

NEWSLETTER

McLean County Genealogical Society

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From the Editor's Desk –

I'll start with apologies for the lateness of the January/February newsletter. A combination of events led to the delay.

THE McLEAN COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY COULD USE YOUR HELP.

If you are interested in volunteering with TMCGS, please consider pitching in for either short-term or longer project. The Society has needs for indexing, editing, digitizing content for our website, creative writing, publicity, and my favorite – “other.” If you are interested and can contribute some time, contact us and let us know what area/s you would be interested:

mcgs.directors@gmail.com

When you look at the 2026 Board of Directors listing to the left, you will note that the Board has several open positions.

Would you consider serving as a Director with TMCGS? Each of the current Board members wears more than one hat and there are some unfilled positions. Please take a look at the list below and let us know if there is an area in which you are interested. We could benefit from your help!

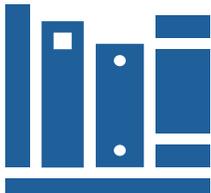
Open positions include Vice President, Finance, and Program. If you have experience in editing, your help would be very much appreciated with both our bi-monthly newsletter and the annual journal *Gleanings*. While other Directors' positions are filled, if you are interested in helping with one or more of those, please contact mcgs.directors@gmail.com

If you don't have time for a commitment to our board, we would appreciate your contributions in the form of McLean County family histories and/or queries.

~~Cheryl

CALENDAR NOTE

Normal Public Library's Genealogy Meetup in person or Zoom. Preregistration is required via the Normal Public Library website: normalpl.org Check their website for the link to registration for the Meetups which are typically held on the 1st Tuesday at 2:00 pm and are an opportunity to get help in using Ancestry Library Edition as well as other library resources and to discuss their brick walls and successes.



FROM THE STEVENSON-IVES LIBRARY SHELF

Harold Sinclair (1907-1966) was a famous award-winning American writer with strong ties to Bloomington. He wrote several historical novels highlighting pioneer life in Illinois and the Civil War. An accomplished musician, he produced stories of Jazz and New Orleans. Sinclair was a native of Chicago, but his family moved to Bloomington when he was eight and he considered it to be his new home base. He dropped out of high school and began his travels to New Orleans and Texas but always reconnected with his Central Illinois roots. *American Years*, *Years of Growth*, and *Years of Illusion* formed a trilogy about the history and people of Everton, Illinois, a.k.a. Bloomington. *American Years* is a well written, entertaining account of Bloomington from 1830 to the beginning of the Civil War. Many prominent people like David Davis, Jesse Fell, Abraham Lincoln mix with other lightly disguised inhabitants such as Isaac Frink/Funk. (Hint: This book is also available at Bloomington Public Library and can be checked out for three weeks.)

One of Sinclair's most popular works was *The Horse Soldiers*. In 1959, John Ford turned it into a motion picture starring John Wayne, William Holden, and Constance Towers. The *Cavalryman* was considered for a television series but was never produced.

The Museum has the following Sinclair works:

American Years (1938); *Westward the Tide* (1940); *Years of Illusion* (1941); *The Cavalryman* (1958); *The Horse Soldiers* (1955); *Music out of Dixie* (1953); *The Port of New Orleans* (1942); *The Years of Growth* (1940); *Journey Home* (1938).

FROM THE LIBRARY SHELF – part 2

Just a reminder that the Stevenson-Ives Library has a large McLean County collection including atlases and maps; city and church directories; histories; grade, high school, and college yearbooks; telephone books; local publications; business guides; special events programs, works of local authors; cemeteries; genealogies; Bloomington City Council records; local biographies and cookbooks. There are many, many more areas of focus about McLean County and the surrounding counties, as well as genealogical information pertaining to settlers from the Eastern and Southern states. TMC GS holdings are contained with those of the DAR and the McLean County Historical Society, located on the Courthouse Square. McLean County Museum of History, Stevenson-Ives Library, 200 N. Main St., 2nd Floor. Bloomington, Ill. The Museum is open to the public and is handicapped accessible. For details: www.mchistory.org/visit One of the advantages of membership with TMC GS is that free admission is included with that annual membership. If you are not a member of TMC GS and want to visit the museum and library, admission is free on Tuesdays.

