Tour of Barns to Honor Late West Bloomfield Historian

by Ray Henry, Chairman
photos by Marc Sulkes

October 13th, 2012 is the date for the sixth biennial Ontario County Historical Society’s “Tour of Barns”. On each tour, we attempt to provide our visitors with a good cross-section of important historical agricultural and other non-residential sites in the selected area of the county. The goal of this year’s tour is to weave education into the showcasing of these 100 year-old plus structures, which all have a common thread – individual as their stories may be, they have all played an important role in the history of the Town of West Bloomfield and indirectly with all of Ontario County.

This year’s tour, entitled the “Sandy Schlenker Memorial 2012 Agricultural Fair and Tour of Barns”, is in memory of Sandy, who passed away in May of 2009. Friends and family marvel at how much Sandy (Bortle) Schlenker accomplished in her life. The West Bloomfield community was her home since 1958 and it is where she and her husband, Corky, owned Bristol View Farms at #8424, Routes 5 and 20 and the Schlenker Farm Market. Today, Schlenker’s son Ed and his wife, Katy, are operating the Schlenker Farm Market. Countless youngsters worked for the Schlenker’s over the years.

Also, over the years, Sandy served as everything from a founding member of the West Bloomfield Historical Society in 1983 to Society president, curator, and historian. In 2008, she was also appointed to the position of Town Historian. Her love of history was well-known and families trusted her with their heirlooms as well as their family histories. By her own estimate, she did 1000 family genealogies for people in West Bloomfield.

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This year’s tour starts at the Ionia Firemen’s Firehouse and Carnival Grounds where tour goers will exchange their tickets for the tour’s booklet. At this site, additionally, there will be a host of demonstrations including hand-hewing beams, mechanical auguring for tree nails, apple pressing, hay carrier systems, and barn models. Refreshments will be provided by the Ionia Methodist Ladies Group.

From here, the preferred route is to proceed east to the four corners, turn south (right) on Elton Road to #2152. The 1815 barn is an excellent example of a three-bay threshing barn, a very early example of a basement, ramp barn. It is said that the Seneca Orator, Red Jacket, frequented this farm for many springs, bringing new peach tree saplings each year from which the “Wagner” peach was developed, hence the name of the farm became “Peachdale”.

The next site is #8361, Routes 5 & 20, just west of Elton Road, a gambrel-roofed dairy barn built in 1938 by Mr. Ed Richmond. Mr. Richmond was well-known for construction of many barns in Ontario, Seneca, and Monroe Counties. Relatives of Mr. Richmond will be hosting a display on the history of Ed Richmond and his barns on the main floor. The present owner has a nice display of antique farm tools on the lower level, along with a “man cave” in the old milk house.

Across from #8361, at #8424, is our signature barn, a gambrel-roofed barn built in 1839. Reportedly the result of the last “barn raising” in the area, the hand-hewn beams were from an old barn that was torn down. This is a working farm barn used today for storage of squash, cabbage and firewood storage. Immediately to the east of the signature barn is the Schlenker Farm Market, started by Sandy in their side yard. The market has since expanded to the pole barn, and should have a good supply of pumpkins, squash, and other fruits and vegetables of the season for sale for the public as well as the tour goers.

The West Bloomfield Historical Society is housed in the old Saint Joseph’s Church on the east the Village of West Bloomfield and will be open for the tour. The building houses a large number of agricultural artifacts and displays. The Society will host a scavenger hunt for the children on the tour. This promises to be not only fun, but informative as well.

Turning north at the four corners in West Bloomfield Village and then right onto Baker Road will bring the tour goers to the Lazy Acres Alpaca Farm. Known in the past as the “Baker Farm”, the barn complex consists of three gable-roofed barns plus a gable-roofed carriage house. The main barn is a large English barn and was equipped with a hay carrier system. The smaller barns and the carriage house were also equipped with hay carrier systems. Today, the farm is home to a 95+ herd of Alpacas and the owner will be conducting educational tours about the Alpaca industry.

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War of 1812 Bicentennial Celebration

Imagine this – you are standing on the lawn of the brand-new 1812 Tavern on Main Street hearing the sounds of the militia drilling in the town square – the calls of the sergeant, the beating of the drum, the rattle of the muskets and equipment the men are carrying. It is October 1812, and Bloomfield is preparing to send some of its strongest and best young men to join the militias fighting the British along the Niagara Frontier and Upper Canada. The July invasion of Detroit led by William Hull has failed and now the war plan is to invade Queenston, across the Niagara river from Lewiston.

Imagine that you walk over to Elton Park to see what is going on – who is drilling with the militia, and who is cooking whatever it is that smells so good!

