits



I joined MCHS as Museum Curator on January 27, 2025, and immediately began planning the current Anderson Gallery exhibit “Weavers & Spinners: Usable Textiles in McHenry County.” My predecessor, Kira Stell, planned to open an exhibit in the Anderson Gallery in April 2025, but was still very early in the planning stages when she left for another position in the fall of 2024.

After beginning as curator, I focused the new Anderson Gallery exhibit on the history of textile production, particularly the ways early McHenry County residents produced their own textiles from the resources available on their own land, the skills and trades that county residents developed surrounding textile production, the loss of these skills and trades with the industrialization of the garment industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the resurgence of interest in textile production and heritage crafts like sewing, knitting, and quilting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Weavers & Spinners” opened on April 26, 2025, three months after I joined MCHS, and will be on display through the end of 2025.

During the last week of April, within days of the “Weavers & Spinners” opening, we received notice that the building in Woodstock where we leased offsite collections storage space had been sold, and that we needed to move out by May 31. During the month of May, we reviewed the objects stored there, planned for their relocation to storage in spaces owned by MCHS in Union, and carried out their move in stages. The move from the old offsite storage facility was completed on June 2. The move could not have happened so successfully, and in such a short period of time, without the assistance of volunteers Chris Hansen, Jim & Deb Julison, John Silker, and Tyson Davis.

In June, we began an inventory of the collections that have long been on exhibit in Eckert Hall. Interns Brandon Cippola, Isabel Barnard, and Elise Field are conducting this ongoing project. In June, we also began looking ahead to a busy 2025-2026, with planning beginning for new exhibits marking the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the museum in 2026, as well as the addition of interactive technology into the Eckert Hall exhibits courtesy of a \$20,000 grant from the McHenry County Community Foundation.

-Siobhan Heraty, Museum Curator



Thank you for supporting the  
McHenry County Historical  
Society & Museum