



Historian's Bulletin



November 2017

Greetings Municipal Historians!

Wow! I can hardly believe that 2017 is coming to a close next month. The leaves are falling and we have been having a bit of an "Indian summer" in spite of the calendar - something that Mother Nature neglected to give us when it was due.

Don't forget that November is New York History month - so many things that you can do to commemorate a piece of your town or village's history. At our last meeting, we discussed a few places to publicize that history - see the notes below.



Speaking of meetings - our next meeting will be held on November 9th and I would like to have a lunch meeting along with a bit of a trivia game to test your knowledge of Montgomery County history (all for fun of course! ☺) so put on your thinking caps.



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

Happy fall!

Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar
Montgomery County Historian/RMO

Notes from Historians' meeting 5/8/17 - Dept. of History & Archives

Thank you to New York State Historian, Devin Lander, for attending our meeting.

Attendees: Kelly Farquhar (Mont Co. Historian), Robert Carter (Minden), Earlene Melious (Mohawk), Eileen Chambers (Fort Plain), Mat Rapacz (St. Johnsville), Dennis Malcolm (Ames), Beverly Guiffre (Fonda), Barbara Alkinburgh (Nelliston), Bill Maring (Root), Lorraine Whiting (Charleston), Steve Helmin (Glen), Karl Gustafson (representing Mont Co Exec, Matthew Ossenfort), and Devin Lander (New York State Historian).

NYS Historian website: Devin Lander discussed the new New York State Historian website which can be found at <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/research-collections/state-history> or it can

be accessed from the New York State Museum website. The website, an idea for exchange of information among historians, features notices of upcoming events across the state, articles written and submitted by public historians (both academic and municipal), available grant opportunities, announcements, and resources. He encourages everyone to look and submit items of interest.

You can download a History Month promotion kit from the NYS Museum website <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/historymonth/> for information on how to promote History month events in your community.



In the near future, Devin would like to post historians' annual reports online. By the end of this year, these reports may be streamlined so that municipal historians can submit their annual report online in a fillable form.

NY History blog: Another good source for getting the word out for historian related events and articles is the New York History blog, compiled by John Warren. The blog is accessible at <http://newyorkhistoryblog.org/> and features news reports, links, event listings, and announcements of new publications and other resources.

Significant anniversaries in 2017: Discussion of the significant anniversaries in 2017 – (1) 100th anniversary of the passage of the New York State referendum giving women the right to vote in the state. New York State has established a Women's Suffrage Commission (<https://www.ny.gov/programs/new-york-state-womens-suffrage-commission>), chaired by Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, to plan and execute programs marking this anniversary through 2020; (2) 100th anniversary of the U.S. entrance into World War I. The New York State World War I Commission website launched April 6th 2017. The website is interactive and historians can submit WWI related events, stories, monuments and artifacts at <https://www.ny.gov/programs/new-york-state-wwi-centennial-commission>; and (3) 200th anniversary of beginning construction on the Erie Canal.

Historian Go-Around:

Mat received material from the Anita Smith Collection from her tenure as town/village historian. Along with local area history, he is researching items in the collection at the Margaret Reaney Memorial Library.

Eileen submitted an application to the Pomeroy Foundation for an historic marker for the Nelson Greene house which has been successful and the marker received. She will again be conducting a walking tour of the Fort Plain Cemetery in August and will also present with Rob Carter to the Fort Plain Seniors.

Rob is planning for the 3rd annual Minden History Day set for June 3rd 2017 where the Fort Plain school teachers will present. He is also planning a celebration for 2018 to commemorate the 220th birthday of the Town of Minden.

Bill continues to work on abandoned cemetery legislation. He met with Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi last year and was told that Virginia's legislation is full of loopholes and in spite of the wording, property owners can still be sued if someone is injured while visiting an abandoned family cemetery on their property. He has heard nothing further to date. He is cleaning up cemeteries in Root and 2023 will be the 200th anniversary of the town's creation.

Dennis reported on happenings at the Ames Museum where there is a new ceiling in the research library, chair lift and ramps have been installed. The newspaper project is complete – the collection of newspapers, dated 1826-2000, has been placed in clear, archival bags so they are preserved and will be available for research. The Museum received a hand-made quilt from the Methodist Church and will be open for the season on May 13th. The Museum is still trying to locate any books that once belonged to the “Ames Academy” library. With a grant from the Erie Canalway, there is a 5K Run/Walk scheduled for Sept. 16th for the Ames Museum. Anyone is invited to put up a table for crafts or items of interest (not garage sale).

Barbara discussed the June 13th presentation of a plaque that will have the names of Nelliston’s village presidents and mayors up through the present.

Lorraine talked about Charleston’s Memorial Day parade that will be followed by a free picnic, as well as the events going on at the Schoharie River Center and the Charleston Historical Society.