During their shifts, volunteers at the Stevenson-Ives Library are available to help visitors with their research.

Parking downtown is limited to 90 minutes and time limits are enforced. Please be aware of that if you choose on street parking rather than the parking deck.



NEWS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Transition of Distribution duties from Ruth Wilkerson to Virgil Hovar.

Longtime Director of Distribution, Ruth Wilkerson, is stepping back from some of her chosen duties with The McLean County Genealogical Society. She will continue to be active with the group, including as official historian. Each of us who has been a member, has attended a TMC GS meeting or activity owes Ruth a thank you, a sincere thank you. For decades, she has meticulously kept membership and society records for TMC GS. You see that in the indexes she prepares each year, in the diligent ways she has been active in documenting our past and present.

Taking on Distribution responsibilities will be Virgil Hovar, a retiree of Hewlett-Packard (Enterprise) after a 33 year career as a Software Analyst and Customer Account Manager. The Hovars founded Fusion Brew 20 years ago. Their daughter Sarah continuing to manage the business. The Hovars are long time area residents. Virgil grew up in Mackinaw and his wife, Rebecca, hails from East Peoria. They have lived in Bloomington since '84 with the exception of a brief move to work in Chicago. There two other children, Tracy and Michael, who live in the northern Illinois.

Virgil's interest in genealogy primarily started after his son, Michael, had taken an interest as a young boy and had started to gather family details and trace the roots of their family name. One of their first dedicated genealogy trips was a weekend spent in a tent just outside of Galena where Virgil's father was born and raised. The weekend was full of discoveries and surprises, thus was the fodder to feed the flames of passion for genealogy. Since then, they have traveled as far as Slovenia to meet family and visit homesteads of generations of family. Virgil's passion for genealogy and family history continues today as he spends many hours each week doing research for the McLean County Museum of History, where he volunteers. He also participates in local genealogy activities which have led him to volunteer in his new position with The McLean County Genealogical Society.

RESEARCH

Our research volunteers are happy to assist you! Many of you have ancestry.com or newspapers.com accounts which help you locate information about your McLean County ancestors. For those of you who don't have those accounts and for those of you who aren't able to come to McLean County to do research, our researchers are happy to assist you. Local resources could and many times do, include materials not available on ancestry.com, findagrave.com or newspapers.com. Email requests to: mcgs.research@gmail.com. Please include a family group sheet, or at least as much information as you have about an individual or family, so that research isn't duplicated and that a foundation for research is provided.

The Fox Valley Genealogical Society which serves DuPage, Kane, Kendall and Will Counties is pleased to announce their 2026 Program Schedule. They have asked that we share this news with our members and genealogy friends. Details can be found on our website at

<https://ilfvgs.org/education/programs/2026-programs/>, or you can download a copy.

FVGS holds nine monthly meetings on the 2nd Thursday at 7:00 p.m. (Central). The group meets online (via Zoom) in January, February and March. All other meetings are in person at Grace United Methodist Church (300 E Gartner Rd, Naperville, IL). FVGS meetings are free and open to the public. Register for online events to receive the link to attend. The first meeting of the year which will be held on February 12th will cover "Using Artificial Intelligence Tools for Genealogy" by Blaine Bettinger, PhD., JD.

From the *Gleanings* Editors: In the May/June 2021 MCGS Newsletter, there was a request for genealogical information that you may hold in your personal collection. Would you consider contributing your family cemetery database? Do you know of someone in your family who has access to sexton's records? Would you like to share information about a family-owned business in McLean County? Family oral history can provide many clues. Do you have an interesting story to tell? Please consider sharing the information you have with TMCGS.

EQUESTRIAN STATUES

"Many towns and cities have equestrian statues in their parks. When you see such a statue, notice position of the horse's feet: If they are all on the ground, it means the rider died a natural death. If one hoof is raised, it means the rider died of wounds sustained in battle. Two hoofs in the air means the rider was killed in battle. This is an international code followed by all sculptors." (Effingham Co. Gen. Soc., Vol. XII, #2, Feb. 1991.) (TMCGS Newsletter, Vol. 25, No. 4, Apr. 1991)

Question: where is the nearest equestrian statue? Is there one in McLean County? If not, is there one in Central Illinois?

