

ON THE SQUARE



The Magazine of the McLean County Museum of History

Volume 56 | Issue 2 | Summer 2024

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Cover Photo

John Troyer loads hay in Danvers, Illinois, on August 1, 1941. This photo from the Pantagraph Negatives Collection has been preserved and digitized by the McLean County Museum of History as a part of the Museum's ongoing digitization efforts to save y(our) history. To learn more, please visit mchistory.org.

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Museum membership is an act of philanthropy that supports local history, preservation, and education for the entire community. Membership also offers direct benefits to you and your family with free admission to the Museum, Library & Archives, plus discounts in the Visitors Center & Gift Shop, special member pricing for events, this magazine, and a Time Travelers reciprocal membership that grants you free and discounted admission to hundreds of sites across the country.

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From the Desk of Executive Director Emig

On a sunny, brisk day in April, the McLean County Museum of History had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Menah Pratt of Virginia Tech University, whose mother Dr. Mildred Pratt was a trailblazing professor of social work at Illinois State University and co-founder of the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project. Dr. Menah Pratt shared excerpts from her recently published book *Blackwildgirl: A Writer's Journey to Take Back Her Superpower*, including this gem: "Like archaeologists, we must try to preserve the ancient artifacts of our spirits waiting to tell their story from shreds and pieces of memories."

This issue of *On the Square* goes behind the scenes again, revealing the day-to-day experiences of Curator of Collections Jackie Cain and Librarian Bill Kemp to illuminate how we preserve objects, papers, photographs, and digital data so that the "shreds and pieces of memories" can be excavated. The objects that we preserve are not the point. Rather, the point is to preserve the stories of people who engaged with, created, and valued these objects. We collectively invoke the spirits behind the stuff.

Museums everywhere are at a turning point. Mariah Berlanga-Shevchuk writes, "...the future of museum collections—and museums themselves—is one in which our collections are active, people-centered, and collaborative... We stay away from telling a single story and instead convey how many different people would or could have used, made, or appreciated stories about the object" (2022). The McLean County Museum of History has been and continues to be at the forefront of this transition, reckoning daily with the import of being the receiver of memory (Lowry, 1993). We are your museum – preserving and sharing Y(OUR) history.


Julie M. Emig, Ed.D.



Development Updates

We have launched new benefits for all members and changed our price structure for entry-level memberships.

- New entry-level pricing for individual senior, and senior couple memberships
- Household memberships at the Davis level and above
- Fifer-Bohrer and higher levels will receive a compilation of the previous year's *Pages From Our Past* *Pantagraph* columns as a searchable PDF.

For more details, please visit mchistory.org/membership.

THANK YOU to this year's Presenting Sponsors! WGLT, Bloomington-Normal's Public Media, is once again our livestream sponsor. MCK CPAs is now sponsoring our Lunch & Learn series, and Illinois Farm Bureau is sponsoring our Museum at the Market initiative, which provides free Museum admission to the public during the Downtown Bloomington Farmer's Market.

Retirement Jitters

Something seems to have spooked retirees, and near retirees. There has been a noticeable uptick in delaying retirement, and even coming back into the work force from retirement.

According to a survey reported in the trade publication Investment News, two-thirds of those in their 50s or early 60s have thought about delaying retirement, or have already done so. Nearly half of the surveyed retirees (44%) have returned to the world of work, or are considering it. Financial insecurity is the primary driver of the phenomenon, according to the survey. Persistent inflation and increasingly volatile financial markets have caused many to reassess whether they really have adequate resources to retire. Many in this age group may recall the economic challenges of the late 1970s, when inflation was more severe.

However, financial worries are not the only factor. Some people just love their work. Some appreciate the mental stimulation of being in the workplace. Some feel that employment adds purpose to their lives.

A survey by payroll company Paychex had similar results. One-sixth of retired respondents were considering a return to work after an average of four years in retirement. Of those who had “unretired,” 55% said they needed more money, 47% said they had gotten bored in retirement, 45% gave personal reasons, 41% expressed worries about inflation, and 33% needed health insurance coverage (multiple answers were allowed). Many of these were asked by a former employer to come back to work because of a labor shortage, and 59% reported working remotely.

60% of those left retirement were happy with the experience of going back to work. 50% said they were energized, 48% were excited, only 27% were nervous. However, 71% reported that younger employees had occasionally made them feel insecure about their abilities.

Despite the trend of have longer or second careers, the fact is that the labor force participation rate of those age 65 and up remains well below what it was before the pandemic, according to The Wall Street Journal. In February 2020, 26% of those 65 and older who were not disabled were working, a modern peak. The pandemic and the recession triggered a great many retirements, bringing the participation rate down to 22.7% by July 2021. In August 2023 the rate stood at 23.7%.

Are you concerned about your retirement readiness? We’d be pleased to discuss your situation and offer our insights for today’s retiree.

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WEALTH MANAGEMENT

HISTORY Makers

The 2024 History Makers Gala and the Annual Meeting of the McLean County Historical Society will take place on the evening of June 18th at the Brown Ballroom at Illinois State University.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the program will begin at 6:15 p.m.

Each year, the History Makers Gala recognizes long-standing residents whose contributions of time and talents have helped to make McLean County a better place to live. This year, we will gather to recognize Julie & Bob Dobski, Barb & Bob Hathway, Jan Lancaster, and John Penn. The Gala dinner will feature live entertainment celebrating the honorees and their service to the community through a performance by Illinois Voices Theater entitled "A Recipe for Community."

To learn more please visit bit.ly/hmgala24.

Julie & Bob Dobski

Is a business all about profit? Not to Bob and Julie Dobski, who built their businesses with a family atmosphere, concern about their workers, and nurturing people to grow together.

The two grew up in Chicago's Logan Square, where Bob's dad operated a grocery store, Edmund's, and Julie's dad drove a CTA bus. Being in Chicago, the streets were the dividing lines, as each belonged to a different parish and went to different parochial schools.

Service jobs were their calling. Eight-year-old Bob helped at the family grocery store. Julie, the second oldest of eight children, aided in family childcare, before working at the lunch counter. Julie's aunt worked at Edmund's and soon Bob and Julie were acquainted. The pair got engaged in 1973 and married a year later.

