



NEWSLETTER

McLean County Genealogical Society

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From the Editor's Desk –

For all of my life the *LeRoy Journal* and *The Pantagraph* and, I'm guessing, so have hundreds of other newspapers had a "Pages from the Past" or "LeRoy Lore" or "How Time Flies." I applaud the editors and "gleaners" who find tidbits of information about our families and events that are long gone. In the January 29, 2026 edition of the *LeRoy Leader*, it was this blip that caught my attention, "1916. Mrs. Harriett Schuler, the widow of John Schuler, the Chicago & Alton engineer who handled the funeral train of Abraham Lincoln." Harriet Prince was born in Holland, August 27, 1826 and at the age of 11 she came to this country and settled with her parents at LaPorte, Ind. She married John Schuler on May 19, 1855 and some years later they moved to Bloomington where Mr. Schuler was an engineer on the Alton railroad. The couple had ten children and by 1870 the Schulers had moved to LeRoy. While this is the obituary of Mrs. Harriett Prince Schuler, one of the most significant events in her life was that her husband was the engineer on the Alton railroad for the train that conveyed the body of Abraham Lincoln from Chicago to Springfield.

Mr. John Schuler's own obituary did not mention this newsworthy event. In fact, his obituary (*The Pantagraph* on March 19, 1895) was quite simple, "Mr. John Schuler, of Leroy, died Saturday at his home, at the age of 63. He leaves a wife and eight children." While his career as a train engineer and its ties to the Lincoln train was newsworthy in other newspaper editions, it didn't seem to be of importance in his obituary. This was: John Schuler was one of ten or so LeRoyans who were fortunate to have a streetlamp installed at intersections near their homes. His kindness to a Mexican War veteran, was mentioned more than once in local news, but not his connection to Abraham Lincoln.

President's Message

From Rand - Military Veteran Home Records



Family Search maintains copies of records for the United States Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938 – the collection has 208,446 images

Link: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/1916230>

I recently was trying to locate a McLean County resident and veteran who had died in 1909. The Illinois Veterans interment records stated he was interred at an “Unknown Cemetery” in McLean County. I did a Find a Grave search using his DOB and DOD, but no luck.

I went to Family Search and did a general Records search but had no luck. (Very few John Zeller hits)

The newspapers.com death notice stated he had died at Danville, a town that had a National Home for Veterans. Chat GPT guided me to the above website which was an instant hit!

The page returned showed his physical characteristics, his veterans pension number, his wife's name (I was looking high and low for this), the possessions he had upon entrance to the Home, his military service record, the nature of his injuries, what he died of with date of death and interment.

United States, National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938

Images and partial index of historical registers of residents (a record of veterans admitted) for twelve regional homes. Pages in the registers were divided into four parts for each veteran: military history, domestic history, home history, general remarks. Content for these sections includes such information as rank, company, regiment, discharge, when admitted to home, birthplace, age, religion, residence, marital status, name and address of nearest relative, pension information, date and cause of death, and place of burial. This collection is part of Record Group 15 Records of the Veterans Administration and is NARA microfilm publication M1749. Home numbers 1-5064 from the home in Bath, New York are not currently available.

First Names	Last Names
Birthplace	Birth Year
SEARCH MORE OPTIONS	

HOW TO USE THIS COLLECTION

BROWSE ALL 208,446 IMAGES

A modified search on FG turned him up (he did not come up before because I had specified DOB and DOD and only the DOD was in the memorial). I could then upload my research to the memorial and add his FG to the tree.

This is a great resource and should be used by everyone working on veterans.

More Information is available at these links:

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/spring/soldiers-home.html>

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/spring/nhdvs-sidebar1.html>

Rand

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Ardys Lilyan Serpette, 87, of Bloomington, passed away on July 7, 2026, at The Loft Rehabilitation & Nursing of Normal.

A celebration of life service was held on August 1, at the Mennonite Church of Normal. Interment service at Pike Township Cemetery in Graymont, Illinois. Memorial contributions may be directed to The Illinois Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society, Metamora, Illinois, or The McLean County Genealogical Society, Bloomington, Illinois.

