



McLEAN COUNTY
MUSEUM
OF HISTORY

FISCAL YEAR 2024
ANNUAL REPORT

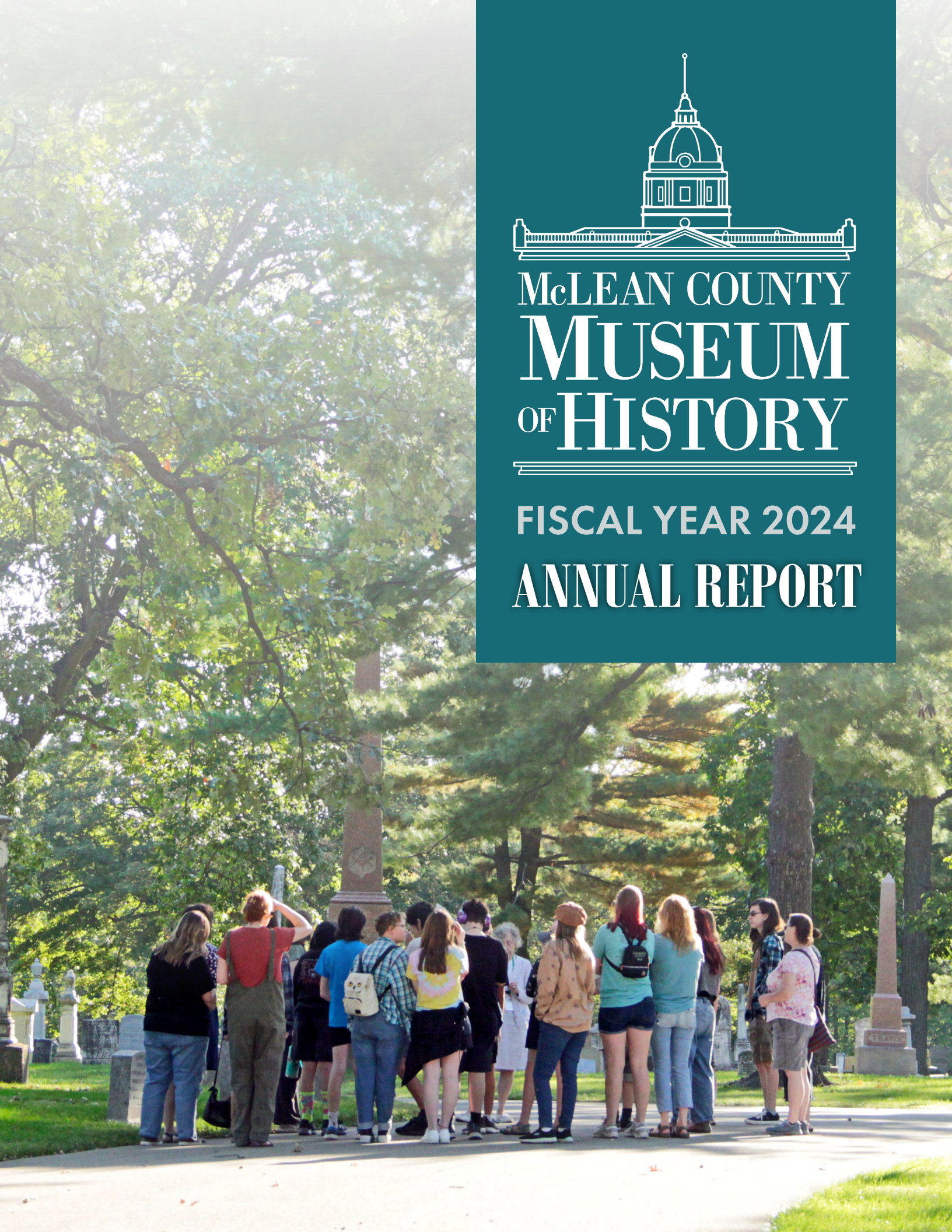




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Architectural photography by Museum volunteer extraordinaire Kevin Eatinger



The McLean County Museum of History traces its roots back to 1892, the year the McLean County Historical Society was founded.

The Museum is an AAM nationally accredited, independent 501(c)3 nonprofit, featuring nine exhibit galleries, preserving more than 18,000 objects, 15,000 rare books, and over 2,000 linear feet of historical papers and images in the archives.