Bev is doing research on Martin Van Buren (not the U.S. President) who died in the Montgomery County Poorhouse. She is also researching the buildings in Fonda that are proposed for razing.

Earlene has been going out to survey private cemeteries in the Town of Mohawk and updating the listings. She has discovered an undocumented cemetery in Tribes Hill and is continuing to research Berryville to apply for a Pomeroy historic marker.

Steve recently retired from New York State. He has been conducting an inventory of documents, dating back to 1823, recovered from a safe sold by the Town of Glen. He will also be getting photographs that were formerly on display at the Truck Stop.

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 Thursday, November 9th 2017 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.

World War I soldiers shared their thoughts in letters home *by Mat Rapacz, Historian, Town & Village of St. Johnsville*

There are no World War I veterans still living and the sacrifices made by the doughboys during “the war to end all wars” are fast fading from memory. In 1918, *The Enterprise and News*

of St. Johnsville printed letters from local men who were sent to fight in the trenches and on the battlefields of France. Below are excerpts from a few of their letters.

Some of the soldiers were itching to tell of their exploits but couldn't because of censorship restrictions. Many letters, like the following one from Leroy Ruller to Frank E. Huffnail, Jr. of Fort Plain, written August 24 expressed confidence that the Americans would quickly lick the Kaiser.

. . . I came back very lucky, although a few of our chaps were unlucky and didn't come back with us. We have to expect that now and I suppose there will be more the next time but believe me, one of them that is coming back every time is going to be myself, for there is no Hun that can get me. I would like to tell you more about it, but I am afraid our censor would cut it out so will have to wait until that happy day when we can all return and tell all about it. The people back home don't realize what this war is over here, but if they were here they would soon find out; now it is knocking at some of the doors over there, for America is beginning to lose some of her men, but we all hope that it won't last much longer and I guess even the Kaiser himself hopes the same thing. By the way, they are licking him all along the lines; he will soon find out who is boss and what we are there for; he is beginning to realize it already. . .

Peace rumors abounded in the summer and fall of 1918 as did the French rains. Edward Hook wrote on October 16, 1918 to his family:

. . . There is strong rumors of peace over here and we are all hoping that it comes soon, not that we are sick of it or want to quit, but just to stop this horrible slaughter which is something terrible at times. We have lost men, quite a number in fact but nothing considering what the Germans are losing.

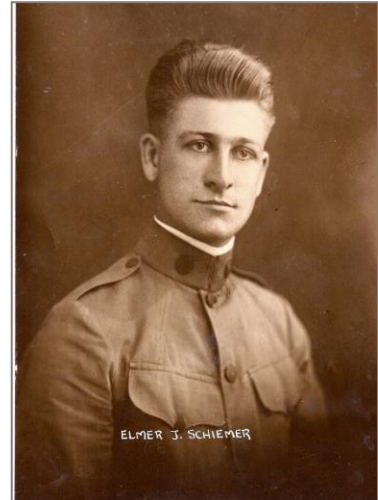
If peace is declared, it will probably be some time before we get home but we are all looking forward to that day.

The weather has been bad for the past few days, raining most of the time. It makes it rather hard going for us over this devastated territory as the roads are in bad condition, and all over is nothing but shell holes, and these are the only thing we have for shelter during a bombardment. If they are full of water it makes it rather uncomfortable particularly if one has to stay there all day and that oftentimes happens for "Jerry" snipers are always on the job.

It was different when we were in trenches, we always had some protection, but now it is every man for himself. This open warfare reminds one of the old Indian wars, from tree to tree and shell hole to hole, but it is the only way to fight for then every man has an equal chance.

The next excerpt, from a letter by Ransford W. Furbeck, is undated, though likely the same month as the above. It describes what the war did to the French countryside.

. . . Most of the territory we covered was in the hands of the enemy when we first arrived and everything is waste. The trees are nearly killed from the shell fire and many of the towns have no walls left standing over eight or ten feet high and most of the fields are pitted with shell holes or covered with barbed wire entanglements and dug up for trenches. It is a pitiful sight for there



**Elmer Schiemer, one of the
letter writers and WWI
veteran**

still remains enough to suggest the former beauty of the place. From one high hill, one can see the ugly battered remains of what were once beautiful red-tiled towns and tattered patches of what must have been a stately and magnificent avenue of Lombardy poplars. I have "damned the Kaiser" while swinging a pick or trudging on a hike or wearing a gas mask or eating monkey meat, but I never damned him as thorough as when I saw the devastation that his silly ambition has caused. . .

A letter from Elmer Schiemer from somewhere in France described a French village where "all the buildings are made of stone" and how "one can have a whole pocketful" of French money "and not have over 19 cents in real money." He goes on to describe the following encounter.

