The Curator’s Loft
by Wilma Townsend, Curator

As we explore the women’s suffrage movement in Ontario County in our new exhibit, we also focus on the many women involved in the related reform movements such as temperance, abolition and education. Caroline Matilda Thayer, who lived in Ontario County in the early 19th century, was one such woman who was a pioneer in education reform as a female educator and author. Our many thanks to Richie and Gil Smith for their contribution to our local history.

Caroline Matilda Thayer, An Exceptional Woman
by Richie and Gil Smith

Caroline Matilda Thayer was a noted author and educator from New York to Mississippi in the 1820s and 1830s. Before she moved to New York City in 1819, she spent seven years in Ontario County, New York developing those skills and forging the courage which would make her exceptional.

Born in 1785 in Watertown, Massachusetts near Boston, she grew up in a comfortable home. She was a gifted child and soon mastered the 3Rs of her day. Caroline began early writing poems and prose and her first book, The Gamesters, was published in 1805 in Boston. She began formally teaching and continued writing.

On April 10, 1809 in Sutton, Massachusetts, Caroline married James Thayer, then in his last year of medical school. Their first child, Anna Matilda, was born and died before the end of the year. The Thayers established their home in Rehoboth, Massachusetts and on April 14, 1810 announced his opening of a medical practice and her opening of a school. The following February a son, George Erasmus, was born. By the end of 1811, the Thayers had decided to take their talents to people on America’s western frontier, the Genesee country of western New York State. Like pioneers before them, they elected to traverse the crude roads in winter, when a sled traveled more easily than a wagon in other seasons.
From the Director’s Desk
by Edward Varno

Working Together

English poet, John Donne, in his 1624 meditative prose wrote, “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main”. He was referring to human beings and the fact that they do not thrive when they are isolated from others.

This logic can be easily adapted from people to community organizations.

No organized group can strive or thrive when it operates in a vacuum. Therefore, organizations must work together if they are to accomplish the mission that they were established to pursue.

This is a reality that should spur our community’s not-for-profit groups, school districts and local governments to join hands in development of programming. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Here at the Ontario County Historical Society we constantly have our feelers out, communicating with others to see if there are projects or events we can work together on. Our staff, Board of Trustees and, of course, myself as the representatives of the Historical Society are always on the lookout for relationships we can pursue. Not all of the ideas work out, but here is a sampling of what we are currently doing with others in the community.

New York Wine and Culinary Center and OCHS have formed an alliance that will dovetail our mutual interests in food and history. I learned early on that when promoting an historic program, one never uses food and old in the same sentence. So when John Berndt, the NYWCC Director, and I sat down to develop joint programming we decided to have an “old fashioned” pie auction and pie making class. The pie recipes used might be historic, but the food certainly will not be old. Our event will be held on Sunday, March 12th, at the Culinary Center. Pie donations are welcome.

The Wood Library Association and The Historical Society’s relationship dates back to the early 1900s when, in 1914, the Library joined with OCHS to occupy the new Historical Museum building. That relationship continues today. Space needs sometimes require our events to be held at the Library’s community room. We also have periodic displays in the Library’s lobby. Both organizations have joined in the past to support each other’s grants and present humanities-related events such as community reads.

As you know, this year, the state is celebrating the centennial of the women gaining the right to vote. We wanted to find out who the unsung heroes and heroines were in our county and assemble the information into one place. We found that our county’s suffrage history and its related documents are spread throughout the county and buried in local archives. The challenge we faced was to dig into local history files and newspapers to find our community’s suffragists who either promoted or fought against the cause of women’s suffrage. When we put out the call, virtually every municipal historian in the county assisted in the “Community Suffrage Research Project”. Their work has spanned nearly two years. Over 200 documents have been assembled. The information will be used in developing our new exhibition of the local battle for women’s suffrage that will open on “Mother’s Day”.

