

*Your Museum —
Your History!*



McLean County MUSEUM of HISTORY

200 N. Main St. Bloomington, Illinois 61701 ~ 309-827-0428 ~ mchistory.org

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Fiscal Year

ANNUAL REPORT

Jennifer Rusk portraying
Ella Lee Stokes



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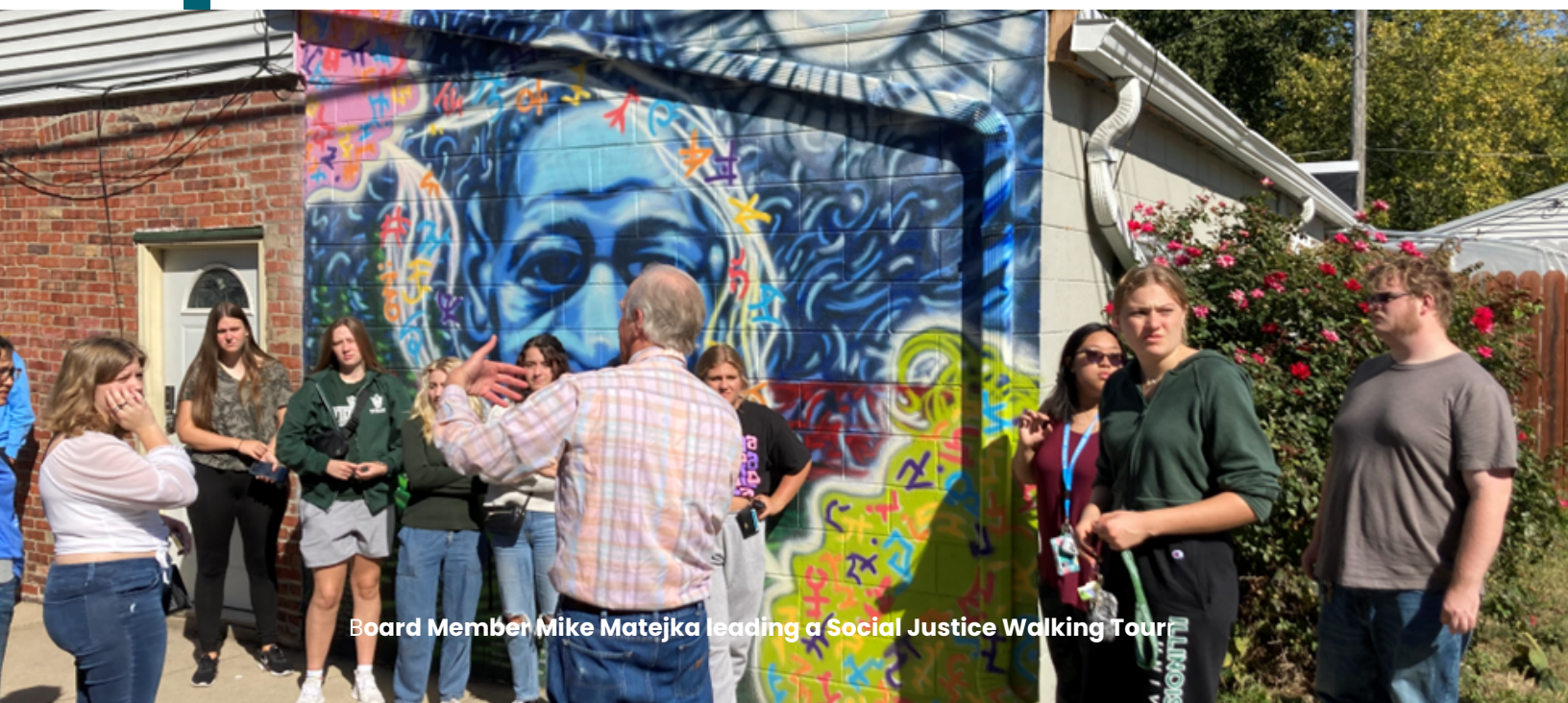
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Board Member Mike Matejka leading a Social Justice Walking Tour



Early 20th Century photo of courthouse and Museum

Museum Mission

Our mission is to preserve, educate, and collaborate in sharing the diverse stories of the people of McLean County. This mission is achieved by:

Preservation: We are a steward of McLean County history—discovering, researching, and sharing the tangible evidence of the past