Edmunds had expanded to three stores in Chicago-land. The newlyweds lived in Arlington Heights. As big box stores spread, the family grocery store was a dying species. Bob had two brothers with McDonald's franchises, so they applied for and opened the first McDonald's in Farmington, Missouri.

Coming from America's Second City to an 8,000-population town was quite a contrast, but they were soon community stalwarts. Besides adjusting to a smaller community, allegiances shifted. Bob quips that he didn't know "baseball existed after September" and he found that America's pastime was played in October, as their loyalty shifted from the Cubbies to the St. Louis Cardinals.

With little cultural life, the two participated in the "One Nighters" theatrical group, and later brought the concept to Bloomington-Normal. McDonald's encouraged community involvement, and Julie and Bob were soon active in local charities. Julie helped start the Miss Farmington pageant, and Bob served as Chamber of Commerce President.



In 1989 McDonald's beckoned Julie and Bob to Bloomington-Normal to manage the restaurants here, enlarging the local franchise to 11 locations, including McLean and Gibson City. The community involvement they practiced in Farmington proceeded at warp speed in McLean County.

Both Bob and Julie have served as McLean County Chamber of Commerce President. Julie led one United Way campaign, serving as board president twice, and Bob served two terms as an Illinois State University trustee. Together they serve with the Salvation Army's Safe Harbor and the Holiday Spectacular regularly features the Dobski Dancers. Julie is very involved with Rotary, serving as District 6490 Governor from 2019-2020. She also chairs ISU's College of Business Advisory Board.

The Dobskis are always open to new ventures; in 2004 Julie launched Little Jewels Learning Center, now in three locations with over 150 staff, serving approximately 450 children. The two sold their McDonald's restaurants in 2017. Bob launched RobDob's in 2019, just before COVID. The restaurant survived the pandemic and flourished as a "taste of Chicago" with its décor and fine dining menu.

Besides their four children, "family" is the recurring word that reflects their business philosophy. "You create a family of employees," Bob explained, "that's what made us successful." Julie adds that "we love to motivate and develop our people, treat people like you like to be treated." That business and community loyalty, plus, according to Bob, "Julie's inability to say no," has gained the two loyalty and recognition.

Their community recognition reflects that service. They were 2013 Philanthropists of the Year and are both McLean County Chamber of Commerce Legacy Award winners. Julie was named a YWCA Woman of Distinction, received the Chamber's Athena award, and was inducted into the ISU College of Business Alumni Service Hall of Fame. A proud moment for Julie was receiving an honorary ISU doctorate in 2016.

With their work ethic and community appreciation, they did more than create businesses, they enriched McLean County. "We've been blessed, we've been lucky," Julie noted, "I like to think we made a difference." "It's the people," Bob adds, "you empower the people around you to do more – make everybody successful and support them."

Barb & Bob Hathway

Barb and Bob Hathway's kind and giving spirits enrich our community through social justice activism, religious faith, educational uplift, and musical talent.

Centered at First United Methodist Church in Normal, the two active congregants are always ready volunteers. Community for Social Action, Habitat for Humanity, the Drug Court, Witness for Peace, Boy Scouts, PATH, and Mulberry School all benefitted from their efforts.

High school sweethearts, the two raised a family locally while Bob taught mathematics at Illinois State University and Barb worked at Mennonite Hospital and Diamond-Star Motors Assessment Center. Bob's summer breaks allowed travel for volunteering. For 57 years their voices have amplified services through the First United Methodist choir.

Peoria was their hometown. Both were born in the city, but Barb lived in nearby Dunlap through eighth grade. As high schoolers they met ice skating at Glen Oak Park. Barb attended Illinois State University in Business Education, while Bob was at Bradley University. They married a few months before Barb's graduation. Bob pursued his Ph.D. in mathematics at the University of Wisconsin while Barb was finishing her student teaching. Bob joined ISU's faculty in 1966.

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The Hathways both love nature. Bob credits his father, Central Illinois Light Company's CEO, for training his young son in gardening skills. Bob became a Master Gardener and over eighty local Habitat Homes were graced with his landscaping skills; he along with Vernon Shepherd and Valarie Dumser also established a Holton Homes' community garden. Low-income youth hired for a State Farm summer internship aided in the vegetable growing effort. He also supervised youth doing community service at this garden. The isolated Canadian-U.S. Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota were frequent canoe trips for Bob, including leading a Boy Scout troop expedition.

First United Methodist's Social Concerns Commission was their revelation toward social justice. They connected with Lyndon Johnson's Great Society efforts, helping establish Head Start locally, where they worked with Harriet Rust and local schoolteacher Francis Irvin.

With no summer teaching duties, Bob was freer to volunteer. Community for Social Action was a volunteer group that included Bob and Marilyn Sutherland, Ralph and Ellen Smith, Jack Porter, Tom Wilson, Carroll Cox, Francis Irvin, and other friends, dedicated to understanding the larger world and its issues. Barb served as treasurer. Bob was part of a group that traveled to Cairo, Illinois, to stand vigil with the African American community. They began Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers grape boycott efforts locally and offered Vietnam War era draft counseling. Bob traveled to Nicaragua during the 1980s Contra wars with Witness for Peace. Bob volunteered for tornado clean-up efforts in Alabama, Kentucky, Illinois, and Iowa and hurricane damage in Mississippi.

Not satisfied with local educational offerings for their children, David and Jill, Barb and Bob helped found the Bloomington-Normal New School, today's Mulberry School. Their inspiration was Rudolph Flesch's book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Parents collaborated to start the school, financially support it, hire teachers, and Bob served multiple years as president and treasurer.

Bob was the winner of the Martin Luther King Award which led to his being a member of the Normal Human Relations Commission for 10 years, four as chair. As both Normal and Bloomington wrestled in the late 1990s with including LGBTQ+ individuals in the Town ordinance, Bob was proud that the Commission firmly stood for that expansion. He worked with History Makers Normal Mayor Carol Reitan, Barbara Stuart, Bob and Marilyn Sutherland on the Alternatives to Jail effort, which led to the currently active Drug Court. He was also chosen as an "Extraordinary Man" by the CSI organization.