John Donne compared people to continents, I believe that we can extrapolate that to community groups. No matter how small or large on organization we all need each other to thrive and survive. It is the best way to expand everyone’s base of understanding of what our great community culturally has to offer.
They arrived in the Town of Mendon, then in Ontario County, before spring in 1812. During their first year in Mendon, both Thayers likely united with the active Methodist Episcopal Society. Caroline no doubt enjoyed the information and ideas introduced by circuit riding preachers visiting their community. James soon became a member of the Ontario County Medical Society. They could not have known that America would become engaged in its second war of independence from Britain less than 70 miles west of them. More than a thousand pioneers soon fled back east from the privations of war on the Niagara frontier, often through the Town of Mendon. Militia groups in central New York moving west to engage the British and Indian forces attacking the United States also followed this route.

On June 21, 1813, the Thayer’s son, George Erasmus, died and was buried in Mendon. Caroline was again pregnant and their daughter, Juliana Elizabeth was born on September 21, 1813, but died the following day, joining her brother in a Mendon grave. Caroline found solace in her writing and participation in the local Methodist class. On January 1, 1814, Caroline wrote to her friend, Julia, probably in Massachusetts, describing her anguish at the loss of her children during the past year and the development of her religious beliefs during the decade they had been apart. She encouraged Julia to consider her own future. Life for the Thayers continued as Caroline healed within.

On February 15, 1815, she gave birth to a son, George Warren Thayer. Caroline continued writing poems. In January of 1816, she resumed her correspondence with Julia writing in February, March and April. Their exploration of religious beliefs seemed to have reached a mutually satisfactory conclusion. Caroline thought that her writings might be of benefit to others and considered having them published. In mid-year, she met with the book agent for the Methodist Publishing House, located in New York City. After reviewing her work, he suggested that she copy the manuscripts and send them to the Publishing House, which she did. For reasons unknown, the Thayers moved from the Town of Mendon to the Town of Palmyra, some 26 miles east. They were hardly settled when James became ill and died in early February 1817. Caroline was pregnant at the time, and remained in their home until the birth of her namesake. Shortly thereafter, Caroline was advised that the Methodist Publishing House in New York City would publish her manuscript under the title *Religion Recommended to Youth*.

On July 8, 1817, the new baby died. Caroline had already been giving thought as to how she was going to provide for herself. She decided to move to the newly incorporated Village of Canandaigua, some 15 miles distant, where she arrived in autumn. After finding temporary accommodations, she joined the Methodist Society, and began seeking a teaching position. An older member of the Methodist Society, Father Aaron Spencer, offered her rooms in his home along Canandaigua Lake, some two miles southwest of the village and she accepted. Father Spencer had made a similar offer three months earlier with respect to rooms in a different wing of his home, to the newly arrived Methodist Preacher, Rev. Benjamin Paddock. Caroline and the Paddocks each had a young child, and they became friends. Caroline continued to seek an opportunity to open a school and secured authorization to do so in the Town of Canandaigua District 9 School. The building was located a short distance down the lake from the Spencer home and her school was to open the following June. She began making plans for an instructional program and in addition to the basic course of studies, she decided to offer a Sabbath School. Rev. Paddock assisted Caroline in developing instructional materials, including a young people’s Catechism.

In late spring, Caroline was advised that her book had been favorably received and a second printing was planned later that year. Caroline also wrote the Ode which was sung on July 26, 1818 at the dedication of the new Methodist Episcopal chapel in the Village of Canandaigua.

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“No Vote; No Kiss:” Valentine’s Day, 1916

Valentine’s Day just came and went—again! It’s a time when we think of those we love and appreciate. We also think of “sweets for the sweet,” and sending loving or sentimental greetings to those who are important in our lives. However, Valentine’s Day had special significance for the women’s suffrage movement a century ago.

In 1916, the National Woman’s Party (originally Alice Paul’s Congressional Union); and then the National American Woman Suffrage Association from which the NWP had separated; were engaged in intensive efforts to secure the right to vote for women in several big states. New York was the most important of them since it had the biggest population at the time, and consequently, the largest Congressional delegation. New York was the key to eventually passing a federal amendment. An attempt to pass a suffrage amendment to the New York State constitution had failed in 1915. A new and ultimately successful campaign to pass a state amendment in 1917 was well underway. Suffragists across the state, around the nation, and in Washington, DC, decided to send pointed Valentine’s Day messages to President Wilson, members of Congress, and other public officials. It was the age of popular postcards, so most of those messages were in that format. Suffrage themes with pointed humor had been used by postcard publishers for several years, so the idea was not radically new.