"The other night I was standing in the road and a small girl came along carrying a bucket of water about half as large as she was. I took the pail and carried it for her. She took me by the hand and led me into a house just a few doors below where we live and the old lady (I imagine it was her grandmother) seemed so pleased that I brought it in for the child, she said "Merci, M'sieu and offered me a chair and I declined and motioned that I had to go. Every time the child sees me now she looks at me so frankly and grins all over her face. I saw her the other day at mess time and some soldier had given her his coffee. She sat on the ground drinking it as trig as the rest of us . . .

The war ended November 11 with the signing of the armistice which was celebrated in St. Johnsville, as elsewhere, with a noisy, large parade. The celebration closed with prayers by Rev. H.C. Ficken and Rev. H.W. McCrone and a patriotic speech in Italian by Mr. P. Boskey. Corporal Guy Snell wrote a letter to his family three days after the armistice was signed which read in part,



A group of WWI veterans in front of the bank, taken after they returned to St. Johnsville

. . . This week has been a wonderful week, which will never be forgotten and at noon of the eleventh day the Germans gave up, whistles blew and cannons sounded all over France. That night and the next day we did not work but celebrate and what I mean we let the whole world know that the war was over. . .

Now that the war is over I am ready to come home, but I suppose it will be a long time yet before we land in God's country, but hope to be back by spring and because the war is over it is no sign that you should stop writing.

According to the papers, the people in the states went wild when they heard of the German's defeat and I suppose the happiest of all men were the last bunch drafted. . .

In December, the St. Johnsville village board unanimously decided to award returning soldiers a handsome engraved certificate of service.

From April 16, 1917, to November 11, 1918, (only 19 months) American battle deaths totaled 53,513. Military deaths from other causes, including the Spanish influenza, were 63,195. About 200,000 American troops suffered wounds which were not fatal.

“I Want to Read That Newspaper!”

By Dennis R. Malcolm
Village of Ames, NY Historian

How many times have you gone to a museum only to see “Do Not Touch” signs everywhere? Many people visiting our museum want to look at and touch the newspapers that we have. Unfortunately, that was not possible because some are from



the early 1800's and very delicate. We have designed a protective system to allow people to touch and read the papers. We finished the first batch of our archive newspapers papers this spring. So now any person, including the nine year old young man who made the title statement, can read, look over, and enjoy even the 1826 newspaper. This is an ongoing project as we work to preserve all of our newspaper collection.

We began by taking the newspapers apart, page by page and placing them on a large table. We then placed white poster board over all of the papers, being sure to straighten out any wrinkles or folds. We then stacked volumes of encyclopedias on top of the poster board and left it that way for over three months. Yes, we used heavy volumes of encyclopedias to press the pages as flat and straight as possible. All we could do now was wait.

While we were waiting, we ordered plastic archival bags from the “Clear Plastic Bag Company” in the size we needed for the newspapers. We would use these to enclose each sheet of newspaper. Finally the wait was over. We removed the encyclopedias and the poster board. Now the delicate work began. When we began separating the sheets of newspaper we ensured that each was cut to be a single sheet front and back. Each sheet was then slid carefully into a plastic bag. Each bag was checked to be sure the newspaper was flat and free of wrinkles. After each sheet of a dated newspaper was bagged, we arranged them in order, checked and re-checked the page numbers, then stacked them, carefully matching up all sides.



When an issue of the paper was re-assembled all of the pages were bound together using wooden strips of clear pine 1” x 1/2” x 28.” After all of the pages were stacked together and clamped, the wooden strips were screwed on using wood screws. We were sure to not screw through the newspapers, just through the plastic bags. When they were all bound, the date and the name of the paper was written in marker on the wooden strip. Two special racks were built to allow the newspapers to hang from

the extensions on the wooden strips without any creases or folds.



Now the nine year old young man can read and touch any newspaper in our museum that has undergone this process. He really enjoyed reading about the sports of

the late 1920's, including his beloved New York Yankees! Many people have stopped by to read the older papers, some going back to 1826! One paper that draws a lot of interest is the Rochester paper of 1850 which printed the entire federal government budget in approximately 18 inches of newspaper columns.

Newspapers are an important part of printed history and they deserve to be read in their entirety by all generations. So, yes you can now read that newspaper!

