



Historian's Bulletin



June 2018

Greetings Municipal Historians!

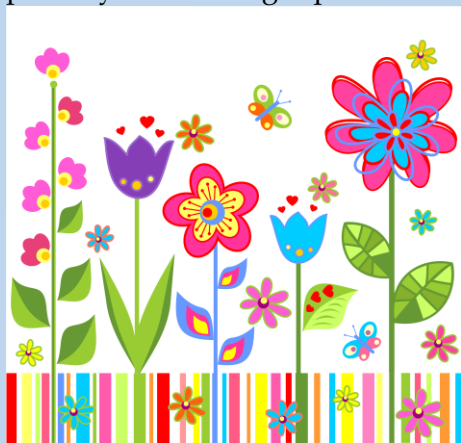
Half of 2018 is already almost behind us - I think that someone needs to tell Mother Nature that summer is upon us!

The summer season brings many events and happenings in our county. Make sure you see some of the events in this newsletter that are going to occur over the course of the summer.

A couple of events that I have scheduled are a walking tour of Canajoharie highlighting the Underground Railroad, anti-slavery activity and African American life in that village. The tour is part of programming for the Arkell Museum and will take place at 11am on Saturday, July 14th. We'll meet in the parking lot of the Arkell Museum and because we will be doing a lot of walking up and down some hills, good sneakers is recommended.

On July 18th at 6pm, I will be presenting to the Historic Amsterdam League (HAL) on Ann Maria Schram, a woman who served as a nurse during the Civil War. Then, as a partner with the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State (UGRCNYS), I will be setting up an exhibit and presenting on the Underground Railroad in Montgomery County at the New York State Fair on Wednesday, August 29th. The exhibit will be there for the day while the presentation will occur at 6pm that evening. The NYS Fair is allowing UGRCNYS to display and present in the Stickley Room and the Empire Theatre for the entire duration of the fair. Each day there will be a different UGRCNYS partner hosting their exhibit and presenting a topic related to Frederick Douglass or their Underground Railroad site or program. See me for more details.

Speaking of meetings - our next meeting will be held on June 27th and I would like to have a trivia game to test your knowledge of Montgomery County history (all for fun of course! ☺) so put on your thinking caps.



As always, please let me know if there are specific topics that you would like to see covered at some of our historians' meetings.

Warm wishes for warmer weather! ☺

Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar
Montgomery County Historian/RMO

Notes from Historians' meeting 11/9/17 - Dept. of History & Archives

Attendees: Kelly Farquhar (Mont Co. Historian), Earlene Melious (Mohawk), Robert Carter (Minden), Eileen Chambers (Fort Plain), Mat Rapacz (St. Johnsville), Beverly Guiffre (Fonda), Bill Maring (Root), Lestra Vertucci (Town of Amsterdam), John Tokarowski (Hagaman), Rob von Hasseln (City of Amsterdam) and Karl Gustafson (representing Mont Co Exec, Matthew Ossenfort).

Cultural Resources Survey (update): Kelly gave an update on the cultural resources survey for rural parts of western Montgomery County. The survey is complete and the consultant is finalizing the report and compiling the accompanying maps and photographs. When it is printed, a copy will be distributed to each of the five towns covered in the survey – Minden, St. Johnsville, Canajoharie, Palatine and Root. There was discussion of possibly putting the historical narrative portion of the survey report online.

Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank: Karl discussed the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank (GMVLB) and reported that the nature of land banks is to help communities with blighted or distressed properties. It is Greater Mohawk Valley because it covers a six-county region across the Mohawk Valley including Montgomery, Fulton, Herkimer, Oneida, Otsego and Schoharie Counties. The objective is to work with the communities to allow the Land Bank to use their resources to rehab and stabilize to resell, demolish, reconstruct, and/or deconstruct structures and preserve artifacts. If there is an historically significant property, the basic mission is to try to preserve that property.

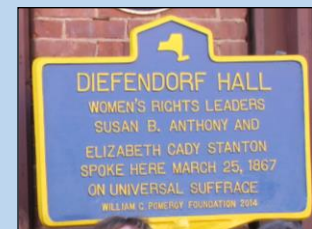
Karl is the Chairman of the GMVLB. He stressed that there is an awareness of the importance of historic structures. Currently, there are approximately 270,000 abandoned or blighted structures across New York State. About 30% of those are historic structures that have been documented.

GMVLB procured items from the now demolished Webster Wagner home in Palatine Bridge. Those items are currently in storage until it is decided how best to preserve them and showcase the history of the once magnificent home.

GMVLB also provided some funding to assist Montgomery County with the cultural resources survey of historic resources in the rural areas of western Montgomery County.