AAM Accreditation recognizes museums for their commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards, and continued institutional improvement. Only 3.3% of museums in the country are accredited.



MUSEUM MISSION

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

This mission is achieved by:

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

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

COLLABORATION: We are inclusive, seeking ideas and valuing multiple perspectives.



FROM THE DESK OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EMIG

Gabrielle Lyon, the effervescent executive director of Illinois Humanities, recently captured our shared purpose in a powerful statement: “The public humanities reminds us to embrace complexity...to help people engage beyond boundaries rather than retreat into the familiar.” The McLean County Museum of History is committed to the mission of preservation, education, and collaboration. Over the past fiscal year, the Museum has worked tirelessly to embody this expansive mission by telling complex, nuanced stories that encourage our visitors to “engage beyond boundaries.”

“Visiting a museum is an act of imagination” (Wilkening, 2024). Whether through a photograph, object, audio tour, interactive exhibit, rotunda display, live music, or even a restored Santa Claus, museums transport visitors to alternative places, times, and perspectives. One such example is *A Deadly Deception: The Asbestos Tragedy in McLean County*, the Museum’s newest temporary exhibit detailing the catastrophic effects of negligence at the UNARCO plant in Bloomington. Board member and exhibit co-curator Mike Matejka and Curator of Exhibits Susan Hartzold wove together narrative testimony from workers highlighting the way that “meaning-making occurs in museum exhibits at the intersection of personal, public, past, and present” (Wills, 2024, *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, in her published review of the exhibit).

In collaboration with community partners, we launched a Spanish Language Tour of Making a Home, funded in part by Illinois Humanities, opening the door for similar initiatives that provide greater access through language and shared interpretation. Additionally, we reopened the Merwin Gallery, where over 300 objects from our collection are now displayed on a rotating basis. Our growing online database helps visitors and educators explore the historical and cultural context of these artifacts. Community members have also contributed by co-curating displays in the rotunda, such as the vibrant community ofrenda for Día de Muertos.

The act of preservation—of paper, objects, images, or facets of the digital world—has never been more complex. Stories now exist in both physical and digital forms. In partnership with the nationally acclaimed Northeast Document Conservation Center, we conducted extensive review of our capacity in digital preservation. The feedback emphasized the importance of integrating digital preservation into all aspects of our work. For example, Librarian Bill Kemp and Director of Marketing and Community Relations Jeff Woodard captured an oral history from Donald McHenry, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, who graduated from ISU in 1957. This oral history, now part of our collection, raises questions about how to preserve, ensure the accessibility of, and teach with digital content. As museums continue to rapidly evolve, we recognize the need to adapt. In one of the American Alliance of Museums’ top blog posts of 2024, Jencks writes, “Whether we are in art museums, science centers, or history museums and sites, we have an obligation to connect the stories we tell and the environments we create with the things people care about today. For better or worse, the world is forcing our hand.” Jencks advocates for museums to develop “civic strategies,” to recognize that “cultural institutions are civic creations.”

Ultimately, we at the Museum strive to use the humanities as a way to connect with one another. Rather than focusing on partisanship, we work to develop civic discourse across boundaries. Recently, a visitor from Oregon summed up our mission beautifully: “[The Museum] reminded me of things I had forgotten. Exposed me to many things I never realized.” We are grateful for the continued support of our members, volunteers, board of directors, and our community who help us make this work possible. We are *Your Museum – Your History!*



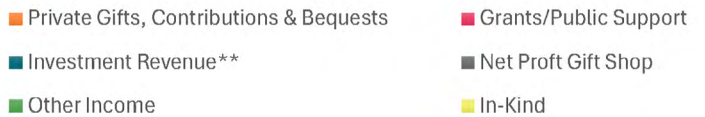
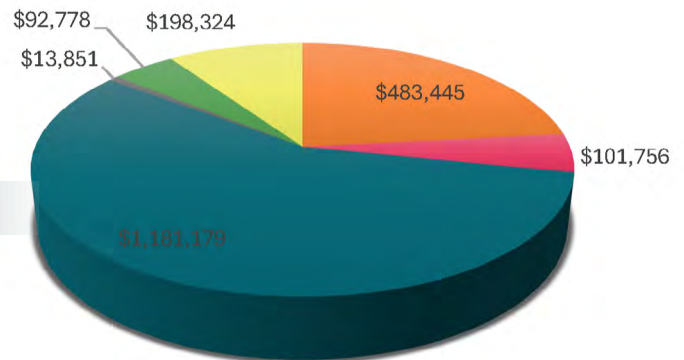
Fiscal Year 2024

