



MONTGOMERY
COUNTY NY

Made of Something Stronger

Montgomery County Dept. of History & Archives

Annual Report

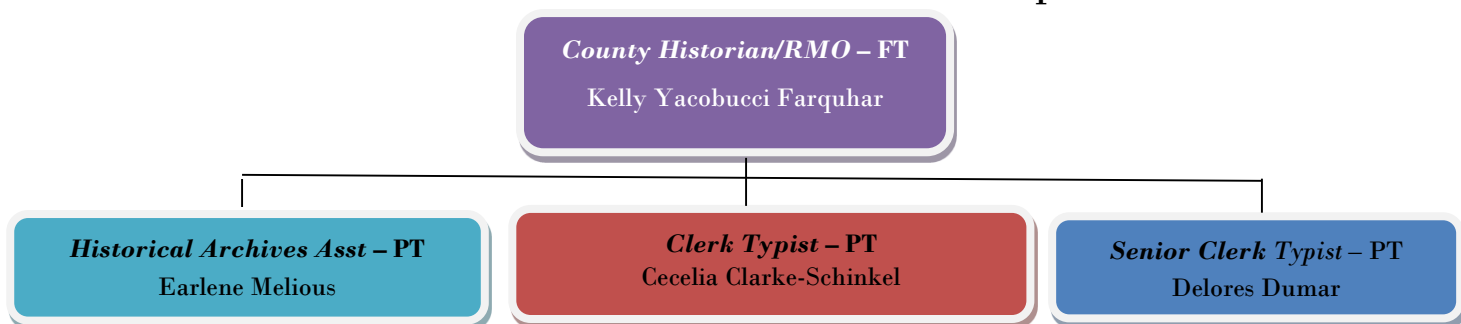
Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar, Montgomery County Historian/RMO

2020



The Montgomery County Department of History & Archives, since its establishment in 1934, has been a Mecca for genealogical researchers across the nation. The valuable resources and outstanding staff have made this research library renowned to those in search of family history. While genealogy has helped attract visitors, the department is also very dedicated to preserving Montgomery County’s local history, a history that has developed over the past 2 ½+ centuries. Teaching the public on events that impacted the county’s culture, society, industry, transportation, education, etc. and recognizing their place in the national arena has been a long-standing mission of the department.

2020 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART – Department Staff



As liaison to the state agencies, the County Historian provides support to and organizes meetings of the county’s municipal historians. The County Historian, as Records Management Officer, maintains physical and intellectual control of the inactive records created by county departments and placed in her custody. Additionally, she provides support and assistance with writing New York State Archives grants.

RESEARCH LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

1. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT & PROJECTS

- a. Assistance provided to public in the Research Library for which the total usage for the first 2 ½ months of the year was **113** (*Staff*)
- b. Staff answered a total of **33** genealogy research requests in 2020, which resulted in **\$2,000.00** in revenues turned over to the County Treasurer.
- c. Collected revenues of **\$326.03** in historians’ fees for copies, *Steeple Chase* (church histories for Minden & Canajoharie), Canajoharie & Green Hill UGRR/African Americans walking tour booklets, maps/posters, postage, genealogy forms and CDs. Donations totaled **\$75.00** turned over to the County Treasurer.
- d. The Catalog of the department’s collections generating revenue of **\$43.90** that was turned over to the County Treasurer.
- e. Added **42** surnames files to our collection of family files for a total of **2,961** surnames
- f. Working with Data Processing dept. to update department webpage and surname file list & catalog to make them accessible to the public via the county website.
- g. Continued organizing & improving descriptions of photo binders



- h. Accessions for the department: **34** items given by donors from across the nation – **24** for the library and **10** for the archives including 100+ bound books of *Courier-Standard* newspapers (dated 1892-2004)
- i. *Retrievals of Archival Documents* (both 2nd and Records Center) – **14** incl. maps
- j. Documented impact of COVID-19 on world, U.S., NYS, and Montgomery County in a timeline
- k. Compiled draft plan for re-opening Department of History & Archives to the public in the era of COVID-19 pandemic

