Memberships Mean Loyalty

Some of the most interesting conversations I have are those with our members. They have a love for history and enjoy learning about our region’s past. History is not only a universal subject but it helps us all to think critically, an activity that helps keep our minds fresh.

Museums and local historical societies in general have seen a decline in membership over the last few years. Frankly, the Ontario County Historical Society has lost about 150 members since 2008. From talking to other museum directors, it appears to be a common phenomenon. When the economy dips and we face an uncertain future, low priority expenses are sometimes suspended and organizations suffer membership declines. OCHS is no different. We want you to help us reverse this trend.

Why do people join? I have been told that our members like the way we present our region’s history. They enjoy our exhibits and our learning programs. Further, members want to support our efforts to keep and maintain our vast collections of artifacts and rare documents. They want us to continue to teach children about our past and to help them develop critical thinking skills that the whys and hows historic inquiry offers. But without a doubt, of all our members like our quarterly newsletter, The Chronicles.

This is why we have chosen this format to ask our past members to come back and rejoin the Historical Society. As a member of OCHS, you not only support our efforts but, The Chronicles is delivered to your home in March, June, September and December and will be for as long as you maintain your membership.

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Seneca Town

The Town of Seneca was named in honor of the Native Americans who occupied the region of the Finger Lakes before the settlement of the white man. Seneca is one of the oldest civil divisions in western New York State. The original district or township of Seneca was created in the same act of the New York State Legislature that established Ontario County in 1789. However, the town was not sufficiently populated to warrant a “complete organization by election of officers” until 1793. It was on the first Tuesday of April that year that the first town meeting was held at the inn of Joshua Fairbanks.

Seth Stanley is noted as being Seneca’s first settler. The area he lived in became known as Stanley Corners and eventually Stanley. At the time the original town was created, its territory actually included the lands now identified as the Town and City of Geneva. It was not until 1872, nearly 100 years after its establishment, that the Ontario County Board of Supervisors voted to divide Geneva and Seneca into their current configuration.

The establishment, growth and advances in farming in the Town of Seneca in many ways follows the course of our nation’s farming heritage. The town has abundant fertile till that has been given the name “Honeoye Lima” soil. Settlers had farms that were 25 – 30 acres. That was just about all they could manage and most of what was produced was consumed there on a family’s farm. This subsistence farming was changed as transportation to markets improved. When the Erie Canal opened in 1825, increased demand for products caused farms to consolidate in Seneca starting a trend toward larger commercial farms. Through improvements in transportation and technology this trend continued through the 20th century. Today, small family farms are the exception in the town of Seneca rather than the rule.

The earliest crops grown in Seneca included flax and hops. Cabbage was also an early crop. Wheat was a popular crop too, but harvesting it was very labor intensive. An invention developed in Phelps led to a labor-saving device called a thresher which separated the grain from the plant. Soon threshing became part of regular farm operations. In 1860, the McCormick Reaper replaced the grain cutting cradle on farms in Seneca. In the 1880s, the grain binder was introduced. It not only cut the wheat but it tied it in bundles. These machines, once powered by horses and oxen, were replaced by soft coal and wood-fired steam engines. As the 20th century evolved, the trend toward gasoline and diesel power emerged.

Gentlemen took on threshing as an occupation; Ed Gulvin, Bill Stokoe, Elias Barnes and Carl Snyder were the notable threshers in Seneca. Crowds would gather to take in the spectacle of these machines when they came to a nearby farm. Operated by only two men, they had great flywheels, rotating governors and plumes of black smoke caused by the burning of soft coal fuel. These mechanical monsters moved slowly through a field that once employed dozens of laborers to do the same task.

continued on page 3
To celebrate steam power in farming, The Pageant of Steam is held in the adjacent town of Hopewell each August. It brings the Age of Steam back to life and attracts antique farming machines from across the nation for the public to enjoy. It is a visitor attraction even to this day.