Financial Snapshot

April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

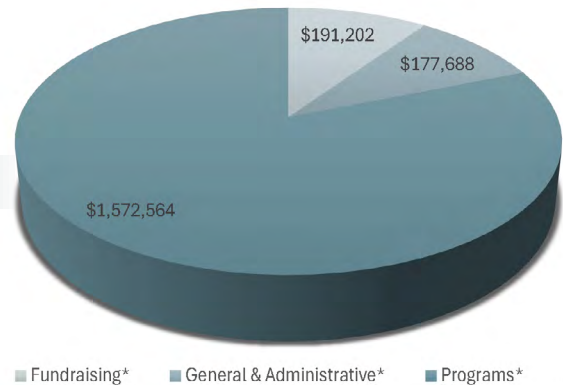
OPERATING REVENUE

\$483,445	Private Gifts, Contributions & Bequests
\$101,756	Grants/Public Support
\$1,181,179	Investment Revenue**
\$13,851	Net Profit Gift Shop
\$92,778	Other Income
\$198,324	In-Kind
\$2,071,333	Total Revenue



EXPENSES

\$1,572,564	Programs*
\$177,688	General & Administrative*
\$191,202	Fundraising*
\$1,941,454	Total Expenses



Moving forward, private support, including estate gifts, will continue to be critical to the Museum's financial stability. Growing the pool of invested assets to offset economic instability is a long-term priority.

** Much of the fluctuation in operating revenue from year to year is driven by investment revenue and grants. This includes changes in the market value of our endowment assets. Grant dollars will increase in FY 2025 due to recent award notifications.

* Includes associated staff salaries

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

as of January 1, 2025

OFFICERS

Carolyn Perry Yockey* – *President*

Michelle Pazar – *Vice President*

Robert Porter – *Secretary*

Bob Watkins* – *Treasurer*

Tom Eder* – *Immediate Past President*

DIRECTORS

Craig Alexander*

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R.C. McBride

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Shellie Opsal

Allison Petty

Karen Schmidt

Ann Sullivan

Aondover Tarhule

Carl Teichman

Paul B. Van Ness

Bill Wetzel, Jr.

Sheahon Zenger



A WORD FROM BOARD PRESIDENT CAROLYN YOCKEY

What have you donated to the McLean County Historical Society? We often use the phrase *Your Museum, Your History*. We indicate that our Museum is not a storage place for other history, but the history that relates to each one of us who live in McLean County.

Some of us have connections that go way back, while others have arrived more recently. People from all over the world have made their home in McLean County, including my great-great-great-grandfather who came here in 1823, and is featured in our *Making A Home* exhibit gallery!

It is because of the people who came before us that this community is the wonderful place it is today. I encourage anyone living in McLean County to spend some time in our Museum, learn the many stories of our history. You will be pleasantly surprised at the many connections among us.

Our History Makers each year are honored because of the roles they have played in our county's history. They set an example! We want to learn from them. In preserving their stories, we are adding to the history of our county.

Everyone has a story. Perhaps you have something that relates to the history of our county. We would love to have you share it with us.

Our Museum is an outstanding one. In 2022 we were re-accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. This places us in the top 3.3% of all museums in the country. Share your history with us; learn about our history. Visit the McLean County Museum of History often.

MUSEUM STAFF



Jackie Cain | Curator of Collections

Manages the donation, processing, and preservation/conservation of the Museum's collection of 19,000+ objects, along with managing the development and implementation of the Museum's Online Collections Database — She has an M.A. from IUPUI in Museum Studies, and 5+ years of collections care experience. Jackie joined the staff in 2022.



Kathi Davis | Visitors Center Assistant Manager

Assists in managing the operations of the Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center & Gift Shop — Kathi joined the staff five years ago. She was a flight attendant with Delta Air Lines for 35 years, based primarily in South Florida, where she earned a master's degree in mental health counseling from Florida Atlantic University. When she retired in 2005, she moved to Normal and managed BroMenn Thrift Shop for 3 years and was program and grants director at Illinois Prairie Community Foundation for 8 years.