Ardys was born on July 5, 1939, in Peoria, daughter of Melvin John Joseph and Lorene Forney Serpette.

Survivors include her children, Timothy Charles (Lisa) of Bloomington, IL. and Pamela (Tim) Estes of Colorado Springs, CO, and five grandchildren, Jason (Kari) Serpette, Brandon (Lauren) Serpette, Blake Serpette, Lindsey Estes, Katherine Estes, Two great-grandchildren, Aidan and Isla Serpette; Four step-grandchildren Trey, Loki, Evie, and Finn, and a sister, Zelda Hinchee. She was preceded in death by her parents and a sister, Beverly Ann Fleeman.

Ardys retired from State Farm in 2004. She was a longtime member at Mennonite Church of Normal and was passionate about genealogy, finding great joy in tracing family histories. Ardys also had a deep appreciation for history and dedicated many hours volunteering with The McLean County Genealogy Society and Illinois Mennonite County Genealogical Society. Ardys also generously gave her time to several other community organizations throughout the years.

Ardys joined Toastmasters International in 1999. As a Toastmaster of 25+ years, she was a member of 4 clubs, State Farm Windjammers, Voices for Service, Four Seasons, and a founding

member of Delightful Greeters Toastmasters, an Advanced club and achieved the highest award, the DTM, Distinguished Toastmaster.

Ardys graduated from Flanagan High School in 1957 and grew up in Graymont, Illinois.

From her memorial page, "She was always a smiling face in the Genealogy Library at the McLean County Museum of History. Always helpful, encouraging, and interested in each patron. Her life was a blessing." - **Sandra Parker**

Editor -TMCGS is thankful for the donations to The McLean County Genealogical Society In honor of and in memory of Ardys and that thank you also goes to Ardys herself who left a gift to our Society.

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This response to the Addendum on Page 7 of the July/August TMCGS newsletter (Berenz and Son came from Bob Lundeen and Edgar Lundeen, Jr.:



" 'Givens' place' was the Will and Jennie Givens farm in section 29 of Bloomington Township from before 1900 through 1914 when they moved into Bloomington (first to 2307 S. Morris Avenue, then to 909 West Wood St). The Givens farm remains in the family of their descendants and is now the Lundeen Family Farm, LLC.

There are two (2) bridges on Kinder Road, just south of the private drive to 9247 Kinder Road, the former home site. The coordinates for the bridges from Google Maps are approx.: 40.421226, -89.014089, and 40.420562, -89.014058.

The north bridge spans Timber Creek and the south bridge spans a field drainage ditch that joins Timber Creek downstream, also on the Givens farm.

Neither Bridge has any railing above the road level."

Editor's note: I am thrilled to have input – corrections, additions, memories and observations that help fill out the stories of McLean County's past. If you have a story, remembrance, please share with us at mcs.research@gmail.com

Still another bit about McLean County roads and the building of those roads comes from "LeRoy Lore" in *The LeRoy Leader*. In 1934, "A crew of men from the CCC camp started work taking the

sod from that part of the grounds at the country club where the earth will be removed to get gravel.” Just 90 or so years ago, there were very few paved roads in the county. In just doing a quick search, it was 1922 when the first two blocks of Washington St. were paved using “creosote blocks.”

FROM THE STEVENSON-IVES LIBRARY SHELF - part 1



MOURNING IN McLEAN explains some of the unusual funeral customs and practices which have been used in McLean County. Candace Summers, as she gathered material for Evergreen Cemetery Walks, found many tidbits of information which were too numerous to include in the performances and created this book. It details mourning attire, burial practices, postmortem photography, military honors, burial clothes, hair art, burial practices and other little known bereavement details. There are several photographs of items from the McLean County Museum of History to illustrate the text. This book is a small paperback available in the Museum’s Gift Shop.

FROM THE STEVENSON-IVES LIBRARY SHELF - part 2

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS magazine published the winners in a survey of McLean County’s Choicest Places and People in its December 1991 issue. Surprisingly some of the same businesses and people are still going strong and are just as popular in 2026. (Editor’s note: place names in **bold** are no longer open for business.)