Transportation improvements also fostered the change from the small family farm to the larger commercial operations. No longer was the Great Indian Trail (Seneca Turnpike) that ran through the town the only east-west route for goods. Inexpensive shipping by the Erie Canal changed the way farmers looked at their planting schedules especially the wheat crop. With the new lower cost shipping down the canal, whiskey was no longer the processed product of choice for many wheat farmers. As a result of lower cost transportation of the canal, wheat became a grain commodity that could be shipped to Albany, Buffalo and beyond for pennies of what it once cost.

In part to serve its agricultural customers, the railroads planned their routes through Seneca’s four main hamlets. The Northern Central was built through Hall and Stanley in 1851. It connected Canandaigua with Washington D.C. and eventually became the Pennsylvania Rail Road. The Sodus Point and Southern Railroad, built in the 1860s, ran from Sodus Point on Lake Ontario to Stanley where it joined the Northern Central. The primary purpose of the line was to transport coal from Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario where it was shipped by steamer. In 1892, the Lehigh Valley Naples branch was built from Geneva to Naples. It also ran through Stanley.

With the convergence of three railroads, Stanley became a very important rail center in the region. The farmers in the community found a friend in the railroads. It opened markets and greatly expanded the demand for fresh produce that the farms in Seneca had the technologies and capacity to produce in adequate quantities. Good transportation, excellent soils, hard work and business ingenuity have made Seneca one of the principal growing areas in the world for products such as red kidney beans, cabbage and beets.

Little did Seth Stanley realize when he came to Ontario County with his family in 1796 that his humble settlement, Stanley Corners would become the center of transportation for the iron horse, an invention that shaped this nation and brought prosperity to the farmers and fame to the productive soils of the town of Seneca.
What’s in the Collection?

by Wilma Townsend

As we head toward summertime, we are planning vacations, day trips and other events to get out and enjoy times with friends and family. Of course, we often bring back remembrances or souvenirs from our travels – everything from T-shirts, refrigerator magnets, mugs, postcards, and key chains to hand crafted items, seashells, colorful rocks, and flowers. These items carry a special, often nostalgic memory of a place or event for the owner.

The Ontario County Historical Society has recently received two such souvenirs into the collection which have connections to Canandaigua. The first item is a small felt banner with “CANANDAIGUA” and an Indian with a full headdress (typical of Plains Indians not Seneca) printed on it. It was donated by Gordon Reed of Canandaigua. The banner probably dates from the 1940s-50s and still retains the price tag “M. H. Fishman Co. 5c to $1. Stores”, Canandaigua.

The second item is a c. 1940 demitasse cup and saucer with an illustration of Roseland Park on each, given by Philip Cady of Waterloo. He had found the set at a garage sale in Pennsylvania several years ago. Although the names of the original purchasers are long lost, both the banner and the cup and saucer were bought to remind the visitor of their happy memories of being in Canandaigua.

So what will you bring home this summer as a souvenir of your vacation?

Our newsletter presents the news of the Historical Society, interesting history tidbits and the latest local history books published. We choose not to send *The Chronicles* electronically. It arrives in a paper format that can be placed on the bed stand, coffee table or your desk to be picked up and enjoyed anytime.

To bring this message to our past members this quarter, we purposefully had several hundred additional, *The Chronicles*, printed and sent to our entire family of current and past members.

Returning to the fold is easy. There is a form on the back page of this newsletter; memberships start at only $35 with $30 senior memberships available. If you are not sure of your membership status, call the museum at 585-394-4975 and we will look it up. Become a loyal member. We won’t disappoint you.
Families in Focus

Things are really starting to buzz at the Historical Society. Families are in focus. We are preparing for a new and exciting Tour of Barns to be held on October 13th. This year we are dedicating the event to the memory of Sandy Schlenker, the historian for the town of West Bloomfield who passed away in 2009. The tour will be educational in nature and focus on family learning. There will be eight sites to visit including an alpaca farm and a stop featuring historic agricultural demonstrations. It will be an event to remember with special family pricing too. So reserve Saturday, October 13th, and plan to bring the entire family.