Education: We are a cornerstone for learning and civic engagement through programs, exhibitions, and enrichment

Collaboration: We are inclusive, seeking ideas and valuing multiple perspectives



The McLean County Museum of History (MCMH) traces its roots back to 1892, the year the McLean County Historical Society was founded. It is a nationally accredited museum that features nine exhibit galleries, preserves approximately 18,500 objects, makes available more than 15,000 rare books, and manages 2,000 feet of historical papers and images in its archives. While the McLean County Museum of History has used strategic planning to guide its work since 1984, the hiring of a new executive director and several new staff members in 2020–21, in addition to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and other current events, provided an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of the role MCMH plays as a regional history museum in Central Illinois. We revisited our mission and vision, developed a new set of strategic goals, and articulated how to align our work as a museum of history with the broader community. This planning was completed in conjunction with the process of preparing for American Alliance of Museums reaccreditation.

In November of 2022 we learned that the Museum earned reaccreditation by the American Alliance of Museums. Of the nation's estimated 33,000 museums, just 3.3%, are accredited. Accreditation recognizes museums for their commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards, and continued institutional improvement.

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Statement From Executive Director Julie Emig

People trust museums. The American Alliance of Museums (Wilkening, 2021) found that “The American public regards museums as highly trustworthy—ranking second only to friends and family, and significantly more trustworthy than researchers and scientists, various news organizations, the government, corporations and business, and social media.” Holding the public’s trust makes us that much more accountable, not only to the high standards of peer institutions, but more importantly to the members of our community. At the McLean County Museum of History, we are committed to engaging the public in interactive exhibits, critical inquiry, research, and opportunities to co-curate content. As described in our 2022–27 Strategic Plan, our mission is to preserve, educate, and collaborate in sharing the diverse stories of our community; in so doing, we are assiduously accountable to our community’s trust.

In the past year, the Museum has been working hard to live up to that trust. We received two awards for our groundbreaking series “Breaking Bread in McLean County,” which features the stories of local immigrants through the lens of food and memory. We were awarded two grants of over \$100,000 to continue the Pantagraph Negatives Digitization project, making content available worldwide through the Illinois State Archives. We received a generous Under Our Wing grant from Business Builders to launch a website that features our critically acclaimed Social Justice Walking Tour. We partnered with the County to adopt a new 30-year lease for the old courthouse—known today as the Museum Square—and are officially deluge free after that the County replaced the building’s roof with attention to historic accuracy. We published Executive Director Emeritus Greg Koos’ book, *Freedom, Land, & Community: A History of McLean County Illinois, 1730–1900*, to excellent reception. The staff and board have committed to exploring and questioning the Museum’s role as a cultural institution engaged in diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. Finally, we participated in a rigorous reaccreditation review by the American Alliance of Museums; we are among only 3% of accredited museums nationally.

In a recent survey about the Museum’s impact, a respondent noted that “...historians are record keepers. Without them, the past would vanish. Having skilled experts curate collections and educate the public about past events leads to increased empathy and understanding, which in turn adds motivation to help solve major social problems.” The McLean County Museum of History is at the forefront of a national movement to reframe the role of museums through our strategic goals: Learning with communities; sharing stories; preserving histories; improving spaces; growing assets; and investing in people. The high quality of our programming is made possible through the passion and dedication exhibited by our outstanding staff, the collaboration with our community, and support from loyal patrons and members. We are Your Museum, Your History!



Statement From Board President

Tom Eder

Founded in 1892, the McLean County Historical Society recognized its 130th anniversary this year! Our Museum, opened in 1904, has become a premier county historical museum, one of the only 3% of museums nationally to be accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

That process of reaccreditation was a focus for our award-winning staff this year. We reimagined our vision for the future by renewing our strategic plan. Community members, staff, and Board all participated in developing a plan that will guide us as we continue to improve the services we provide to the thousands in McLean County and beyond.

In 2022, our home, the beautiful former McLean County courthouse, received continued attention and upgrades from the County. A new roof now protects the treasures in our collection of 18,500 artifacts. Additionally, repairs are underway of the third floor and a new elevator that will enable us to increase our gallery spaces and provide improved accessibility for our visitors.

