



On The Square

The Quarterly Newsletter

McLean County MUSEUM of HISTORY

Volume 47, Number 4

December 2015-January-February 2016

Greg Koos to Retire After 38 Years of Leadership, Preservation, Vision

As McLean County Museum of History prepares for major exhibit and technology changes that usher in a new era of teaching and promoting local history, the man who—working with his mentor Barbara Dunbar—transformed the McLean County Historical Society's operations into a nationally accredited museum has announced his plans to retire.

Executive Director Greg Koos, 66, will finish his 38-year career with the Museum on March 31, 2016, well on the way to completing a three-year capital campaign expected to raise more than \$3 million for Museum improvements.

Koos said, "Preparing the Museum for its 21st century transformation is now complete. It is time for the next generation to set new directions. The Museum staff and board are prepared and excited about the future. There could be no better time to turn over the reins."

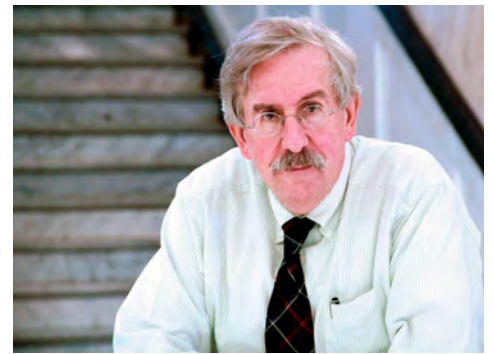
Koos has been with the Museum through four decades and two locations, starting as a part-time employee. He was hired full-time as archivist and site manager (1977-1987) at the Historical Society's former home inside the McBarnes Memorial Building in Bloomington.

In this role, he oversaw three major historic site development projects including the award-winning Miller/Davis Building (1844) which sits at the corner of Main and Front streets.

By 1987 Koos was prepared to take over as executive director and he led the transition and move into the Museum's current home inside the 1903 McLean County Courthouse. That re-utilization project was honored by the American Association for State and Local History in 1993. Koos also curated multiple exhibits on local history and, working with Jack Moody of the County of McLean, oversaw the restoration of the courthouse dome which won the Landmarks Illinois Richard H. Dreihaus Award in 2005.

"I'm not finished with history," Koos noted. "I will be writing a general history of McLean County. I intend on using our great collections which have been developed to tell the story of this place which continues to fascinate me."

During Koos's tenure the Museum's capacity for developing new exhibits and delivering educational programs and events has nearly tripled. Board President Carolyn Yockey added, "Greg has devoted



McLean County Museum of History Executive Director Greg Koos will retire at the end of March after 38 years. During his tenure, Koos helped gain national accreditation for the Museum and nearly tripled its capacity for exhibits and annual educational services.

much time and effort to the Museum over his 38 years and we truly appreciate that. He is a walking encyclopedia of McLean County history; we are thrilled that he is writing a book to preserve what he knows."

The Museum's Board of Trustees voted Wednesday, November 18 to promote Director of Development Beth Whisman to the executive director position. She will begin her new duties April 1. The two will work side-by-side with the transition, and Koos will remain as a consultant through September.



CHRISTMAS at the Courthouse

Join us December 5th

SEE PAGE 3

With thanks to our newsletter sponsor:



Behind the Scenes
of *Making a Home*
See page 4 for details.

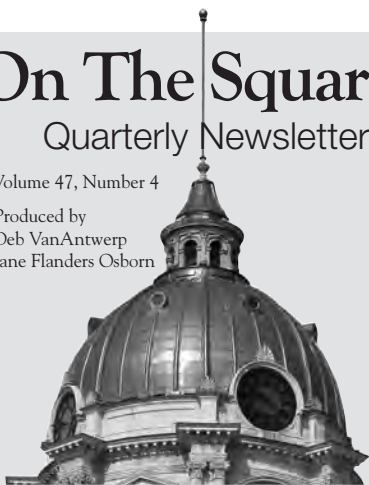
Capital Campaign Update
See page 8 for details.

On The Square

Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 47, Number 4

Produced by
Deb VanAntwerp
Jane Flanders Osborn



McLean County Museum of History
and *Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66*
Visitors Center



200 N. Main St., Bloomington, IL 61701
Phone (309) 827-0428 Fax (309) 827-0100
www.mchistory.org

Located on the corner of Main (Rt. 66)
and Washington Streets, the Visitors Center
and Museum entrance is located on
Washington Street on the south side of the square

HOURS

9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday, Saturday
9 a.m. - 9 p.m. Tuesday

OFFICERS

Carolyn Yockey, President
Bill Zimmerman, First Vice President
Brad Briney, Second Vice President
Sandra Harmon, Secretary
John Killian, Treasurer
Craig Alexander, Immediate Past President

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Edward B. Jelks	Carol Struck
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David Ashbrook	James A. Stahly
Carl Behr	Carol Struck
Nancy Froelich	Steve Wannemacher

History Reads Selections for 2016

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Join us for History Reads Book Club, a joint program offered by the McLean County Museum of History and the Bloomington Public Library. Here are the 2016 book club selections.

February 2:

The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers (2015)
edited by Brian Dolinar

May 3:

The Fire That Will Not Die (1979) by Michele McBride

August 2:

Lincoln's Ladder to the Presidency: The Eighth Judicial Circuit (2012)
by Guy C. Fraker

November 1:

The Bootlegger: A Story of Small-Town America (1999) by John E. Hallwas

Books will be available for checkout at Bloomington Public Library or may be requested via inter-library loan through your local public library.