Due to its popularity, we decided to keep our current photographic exhibit, “The 1858 Backyards of Canandaigua”, open for another year. If you haven’t had the chance to see it, please stop in and don’t hesitate to bring the kids. It is a wonderful way to help our children see the Canandaigua of the past and learn about the families that made our city great. There is no charge for admission, just stop by and browse. It is a wonderful way to share your love of our history.

To celebrate the success of the Backyards exhibit, on September 21st and 22nd we will have a “Walk into the Past” of Canandaigua’s historic Gibson Street. Led by lamp-bearing docents, you will walk from the Historical Museum to several homes along the street. Prepare to stop and hear the 1858 stories of the men women and children who lived in the homes including, Dr. Edson Carr, photographer Augustus Coleman, 10-year-old Ally Antis, and Banker Theodore Hart. You will even hear the story of what really happened to infamous William Morgan from one of the accused co-conspirators, Nicholas Cheseboro, as he shares his side of the story from the front porch of his home at 59 Gibson Street. It will be a family event that will entertain children fourth grade and older. Again, special family pricing will be in effect. Don’t miss it.

The year will be capped off in December with the opening of our new long-term exhibition on the early history of Western New York. Our south gallery will be transformed with life-sized figures of early western New York personalities, including The Marquis de Denonville, Red Jacket, Oliver Phelps and nine others who will tell the story of how the Dutch, English, French and Iroquois Empires battled for control of what would become western New York State. The exhibit will have interactive stations for children to enjoy as they learn. It is a fascinating story of our region’s past that will help you understand why our region is as it is today.

The Historical Society’s membership renewals, a critical piece of our annual operating budget, have suffered for the past couple of years as a result of our economic woes. Now that our area’s economy is starting to rebound, it is a good time to come back to the museum. Individual memberships are still only $35 and a membership for your whole family is just $50. It is a real bargain.

Studying history helps children to think critically, a skill we all need in life. The Historical Society has the events and programs to build these skills in children.

For your convenience, a membership form is on the back page of this newsletter. Just fill it out and send it in. We will welcome you back with open historic arms.
The Chronicles  
June 2012

Announcements

• The Historical Society will host the Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce’s monthly mixer on Wednesday, June 13th. Food will be provided by Mark’s Pizzeria and beverages to be provided by Ryan’s Wine and Spirits. Proceeds from a benefit raffle for a framed print will support the Chamber’s operations.

• Planning is moving forward for our Walk Into the Past – Celebrating the Families of Canandaigua’s Gibson Street. The event will take place September 21st and 22nd and is being developed and priced for family enjoyment. Take a walk into the past and meet the personalities who lived on this historic Canandaigua street.

• We are pleased to announce that Small Wonder: Squaw Island, Canandaigua Lake, by Ontario County Historian, Preston Pierce has been republished in a 2nd edition with new images and revised text. It will be available in the museum’s bookshop around Memorial Day.

• Our Tour of Historic Barns focuses on the town of West Bloomfield this year. The tour has been revamped to add a new focus on agricultural heritage and will be dedicated to the late West Bloomfield Historian, Sandy Schenkler. Demonstrations of farming skills of days past have been expanded and will be offered for viewing at the Ionia Carnival Grounds. Special family pricing will be in effect to make it more affordable. The tour will be held on October 13, 2012. Mark your calendar.

• We have received a small grant to help us revision the museum’s educational programming. Anne Ackerson, the Director of the Museum Association of New York will be guiding the staff of the museum through the process. It will help us create new education programs to support our soon-to-open permanent exhibit on the early history of western New York.

• Speaking of which… our western New York exhibit is scheduled to open before Christmas. We are very excited as we approach the end of our two and a half year planning process. It is a look at the period 1650 – 1797. A link to our exhibit blog is on www.ochs.org. It makes for interesting reading.

