

# The Monroeville Historical Society

Contributed by Administrator  
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The History of the Monroeville Historical Society In the late 1960s a group of citizens saw the need to form a society to help preserve the community's history. Tipper Sylvis, Horace Warner and Jim Mirro were the first members, with Mr. Mirro becoming its first president. These members met at the Old Stone Church, which had recently been purchased by the Silvis family and donated to the Borough of Monroeville. The Monroeville Historical Society (MHS) was officially founded in 1969 with the mission of helping to preserve properties of historical significance, and to educate the community as to their common heritage. The group was instrumental in saving the McGinley House from demolition by convincing Westinghouse officials to donate the property to the community in 1969. The Society was eventually to oversee four landmarks recognized by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation: the Old Stone Church, the McGinley House, the McCully Log House, and the MacGregor Bridge -- structures all owned and maintained by the Municipality of Monroeville. The McGinley House was opened as a museum on Labor Day in 1976 as part of the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations. It was subsequently restored to serve as an example of a typical 1800's farmhouse. The East Suburban Woman's Club helped by giving the Society a contribution to purchase period antiques. Members also donated furnishings and artifacts to the growing collection of the Monroeville Historical Society. Lois Alworth, the Society's second president from 1977 to 1978, was instrumental in getting Garden Club Council, made up of four Monroeville garden clubs, to join together to build the herb garden behind the House. Each club was given a section and category of herbs to tend. Lois Lyman subsequently took on the responsibility for the upkeep and yearly planting of the herb garden. Lois Alworth's term was followed by Dolly Eichelberger's; Marilyn Chandler served as the fourth president. Marilyn Chandler's term was followed by presidents Lynn Chandler, Paul Damon and Dan Nowak. Bob Elms was president from 1993 to 1995 when the McCully Log House was acquired and rebuilt. In 1992, the McCully Log House was long abandoned had been slated for demolition. Dan Nowak, Bill Johnson and Dan Aston were instrumental in securing the McCully Log House for the Municipality before it was torn down. The house was dismantled at its original site at 106 Queen Drive, transported and rebuilt log by log to be re-assembled next to the McGinley House in a 3-year effort that involved the historical society and community volunteers such as MHS member Clair Chandler who donated hundreds of hours of carpentry and masonry work. Once on the new site, it was placed under the care of the Monroeville Historical Society, and restored it to its original appearance. The restoration was completed in 1995, and today it provides an excellent example of an early American Log House. Also in 1995, the Society was given the Diana Caplan Antique Miniature House Collection. Mrs. Caplan worked in various crafts including jewelry. She owned a gift shop in Pittsburgh, and kept a workshop in her home devoted to her hobby- working on miniatures. She died in 1994, and her collection was donated to the Monroeville Historical Society; it is now housed in the McGinley House and open to the public, during regular tours. Dick McClain, who served as president from 1996 to April 2004, helped to initiate the remodeling of the Old Stone Church basement and replacing its slate roof. Lynn Chandler was again elected president in 2004. She was to oversee the acquisition of the Sooy Collection in 2006. In 2006 the historical society was the recipient of a special gift from Rebecca Gillis Sooy, formerly of Monroeville. Ms. Sooy was the Great-Great-Great-Granddaughter of Joel Monroe, (for whom Monroeville was named) and upon her death in California in 2006 a number of artifacts that had been in her family for many years were willed to the Monroeville Historical Society. These historical artifacts are today on display in the Joel Monroe Room in the McGinley House. It was also under Lynn Chandler's leadership that a display shed was constructed for the society's collection of antique tools. This structure, situated behind the herb garden, was erected by M-Square Construction Co. (Mark Kacvinsky, President) in August 2008 with financial support from: the Urban Development Program of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with assistance from Representative Joseph Markosek; the Golden Living Center &ndash; Monroeville, Mr. Travis Reed, Executive Director; and with additional funds from the Monroeville Historical Society. Today the Society continues to take an active role in preserving our landmarks and educating the public about the history we all share.

The Society's meetings and programs are held monthly (except in August and December) on the third Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at the Monroeville Public Library. The public is invited to attend.