The International Council of Museums has defined a museum as “a permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible...Museums foster diversity and sustainability. They offer varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing.” (ICOM, 2022). I believe this definition precisely captures the work and mission of the McLean County Museum of History. Come visit us, in person or online through our expanding digital presence, and you will enjoy learning more about and reflecting on the rich and diverse history of Bloomington-Normal and McLean County.

I hope you will review this Annual Report. You will learn much more about the work undertaken this year and the tremendous resources available to you at the Museum. In advance, I thank you for your continuing financial support. Seventy percent of our funding is private in nature, through memberships, gifts, and donations. This is as it should be; after all, we are proudly, “Your History... Your Museum”!

Financial Snapshot

Fiscal Year ended March 31, 2022

Operating Revenue

- \$ 569,820 Private Gifts, Contributions, & Bequests
- \$ 617,552 Government/Grants
- \$ 405,266 Investment Revenue**
- \$ 27,554 Net Profit on Gift Shop Sales
- \$ 63,823 Other Income
- **\$1,684,015 Total Revenue**

Expenses

- \$1,312,218 Program
- \$ 188,231 General & Administrative
- \$ 154,721 Fundraising
- **\$1,655,170 Total Expenses**

Much of the fluctuation in operating revenue from year to year is driven by investment revenue, which includes changes in the market value of our endowment assets. In fiscal year 2021 the markets were robust but have seen substantial declines again in 2022. *Moving forward, private support, including estate gifts, will continue to be critical to the Museum's financial stability.***

Current Board of Directors

Officers

Tom Eder – President
 Carolyn Perry Yockey – 1st Vice President
 Michelle Pazar – 2nd Vice President
 Robert Porter – Secretary
 John J. Killian – Treasurer
 County Board Rep. – John McIntyre
 Immediate Past President – Bob Watkins

Directors

Craig Alexander	Carl Teichman
Keith Cornille	Paul B. Van Ness
Zach Dietmeier	Bill Wetzel, Jr.
Larry Dietz	
Russel Francois	
Vasudha Gadhiraju	
Arlene Hosea	
Terri Kinzy	
Mike Matejka	
R.C. McBride	
Marcos Mendez	
Pam Muirhead	
Georgia Nugent	
Shelli Opsal	
Allison Petty	
Karen Schmidt	
Ann Sullivan	



New Museum Roof!



Museum Staff



Julie Emig, Executive Director

Responsible for the management and direction of the Museum. Emig has worked for the last 27 years as a teacher, leader, and staff developer for schools and public institutions across the country. Julie has a doctorate in literacy education and was associate director for a 20 million grant funded by the Institute of Education Sciences based at the University of Illinois in Chicago. She is in her third year of leadership at the Museum.



Norris Porter, Development Director

Manages membership, fundraising, sponsorships, and grant work for the Museum. He has over 34 years of experience, 15 in development & fundraising in the higher education and nonprofit sectors. Porter is in his third year at the Museum after retiring from a 30-year career in higher education.



Susan Hartzold, Curator of Collections & Exhibits

Manages the donation, processing, and preservation/conservation of the Museum's collection of 20,000+ objects; develops, designs, and builds the Museum's award-winning exhibits; Edits the Museum's Quarterly Magazine; and creates graphics for promoting Museum programs and events. Hartzold celebrated 31 years with the Museum in September.



Jackie Cain, Registrar

Processes incoming donations to the Museum's object collection, maintains the collection database, and assists the Curator with collections research and management. She has a Master's from IUPUI in Museum Studies, and 5+ years of collections care experience.



Brandy Maloney, Development Assistant

Supports the Director of Development with membership, sponsorship, fundraising, and special events. Maloney has a graduate degree in History from ISU and over a dozen years of experience in development. She joined the Museum in 2017 and has been in her current position since 2019.

Museum Staff Cont.



Candace Summers, Senior Director of Education

Helps to educate over 20,000 people in Central Illinois through educational programs like the Evergreen Cemetery Walk and Senior Reminiscence program. Summers has over twenty years of experience working in the field of history and museum education. She has worked at the McLean County Museum of History for over 17 years.



Emily McCusker, Director of Youth & Family Ed.

Oversees programs like the Futures in History Day Camp that engage children and families in history, both locally and globally. She has worked with multiple museums in the Chicagoland area. McCusker graduated from Lake Forest College in May of 2022 and began working for the McLean County Museum of History in July of 2022.



