

ALEXANDRIA-MONROE TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY (AMTHS)

Summer 2024

MONROE TOWNSHIP EVENTS

August 8: Time TBD

(Alexandria-Monroe Historical Society Museum, 313 N. Harrison St., Alexandria)

Donald Almquist: Shares his story

Former Alexandria native, retired GM executive, and author Donald Almquist plans to visit local relatives in early August. We are working on hosting an event where he can share his memories of his early life in the community. This event will be part of our *Listening To...* series.

The [Local Events page of our website calendar](#) will have more details on this event.

Sept. 19: 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Stephen Jackson Presents: The Great Floods (Alexandria Community Center, 315 S. Harrison St., Alexandria)

Once again, Madison County Historian Stephen Jackson joins us to share what happened during some historic floods in our area and how the communities rallied to the rescue of residents and buildings alike.

Oct. 12: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Annual Ham & Bean Fundraiser (Emery Lee Building, Beulah Park, Alexandria)

Mark your calendars for this annual fundraiser! Join us to have some yummy food, share your personal stories, and maybe bid on some silent auction items (still working on the details).

Oct. 19: Save the date for the cemetery tour!

IN GRATITUDE

Once again, we are humbled by your donations! Thanks to the many members who make financial donations as memorials or special contributions. Many of you prefer to remain anonymous, but know that your financial support helps us keep our museum FREE to the public.



Thank you to The McCurry-Osity Shop (224 N. Harrison)! Through a special campaign in memory of former Alexandria resident Suzanne Morpew,

this store donated 10% of its sales on May 4th, 2024, to the Alexandria-Monroe Twp Historical Society.

They also provided a personal matching donation. Thank you, McCurry-Osity Shop!



Thank you also to the friends and families who sent in donations in memory of Vince Beardsley and Donnis Kirkpatrick.

Your generosity keeps memories alive in so many ways.

Everyone can recognize history *when* it happens. Everyone can recognize history *after* it has happened; but only a wise man knows *at the moment* when it is vital and permanent, what is lasting and memorable.

–Winston Churchill



ALEXANDRIA-MONROE TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY: THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS (1979-1999)

In 1975-1976, as the U.S. Bicentennial celebration planning began, many community members pondered how to capture our local Alexandria and Monroe Township history. Through the efforts of John and Marsha Madden, Max and Nancy Draper, Curt and Rosemary Ellis, Jim Donahue, and John Noffze, the Alexandria Historical Society was formed in 1979. John Madden served as its first president.

During the 1980s, volunteers and citizens gathered Alexandria's historical records, materials, photos, and memorabilia to create local history and genealogical collections. The society later expanded the collections to include township artifacts and updated the organization's name to include Monroe Township.



Many buildings were offered as the museum location. The historical society board considered a Jefferson Street house donated by John-Mansville, a room in the Alexandria Public Library, and the former street commissioner's house on the southwest corner of Beulah Park. In 1987, under then-president Nancy Draper and vice-president Sybil Sayre, the historical society officially leased 205 E. Church Street (next to city hall) as its first museum location.

As the collection and society's needs changed, the historical society searched for a new museum location. In October 1996, the Community Hospital Network and Dr. Thomas Owen donated the 313 North Harrison Street clinic building. Volunteers moved artifacts and many library resources into the new facility in 1997. Due to Nancy Draper's dedication to the museum's library and genealogical resources, the Historical Society dedicated one room as the Draper Library. The museum was initially open to visitors on Thursdays from 1 to 5 p.m. and by individual appointment.

As the museum and its membership grew during the 1990s, members or invited guests presented programs on local clubs, churches, and community history. Some programs were combined with the Orestes Historical Society, then under the leadership of Carolyn Shettle. Sybil Sayre organized the first annual ham and bean fundraiser at the 1997 Small Town USA Festival. Class reunions began to tour the new museum to recall memories of their early years in Alexandria and other Monroe Township locales.

And so, our history continues...

LISTENING TO...SERIES: CAPTURING THE MEMORIES OF MONROE TOWNSHIP

In a recurring new series, *Listening to...*, the Alexandria-Monroe Township Historical Society interviews Monroe Township residents to record their personal and first-hand recollections of local events and experiences. We got off to an amazing start!

