

MCHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT



2022

2023

6422 Main Street
PO Box 434
Union, IL 60180

Board of Directors

Karen Parks - President

Bob Frenz - Vice President

Molly Walsh - Treasurer

Nancy L. Baker - Secretary

Arlyn Booth

Carol Fiandalo

Nancy Kowalski

Mary McCann

Lonni Oldham

Paula Rieghns

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Debra Perkins Silker

Caroline Sobolak

Ed Urban

Staff

**Kurt Begalka
Administrator**

**Kira Stell
Curator**

**Lela Olson
Office Manager**

**Janet Barron
Volunteer & Outreach
Coordinator**

**Cindy Simmons
Bookkeeper**

**Rachel Seidner
Research Librarian**

Administrator's Report 2022-2023

The 2022-23 season was a year of transition, with much of our focus directed inward. The museum building has undergone extensive renovations – inside and out. Volunteers painted the office and foyer, built displays, and spruced up the Museum Store area. We purchased new storage cabinets for the library after bolstering the floor, creating more of “stacks” area for library volunteers and our newest staff member: Librarian Rachel Seidner. We added curtains around the perimeter of the stage, continued to upgrade the electric and plumbing, and launched an ambitious tuckpointing project on the limestone portion of the school building which dates to 1870.

PRESERVATION

It was another challenging year for preservation in the county, but there were some noteworthy successes. Work continued on restoring/repurposing both the original county courthouse in McHenry and Old Courthouse in Woodstock. Efforts to save the original Solon Mills train depot ultimately fell short, but many of its original architectural elements were removed and saved by the McHenry County Historical Society and the W.A. McConnell Foundation of Richmond. The foundation also succeeded in getting Richmond's George Street bridge placed on Landmarks Illinois' “10 Most Endangered” list and it appears many of the structural elements of an 1876 barn in Spring Grove – including its beautiful roof – will be relocated and repurposed as an event space at the nearby Richardson farm.

PROGRAMMING

The historical society's 60th anniversary was an integral part of many conversations between staff and board members. We are selling raffle tickets for an amazing anniversary quilt, and a celebratory party is planned for Nov. 10. We also focused on outreach, collaborating with McHenry County College on a program in Crystal Lake, the Huntley Park District on a program in Huntley, and we made our first ever appearance in Sun City. Kira Stell added five – count 'em – five new exhibits that included 60 Years, 60 Objects: Stories from McHenry County in the Anderson Gallery. Finally, we kept inclusivity in mind with two programs planned for later this year: *A Brief History of the Reintroduction of the Native Americans into Illinois* and *Did Black Lives Matter in Early Illinois? Voices from the Brink of Slavery and Freedom*. We also collaborated as part of Raices Latinas – a “transformational grant” that includes Latino and Latina oral histories and historical impact of migrant workers.

Administrator's Report 2022-2023

FINANCES

Despite a challenging economic climate, our members continue to step up and support the organization. As of this writing on June 6, the Annual Fund had surpassed \$43,000 and was climbing toward our \$60,000 goal. That compares to \$28,700 in 2022. We also had a record year for grants: A \$20,000 tuckpointing grant, a \$6,000 CDBG grant to buy a used scissor lift for museum repairs, a Community Foundation for McHenry County grant (\$18,000 this year and next) to hire a part-time librarian and a Collections Assessment for Preservation grant to review our collection and museum building.

ADMINISTRATION

I would be remiss if I failed to thank the many, many people who helped me at the historical society these past 11 years – especially The Nancys: former staff members Fike, Irwin, and Roozée. It was their dedication to this organization that propelled it forward, and their willingness to trust in was possible that contributed to the many firsts we enjoyed. Thanks to the many talented individuals who passed through its doors and left their mark on its history. And lastly, how can I properly thank all of the volunteers – past and present – who made MCHS what it is? It your singular devotion to local history that will carry this organization into the 21st century. Godspeed.

– Kurt Begalka



Executive

If we are to be an integral part of a vital and changing society, then we can do no less than try our best with new ideas; we can do no less than work towards their successful implementation; we can do no less than try today to build for tomorrow.

We realized, however, that every ship needs a captain, or it is bound to flounder in the heaviest of seas. The search for a new Executive Director began in earnest, and it was a task taken seriously by all involved. Indeed, the opinions of all who cared to comment were not only recognized but praised and included wherever possible. It was a long search; it was a hard search; it was a search where no one “settled” but made certain that they selected the best person.

I take pride in introducing the new Executive Director of the McHenry County Historical Society, Anna Pivoras, a person who has been an Executive Director of the Boone County Museum of History for almost eight years. At Boone County, she managed all museum operations, including programming, tours, public relations, marketing, education, exhibits, staff management, and events. She was also responsible for all office management tasks, including budgeting, audits, running board meetings, etc. She spearheaded four major museum renovation projects and brought in revenue through grants and fundraising. Before Boone County, she was at Midway Village in Rockford and the Burpee Museum in Rockford.