RootsTech by FamilySearch Registration is now open!

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/registration>

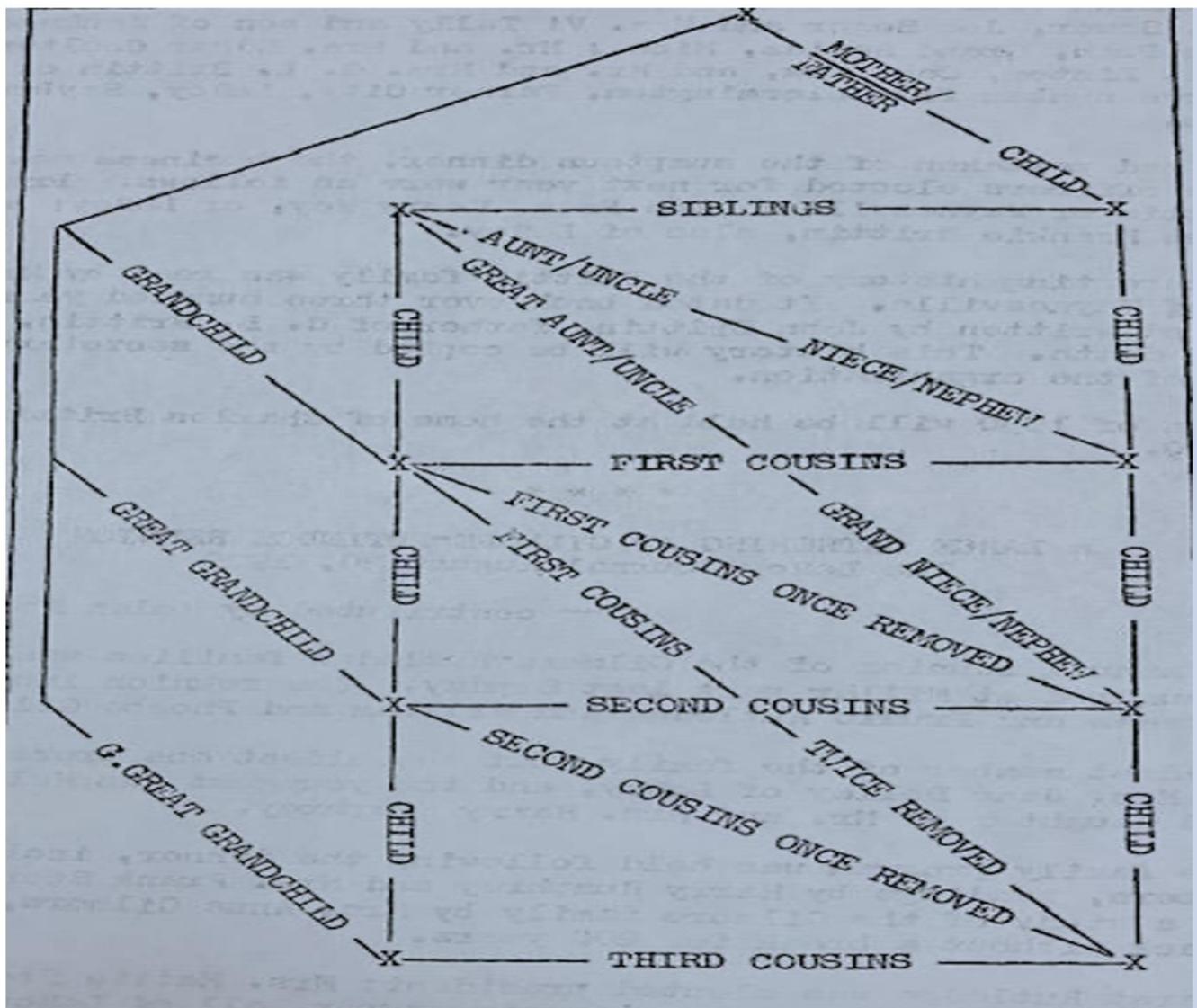
Attend "the world's largest family discovery event" online or in person in Salt Lake City

March 5-7, 2026

Online is free with many online sessions.