Anti-suffragists were not slow to catch on. They too began to send greetings expressing their desire to prevent the passage of woman suffrage laws. In some cases, it was necessary to look at a card carefully to decide whether it was pro-suffrage or anti-suffrage. Many of those cards were seen in Upstate New York since Alice Wadsworth, the wife of Senator James W. Wadsworth, Jr., was a leader in the anti-suffrage movement. In 1916, the suffragists found themselves split again on tactics. The more militant “suffragettes,” who modeled their efforts on the British movement led by Emmeline Pankhurst, left the National American Woman Suffrage Association and formed the National Woman’s Party. Led by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, they were the suffragists often depicted in textbooks picketing outside the White House.

The NWP/Congressional Union designed a special Valentine card for President Wilson. Pictures of it were published in many newspapers across the nation. The New York Sun printed Wilson's Valentine card right on the special day, but on page 12 along with other news of lesser importance. The Philadelphia Inquirer simply mentioned the fact on February 15; in a small article but on page one. Other papers published the story of the suffrage Valentines on their “social pages,” reflecting the ambivalence felt in much of the nation. President Wilson’s special Valentine was made from white, pink and silver paper, tied with a silver ribbon, and sealed with a big pink heart. The message written on Wilson’s special card was mild and cajoling. In the end, President Wilson did support a suffrage amendment to the US Constitution. The messages to members of Congress, however, could be quite biting. Senator Wadsworth and Hudson Valley Representative Platt each received no-nonsense messages that were published widely.

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On Valentine’s Day, 1920, Carrie Chapman Catt announced the formation of the League of Women Voters. The League was really a merger of National Council of Women Voters, founded by Emma Smith DeVoe, and the National American Woman Suffrage Association, then led by Carrie Chapman Catt.

With the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution assured, Catt saw no point in maintaining the NAWSA. Her efforts to secure passage of suffrage amendments in the states had focused on education. The League was a natural extension of that focus, aimed at providing non-partisan information to newly enfranchised women.

Emma Smith DeVoe held very similar views. She is little known in New York and the Northeast since her career was focused on the states of the mid-west and Pacific Northwest. Her National Council of Women Voters had been founded in 1911. Unlike the League of Women Voters, DeVoe’s Council originally focused on providing information to women in states that had just granted suffrage to women, or had no equal suffrage movements. There is a very close association between the traditional Valentine greeting card tradition and the women’s suffrage movement — no matter which side you or your loved ones supported.
Your Historical Society

Museum Educator, Preston Pierce, talks to children about the importance of transporting coal at the “Polar Express Holiday Event”

Bill Fuge stopped in to see the model railroad set-up for the “Polar Express Holiday Event”

“Desires, Opportunity and Change - Western NY” exhibit moved in February to Niagara County

Ellis Award recipient Babette Huber enjoys a moment at the OCHS “Annual Dinner” in November

Finger Lakes Boating Museum presentation on Steam Technology in January

Suffrage Historians of Ontario County - SHOC meet in January to discuss research
Viral Leanings
by Maureen O’Connell Baker, Social Media Coordinator

Holy Cow!!
3000 and counting!! That’s right…we now have over 3000 followers (an increase of 500 from a year ago) on our social media Facebook page.

Fueled by our latest set of 5 mini videos on Ontario County historic preservation projects, our followers are watching and sharing these with their Facebook friends, expanding our fan base at record pace. Thank you everyone! It is a joy to read your comments and share your memories. Utilizing social media offers many possibilities and has been successful in promoting educational programs, events, and fundraisers. Museum Educator, Preston Pierce, is keeping busy this winter hosting Boy Scouts earning merit badges in history and genealogy. During the holidays, kids of all ages enjoyed the model train village and learned about the railroads that came through Ontario County. And most recently our new historic preservation videos take us through five towns showcasing their valued treasures.

Visit us on Facebook and give us the “thumbs up” to let us know you were there. Be sure to “Like us”. Then visit www.ochs.org for a front page link to our award winning videos.