Barb volunteered with PATH's Help Desk, by driving clients, plus serving on the Bloomington-Normal Green Team and First United Methodist's Women and their Sunrise Circle. Working in personnel at Mennonite Hospital, she was its final "employee of the year" when it closed in 1988.

With their two children, adopted daughter, seven grandchildren and one great grandchild, Barb and Bob have crafted a rich life, always responsive to their community, grounded in their faith. With a deep compassion for humanity and ever willing to volunteer, they enriched not only McLean County but the world.

Jan Lancaster



She is "Momma" to many searching souls, looking for a safe haven. Jan Lancaster has operated the Bistro, Bloomington LGBTQ+ friendly bar, since 1993. Those who needed a ready ear, support, and kindness found in a bar more than a business; it has been a community outpost that welcomes all in a supportive environment.

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Jan grew up in Normal. Her mother was a social worker for the Department of Children and Family Services. As a child, Jan remembers that frequently other children were at the family home, young people who needed shelter for a night or two. Jan is the same open shelter to the local LGBTQ+ community. She was married at 18 and has two children, Sara and John.

Owning her own business was not her original intent; she worked first for Johnny Martin Chevrolet and for the Music Shoppe for many years, tracking accounts, showcasing school band instruments throughout Illinois, and assisting this family business. She discovered the Bistro and found its atmosphere welcoming, becoming a regular patron. The owner convinced her to purchase the business, which she completed by cobbling together a bank loan, personal funds, and supportive friends. Her advice to anyone hoping to open a business is, "keep your day job."

In 1996 she was a partner in opening Lancaster's, a downtown Bloomington fine dining establishment, which closed in August of 2014. Jan notes that "bartenders are a different breed" and she loves to create a party atmosphere, including twice staging an indoor beach party, which included two and a half tons of sand in the building. Her workforce includes some with over 15 years at the Bistro. She values her staff as deeply as she does her customers.

When she first opened the Bistro, she took down the dark awnings and created a more welcoming environment. During the 1980s and 1990s she helped care for AIDS patients. In her early years, many Bistro patrons would park blocks away, careful they were not outed by entering a gay bar. People came to her for a welcoming environment, particularly if families were not supportive. For many years she hosted Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners for those who had nowhere to go or were not comfortable with their family. Angry parents would call her, and she would counsel them, "talk to your child," asking them to support their young person.

Locally she has watched the climate change. Expanding the local discrimination ordinances to include LGBTQ+ people took three attempts over decades. In 1984 an ordinance expansion was rejected in Bloomington and again in 1996 in both Bloomington and Normal. In 2001 Normal passed the ordinance and Bloomington in 2002. Today's Prairie Pride Coalition was originally the Advocacy Council for Human Rights, initiated by Lancaster, David Bentlin, and others to lobby for equality.

Lancaster started downtown Bloomington's Pride Fest in 2018, missing one year for COVID. It has become a premier downtown activity, now attracting 8,000+ people. Lancaster is proud that families come and celebrate with their neighbors, without regard to sexual orientation. On a more somber note, the June 12, 2016, Orlando, Florida, Pulse night club shooting is commemorated annually outside the Bistro. When the shooting took place, a solidarity march was held from the Bistro to Withers Park, organized in a few hours and attracting hundreds.

Jan is a continual advocate for Bloomington. She has served on the Bloomington Human Relations Commission, Uniquely Bloomington, and the Public Safety and Community Safety Board. She is a past president for the Downtown Bloomington Association and also helped organize the Bar Owners Association. She is a continuing advocate for downtown Bloomington renewal. She credits the City for its openness to new ideas and the Bloomington Police Department for their vigilance for her patron's safety.

In 2007 Jan was recognized as a Woman of Distinction by YWCA McLean County and she was honored by the Downtown Bloomington Association in 2002 as the Jean Anderson Award recipient. Jan's History Maker nominator, Dave Bentlin, President of the Prairie Pride Coalition, states, "Her service to and presence in the LGBTQ+ community is historic, important, and irreplaceable." While society has changed for more inclusion, over the past thirty-one years many found sanctuary, friendship, relationships, and a welcoming environment, thanks to Jan Lancaster's embracing heart.

Not a Museum member? Gala attendees who join before the end of June will receive a 14-month membership for the price of annual membership. Just include the note, "I attended the 2024 Gala" with your membership payment.

John Penn



Humble service to his community marks John Penn's commitment to his union, his community, and his nation. If there are two words that define John Penn, they are family and community, and to him, they are interchangeable. Bloomington born, John is the inaugural second generation McLean County Museum of History "History Maker." His father Paul was among the original 2012 honorees. Like his father, John was immersed in organized labor, following in his father's footsteps to lead Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) Local 362. John began working as a Laborer at age 14.

He credits his father and his World War II veteran contemporaries, the "Greatest Generation," for their guidance and examples. He carefully watched his father Paul, seeing how he worked with people and noting his deep concern for the membership. At age 18 John joined the Air Force, serving in Korea, Vietnam,

Okinawa, and while in the U.S., John married Mary, his Bloomington High School sweetheart, in February 1967. When their daughter Shawn was born, he shipped out for Asia five days later. While in Korea he learned martial arts. When he returned to Bloomington, he initiated free Tae Kwon Do classes at the Bloomington YMCA.

John assumed union leadership, becoming Laborers 362's business manager at age 25. He credits the older generation for guiding him and local union contractors whose handshake and word was always honored.

The local labor movement was transformed by John's efforts. He revived the Labor Day Parade in 1977; *Union News* was published with his initiative. Whenever a community project arose, John marshaled the membership for donated labor. The union could not write huge donation checks, but members could donate their construction skills, saving local non-profits thousands of dollars. The members responded to John's and his late father Paul's leadership. The camaraderie that grew through this generosity built a local union that was ever ready and proud to aid local charities. This has included 40-50 Laborers volunteering annually for the Illinois Special Olympic State Games ever since they came to Illinois State University.