You can experience this exciting time in Bloomfield history by participating in the “War of 1812 Bicentennial Celebration” in Bloomfield on Saturday, October 6, 2012. In Elton Park, you will see the militia drilling – and if you are male and between 16 and 45, you may be pressed to join them! Smell the campfire cookery and sample some pies – play the games and sports of the era. If you are a youngster, you can train with and join the militia as a junior aide-de-camp, and try your hand at games of the day.

You can hear circa 1812 songs and music from Dave Ruch – a War of 1812 historian and musician. Preston Pierce, Ontario County Historian will be talking about the war and the flags used, and there will be representatives of the East and West Bloomfield Historical Societies present to talk about some local people and houses which played a part in the war. In 1812, there was just one town, Bloomfield.

You can see a Seneca Indian and hear about the war from his point of view. You will see what the American flag looked like 200 years ago, and learn why it is so odd-looking to modern eyes. You will learn about local soldiers and officers, and about what life was like for the folks left at home – what we cooked, what farm implements and equipment we used, what we planted and harvested. Food and drink of the era (and some of more recent styles!) will be available in the park – and late in the afternoon there will be ale and pretzels on the lawn of the 1812 Tavern.

Members of the East Bloomfield Historical Society, the owner of the 1812 Tavern, and other interested parties are planning a day-long celebration with food, drink, music, activities, costumes (you are encouraged to dress up too!) and all sorts of fun. Put this wonderful event on your calendar now!

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East on the Baker Road, then north on the Cox Road will bring you to County Road #14. Turning right onto the County Road #14 at #8482 you will find the expansive farm, known as “Velvet Beech”, built by Alonzo Mansfield prior to 1876. The farm has an interesting collection of barns, most of which were also built by Mr. Mansfield. The only exception to that is a “scale house” that was moved here from somewhere near the Ionia Station and it is a very interesting structure. The barns include a horse barn attached to a carriage house, a large gambrel-roofed hay barn, a milk house, smoke house, chicken house, hop house, two outhouses, and the aforementioned scale house. There is also the remnants of a pump house operated by a windmill.

Continuing east on County Road #14 will bring the tour goers back to the Ionia Carnival Grounds where refreshments may be enjoyed.
As the summer winds down and the fall season approaches, the Ontario County Historical Society finds itself at a very busy time. Someone once said that time was created so everything would not happen at once. I am so happy for clocks and calendars. Here is what we are planning for lovers of history.

On the evenings of September 21 and 22, we will have a fun family event that will propel us back in time to the 1858 streets of Canandaigua; specifically, Gibson Street. Tour goers will have a chance to walk in groups of ten or so to the homes of prominent Canandaigua residents of the times who lived on the street. Standing on their lawn, you will hear the personal tales of a banker, a physician, a dentist, a merchant, a domestic servant, and even a co-conspirator in the William Morgan Affair. Tickets are limited so call now to reserve your place.

On Saturday, October 13, we will hold our bi-annual “Tour of Barns”. See the article on the front page of this issue for details. Tickets can be purchased online at www.ochs.org.

During this time, our staff and exhibit consultants, Riverhill Associates, will transform the south gallery of the museum to an eye-catching exhibit on the “Early History of Western New York.” Looking through the eyes of twelve prominent players, we examine the period 1650 to 1797 and the conflicts and events that shaped the western New York we know today. Was greed a factor in these conflicts? You can find out when you visit. The exhibit will open in December.

The City of Canandaigua will celebrate 100 years as a city in 2013. The Historical Society will play a prominent role in the celebrations next year. We have planned a special speaker’s series, an exhibit on the City of Canandaigua and a “Tour of Homes” that will feature its neighborhood’s great architecture.

Finally, I wanted to acknowledge all those members who responded positively to our membership appeal and returned to the fold over the summer. Thank you.

You will not be disappointed.
What’s in the Collection?

by Wilma Townsend

The Beaver

Most of us think of furry animals with wide flat tails that build dams and lodges from trees that they have chewed through with their large teeth. Most of us don’t think too much about the role the beaver pelt played in the early history of western New York. By about 1600 in Europe, beaver pelts were essential to the making of felted hats – needed for warmth in the cold winters as well as for making a fashion statement. At about this same time, European beavers had been hunted to near extinction and the desire for quality felted beaver hats forced prices to go up, making them available only to wealthier individuals. However, European traders had found a new source in eastern North America – the American beaver. By developing trading relationships with Native Americans, the French, Dutch and English traders expanded their access to more beaver pelts for European markets. The beaver pelts were sent to Europe where they were used in hat-making; the resulting hats were sold throughout Europe and back in the colonies. While not so good for the beaver, its pelt became a catalyst for dramatic social, political and economic change in the early history of this region.