Suffrage Movement
Word Search

WORD LIST:
AMENDMENT POLITICS
BELVA LOCKWOOD PROPOSITION
CONVENTION RHODA PALMER
COURT HOUSE SUFFRAGE
EQUALITY SUSAN B ANTHONY
MARY GRAY PECK TRIAL

continued from page 3 — The Curator’s Loft

Her Sabbath School opened in Dr. Parshall’s barn half a mile above the lake, serving up to 40 students per week in addition to her common school instruction. There is no record of how long Caroline continued her educational efforts in District Nine. Caroline’s educational achievements so impressed the Methodist leaders in New York City that in 1819 she was named Superintendent of the Female Division of Wesleyan Seminary in New York City. Four years later her book, First Lessons in the History of the United States, was published. It was a great success, recently being republished by Barnes and Noble as part of their Classic Reprint Series.

Caroline went on to become an author and educator of prominence for two decades. She headed the renowned Elizabeth Female Academy in Washington, Mississippi in the 1830s. She died at her school in Harrisonburg, Louisiana, March 26, 1844.
News and Announcements

• As the Historical Society enters its 115th year of preserving and promoting our county’s heritage we are grateful to all our members and business supporters who supplement the cost of operating our historic landmark. Thank you for your generosity.

• The holidays were a fun time at the museum this year. The “Annual Holiday” party attracted a host of guests who enjoyed cookies, and light snacks prepared by our Hospitality Committee, Nancy Hayden and Louise Radak. They always do a nice job.

• The Museum’s model railroad set-up entertained children of all ages. Our “Polar Express Night” was a great success. The children received whistles, engineer caps, and a special Polar Express bell for their family’s holiday tree. Special thanks go out to our Museum Educator, Preston Pierce, for the railroad history stories and making the train set-up possible; Louise Radak who read The Polar Express story to the little guests and Nancy Hayden for making the cookies appear.

• We were visited separately by students in the 1st, 2nd and 4th grades from St. Mary’s School over the holiday season. The young’uns enjoyed the model railroad and the 4th Graders learned about the early history of Ontario County. Being close by, they were able to walk. We hope to see them again next year.

• We have some fun events planned for this year to raise funds to support museum operations. In March, we plan to hold a homemade pie auction in conjunction with the New York Wine and Culinary Center, and other events that the family can participate in. Watch your mail and future issues of The Chronicles for more information.

• We have closed the exhibit on the early history of western New York. It was opened in December of 2012 and has entertained and educated the public for several years. The exhibit was funded with a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Its new home will be at the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center.

• In the empty space, on “Mother’s Day”, we will open our new exhibit on the suffrage movement. The exhibition will present the story of the people and organizations that promoted, and fought, the cause of women’s suffrage in New York and our country. Our county’s involvement was wide and deep.

• Do you remember the year 1964? It represented the cultural period between the end of the innocent 1950s and the raucous 1960s. This summer we will be opening a fun exhibit on Canandaigua in 1964. It will be based on an aerial photograph of downtown taken that year. The number of missing building will amaze you. Artifacts from the attics of our members and technical memorabilia from the Antique Wireless Museum will be on display. Sit in a big-ole, overstuffed couch and look at issues of Look, Life and Saturday Evening Post magazines. Of course there will be a party to celebrate its opening. Special thanks to Dave Hayden and Greg Russell who were the brainchild of this project.

• Finally, we are mourning the passing of long time Historical Society Member, Robert Purple. Bob was a lifelong Canandaigua resident and loved our local history. He died on February 16, 2017 at the age of 91.

The Oliver Phelps Fund

Thank you to the following donors:

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We Welcome These New Members

John Berndt
Laurie Collward
Elizabeth Barrett
Women’s March, Seneca Falls, January 21, 2017

by Barbara Stahl, photos courtesy Jacqueline Lowe

What a thrill to walk in the footsteps of the women who worked tirelessly for the right to vote. I had an opportunity to march with around 9,999 others in Seneca Falls on January 21st of this year in support of women’s rights. I have often wondered if I would have been brave enough to have marched with the suffragettes in the mid 1800s and early 1900s. They were a most courageous group. So, in 2017, I walked for them, for my female ancestors, as well as my future descendants. What a privilege!