On September 13, 1979, 57-year-old Gerald Smith was flagging traffic on I-55 in Normal. He was struck by a car, thrown 30 yards, and killed instantly. John called a safety strike, shutting down \$5 million in highway work. From this John helped initiate the Illinois Department of Transportation's Work Zone Safety Committee, which still meets regularly to ensure safety for motorists and workers.

Labor was cautious toward political involvement, but John realized a political voice was critical. He was elected McLean County Democratic chair in 1984. John began to look at community boards and Laborers began serving. This helped build positive labor-management relations. Laborers Local 362 joined the Chamber of Commerce, and John was an original Economic Development Council officer. The Chamber and Laborers initiated the Children's Christmas Party for low-income families in 1982, which continues today.

In 1994 John was elected as North Central Illinois Laborers District Council business manager. In 2003 this group merged with Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota to form the Great Plains Laborers District Council. In 2008 he was appointed and then re-elected three times as a LIUNA Vice-President and appointed Midwest Region manager, overseeing local unions in 10 states. He encouraged local unions to organize a veteran and a retiree committee, keeping members involved. Having served the union for 49 years, he retired in 2023.

In 2003 John was the third person honored as the Pantagraph's "Person of the Year." In 2022 he was inducted into the Illinois Labor History Society's Union Hall of Honor. To John, family is more than blood. It is the fellow worker, the low-income, anyone in McLean County in need. His responsible leadership means always stepping up, contributing to community building to ensure a viable and vibrant central Illinois.

BEYOND BOOKS: Behind the Scenes with Bill Kemp



One would think serving as Museum librarian for twenty-plus years would mean getting to know a lot about local history. While that may be true on a superficial level, I am well aware of this timeless observation: The more you know about something, the more you come to know how little you really know about that something.

And indeed, not a day goes by here at the Museum in which I do not learn something new. “How did I not know that!” is a refrain one will hear in the Reading Room from time to time. A little humility in the presence of history goes a long way.

The Library & Archives is a two-person outfit, as I work alongside Archivist George Perkins. On most days, at the top—or near the top—of our “to-do” list is keeping pace with incoming requests and reference queries. First and foremost, we are here to serve the public, and in doing so we fulfill the Museum’s mission to make available to anyone the books and archival papers in our ever-expanding collections.

People ask for our assistance through appointments, walk-in visits, phone calls, and emails. And yes, we still get letters! People want to know all kinds of things, and we hear from all kinds of people—students of all ages, genealogists, community residents, visiting researchers and scholars, or the simply curious. We help people who live a few blocks from the Museum Square to those reaching out to us from Hong Kong or London. Answering a question can take five minutes or half a day, and one question often leads to many more.

The Library & Archives is so much more than books and papers. The Museum is, after all, a museum, so exhibits and programs are also a component of the Librarian’s workday. For instance, I’m spending increasing time this year on the Museum’s upcoming baseball and softball exhibit, which is set to open in 2026. Collaborating with Curator of Exhibits Susan Hartzold, I’m working with our fabulous exhibit committee to undertake oral histories, plow through primary and secondary source research, reach out to potential donors of objects (such as jerseys) and papers (such as old tournament programs), create an exhibit script, among a plethora of other tasks. I’ve also made several trips to the archives at State Farm Insurance Company. Archivist Buck Farley has made available all kinds of neat stuff relating to the insurance giant’s big-time softball team of the 1950s.

The big idea of the exhibit is that baseball is “more than a game,” so while the exhibit will glory in the rich history of local baseball and softball, we cannot forget the games are also a window into American life.

After all, when it comes to these two intertwined sports, one cannot tell the whole story without explorations of class, immigration, race, and gender, as well as the impact of sweeping technological changes and the emergence of mass media, to say nothing of the evolving nature of how Americans have spent, and now spend, their leisure time. Whew! But fear not, when it is all said and done, this exhibit will celebrate those lost summer evenings at Bloomington's O'Neil Park not so long ago, when the boys and girls of summer traced the passage of time with fresh air, green grass, competition, and comradery.

As librarian, I also present public programs on a range of topics. Early this year to cite several representative examples—I gave an illustrated talk on the crazy, nearly unbelievable story of the county's cattle and hog droving era to a 4-H Club. There was also a program on local streetcar history for the Museum's Lunch and Learn series, and another one on Lincoln's "Lost Speech," given to a group at Luther Oaks retirement community.

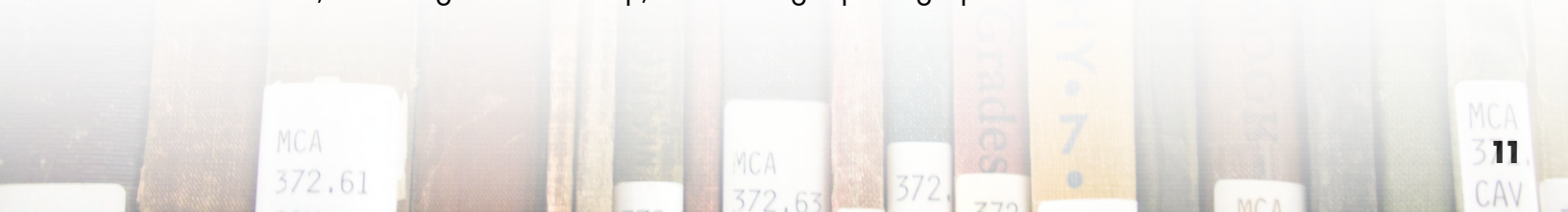
If answering requests and reference questions is the most time-consuming part of the job here, accepting and processing donations comes in a close second. On average, the Library & Archives receives 18 to 20 separate donations each and every month. You can read a list of recent gifts to the Museum in each issue of *On the Square*. And when it comes to donations, the adage, "you never know what is going to come through the door," certainly holds true. One of the more intriguing donations of the past several months is a collection of letters discovered in the attic floorboards of a residence on the 600 block of West Locust Street in Bloomington.