The program begins at 7:00 p.m. in the Museum's Governor Fifer Courtroom. Free parking is available at the Lincoln Parking Deck, located one block south of the Museum on Front Street.

For more information contact the Museum's Education Department at education@mchistory.org or 309-827-0428; or contact Karen Moen at Bloomington Public Library at reference@bloomingtonlibrary.org.



2016 Dates for Knitting Under the Dome

We're kicking off our fifth year of Under the Dome Knit In! The 2016 Knit Ins will be held on February 20, May 14, August 20, and November 12, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. in the Museum's Governor Fifer Courtroom. We welcome all knitters and crocheters to create charity items or work on their own projects. Details on 2016 charities will be available in our February monthly mailer.

The Under the Dome Knit In is free and open to everyone. Light refreshments are served. Bring your own project or the materials to begin a new one, grab a friend, and come "knit for a bit!"



Free parking will be available at the Lincoln Parking Deck, one block south of the Museum on Front Street. Questions? Contact the Education Department at 309-827-0428 or education@mchistory.org.

Join Us for Christmas at the Courthouse

December 4

On Friday, December 4 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. the Museum offers free admission during the Downtown Bloomington Association's *Once Upon a Holiday* event.

Enjoy a celebrity reading of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* by Normal Mayor Chris Koos and Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner, music by Marcos Mendez, and refreshments including adult eggnog.



December 5



The Twin Cities' annual Jaycees Christmas parade ends each year at the doorstep of one of the community's largest free holiday celebrations.

Christmas at the Courthouse is a time-honored tradition.

The Museum opens its doors to the community each year on the first Saturday of December for a day of family fun and holiday cheer. Visitors can enjoy music, homemade cookies, cider, and more on Saturday, December 5 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

An architectural gem, the old courthouse on the Museum Square in Downtown Bloomington will be adorned with traditional holiday decorations including the majestic tree in the rotunda. Families can take photos with St. Nick, make crafts in the Museum galleries, and enjoy face painting. Mike Matejka will share his model toy train, which is always a hit with the children.

This year's Christmas at the Courthouse is supported in part by our community sponsors Sean Craig with Royal Alliance Associates, Inc., CEFCU, WBNQ, and Commerce Bank.

Musical performances will feature the acoustical styling of Marcos Mendez, the Bloomington High School Quartet, the Loving Missionary Choir, the Sound of Illinois Chorus, and the State Farm Employee Activities Chorus (SFEA). Dr. Mike Lockett will entrance the young set with his storytelling.

If you like to shop locally for the holidays, think of the Museum's Visitors Center! We offer vintage-style toys for children, nostalgic gifts for grandparents, and many other items that are sure to delight your family and friends.

The *Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66* Visitors Center and gift shop located on the ground level will be open all day, and shoppers can choose from a wide range of holiday gifts.

Great stocking stuffers include pick-up sticks, Jacob's Ladder, and penny smasher bracelets for the kids. We also carry Katydid's, Funks Grove Pure Maple Sirup, BEER NUTS products, Steak 'n Shake goodies, Lincoln memorabilia, Route 66 items, local history books, and other products unique to the area.

For more information about these Museum events, visit mchistory.org or call 309-827-0428.

Making A Home Begins New Era for Museum Grand Opening Set for January 18

Challenges, Choices, and Change define where we make our home, who we become and the legacy we leave that will shape future generations.

Join us on January 18, 2016 to explore these themes as the Museum unveils the first of five new galleries that will make up our new permanent exhibit *Challenges, Choices, and Change: The People of McLean County*.



It will be the Museum's first new permanent exhibit in 24 years and will serve as the foundation for its interactive student programs and public education.

The four other galleries are set to open over the next two years and will cover the historic themes of agriculture, work, politics, and the integral role McLean County played in the election of President Abraham Lincoln.

This significant installation is being funded through the ongoing *Extending Excellence* capital campaign that is raising \$3 million to build five new permanent exhibits, upgrade digital technologies throughout the Museum, expand the Education Department, and improve landscaping on the Museum Square.

From the Native American period to the late 20th century, a wide variety of artifacts will be featured, including these from the 1950s, in the new *Making a Home* gallery.



A public Grand Opening program—for *Making a Home*—on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day will help celebrate the diverse people who have made McLean County home with a special program set to begin at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, January 18 with a presentation by exhibit consultant Dr. Gina Hunter. The program will be followed by acknowledgments and a ribbon cutting. Refreshments will be served afterward. The public is invited to attend this free program.

Year End: Perfect Time to Make Charitable Donations with Lasting Impact

As 2015 comes to an end, we want to thank our members, donors, and friends for supporting our many programs, exhibits, and lectures that make this institution a vital contributor to the community's cultural and educational opportunities. This is an exciting time for the Museum as the ongoing *Extending Excellence* campaign begins to produce tangible evidence of its success, from new digital infrastructure that includes free WiFi for Museum guests to the much anticipated grand opening of the *Making a Home* gallery in the new permanent exhibit *Challenges, Choices, and Change: The People of McLean County*. We couldn't achieve any of this without the generous philanthropic support of our friends!

Now is a great time to consider a year-end tax-deductible gift to help either our campaign committee reach

its \$3 million goal or to help the annual fund pay for the day-to-day costs of operating the Museum and its free educational programs that serve 8,200 local students and senior citizens each year.

