



**Monroe County Museum System Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting**

Tuesday, October 21, 2025 @ 7 pm
126 South Monroe Street
Monroe, Michigan 48161

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes from Regular Meeting of September 23, 2025
5. Public Comment
6. Markers Committee
 1. Text approval for Berlin Charter Township Historical Society's new marker for South Rockwood Evangelical Church and John Strong Jr. - **Action Needed**
7. Projects Fund Committee
8. Awards Committee
9. New Business
 1. Monroe County Museum System Department Report
 2. Acceptance of Accessions - **Action Needed**
 3. Approval of Deaccessions - **Action Needed**
10. Old Business
 1. Historical Society Extension Request
 2. Museum Expansion Update
11. Public Comment
12. Board Comments
13. Adjournment

Next Meeting

November 25, 2025 @ 7 pm
Monroe County Museum
126 South Monroe Street
Monroe, Michigan 48161

2025 Monroe County Museum System Board of Trustees

(All terms expire 31 December 2026)

Officers	Trustees
Chair Brian Egen, County District 6	Trustee Emeritus Richard Micka
Vice Chair Michelle Lavoy, County District 5	Trustee Barbara Roe, County District 1
Secretary Michael Humphries, County District 8	Trustee Thomas Heywood, County District 2
Immediate Past Chair Hobby Nels	Trustee Sue Wagers, County District 3
	Trustee L William Conner, County District 4
	Trustee Anne Noland, County District 7
	Trustee Nick Guthrie, County District 9

2025 Board of Trustees Committees

(Appointed annually by the board chair)

Executive Committee	<i>Board:</i> Brian Egen (Chair), Michelle Lavoy, Michael Humphries, Hobby Nels <i>Staff:</i> Andrew Clark, JJ Przewozniak
Awards Committee	<i>Board:</i> Michelle Lavoy, Anne Noland, Sue Wagers <i>Staff:</i> Andrew Clark
Markers Committee	<i>Board:</i> Nick Guthrie (Chair), Brian Egen, Michael Humphries, Barbara Roe <i>Staff:</i> Andrew Clark, JJ Przewozniak
Projects Committee	<i>Board:</i> Michael Humphries (Chair), Bill Conner, Brian Egen, Nick Guthrie <i>Staff:</i> Andrew Clark

Mission Statement of the Monroe County Museum System

At the Monroe County Museum, we fuel and cultivate our visitors' curiosity through the exploration of Monroe County's reach and varied stories, joining together to unearth meaning and illuminate relevant connections between the past, present, and future.

Monroe County Museum System Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes: Tuesday, September 23, 2025 // 7:00 PM
Held at the Monroe County Museum
126 South Monroe Street, Monroe, MI 48161

Attendance:

Brian Egen, Chair	District 6
Richard Micka, Trustee Emeritus	
Mike Humphries, Secretary	District 8
Hobby Nels, Immediate Past Chair	
L. William Connor	District 4
Nick Guthrie	District 9
Thomas Heywood	District 2
Barbara Roe	District 1
Sue Wagers	District 3

Andy Clark, Director
JJ Przewozniak, Deputy Director
3 visitors

Not present:

Michelle LaVoy	District 5	
Anne Noland	District 7	(excused)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM, and roll call was taken by Chairman Egen. Dick Micka made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Nick Guthrie, and passed unanimously.

Tom Heywood made a motion to approve the Minutes from the regular Meeting of August 13, 2025. It was seconded by Mike Humphries, and passed unanimously, after Sue Wagers commended Robert Lutey on the detailed recording.

1st Public Comment: None.

Markers Committee Update: Nick Guthrie announced the assembly of a list of 10 marker refurbishments, selected with *America250* in mind due their visibility/location and relevant content: 1) *Capture of General Winchester*; 2) *Soldiers and Sailors Park*; 3) *Monroe County in the Civil War/Grand Army of the Republic*; 4) *Dr. George Francis Heath 1850-1908*; 5) *"Newton" Strike*; 6) *First District Court*; 7) *The American Surrender*; 8) *Death of Capt Woolfolk*; 9) *Tecumseh's Headquarters*; and 10) *First Mail*. He commended Berlin Township on the excellent application for a new marker and announced the forward movement of that process. Dick Micka commented on the color of historical markers used by the NPS, and some discussion ensued.