Once those papers are accepted into the Library & Archives, then the real work begins! The items, or collection of items, of any donation are then organized, inventoried, cataloged, and housed in the Museum's climate-controlled Archives or Library Stacks. We then upload collection inventories (known as finding aids) to our website; update our online Archive Vertical File Catalog; and add new book and periodical holdings to our online Library Catalog. All those technical-sounding things help make the Museum's collections known to the wider world. Simply put: If people cannot find what we hold, then we are falling short of our jobs. George and I take our work seriously, because we think local history is serious business.

Of course, all of this work is greatly dependent on the invaluable assistance of our volunteers, who put in innumerable hours helping us process collections, answer reference questions, and tackle special projects, among the myriad of other important labors both exciting and mundane. There is no question that the Library & Archives—its organization, openness, and well-regarded reputation—are due in no small measure to the past and present efforts of our volunteers.

And as is the case with volunteers, Archivist George Perkins and I lean heavily on the work of college students through internships. During most semesters, there is one intern helping out in the Library & Archives. Students mostly come from Illinois State and Illinois Wesleyan, and they usually work on creating finding aids for existing or newly acquired collections. They also get a little bit of hands-on experience when it comes to archival preservation by learning how to encapsulate fragile maps, posters, and other large format items.

As I tell people all the time, the Museum is a nonprofit institution, and as such our staff simply cannot do all we do without those who appreciate the importance of saving history—whether it is someone volunteering a few hours a week, renewing a membership, or donating a photograph.



Curious about Collections Care? Commentary from Curator Cain



As the Curator of Collections at the McLean County Museum of History, every day is different! At the heart of my job is caring for the physical object collection. However, once you consider the sheer number of objects in our collection, each with unique storage requirements, on top of regular database management, volunteer and intern management, and endless research, this seemingly simple role unfolds to reveal a much more intricate balancing act.

To understand my role at the Museum, you must first know how and where our collections are stored and what they contain. The Museum's collections fall into two categories: Library & Archives and the Object Collection. Anything that is paper, like books, documents, and photos, goes to the Library. Everything else goes into the Object Collection.

Currently, the Object Collection houses 18,000+ objects, all of which are stored on-site in several storage locations. Given the wide variety of objects in the collection, each storage space is different and designed based on the objects it holds. A great example of this is the Barbara Dunbar Textile Collection on the 3rd floor. This space houses over 5,000 textile pieces and is one of the largest storage areas in the Museum. Although these areas are not open to the public, staff, volunteers, and interns are treated to behind-the-scenes tours of these spaces during their training. Museum members are also offered behind-the-scenes tours during Member Appreciation Month in November.

Keeping track of 18,000+ objects and where they are at all times can seem daunting. Luckily, the Museum utilizes a comprehensive program that allows us to track information related to our collection through an easy-to-use database. Our Collections Technician, Morgan Bueza, and I work tirelessly to ensure the database has the most up-to-date and extensive information possible about an object. This includes object descriptions, condition reports, provenance, individual biographies, business and organization biographies, dimensions, and research notes.

This database is currently only for internal use, but we are actively working to make these records more accessible to the public. In November, we launched our Online Object Database (OOD), which currently features 857 objects from our permanent collection. The OOD is a web-based, public-facing version of our more extensive, more comprehensive internal database. We are working to add more each month, but digitizing records takes a lot of time and money. Explore the OOD at mchistory.pastperfectonline.com.

Aside from updating the object database, creating custom housing is a vital part of the object preservation process. Custom housing allows us to build a storage method created solely with the object in mind. Storage methods can include, but are not limited to, custom boxes, covers, or even crates.

When creating custom housing, we consider many factors, including material type, size, condition, current deterioration, pressure points, and internal damage. Some objects, which have either undergone extensive conservation or are severely damaged, require a custom storage solution that can ensure no further harm is caused to them.

One of the biggest challenges we face with these custom storage solutions is ensuring that we use archival materials. Archival materials are specifically designed to avoid any adverse reaction with or deterioration of the object.

In fact, there is actually a surprising amount of chemistry that goes into object preservation! Knowing general details about the chemical makeup of materials like leather, paper, and ceramics helps us store each object in the best way possible. Ideally, we use all acid-free materials because this can drastically lengthen the life of our objects. Acid leaches into objects through various sources and can often cause a yellowing or brittling effect on paper and textiles. Using acid-free materials ensures that this damage is prevented.

See the image below for an example of custom object housing. Since we house similar items together, we often rehouse all the others in the same box when we rehouse one object. This box of 1920s-1960s shoes is only one of 15 in our collection. It ensures that all the shoes are properly padded with acid-free tissue, secured with acid-free ties, and that each shoe storage tray can be removed from the box if needed. Each tray has a larger wall that ensures that the separate pairs of shoes don't touch within the box. These larger walls also allow us to attach one of our barcoded labels in an easy-to-read place.

The incorporation of barcodes into our storage systems has transformed our work. Previously, each time we wanted to look up an object in our database, we had to find a small written number somewhere on it and then type it into the database. Now, we scan the label, and the record will pop right up!

Once we've created custom housing for an object, we generate its unique barcode, place it in one of our six storage spaces, and update our internal database with its location. Then we rinse and repeat, moving on to the next object!