Our upcoming exhibit set to open in December 2012 will delve into these topics and more, but here is a brief explanation of the not-so-easy task of transforming a beaver pelt into a felted beaver hat.

Preparing the Pelt

Step 1: The Pelt. The best beaver pelt came from beavers trapped in the winter. The fur consisted of two types of hair – coarse outer guard hair and the soft under-fur called beaver wool. Pelts were divided into three types – castor gras and castor sec, and bandeau. The more desirable castor gras pelt was trapped in the winter and worn by the Native American trappers whose sweat aided in the loss of the guard hairs and improved the felting process of the under-fur. Castor sec pelts were not worn by the trappers and still had most of their guard hairs which had to be removed by hand. Bandeau pelts were the least desirable as they were not often scraped clean and could rot during shipment to Europe.

Step 2: Pulling and Shaving. All of the remaining guard hairs had to be removed from the pelt and the beaver wool torn or shaved off. The resulting balls of beaver wool were called beaver fluff.

Step 3: Carroting. To make the felting process easier a solution of mercury salts in nitric acid was applied to the pelt or fluff – this made the keratin scales on the fur dissolve and made them interlock more easily when felted.

Step 4: Mixing, Weighing and Sorting. The fluff was sorted by color, mixed with fluff from other pelts, weighed and carded. The carding agitated the fluff and prepared it for felting.

The Felting Process

Step 1: Bowing. The beaver fluff was spread on a table with small slots or holes and agitated again with a “hatter’s bow”, which resembled an oversized violin bow. This caused the fluff to bond to together and the heavier dirt to fall through the holes to the floor. The resulting product was called a batt.

Step 2: Basoning. The batts were then covered with damp cloth or leather and piled on top of each other over a small heat source. The heat and moisture caused more bonding, condensing and shrinking of the batt.

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Announcements

- Local Photographer Gary Dixon has recently published a book of great Canandaigua photos, *Canandaigua, New York Through the Eye of a Camera*. It is sure to be a hit.

- We have made it easy to purchase tickets for the “2012 Tour of Barns” on line. Visit www.ochs.org and follow the link. Ontario County Historical Society members receive a discount.

- Ontario County Historical Society lapel pins are now available. The 1.25 inch round pin bears the image of the Ontario County Historical Society logo and “Canandaigua, NY” it would make a fine gift for any lover of history.

- September 21 and 22 will be the dates for our new program, “A Walk into the Past”. Sign up now for this interesting and educational evening event centered on 1860 Gibson Street. Special family pricing is in effect. Call the museum to sign up. Only 80 spaces are available. Cider and donuts will be served. Canandaigua National Bank’s George W. Hamlin IV will play one of the six personalities, Theodore Hart, the early Canandaigua banker. Board of trustee member, Lloyd Lill is chairman of the event committee.

- We are sad to announce the closing of our exhibit, “So, What’s in the Collection?”. The good news is that the much anticipated long term exhibition on the “Early History of Western New York” will replace it and open in December. Watch your mail for details.

- Thank you so much! The Canandaigua Garden Club has replanted the front of the Historical Society building and it looks stunning. With the planters on the portico, the building is in its glory as it awaits its 100th anniversary in 2014. We cannot believe that our home is nearly 100.

- The Historical Society will host four public presentations on the history of the city of Canandaigua in 2013. Speakers will include, museum educator, Ray Shedrick; City of Canandaigua historian, Lynn Paulson; count historian, Preston Pierce; and will conclude with a community discussion on the future of the city led by Steve Uebbing. The events are planned to be at the Canandaigua Middle School and will be free and open to the public.

- Finally, we continue to increase our friends group on Facebook. It is a new way we can share the wonderful treasures found here in the museum. Friend us. We are found as Ontario County Historical Museum.
Two Hundred Years to be Celebrated

Located at 58 North Main Street, the First Congregational Church is celebrating the 200th anniversary of its sanctuary throughout this year. On Sunday, October 21, 2012, at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday service, congregants will begin the months-long celebration with a reunion of former pastors and special music composed by Canandaigua musician, Brian Story. Following the service that afternoon, there will be a presentation in the sanctuary beginning at 1:00 p.m., led by Ontario County Historian, Preston Pierce, where a series of vignettes will depict life in 1812 Canandaigua and the continuous and important role this building has served.

The First Congregational Church Society of the Town of Canandaigua, New York, with the leadership of nine men and women and the inspiration of Zadok Hunn, was incorporated in 1799. Services were held in homes and barns under the spiritual leadership of the first "settled" minister, Rev. Timothy Field, a young Yale graduate, who served from 1799 to 1807.