In person is \$129 US 3-day pass or \$79 US 1-day pass

FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CHART

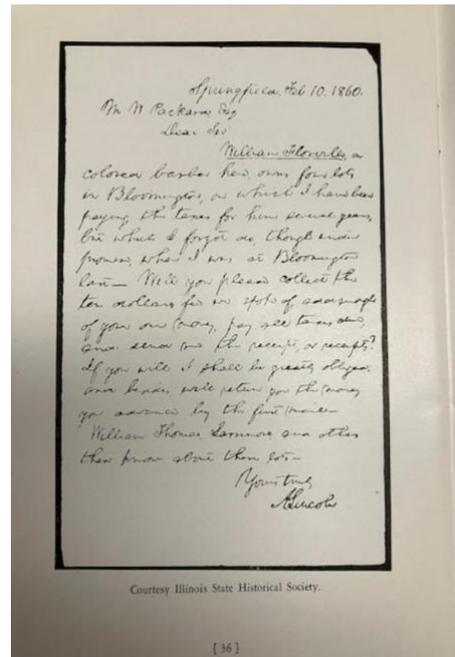
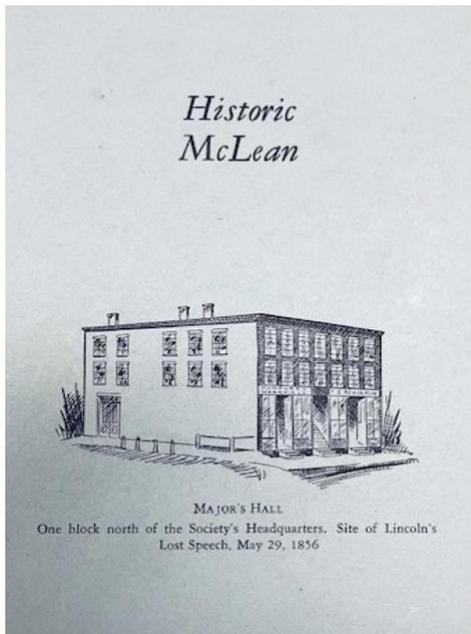


The chart above was adapted from “The McMurtry Family” chart, by David Cornelius McMurtry, as published in “Descendants of Thomas Haughey The Immigrant,” published privately by W. Donald Mayne, copyright 1974. Reprinted in *Gleanings*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pg. 77.

Those of us who attend family gatherings are sometimes befuddled by kinship nomenclature when face to face with the person you’ve always called “Aunt Tilly” who is actually not a relative at all, but the longtime neighbor who babysat you. Or, how a second cousin once removed fits into the family tree. *Webster’s International Dictionary* defines “cousin,” as the son or daughter of one’s aunt or uncle. The children of first cousins are second cousins to each other, and the children of second cousins are third cousins to each other, etc. The child of one’s first cousin is properly called first cousin, cousin once removed – meaning the two are separated by a generation. I go to family gatherings – weddings, reunions, funerals, etc. fully expecting a quiz on this topic! ~~editor

LINCOLN'S BARBER HAD IMPACT ON LINCOLN AND ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

I was looking at my grandmother's copy of "Historic McLean", by Wayne C. Townley, pub. by McLean County Historical Society, vol. 6. The first printing of this booklet was October 1944 with the second printing, April 1945. The dedication reads, "This is dedicated to the brave men and women in the service of their country. Their history cannot yet be written. Their great deeds are countless. For thousands of years people have striven for liberty. They are fighting for it and for us." "All honor to their names."



In a letter written by A. Lincoln to Mr. W. Packard, Esq. on Feb. 10, 1860: "Dear Sir: William Florville, a colored barber here, owns four lots in Bloomington, on which I have been paying the taxes for him for several years, but which I forgot to, though under promise, when I was in Bloomington last—Will you please collect the ten dollars fee we spoke of, add enough of your own money, pay all taxes owed, and send me the receipt, or receipts? If you will I shall be greatly obliged; and besides, will return you the money you advanced in the first mail—William Thomas, Larrimore, and others there know about these lots.