Timing is important for these gifts. Please date your check on or before December 31, 2015 and mail it with a postmark on or before that date. Gift checks mailed with that postmark will be counted for 2015 regardless of when they are received. You may also hand-deliver your check and enjoy a quiet break during the holiday rush by visiting our galleries and Library. A gift by credit card or PayPal can also be processed easily via our www.mchistory.org website on or before December 31, 2015. Credit card gifts sent via the mail will be processed on the date they are received, so please allow plenty of time to mail them before the deadline.

Planned giving is also an ideal way for Museum supporters to have a lasting impact. Charitable gift annuities are now an available option for those who want to support the Museum while establishing a reliable retirement income supplement. A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract (rather than a legal trust) and it allows you to supplement your income with regular, fixed lifetime payments that are partially tax-free. The gift portion of your assets are tax deductible; they remove taxable assets from your estate and allow you to eliminate some capital gains tax. Calculations are estimates and actual benefits might vary. As with any major financial decision, consult your financial advisor to decide if a charitable gift annuity is right for you.

First is the Worst, Second is the Best!

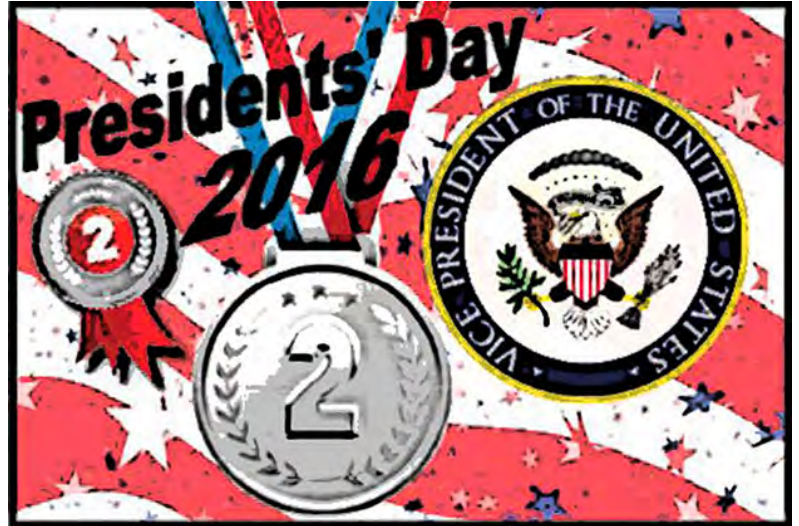
A Presidents' Day Preview

Presidents' Day 2016 at the McLean County Museum of History will be a celebration of America's great right-hand men because this year, Presidents' Day will be Vice Presidents' Day! Join us on Monday, February 15 from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. for a free, family-friendly open house featuring games, crafts, sweets, and our annual mock election. This free event is sponsored in part by State Farm Bank.

Did you know:

- prior to 1967 there was no official line of succession to the presidency? People merely assumed that the vice president would be happy to fill the role.
- of the United States' 47 vice presidents, 14 have become president?
- William King holds the title of the United States' shortest lasting vice president, having held the office for a mere three weeks?

Famed Tonight Show host Johnny Carson once said, "Democracy means that anyone can grow up to be president, and anyone who doesn't grow up can be vice president." We'll see if Johnny's words ring true as we put America's VPs in the VIP spotlight. Make plans to join us for this annual Open House event.



Museum to Co-host 9th Annual Teachers Symposium

Teaching the 20th Century in the 21st Century

The McLean County Museum of History is pleased to partner with the Illinois State University Department of History and the Regional Office of Education 17 to present an annual history symposium for Illinois teachers and ISU history education majors. The symposium will be on Friday, January 20, 2016.

The theme, "Teaching the 20th Century in the 21st Century," was selected because as we move further into the twenty-first century, the events of the twentieth century pass into history while their themes remain intensely relevant. Past symposium themes have included, "Teaching World History in a Global Society," "Celebrating Leaders: Past, Present, and Future," and "Civil Rights: Education and Activism."

For seven years the Museum hosted this event. Last year, construction at the Museum in preparation for the opening

of the Visitors Center meant that we were unable to host, so the symposium was relocated to ISU. The University's greater capacity, along with the proximity of interested faculty and students, helped make the 2015 symposium the largest yet. 200-plus practicing teachers and students had the choice of attending as many as five of 35 unique sessions.

Following last year's success the lead coordinators of this event, Dr. Richard Hughes, Associate Professor of History Dr. Diane Wolf, Assistant Regional Superintendent; and Candace Summers, Museum Director of Education; made the decision to alternate hosting the symposium at the Museum and the ISU campus.

A call for proposals was sent out in September asking local professionals—including ISU faculty members, Museum staff, and educators from across the state—to submit session ideas ranging from twentieth century women's history, to monuments and icons, to local history. Proposals were reviewed in October and sessions were accepted by all three parties in November.

The Museum looks forward to once again hosting our local educators and future teachers at this highly-regarded event.

Scenes From the 21st Evergreen Cemetery Walk

This year, 2,054 students and chaperones attended free of charge because of the generosity of Museum members and support from event sponsors Evergreen Memorial Cemetery, CEFCU, The Copy Shop, and Museum Board Member Willie

Brown. Here, students listen to Dr. Thomas Rogers, played by John Kirk, as he talks about practicing medicine in the days of house calls made on horseback.



Mary Kay Zeter (left) is one of over 60 volunteers who make this annual event possible. They research, serve as box office volunteers, guide the tours, and even bake cookies! We couldn't do it without them.