Thirteen years later, in 1812, with a membership of about forty communicants, the Society erected the present stately meeting house, much as it appears today. While the plans were brought from New England, the architect is unknown. The roof trusses were made of hand-hewn wooden beams, fastened with wooden pegs, and the exterior walls were made of bricks from Phelps, New York. The imposing Federal-style building, with its Ionic pilasters, wheel windows and pediment swag of teakwood, is a testimony to the courage and faith of that small body of sturdy inhabitants. The arched portico and the gold-clad barbless feather weathervane atop its domed bell tower set it apart from the early New England church edifices.

The construction costs of $12,996.31 were borne by the congregation. Funds were raised by subscriptions. A total of $5,000 was in pledges — one third in cash and two-thirds in cattle and grain. A mortgage covered the remaining $8,000. To celebrate 200 years, an endowment fund is being created to insure the ongoing preservation of this remarkable structure, the “Historic Building Preservation Fund”. This is the oldest public building still in use in the city of Canandaigua.

The interior, with its enclosed box pews, amber-glass windows, and horseshoe balcony still carries the pioneer concept of worship. The magnificent pipe organ was built in 1882 and recently underwent extensive renovations and updates by Parsons Pipe Organ Builders Co. of Bristol, New York.

From the time the sanctuary was completed in 1812, it has been a location for Canandaiguans to meet for local, as well as national services and celebrations.

On Sunday, November 18, 2012, the church will continue the celebration with a Thanksgiving service typical of the 1860s, and December will find the sanctuary decorated in an authentic Victorian Christmas manor. Come January 13, 2013, the focus will be on the Depression Era. In February, on the 17th of the month, the service will highlight the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War Era. Finally, on March 10, 2013, a rededication service will take place, 200 years to the day since the original dedication of the building.

Ontario County residents and anyone interested in local history are invited and are welcome to attend any and all of the above mentioned events. For further details, please check the church web site at: www.canandaiguachurch.org or call 394-2184.
The Chronicles

September 2012

Preston Pierce, Ed.D. Awarded National DAR Medal of Honor

by Barbara Stahl

Preston Pierce, Ed.D. was awarded the National DAR Medal of Honor in a ceremony hosted by members of the Canandaigua Chapter, NSDAR this past April.

His selection was made in recognition of his excellence in demonstrating the National Society’s goals of promoting patriotism, historic preservation, and education. New York State Regent Denise Doring VanBuren presented the medal.

The National DAR Medal of Honor is the most prestigious honor awarded by the Daughters of the American Revolution, which is given to an adult man or woman who is a United States citizen by birth and has shown extraordinary qualities of leadership, trustworthiness, service, and patriotism. The recipient must have made unusual and lasting contributions to our American Heritage by truly giving of himself or herself to his or her community, state, country, and fellowman.

As a youth, Dr. Pierce was immersed in history through family trips to local historical places such as a nearby quarry that provided conglomerate rocks for Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park’s rock gardens between 1910 and 1919. Family vacations most always included an historical site such as Williamsburg or Quebec City.

His professional career continues after his retirement from public education in three part-time positions all related to history and its dissemination. They are County Historian at Ontario County Records and Archives, Professor of History at Finger Lakes Community College and Regional Archivist for the New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program.

He frequently speaks in a variety of venues about an aspect of history, often showing how regional events fit into the bigger picture. For example, recently he gave an extraordinary talk about “The War of 1812” and how it played out in western New York. With his expertise and incredible knowledge, he continues to educate and amaze his audiences.

Maureen’s Book

Shoppe Corner

by Maureen O’Connell Baker

Recommended selection from the Historical Society’s publications.

Murder, Mayhem, & Madness

The cooler days and breezy nights of autumn will be here soon. With Halloween just around the corner, it’s a great time to recall spooky tales of haunted mansions and strange occurrences which happened right in our neighborhoods.

The latest book by Michael Keene takes you on a journey into the past to investigate thirteen true stories of the dark side of local history. Drawing upon years of original research, often uncovering new clues, you will learn some of western New York’s most shocking crimes. Was Joseph Smith of Palmyra, the founder of the Mormon Church, murdered to prevent him from running for the presidency of the United States? What terrible event occurred in the village of Caledonia that led to a man being hanged twice? Who was Anna Schumacher and why did her mysterious murder in Holy Sepulchre cemetery go unsolved - until now? What stories lie behind Rochester’s first murder and the unusual execution of the killer? Was justice served at the first hanging in Ontario County? Who was the Batavia woman who poisoned her entire family only to eventually be set free?