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 of the 2022-25 Strategic Plan and reported the progress during Year 1 of the Plan. Strategic Planning also reviewed best practices in the field of historical institutions. To that end, an evaluation of the self-assessment tool, STEPs II, was conducted and results were shared with the Board of Directors. The Directors selected several areas of the evaluation as important, short-term focuses for the Society.

It has been a wonder to see the work undertaken by the staff, board, and volunteers this past fiscal year. They each deserve a strong round of applause, and I am deeply in their debt.

We are looking forward to trying our best with new ideas, working towards their successful implementation, and to build for tomorrow.

Karen Parks, President

Financial

We continue to receive tremendous support from our members. We cannot thank our members enough for their continued financial support. In addition, we received two grants, \$20,000 from the Illinois Department of Economic Development and \$18,000 over two years from the McHenry County Community Foundation. Even with our increase in revenue our expenses this fiscal year have outpaced our revenue. This is due primarily to repairs and maintenance of our historic buildings which included the masonry work and tuckpointing work on our 1870 main building. The pie chart is a breakdown of the Society's revenue and expenses for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The Board has approved the 2023-24 budget of 441,360 for revenue and expenses of 437,244.91.

Investments

McEachren Charitable Trust market value

June 2022	\$	3,813,402.53
June 2023	\$	3,978,783.80