Kathleen Kirk (standing) teamed up with our new Artistic Director, Rhys Lovell, to write the actor scripts this year. Their coordinated efforts resulted in cohesive scripts that made connections between the different characters, something our visitors noticed and appreciated. Kathleen is seen in her portrayal of Dr. Louise Crothers, with her husband Dr. Eli Crothers, played by Todd Wineburner.



Over the course of this eight-day event, actors shared their stories over 130 times to 3,773 visitors who enjoyed experiencing a slice of our local history.



The 2015 Evergreen Cemetery Walk staff and cast hope you enjoyed the event!

Meet New Board Member Larry Dietz, ISU President

What brought you to McLean County and how long have you been here?

I was hired as the Vice-President for Student Affairs in June of 2011 so I came here to further my professional career.

Have a family?

Tell us a little about yourself!

I am married to Marlene who is a communications consultant and we have a son, daughter, and four grandchildren ages 16, 13, 8, and 6. All of them live in Kansas City. I grew up on a dairy farm in Southern Illinois, finished my BA in political science and pre-law at Southern Illinois University and completed my MS and Ph.D at Iowa State, all while working full-time. I have held administrative positions and taught at SIUC, Iowa State, University of Missouri Kansas City, and went back to SIUC and then moved here. I became president in March of 2014 and am also a tenured Associate Professor in Educational Foundations and Administration.

How did you end up on the Museum Board?

I am personally interested in history and my political science background and interests are somewhat aligned with the Museum's interests. In addition, the University has usually had a presence on the Board held by numerous faculty and staff but I wanted to serve myself. Given my schedule, I have not been as active as I would have wanted but Jay Groves, Chief of Staff, has kept me informed and we have supported Museum efforts as an institution.

Do you have an interest in local history and, if so, why?

I do as indicated above. I am a particular fan of Abraham Lincoln and have studied and read about him over the years. As the state's oldest University, I am also interested in ISU's history and have read extensively about that and the surrounding communities' development.

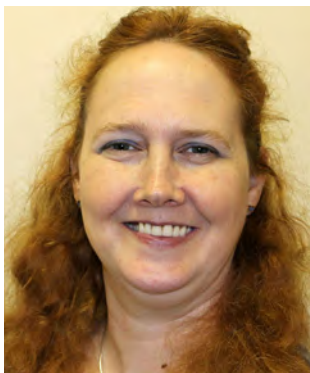


What special attributes or background do you bring to the Board?

I bring a commitment to making sure that ISU is doing what it needs to do to be a good partner with organizations such as the Museum. I am a strong advocate for ISU and the Bloomington/Normal communities as a place to live, learn, and work.

Meet Our Interns

Chelsea M. Pokrzywinski



Chelsea Pokrzywinski is a first year graduate student in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She interned in the archives with George Perkins processing a collection donated to the Museum by St. Mary's Catholic Church and School in Bloomington. Chelsea said she learned a lot about best practices, sorting, and

organizing the pieces of a collection during her internship, and she even remembered how to use an electric typewriter without the ability to correct what is typed! With her background in history and her desire to work in a museum or archive after graduation, the McLean County Museum of History was a great fit for her internship. Chelsea said she felt blessed to have the mentorship of George and Bill whenever she had a question, and to be a part of the Museum team.

Brooke Wamsley



Brooke Wamsley is a graduate student in Anthropology at Illinois State University and is currently serving as an intern in the Curation department, assisting Susan Hartzold with research on a new permanent Museum exhibit. Not being a native to the region or Bloomington, Brooke has thoroughly enjoyed learning about all the personalities and

events that are part of the history of McLean County.

Become a Museum Intern

If you or someone you know would like working with talented staff at a not-for-profit environment, an internship at the Museum may be for you. We accept college students in many fields, including history, archaeology, anthropology, social sciences, English, marketing, and business. Past Museum interns have reported successful careers all over the world! For more information about upcoming summer 2016 internships, contact Deb VanAntwerp at volunteers@mchistory.org or (309) 827-0428.

Extending Excellence Campaign Progress Report

For more than a century, the Museum has successfully used artifacts and stories of past people to connect different generations and reflect on our heritage of hopes, triumphs, and failures. The *Extending Excellence* campaign committee has been making steady progress since it announced plans last year to raise \$3 million to ensure that the Museum can continue this important work for future generations.

If you have not contributed, we hope you'll take a moment to learn more about the campaign in this newsletter and on the Museum website www.mchistory.org/campaign where you'll find informative videos, a list of donors, detailed plans, and ways to make a gift to the campaign.

As of Oct. 31, 2015, the *Extending Excellence* campaign has secured \$2,646,665 in gifts and pledges to fulfill four major goals for the Museum:

- Installing the new 5,000 square-foot permanent exhibit *Challenges, Choices, and Change: The People of McLean County*;
- Upgrading digital technology throughout the Museum;
- Expanding the Education Department (see story on page 6); and
- Improving landscaping on the Museum Square.

So far, the landscape work has been completed, digital infrastructure upgrades have begun including new WiFi for guests on the Museum Square, a third Museum Educator has already started on a part-time schedule, and the first of five galleries in the new exhibit is well on its way to a grand opening on Jan. 18, 2016.

Your support will significantly enhance our ability to meet these goals and continue our mission to educate the general public on the history of the people of McLean County and connect students of all ages and backgrounds with our collective past. Together we will foster a deeper sense of who we are and where we will go together as a community.