Projects Fund Committee Update: Mike Humphries invited Andy Clark to welcome members of the Historical Society of Monroe County in attendance (Anne Kleinow, Christine Kull, and Jeanne Micka) to address issues surrounding the currently incomplete HPF award-funded restoration project of the Johnson-Phinney House. Anne requested a reconsideration of the \$20,000 grant originally pledged in July 2022. She explained that they were making progress, and cited a number of issues that were responsible for the stalled project, such as personnel changes at MCHS, contractor failures, and rising costs resulting from delays. She mentioned that the cost to strip and paint the Johnson-Phinney house was \$135,000. She concluded by expressing appreciation to the MCMS for consideration of honoring the award, despite failure to meet the initial project deadline of August 5, 2023 as well as a subsequent deadline extension of May 31, 2025. Mike Humphries thanked the MCHS members for the explanation, and pledged to answer the issue following discussion with the HPF committee. Some discussion ensued regarding a potential unprecedented additional extension and the potential resubmission of supplemental application documents.

L. William Conner asked how far along the project was, to which Anne replied the half way point had been recently reached, with an intended completion date of December 1 for stripping and painting. She explained that stripping was the most labor-intensive aspect, and discussion ensued regarding the use of infrared paint strippers, and various related topics.

Brian Egen said that the BoT is committed to figuring this issue out while ensuring that all protocols and procedures are followed. Mike Humphries followed up by assuring all that the MCMS prides themselves on being good stewards of HPF grant funds, and Brian concluded the discussion expressing understanding of the challenging nature of building restorations.

Awards Committee Update: Sue Wagers complimented the SoS Award Ceremony event held on September 10, and congratulated everyone involved in the event's execution. She expressed thanks to the Michigan Wine and Beer Portal's catering services, noted the great reception by the guests, and congratulated all the award recipients.

New Business: Mike Humphries moved to accept the August MCMS department reports, which was seconded by Tom Heywood. Brian Egen noted minor grandiloquence in the Deputy Director's report, and the motion passed unanimously. L. William Connor made a motion to accept the August 2025 Accessions Report, which was seconded by Tom Heywood and passed unanimously, following some discussion on the items.

Old Business: Andy Clark presented a 50% design update on the building expansion project. Brian briefly shared background while handouts were distributed, and Andy went on to summarize the discussions and evolutions of building design with Kohler Architecture to date. He walked all present through the design process, explaining how Kohler's work expanded on the initial concept by PLY+, and how design updates incorporated economy, efficiency, and the best choices among options presented. Discussion ensued, primarily focusing on the back of the museum, the challenges of having a ramp to the new main visitor entrance, and aspects of safety and efficiency in the proposed new interior spaces. Hobby Nels and Brian Egen contributed additional explanations of the grade challenges, and compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Further productive discussion ensued regarding various aspects of the proposed new addition, including the potential incorporation of a solar energy source, visitor traffic flow, ideal natural and artificial lighting options, "tenant spaces" for groups such as GSMC, media releases and related topics, and general design choices.

Concluding commentary by Andy and Hobby emphasized 1) the great strides this project has taken to go beyond the initial wants for “more storage space” into a multi-faceted effort to expand all operational units of the MCMS; and 2) the benefits of working through a gradual, comprehensive stepped process, growing en route to final execution.

2nd Public Comment: Jeanne Micka reminded all that acquisition of a new building of similar architectural style to the museum would be an option in the future worth considering.

Board Comments: All trustees expressed thanks for a productive meeting and support for the expansion. Nick Guthrie offered congratulations to Robert Lutey on his well-deserved new post as Lead Historian and Dick Micka inquired about fire code compliance for the proposed new building expansion.

Tuesday October 21 was selected as the date for the next MCMS BoT meeting.