MCHS Endowment market value

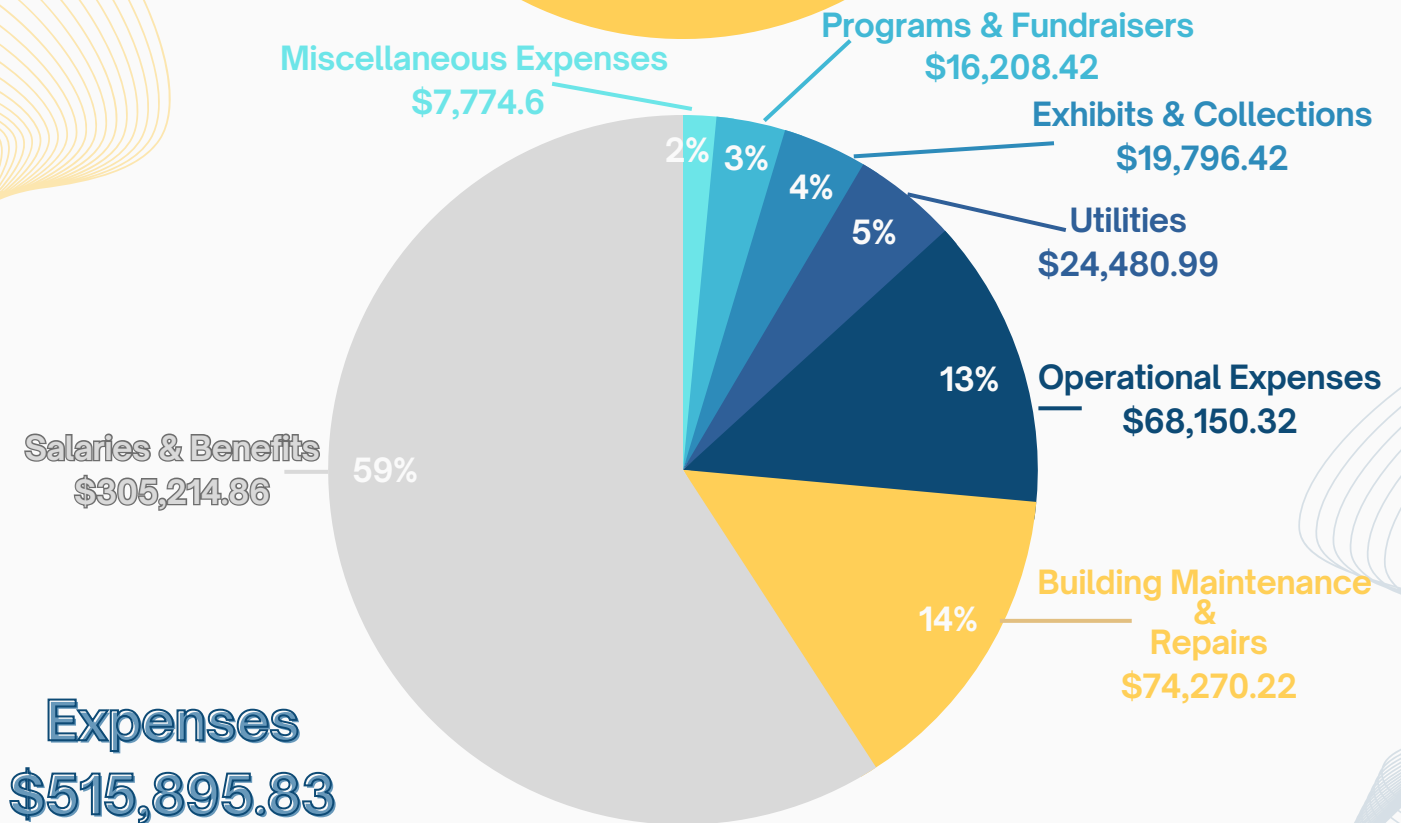
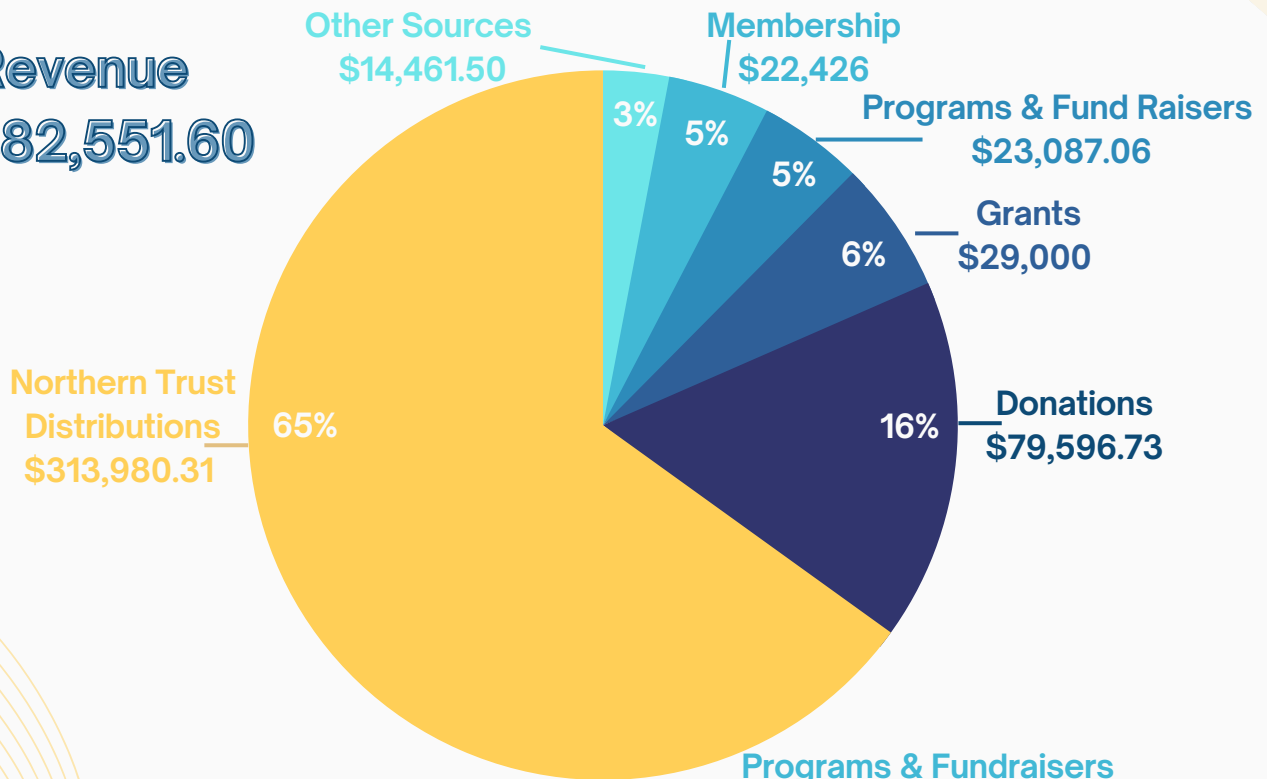
June 2022	\$	1,871,207.20
June 2023	\$	1,914,708.47

Anderson Fund market value

June 2022	\$	884,729.31
June 2023	\$	910,535.51

Financial

Revenue
\$482,551.60



Expenses
\$515,895.83

Buildings

During the past fiscal year, building committee members visited each of the Society's nine buildings to observe building conditions and identify new issues. Members of the building committee participated in the CAP project, which identified (and confirmed) building and site issues. These projects have been incorporated into a working draft of a 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

The Committee prepared a policy regarding the use of Alternative Building Materials on MCHS buildings. The policy is based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

A grant from the State of Illinois helped to fund the restoration of the limestone portion of the museum by Seyller Tuckpointing and Masonry, allowing previously budgeted funds to be used to repair masonry issues on other parts of the museum exterior.

The Historical Society's insurance company covered a hail damage claim for the Riley Methodist Church which resulted in the replacement of shingles and siding. The foundation was stabilized by the same contractor that completed the museum masonry repairs. Although the issue of being able to use the church in the future has not been resolved, the recent improvements will help protect the building for the future.

The deteriorated bell cupola on the West Harmony School will be rehabbed thanks to generous donations on Giving Tuesday.

