These are Times that Try Our Souls—
But We’ve Been Here Before!

By Preston Pierce, Museum Educator

Considering of the trials and tribulations faced by our Revolutionary patriots, Thomas Paine produced a pamphlet called “The Crisis.” Paine told his readers that those were “the times that try men's souls.” His words easily apply to what we face today. COVID-19 continues to try the souls of humankind at a critical point in our yearly cycle—the opening of school.

In the fall, at the opening of school, local people have faced frightening health issues in the past. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Finger Lakes Region was periodically ravaged by epidemics of disease. Many of them were even more frightening because their causes were then unknown and cures (or prevention methods) were slow to develop. Consider these threats our ancestors faced:

Dysentery epidemics, often arising in mid-summer, accounted for many deaths around Ontario County in 1815 and 1816. Arising from polluted water, dysentery continued to plague local residents for decades. It was only diminished with the identification of its cause and subsequent development of sanitary water and sewer systems, as well as the eventual development of anti-biotics.

Typhoid epidemics struck Ontario County repeatedly, with deadly effect, throughout the nineteenth century. Typhoid is spread by eating or drinking food or water shared by an infected person and polluted by their waste. Lack of sanitary sewage disposal played a big part in the spread of typhoid. Our first wooden water pipes serving only part of the village weren’t much help.

A typhoid vaccine was finally developed in 1896. The use of chlorinated water was a key to reducing the incidence of typhoid in the US. Most every town in this region began chlorinating their water in the 1920s. In Canandaigua, a police patrol was established to enforce a local clean water ordinance. Now, chlorinated water, vaccination, and sanitary sewers have made typhoid virtually non-existent here.

Nearly everyone knows about the influenza pandemic that took so many lives in 1918-1919. It was particularly frightening in that wartime autumn when World War I was reaching its climax. Mask-wearing and school closings were common, even in Ontario County. Half of the local service men who died in World War I were victims of influenza or the pneumonia it caused.

“Flu” epidemics have continued over the years, often in late fall and winter. Preventive inoculation for the various strains of influenza seem to work fairly well but are dependent on scientists’ understanding of the strain of flu that will be most worrisome in the upcoming fall and winter. Every few years, we suffer yet another flu epidemic. What we are experiencing now is worse by far!

continued on page 9
What’s in the Collection?
By Wilma Townsend

Despite the COVID-19 shutdown, donations to the OCHS collection have continued at a good pace. Two items of interest recently added to the collection are an early yarn winder and a set of photos from a Clifton Springs business.

The yarn winder consists of a 5-legged base, with a shaft extending to a gear box mechanism that counts the rotations of the six arms on to which spun yarn is wound. The gear clicks or pops (hence the nursery rhyme “Pop goes the weasel!”) when a given amount is wound. A yarn winder is also known as a niddy-noddy, clock reel, or a weasel.

Stamped or carved on the top of the yarn winder gear box is "N. CANFIELD." Most likely, the winder came from the family of Nathaniel Canfield (1806, Dutchess Co., NY – 1874, Canandaigua, NY) and his wife Betsey Canfield (1806, Dutchess Co., NY – 1890, Canandaigua, NY) The winder was most likely made in Dutchess County, brought with the family to Saratoga County where their children were born in the 1820s, and by 1840 to Bristol where the family had a farm just north of Bristol Center. Women were still spinning yarn in the early 19th century here in Ontario County so it may have used here. Clearly, it was of value to the family to have traveled with them across the state.

When the c. 1918 photo album was donated to the museum, it was unclear what manufacturing company in Clifton Springs was shown in the images. After scanning and enlarging the photos, a box with "Victor Half-a-Minute Pump" on it was detected in one of the images. With a little help from the internet, we learned that the Judd & Leland Mfg. Co., Clifton Springs, NY, made these pumps for automobiles, particularly for the Model T Ford, and produced tin ware and leather goods. Owned by local businessmen William Arthur Judd and Roderic L. Leland, the factory was located on Hibbard Ave., near Spring Street, next to the railroad. The thirteen images give a detailed glimpse into the office and manufacturing areas of this early 20th century company.
From the Director’s Desk
By Marci Diehl

Goodbye, Professor
Graduating from “The University of Ed”

Three months can seem like an eternity. It can seem too long to wait for a happy event. Too long to be separated from family and friends. For me, three months sounded like a gift. It meant I wouldn’t walk cold into a leadership role. I was very grateful to know that Ed Varno had planned those three months to work with the person who would take over his position.

