A Look Back at an 1817 Stage Coach Ride

reprinted from *The Cazenovia Republican* — May 24, 1906

The old fashioned thorough-brace stage coach, which used to rumble through Cazenovia and over the Nelson hills, was a familiar object in the earliest days of the village, but is quite unknown to the present generation.

The route followed by this stage line was over the Great Western series of turnpikes, from Albany to Syracuse, with daily service each way, and was, with a similar line on the Genesee road, the only public means of conveyance between these places. The coaches were quite comfortable, and afforded accommodations for twelve or fifteen passengers. They were drawn by four and sometimes six horses, with relays about every twenty miles; and covered the entire distance of the route, within twenty-four hours.

This line commenced operations in 1817, shortly after the opening of the Cherry Valley end of the road, and was an extension of the Albany and Cobleskill stage line. The route followed one of the two principal thorough-fares leading westward across the state, and was crowded with general traffic through which the coaches made their way.

A trip over this route occupied a night and parts of two days, passengers leaving Syracuse at ten in the morning reaching Albany before noon the following day. Not much sleep was obtained during the night ride and not much effort was made to obtain it. The passengers generally took this discomfort good naturedly, however, and made the best of the situation.

Wayside inns were scattered all along the road at frequent intervals, and stops were made at stated points for meals and change of horses. At these inns the traveler was cordially welcomed, and in the colder months, greeted by a cheering fire of blazing logs, crackling in the old-fashioned Franklin fire place,
and generously dispensing its glow and warmth. Here also was found an old style, but genuine, country hospitality, accompanied by such physical comforts as hunger or thirst might require.

The hot flip-irons were in the glowing coals ready to impart just the right temperature and flavor to the foaming mug of ale or cider. On the counter of the small, but well stocked bar was a steaming bowl of hot Tom and Jerry (a popular old time drink not often found now-a-days,) ready and available for immediate use. These timely and agreeable night refreshments, made the occasional stops not at all uninteresting, and generally provoked the inquiry of the driver, as to the distance to the next stopping place. So the night wore on, and the morning sun found the stage well on its way towards Albany.

In the summer time this trip was most enjoyable. The route lay through a hilly and picturesque section of the state, and many pleasant village and pleasing rural scene. At many points on the road, the passing stage was the event of the day and the driver's horn announcing its approach, never failed to bring to open door and swinging gate, the farmer's wife and children to greet the coming coach.

The stage driver of that period was a product of the times and of his environment. He was often an interesting character, and may be said to have been in a class by himself, his counterpart not being easily found in any other occupation.

Driving over his allotted route, by day and by night, in the summer and winter, in all sorts of weather, though mud and snow in the colder months, inured to hardship, skilled in the handling of the reins, careful of his team, and ambitious to deliver his passengers safely at the end of journey, were his distinguishing qualities, and tended to the development of individual traits peculiar to himself.

In recalling the names of these old-time drivers it is quite possible that some of the earlier residents of Cazenovia and Nelson, have not yet quite forgotten Jerry White and Phorn Church, is fairly representative of the class to which reference is here made. Both of these men were experienced and careful drivers, and in their day, were well known along the line, and in many ways were unique characters. They were long in the service, and could be counted on in darkest night or wildest storm to bring their coaches through on scheduled time. They knew every inch of the rod over which they drove, and never failed to deliver their passengers safely at end of journey.

An Albany trip on one of these coaches in the pleasanter part of the year was an agreeable experience. There a seat on the box of the stage was generally preferred to the more limited room inside and the passenger deemed himself quite fortunate, who secured one by the side of the driver, especially if the driver was our old friend, Jerry White. On such occasions Jerry's confidence was easily secured; his fund of anecdote and story was large, and easily drawn upon. He knew something interesting about every mile of road, and needed little encouragement to tell it. His stories were sure to be properly sent up and embellished, and he could tell of more things that never happened than any other driver between Albany and Syracuse. At any rate he was always entertaining and the traveler who sat on the box with Jerry was not likely to soon forget his quaint and humorous personality.

The last stop of the coach on its way to Albany was at McGowan's tavern some eight miles from the city. Here the final change of horses was made and passengers given a brief opportunity to get acquainted with Dutch hospitality as dispensed at this famous inn. Whoever has stopped once at McGowan's will easily remember the mammoth fireplace, the odd furniture and surroundings of the inn and the genial old Dutchman who ran it. A further short ride of an hour and Albany was in view.
What’s in the Collection?
by Wilma Townsend

In 2011, the Historical Society received over 300 historical items from 51 donors which were accessioned in the collection. These included photos, fine art, everyday objects, and variety of documents. Below is a sampling of some of the donations. Thank you to all of our donors for their generous gifts!