During the past fiscal year, building committee

The Committee spent considerable time trying to understand more about the limitations of the museum site for future expansion. The museum and Washington Street acquisition rely on private septic systems for waste disposal needs. Though the Village of Union is planning to install public sewers, the Village does not have a definite time frame to complete the construction. Additionally, the museum is located in a 100-year floodplain. The Building Committee met with the project manager from Hay and Associates, Inc. (civil engineers), who analyzed the floodplain which runs through the center of Union to understand how that impacts the museum and potential expansion. The consultant said that it is a question of when, not if, our site will flood. When that happens, the depth of the flood is expected to be less than two feet.

Buildings

No decisions were made regarding future expansion. Given the engineering issues, it is highly unlikely that the existing site can accommodate all future space needs, so the question is how to best provide additional space cost-effectively. The CAP report recommendations and the GWA Studio space study from FY 21/22 recommended options to find additional space within the existing structures (such as the construction of a mezzanine), which may be part of the future solution.

Building priorities for the next couple years include planning for roof and HVAC equipment replacement, improving aesthetics to enhance the museum image, improving handicapped accessibility, 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 and site design and construction (historic and otherwise) at whatever level is comfortable—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 Coordinator Janet Barron or Building Committee Chairman Nancy Baker.

Finally, the Committee wishes to offer its sincere thanks to outgoing administrator Kurt Begalka for his many efforts to maintain and preserve our Buildings and manage our site.

Nancy Baker
Building Committee Chairman



Collections

Last summer, Exhibits Curator Kira Stell applied to the Collections Assessment Program (CAP). This program is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation. CAP is an overarching study of an institution's conditions, policies, and procedures related to collections care. It includes a review of collections storage and 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.

MCHS was selected as one of 56 organizations invited to participate in the 2022 CAP program. The CAP program allocated funding for a collection assessor and a building assessor. Melissa Amundsen from Midwest Art Conservation Center in Minneapolis was selected as the collection assessor, and Charles Quagliana, Preservation Architect from Mazomanie, WI as the building assessor.

Both assessors visited MCHS over a two-day site visit in early February 2023. The building assessor evaluated primarily the interior of the storage facilities with cursory observations of the exterior. The collections assessment included observations made in all the collection areas: storage, exhibit spaces, and work areas. Visual observations were combined with environmental readings of temperature, relative humidity, visible light, and ultraviolet radiation.

The CAP assessors produced a CAP report which provided MCHS with a prioritized set of recommendations for improved collections care. Preventive conservation practices addressed the following areas within the CAP report: environmental monitoring and control, safe handling, storage, and exhibition, integrated pest management, and emergency preparedness and security.

The Collections Committee is prioritizing the recommendations from the CAP report and creating action plans based on the immediate and short-term recommendations. The 2023-2024 collection budget request reflects some CAP recommendations. This includes adding additional data loggers to monitor temperature and humidity changes in the exhibit spaces and Research Library.

Collections

2022-2023 Collections Projects

- Last summer, Heather Jensen was hired for a 10-day collections project to inventory, catalog, and photograph 300 large objects in the oversized furniture section of the museum's 3-dimensional storage. These objects included chairs, dressers, children's furniture, tables, and sewing machines. 15 objects were recommended for deaccessioning that were in poor condition or duplicate examples.
- Last summer, Stephanie Wilson was hired as a Research Library Collections Assistant for a 15-week project to begin inventorying, cataloging, and putting on PastPerfect, the accessioned Biographical Collection that is frequently used for genealogy research. A total of 2,500 photographs and genealogical items in the Research Library were cataloged into PastPerfect.
- The Collections Committee held several workdays this year to replace non-archival hangers with archival ones on the 1920s, 1940s, and 1950s clothing racks, and the coat rack in Textile 1. Archival hangers assist with preserving the historic clothing and allows them to hang straighter on the rack. The Collections Committee replaced a total of 200 hangers this year.

2022-2023 Accessioned Artifacts - 374

Sample of accessioned artifacts: three Civil War diaries from Dwight Andrus of Seneca Township, 1863-1865; wooden shelf clock used in McHenry telegraph office, late 1800s; portrait of Dr. C.C. Miller of Marengo, late 1800s; Betty Deitz Woodstock High School diploma, 1939; Riverside Hotel belt buckle; Joseph Spiess Company gift box; Todd School for Boys record album, 1950; Coast Guard uniform worn by John Weck of Algonquin, 1951-1953; programs for Richmond Women's Club, 1960s-1980s; coffee mug commemorating the 100th anniversary of Zion Lutheran Church, McHenry, 1976; engineer seal used by James Rakow, 1976; Johnsbury High School fundraiser cookbook, 1980; Crystal Lake Central High School Yearbook, 1988; admission ticket for Dick Tracy Days, 1998; burgundy silk sari worn by Dr. Sanjukta Mitra at a Diwali party, 1990s; advertising memorabilia from ShadowView Brewing of Woodstock, 2023.