I had (have) so much to learn. As I’ve always done, as a student and a career writer, I took notes. Ed felt the pressure of attempting to convey 25 years of experience, knowledge, and personal wisdom in just 90 days. We talked all day long. I could barely keep up with my note-taking.

Both of us are storytellers, with a similar sense of humor. As you may know, I started referring to training as “The University of Ed.” He’d sit down at the computer, and I’d ask how he was doing something, or why. He’d point to a stool nearby. “Pull up the Stool of Knowledge,” he’d say. I’d sit by his side and learn. We laughed together all the time.

The calendar marched on. My notebook filled up.

I asked Ed a million questions. He kept thinking of other things he needed to tell me; or prepare to hand over so they’d lead to a smooth transition. I felt a bit more confident, but the thought was always: Will I feel ready for the impending “graduation” when Ed retires?

July came along and his countdown got smaller to July 23rd, his last day.

Ed had so much confidence in me. “You’re going to be okay,” he’d say. “You’re going to do great. Just be yourself. People will love you.” I felt a real sense of calm about the future for me and for OCHS.

Then it was Ed’s last day. Wilma, Barb, and I tried to make it as festive as possible. Surrounded by some old friends and volunteers, feted by the Mayor, Ed had one last thing to do before he and Vanessa left the party like a groom and his bride from a reception. He stood next to me and brought out his key to the Museum from his pocket. Then he dropped it into my hand.

I knew I’d been handed my “diploma” in that moment.

The days are still happy here — things are coming along, going forward. We have a great new team.

Three months rushed by. It turns out a time limit can be something you look forward to, and something you wish could last a bit longer. How lucky I was to have had such a “professor.”
Curator’s Loft
By Wilma Townsend

Several weeks ago, as we planned to reopen the museum in the COVID era, I cleaned and rearranged the space in the basement that is known as the “Pioneer Kitchen.” Little has changed in this room since the museum’s construction in 1914 other than one of the walls being opened up into the meeting room in about 1980. I began thinking about what the original vision was for this kitchen. What did the OCHS leaders at that time want to present to the public about the history of our county?

The Ontario County Historical Society, founded in 1902, was one of the many thousands of historical societies formed following our country’s Centennial in 1876. These societies were founded in part to preserve the history of our relatively new country as well as the legacies of prominent local families, leaders in business and politics, local heroes, and significant buildings. They also hoped to preserve a way of life that appeared threatened by the many immigrants pouring into the country around the turn of the 20th century.

When our current museum building was designed by famed architect Claude Bragdon and built in 1914, the OCHS leaders presented museum rooms filled with “a unique and valuable collection of relics.” Longtime families donated valuable historic items, such as the original deed to the Phelps and Gorham Purchase, an oil painting of Francis Granger, the 1794 Canandaigua Treaty, a first edition Book of Mormon, and early 19th century household items and farm tools, as well as local Native American artifacts. Also included were three period rooms: the “Old Time Parlor,” the “Bed Chamber,” and the “Old Fashioned Kitchen.”

In many ways, our “period” kitchen is a historic time capsule of early 20th century museum interpretation of the past. Many of the very artifacts described in the July 22, 1914 Ontario County Times article below when the museum opened for the first time, are currently on exhibit in the kitchen.

The old-fashioned kitchen, which is found in the basement, has a big fireplace modeled after those found in the first houses erected in Canandaigua. From the crane which is from the Jared Wilson house on Main Street, hang pot hooks on which are suspended brass and iron kettles of ancient use; at its side opens just such a brick oven as those in which the pioneers baked their bread; and in front is found the plate warmer from the old Blossom Hotel, predecessor of the present Canandaigua Hotel, with toasting irons, shovel, poker, etc. The hinges and door handles came from the old Chapin House on Coy Street, supposed to be one of the first frame houses, if not the very first erected in Canandaigua. The latches on the cupboard doors are from the old Atwater House just west of the Washington Hotel on Ontario Street.