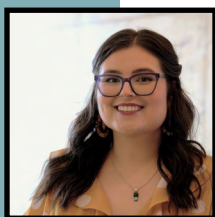
Julie Emig | Executive Director

Leads and directs Museum operations — She has worked for the last 30 years as a teacher, leader, and staff developer for schools and public institutions across the country. Julie has a doctorate in literacy education from Boston University and was associate director for a 20 million grant funded by the Institute of Education Sciences based at the University of Illinois in Chicago. She is in her fifth year of leadership at the Museum.



Eric Hansen | Director of Volunteers

Recruits, trains, and supports volunteers in their many roles within the Museum — He has a background in volunteer management and received his B.S. in Political Science from Illinois State University. Eric is a proud Central-Illinois native, having grown up right across the McLean and Tazewell County border in Minier.



Micaela Harris | Director of Communications

Creates various visual and written communications, including the tri-annual *On the Square Magazine*, an array of promotional materials, and press releases — Micaela collaborates with nearly everyone on staff to creatively tell the stories of the people of McLean County. She grew up in the area and returned after graduating with her B.A. in Journalism & Mass Communication from Drake University in 2020.



Susan Hartzold | Curator of Exhibits

Develops, designs, and builds the Museum's award-winning exhibits — Susan celebrated 33 years with the Museum in September and is the creative force behind over 50 of the Museum's exhibits and installations. She holds a B.A. in Art from Illinois State University.

MUSEUM STAFF



Bill Kemp | Librarian

Heads the Museum's Library & Archives and has done so for the last 21 years. He has graduate degrees from the University of Illinois Springfield and Illinois State University — Bill is known for his in-depth knowledge of McLean County history and informative presentations to the community.



Brandy Maloney | Development Assistant

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



Emily McCusker | Director of Youth & Family Education

Oversees programs like the Futures in History Day Camp that engage children and families in history, both locally and globally — Emily also works to connect with local educators to bring Museum resources in to the classroom. She has worked with multiple museums in the Chicagoland area and graduated from Lake Forest College in 2022 with her B.A. in History.



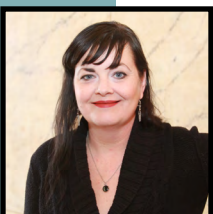
Maria Mears | Director of Adult Education & Interns

Works with adults of all ages, ranging from college students to senior citizens, to engage with innovative history programming — She also directs the Museum's college internship program. Maria has a Ph.D. in American Studies and brings extensive knowledge in historical research and interpretation. She also has experience working in museums and taught Interdisciplinary Studies at the college level for over 4 years.



Torii Moré | Curator of Digital Humanities

Advances the Museum's digital footprint, most notably by incorporating technology in our exhibits and managing the web presence — Torii started as an intern in 2010 and worked in multiple departments before becoming the Museum's first Curator of Digital Humanities in 2012. She holds a B.A. in Anthropology from ISU, and an M.S. in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois.



Lisa Novak | Visitors Center Manager

Manages the Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center & Gift Shop. Lisa brings over 15 years of extensive experience to her role — A seasoned marketer and entrepreneur, Lisa's exceptional creativity, business acumen, and dedication to cultural appreciation are reflected in her leadership and innovative contributions.

MUSEUM STAFF



George Perkins | Archivist

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



Norris Porter | Director of Development

Manages membership, fundraising, sponsorships, and grant work for the Museum — He has over 36 years of experience, 17 in development & fundraising in the higher education and nonprofit sectors. Norris has been with the Museum since November of 2019, after retiring from a 30-year career in higher education.



Candace Summers | Senior Director of Education

Organizes and implements programming for a variety of ages to educate over 20,000 people in Central Illinois annually — Candace is passionate about fostering an appreciation for history while promoting community involvement and lifelong learning. She holds a B.A. in Archaeology from the University of Evansville, an M.A. in History from Illinois State University, and has worked at the Museum for over 19 years.