- Reproduction photographic prints made from glass plate negatives of c. 1858 Canandaigua. Donor: Roy and Barbara Johnston. (acc. # 2011.55)
- Kershaw family photos, early 1900s. Donor: Barbara Ransome. (acc. # 2011.64)
- Painting of the Canandaigua Hotel by Fred Johnson. Donor: Estate of Jean Ryan. (acc. # 2011.87)
- Late 19th century photos of Hawley, Smith and Royce families. Donor: David Crumb. (acc. # 2011.120)

From the Curator’s Loft
by Wilma Townsend

As many of you know, the Ontario County Historical Society would not be what it is today without our volunteers! Over the years I have had numerous dedicated volunteers help with collections management especially with building the collections database PastPerfect, collections care, and exhibitions. Some past and present volunteers include: Nancy Steiman, Dave Kavanagh, Linda Alexander, Marc Sulkes, Betty Lyon, Betty McMahon and numerous others that have given their time to help preserve our history.

One current volunteer deserves special recognition – Judy Kiehle – who recently logged 2000 hours of volunteer time. For the past ten years Judy has spent nearly every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon entering thousands of collections records into the PastPerfect database, reorganizing and updating photographic and ephemera records, scanning images and doing research on a variety of local history topics. A retired high school math teacher, Judy is also busy with family history research and genealogy, traveling, and keeping up with her large, extended family. We truly enjoy having her here – thank you again, Judy, for all of your work!
In Search of the Best Long House

Recently, our Executive Director Ed Varno was asked by Congressman Tom Reed, (NY29) to help judge Native American long houses that were submitted from 4th and 7th graders throughout the Congressional District as part of a contest.

On a Friday morning in January, Ed accompanied Jay Dutcher, the Congressman’s Chief of Staff and Dan Olson, the AP History teacher at Victor Central High School on a drive across the southern tier. The long houses to be judged were located at the Congressman’s offices in Pittsford, Olean and Corning. It was a long but interesting day according to Varno. One of the highlights was a stop outside of Olean at a famous cheese shop in Cuba.

“There are some talented children who really love history in our region. The diversity of design and construction showed that the children had learned their local history and all about the traditional homes of the Haudenosaunee”, Varno commented. “I never realized just how big the 29th District was until I actually traveled it in one day by automobile. But, overall the trip was well worth the time and effort.”

Those long houses that were selected as the best will be transported to Washington D.C. and placed on display in offices of Congressional leaders. The winning children and their parents will be asked to visit our nation’s Capital to have their picture taken with their historic creation and Congressman Reed.

The only incident of the day was the package of Cuba Cheese that Varno left in Jay Dutcher’s vehicle upon their return to Rochester. True to his nature, Dutcher delivered the half pound of “Extra Sharp” to Ed’s home in Cheshire. Unfortunately, no one was there but a note from the Congressional staffer on the bag left no doubt from where it came.

The cheese went perfectly with the glass of Finger Lakes Riesling later used to toast Mr. Reed, his great staff and all the children who participated in this project.
From the Director’s Desk

by Ed Varno

Re-visioning Our Education Programs

When the Ontario County Historical Society began implementation of its five-year strategic plan in 2008, one significant education-related goal dealt with teaching our local history using a variety of engaging educational programs designed specifically for targeted audiences.

Since 2008, the Society has worked diligently and successfully to implement educational programs that reinforce New York State Learning Standards, integrate hands-on activities and related off-site experiences into exhibit-related programming, and to incorporate technology into many education functions. The effort has resulted in the Historical Society being offered a seat on a Canandaigua School District curriculum development committee and, thanks to Superintendent Don Raw’s support, the receipt of district funding for development of a 4th grade distance learning program.

Success is in the numbers. The creation of new educational programming has increased the museum’s education audience by three-fold while school participation for our programs at all grade levels has grown by 225% over this period. Further, the number of students and adults who have attended our on-line distance learning events has grown from zero in 2008 to nearly 1,000 today. Ontario County Historical Society consistently receives high marks from teachers for educational content and instructional proficiency.

Canandaigua teachers have praised the local history content in our distance learning programs and Michael Galban, the educator at Ganondagan State Historic Site has acknowledged the sensitive and effective means by which the Historical Society presents its distance learning class on the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794. Add this to our 12-year run as sponsors of the Finger Lakes Regional National History Day competition; it would appear that we are on the right track with our museum’s education programs.