Best Power Lunch, Dance Floor, and Singles Spot: **Central Station and Bogie’s Nightclub**

Best Cup of Coffee: The Coffeehouse in Normal

Best Steak: **Alexander’s Steak House**

Best Burger: Green Gables

Best Place for a Good Laugh: **The Treehouse**

Best Pizza: Tobin’s Pizza

Best Take Out Food: Avanti’s

Best New Car Dealer: Rebbec Pontiac-Buick

Best Bakery/Best Meat Counter: **Mike’s Market at Park and Empire in Bloomington**

Best Specialty Shop: Tie between **The Mole Hole** and The Garlic Press

Best Law Enforcement Officer: Sheriff Steve Brien

Best Florist: Forget-Me-Not Flowers

Best Restaurant Wait Staff: Denny's on Eldorado

Most Effective Community Activists: Mary Campbell, Carol Reitan, Mayor Jesse Smart, Councilwoman Judy Markowitz, Police Officers Dave White and Bill O'Connor

Person People Would Most Like to Meet: Ed Rust, Jr.

Best Caterer: **Glorious Food**, Dennis Gieseke, Owner

Best Musical Groups: Captain Rat and the Rivets

Best Beer: Schooner's

Best Place for Discreet Cocktails: **Jumer's Chateau (restaurant is closed)**

Best Cheap Breakfast: **Zorba's**

Best Golf Hole: #3 at Highland Course

Editor's note: Winners of this year's competition of "best of" will be announced Sunday, September 6, 2026. A few categories have changed or have been added since 1991. Health & Wellness Professionals, Home Services, Local Learning, Automotive, and Beauty & Grooming, for example.)

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While waiting for a tire rotation last week, I was scrolling away on Facebook when I noticed a gravestone posting, with "Some Mother's Boy" engraved as the headstone which is at Georgetown Cemetery, Georgetown, Kentucky. The stone is small with these words and dates: "Killed Apr.1,1821 Interred Apr.14,1921" The findagrave.com memorial ID is 203537323. In *The Lexington Herald*, it was noted that the unknown boy had an impressive funeral with townspeople pitching in to buy flowers and provide the small grave marker (an early example of go fund me or crowdsourcing!). They knew what he looked like: about 17

**Some Mother's Boy  
Killed  
Apr.1,1921  
Interred  
Apr.14,1921**

years old, brown hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. His clothing had a laundry mark and a pocket held a receipt for a railroad fare from Cincinnati to Chicago. Pictures of the boy were posted in newspapers all over the country with no results. 96 years later, in June of 2017, the remains were exhumed and through DNA was found to be Frank Albert Haynes of Bronston, KY. National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) and Scott County Coroner John Goble identified the boy. Further research revealed that being hit by a train as his cause of death. Once Frank Albert Haynes' DNA established his identity, his remains were moved to be with the rest of his family at Beaty Cemetery in Pulaski County, Kentucky.

Satisfied that Frank Albert Haynes had been identified thanks to DNA and NamUs, I googled, "Frank A. Haynes."



"We are happy to help you in your search to find your McLean County ancestors. Please send an email request to [mcgs.research@gmail.com](mailto:mcgs.research@gmail.com). Your request for assistance should include as much information as you have about the person/family for whom you are searching. Do you know the area in McLean County where your ancestor lived? If so, that would be helpful in conducting a search. Family Group Sheets and/or a link to your [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) tree (if you have one) are also helpful: they help avoid duplication of research and provide guidance in the search for your ancestors, especially

where the surname is common in this county."



Tuesday, check on date!!!! 7, 2026 2:00-3:00pm Genealogy  
Meetup at the Normal Public Library in the Community Room.  
Registration is required:

<https://www.normalpl.org/event/genealogy-meetup-47896> Check on registration link.



**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:mcgs.directors@gmail.com>

Visit: McLean County Museum of History  
Stevenson-Ives Library  
200 North Main Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.