Collections

2022-2023 Deaccessioned Artifacts - 273

Sample of deaccessioned artifacts: Marengo Republican 1882 newspaper (digitized); Masonic apron (not McHenry Co.); WW II scrapbook (digitized); Illinois Federation of Women's Club booklet (digitized); Marengo road papers (digitized); Walworth County plat (not McHenry Co.); Kane County plat (not McHenry Co.); reed chair (poor condition); 1971 Women's Club yearbook (duplicate); green enamel kitchen chair (poor condition); 1989 Crystal Lake High School yearbook (duplicate); Marengo Cemetery tour booklet (duplicate); black cotton jacket (poor condition); 1971 McHenry Women's Club yearbook (duplicate); 1930 official Illinois map (duplicate).

Kira Stell
Curator



Education

The education committee started off this past year by being fully involved in both the Heritage Fair and Cider Fest with children's activities such as arts and crafts, games, and always the favorite - the cakewalk.

Our school tours have begun to slowly return to the museum. We had two tour groups scheduled in the fall, but one canceled while we had Alden Hebron's fifth graders for a wonderful time. We picked up again this spring with two tours in May, Woodstock's third graders, and Riley's sixth graders. We were also expecting a homeschooler group and a McHenry High School group, but both were canceled. We are not finished yet, as tomorrow we will be having forty-five students from Kids R Kids daycare ages six through eleven.

Our steadfast volunteer, Trudie Dryer, has been spending her Sundays at the Dole Mansion and Crystal Lake Farmers Market promoting the museum and providing activities for any children who happen to be with their parents at the market. Our creative team, and Pam Dean, are responsible for the cute children's activities.

In accordance with our Society's StEPs goals and McHenry County Historical Society's Strategic Plan's Outreach Pillar, which is to engage people of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds in the rich history of McHenry County by enhancing our program offerings, we are developing QR codes for each of our historic buildings.

That includes on-campus Unions School, West Harmony one-room school, the Gannon Cabin, and our 1930s brick bungalow on Washington Street. In case you didn't know, we also have a limestone one-room school house (Pringle), a town hall (Perkins), and a small church (Riley). If you take a picture with your phone camera on the QR code, it will take you to information about that building. This is a work in progress.

Education

This is the Society's 60th year and the education committee has been doing their part. We created and decorated our 60th-themed Christmas tree for Woodstock's Christmas Walk at the Opera House and we helped out at the Museum's Opening event by selling not 50/50 but 60/40 raffle tickets. The big winner with 60% of the sales (\$320) went to Lisa Kemp - Congratulations!

After all this, you would think we are done, but no - in August, we will be presenting a program, "Pack Your Wagon," for the McHenry Public Library, where we will be teaching children from kindergarten through fifth grade about westward travel. Then on September 6th and 7th, we will be hosting Marengo Elementary's Family School Nights. And then more school tours:)

Karen Parks
Education



Governance

The Governance Committee had a busy year updating policies and job descriptions, providing board training based on a needs assessment, and developing an institutional archive for the Society. However, the committee's favorite duty is recruiting new board members, and this year we are happy to nominate three candidates for three-year terms on the Society's Board of Directors.

Carol Fiandalo, Grafton Township

Carol has lived in Huntley with her husband and two children for twenty years. She spent her younger years volunteering at the McHenry County Historical Society with her grandmother, Helen Marlowe. She wants to continue her family's commitment to the Society and to local history. Carol began volunteering in 2021 by helping with bookkeeping. With more than twenty-five years of experience in accounting and finance, this was a perfect opportunity to give back. She is looking forward to providing her expertise to the Historical Society board. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, crocheting, reading and being active outdoors.

Nancy Kowalski, Nunda Township

Nancy resides in Crystal Lake and is a customer service specialist. She and her family have strong ties to McHenry County and have been deeply involved in 4H over the years. Nancy brings her fundraising, marketing and public relations skills to the Society. She states that she loves history and would love to work with the Society to share history with others.

Ed Urban, Coral Township

Ed has been a resident of McHenry County since 1971 and lives in Coral Township with his wife Diane. Ed is a former MCHS board member, and over the years, Ed has presented unique programs at MCHS and contributed articles to the Tracer both of which often share his interest in local history from a perspective influenced by his career in law enforcement. Additionally, Ed wrote the local history column "Pondering the Past, Tales Lost in Time" for the Marengo-Union times.

Thank you to current Board Directors, Bob Frenz, Dan Ring, Don Rose, Deb Silker and Molly Walsh who will each serve another three-year term.

The Society extends appreciation and a thank you to Geri Alten for her service as a Board Director.

Lonni Oldhamn, Governance Committee Chair

HISTORIC SITES

This past year, the committee has been focusing on seeking new Plaquee opportunities. The committee currently contains 6 members.