Maria Mears, Director of Adult Education

Works with audiences made up of young adults through seniors in engaging history programming. Having recently obtained a PhD in American Studies, Maria brings extensive knowledge in historical research and interpretation. She also has experience working in museums and taught Interdisciplinary Studies at the college level for over 4 years.



Bill Kemp, Librarian

For nineteen years, Bill has headed the Museum's Library/Archives. He has graduate degrees from the University of Illinois Springfield and Illinois State University. Kemp is known for his in-depth knowledge of McLean County history and informative presentations to the community.



George Perkins, Archivist

Before he joined the staff in 2005, George was a Museum volunteer—in one capacity or another—for three decades. The recipient of the Illinois State Genealogical Society's Volkel Medal of Honor in 2021, George was recognized for his significant contributions to the field. He has a B.S. degree from Illinois State University.

Museum Staff Cont.



Rochelle Gridley, Assistant Archivist

Previously a volunteer with the Museum, Rochelle began working part-time in 2018. In her grant-funded position, she has worked exclusively on the Pantagraph Negative and MCMH Print Digital Collections. Rochelle has a master's degree in library science from the University of Illinois.



Jana Kiefer, Assistant Archivist

The Museum's second grant-funded, part-time Archivist, Jana began working on Museum's Print Digital Collections in 2021. Jana has been a longtime volunteer with the library and the annual Cemetery Walk.



Torii Moré, Curator of Digital Humanities

Advances the Museum's digital footprint most notably by incorporating technology in our exhibits and managing the web presence. Moré started as an intern in 2010 and worked in multiple departments before becoming the Museum's first Curator of Digital Humanities.



Betty Turchirollo, Assistant Volunteer Coordinator

Has been with the Museum for nearly 20 years. She has taken the lead in tracking volunteer and intern hours, maintaining volunteer and intern databases, and ensuring the success of events.



Jeff Woodard, Dir. of Marketing & Community Relations

Represents a public presence for the Museum, with responsibilities for developing marketing goals and objectives with an emphasis on promotion of educational programs, permanent and rotating exhibits, and community outreach initiatives including providing marketing support for the Visitors Center and the Museum.

Museum Staff Cont.



Micaela Harris, Marketing Coordinator

Creates various digital and print marketing materials and collaborates with staff members throughout the Museum to share our story with the community. Micaela grew up in the area and returned after graduating with her B.A. in Journalism & Mass Communication from Drake University in May 2020.



Jamie Arthur, Visitors Center Manager

After volunteering at the Museum reception desk for many years, Arthur became the Visitors Center Assistant in 2019, and accepted the position of Visitors Center Manager in 2022. She brings several years of customer service and retail sales leadership experience to the Visitors Center Manager position. Jamie is also a proud Illinois State University alum.



Kathi Davis, Visitors Center Assistant

Was a flight attendant with Delta Airlines for nearly 35 years, based for most of that time in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. When she retired, she bucked the usual trend and moved north to be closer to family. She was the manager of BroMenn Thrift Shop for three years and program and grants director at Illinois Prairie Community Foundation for eight years.



Sara Kellum, Visitors Center Assistant

Has over 30 years of experience working with the public. She grew up in the Bloomington-Normal area, lived in the San Francisco Bay Area most of her adult life and returned to Bloomington-Normal in 2015. Sara started at the Museum as a volunteer in October of 2019 and is thrilled to be working several days a week in the Visitors Center.



Greg Koos, Executive Director Emeritus

Retired in 2016 after a 39-year career at the Museum. He oversaw three major historic site development projects and led the transition and move into the Museum's current home. Koos continues to help the Museum in retirement. Most recently he has authored a new book on 19th Century History of McLean County.

Department Reports

Development

The Development staff worked hard this year to transition to a new CRM software platform. The new platform is cloud based with more robust features allowing for cost savings and efficiencies, including the combination of three software products into one solution for record keeping, online giving, and communication.

Over \$100,000 was obtained through three grants that helped to support the Evergreen Cemetery Walk as well as leverage our ability to utilize remaining IMLS grant dollars to digitize more files for the Pantagraph Negatives Project. Gala Honorees included Alan Bedell & Deanna Frautschi, and George & Myra Gordon.