However, we do face challenges. We are well aware that the educational system is dynamic and operates in a quickly changing and challenging environment. Teachers have shrinking budgets, many resources to draw from and less time to use them in the course of a school day. We know from educator focus groups we conducted in 2009 and 2011 that our teachers’ greatest needs for local history programming are now linked to Common Core Standards. Further, programs must hold the students’ interest and be cost effective. Finally, our local history content must mesh with Regents Requirements for United States history.

Prompted by two important developments, our organization has reached an important crossroad with its educational programming: 1) it is nearing the opening of a major, IMLS-funded long-term exhibition with a regional focus on the early history of western New York that will require an exciting and wide-ranging menu of educational programming to support it, and 2) working in partnership with the New York Institute of Technology’s EEZ Program, the Historical Society has successfully entered the realm of being a distance learning provider with state-of-the-art technology and dedicated space. The internet is a critical new platform for a variety of future programming. Combined with a strong institutional emphasis on education and a supportive board with solid representation from the educational community, 2012 seems to be the right time to revise our multi-year plan.

With the help of a state museum grant for analyzing, refocusing and expanding our current educational programming, it is our intention in 2012 to create an updated set of five-year educational program objectives and related tasks that will be incorporated into our current comprehensive plan. To get there we will identify programming opportunities, target new audiences and establish pathways for meeting our educational mission. It will set our course through 2017.
Announcements

- Due to its popularity, the museum is pleased to announce that the photography exhibit, “The Backyards of 1858 Canandaigua” will be held over for another year. In addition, we have published a soft cover coffee table book of the Coleman glass plate photos and family information featured in the exhibit. It is now available at the museum. Call to order.

- With our new year comes new Board of Trustees committee assignments. President Tom Walter has named Nancy Hayden the chair of the Museum Maintenance Committee and Marcia Farrell Membership Chairman and Jim Ingalls, Personnel Chairman. We also welcome newly elected Board Members, Sal Pietropaolo and Louise Radak.

- Finger Lakes Regional History Day returns to the Historical Society as its venue in 2012. Working with our neighbors at the United Church we will have ample room for presentations, student interviews and, of course awards. The public is invited to stop in and see the students’ work. The event will be held Friday, March 9, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. We want to acknowledge and thank all our generous friends that contributed for student awards for the History Day Competition.

- Special thanks goes out to volunteer, Betty Lyon, who recently completed rehousing the 3-ring binder that has all our pictures and information on the county’s historic school houses.

- Long-time volunteer Judy Kiehle recently surpassed the 2000-hour volunteer mark here at the museum. Judy is our specialist on indexing and scanning our substantial photographic collections. The museum has over 35,000 images in its collections. Stop in and see them.

- On June 1, 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain. To commemorate this event, the Society will feature programs on the War of 1812 during the month of May. Talks by Dr. Preston Pierce, the Ontario County Historian, Dr. Gary Gibson of the Sackets Harbor Battlefield Alliance and period music by Dave Ruch are currently scheduled. Other speakers are anticipated. Watch your mail and our Facebook Page for announcements.

- On June 13, 2012 the Historical Society will host the Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce’s monthly mixer. It is a great opportunity to show off our new Education Room, our exhibits and to catch up with our business friends in the community.

- Committees have been formed for two projects of interest in the coming months. First, we will be revisioning our internet site, www.ochs.org. More data, artifacts and ways to create revenue are under discussion. Second, we are working on developing a walk into the past that is based on our popular exhibit, “The Backyards of 1858 Canandaigua”. It is scheduled for September 21-22, 2012.

- This being an even-numbered year, we are already planning our Tour of Barns. In this, our 6th tour, the venue will be in the town of West Bloomfield; Ray Henry is Chairman of the event. To attract more families and make it a more exciting day, we are expanding the popular demonstrations from past years to include cider pressing, beam hewing, hay carrier systems, barn models and the like. Save the date, Saturday, October 13, 2012.