Historians can work with GMVLB to make them aware of a structure that is distressed. As historians, you can let your municipalities know of a structure's historical significance and indicate that it may be a project that GMVLB can work on ... or let the foreclosing entity (e.g. in some cases, the County) know. In future meetings, Karl can update us on historic preservation activities.

Historic Markers list: There was discussion of compiling a list of historic markers for each municipality. Over the years, markers have been put up and come down and if we can establish a list and keep it current, then we will know if any turn up missing and what information was on them.



Parcel history cards: Montgomery County Real Property sent their filing cabinets containing parcel history cards to Dept. of History & Archives. The data from the cards is now available online so we can either keep them for our use or distribute to any

interested historians. History & Archives is not keeping the cards so we are offering any historian cards for their municipality.

Association of Public Historians of New York State (APHNYS): The Association of Public Historians of New York State is an organization representing over 1,600 local government historians across the state. NYS Law requires that a local historian is appointed in each city, town, village, or borough, and allows for the appointment of an historian for each county. Annual conferences are held offering training and items of interest to the local historian. There are 12 APHNYS regions across the state hosting regional meetings that are open to all APHNYS members. Ours is Region 7 with Dick Williams, Historian for Village of Clinton/Town of Kirkland, as the Regional Coordinator. Membership in APHNYS is encouraged as the information provided at the conference and regional meetings is extremely useful to conducting our jobs as historians professionally and is great for networking with other historians. Membership dues is determined by the size (population) of your municipality. For more information, see www.aphnys.org

Historian Go-Around:

Lestra would like to get together with the historians from the villages in Amsterdam to share information.

John discussed the activities at the Hagaman Historical Society and their interest in compiling a history of Hagaman. He received inquiries and is also involved with sorting documents at the historical society.

Mat will be submitting an application for a National Register nomination for an historic district in the Village of St. Johnsville. He has been working on historical inquiries from the EPA, etc. Along with local area history, he is researching items in the collection at the Margaret Reaney Memorial Library going through documents, as well as cleaning up and working on a map for the village cemetery.

Eileen conducted a walking tour of the Fort Plain Cemetery in August and she will be doing a cemetery walk for the 8th graders at Fort Plain School. She put together a WWI exhibit for Diefendorf Hall at 47 Main Street. Eileen and Rob Carter have been hosting History Roundtable discussions at the Fort Plain Library.

Rob C. is the recipient of an old safe from the Town of Minden. He is also planning for 2018 to commemorate the 220th birthday of the Town of Minden and the 4th "History Day" event in June.

Bill is working with the Town in cleaning up cemeteries in Root. 2023 will be the 200th anniversary of the town's creation and he is coordinating with the Root Historical Society to commemorate the anniversary.

Bev researched the history of the site at the southeast corner of Main and Bridge Streets. She will be conducting a village tour in the spring. Also, she will be talking with the Reformed Church congregation about the church structure when it was moved from Center Street across the railroad tracks to its present location on Broadway.

Earlene has been doing deed and D.B.A. (“Doing business as...”) research, i.e. property abstracts for the town. She is also making a list of the district schools that once existed in the Town of Mohawk.

Rob v. regularly meets with Amsterdam’s mayor to discuss matters related to history. As a member of the Historic Amsterdam League (HAL), Rob reported that they conducted their 6th ghost tour in October. Their upcoming 7th neighborhood tour will focus on the east end of the city. Rob is working on the Chuctanunda Trail designing placards and trail markers, as well as creating a Sanford Mills Historic District. He reported on a \$1000 scholarship that will be available to an Amsterdam High School student pursuing a degree in history or library studies.

Please send me information about the work that you are doing as a public historian in Montgomery County and I’ll include it in upcoming newsletters. We love to share with each other the progress and success of our projects, as well as any difficulties. You can either send me a little note in the mail or by email to kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us.

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 27th 2018 at Department of History & Archives, Old Courthouse, 9 Park St., Fonda, NY.

If you’ve never been to an historians’ meeting before, we would love to see you there! Please RSVP to (518) 853-8186 or email kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us.

Listen to the newest podcast which explores the story of New York State and the unique tales of New Yorkers.



Hosted by New York State Historian Devin Lander and Don Wildman, host of the Travel Channel’s “Mysteries at the Museum.”

Beers with Billy Tavern Night, June 29th, 2018, Old Fort Johnson, 2 Mergner Road, Fort Johnson NY just west of the intersection of NYS Routes 5 & 67. It’s exactly 280 years since a young William Johnson first arrived in the Mohawk Valley. Help us celebrate this anniversary with a tavern night on the lawn of his 1749 house – featuring Wolf Hollow Brewery craft beers, locally smoked BBQ and a variety of 18th century games. Come join us Friday, June 29, from 5:30-9:00 pm in Fort Johnson NY.