Jeff Woodard | Director of Marketing & Community Relations

Develops and maintains regional and local relationships, representing the Museum at events, on various boards, and professional organizations — Jeff provides significant marketing support to the Visitors Center and serves as a liaison for the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project, conducting several oral histories each year. Jeff holds an A.S. in Electrical Service Engineering. He has been on staff for over 19 years.



Greg Koos | Executive Director Emeritus

Led the Museum for 39 years before retiring in 2016 — Greg oversaw three major historic site development projects and led the transition and move into the Museum's current home in the old courthouse. He continues to help the Museum in retirement, and is the celebrated author of *Freedom, Land & Community: A History of McLean County 1730 - 1900*.

To contact any of our staff members, please visit mchistory.org/about/staff

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

COLLECTIONS

Encompassing 19,000+ objects, our collection is significant in its documentation of all facets of life during the growth and development of McLean County, Illinois.

Over the last year the museum has worked to continue to grow our vast collection of McLean County artifacts. We accepted 25 donations resulting in an astounding 49 objects being added to the collection. Objects range in date from as far back as the 1860s to as modern as 2024. The additions came in a variety of object types including a handmade dulcimer, items from the Prairie Pride Coalition, and a hand-woven baby blanket.

The Collections Department focused heavily on adding additional records to the Online Object Database this year. This database allows visitors to access information related to the Museum's permanent object collection, including photos, descriptions, historical context, and biographical information about the objects in our collection and the people who owned them. The database currently features 1,126 objects from the Museum's collection and averages 1,000 searches per month. We intend to add 500 more objects to the database each year. Please visit mchistory.pastperfectonline.com to access the Online Object Database.

Additionally, the Collections Department received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS) for art storage renovation. The "Museums for America" grant will allow the Museum to retrofit an existing storage space with SpaceSaver storage and to conduct a full inventory of all artworks in the collection. The Museum's art collection consists of over 550 pieces of locally significant art, some dating back to the 1800s, and some as recent as the 2000s. However, Curator of Collections Jackie Cain estimates that over 50% of the collection needs conservation work.

The IMLS grant will also help the Museum increase the art collection's accessibility and provide hands-on learning opportunities for emerging museum professionals. The grant work will span from September 2024 to March 2026.



DEVELOPMENT

Membership increased 11.6% with our average rolling total hovering around 700 active members.

Our goal is to achieve a rolling total of at least 800 by 2026.

We have now gained back our membership numbers lost during the pandemic and will look for growth in the coming years. New membership rates and benefits were finalized and implemented in the new fiscal year. Our fiscal end of year fundraising initiative "Saving History" totaled \$43,756. Thank you to everyone that contributed to furthering our digital preservation initiatives.

Several larger grants were realized this fiscal year including:

\$50,000 contributing to needed renovations at the historic Miller Davis Building on East Front Street

\$550,000 from a Congressionally-Directed grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, thanks to the efforts of Senator Dick Durbin, to further the digitization of the Pantagraph Negatives Collection

\$72,350 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to improve art storage

The acquisition of the iconic Livingston's Santas occurred and fundraising initiatives immediately began for a projected project cost of \$85,000. More will be shared on this in the 2025 fiscal year report. Jeffrey Alans and the Wandell Family became the "Presented By Sponsors" for the Santas with a five-year financial commitment.

Historic markers for the Simon Malone home, Booker T. Washington home, Circus, and Old Soldier's Monument in Briarwood Subdivision were all installed and dedicated.

The History Makers Gala netted its largest total in recent years with an increase of 19.3% over pre-pandemic numbers.

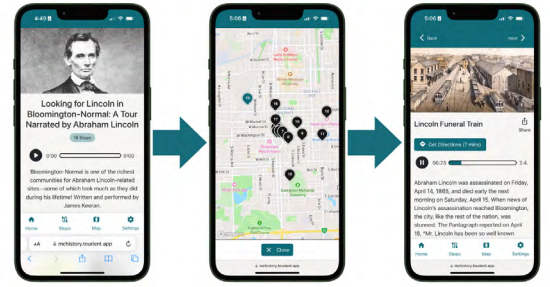
A focus on obtaining grant funding, increasing partnerships, membership growth, and planned giving awaits our team in the coming years.



DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Our new mobile tour platform, **Tourient**, launched this fiscal year. We have three tours available to the public:

- Abraham Lincoln in McLean County, a tour narrated by Abraham Lincoln
- Downtown Bloomington Architectural Tour
- Construyendo un Hogar (a Spanish language audio tour of our *Making A Home* exhibit gallery)



To date, over 350 unique users have used Tourient. This new platform will continue to grow in the coming months and years – keep checking back for more! Please visit mchistory.tourient.app to take a tour.

Additionally, we made several exciting updates to our website this year. We added 250 *Post Amerikan* newspapers, which are full-text searchable. We also improved search functions with tabs separating categories. Our website had 177,700 total views this fiscal year. The most visited pages are the Home page, Evergreen Cemetery Walk, Research, Visit, and Events.

We livestreamed 21 programs, increasing access to our high-quality educational programming. Our YouTube channel had 8,264 views this fiscal year, 2,000 of which were livestream viewers. During this time period, Bill Kemp’s program “The Night the Stars Fell” recorded October 2021, was the most popular video. Our top livestream during this period was “The Politics of Labels: Latino, Latinx, Hispanic” with 232 views.

More focus has been turned onto our digital assets and collections, beginning with an on-site visit and in-depth report from the Northeast Document Conservation Center. Conversations and meetings continue on this topic, as we develop policy documents and workflows to ensure long-term preservation of our digital materials.

EXHIBITS

The Merwin Gallery, showcasing nearly 300 rarely seen objects from the Museum’s collections, opened to the public on November 4, 2023. Since its opening, three sections of this open-style storage gallery have been updated with new objects, ensuring visitors always have something fresh to discover.

Work also began on the exhibit *A Deadly Deception: The Asbestos Tragedy in McLean County*, which opened this fall. This long-anticipated exhibit delves into the history of UNARCO, a company on Bloomington’s west side, whose owners concealed the dangers of asbestos to maximize profits.

Simultaneously, development commenced on *More than a Game! The McLean County Story of Competing with the Ball & Bat*. Scheduled to open in 2026, this exhibit will explore the history of baseball and softball in McLean County. Co-curated by Susan Hartzold and Museum Librarian Bill Kemp, with support from the exhibit’s development committee, most of the research is complete. We’ve conducted a dozen oral history interviews, and efforts are underway to identify objects, images, and graphics for the exhibit.

Additionally, progress continued on the Museum’s LGBTQ+ Oral History Project. A committee comprising staff, scholars from ISU and IWU, and community members collaborated to draft and submit an NEH grant application. The grant aims to support the oral history project for a future exhibit.

EDUCATION

Over the past year, we hosted a variety of educational programs and events for community members of all ages. Highlights included the annual Futures in History camp, the Evergreen Cemetery Walk, Seeds of History, and the weekly Sunday *Pantagraph* column, Pieces From Our Past.

The Pieces From Our Past column features short articles on various topics in McLean County history. Under the leadership of Candace Summers, Senior Director of Education, the column's voice has expanded in recent years through contributions from authors representing ISU, IWU, Ewing Manor, Bloomington High School, and friends of the Museum, such as Don Meyer and Dave Bentlin. This collaboration has enriched the column's storytelling and allowed for a more diverse exploration of McLean County's history.

In November, the Museum unveiled *Construyendo un Hogar*, the Spanish-language audio tour for the *Making A Home* exhibit gallery, during the best-attended Día de Muertos event in the Museum's history. Funded by an Illinois Humanities Action Grant, Director of Youth & Family Education Emily McCusker led this project. Together with Curator of Digital Humanities Torii Moré, Director of Communications Micaela Harris, and a committee of dedicated community members, this tour is now available on [Tourient](#) for anyone, anywhere, to access at any time.

The Seeds of History initiative, which combines local history with ecology, also saw significant progress. Thanks to a grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation and the efforts of Torii Moré, Jeff Woodard, and Maria Mears, native plants were added around the Museum Square. IWU undergraduate researchers contributed by creating digital content and a scavenger hunt linking the plants to local history. Additionally, Maria Mears and Jeff Woodard planted a Three Sisters garden in the Westside Community Garden in Downtown Bloomington. This demonstration plot, with signage explaining the Indigenous planting method, provided a unique educational opportunity. The Museum's Futures in History campers visited the garden to learn about community gardening and the Three Sisters planting tradition. Public tours were also hosted in partnership with the University of Illinois Extension, further educating visitors on this sustainable practice.