Bill Kemp, Dianne Hollister, Guy Fraker, and Norris Porter at the Funeral Train Marker unveiling

Membership increased 7.2% with 652 active members as of the end of the fiscal year. Our goal is to grow membership to 800 members by 2026. A gift of \$84,000 was obtained for refurbishment of the WWII Memorial at the Museum with additional matching dollars that launched our Historic Marker Matching Initiative. A new "Looking for Lincoln" Funeral Train Marker became a reality through the generosity of Dianne & John Hollister. Goals moving forward include growing our endowment through planned gifts, reinvigorating discount partnerships with local businesses, improving membership benefits, growing grant dollars, partnering with our smaller communities in the county, and increasing corporate support for the Museum.



Photo from Pantagraph Negatives Project

Library and Archives

Combined collections include more than 14,000 cataloged monographs, reference books, serials, and other titles in the Library; and more than 2,000 linear feet of family papers, business records, photographs, photo negatives, scrapbooks, maps, posters and flyers, architectural drawings, and more in Archives.

Highlights during the past Fiscal Year include: partnering with Bloomington Public Library on the digitization and online access of the rare and historically invaluable five-volume set *Home Town in the Corn Belt*, published in 1950; collaborating with the Digitization Center at Illinois State University's Milner Library to scan at archival standards selected maps and other large-format items; digitizing and uploading onto Internet Archives a host of Museum and local history publications, with an emphasis on materials relating to the local Black community; topping 100,000-plus digitized Pantagraph negatives on the Illinois Digital Archives (IDA) website, marking a milestone in one of the more significant projects undertaken by the Museum in the past decade; creating two new IDA collections—"Public Life in McLean County," and "Architecture in McLean County;" adding 80 or so new collection finding aids to Museum's website, making for a total of 565 collection inventories available to students, researchers, genealogists, and others; and last, continuing to strengthen Library holdings—through weeding, acquisitions, and original cataloging.

Education

In-person programming resumed as conditions around the Covid-19 pandemic improved, and the Education Department turned its focus on engaging Museum audiences through a combination of online and in-person programming.

The Museum's groundbreaking 10-part online Breaking Bread in McLean County series, (which explored the migration stories of McLean County residents) earned two awards: an award for Superior Achievement in Community Partnerships from the Illinois Association of Museums and a Best Practices Award from the Association of Midwest Museums. Due to the success and positive reception of the Virtual Evergreen Cemetery Walk, the Museum continued the online-event and returned to the traditional in-person Evergreen Cemetery Walk. The Museum, working with a variety of cultural and community organizations, partnered with District 87 school district to facilitate a 3-week summer camp program for District 87 students that helped bridge the learning gap between online and in-person learning.





Collection & Exhibits

Encompassing nearly 18,500 artifacts, our collection is significant in its documentation of most facets of life during the growth and development of McLean County, Illinois. Collection work focused on first phase efforts to make accessible to the general public, through an online website, data, labels, and images of objects in our collection. This work has a dramatic impact on the Museum's intellectual control of the collection as it involves research and documentation of each object, its owner(s) and any additional data needed to accurately interpret the story of its use in McLean County. This research is followed by the development of an interpretive label and the photography of each object. Once we have reached a goal of 5,000 objects, the data, labels, and photographs will be uploaded to our online website. To date we have prepared 1,500 objects.

While no new changing exhibits were installed during this fiscal year,* work began and funds were raised to renovate the Merwin Gallery. Re-imagined as a non-static visible storage space, it will feature hundreds of never-before seen objects from the Museum's vast collection. Interpretive labels that tell the stories of the owners and/or makers of the objects will accompany each and provide the context of their history in McLean County. To keep it fresh, several objects will be rotated into and out of the gallery monthly so that return visitors will always have something new to see. Scheduled to open fall 2023, we can't wait to see this renewed gallery come together!

**The galleries could not be used due to water damage sustained prior to the replacement of the courthouse roof. Repairs were underway as this report was being produced.*



Digital Humanities

In December 2021 we launched our exhibits online, which allows all the amazing people and objects featured in our galleries to be seen by anyone at any time. Exhibit panels are displayed as webpages (which are fully searchable), and visitors can also walk through our exhibits virtually in a 360-degree tour. Links in each site allow visitors to experience both seamlessly.