• In our Museum Without Walls report, we are proud to announce that we have topped 740 “likes” on our Facebook page. Find us; like us on Facebook. There is always something interesting happening on the Ontario County Historical Museum Facebook page. Visit our Museum Without Walls.

• Please note that the March Chronicles were published with the incorrect issue number. The correct issue number should have been Volume 41, Issue 1. Sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.

• The Historical Society is mourning the sudden passing of Jim Ingalls on May 7. Jim was a wonderful contributor to the board and to the Society’s vision and mission and will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Jean and his family.
This fall we will be presenting an evening walking event along one of the older residential streets of Canandaigua to meet some characters from the past. As with many of our activities, this gives the staff and volunteer researchers the opportunity to dive into the details of our local history. Without giving away the whole story, I want to share a bit about the research done on one particular aspect of the event.

One of the characters to be portrayed died at his home in 1861. A beloved doctor in Canandaigua, he was also involved in musical activities around the village including leading the choir at his church and running a popular singing school for many years. Shortly before his death, the choir of the Congregational Church surrounded his bed and sang his favorite hymn – “Jesus, Lover of My Soul”. Since we would like the actor portraying this individual to sing this hymn, we needed to simply locate the song in an old hymnal. Or so we thought.

As it turns out there are several versions of this hymn – but which one would the choir have sung in 1861? The words were written in 1740 by John Wesley in Ireland while, according to one story, he was hiding from angry crowds who disapproved of his doctrines. Fortunately, the many verses he wrote have not changed, but like many hymns and songs, the words were put to a variety of tunes.

Prior to about 1800, most hymns were sung to then familiar old folk tunes or those created by country composers. However, in the beginning of the 19th century, a musical reform movement had begun in America to improve the quality of church music – to make it more in keeping with the principles of harmony and composition of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Several of these musical reformers lived and worked in upstate New York at the same time as the Protestant religious revivals were spreading across this region.

One of these early reformers/composers was Thomas Hastings (1784-1872), who for a short while around 1830 actually lived in Geneva where he ran a singing school. He later moved to Utica where he became well known for his compositions and publications. We have a copy of one of his books, Spiritual Society Worship which he published in Utica in 1832. Not surprisingly this book contains “Jesus Lover of My Soul” with the music modified from an older tune called “Haven”. Another singing school teacher, Simeon Marsh (1798-1875) who was strongly influenced by Hastings, also taught briefly around Geneva. In 1834, while traveling by horseback around the beautiful Mohawk Valley to teach a singing school, Marsh was inspired to write down the tune “Martyn” to the words “Mary to the Savior’s Tomb”. A few years later Hastings, with Marsh’s approval, published the tune with the words to “Jesus Lover of My Soul” in one of his many singing books. Hastings’ tune books would have been readily available here in Canandaigua, (probably from the Bemis Bookstore), to anyone involved in church music. In 1893, an article in an Amsterdam, NY newspaper about Simeon Marsh noted: “Probably there is no tune in the Protestant world that has become more widely known than this simple and melodious air.”

Because these two composers lived and worked in Upstate New York, and may have even met our character at singing school events, we plan to use the hymn written by Simeon Marsh. Here are the words to the first verse:

*Jesus Lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly,*  
*While the nearer waters roll, While the tempest still is high;*  
*Hide me, O my Savior hide, Till the storm of life is past;*  
*Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last!*
A Perfect Fit
by Betty McMahon

Shared interests….Public service….Common commitments

These words come to mind when thinking of the connections between DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) and OCHS (Ontario County Historical Society).

OCHS provides to the DAR and the community….