The heavy hewed oak beams in the ceiling are from an old house recently torn down at the corner of Gorham and Wood Streets, which in its time was a part of the Gorham House that stood at the northeastern corner of the original public square. From these beams hang a bear trap, an old-time tin lantern, balances, a carpet sack, . . . In the cupboard are wares of ancient pattern, on the mantel hangs a flintlock gun and bear grease lamp, and on the shelves can be found candle molds, foot stoves, camphene lamps, pewter tea pots and platters, hatchels and carders. In one corner of the kitchen there is a spinning wheel and other implements of household industry, while quaint old shovels, pitchforks and flails in another corner indicate that the men of the house were equipped with implements of toil.

Occupying the center of the room and perhaps its most striking feature is a large folding table, the gift of the McLennett brothers, which is known to have come from the home of Jasper Parrish, the government Indian interpreter and [Federal] agent here, 1792-1836. About this table probably gathered on more than one occasion Seneca sachems to receive their annuities, and air their grievances.

The OCHS leaders furnished the period rooms to convey what they believed life was like in this county in the early 19th century, particularly in the wealthier homes of Canandaigua or Geneva. More recent scholarly research on early kitchens would dispute this 1914 interpretation, particularly the quantity and upper middle-class quality of items on display. However, when looking through the lens of that time, one can see that the “Old Fashioned Kitchen” presented the “best” of the old, featuring artifacts from prominent homes and individuals.

Today, the Pioneer Kitchen is open to the public as part of our exhibitions and the room appears largely as it did in 1914. The space has been and continues to be used for educational programming, meetings, and events. On your next visit to the museum, take a few minutes to wander around the Kitchen and take a careful look at the c. 1914-16 photo of the room hanging on one of the walls. See how many of the items in that photo you can still find on exhibit in the Kitchen!
OCHS Welcomes Taylor Wallace

Born and raised in Canandaigua, I first experienced the Ontario County Historical Society in the form of grade school field trips to the Pioneer Kitchen in the basement in the mid-2000s. Now, almost 15 years later, I’m back in a much different capacity as the new administrative assistant to Executive Director Marci Diehl.

Outside of work, I enjoy reading, writing, and the outdoors (when I can – one of the few perks of the long months of coronavirus isolation!). I am also very interested in language learning and acquisition. I studied Spanish for over six years in the Canandaigua school system before taking classes in Chinese and Japanese in college, which enabled me to study abroad in Kyoto, Japan during my junior spring. I’ve also dabbled a bit in Scots Gaelic, and would love to study Russian and Arabic, among many other languages – you name it, I want to learn it! I graduated in 2019 from Hamilton College with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Creative Writing – complementing majors that reflected and helped further develop my love of storytelling in all its myriad forms, including history.

After all, history isn’t some impersonal timeline of events. It’s about people – who they were, what they did, why they did it, and how it affected them – and how they affected those around them. To understand history’s significance as a collection of stories of humanity, to study and use it and get invested in its characters and lessons, is pertinent now as it is always. The opportunity to work here, in a museum and organization dedicated to local history, seemed like a great chance not only to deepen my own understanding of how Ontario County’s stories affect us, but also to help make it possible for others to do so as well, so that we can all continue to help our county learn and grow into the future. In addition to my admin duties, I hope to help expand the Society’s reach, through social media and other avenues, to more patrons and especially – as OCHS’s new resident young person – younger audiences.

Thank you so much for welcoming me to the Society, and I look forward to meeting you!