Donor Recognition Opportunities; Commemorate Your Gift

All donors who give \$5,000 or more to the *Extending Excellence* campaign will be honored on a permanent plaque at the Museum. Donors who have pledged or given \$25,000 or more are eligible to also choose from a variety of special recognition opportunities. Those who qualify will be sent notices as new opportunities become available in different areas of the Museum and galleries.

A few early donors have already chosen their means of recognition,



Challenges, Choices, and Change: The People of McLean County grand opening schedule

Making a Home

January 18, 2016

Abraham Lincoln in McLean County

May 2016

Farming in the Great Corn Belt

March 2017

Work Gallery

November 2017

Politics Gallery (TBA)

basing their selections on personal ties to the history of McLean County. For example, Mike and Carole Dolan have elected to name the burr oak located on the northwest corner of the Museum Square (shown) due to its proximity to the family's Pantagraph Printing & Stationery Company.

If you have already made a gift or are considering a gift of \$25,000 or more, please contact Director of Development Beth Whisman to discuss your options inside and outside the Museum's walls.

Behind the Scenes of *Making a Home*

Work in progress: clockwise left to right

▶ Curator Susan Hartzold reuses the Honduras mahogany casework from the current galleries to reduce waste and save money.

▶ Actors perform for a digital video interactive for visitors.

▶ Curator of Digital Humanities Torii Moré records with Balwant Singh, whose story is featured in a digital audio and map interactive.

▶ One *Making a Home* vignette explores local German and Jewish traditions, including the annual Hebrew Charity Ball.

▶ Executive Director Greg Koos leads a construction tour for campaign committee members inside the future *Making a Home* gallery. It is the first of five galleries to receive major upgrades. Campaign donors will be the first to see the exhibits as they are completed. The public opening will be January 18, 2016.



Finish Strong: Donate Today and Help Us Raise the Last 12%

Despite reaching 88 percent of our campaign goal and seeing the first fruits of our labors, there is still more to do. The final stretch of a campaign is always the hardest. Yet, the *Extending Excellence* Campaign Committee is confident that we will reach our goal with your help.

The Museum is receiving more public attention than ever, our website is getting an unprecedented number of visitors, and the new Visitors Center located on the ground floor has attracted the interest of people far and wide. More and more people are learning just how important the Museum is to local education, culture, and economy.

There are many ways to make a meaningful campaign gift whether you prefer to make a single donation, a planned gift to be distributed over a five-year period, or an estate gift. You can send a check to the Museum with "capital campaign" written in the memo line or use your credit card through PayPal at www.mchistory.org/campaign

Campaign statistics:

- \$3 million goal
- Hit 88% of goal in October
- 150+ private donors
- 21 corporate donors
- 100% of Museum board donated
- 12 Museum staff members donated
- 5-year pledge option

or by calling the Development Office at 309-827-0428.

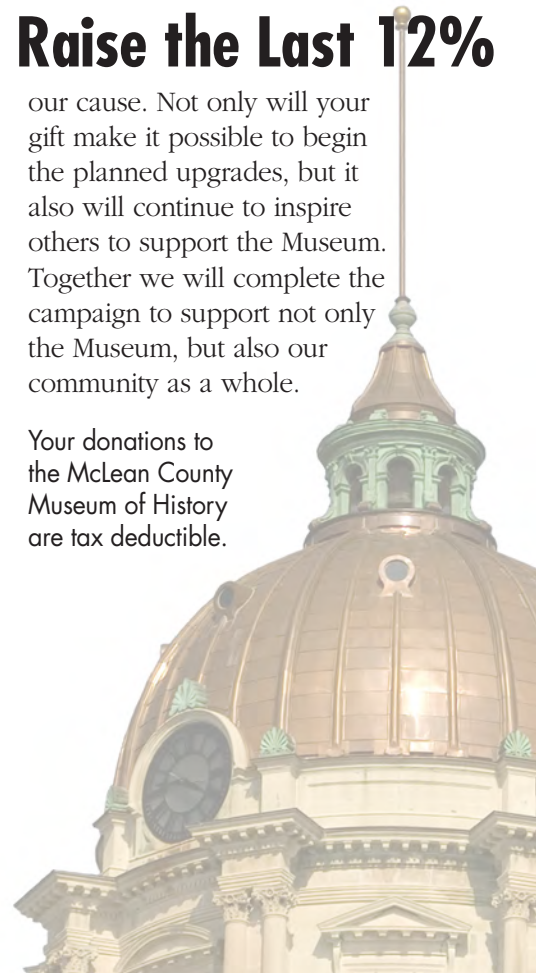
For a more personal conversation about your giving intentions, please call Executive Director Greg Koos or Development Director Beth Whisman at the same number and they will work with a campaign committee member to offer a formal presentation and tour.

"The Museum's excellence has been apparent for years; it must not be allowed to slip away," said Craig Alexander, campaign co-chair.

Your commitment to *Extending Excellence* will do so much to further

our cause. Not only will your gift make it possible to begin the planned upgrades, but it also will continue to inspire others to support the Museum. Together we will complete the campaign to support not only the Museum, but also our community as a whole.

Your donations to the McLean County Museum of History are tax deductible.



Library Volunteer Produces Local History Blogs

Six years ago Rochelle Gridley and her husband indulged their love of history by purchasing a home in the Founders' Grove area of Bloomington. She began research on her home, hoping to find a romantic back story. The results were disappointing, but Rochelle enjoyed her research and wanted to do more of it.

Professionally, Rochelle worked 25 years as a paralegal and claims adjustor. Burnt out and ready for a change, she decided to re-train for a service career. She returned to school and received her degree in library science in 2013.