New to Collections

BOOKS

- *The Powell Expeditions* (2024) by Tim Piper (Jubilee Walker series, book 1), a young adult fiction featuring a boy traveling with Maj. John Wesley Powell. Donated by Jana Kiefer.
- *Louis Lenway Williams Autobiography* (2021), compiled by donor. Donated by David Williams.
- *Midwestern Memories and California Dreamin'* (2023), which features a chapter on growing up in Bloomington's Meadowbrook subdivision. Written and donated by Bob Harrer.
- Two historical novels—*The Lively Lady* (1931) and *Great Smith* (1943)—both printed for the U.S. Armed Services by the nonprofit Council on Books in Wartime, held by donor's father, Henry Hitch Adams, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Donated by Sandy Adams.
- Cookbooks—*Killian Favorites* (1989) and *Killian Favorites: The Next Generation* (2010), both containing family photographs and genealogy. Donated by the Killian family.
- *The Closing of the ISNU University High School in 1895* (1971), bound research paper, by Norma Ashbrook. Donated by Dixie Lewis.
- ISU yearbook from 1975. Donated by George Perkins.
- *Bittner Family History: From Puschendorf, Bavaria, and Maulbach, Hesse to Butler County, Ohio, and McLean County, Illinois* (2023). Written and donated by Sam Redding.
- Two books by Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father* (1995) and *The Audacity of Hope* (2006), both signed to Betty Kinser. Donated by her children, Brent Kinser and Kris Anne Bergmann.
- Cookbooks—*Taste of Normal, Our Favorite Recipes* (2002), compiled by Town of Normal employees, and *McLean County Health Department Diabetes Prevention Program, 2022-23 Class Recipe Book*. Donated by Frank and Angie Hoffman.
- Cookbooks—*Saintly Delights, All Our Best from Holy Trinity, St. Clare School Club* (1989), and *McLean County Facilities Management Recipe Book, "Top Secret,"* compiled in part by Curt and Tom Hawk. Donated by Curt and Diane Hawk.
- *My Sunday Missal* (1940), stamped St. Patrick's Church, Bloomington, and *Vest-Pocket Gems of Devotion* (1914), signed by Mary McElvaney, St. Patrick's School. Donated by Michael Huber.
- Two young adult books by local authors—*The Spinner Family* (1903) by Alice Jean Patterson, and *Under the Eye of the Blazing Sun* (three-novel compilation, 1981) by Bettie Wilson Story. Donated by Angela Bonnell.
- *Bloomington-Normal Junior Women's Club Cookbook* (1968), commemorating the club's 40th anniversary, includes handwritten notes by cookbook's late owner, Elsie Schalk. Donated by Elsie's daughter Sara Kellum.
- *Year of the Quiet Sun* (1970), signed by author Wilson Tucker, with a note to Karl Blakney. Donated by Karl's son, Gary Blakney.
- *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*, member directories, 1996, 2000, 2005, and 2010. Donated by Kathryn Kerr.
- Several titles, including *Trials and Triumphs: The Story of the Difficulties, Sorrows and Sufferings of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francios of Peoria* (1942) by Msgr. John J., Burke (includes section on Bloomington's St. Joseph's Hospital).

Donated by Andy and Pat Luber.

- *The Ellzo, 1927*, Ellsworth Community High School yearbook. Donated by Sandra Crain Fosha.

PHOTOGRAPHS

- Four color prints of Larry Stewart farming in Money Creek Township, including discing, planting, and combining. Donated by Ruth Stewart.
- Large collection of photographs, most relating to Campbell and Rodman families, as well as group portraits of Gray's College of Music students, and other photos. Donated by Cheryl Hanback.
- Various photographs from the Joybelle (Joy) and Warren Craig family, including those relating to foreign exchange students living with the family. Donated by Shirley Craig.
- Four black-and-white photos of ISNU students, 1947-1948, housemates of donor's sister, Elaine Watke. Donated by Catharine Knight.
- Moore Brown and her daughter, Jeanne Morris, taken in 1999 for a *Twin City Community News* article; 11 photographs of downtown Bloomington, mostly murals, circa 2001; and more. Donated by Ruth Cobb.
- Photos, some signed, related to Betty Kinser's support of several Democratic Party candidates, including Barack Obama, Lane Evans, and John Edwards. Donated by Betty's children, Brent Kinser and Kris Anne Bergmann.
- Ellsworth homecoming, August 29, 1937, and an undated photograph of horse-drawn corn wagons. Donated by Sandra Crain Fosha.

Continued on next page...

- Photograph of 97-year-old Miriam Moore Brown and her daughter, Jeanne Morris, taken in 1999 for a *Twin City Community News* article; 11 photographs of downtown Bloomington, mostly murals, circa 2001; and more. *Donated by Ruth Cobb.*
- Collection of early twentieth century postcards depicting local scenes, including the east side of the Museum Square, the 1897 Bloomington High School, two versions of a postcard labeled, "Scene on Broadway, Normal, Ill." and more. *Donated by Darlene Miller.*
- Three picture postcards featuring George Hoagland's Oil of Gladness cleaning supply business in the early twentieth century. *Donated by Mary Lynn Edwards.*

OBJECTS

- Items belonging to Otis Irvin circa 1920, including a wooden airplane, toy aviator's goggles, book of well wishes, and poems. *Donated by Barbara Schlosser.*
- Handmade red baby blanket circa 1928. *Donated by Helen Robbins.*
- Dog collar, bandana, and chew toy belonging to the world record setting dog, Rocky, circa 2023. *Donated by Crystal and Bradley Williams.*
- Suction machine used by Dr. Herman Wellmerling, circa 1960. *Donated by the Heritage Operations Group.*
- Agriculture coin awarded to Henry Funk, circa 1878. *Donated by John B. Keller.*

- Dulcimer made by Armadillo Dulcimer Works, circa 1970. *Donated by Greg Koos.*
- Two fiberglass Santa statues used to decorate the exterior of Livingston's Department Store from the 1940s until the 1970s. *Donated by Jeffrey Alan Wandell.*
- Better Babies Medal, circa 1916. *Donated by Diane Walker.*
- Flax-spun bedsheet and pewter teapot, circa 1860s. *Donated by Mary Beth Nevitt.*
- Cogs and Coresets Pin, circa 2018-2019. *Donated by Candace Summers.*

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Continued on next page...

Oil of Gladness donation wows Museum staff!

Mary Lynn Edwards made one of the more exciting donations to the Library & Archives in recent months—three early twentieth century picture postcards showcasing Black entrepreneur George Hoagland's cleaning supply business, known as Oil of Gladness.

Two of the three postcards (including the one shown here) were new to Museum staff. Believe us when we say it is not every day when the Librarian and Archivist are blown away by such an unexpected find! And we held a copy—but not an original—of the third postcard, which offers three views of work at the Oil of Gladness factory on West Washington Street in Bloomington. Museum staff shared the postcard with Greg Koos, executive director emeritus, and he noted this rare postcard offers an interesting look at early twentieth century craft production of a consumer product.