In 2024, the Museum celebrated the grand finale of the Evergreen Cemetery Walk. After 30 years, this beloved program was retired due to challenges such as volunteer recruitment, a significant budget deficit, shifting community needs, and increased competition from other events. The final year was a resounding success, with 3,470 in-person attendees and hundreds more participating online through the Virtual Evergreen Cemetery Walk.

Looking ahead, the Education Department is preparing for exciting new projects and plans to:

- **Expand** collaborations with local schools, teachers, and multilingual programs.
- **Revamp** the Senior Reminiscence offerings to better serve the community.
- **Create** new programming, such as "Mourning in McLean" — an interactive exploration of mourning practices and death culture over the past 150 years.

1,750

School and Adult Program Participants

5,242

Special Event Attendees

13,841

Outreach Program Participants

20,833

TOTAL People Educated in FY 2024

LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

The monumental disruptions of the Digital Age continue to present the Library & Archives with daunting challenges and astonishing opportunities. Staff continue to upload photographs, publications, and other materials onto the Illinois Digital Archives and Internet Archives websites. In addition, new and revised archive collection finding aids are regularly added to the Museum's website. Public access to Museum collections has long been a priority of the Library & Archives.

Staff and volunteers work to maintain and "grow" library holdings that are relevant to today's students, researchers, genealogists, community residents, and others. During the past three years, Librarian Bill Kemp and volunteer Nola Marquardt teamed up to aggressively but smartly "weed" out-of-date reference books and genealogical research publications made superfluous by the Internet, and many works ill-matched to the Museum's collection priorities and mission. The goal is to create a leaner but much stronger and deeper collection of both "old" and newer books and publications. Since the latter half of 2022, more than 3,000 books have been removed from the Library shelves.

Concurrent with the weeding program is an equally energetic effort to catalog and add original items to the Library. The Museum is a rare county historical society that undertakes original monograph and serial cataloging. Led by Library volunteer Bec Bell, the Museum is cataloging an average of fifteen books and titles monthly onto the WorldCat database. These books include local fiction, local church histories, unpublished recollections and memoirs, and other materials generally not held by other institutions. As such, the Library & Archives staff has prioritized collecting and cataloging the works of local authors, as well as local studies and reports, local magazines and newsletters, McLean County cookbooks, and other subjects specific to the Museum's mission.

Digitization. Relevancy. Access. To those guiding principles we can add public engagement. Library & Archives staff take pride in working with prospective donors of papers and other materials, ensuring a positive and professional experience. In Fiscal Year 2024, the Library & Archives processed a record or near-record 192 separately signed donations. These donations ranged in size from several picture postcards to multiple bankers boxes of papers. To cite a representative example, during the fiscal year we received three-plus cubic feet of papers from area resident Diane Scheel relating to her years working at Eureka Co. from 1965 to 1999. The papers detail Scheel's thirteen years as a Machinists' union shop chairperson and include reports from labor-management meetings. This collection offers students, academic researchers, and others a window into Midwestern manufacturing and its struggles as companies opened new facilities in Mexico and overseas.

Another way the Library & Archives engages with the public is through programming. Librarian Bill Kemp continues to give several dozen public programs a year on a range of topics. During Fiscal Year 2024, newly developed programs included a walking tour of the Illinois State University Quad and illustrated talks on local streetcar history and Twin City born architect A. Richard "Dick" Williams.

At any given time, the Library & Archives staff undertake various special projects. On November 13, 2023, Librarian Bill Kemp, Marketing Director Jeff Woodard, and Illinois State University librarian Angela Bonnell interviewed former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Donald McHenry, a 1957 Illinois State Normal University graduate. The interview focused on McHenry's time as a student in Normal, and his work helping to break down de facto racial segregation in the Twin Cities. The final edited oral history is an invaluable addition to the Archives.



MARKETING

This year, our marketing efforts focused on strengthening brand awareness, building partnerships, and strategically shifting our communications approach.

We ran a general advertising campaign in over 20 print and digital media outlets, including *The Pantagraph*, WGLT, *Illinois Heritage Magazine*, WMBD, and Best Version Media's locally published magazines.