As a newly-minted professional librarian at Illinois Central College Health Science Library, Rochelle wanted to commit to volunteer service to maintain her link with Bloomington. Combining her love of history and the enjoyment of her new career, she thought the Museum's library would be a natural fit.

Early in her volunteer service, Rochelle found out about the marvelous *McLean County Combined Index Atlas*, which was collected and reprinted by the Museum and the Genealogical Society; she purchased a copy and obtained permission to reproduce images from it. With this new information, Rochelle expanded her historical research to other homes in Founders' Grove and created *A History of Founders' Grove in Maps*. (rochellegridley.wix.com/foundgrovemaphistory)

Another important step in Rochelle's avocation came when, as a library

volunteer, she archived a set of World War II letters between a Bloomington soldier and his wife. From this and other projects Rochelle developed areas of historical interest that include labor issues, African American issues, and womens' and childrens' issues.

She began researching local people and events using newspapers.com and the Museum stacks, and found that she preferred to learn about, and highlight, the everyday man and woman. (<http://rochellegridley.wix.com/mclean-100-years-ago>)

Rochelle's interest in women's issues inspired her to create a blog that details local womens' roles in WWII. One of those remarkable women was Mary Jayne Stickrod. Jayne, according to Rochelle's blog, was a Wesleyan graduate, a professional swim instructor, an Olympic swim hopeful, a Captain in the Red Cross who ran a Clubmobile as one of the "Doughnut Dollies" assigned to follow Patton's army, and a Navy SEAL swim instructor in Japan and Korea. (www.womencalledtoaction.wordpress.com)

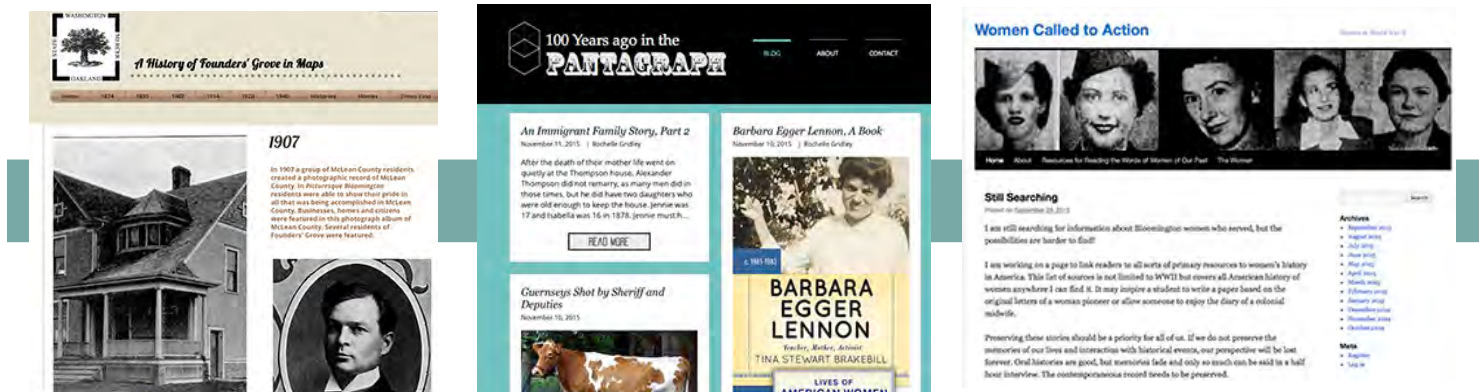
Researching Jayne and other Bloomington women of that era has led to some heartfelt encounters, including correspondence with Ms. Stickrod's son and a meeting in Farmer City with Emma Haynes, former WWII WAVE from Bloomington. Rochelle was able to give Ms. Haynes recent photographs of her childhood home as well as copies of newspaper clippings from her past.



Rochelle also creates a daily post featuring one local item that happened 100 years ago in McLean County. It can be found on the Founders' Grove Neighborhood Association website. (www.fgna.org)

Continuing with her interest in ordinary citizens, the posts highlight events that happened to everyday people. Recent entries included "Orphaned by Divorce," "Homegrown Confidence Men," and "Adventures of a Railroad Engineer."

We are gratified to have provided resources that assist and inspire Rochelle to document local history from her own unique viewpoint, and we hope she will continue to research, enjoy, and share pieces of the history of Bloomington-Normal for years to come.



Caution Needed on Pension Buyouts

More and more companies are offering or planning to offer lump sum distributions to former employees, sometimes referred to as “pension buyouts,” according to a September report in The Wall Street Journal. A number of factors were cited for the trend:

- Low interest rates and shrinking market returns have enlarged the gap between pension assets on hand and obligations to plan participants. According to Standard & Poor's, the gap grew from \$224.5 billion at the end of 2013 to \$389.1 billion at the beginning of this year.
- Premiums paid to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation are ratcheting up, increasing 30% from last year to next year.
- When a participant accepts a buyout, the longevity risk (the chance that the participant will outlive his or her life expectancy) shifts from the employer to the participant.
- New IRS tables reflecting greater longevity won't go into effect until 2017.

That last point is what gives the issue great urgency. Longer life expectancies mean larger lump sum distributions, so companies have a great incentive to make these offers this year and next. However, low interest rates also lead to larger lump sums. As interest rates go up, the actuarial calculations converting a stream of future payments to a single payment today lead to smaller numbers. Thus, the optimal strategy for a company is to offer lump sums after interest rates go up (possibly later this year?) and before 2017. The optimal strategy for those who may receive lump sums is something else.