Hoagland was also a minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and as such played an instrumental role in the establishment of Third Christian Church in Bloomington. His remarkable story can now be better told—and certainly illustrated—through Mary's donation. So thank you again Mary, for helping us preserve the past!



ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

- World War II POW Journal of Normal resident Robert S. Hall (1915-1976) and supporting material. *Donated by Hall's daughters Holly Schultz, Luanne Negley, and Nancy DeLorge.*
- Land Records (1837-1878) mostly relating to the Trimmer family of Lexington and Money Creek Townships. *Donated by Jean Ann Kemp Young.*
- Collection of papers relating to the Ilse and Charlie Jobson Natural Play Park at Colene Hoose Elementary School in Normal. *Donated by Karen Stephens.*
- 17 World War II home front posters published by the Office of War Information. *Donated by Dianna Dee Damkoehler.*
- Large collection of local softball history documents, including O'Neil Park schedules, fastpitch tournament programs, Arthur "Mr. Softball" Floyd albums, and many other treasures. *Donated by Larry Carius.*
- Two posters for 1965 Lexington Jaycees sponsored teen dances. *Donated by Ann Dady.*
- Scrapbooks covering 1939-45, 1959-60, and 1965-67, containing news clippings, photographs, programs, and other items relating to Illinois Wesleyan University, Illinois State Normal University, and Bloomington High School respectively. *Donated by Westminster Village Boutique.*
- LP vinyl record with "Remember Martin Luther King," words and music by David Morgan; "I Had a Dream," words and music by I.M. White; papers relating to Feb. 1, 2024 "Building Communities" visit to the White House (attended by the donor), and more. *Donated by Mike Matejka.*
- Undated house plans for Heyworth residence and a 1998 world map sponsored by *The Pantagraph* and Illinois Power. *Donated by John Baker.*
- Various items, including the ISNU 82nd commencement week program from June 1-9, 1941. *Donated by Dixie Lewis.*
- Oakdale School (Bloomington) Student-Parent Handbook, circa 1994. *Donated by George Perkins.*
- Additions to the Diane Scheel / Eureka Co. Collection, mostly papers relating to union activities, including proposal on insurance from 1982. *Donated by Diane Scheel.*
- Letters from Harry S. Kingsley to Lorraine McElroy, Bloomington, 1893-94, discovered in the attic floorboards of a West Locust Street residence. *Donated by Orman Jones.*
- Bloomington High School Class of 1953 reunion materials, including 30th (1983), 45th (1998), and 50th (2003) booklets. *Donated by Sybil Stern Mervis.*
- Items related to the November 14, 2023 "When Words Fail Us" peace vigil held at the Museum by Not In Our Town for victims of worldwide violence. *Donated by Mollie Ward.*
- Two certificates, including one reading, "National Horse-Shoeing Humane Movement of Anatomy and Concussion," 1908, for Silas G. Hinshaw. *Donated by Martha Oertle.*
- Selection of local publications: *Escapist*, four issues, 1997-98; *Childhood Magazine*, eight issues, 1997-2002; *Barn Quilt Heritage Trail* booklets, 2013 and 2014, and more. *Donated by Ruth Cobb.*
- Various items from Betty Kinser's political activities, including a May 2004 *New Yorker* magazine featuring a photo of then-Illinois State Sen. Barack Obama and Kinser, signed by Obama. *Donated by Betty's children, Brent Kinser and Kris Anne Bergmann.*
- Additions to the State Farm Holiday Classic (high school basketball tournament) Collection, including program, promotional poster, and passes. *Donated by Jeff Findley, on behalf of The Classic, Inc.*
- McLean County Association for Home and Community Education 105th annual meeting Booklet, 2023, and other items. *Donated by Ruth Stewart.*
- Menu from the "The Galery" in Normal, 1973, with poem, "Sibling Chant," on the reverse, handwritten in pencil by Carmen Geison Kellogg, late sister of donor. *Donated by Stan Geison.*
- Papers relating to Bernard G. McElvaney (1915-1993), Bloomington Police Department chief, and later private investigator, including expense reports and notes. *Donated by Michael Huber.*
- Christmas at the Mansions booklet, 2023. *Donated by Karen Schmidt and John Elterich.*
- Robert Risser (1913-1992) school materials, including final report card—examinations at Danvers—1927-28, and course of study diploma (entitles holder to high school admission), 1928. *Donated by Risser's daughter, Diane Walker.*
- Civil War service record book, 94th Illinois Infantry Regiment, handwritten, with information on each member of Company E. *Donated by the Lexington Genealogical and Historical Society ("The Fort").*

- Various items including McLean County Youth Center presents Shelly West program from 1991, at the Scottish Rite Temple; B-104 Hot Country member card; front page of the August 17, 1977 *Pantagraph* (death of Elvis Presley); and much more. *Donated by Sandie Stengel, in memory of Betty Stengel Miller.*
- Donation receipt from Adlai E. Stevenson presidential campaign fund, 1952, made to W.L. Wooten (donor's grandfather). Donated by Betsy Blanks. Several *Pantagraph* issues or special supplements, including "We Remember" section, September 11, 2006. *Donated by Kathleeen Lorenz.*
- Cancelled checks, 1880s, from the Saybrook Bank. Reeves and Schureman, Bankers, Saybrook, and other institutions. *Donated by Edward Boyle.*
- Large collection of local music and sound recordings, including LPs by The Revelations Quartet, "Oh Praise the Lord"; Second Presbyterian Church chancel choir, 1957-58; Illinois State University concert band, 1980; as well as several 45s, a cassette tape, CD, and other items. *Donated by Chris Young.*
- Papers related to the Youth Opportunity Foundation, including bylaws, minutes, correspondence since 1986, and more. *Donated by the Young Men's Club.*
- Business papers for Craig Canvas Service in Normal. North Bridge Baptist Church papers, 2001, and many more items. *Donated by Shirley Craig.*
- Collection of items—news clippings, flyers, programs, correspondence—relating to the Equal Right Amendment campaign from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Donor's involvement in the National Organization of Women and Planned Parenthood, among other activities. *Donated by Beverly Berglund Poole.*
- Collection of local softball materials, 1970-1990s, including "O'Neil Park Celebration" booklet, 1994. Bloomington Hearts men's fastpitch yearbooks, 1984-87. Amateur Softball Association national "A" fastpitch championship programs, 1983, 1988, and 1992. And more. *Donated by Jeff Collins.*
- Six Corn Belt Philatelic Society postcards, Lincoln-themed, 1983-87. *Donated by Mary Lynn Edwards*
- Additions to the American Civil Liberties Union—Central Illinois Chapter Collection. *Donated by Sally Pancrazio on behalf of the local ACLU chapter.*
- Dorothy "Dot" Siebert scrapbook on women's fastpitch softball, 1966-74, including photographs, news clippings, schedules, and more on the Carlock Comets and Bloomington Bearcats. *Donated by the "Dot" Siebert family, including sister Eunice Speidel and niece Peggy Stark.*
- Various papers, mostly relating to Clara Miller Harvey, including a program for BHS play, "Ramshackle Inn," 1947. Promotional item from Fried's Book Store (undated). Receipts from various local businesses, including Smith-Alsop Paint Co., and more. *Donated by Dennis and Janet (Clara's daughter) Faulk.*