- Finally we would like to thank Board Member, Marcia Farrell, for the wonderful decorating she did at the museum. It was a perfect accent for our mini-holiday exhibit.
Your Historical Society

Kim Tenrerio delivers a stunning one-man performance of Charles Dicken's A Christmas Carol to a capacity crowd at the museum

NYS Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb speaks of his love for our history at this year's Annual Meeting

Kathy Cooper shuffles stubs before the drawing for the Tour of Homes quilt

Lisa Wemett of Macedon wins the Tour of Homes quilt raffle. — Kathy Cooper and Betty McMahon designed and stitched the quilt

Donations for the Seneca Family statue continue to come in. OCHS was selected as the fiscal manager for this community project

continued from A Look Back from page 2

The stage business on this route, as well as on most others in this state, was at its best from 1820 to 1845. Its rapid decline thereafter was owing to the packet lines on the newly finished Erie Canal, and later, to the competition of the New York Central Railroad system which soon controlled the bulk of the passenger business. This monopoly administered a finishing blow to the stages, and soon after, to the packets as well.

The old-fashioned, easy-going stage coach belongs to another age, or to a newer country, and is no longer seen on its once familiar routes. But the turnpike over which it ran still exists and winds its way among the same pleasant country. The extensive business, however, which formerly crowded that thoroughfare, has founded other avenues and is not likely to return. The wayside inns for the most part, are also things of the past. The music of the stage horn and the crack of the driver's whip no longer awaken the sleeping villages and country life along the road seems to have lost something of its old-time charm, for which, the more rapid methods of modern life, does not fully recompense.
Maureen’s Book Shoppe Corner  
by Maureen O’Connell Baker

Hot off the press!!

The Backyards of 1858 Canandaigua  
The Photography of Augustus Coleman

This is our newest publication based on the Historical Society’s photo exhibit of the same name. This publication features glass plate photographic images of Pre-Civil War Canandaigua that shows historic homes, backyard gardens, privies, animal pens, streetscapes and genealogical information on families of that time.

Photographer Augustus Coleman (1836-1888) took these photos from the cupola of his home at 60 Gibson Street in the late fall of 1858. The glass plate negatives were stored in the attic of the house, remained long after Coleman’s death and were rediscovered by the current homeowner. The Historical Society is most fortunate to have the opportunity to preserve and display these very early and very rare images of Canandaigua.

Now you can have this great exhibit to enjoy at home. A must for your coffee table; this 50 page, 11” x 17” spiral bound, soft cover book retails for $30. Only limited quantities are available. Call or stop in to get your book today. Shipping is available.

The Great Squirrel Hunt of 1815

Here’s an environmental lesson learned by our early pioneers as told by historian, Bob Moody.

In the early 1800s, Rushville, in the town of Gorham was known as Federal Hollow. It was considered a great place to settle because the forests were full of nut trees and wild life. The nut trees, among others, were cut down for homes and farm land. That chased off the indigenous hawks which preyed on the black squirrel. With its predator gone, the black squirrel population blossomed.

The furry forest creature’s primary food source, the nut trees were gone and the settler’s corn supply became their food source. This just could not continue if the pioneers were to make it through the harsh Finger Lakes winter.

The solution became known as the Great Squirrel Hunt of 1815. For a week, the men from Jerusalem would compete with the boys from Middlesex to see who could best eradicate the pest. They all agreed to bring their prey to Federal Hollow for judging and a community celebration. At first hundreds and then thousands of men poured into town and “ate the town” to what was referred to as a “perfect famine”. The plan worked. To this day, the black squirrel is only rarely seen in the Rushville area.
March 2012

Learning Horizons

by Nancy Parsons

National History Day
For the 12th year running, the Historical Society is the regional coordinator for the Finger Lakes area New York State History Day competition. The Historical Society has teamed up with our neighbors the United Church to host the competition at the museum. This year’s national theme is Revolution, Reaction and Reform in History.

History Day is a long-time, national-level learning program in which junior and senior high youth undertake primary document research on a common theme and create final projects for judging. The theme not only provides a lens through which the student can study the past but also helps to frame the research for both teachers and students.

Student entry categories include drama performance, table top display, research papers, web site or documentary. As part of the entry, students must submit an annotated bibliography and a process paper which assist the judges during the interview. The process helps the students to distinguish the difference between primary, secondary and tertiary research sources. As an example students quickly learn that Wikipedia is not a primary source and it is not a secondary source, it can be a tertiary source with caution.

This year, students from the five county Finger Lakes Region have been invited to compete to advance to the state competition in Cooperstown in April. While we excitedly anticipate the growing number of student entries for this year’s contest, our thanks also go to our donors who contribute to the winners’ prize fund and all the volunteers who assist at the March competition as judges and as administrative personnel. All help to make this day a pleasant and meaningful experience for the students.

Education Programming in 2012
The new high tech Education Room at the museum will be the venue for our education programs this year. The 42” monitor makes every seat in the room the best seat to see the program graphics.