Tax implications. Unless the lump sum is rolled over into an IRA, the entire amount is immediately taxable. Those under age 59½ also must pay a 10% penalty.

Investment implications. In making the offer of a pension buyout, the employer is shedding responsibility for managing the funds. That's understandable, because it is difficult work. Is the participant prepared to develop an investment strategy for the money? Can he or she implement the strategy and monitor the funds in the long term? What rate of return will the participant need to achieve in order to create a retirement income stream that is comparable to the pension? Is that return realistically achievable?

Longevity risks. One advantage of taking a lump sum is the possibility of leaving something for one's heirs. If one doesn't need the money right away, it may continue to grow tax deferred if it has been rolled into an IRA, resulting in an even more secure retirement in later years. But the flip side is the risk of outliving the money if one lives “too long.” The pension promise does not expire until death.

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Donations to Collections

Library/Archives Spotlight

St. Mary's Catholic Church Basketball Squad, 1916-17



In August the Museum received a large collection of material relating to St. Mary's Catholic Church on Bloomington's west side. Museum Archivist George Perkins and Registrar Tod Eagleton worked with church officials to make sure the rich history of this nineteenth century German Catholic church is preserved, cataloged, and available to future generations. Museum intern Chelsea Pokrzywinski, under the direction of George, has spent the fall semester organizing these items, including parish records, bulletins, and church and school directories.

The treasure trove included this wonderful photograph. Founded in 1913 or 1914 by Father Adam Schaak, the St. Elmo Club of St. Mary's Church organized basketball and baseball teams and staged theatrical productions and dances. In the early 1920s the club even had a cabin built on the Mackinaw River. Membership peaked at 125 kids, though declining interest led to the club's dissolution in 1933.

Recent Donors to Library/Archives:

David Bill
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Lewis A. Garrison
Steve Graves
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Cathy Helton
Jane Hoobler
Patty Hume
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Jim White, A. Gridley Antiques

A Moment in History

MAY 20, 1989



As the Museum prepares for its first permanent exhibit installation and major technology upgrade since we moved into the former McLean County Courthouse and held our grand opening in 1992, we thought members and donors might enjoy this historic photo of Museum Executive Director Greg Koos outlining plans for the big move from the McBarnes Building to the old courthouse. This photograph ran in the May 20, 1989 *Pantagraph* with this caption: "Director Greg Koos explained the Historical Society's plans for the McLean County Courthouse."

Collections Spotlight Featured Artifact

Handmade Dress — donated by Angeline Burnell, c/o Lois Dineen

The Museum recently received a handmade dress with matching capelet worn by Elizabeth Wilkinson-Plies in the late 1830s and early 1840s. What makes this donation truly unique is that it is now the oldest dress with provenance in our collection! Despite some fading in color, the dress is in remarkable condition. Its once-vibrant light purple and white striping is still evident over much of the material.

Elizabeth Wilkinson was born in Virginia on June 17, 1802, one of ten children to John and Elizabeth Gregg Wilkinson. On April 6, 1820 she married Johannes Plies, a German immigrant, in the New Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lovettsville, Virginia. Elizabeth was a Quaker and her dismissal on September 26, 1821 would indicate that her church did not approve of her marriage. They had two children, William and Caroline, but many other details of their lives together are unknown. Johannes passed away sometime in the early or mid 1830s and it was during this period that Elizabeth moved to Ohio to be closer to family.

On March 25, 1836 Elizabeth married her second husband, Richard Fling, in Montgomery, Ohio. In the months to follow, Elizabeth and Richard left Ohio for Illinois, arriving sometime around 1837.

The couple lived in Money Creek Township and had four children: Richard Jr., Owen, Angeline, and Thomas. Richard passed away on September 28, 1855 and is buried near his brother Charles in the Old City section of Evergreen Memorial Cemetery. Elizabeth lived the remainder of her life in Towanda with her daughter Angeline Heller and Angeline's husband Charles. Elizabeth passed away on December 16, 1875 and is buried with her son Richard Jr. in Zion Baptist Cemetery in Towanda.



Recent Donors to Collections:

David Bill	Mike Matejka
Angeline Burnell	JoAnna Mink
City of Bloomington	Tina Sargent
Maxine Drexler	Fr. Ric Schneider
John Fugate	Meredith Schroeer
Patty Hume	Carolyn Sommers
Jane Irvin	Mike Thoms

McLean County Museum of History Welcomes Our New Members!

Larry Apfelbaum
Ian Chafee
Daniel James Freburg
Kathryn Kerr
Jana Kiefer
John and Nicole Learned
John and Susan Lewellen
David Park
Roger N. Riens
Margaret A. Wolf

Museum membership is an act of philanthropy that supports local history, preservation, and education for the entire community. Each membership also offers direct benefits to you and your family with free admission to the Museum and Library/Archives, 10% off in the gift shop, member price for event tickets, and our Time Travelers reciprocal membership that offers free and discounted admission to hundreds of sites across the U.S.
Join today at www.mchistory.org!

Calendar of Events

Ongoing programs
and upcoming events

Second Thursday of every month until May, 2016
12:10 p.m.