The first recording session was held at the museum on Saturday, June 22, 2024, and included Neal Johnson, Pete Sayre, and Dick Thompson. These gentlemen lived rich lives in the area and are just three of the many long-time residents who impacted our communities. Here is just a sampling of the stories they shared:



Neal Johnson

To help the museum with our “unique job” collection, Neal Johnson recalled his first job at Delco Remy. He recalled hearing an announcement at the high school in 1943 that Delco Remy was recruiting 16-year-old males for their Anderson plant. Due to World War II, many trained employees were away. He shared how he hitched a ride to Anderson after school. Delco Remy hired him on the spot.

The manager then “took me out to Plant 13, where they made magnetos for airplanes.” Neal worked until 11 pm that night and had to walk home from Anderson to Alexandria. His family did not have a home phone, so he could not tell them where he was or that he needed a ride home.

“When I got home at 4:30 am, mom said, ‘Where have you been?’ After I told her where I was, she said ‘you’re lying to me, and you smell funny.’ He explained to his mom that he was covered in oil and could not talk then. Neal had to get to bed for just a few short hours of sleep before going to school.

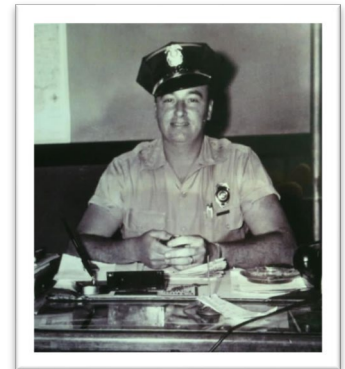
He also mentioned that his first paycheck was only two cents. They took out funds for war bonds and taxes from his part-time paycheck, leaving only two cents. He never cashed that check, and his family still has it (which they generously shared with our historical society).



Pete Sayre

Pete Sayre shared how Mayor Guy Lewis hired him on the spot for the Alexandria Police Department in 1952. “I was working at the service station on Washington Street and decided to apply for an open spot.” Pete said, and the mayor exclaimed, “YOU are the type of person I want in the Police Department. I’ll call the clerk to swear you in right now if you say yes.” And that is just what happened. Neal remembered that he was a city council member and how they heard the news afterward.

Pete Sayre was also a school bus driver for 50 years.



Dick Thompson

Both Dick Thompson, a veteran school bus driver for 45 years, and Pete shared several memories of those days and the students who stood out in their minds. Maybe you were one of those students who rode on their school buses!

Dick Thompson recalled his first job at National Gypsum. “Instead of wearing bib overalls like everyone else, I wore a belt. By the end of the day, I had a waist full of insulation. I lasted 7 days in that job.” Dick also shared many other memories from his years as a local school bus driver.

MEMBER HAIL AND FAREWELL

We would like to recognize members who recently passed away and say hello to those added as 2024 members. Thank you for supporting the community and our museum.

Farewells

Vince Beardsley, Rovena Wiegert

Hails

Lee Bryant, John Burdsall, Jamie Combs, Larrilee Frazier, Wendi Goens, Patty Kuhn, Marianne (Perry) Marshall, Bailey McBride, Chip & Cyndee McFerran, Karen Napier, Dick & Anita Nottingham, Patty Riggs, Greg Stanley, Ron Summers, Sue Wilson, Woody Wright



INDIANA STATE HISTORIC RESOURCES

The AMTHS and many others who love this area are saddened by the loss of buildings and, therefore, local history. We are striving to learn more about how the state determines historic structures and the preservation resources available for property owners of homes and businesses.



The Department of Natural Resources in Indiana performs county-wide surveys of historic properties. The last one taken for Madison County (and, therefore, Monroe Township) was in 1980-1981. The state created a [SHAARD database](#) and an [Indiana Historic Buildings, Bridges, and Cemeteries \(IHBC\) map](#) to capture the survey results on structures identified and recommended by county historians and state preservationists. Your home or business might be listed!

The AMTHS is working with the DNR to update this database's existing local historical records until the next projected historic survey is undertaken in 2026. This information can be useful in identifying those buildings and homes indicated as important to local history in the 1980s, providing updates to that existing data, and collaborating with civic and other community leaders on recommendations and additions before the upcoming survey.

BOARD INFORMATION

President: Danny Lamb
Vice-President Patty Brooks
Treasurer: Pam Blake
Secretary: Jenny Corbett
Membership: Vickie Beardsley
Board: Jeff Bryan, Annette Ellis, Mike Lynch

MUSEUM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (765) 490-0081
Email: alexhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.alexandriahistoricalsociety.com/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/alexmonroetwphistory>
Hours: Thursdays 1-5 pm; Saturdays 10 am-1 pm;
or by appointment