2. PUBLIC RELATIONS & OUTREACH

- a. Facebook page activity for Department of History & Archives to report on news, accessions & various things happening at the department increased to **977** “Likes” at the end of Dec. 2020 and reached **3,712** people
- b. Began publishing “this day in Montgomery County history...” with dates relative to historical events in Montgomery County on department’s Facebook page
- c. Attended virtual monthly meetings of Underground Railroad Consortium, along with representatives from other agencies/groups across New York State associated with Underground Railroad projects/research – *Kelly* (March, April, August, September, October, November)
- d. Worked with Tourism Director at the Fulton-Montgomery Chamber of Commerce to post information on the Underground Railroad project in Montgomery County on the Chamber’s website in two locations: <http://www.visitmontgomerycountyny.com/things-to-do/?cat=Suggested+Trips> (blog posts for Canajoharie and Amsterdam) and <http://www.visitmontgomerycountyny.com/underground-railroad-itinerary/> with links and several ways to find it on the tourism website. The information has also been included in the Montgomery County Travel Guide for 2018.
 - The Chamber has reported that in 2020 online statistics, the Underground Railroad content had 1742 views with an average of 48 seconds before clicking through to the UGRR itinerary.
- e. “Coffee with a Historian” program started February (10 attendees – in person)
 - Virtual program (Sept) – Jerry Snyder’s “Passing Through the Mohawk Valley” postcards (10 participants coast to coast – CT, CA, Boston, Rochester, etc.)
 - Virtual program (Oct.) – Bob Cudmore’s stories (10 participants)
 - Virtual program (Nov.) – NYS Historian Devin Lander discussed “NY in a Minute” podcasts, *Rev War 250* commemoration, NY History Day, *New York History Journal*, etc. (12 participants – ME, Lake Ontario, VA, etc.)
- f. Outreach programming, consisting of presentations, displays, etc. is vital to this department’s success. Often, this programming takes place outside of the regular work hours. Outreach presentations included (*Kelly*):
 - Participated / presented on the Underground Railroad at “Museum Mondays” at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site (Feb. 3rd) (approx. 25 attendees)
 - Virtual presentation via Zoom on “Underground Railroad & Abolitionists in Montgomery County” for HAL meeting (Aug. 19th) – approx. 18 attendees
- g. Requests for information (historical / genealogical / or general in nature) come into the department either by telephone, written correspondence or via e-mail. Requests for information come not only from the general public, but also from other county departments, various agencies (Chamber of Commerce, New York State



Court System Historical Society, New York State Archives, etc.), title searchers, surveyors, and media. Staff also handled a daily average of 4-5 telephone calls (approx. 1,222 calls) of general inquiries for genealogy and local history. (*Staff*).

3. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- a. Provided family historical and parcel history information on Hoke family and 131 Mohawk St., Canajoharie, for Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank Feasibility Study on Hoke House
- b. Sold the F.J. & G. Railroad Trolley Car No. 29 to Historic Amsterdam League for future preservation

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- a. Attended APHNYS Conference – virtual (Sept)
- b. Attended NYS Family History Conference – virtual (Sept)

5. PUBLICATIONS & WRITING

- a. Writing is a significant aspect of any historian’s job. The revenue generated from the royalties for the Montgomery County and Amsterdam *Images of America* series of photograph books, published in 2003 and 2007 respectively, and turned over to the County Treasurer totaled **\$87.24**.
- b. The culmination of the 2011 *Preserve New York* grant survey of the continued research on documenting Underground Railroad, anti-slavery activity and African American population in Montgomery County during the 19th century was the 192 page book entitled “Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Montgomery County, New York, 1820-1890” As part of the grant, books were distributed to local school libraries, as well as the public libraries in Montgomery County. The book was also available for sale -- **\$105.00** in sales was turned over to the County Treasurer. The information has also been made available for educational purposes online at the Dept. of History & Archives website. (*Kelly*)
- c. Collaborated with Montgomery County Senior Planner and Fulton-Montgomery Chamber of Commerce Tourism Director with creation of TravelStory app and writing of script, called "Cycling the Erie Canal," highlighting various historical points across Montgomery County traveling via the Bike Path
- d. Continued as member of Advisory Board to review abstracts of potential articles for newly revised *New York History* journal as administered by Cornell University Press and New York State Museum (2-3 times per year)