Outside of advertising, the department worked hard to receive earned media coverage through various press releases and media advisories regarding the Museum's programming. This included coverage of the History Makers Gala, Merwin Gallery reopening, Dia de Muertos Celebration, and the Intergenerational Dialogue hosted in collaboration with the McLean County League of Women Voters in honor of Women's History Month.

The Saving Santa campaign launch also demonstrated our ability to execute multi-channel media roll-outs, garnering attention with a front-page feature in *The Pantagraph* and features on television, radio, and digital broadcasts across Central Illinois.

We've prioritized high-quality content on the Museum's platforms and seen beneficial returns. Our Facebook posts made over 2 million impressions this year, and the recently revamped *On the Square Magazine* received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Collaborative projects like the Route History Virtual Experience—a VR tour exploring Illinois Green Book Cities along Route 66—further highlighted the Museum's commitment to sharing untold stories while expanding our reach to diverse audiences.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on strategic growth, working with our community partners to amplify the stories we tell, and engaging our various audiences with meaningful content, online and in person.

VISITORS CENTER

The Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center & Gift Shop

- Greeted **22,948** visitors
- Earned proceeds of **\$11,894** in admissions fees
- Grossed **\$38,845** in gift shop sales during this fiscal year

We welcomed visitors from around the world, including travelers from Australia, Germany, Mexico, Canada, Italy, Brazil, Lithuania, and France, just to name a few.

We also excitedly welcomed Lisa Novak as our new VC Manager this year. Her entrepreneurial spirit and marketing skills are set to revamp the space, bringing in new merchandise and tailoring our selection of local products to members and international visitors alike. Lisa's unique blend of creativity, business acumen, and cultural appreciation shines through everything she does. Please welcome Lisa the next time you visit!



One of our most notable visitors this year was Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, who purchased a copy of Greg's book, *Freedom, Land & Community: A History of McLean County 1730 - 1900*, during an official visit in January.

VOLUNTEERS

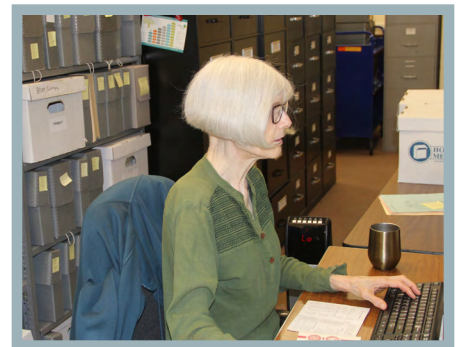
Over the past year our work focused on enhancing the Museum's volunteer program and deepening its connection with the community. This effort began with training under former director Mary Anne Schierman, focusing on key areas such as on-boarding, recruitment, scheduling, volunteer retention, and developing new trainings.

Early initiatives included conducting staff interviews to understand departmental needs, creating detailed volunteer schedules and newsletters, and on-boarding new volunteers. We also worked to improve the Volgistics database, integrating paper records, streamlining documentation, and ensuring accuracy.

Representing the Museum at local volunteer fairs and strengthening partnerships with community organizations helped to grow the volunteer network and broaden the Museum's reach. Throughout the year, the department successfully recruited and onboarded volunteers for a variety of important roles; from assisting in the Library to supporting signature events like the History Makers Gala, Cemetery Walk, and Christmas Under the Dome.

Altogether, volunteers contributed an astounding 7,700.45 hours of service this fiscal year, ensuring the Museum's continued success. We appreciate all our volunteers who give so generously of their time and energy, the Museum wouldn't be able to operate without them.

Moving forward, the department remains committed to fostering a welcoming and engaging environment for volunteers and is excited to build on this year's accomplishments as the program grows in the year ahead.





In this past fiscal year, we have accomplished many goals aligned with our strategic plan and mission.

We've increased the accessibility of our **19,000+** object collection, expanded our membership base by **11.6%**, welcomed over **22,000** visitors, and launched our innovative mobile tour platform, Tourient. We've created new ways to engage with local history, partnered with more community organizations than ever before, and served over **40,000** people through interactive programming.

With continued community support in the next fiscal year, we look forward to advancing our mission, creating new ways for people to engage with local history, and serving our community.



McLean County Museum of History
200 North Main Street, Bloomington, IL 61701
mchistory.org | 309-827-0428 | [@mchistorymuseum](https://www.instagram.com/mchistorymuseum)