\$25 admission includes beer or iced tea, pulled pork BBQ dinner, games and a souvenir glass. Tickets available on site and online at www.oldfortjohnson.org. Must be 21 or older to drink beer.

Disease, Death and Mourning in the 18th Century – Sat., July 14th 11am-4pm, Johnson Hall State Historic Site, 139 Hall Ave., Johnstown, NY 12095. Johnson Hall will be draped in mourning as the anniversary of the July 11, 1774 death of Sir William Johnson is observed during an Open House. At 11:30am Anne Clothier will speak on “*Maladies, Medicine and Mortality in Upstate New York, 1750-1850.*” At 1pm, “*18th Century Medicine and Surgery*” will be discussed by Paul Supley. At 2:30pm Wade Wells will present “*Funeral and Mourning Practices of the Period,*” & will accompany the casket in the White Parlor throughout the day. The Hall will remain draped in mourning on July 15. Free admission – Donations to help support the event will be greatly appreciated. www.facebook.com/johnsonhallstatehistoricsite

MINDEN HISTORY FAIR 2018,
"MINDEN 220" by Robert C. Carter,
 Historian, Town of Minden



This year, the 4th Annual Minden History Fair celebrated Minden's 220th Anniversary, being formed on March 2nd, 1798. This year's theme was "MINDEN 220", meaning the 220th

Anniversary of our founding.

It was again held in the Harry Hoag Gymnasium of the Ft Plain Elementary School where many exhibitors set up tables to display their collections. We had a few new people set up tables also. A couple visitors even asked me if they could set up a table at next year's event! Among the presenters were myself, The Ft Plain Museum (FPM), 47 Main, Eileen Chambers (Ft Plain Village Historian), Fort Plain Free Library (FPL), two 18th century children's toys exhibits (hands-on), Churches from Frey's Bush and Ft Plain UMC, and a host of others. Stewarts Shops from Ft Plain provided free ice cream for the



afternoon. Many visitors enjoyed the showing of the movie, "Drums Along the Mohawk" which ran in a loop all day.

Children of all ages played with the 18th century toys such as paints, quill pen and ink, hoops and blocks. Presenters had on display many photographs from way back when, old glass bottles and postcards, photo albums, old newspapers and much, much more. This year we raffled off three "baskets", two children's and one adult. These were filled with period correct items such as maps, toys, games,



information booklets, as well as some local items. Many items for the baskets were donated from the FPL and FPM, as well as individually. Donations from the sale of raffle tickets were presented to the FPM and FPL. We had "Minden 220" buttons made up to pass out to each visitor. The local newspaper

was there for interviews and photos. The FPM graciously had on display a sleigh and a horse carriage, which both were made in Ft Plain during the 1800s.

We had a children's costume parade as well as photos on the sleigh. The children greatly enjoyed being dressed up and got a kick of showing off their costumes!



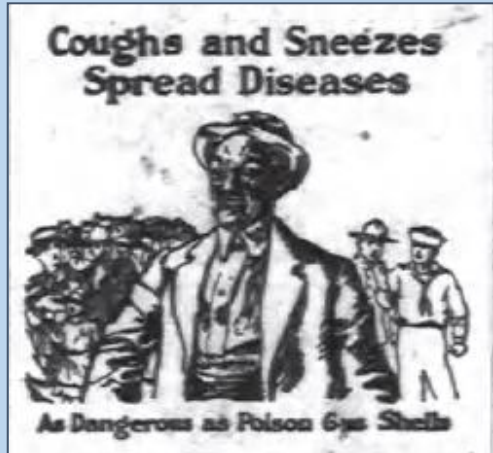
Children's were the 18th toys/ladies. A questions past were answered. I

dressed as a Colonial Gentleman and paraded around the event representing Minden's past. Many compliments were made on the event as well as my period costume. Next year's event will be in the planning stages very soon and we hope to see even more exhibitors and presenters. Overall, everyone had a wonderful time. See you next year!

Flu pandemic of 1918 paralyzed valley

by Mat Rapacz, Historian, Town & Village of St. Johnsville

As World War I was winding down, people on the homefront were facing another type of enemy, unseen and deadly, that forced them to work together. That enemy was the flu, the worst outbreak that ever hit the Mohawk Valley, not to mention most of the rest of the world. Schools, churches, libraries, most factories, and almost every other type of public place were closed for much of October, 1918 in New York state by what became known as the Spanish influenza.



The disease's exact origin was uncertain then and still is uncertain today. Early signs of the illness were observed on the Eastern front among German troops in 1917. An early outbreak in the United States apparently came from Camp Funston, Kansas in March, 1918.

One prominent characteristic of the flu was its suddenness, a weakness and pains in the eyes, ears, head or back with soreness all over. Many patients were dizzy, some vomited, most had fevers of 100 to 104, eyes often appeared bloodshot. In many cases there was running from the nose and a cough. In most cases, symptoms disappeared after three or four days. Some patients, however, quickly developed pneumonia, inflammation of the ear, or meningitis and died. From

infection to death was usually about a week.