For more information about this project or to view other ongoing projects at the Village of Ames Museum, go to www.amesmuseum.weebly.com or email us at amesmuseum@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

- **APHNYS Annual Conference** – Oct. 31st to Nov. 2nd, 2017, Poughkeepsie Hotel and Conference Center, 40 Civic Center Plaza, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601, Fee: Various, For More Information: <http://www.aphnys.org/conferences-and-meetings/>
- **Evening at The Table at Fort Plain fundraiser** – Sun., Nov. 5th 4pm-8pm, The Table at Fort Plain, 70 Canal St., Fort Plain, NY 13339. Spend a wonderful Evening at The Table at Fort Plain and help raise funds to support the Palatine Settlement Society / 1747 Nellis Tavern. \$35 per person; 4 pm cash bar, 5 pm dinner. "Turnpike Tavern Fare": Chicken or Pork with sausage potatoes, vegetable and apple dessert. Chef Aaron will speak on the style and types of foods served along the turnpike at various taverns in the 18th and early 19th century. The Palatine Settlement Society asks that you get your tickets soon for this exclusive evening of fundraising and wonderful food, conversation, and people. Seating is limited to just 40 guests. SEATING IS LIMITED - Get your tickets! Call Mary 315 866 2619 or Ray 518 842 6400
- **New York Women's Suffrage Centennial Conference**, Nov. 4th, 2017, Cultural Education Center, Empire State Plaza, 222 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY 12230. Registration Required; For More Information: <http://www.nychtn.com/>
- **Researching New York 2017 Conference**, Nov. 16th to Nov. 18th, 2017, University at Albany, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222. Registration Required; Admission: \$80, For More Information: <http://nystatehistory.org/>
- **Bus trip to new Museum of the American Revolution & Independence Hall in Philadelphia** -- Saturday, Nov. 4th 2017. Bus leaves approx. 5:30am from Amsterdam with additional pick-up locations at Albany & the Hudson Valley. \$95 per person. There are a few seats still available. If interested please email registration ASAP to brianm248420@hotmail.com.
- **NYS History Month Tuesday Talk: Catch the Tunes** – Tues., Nov. 7th 6:30pm-8:30pm, Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, 129 Schoharie St., Fort Hunter, NY 12069. Music during the early part of the 19th century was not only entertainment but also connected people and communities. All along the turnpikes and canals of New York, music reflected the culture, political, social movements and a changing world view in light of new innovations. Take a listen to history, and Catch the Tunes with Liaisons Plaisantes.

MUNICIPAL HISTORIANS of MONTGOMERY COUNTY

AMES (V)

Dennis Malcolm
626 Latimer Hill Rd.
Ames, NY 13317
smalcolm@citlink.net

AMSTERDAM (C)

Robert H. von Hasseln
City Hall, 61 Church Street
Amsterdam, NY 12010
(518) 841-4323
rvonhasseln@amsterdamny.gov

AMSTERDAM (T)

Lestra Vertucci
19 Prospect St.
Fort Johnson, NY 12070
(518) 843-1037
lestravertucci@gmail.com

CANAJOHARIE (T/V)

Kathleen Hanford
Town of Canajoharie Office
12 Mitchell St.
Canajoharie, NY 13317
kahaemtcc@hotmail.com

CHARLESTON (T)

Lorraine Whiting
741 Corbin Hill Road
Esperance, NY 12066
(518) 922-5867

FULTONVILLE (V)

vacant

GLEN (T)

Steve Helmin
44 South Main St.
P.O. Box 217
Fultonville, NY 12072
(518) 853-3118

HAGAMAN (V)

John Tokarowski
96 Pawling Street, PO Box 215
Hagaman, NY 12086
(518) 378-4265

FLORIDA (T)

Tim Sievers
368 Thayer Rd
Amsterdam, NY 12010
(518) 842-0719

MOHAWK (T)

Earlene Melious
432 Mohawk Dr.
Tribes Hill, NY 12177
(518) 829-7458
amelious@nycap.rr.com

PALATINE (T)

vacant

FONDA (V)

Beverly Guiffre
32 Railroad St.
Fonda, NY 12068
fondahistory@gmail.com

FORT JOHNSON (V)

Paula Fish
PO Box 15
Fort Johnson, NY 12070
(518) 843-3462

VILLAGE OF PALATINE BRIDGE

VACANT

NELLISTON (V)

Barbara Alkinburgh
73 East Main Street
P O Box 307
Nelliston, NY 13410

FORT PLAIN (V)

Eileen Chambers
107 Mohawk Street
Fort Plain, NY 13339
(518) 993-2628
chambers.eileen@gmail.com

ROOT (T)

Mr. William Maring
163 Rural Grove Rd.
Sprakers, NY 12166
(518) 922 -5606
williammaring@yahoo.com

MINDEN (T)

Robert C. Carter
12 Wagner Street
Fort Plain NY 13339
(518) 993-1023
mindenhistorian@yahoo.com
Mailing address:
PO Box 106
Nelliston, NY 13410

ST. JOHNSVILLE (T/V)

Mat Rapacz
32 S. Division St.
St. Johnsville, NY 13452
(518) 568-7057
zcap928@live.com

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar
Montgomery County Dept. of
History & Archives
Old Courthouse
P.O Box 1500
Fonda, NY 12068-1500
Phone: (518) 853-8186
kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us