We Welcome These New Members

Gary VanDeusen
Karl and Karla Naegler

The Oliver Phelps Fund

Thank you to the following donors:

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<td>Suzanne Winslow</td>
<td>Leigh Jones</td>
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Your Historical Society

1. The Ultimate “She Shed” (Naegler's garden)
2. The Garden Party was a hit with attendees
3. Tim Milford, an historian at St. John's University, Queens, NY, at work on research on Charles Williamson
4. Garden Tour Sponsor Party
5. We finally opened in July!
Mail Box

Dear Marci + Ed,

Thank you so much for hosting my visit to OCHS’s archives. You welcomed me to Canandaigua on short notice and in the midst of a pandemic. Most importantly, though, you have preserved a fantastic collection that will add depth + texture to my dissertation.

I also need to sing Betty’s praises. She made my visit incredibly efficient, pulling materials from the files and saving time for me to dig through the records.

You have done a great job at OCHS! Canandaigua is lucky to have an institution like yours.

Sincerely,
Wade [Morris]

Dear Marci,

A very tardy but sincere WELCOME and congratulations! You are the new OCHS executive director and offer skills, knowledge, and so much more. Plus, you earned a doctorate from the University of Ed!

Best Wishes,
Kathie Meredith and David Crowe

Dear OCHS,

Here is a favorite quote: “Be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire.”

Enclosed is a memorial for Leigh Jones.

I was so fortunate to meet Leigh at the OCHS many years ago. I have wonderful memories of all the trips around the state doing research while having lots of fun.

She will be remembered by many as being so outstanding as Hopewell’s historian and for her highly praised book, “It Happened at Hopewell: Jacob Isenhour’s Cobblestone Legacy.”

Sincerely,
Suzanne Winslow

Welcome Marci!

Enclosed is given in memory of Maureen Baker. I will never be able to enter OCHS without seeing Maureen at the reception desk. She was always smiling and a positive thinker even when she had her cancer battle. It always took me several minutes to get to my volunteer job because I had to visit with her. Sure glad I did!

Barb Stahl

Please accept the enclosed gift in memory of Maureen Baker, who was so dedicated to your wonderful Museum.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Linse

Creative Space

The Ontario County Arts Council

By Mike Nyerges

The Ontario County Arts Council’s mission is “To promote and strengthen the creative capacity of our community by providing diverse opportunities for arts participation, understanding, and appreciation.” But the efforts, talents and expertise of Arts Council members contribute to more than just the local arts scene. Arts Council members also benefit many other charitable community organizations in the area with their talents.

In a recent survey sent out to Arts Council’s members on their involvement in other community cultural organizations, a majority of those who responded — more than half of the Arts Council’s membership — volunteer their time, talents and services in support of many other charitable, not-for-profit community organizations.

Most contribute artwork in community not-for-profit fundraisers once or twice a year. One out of four respondents contribute artwork more frequently, such as 3-5 times a year. But more than half also donate their time and expertise to charitable organizations, such as photographing their events. Nearly half offer free workshops or teach free art classes in support of local organizations a couple of times a year.

The contributions of OCAC members do not go unnoticed. Organizations that have given special recognition to OCAC members include Rotary, Salvation Army and the Ontario County Office of the Aging. Many other organizations recognize the contributions of OCAC members in their newsletters, such as Wood Library and the Arts Council itself. But the very best way to recognize the talent and generosity of OCAC members is to attend the openings of their shows and exhibits, see their work, and buy their work!

Be a patron of the arts.
News and Announcements

At last – We’ve finally opened! Just after the Governor announced that Tier Four could open, we unlocked the front doors, and hung out our “Open” flag in celebration. That was July 7, 2020. All our COVID-19 safety precautions were in place. It felt so good to welcome people into the Museum again. We’d love to see you and show off the fascinating exhibits on Immigration to Ontario County, and Cow to Consumer, a retrospective on the many dairy farms and their home delivery of products.

The art exhibit in the North Gallery, “Colors of Our World,” produced by the Ontario County Arts Council has been a big hit, drawing in people of all ages. It’s interesting to see the reactions of kids from middle school age to teenagers responding to certain pieces. The exhibit will be up for a few weeks more, so please come in and enjoy it. A new art exhibit “Hidden Treasures” will be mounted Saturday, October 24th with an Open House at 3:00p.m. The wealth of artist talent from the OCAC is impressive.