28 “Hello” letters and/or applications have been sent out over the past year, including several sites that were approached years ago. In addition, the committee reviewed 5 buildings owned by MCHS to be considered for Plaquing, concurring that the West Washington House would be an option for application should MCHS want to pursue it. We received no applications.

As part of the MCHS 60th Anniversary, the committee suggested profiling their Plaqued sites on the MCHS Facebook page. To date, 2 sites have been posted online, which have both received hundreds of likes, along with many shares and comments. In addition, the committee has been in communication with Naturally McHenry County to collaborate on an interactive listing and map of all the Plaqued historic sites with hopes of being completed before the year-end.

The William Woodbeck Barn, Woodstock, circa 1890, received Plaquee number 61. This barn was converted into a residence in 1980. In March 2023, the committee was informed of future plans to remodel the home. The owners were concerned about losing their Plaquee. On March 18th, members of the committee visited the home to review ideas with the owners on how to maintain the original barn’s historical value and obtain cohesiveness with the proposed renovation.

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

Respectfully submitted
Mimi Bierman, Historic Sites Secretary



Library

Accomplishments

The Two Biggest

1. Our part-time paid librarian wish has been granted! The Community Foundation granted us \$18,000 for each of the 2 years, and we hired Rachel Seidner as of May 15, 2023. She will put in extra hours this summer since we started late and since she is off from her other part-time job for the summer. The first 6-month report to the Community Foundation is due June 30. The grant will pay for her first 2 years. The third year and following is up to us.
2. The former library space has been filled with new book shelving, vertical file cabinets, and flat file cabinets! The school files have been moved to the 8 new vertical file drawers, and Pat Merritt is considering how best to fill the 10 empty drawers with the 3 other files needing expansion. The roll of paper for lining the flat file drawers has finally arrived, so Arlyn can finish the flat file transfer and expansion. Maggie did the math, and we have a plan for shifting the Dewey collection. We started shifting. We will be shelf reading (looking for “lost” items and making sure all is in call number order) as we go, cleaning, making notes for the preservation and vinyl binder transfer lists, reversing those items that should be shelved on their spines, and other overdue tasks.

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 2013. The digital obit collection numbers 13,020 as of June 6 and 7,098 cards deleted so far.
2. Volunteer Gail Hayes continues scanning our scrapbook collection. The digitized scrapbook collection now numbers 291. John Stanley of Wauconda now gets the scrapbooks loaded into our database as soon as Gail finishes with them! This database is now public as is our newspaper database, but we need to write an introduction ASAP and then decide whether to separate the two types of scrapbooks and make one the organizations’ records database.
3. Roy Havlik’s Northern Digital Preservation Specialists in Wisconsin finished the last of the Woodstock Sentinel project early this fiscal year. We estimate we are about halfway through our quest to digitize our newspapers. Harvard’s Diggins Library is counting their part of the Harvard Star collection, and we have counted ours. This title can then be quoted when the count is finished and digitized in the future, along with the other 3 Star newspapers for which we have ca. \$10,000 quotes each. Looking for sponsors!

Library

4. The cassette tape digitizing project continues under volunteer Maggie Crane's direction, being aided mightily by volunteer Ed Bormett, who is actually doing the transferring. Preservation underway, with control. 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!
5. Two of our vertical files have their headings lists on the website and two are waiting to be posted on the website upon revamping of the Research Library section of the website. Maggie's Peasley office file subject headings could also be added once they are finalized.
6. Our Marengo Road Paper collection filled in a missing section of the McHenry County's Dept. of Transportation's digital road papers collection on the county GIS. Our papers were digitized by the Illinois State Archives, digital copies given to the Dept. of Transportation and us, and the originals are now housed at the IRAD in DeKalb at NIU with the other townships' road papers.

Preservation

Items preserved this year

1. "Adopted"
 - a. Polly Crandall Questers sponsored the 3 volume Andruss Civil War diary
 - b. Kishwaukee Trail chapter of the DAR sponsored the Marengo 1893-1899 census volume
2. Others
 - a. 1 copy of the 1906 Official Illustrated Prospectus of Nunda and Crystal Lake, Ill.
 - b. 1843 County assessor's ledger
 - c. 1855-1861 railroad tax list
 - d. 1 copy of the 1923 county land ownership map

Research Requests

The administration of the research request process has begun to be taken over from the office manager by Rachel. Rachel has been shadowing Maggie and Arlyn to learn our resources and procedures. 48 requests were received in the last 5 months before Rachel's arrival, most requiring several hours' work each. Rachel has created a library letterhead on which our reports for patrons will be sent.

Library

Accessions

Kira counted 374 items accessioned this year and estimates at least half of those are housed in the library.