Lunch and Learn at the Museum

Bring your brown bag lunch to the Museum's new series, featuring engaging and enlightening topics for discussion. Join us on the second Thursday of every month from now until May for a new topic to explore and discuss. Each program will be held in the Museum's Governor Fifer Courtroom from 12:10-12:40 p.m. The next three Lunch and Learns will be on December 10, January 14, and February 11. These programs are free, open to the public, and sponsored by Illinois Wesleyan University, the McLean County Museum of History, and the Collaborative Solutions Institute.

December Lunch and Learn

Making Poetry Matter: Poetry and the Archive in the 21st Century with Joanne Diaz
Thursday, December 10
12:10 - 12:40 p.m.

Archives provide poets with a way to capture the past and retool it for their own uses. Many poets have turned to archives to exhume some of history's most difficult narratives of race, gender, and violence central to the American experience. Joanne Diaz, Associate Professor of English, IWU, will read and discuss selections from Martha Collins' *Blue Front* to better understand her use of the archive and how she creates a poetics of engagement.

December 4
5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Once Upon a Holiday **First Friday**

Join the Museum staff for a free, fun, and festive evening for the whole family around the Christmas tree as we host celebrity readings of the classic poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas," also known as "A Visit From St. Nicholas." Don't miss this holiday tradition featuring Normal Mayor Chris Koos at 6 p.m. and Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner at 7 p.m. There will be holiday music, homemade cookies, hot apple cider, adult egg nog, and more!

You can also pick up gifts for history buffs and lovers of all things local in the Museum's new *Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66* Visitors Center, located on the ground floor of the Museum. For more information about First Friday and a complete list of participating locations, please visit the Downtown Bloomington Association's website at downtownbloomington.org.

December 5
11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Christmas at the Courthouse

Join the Museum staff for this annual holiday tradition. Enjoy music, Christmas carols, homemade cookies, children's crafts and activities, and a multicultural St. Nicholas for the kids! See page 3 of this newsletter for more details.

December 15
7:30 p.m.

"Carols in the Courtroom"
presented by ISU Civic Chorale

Free admission, refreshments. Donations accepted to support the Chorale.

December 24 and 25

Museum Closed
for Christmas Holiday.

December 31, 2015
and January 1, 2016

Museum Closed
for the New Year's Holiday

January 18
10:30 a.m.

Challenges, Choices, and Change: Making a Home

Join the Museum for the unveiling of one of our new permanent exhibit galleries. The *Making a Home* exhibit will answer questions about the people who have made McLean County their home. Where did they come from and how did they get here? What did they experience after they arrived? See page 4 for more details about the opening program and exhibit.

February 2
7:00 p.m.

History Reads Book Club

Join the Museum and Bloomington Public Library in the Museum's Governor Fifer Courtroom for the first installment of the History Reads Book Club for 2016. See page 2 for more information about this meeting.

February 15
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Presidents' Day Open House

This free, family-friendly event features games, crafts, sweets, and more. For information, please see page 5 of this newsletter.

February 20
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Under the Dome Knit In

Grab a friend, some needles or hooks, and your yarn and come on down to the Museum to "knit for a bit!" Light refreshments will be provided. This program is free and open to the public. See page 2 for more information.

EXHIBITS

Through January 16, 2016

The Greening of the Prairie: Irish Immigration and Settlement in McLean County

For the past 200 years, Irish people have made their way to Central Illinois. This exhibit tells their story through historic objects, photographs, maps, and more.

The exhibit is sponsored by State Farm.



Opening January 18, 2016

Challenges, Choices, and Change: Making a Home

From the arrival of native people to the immigration of Asian Indians and Latinos in the late 20th century, this exhibit explores the experiences of individuals and families who came from all over the world to make McLean County their home. Their stories reveal the many challenges this diverse group of people faced after their arrival — stories of determination and hard choices, of maintaining traditions and inventing new ones, stories of how their lives unfolded and changed — stories of making a home.



Now Open

Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center

Located on the ground floor of the Museum, the new Visitors Center includes an exhibit featuring many local Route 66 landmarks past and present. It allows visitors to compare and contrast travel, dining, and lodging in Abraham Lincoln's time with that of the Route 66 heyday.

The Visitors Center is free and open to the public during regular Museum hours.

Greening of the Prairie: Irish Immigration and Settlement in McLean County

will officially close after Saturday, January 16, 2016. It has been a popular exhibit and we know you'll be sad to see it go.

However, a few of the featured stories and artifacts associated with Irish immigration and many other nationalities will be a part of the new permanent exhibit *Challenges, Choices, and Change: Making a Home*. It will officially open to the public two days later on Monday, January 18, 2016 at 10:30 a.m. We hope to see you there!

William O'Neil House c. 1915



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MYSTERY HISTORY



WOW! Mystery History sleuths have had a hard go of it of late! Only two folks correctly identified last issue's photograph, a November 1960 view of workmen on the roof of the under-construction Coachman Motel east of downtown Bloomington. The 42-room motel, located on the 400 block of East Washington Street, was built for \$500,000 (or nearly \$4 million today, adjusted for inflation) by local attorney Robert Dunn. The once-fashionable motel struggled in its latter years before eventually falling to the wrecking ball in 2008-2009. The site remains vacant and is one of many commercial lots in the downtown area awaiting redevelopment.

The only two sleuths to correctly identify the building were Doug Johnson, executive director of the McLean County Arts Center, and David Beich. Congratulations to Doug and David for success on what may have been the most difficult "Mystery History" in many a year.

For this issue, can you tell us what's going on in this photograph and about when it was taken? If you think you know the answers to both questions, contact Librarian Bill Kemp by email at library@mchistory.org, or by phone at 309-827-0428. As always, good luck.