War of 1812 Month
The Historical Society has designated May, “War of 1812 Month”. We are excited about our programs that celebrate the 200th anniversary of this unsung conflict! This war between the British and the United States was an important national event which produced turmoil in western New York and right here in Canandaigua. Some have called the conflict the second war of independence while others have said that the war defined the U.S. as it moved beyond the founding father’s generation. This war also defined Canada as a sovereign nation within the British Commonwealth.

Don’t forget to check out the related War of 1812 programs in April presented by Wood Library and the Ontario/Yates Small Historical Societies (see the Calendar of Events).

Just a reminder, please call to confirm the Dave Ruch family program on May 12, as we are currently awaiting confirmation of grant funding for this presentation (585-394-4975).

From the Desk of the Treasurer

by Sherry Rodin Sulkes

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you very much to everyone who has donated to the Historical Society’s 2011-12 Annual Operations Appeal. The Annual Appeal is a year-long campaign at Ontario County Historical Society. If you haven’t made a donation yet, please consider a contribution in the upcoming weeks. Your support is very important to the Society and helps us to continue our mission in Ontario County and Western New York.

Please remember the Ontario County Historical Society in your trust, will or estate. Your legacy will carry on for generations to come.

The Oliver Phelps Fund

In Memory Of:
Dr. and Mrs. Roy Johnston Dorothea M. Magley
Marc and Sherry Sulkes Dorothea M. Magley
The OCHS Organization

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Edward Varno Executive Director
Wilma Townsend Curator
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*Volunteer

We wish to extend a special thanks to all of the volunteers who donate so many countless hours in support of the Historical Society.

Address correspondence to:
Ontario County Historical Society
55 North Main Street
Canandaigua, New York  14424

We are open Tuesday through Friday 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Wednesdays until 9:00 p.m.; Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  Closed on major holidays.

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Phone:  585-394-4975
Fax:  585-394-9351
Webpage: www.ochs.org
Email: museum@ochs.org
Please “Like Us” on Facebook! Just go to www.facebook.com and search for the Ontario County Historical Society.

Business Members

We wish to thank the Business Members listed below for their continued support. Please consider them when purchasing goods and services. In addition to these Business Members, we also appreciate the small donations we receive from dozens of local businesses in Ontario County each year.

1840 Inn On The Main
Aberle Eye Care
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Ms. Linda Stone  
Mr. William Wood

Remember to renew your membership on time!

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

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* Centennial Club Membership Levels;  
Invitation to a special annual event for Upper Level Members

Ontario County Historical Museum Membership Application Form

Please print your name as you would like it to appear on your membership card

NAME__________________________________________________________
STREET_________________________________________________________
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Method of Payment

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Card Number_____________________________________________________
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Make checks payable to: Ontario County Historical Society  
55 North Main Street  
Canandaigua, NY 14424

Remember to renew your membership on time!
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**The Chronicles**

March 1 – 6:30 p.m. – Finger Lakes History Day training – judges and volunteers in the Museum Education Room

March 2 – 4:00 p.m. – Finger Lakes History Day training – judges and volunteers in the Museum Education Room

March 9 – 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Finger Lakes History Day competition at the museum and United Church; free and open to the public; all welcome

May 9 – 7:00 p.m. – Dr. Preston Pierce, Ontario County Historian, “The War of 1812 in Canandaigua and Western New York”; in the Museum Education Room; free and open to the public

May 12 – 11:00 a.m. – for the family, the Music of Dave Ruch “War of 1812 Songs and Stories from New York and Beyond”; a New York State Speaker in the Humanities Program; in the Museum Education Room; free and open to the public

May 16 – 7:00 p.m. – Dr. Gary Gibson, Sacket Harbor Battlefield Alliance, “A War of 1812 Overview”; in the Museum Education Room; free and open to the public

Other Area War of 1812 Events

April 15 – 2:00 p.m. – Peter Evans, Wayne Co. Historian “The War That Made Two Nations”, Rushville United Methodist Church, Main St., Rushville, sponsored by Ontario/Yates Small Historical Societies; free and open to the public

April 18 – 6:30 p.m. – Raya Lee, Librarian Buffalo and Erie County Public Library “War of 1812: Fury, Frenzy, Honor” at the Wood Library, Main Street, Canandaigua; a New York State Speaker in the Humanities Program; free and open to the public

**NOTICE:** If your address changes seasonally, please let us know the alternate address and the effective dates.