True crimes of passion, insanity, and greed are woven into these and other tales as you explore 150 years of Murder, Mayhem, and Madness.

On sale now in the Ontario County Historical Society bookstore and on our website for $19.95. 150 pages, paperback. ISBN: 978-0-9831797-6-4
Learning Horizons

by Nancy Parsons

The exhibit on the “Early History of Western New York” is taking center stage as we all “ramp up” for the exhibit opening at the end of the year. Some of our recent activities:

Scripts have been written for the twelve characters exhibit visitors will meet, exhibit timeline dates and events have been chosen and defined, artifacts and documents to be displayed have been located in the museum’s collections (some will be on loan from other institutions), and main section labels are nearing completion. Recently, Linda Norris, our exhibit consultant and staff members undertook “front-end” evaluations of possible “hands-on, minds-on” interactive activities for children and families. Families “tried out” the activities and let us know which they liked and which needed some more work. Another interesting exhibit activity found staff members posing as each of the twelve characters in an action stance. Photographs of our poses will help the exhibit character illustrator design the characters in an action that is appropriate to each person. Is the individual: Trading with a European? Hoeing in the field? Reading a document? Addressing an audience? Drinking a glass of wine? As you can imagine, we had a good time posing for the camera.

We have had a busy summer and anticipate an even busier fall as we head toward the exhibit opening.

The coming year will find us re-visioning the education programs at the museum for schools, family groups, adult audiences, special events and exhibit programming. A grant-funded project will find us working with consultant Anne Ackerson as we reinvent all things educational. Museum visits by Ontario County Historical Society staff will be underway in the fall to explore, interview, and observe the “new things happening” at other institutions and to learn of their successes and best practices. We will also be learning how others are using distance learning, evaluating their programming and finding out about new trends in education and museum science.

Stay tuned as we begin our journey to a new education vision.

From the Desk of the Treasurer

by Sherry Rodin Sulkes

As you begin thinking about your end of year tax planning, please consider a gift to the Ontario County Historical Society. Your tax-deductible cash donation, gift of stock or remembrance in your estate will have a strong and positive impact on the Historical Society’s continuation of its youth and adult educational programs, preservation of the collection, and community outreach for years to come. Thank you for your generosity and support in the past and in the future.

The Oliver Phelps Fund

In Memory Of:

Suzanne Winslow Rosalie Munson
Marc and Sherry Sulkes James Ingalls

continued from What’s In the Collection from page 5

Step 2: Planking. The shrunken batts were put into large metal basins in a solution of hot water and wine sediment. Workers called fouleurs agitated the batts by hand and with stirring planks to make the batts shrink and felt.

Step 3: Drying and Blocking. The felted batts were stretched over wooden molds resembling a hat to be shaped and dried.

Finishing the Hat

Step 1: Trimming and Dying. The basic hat bodies were then heated over a fire and rubbed with a pumice stone to produce a nice external surface, trimmed to the desired shape and send to by dyed.

Step 2: Waterproofing and Stiffening. After the dye dried, a stiffening agent was added with steam to help seal the hat, make it waterproof and create the final shape.

Step 3: Trimming. The hat was finished with a silk or linen lining and details such as ribbons, bands and feathers.
The OCHS Organization

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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 Federal Credit Union
Canandaigua Garden Club
Canandaigua Inn On The Lake
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We Welcome These New Members
Matthew & Holly Bond
Lynn Coleates
Angela Dutcher
Alicia Francis
Barbara Knox
Rich & Pam McGuire
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Louise T. Radak
Tom Reidy
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Judith Smith
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Robert Younger

Membership events are fun!

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 __________
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.

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Return to:
OCHS; 55 No. Main St.
Canandaigua, NY 14424
**September 19** – 7 p.m. – History Book Club at Ontario County Historical Society

**Sept. 21 & 22** – 7 – 9 p.m. “A Walk into the Past” – Gibson Street stories from the pre-Civil War Era
Contact the museum for more information at 585-394-4975

**October 13** – 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. – Tour of Barns and Agriculture Events – West Bloomfield
Contact the museum for details at 585-394-4975

**October 17** – 7 p.m. – History Book Club at Ontario County Historical Society

**October 24** – 7 p.m. – Evening at the Museum Presentation – TBA

**November 4** – Annual Meeting – save the date – details to follow

**November 11** – Canandaigua Treaty Day Events – museum open 12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

**November 14** – 6 – 9 a.m. – Volunteer Appreciation Reception – watch for more information

**November 28** – 7 p.m. – History Book Club at Wood Library

**December 8** – 4 – 6 p.m. – Holiday Open House – save the date!