It’s always good to be adaptable. Still, the best laid plans sometimes go awry. After being on the list for two years to host the Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce’s Business Mixer here at the Museum, along came COVID-19. Thanks to the Chamber’s technological solution, our Mixer became a virtual Facebook Live! broadcast on July 8th from the Chamber’s Facebook page.

Our summer fundraiser, Garden Tour 2020, was a complete success. Nearly 350 tickets were sold, and despite the ninety-degree day, people (in masks) thronged the five gardens presented. The Granger Homestead served grilled hot dogs, drinks, and chips, and ONYA sold pies for dessert. We love connecting with our community partners. There were lots of happy faces sitting at socially-distanced tables beneath Granger’s venerable old shade trees, in sight of the Homestead’s gardens. As always, we cannot thank our volunteers enough for their work on this event. Their dedication and generosity, not to mention stamina on a blazing hot day, make OCHS work. We’ve already picked a date for Garden Tour 2021 – July 17th.

Speaking of generosity and dedication, we’d also like to thank the Sponsors of Garden Tour 2020. Our Sponsor Party was held at the beautiful, historic Morgan Samuels Inn, owned by Liza Barnum. The only hitch in the evening was a deluge of rain of biblical proportions, with thunder and lightning included. That didn’t dampen the spirits of the OCHS attendees – in fact, it added to the camaraderie. If you were a Sponsor but didn’t pick up your gift bag, please do so at the Museum. It may be too late soon. And thank you, thank you again!

July 23, 2020 came all too soon. We said goodbye to Ed Varno as he retired to ride into the sunset with Vanessa. We didn’t let him go without a fanfare, though. Judi and Fritz Cermak had a sign made to put outside that said: Honk! Ed’s Last Day! along with some special balloons. Staff put on a small luncheon in the meeting room and Pioneer Kitchen. His Honor, the Mayor of Canandaigua, Bob Palumbo, read a Declaration making the day officially Ed Varno Day. Wilma created an exhibit panel of Ed’s career. There are a couple of things still in the works to honor Ed. We’ll keep you posted.

Our part-time receptionist and front desk trainer, Barb Hill, has created an Excel spreadsheet to track attendance at the Museum for each month. In the month of July, 186 people came into the Museum to see exhibits, do research, volunteer, or have meetings here. Not bad for our first month open after the Pandemic Shutdown.

You may see that we have a couple of familiar faces behind masks, acting as receptionists: Judi Cermak and Kathy Cooper. Both have volunteered to man the desk on Thursdays and Fridays. We remain closed on Saturdays for the time being, as well as Wednesday nights. We could use a volunteer to come in 10a.m. to 4:30pm on Wednesdays (training included). If you’d enjoy welcoming people, doing a bit of paperwork, and handling phone calls, let us know. We guarantee a convivial atmosphere.

On July 7, 2020, the Board approved a plan to hire a new member of staff (part-time) to be an administrative assistant to the Director. Please welcome Taylor Wallace and read about her in this issue.

As ever, we value and appreciate all our volunteers. But we still need more active, willing, and able volunteers. There are a few projects coming up that will need some muscle, mechanical ability, or a pickup truck. They may be once-a-year, or every-so-often. If you’d like to volunteer or know someone who’d be agreeable, please let us know.
Diphtheria, a bacterial infection, is now considered rare in the United States. In the fall of 1920, the Democrat & Chronicle (Nov. 29, 1920) reported a thousand cases of diphtheria in the City of Rochester. Fifty-six children died from the disease there. Diphtheria is now preventable with the use of reliable vaccines. As a result, between 1980 and 2004, only fifty-seven cases were reported in the entire US.

Scarlet fever was one of the last recurring epidemics faced by parents in the early twentieth century. An often-fatal disease striking children, it carried the added danger that its young victims often developed Bright’s Disease or severe heart problems later in life. Hundreds of children died from scarlet fever in Rochester in the 1870s. The first preventive treatments were developed in 1924. Clinics for testing were often held in schools in the fall. In December 1920, the young son of an obscure Army officer named Eisenhower contracted scarlet fever. He died two weeks later. It was one of the tragic stories many parents feared might become their own.