Brian Egen thanked everyone for diligence and participation in the museum expansion discussions, and highlighted the opportunity to exercise collaborative spirit, in union with excitement from the Board of Commissioners and City of Monroe.

Mike Humphries made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Nick Guthrie and passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 PM.

These minutes were prepared by JJ Przewozniak on October 16, 2025.

Support documents for agenda item 6.1.

**MONROE COUNTY HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM
COVER SHEET**

Title/Subject:

Side A: South Rockwood Evangelical Church

Side B: John Strong Jr.

Location:

South Rockwood United Methodist Church

6311 S Huron River Dr

South Rockwood, Michigan 48179

Marker Maker:

Sewah Studios

Marker Style:

Georgia Series, 24" H x 36" W

Text Size:

1"

Text Style:

Justified

Notes:

Attached is the text submitted by the Berlin Charter Township Historical Society. Funding for the marker is provided by America250MI. As funding is separate from and less flexible than what the MCMS administers, the BCTHS does have a deadline they are looking to meet.

There are two text variants for the South Rockwood Evangelical Church and only one variant of John Strong Jr.

Text has received some minor editing and formatting by staff and should hopefully conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 18th edition and *A Manual for Writers* by Kate L. Turabian, 9th edition.

Credit Line Text (bottom centered; smaller than body text):

Berlin Charter Township Historical Society

America250MI

Staff recommendation:

Approve for production once text is finalized.

SIDE A ver 1

South Rockwood Evangelical Church

The cornerstone for the South Rockwood Evangelical Church was laid in 1884 with its first service held on January 10, 1886. John Strong Jr. donated the land and a large sum of money for its construction. The church pews were donated by C.H. Buhl and the sanctuary was lit by lamps that hung at the altar and over the aisle.

In 1887 Rev. Adam Scheurer was appointed pastor. His daughter Rosina married Delmont Chapman Sr., whose sheep farming family was among the first settlers of Berlin Township. With a rich history and a spirit of unity and commitment, this church serves the community today as the South Rockwood United Methodist Church.

Word Count: 111 words

SIDE A ver 2

South Rockwood Evangelical Church

Originally this building was constructed and dedicated as the South Rockwood Evangelical Church on January 10, 1886, with Rev H. Spitler serving as its first pastor. It was built on land donated by John Strong Jr. near his home and that of his daughter, Alice. He and his wife also contributed monetarily and C.H. Buhl of Detroit contributed the pews.

In 1940, A.B Chapman was a major donor to creatively add a basement underneath for Sunday school and in 1946 a kitchen was added to the back. Largely unchanged architecturally, this church still serves the local community today as the South Rockwood United Methodist Church.

Word Count: 105 words

SIDE B

John Strong Jr.

John Strong Jr. moved to Monroe County with his wife Emily Buhl Strong and children in 1863, becoming a prominent citizen, successful farmer, and businessman. He helped name Rockwood and South Rockwood, led the creation of Berlin Township from Ash in 1867, and served in local politics and the Michigan Legislature. His political career culminated as Lieutenant Governor in 1892. Strong built a magnificent twelve room Victorian brick mansion in 1867, demolished during the construction of interstate 75 for exit 26. Industrious and enterprising, he became one of the county's wealthiest men. He was regarded as fair and prudent and known locally as "Honest John."

Word Count: 105 words

MONROE COUNTY MUSEUM SYSTEM

Department Report

Submitted by Andrew Clark, Director

with contributions from

JJ Przewozniak, Deputy Director and Robert Lutey, Lead Historian

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

Organizational Operations

County Museum

Hours of operation are Sundays through Saturdays, 10 am to 5 pm.

County Archives

Mondays and Tuesdays: By Appointment

Wednesdays: 10 am to 4.30 pm

Thursdays: 1 pm to 4.30 pm

Fridays: 1 pm to 4.30 pm

Territorial Park

Historic buildings closed for the season; grounds open.

Vietnam Veterans Museum

Museum closed for the season; memorial open.

St Antoine's Historic Site

Grounds are open year round.