- A meeting place for our programs
- A rich collection of genealogy sources within a historical framework
- Databases that index records by surname
- A collection of historical documents that create the political, economic and social backdrop against which we can construct the setting our ancestors lived and worked in – enriching our understanding of their lives
- Programs like National History Day in which students prepare exhibits, videos or essays addressing a theme
- Preservation of historical artifacts, buildings, etc.
- All of these sources aid in verifying the lineal connections necessary for application to the DAR – or to others involved in family genealogy

How is the Ontario County Historical Society able to do this? Part of the answer is that there is a dedicated group of volunteers, many of whom are members of the Canandaigua Chapter NSDAR. They are involved in….

- Volunteering in the research room – helping visitors with their research
- Conducting research, analyzing information and writing reports of their findings
- Indexing completed research; maintaining and expanding databases
- Organizing and indexing files of historical and genealogical significance
- Volunteering their services for National History Day
- Updating cemetery records for OCHS and the DAR library
- Accessioning and cataloging books, photos, graphs and other materials
- Referencing photographs and ephemera such as minute books, scrapbooks, and manuscript materials

Why? Because the DAR and OCHS share an interest in history; a belief in service to our community; a commitment to preservation of historical and genealogical information and sites; a commitment to education and promotion of American values – a “perfect fit.”

Maureen’s Book
Shoppe Corner
by Maureen O’Connell Baker

Recommended selection from the Historical Society’s publications.

It Happened at Hopewell: Jacob Isenhour's Cobblestone Legacy, Leigh Rehner Jones and Stephen B. Agard

In this fascinating book, co-written by former Hopewell Town Historian, Leigh Rehner Jones, local history of the 19th and 20th centuries is filtered through the prism of the Jacob Isenhour family of Hopewell, Ontario County, New York. They, along with the rest of the nation, experienced a period of enormous growth, development and change.

Some of the events that had a profound influence on the family include the Phelps and Gorham Land Purchase of 1789; the birth of the age of railroads; the passage of the 1848 Married Women's Property Rights Act in New York State; a revolution in agricultural practices; advances in technology, the Civil War; and the rise of cobblestone masonry.

The stories of this extended family, researched through archival records, oral history, and bibliographical sources, illuminate those times bringing them boldly to life.

The book, beautifully illustrated with many archival and family photographs, contains a map and genealogical chart.

Learning Horizons
by Nancy Parsons

A Forgotten War’s Big Celebration

What forgotten war? The War of 1812!

For the next two years, various 200th anniversary celebrations and commemorations are planned in the US and in Canada where the war is commemorated as 200 Years of Peace.

A little background…in the years 1803-1812, the British navy impressed approximately 10,000 Americans to serve on the King’s ships. With Napoleon causing trouble on the European continent, the British and French sought to prevent American ships from trading with the other side. American merchants and seamen were caught in the middle. By 1806, the British were blockading France and had seized many American commercial ships. Several attempts to settle grievances failed and by June 1812 America declared war on Britain.

Much action occurred in western New York, in the Niagara region and on the lakes. In 1812-13 there were numerous attempts by the US to invade British Canada. In April 1813, American troops took control of the Great Lakes and burned York (Toronto). On leaving Canadian territory in December 1813, the Americans burned Newark, present day Niagara on the Lake.

The British and Canadians retaliated, crossed the border and burned Lewiston and Buffalo. The fighting on the Niagara frontier was quite brutal on civilians, military and Natives on both sides.

The British raided Pultneyville and Oswego for military stores, and attacked the shipyards at Sackets Harbor twice. American “War Hawks” kept looking north to Canada and all that land. They envisioned the elimination of the British from the North American continent.

In Canandaigua, the city fathers were concerned that a flood of American refugees would descend on the village from the Niagara country.

So… if you are thinking of day trips for the summer, check out Old Fort Niagara near Buffalo or visit Fort George and Niagara on the Lake on the Canadian side of the border.

Near the St Lawrence, visit the Sackets Harbor historic sites. Check out War of 1812 events via the internet and learn more about this forgotten war.

From the Desk of the Treasurer
by Sherry Rodin Sulkes

Donations to the Oliver Phelps Fund, a memorial/honoraria fund, are tax deductible and help to support the programs of the Historical Society. Thank you for your support.