The St. Johnsville *Enterprise and News* contained 13 obituaries in its October 16 edition, 17 in the October 23 edition, and 8 in the October 30 edition. The *Journal and Courier* of Little Falls had 13 obituaries in its October 15 edition, and 14 in its October 22 edition while reporting that Herkimer had 11 deaths from the flu that week. No age group or walk of life was spared.

The flu spread quickly. In St. Johnsville, schools were closed on October 7 when 204 pupils were stricken and 500 cases were reported village-wide. The movie theater was ordered closed and churches were asked to postpone meetings. A few days later, pool halls and saloons were closed.

An emergency hospital was set up at the Masonic Temple headed by health officer Dr. Charles Wagner. Industrialist Joseph Reaney hired a nurse and loaned her to the hospital. Mrs. J.R. Fleeman, wife of the village president, made soup and, with volunteer help, distributed it throughout the village. Local clergymen went without sleep visiting the homes of the ill and dying. Everyone who was able lent a hand, from the King's Daughters who served lunches to the Mohawk Condensed Milk Company, which donated milk, to Glen Telephone Company, which donated a phone.

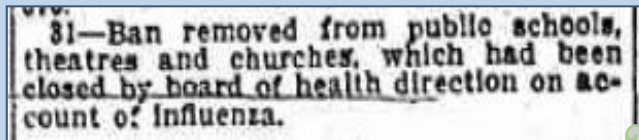
The village's request to the state for doctors and nurses, the 68th received, was turned down because none were available. The state had appropriated \$50,000 to fight the disease. Reported the *Enterprise and News*, "The thing came on so quick and was so universal that people scarcely realized what was going on outside their immediate vicinity ..."

What was going on outside their vicinity was not pleasant. In Chicago, for instance, the county coroner asked the transit system to drape several trolleys in black as makeshift hearses. In

Philadelphia the flu was responsible for 13,000 deaths that October and one-third of all the dead in Pennsylvania. In Albany, 231 died near the end of October and 800 a day perished in New York City. Oswego reported 3,000 cases with but 10 doctors. One half million people in New York State were ill or convalescing in the last week of October.

No place on Earth was spared. The Eskimo population was hit hard by the flu and 80-90 percent of the Samoan population was affected.

“Physicians, nurses, and all who have to do with the care of the sick and the homes where they are, worked to the limit of endurance and it is extremely difficult to get help of any kind,” said the *Journal and Courier*. “Undertakers are hardly able to take care of the cases at hand, and have had difficulty in obtaining supplies. “The city has been divided into districts and public-



81—Ban removed from public schools, theatres and churches, which had been closed by board of health direction on account of influenza.

List of 1918 events recalls when Amsterdam reopens schools and public places closed due to flu outbreak, *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, January 4,

spirited men and women have donated the use of automobiles to carry nurses from house to house, covering more territory than would otherwise be possible.”

The newspaper reported on October 22 that an additional order prohibited any lingering or loafing in saloons and threatened closure of the drinking places if the order were

not obeyed.

In Dolgeville, it was reported that “physicians are nearly worn out in their efforts fighting the epidemic.” Herkimer business was reported to be crippled, and in Middleville the tannery closed for lack of workers.

Advice on how to guard against the sickness was varied and sometimes contradictory: stop shaving, wear fresh pajamas, stop shaking hands, exercise, don’t exercise, take castor oil, don’t take it, stop circulating books, etc.

The Surgeon General of the United States, Robert Blue, recommended wholesome foods, a proper proportion of work, play, and rest, and an avoidance of overcrowding. “One should keep out of crowds and stuffy places as much as possible, keep homes offices, and workshops well aired, spend some time out of doors each day, walk to work if at all practicable -- in short, make every possible effort to breathe as much pure air as possible.”

Once a person got the disease, the advice was simple: go to bed, and stay away from everybody but the nurse or doctor. Don’t breathe on anybody. Take only medicines prescribed by a doctor. As might be expected, home remedies, patent medicines and other influenza specials found their way to the sick anyway. No medicine was found to be effective against the flu’s onslaught.

By the last week in October, the worst was over for the Mohawk Valley and much of the state, and quarantines were lifted. The flu lasted a little longer in Europe, about to the armistice which ended World War I on November 11. Vestiges of it continued into 1919. No one could say why it had ceased any more than they could say why it began in the first place.

World-wide, the flu is estimated to have claimed 20-25 million lives with about 550,000 (some estimates range as high as 850,000) of those in the United States. By comparison, American World War I deaths from combat were 53,513 with about 30,000 more perishing from the flu. Total World War I deaths from all nations were about 10 million.

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