CAP Grant Projects

Two recommendations affecting the library

1. Writing a digital policy has finally been given a good start.
2. The rolled items stored uncovered on top of the flat files have been taken off and are now in the flat files or rolled in a tube and stored vertically on the floor between the flat files. The display items on boards or foam boards that were housed between the flat files are now also in the flat files.

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 at home. She is ready to start indexing the names in the pages she has typed.

Nancy Reczek is working on the surname index card project with Ginny Boss. Ginny has finished 2 lists this year, and Nancy is finishing her first. There are still many lists to transfer.

Ann Bormett has gotten into the second volume transcribing the 7-volume Edinger diary before it is accessioned.

Ed Bormett, as mentioned above, is our digitizing cassette tape expert, which he is doing now totally at home.

Other veteran volunteers continue their service to the library: Pat Merritt clips and files in our vertical files, Barb Pfannkuche catalogs our incoming books, Craig Pfannkuche shares research request duties, and Dave Sippel is taking duplicates out of the 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

Maggie Crane, Don Rose, Henry Kenyon, Marcia Poedtke, Kathy Bergan Schmidt, Kira Stell, and as of May 15, 2023, Rachel Seidner

Arlyn Booth
Research Library Committee Chair



Membership

This year the Membership Committee focused on Neon One, our new Customer Relationship Management program, reviewing and updating membership levels and developing an Outreach Plan to keep members and the public informed about what's happening at the museum.

Neon One is a database program that helps us build an ongoing relationship with our members, donors, volunteers, and event participants. After some initial challenges, we are benefitting from the many positive aspects of this automated system that keeps us informed on members' status, sends out renewal reminders, generates reports, and keeps information in one place. A special thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers who spent many hours entering membership information.

Our membership numbers are increasing thanks to the tools provided in Neon. We contacted individuals with lapsed memberships, and many renewed. During our 60th anniversary year, we set a goal to get 60 new members, and we are very close to reaching that goal! To commemorate our 60th Anniversary, we are offering a special metallic membership card to current Life Members and anyone who joins as a Life Member prior to October 15, 2023. These metallic membership cards will be presented at our 60th Celebration on November 10, 2023. Most information sent to members is through emails. Over 2/3 of our members receive emails, and we would like to increase that number due to the high cost of paper and postage. We currently send invitations and event information by mail to those without emails. If you haven't shared your email, please consider it, as it would be a financial savings as well as providing you with the most current information.

We reviewed our current membership levels this year and made changes to provide more meaningful benefits to all levels. Please check out the updated membership information on our website under "Join Us." New brochures were designed for each membership type with a consistent MCHS logo, format, color, and font. The Organizational Membership information will be available soon.

Currently, our Outreach Plan includes our monthly email newsletter, advertising on social media, newspapers, signage, website, information at community events, and members sharing information with family and friends. We often hear from the general public, "I didn't even know you existed." Our next step is to increase awareness about the amazing things available at the McHenry County Historical Society. The well-designed exhibits that tell our local history, the extensive research library, interesting programs, fun family events, and member-only activities, to name just a few. As a member, please help us share information about our museum, "bring a friend" to an event, share our website, or sign up to volunteer. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions. Thank YOU for being a valued member of the McHenry County Historical Society!

Deb Silker
Membership Chair

Membership

Life Members

Libbie Aavang
Melodie Archer
Barbara Bennett
Kathleen Bergan-Schmidt
Lawrence Bergan-Schmidt
Judy Beth-Hervert
Ann Bormett
Edwin Colton
Aastri Cunat
Trudie Dreyer
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
Chuck Liebman
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
Janice Perkins

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
Dale Shriver
Megan Sommer
Carl Stengele
Linda Stengele
Theodore Thayer
Mary Thennes
Richard Thennes
Cindy Thompson
James Tonyan

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.