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Records Center Activities

Departments	Dispositions within Rec Ctr (in cubic feet)	Transfers to Rec Ctr (in cubic feet)	Requests for retrievals	Records Currently housed at Rec Ctr (in cubic feet) as of Dec. 31st
Board of Elections	---	---	---	97.6
Legislature / Supervisors / Administrator	---	---	---	67
Cooperative Extension	---	---	---	60.5



Department of History and Archives

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County Historian/RMO

County Attorney	---	---	---	4
Data Processing	---	---	---	1
DPW	---	---	---	18.5
History & Archives	0.5	.5	---	1.75
Mental Health	---	---	---	5
Personnel / Civil Service	---	---	---	250
Probation	5	21	28	275
Public Defender	29	---	---	14
Public Health	22	---	---	494
Real Property	---	---	---	1
Treasurer	18	35	---	274.6
Youth Bureau	---	---	---	3.5
Grand Totals	74.5 c.f.	56.5 c.f.	28	1887.45 c.f.

Total number of boxes currently being stored within the Records Center is
2,864.45 -- 1,887.45 (inactive) + **977** (archival)

There are a number of projects that have occupied my time as County Historian (see above for Historian projects) and Records Management Officer.

1. Served as Project Director for payroll records digitization project through NYS Archives' Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund [began July 2019] (Jan. – Dec.)
2. Coordinated shredding of county's inactive records through NYS Archives contract with ConfiData/Empire Recycling (September)
3. Reconvened Laserfiche sub-committee (myself; Greg Oliver & Dan Colon – IT; Bill Roehr; Karl Gustafson, Jr.) meeting with goal to further implement Laserfiche within the County and with partner municipalities
4. Orchestrated the adoption of new LGS-1 Records Retention schedule to replace previous CO-2 Records Retention Schedule

COMMITTEES

The County Historian/RMO served on the following committees:

1. Association of Public Historians of NYS (APHNYS) annual conference planning Committee
2. Path Through History – Mohawk Valley workgroup
3. Montgomery County Records Advisory Board – Chair
4. Mohawk Valley Museum Consortium
5. Mohawk Country tourism group
6. Stone Arabia Battlefield committee
7. Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State
8. Montgomery County Emergency/safety planning committee



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County Historian/RMO

At the beginning of 2020, we were all hopeful for the New Year. However, it turned out to be vastly different from all of our expectations both personally and professionally. With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, mid-March saw the shutdown of industries across the board. Our own Montgomery County offices closed to the public as we began a new reality of working remotely from home with efforts to continue serving our patrons.

As I entered my 25th year of working for Montgomery County, I anxiously anticipated the culmination of a research project on which I had been involved in for a number of months (and something I had been hoping would happen for many years) only to be shut down mere days before the scheduled visit. Definitely a disappointment, however I am looking forward to the future when that project will resume.

Soon after our office closed, the nation watched in horror as the daily infection rates and sadly, deaths, began to climb. At this time, county and local historians across New York State began to document COVID-19's impact upon our communities.

By mid-May, Montgomery County announced the temporary lay-off for some personnel – this included the entire staff of the Department of History & Archives. Unfortunately, the pandemic has caused delays for many projects which are seemingly insignificant compared to the loss of lives, jobs, and personal connections. Enough gratitude cannot be expressed for the front-line medical workers, first responders, grocery store employees, delivery staff, Public Works staff, etc. who put themselves at the forefront during this global crisis to make the rest of our lives somewhat normal.

Returning to the office in August proved, for me, to be surreal. As my part-time staff would not return to work until mid-November, the once bustling office/library was silenced except for the occasional phone call to see if the library had re-opened for public use. The time was used catching up on the backlog of emails and postal mail that had piled up in the interim of our shutdown, as well as researching guidelines and drafting a re-opening plan with protocols that ensure the future safety of our employees and the public that uses our library when we can safely open our doors again.

I wish to thank the County Executive, the County Legislature, colleagues, patrons, and donors for their continued support of this department, its collection and the Records Management Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar
Montgomery County Historian/RMO