The Oliver Phelps Fund

In Memory Of:
The Geneseekers Ruth Holly
Marc Sulkes Harry Sulkes
Sherry Rodin Sulkes Ida B. Rodin
The OCHS Organization

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*Volunteer

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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.

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.

Aberle Eye Care
American Gutter Supply Inc.
Badge Machine Products, Inc.
Canandaigua American Legion #256
Canandaigua Carpets Inc.
Canandaigua Garden Club
J.D. Chapman Agency Inc.
Creative Dimensions
Edelweiss Properties Realtors, LLC
Michael Goodman
Dennis Hogan, Genealogist
The Granger Homestead Society
The Inn On The Lake

Integrated Systems
JSJ Decorating
Johnson-Kennedy Funeral Home Inc.
Laser Genesis
G.W. Lisk Company Inc.
Mayflower Gardens Ltd.
Messenger Post Newspapers
Miller Nurseries
Phelps Sungas Inc.
The Pickering Pub
Mitchell Pierson, Jr., Inc. Realtors
Randall Farnsworth Auto Group

Reliant Community Credit Union
Renaissance - The Goodie II Shoppe
John A. Rogers, Builder
James Rose Outdoor Services
Planning and Development Consultant
Potter HVAC & Metal Fabricators
Guy Straw
Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion
Star Cleaners
St. Mary’s School
VelMex, Inc.
Wegmans Markets, Inc.
We Welcome These New Members

Ms. Tricia Carey
Ms. Sue Ellen Colf
Mr. Patrick Galvin
Ms. Sara Greenleaf
Mr. Thomas Reed
Ms. Lisa Rodriguez
Ms. Rebecca Raguso Snyder
Mr. & Mrs. Andy Stobie
Ms. Linda Stone
Mr. Bill Taylor
Mr. William Wood

New members enjoy strolling through our exhibits

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS IN THE ONTARIO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Receive Regular Museum Mailings — Keep Up-to Date on all Society Activities
Reduced Admission to Society Events and Fund Raisers, including Tour of Homes
(admission to the museum is always free)
Free assistance in the Museum’s Rare Documents/Genealogy Library
Membership in Time Travelers, a National Museum Benefit Program
10% savings on Museum Books Shop purchases
Subscription to our quarterly newsletter, CHRONICLES

ONTARIO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Name(s) ___________________________ Email ___________________________ Phone __________________
Exact as it will appear on the Membership Card
Address _______________________________________________________ ZIP _____________
Optional Alternate Winter Address from __/__/__ to __/__/__
_____________________________ ZIP _____________

General Membership Support:
___ Sr. Citizen $30; ___ Individual $35; ___ Family $50; ___ Friend $75

Centennial Club Level
___ Centennial $100; ___ Benefactor $150; ___ Heritage Circle $250; ___ Director $500+
___ Please accept my additional gift of $ ______
___ I am interested in making an endowment gift; please contact me.

Total Membership: $ ____________ + Additional gift: $ ______ = Total $ ____________

Method of Payment
____ Cash  _____ Check
____ Credit Card  VISA/MC

Card Number ______-_____-_____-_____
Exp. Cv v Date __/__/___;
VC Code ______

Signature: ______________________

Return to:
OCHS; 55 No. Main St.
Canandaigua, NY 14424
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 13 – Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce Mixer at the museum
July 28 – Stop in and visit - museum booth at the Waterfront Art Festival
July 4 – Canandaigua 4th of July Parade on South Main Street
July 16 – Executive Director, Ed Varno’s 60th birthday
August 3 – Exhibit closing – “So Where’s All the Old Stuff?”
August 11 – Canandaigua Rotary Pier Festival – check out the museum booth!
Sept. 21 & 22 – Walk into the Past Canandaigua’s Gibson Street in 1858
October 13 – 2012 Tour of Historic Barns (West Bloomfield)

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