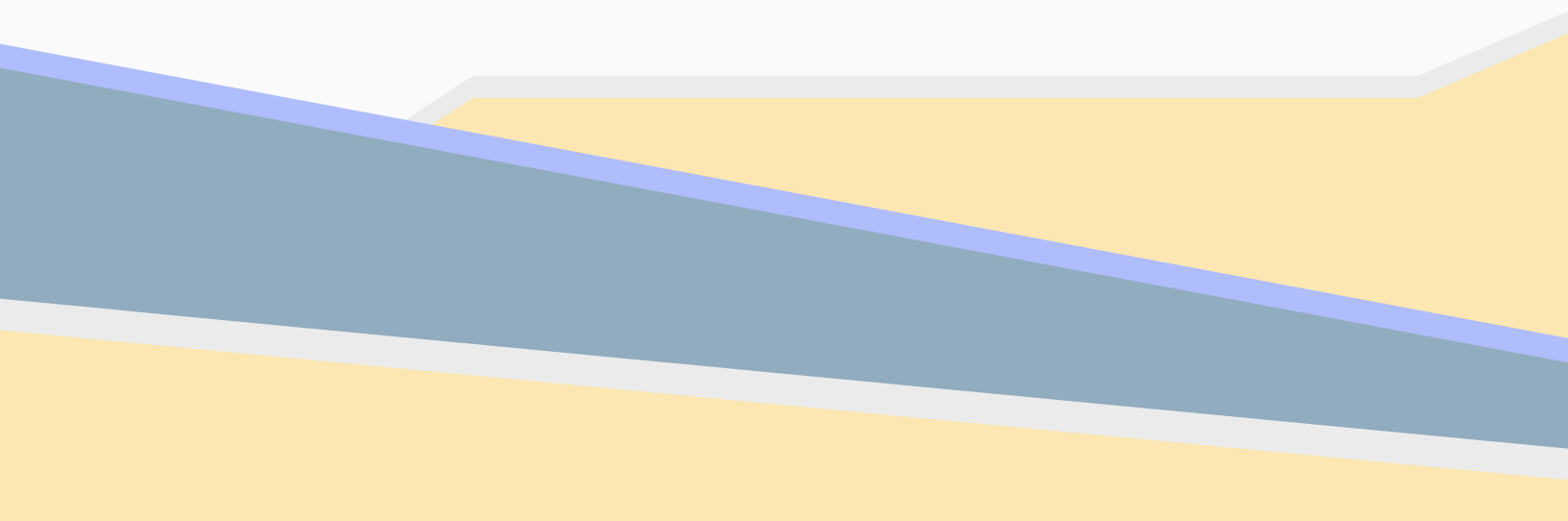
2022 - It was a particularly devastating year for the society when it came to volunteer deaths. We lost Don Bellm, Frank Boxleitner, Wilson “Bill” Dysart, Robert Hughes, Hazel Kniebusch, Alan Levitt, Doris Marsh, Victor Meuch, Dorothy Otis, Jack Paul, Jim Schmid, Josephine “Jo” Smith, Janice Webb, Jean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

2022, February – Neon One management system adopted

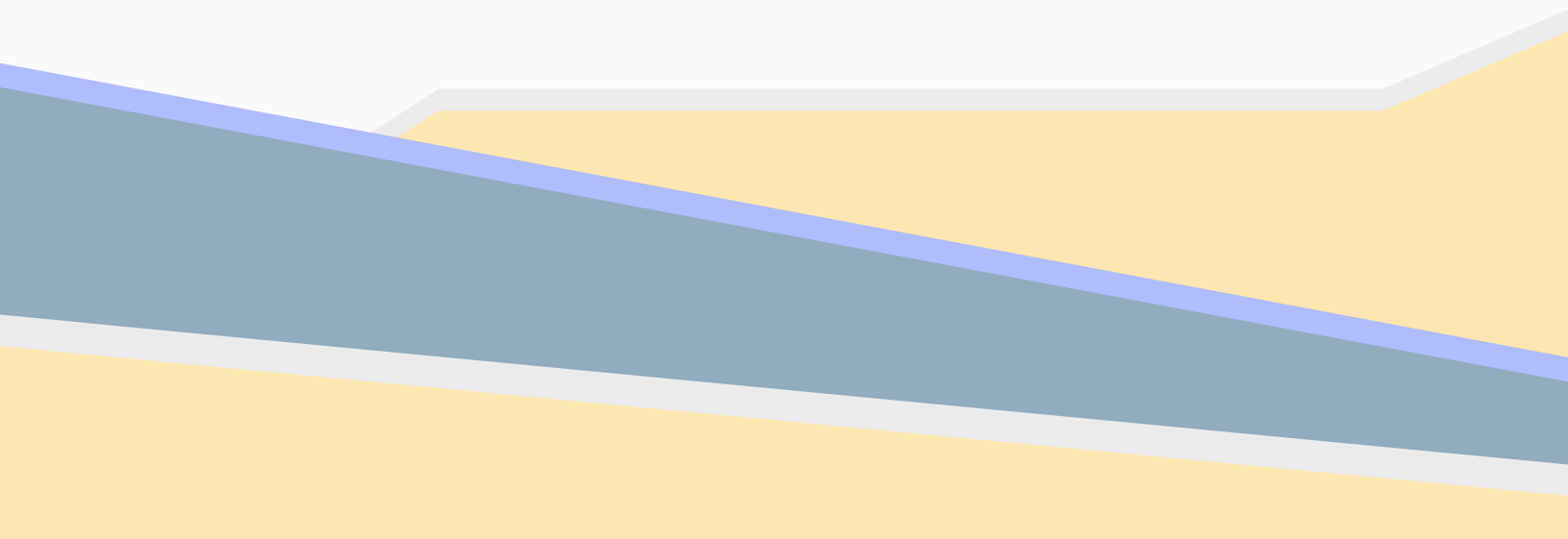
2023 – MCHS participates in Collections Assessment Program (CAP)

2023 – MCHS celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the Society

Notes



Thoughts





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