Yours truly, A. Lincoln

"Billy the Barber deeded these lots together with two other lots adjoining them to the Trustees of the Illinois Wesleyan University by Warranty Deed, June 6, 1867 for \$4,000.00. The lots are at the southwest corner of Locust and Main and the southeast corner of Locust and Center."

In William Florville's obituary (*The Dispatch*, Moline, Ill.), it is noted that Billy the Barber cut Abraham Lincoln's hair for 30 years and was considered one of the future President's closest friends. Billy was born in Haiti in 1806 and learned the barber's trade at a Baltimore convent. He met Lincoln in 1831 in New Salem where Lincoln helped him get into the barber business. It was at Billy the Barber's shop that Lincoln reportedly decided to grow his trademark beard."

Now, we have another piece of lore to that of 11 year old Grace Bedell suggesting Mr. Lincoln grow a beard to cover his thin face. Other theories? ~~editor

NEWSLETTER SUMMARY INDEX - 2025 – With thanks to Ruth Wilkerson

George Perkins retires as Archivist at MCMH	Jul / Aug
How Time Flies article from May 31, 1876	Jul / Aug
Library Shelf - added Pekin Bicentennial Pictorial	Mar / Apr
Library Shelf - added Ancestry of George Clinton & Julia Ann Noel White & descendants	May / Jun
Library Shelf - Kathi Davis writes autobiography about career as airline stewardess	Jul / Aug
Library Shelf - reminder - Stevenson-Ives catalog RSCat address	Jul / Aug
Library Shelf - info about "Good Old Days" "Gleanings" & other quarterlies	Sep / Oct
Library Shelf - Holiday Foods - Recipes from local cookbooks found in the vault	Nov / Dec
MCGS - Editor's Desk (research in cemeteries - some well taken care of - others not)	Sep / Oct
MCGS - Membership Form	Nov / Dec
MCGS - President's Message - Rand Veerman (new section on website - McLean Co records)	Jan / Feb
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MCGS - President's Message - Rand Veerman (Military DD213 & other military info on TMC GS)	May / Jun
MCGS - President's Message - Rand Veerman (discusses Genealogy Meetup)	Jul / Aug
MCGS - President's Message - Rand Veerman (ID theft protection tips on TMC GS)	Sep / Oct
MCGS - President's Message - Rand Veerman ("Remembering Veterans" on TMC GS)	Nov / Dec
Memorial - Cherie Valentine	Mar / Apr
Memorial - LaVerne Lahr	Mar / Apr
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Newsletter Summary Index - 2021	Mar / Apr
Newsletter Summary Index - 2022 & 2023	May / Jun
Newsletter Summary Index - 2024	Jul / Aug
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Program - Zoom or In Person - Genealogy Meetup - March 4, 2025 (sharing & learning)	Mar / Apr
Program - Zoom or In Person - Genealogy Meetup - June 3 & July 1, 2025 (sharing & learning)	May / Jun
Program - Zoom or In Person - Genealogy Meetup - July 1 & Aug 5, 2025 (sharing & learning)	Jul / Aug
Program - Zoom or In Person - Genealogy Meetup - Sept 2 & Oct 7, 2025 (sharing & learning)	Sep / Oct
Query - Do you have a brick wall?	Sep / Oct
Query - Suggestions	Nov / Dec
Query - Durbin family (including Brooks, Cundiff)	Mar / Apr
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Testament: A Soldier's Story of the Civil War	Jul / Aug
Website - newest digital book - Military Records from the County Recorder's Office	Sep / Oct
Weston Prairie Cemetery, Yates Township	Jan / Feb



McLean County Museum of History

Photos by
William P. LaBounty



On the Courthouse Square, Bloomington, Illinois

Contact: P.O. Box 488, Normal, IL 61761-0488
Library: 309-827-0428, ext. 28
<mailto:mccgs.directors@gmail.com>

Visit: McLean County Museum of History
Stevenson-Ives Library
200 North Main Street, 2nd Floor
Downtown Bloomington

Online: <https://www.tmcgs.org>

Library/Archives: Appointments recommended.

Museum: Open to the public.
Handicapped accessible. For details visit:

<https://www.mchistory.org/visit/>

FREE admission for MCGS members.

During their shifts, volunteers in the Stevenson-Ives Library are available to help visitors with their research.