Upcoming Closures

November 11, Veterans Day

November 27-28, Thanksgiving

December 24-25, Christmas

December 31, New Year's Eve

Upcoming Events

Saturdays and Sundays in October

YesterWays:Eerie Edition

October 22 and 29

Shadowed Sips

Nocturnal, 7 pm

October 25

Downtown Trick or Treat, 12 pm

Nomadic Night-Mares, 5 pm

October 30

Gardens of Stone: The Revolution of the Rural Cemetery Movement, 7 pm

In conjunction with the City of Monroe's Historic District Commission

Saturdays and Sundays in November

YesterWays

November 21

Hometown Holiday Lights

Monroe County Museum and Loranger Square

November 21 through December 30

Christmas with the Monroe County Museum

Monroe County Museum

Maintenance and Operations

Museum and Archives

The RRCA continues building exterior improvements which requires the use of our lot for an extended period of time.

Territorial Park

Loop Trail construction work continues.

Congrats to JJ and staff for the impressive reroofing of the barn just a few days after the conclusion of Octobernight.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Museum

Nothing to report.

St Antoine's Historic Site Memorial

Nothing to report.

Programs

Submitted by JJ Przewozniak, Deputy Director

Territorial Park:

Following the close of the living history season, attention was turned to the SoS Award Ceremony event and in greater part toward Octobernight.

September 10 was the Spirit of service Awards Ceremony. Thank you to the BoT volunteers who helped execute the event, and congratulations to the award recipients.

Octobernight site prep is an extensive process that includes many diverse labors. This includes weatherproof temporary utility placement, installation of lighting and other special effects, careful hiding/disguising of the aforementioned, and set design & building for all vignettes, which further incorporates various detailed work. All this aims to create an authentic and quality artistic production, through which the messaging of Octobernight can radiate.

In addition, staff from all departments contribute in various ways to make Octobernight a reality, which includes in-person promotion through local businesses (about 80 local

businesses were engaged), creation of consumables and related items, building & repair, logistics & supply, and a host of other duties as assigned.

The bulk of my work this month was centered on 1) production and coordination of Halloween-themed media for the Eerie Series; 2) creation of new period clothing & props; 3) decorating and site prep at TPRR; 4) coordinating staff projects; and 5) mustering a small army of about 20 volunteers & contractors to activate Octobernight on October 3 & 4.

Miscellany:

- On Friday, September 5, I journeyed with Robert to retrieve freshly conserved weighty artifacts by Mark Gervasi.
- On Thursday evening, September 18, we hosted a public lecture at the museum entitled *Michigan POW Camps in WWII* with Greg Sumner. All had a great time.
- On Friday, September 19, Jill participated in the first OBOC meeting for the 2026 run. The book selection is *The Art Thief* by Michael Finkel, and as always, we look forward to helping.
- Special thanks to volunteer Thomas Smith, who created and donated a gorgeous and meticulously designed 1810s wheelbarrow to the MCMS for use in our living history programming. I picked it up on Saturday, September 27.

Collections and Archives

Submitted by Robert Lutey, Lead Historian

Director Clark, Deputy Director Przewozniak and I successfully moved the 69 surviving Monroe Evening News books back to the museum.

The Archives hosted a group of twenty Airport High School students and their teacher Adam Sakel for World War II research. They were interested in seeing the Laura Cheap scrapbooks as well as our obituary collection. The students were enthusiastic and seemed to enjoy themselves, even though it was a bit cramped!

I took down the Monroe News exhibit on September 15 and returned the loaned materials to their owners, most of whom are former employees. We greatly appreciate their involvement in making the exhibit a success!

I have completed the first draft of our updated collections policy. The next step will be for the collections committee to review it.

Deputy Director Przewozniak and I picked up the bookkeeping machine from our conservator Mark Gervasi. As usual, he did a fantastic job. Mark is now working on another one of our typewriters and two telephones.

The Archives has implemented its new drop-in public hours beginning in September. Feedback from the public has been very positive. Public hours are Wednesday 10-4:30 (closed from 12-1 for lunch), Thursday 1-4:30 and Friday 1-4:30.