That day there were many remarkable speeches given, incredible sights to be seen, memorable sounds to be heard, and clever signs to be absorbed. Most impressive were the estimated 10,000 marchers who had essentially the same agenda, were kind and polite to each another, all of which made one realize that in this great country one person can make a difference. It may be a tiny difference that I alone could make, but when side by side with so many others having the same or a similar intent, the impact becomes huge.

While there were mostly women marching, I was mightily impressed by the large number of men. I look forward to more marches to continue the work for women’s issues. We must not lose what we have gained.

Mail Box

Good Morning,

I would like to thank you all so much for your help on our “National History Day” project. I am and glad to inform you that we have moved on to the state competition in Tallahassee, Florida. The following link is to our site; you can visit it at any time for your own viewing. Any changes or advice on improvement for the next level would be greatly appreciated. Thank you so much!
http://63361309.nhd.weebly.com/

Hannah Snyder
Naples, Florida

Dear Mr. Varno:

Thank you for donating the prizes for the February 12th Rotary Bowl-a-Thon. We split it up into 3 prizes for three different bowlers. A couple of history buffs grabbed the two books.

Donna Miller
Event Co-Chair

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your special gift to the National Susan B. Anthony Museum and House. We are most grateful for your support. Your gift will help preserve her legacy and continue her work towards a world of equality for all.

Sincerely,
Deborah L. Hughes, President and CEO

Note: Deborah Hughes was the speaker at our Annual Meeting in November 2016

Dear Mr. Varno,

Thank you very much for your report on 2731 County Road No. 4, the brick Greek Revival House. You must have spent much more than two hours doing this research. Thank you again for your efforts and Happy Holidays. I may stop in the Museum over the holidays.

Yours sincerely,
Nancy Blackwell
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.,
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.

1840 Inn On The Main
Aberle Eye Care
Bella Rose Bed and Breakfast
Canandaigua Carpets Inc.
Canandaigua Federal Credit Union
Canandaigua National Bank
CIG Insurance Agency
Edelweiss Properties Realtors LLC
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Star Cleaners
Sutter's Marina
VelMex Inc.
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Willow Bend Farms
Wood Library

What’s Up With That?

Passing the corner of West Avenue and Parish Street in Canandaigua on Monday, February 20th, was a scene that caught the community’s attention. The old Van Broker’s Food Market was being demolished. The memories of this corner store flooded the pages of Facebook.

It was a place that will always live in the hearts of Canandaigua residents.

It is rumored that a Byrne Dairy Store will be constructed on the site.

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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 Fundraisers, 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

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Ontario County Historical Society

Name(s) Email Phone

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Optional Alternate Winter Address from __/__/__ to __/__/__

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General Membership Support:

Sr. Citizen $30; Individual $35; Family $50; Friend $75

---

Centennial Club Level

Centennial $100; Benefactor $150; Heritage Circle $250; Director $500+

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Please accept my additional gift of $.

I am interested in making an endowment gift; please contact me.

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Total Membership: $__________ + Additional gift: $________ = Total $________

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Return to:

OCHS; 55 No. Main St.
Canandaigua, NY 14424
March 1: Boy Scout Genealogy Merit Badge group attends the Ontario County Genealogy Society meeting
March 12: “Pi Day” – live auction for homemade pies with a Pi theme – at New York Wine and Culinary Center – pies needed, call the museum register your pie donation
March 18: “National History Day Competition” — note: Saturday this year
March 21: 7 p.m. — Historian Talk – Preston Pierce, “Women, WWI and the 1917 Census”
April 1, 8: 10 a.m. — at the Museum, Boy Scout Merit Badge class – “Railroads” Free
April 26: 6:30 p.m. — Suffrage Event – movie — “One Woman, One Vote”; venue to be determined
May 14: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. — “Mother’s Day Suffrage Exhibit” — opening at the Museum
June 3: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. — 3rd “Annual Town of Canandaigua Day” at the Museum