Do you have an item to donate? Please visit mchistory.org or call us at 309-827-0428 to learn how!



FEATURED ARTIFACT

This unique Lithuanian baby blanket was hand woven in 1928 by Helen Robbins' grandmother, Adeline, while she was pregnant with her daughter Helen. It is made of wool and linen. Adeline grew the flax to create the linen and raised the sheep from which she harvested, spun, and dyed the wool by hand. It was created in Lithuania and brought with her family when they later immigrated to the United States.

Upcoming Events

History Makers Gala

Tuesday, June 18, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Free Admission in Honor of Juneteenth

Wednesday, June 19, from 9:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

200th Anniversary of Funks Grove at the Funk Prairie Home and Gem & Mineral Museum

Saturday, June 22, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Narrative Threads: Community Quilting with Illinois Art Station and Community Partners

Saturday, June 22, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Futures in History Day Camp

June 24-28

Museum Closed for Independence Day

Thursday, July 4

A History of the Evergreen Cemetery Walk at Heartland Community College

Thursday, July 11, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Futures in History: Adventurous Archaeologists

Tuesday, July 16 & Thursday, July 18, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Futures in History: Curious Curators

Tuesday, July 23 & Thursday, July 25 from 12:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Museum Closed for Staff Development

Wednesday, July 31

Knit In at Illinois Art Station

August 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Pride Fest in Downtown Bloomington

Saturday, August 3, from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

History Reads Book Club: *Cahokia: Ancient America's City on the Mississippi*

Tuesday, August 6 at 7:00 p.m.

Ag-mazing History of McLean County Bus Trip

Thursday, August 8, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In the Spotlight: Antoinette Concello with Maureen Brunsdale

Saturday, August 10 at 2 p.m.

Museum Closed for Labor Day

Monday, September 2

Asbestos Exhibit Opening

Saturday, September 7

For more information on all of our events, scan the QR code above or visit mchistory.org/events



futures in HISTORY 2024 camp

Three hands on learning opportunities for students entering 5th - 7th grade to explore Archeology, Architecture, Civics & Advocacy, Museum Studies, and Preservation Studies this June and July!

visit mchistory.org for more information

LEGACY

Generosity Empowering Posterity

**Everyone has a story.
How will you share yours?**

Will the next chapter of your life story include a legacy gift for the Historical Society and Museum?

For more information or to document your legacy, contact Norris Porter at development@mchistory.org or 309-827-0428 ext. 104.

Additional information is also available online at mchistory.org/legacy

Ag-mazing History of McLean County Bus Trip

The Museum, in partnership with the McLean County Farm Bureau, is excited to offer an Ag-mazing Bus Tour narrated by Librarian Bill Kemp and Historian Don Meyer on Thursday, August 8, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Join us as we traverse northern McLean County into Woodford County through one of the nation's major corn and soybean areas. Roadside discussion stops will take us through or near the Yuton Grain Elevator; the White Oak Wind Farm; several sites in Hudson; Oneida Ghost Town; Evergreen Stables; various stops in El Paso; Kappa; Coon Ford Bridge, and more! While on the bus, narration will include local history, geography, and agricultural discussion.

The cost per person is \$40 for Museum or Farm Bureau members and \$45 for the general public. The trip includes transportation by Peoria Charter Coach to all sites, bottled water, and a snack. Some stops will involve light walking.

Coffee and donuts will be available at 7:45 a.m. The trip will leave from the Interstate Center at the McLean County Fair Grounds promptly at 8:15 a.m. and return to the pickup location at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Seating is limited to 50 passengers, with a minimum of 28 people required to secure the motor coach.

Registration is due by July 26, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. Secure your seat online at mchistory.org. Payment is due at the time of registration. Pay online or call the Museum at 309-827-0428 to pay with a credit card.

Teachers can earn 4 PDCHs from the University of Illinois Extension Livingston-McLean-Woodford Unit. Please note on your registration if you are a teacher and wish to obtain the PDCHs.

For more information about this tour, please contact the Museum's Education Department at 309-827-0428 or education@mchistory.org. We hope you will join us on this excursion to explore local agricultural history!



McLean County MUSEUM of HISTORY

200 N. Main St. Bloomington, IL 61701

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Mystery History

The previous Mystery History photo was a stumper for most of our devoted history sleuths. It offered a leafy view of Smith Hall, an Illinois State Normal University men's dormitory. Located on South University Street, it served as a dorm from 1934 to 1958, when it was torn down to make way for Atkin-Colby residence halls.

Give a hand to Thomas Cherry, Carol and Roger Elliott, and Dave Templeton for identifying Smith Hall. Carol and Roger even knew the gentleman in the photo was ISNU Dean of Men Ralph Linkins!

Okay, sleuths, how about this photo? Do you know the location and what's being built? If you think you know the answer to both, let Museum Librarian Bill Kemp know at 309-827-0428 or bkemp@mchistory.org.