Director Clark, M. Nelligan, N. Mester and I installed two more historical markers on September 16.

The seasonal and Bronco McKart exhibits have been reinstalled. The Bronco exhibit in particular was missed, as I had a number of visitors ask me what happened to it.

I have also begun cleaning up the processing room and old break room hoping to squeeze a bit more space out of those areas and to make life a bit easier during the upcoming building construction and move.

Research requests have continued to be handled by Rachel and myself. Topics of interest include house research, Drouillard's Restaurant, family research, and George A. Custer.

Work has continued on general filing, finding aid updating, obituary related tasks and more.

Building Program

This will be covered in section 10.1

Markers Program

See item 6.1

Museum staff will begin removing markers later this week. The eight markers that will be included in the 2025 refurbishment program include: *Capture of Gen. Winchester*, *Soldiers and Sailors Park*, *Monroe County in the Civil War/Grand Army of the Republic*, *"Newton" Strike*, *First District Court*, *The American Surrender*, *Death of Capt Woolfolk*, and *Tecumseh's Headquarters*. Markers will be transferred to Sewah Studios in November. Marker refurbishments are secondary to new production; I anticipate it will be about one year before markers are returned.

Historical Projects Fund

Nothing to report.

Awards Program

Nothing to report.

Personnel Updates

There are no personnel updates.

Octobernight Notes

Many thanks to the volunteers, contractors, sheriff's deputies, and staff that made Octobernight 2025 possible. It was an incredible event and considering the numerous points where it could go sideways, it went quite well.

For those interested, here's the attendance data since 2021, the first year of the Octobernight format:

2021	364	(281 adults; 83 youths)
2022	540	(403 adults; 137 youths)
2023	492	(354 adults; 138 youths)
2024	520	(397 adults; 123 youths)
2025	521	(389 adults; 132 youths)

For reference, the last year of the Lantern Tours format, 2019, brought in 212 visitors for the weekend. (The weather was quite horrible.)

From my point of view, parking was the most difficult part of the weekend as we returned to the county's lot, the first time we've used it since 2021. While ongoing construction and ill placed equipment limited the lot's size, with the final configuration of the parking lot, at present, I'm not certain if we'll really be able to accommodate more vehicles or not; I don't think I'll have a better sense of things until all the construction work is complete. Because of Friday's parking issues and already anticipating a larger group on Saturday, I had to close ticket sales earlier than planned. If ticket sales would've remained open, I expect this year would've exceeded 2022. A bright spot for next year is that all the Loop Trail work will be completed plus we'll be connected to the Ellis Library as a tertiary parking area. (I got a kick seeing participants from the nearby subdivisions walking the Loop Trail to attend the event.)

In our fifth year, our ticket sales also have developed a defined trend: A good amount of interest when launched; a small but regular amount of tickets sold in the weeks after; and a peak in sales the last week with most sales occurring in the days prior and the days of the event.

Hodge Podge

Special thanks to board member Anne Noland for coordinating our participation in the flag retirement ceremony with the Boy Scouts. As we've inherited the flags that get deposited out at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, we collected a fair quantity of flags this year.

Monroe County Museum System

Collections Division

Accessions Report

September 2025

Accession Number	Donor	Item(s)
2025.59	Joseph A. Bookout	Original copy of Talcott Wing's "History of Monroe County Michigan" book
2025.60	Lynn W. Reaume	Archival materials relating to WWII service of Norbert & John Hoffman
2025.61	David Etue	Family WWII photos, Camp Custer images, Raymond Etue WWII certificate, newspaper clipping
2025.62	David Doss	Photograph of a Monroe police officer, 1924
2025.63	Barbara Krolak	Monroe Evening News letterhead (x3), line gauge, archival materials relating to MEN sponsored spelling contests
2025.64	Duane "Rick" Grassley	WWI postcards (x3) relating to Monroe County

There were no non-accession transfers made in September of 2025.

Monroe County Museum System

Collections Division

Deaccessions Report

September 2025

Object Identification Number	Donor	Item(s)/Reason
None	None	None