Smallpox epidemics broke out in North America long before the Revolution. Smallpox was so feared that when just one case from the Town of Seneca was reported in 1891, the Buffalo Morning Express (Nov. 22, 1891) covered the story.

In the early spring of 1894, smallpox broke out in the Village of Manchester. According to the Democrat & Chronicle (Mar. 28, 1894), local authorities ordered the quarantine of “various places” associated with the dread disease.

The Village of Canandaigua actually opened a pest house in December 1902, where smallpox victims were quarantined. Built along the “feeder” outlet, it was actually funded by Mary Clark Thompson. Our Pest House closed about 1922 and was sold two years later, as smallpox inoculations had greatly diminished the threat.

Tuberculosis was another dread disease that prompted local action. In 1909, Mrs. Thompson funded a bacteriological laboratory to serve the whole of Ontario County. From 1909 to 1939, the county operated its own tuberculosis sanitarium on Oakmount Rd. in East Bloomfield. Treatment there was voluntary. In 1922-23, the Canandaigua Rotary Club built a “preventorium” for children with early stage tuberculosis behind the old Thompson Hospital. In 1945, the county tuberculosis committee used portable X-ray equipment to test for tuberculosis in Canandaigua schools. With parental consent, children in seventh grade and higher, together with adults, were tested. County-wide, three hundred eighty-nine students and two hundred eighty teachers tested positive for “TB” and were X-rayed.

Poliomyelitis (Polio), is a viral disease that also spreads from unsanitary conditions. Poor hand washing, the consumption of contaminated food or water, and sneezing or coughing also spreads the disease. In the early twentieth century, the results of polio were called “Infantile Paralysis.” The March of Dimes, a charity that focused on children, was created to combat the disease, whose most prominent victim was President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Today, polio has been eliminated from all but three nations: Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan. However, in the early 1900s, both the actual disease, and fear of the disease, reached epidemic proportions here, and it wasn’t until the Salk and Sabin vaccines were developed in the mid-1950s that this area would be free from polio. Since Jonas Salk’s vaccine was administered by injection, massive “shot clinics” were held in local schools; the Daily Messenger reported hundreds of students receiving their shots at the Canandaigua Elementary School in July and August 1955.

A measure of the extent to which epidemics permeated the thoughts of local people was the renaming of Federal Hollow as Rushville when the first post office opened there in 1819. Dr. Ira Bryant suggested that the village be renamed in honor of Dr. Benjamin Rush – signer of the Declaration of Independence, former Surgeon General of the Continental Army, noted scientist and promoter of inoculation for smallpox, and a man who died in a typhus epidemic in 1813.

Our present experience is different from that of previous generations. We have made important advances in understanding, treating, and preventing epidemic diseases. As the outbreak of COVID-19 shows, however, we continue to share our ancestors’ experience with pandemics and epidemics while we wait for a cure and effective means of prevention.
The OCHS Organization

Staff
Marci Diehl          Executive Director
Wilma Townsend      Curator
Preston Pierce       Educator
Taylor Wallace       Administrative Assistant
Barb Hill            Part-time Receptionist
Webmaster            TLC for Coaches
Betty McMahon        Research Coordinator*
Gene Rogers          Building Support*
Linda Alexander      Librarian*
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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 - 12 noon, 1 - 4:30 pm

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.

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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 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 Bookshop purchases
Subscription to our quarterly newsletter, CHRONICLES

Ontario County Historical Society Membership Application Form

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Address__________________________ ZIP____________
Optional Alternate Winter Address from ___/___ to ___/___
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General Membership Support:
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___ Centennial $100; ___ Benefactor $150; ___ Heritage Circle $250; ___ Director $500+
___ Please accept my additional gift of $________
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Return to:
OCHS; 55 No. Main St.
Canandaigua, NY 14424
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date:   Event:

10/17    BBQ Take-Out Fundraiser at FLX BBQ. Time: 2-5pm.
10/24    Opening of “Hidden Treasurers” OCAC Art Exhibit, North Gallery
Thru 4/2021    Exhibit: “Coming to America! Ontario County Immigrants,” South Gallery