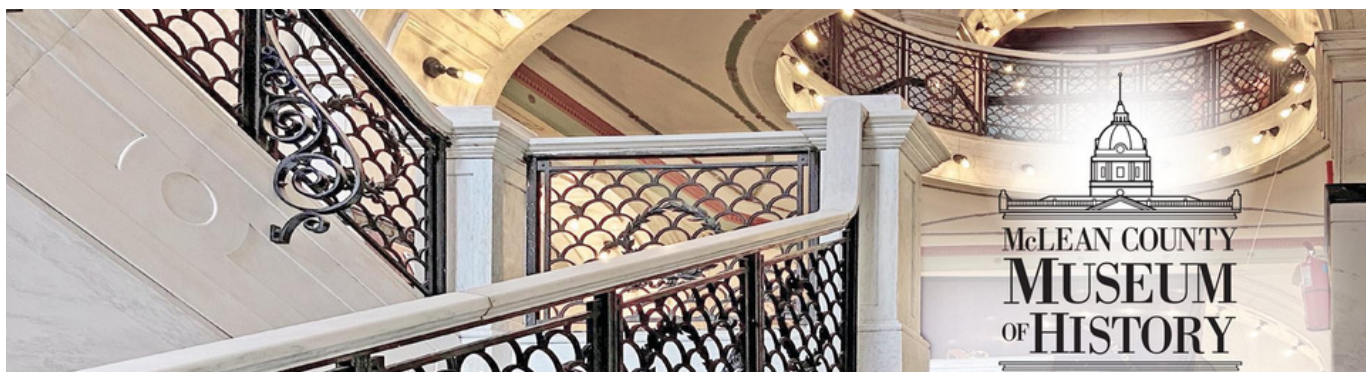
Improvements were also made to the Museum website: a newly designed home page launched, search functions refined, sorting abilities added for biographies and the events page redesigned. We are also very proud of our new live-streaming capabilities, allowing programs in our Courtroom to be hybrid. Those programs can be viewed on the Museum's YouTube channel www.youtube.com/@mchistorymuseum





Marketing

We continue to develop and maintain relationships with the greater community in line with our mission to be collaborative and inclusive, seeking ideas and valuing multiple perspectives. In the past year we have added a part-time marketing staff person, with a focus on developing a more strategic process to better manage our marketing resources. The department has also completed an exterior banner program and a broadcast media commercial campaign, providing a visual branding of the Museum Square. Facility rentals and opportunities to partner with the community are on the increase, and we are again securing motor coach tours.



Visitors Center



Author Greg Koos signing books on the Museum Square

The Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center and Gift Shop reopened to the public in May 2021, after being closed to the public since March 2020, due to the Covid pandemic. We have seen a nice come back since reopening. Admission is above pre-pandemic levels. Sales in the Gift Shop are also notably higher than before the pandemic. The Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center continues to greet and assist local residents, regional community members, and Route 66 travelers from all over the United States, and the world.

The Gift Shop now has Museum branded merchandise for sale and is exploring the addition of more locally made products. The Museum recently published a new book authored by Executive Director Emeritus, Greg Koos – *Freedom, Land & Community: A History of McLean County Illinois, 1730 – 1900*. An early history of McLean County, the book has received very positive reviews and is available for purchase at the Gift Shop. Robert Sampson, PhD, editor for the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society shared his thoughts, "Overall, it is a detailed and illuminating work that, in my opinion and hope, will become the template for local histories throughout Illinois and the country."



Brandy Maloney &
Board Member Paul Van Ness

Volunteers

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

We have been happy to welcome back our volunteers following the height of the pandemic. Volunteers are a critical part of our team and enrich the breadth of historic work to happen. Rewarding opportunities are available with flexible work schedules. We are currently in need of increasing our team of volunteers. If you are interested, you can fill out an application online at

<https://www.mchistory.org/about/volunteers-interns> For questions and additional information you can contact our volunteer staff at **volunteers@mchistory.org**

Opportunities include assistance in library reference, front desk welcoming visitors, preparing new collection items for storage, cleaning archival areas, special program assistance such as the Evergreen Cemetery Walk, and special project assistance with research, workshops, exhibit openings, and more. We benefitted from several college interns over the past year as well.

Currently we are evaluating future staffing for leadership in the volunteer and internship areas. More details will be forthcoming this winter. Mary Anne Schierman has returned from retirement to help us through our transition. We are thankful for Mary Anne's willingness to share her expertise during this critical time.