



Historian's Bulletin



October 2020

Greetings Municipal Historians!

First of all, I hope that you have all been and continue to be safe and healthy during this global pandemic due to the novel coronavirus COVID-19. This year has definitely been one for the history books and it is significant for us as historians to document the impact that this pandemic has had on our local communities.



APHNYS has issued guidelines for public historians throughout New York State on best ways to document the pandemic and its impact locally. You can listen to a special *New York in a Minute in History* podcast discussing these guidelines <https://wamcpodcasts.org/podcast/documenting-a-pandemic-in-real-time-a-new-york-minute-in-history/>.

As you may already know, the Department of History & Archives has been closed to the public since the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 in mid-March. I am back in the office most days and working remotely periodically -- and I am anxiously awaiting the return of my staff. When we are able to open the library back up to the public, everyone will be required to adhere to social distancing and public health guidelines so that both the public and our staff can work in a safe environment.

Sadly, earlier this year we lost a colleague and long-time friend of the department. Willis "Skip" Barshied passed away in January. Skip used to stop by the department and would often come into my office and spend a great deal of time talking about local history. He would always come in looking for information about an individual or a family because he

About a month ago (Sept. 21st-22nd, 2020), the Association of Public Historians of New York State held the first-ever virtual annual conference. Due to the pandemic, the annual conference which was scheduled to be held in Oswego switched to a virtual platform. This virtual conference was FREE to all APHNYS members and officially appointed local government historians and was widely attended. Next year, 2021, we are hoping to have the in-person conference in Oswego.



Also, I started a program known as "Coffee with a Historian" back in February where we welcome a featured historian for coffee and the public has the opportunity to ask questions or find out information from that historian. We were only able to hold the one event in person and the others were cancelled due to COVID-19, but as they say "good things come to those that wait." On Sept. 18th from 9-11am, we conducted the

“Coffee with a Historian” virtually as we were joined by Historic Amsterdam League member and past President Jerry Snyder who provided a brief presentation of postcards and passing through the Mohawk Valley.

Coming up on Friday, Oct. 16th local historian & author Bob Cudmore will join us to discuss his books Lost Mohawk Valley and Hidden History of the Mohawk Valley that he has available for purchase. I will send a link to the meeting for anyone wishing to attend.

Historians scheduled for the November “Coffee with a Historian” events will be New York State Historian Devin Lander on Nov. 13th. I would love to have each of you participate as our featured historian for future “Coffee with a Historian” events – please let me know if you are interested. Stay tuned for more details.

Also wanted to report that our friend and colleague from Ames, Dennis Malcolm, has resigned his position as Village Historian, as he and wife Sandy are moving to Tennessee to be closer to family. Dennis was a tremendous asset to the Village of Ames and he certainly worked tirelessly to educate the public about Ames history and the wonderful resources available at the Ames Museum. We wish Dennis and Sandy well in their new home!

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

Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar, Montgomery County Historian/RMO

Notes from Historians’ meeting 5/2/19 - Dept. of History & Archives, Fonda

Attendees: Kelly Farquhar (Mont Co. Historian), Dennis Malcolm (Ames), Lorraine Whiting (Town of Charleston), Mat Rapacz (St. Johnsville), John Tokarowski (Hagaman), Steve Helmin (Town of Glen), Eileen Chambers (Fort Plain), Rob Carter (Town of Minden), Lestra Vertucci (Town of Amsterdam), and Bev Giuffre (Fonda).

Annual Report: As always, municipal historians should be documenting their work throughout the year in order to report to their appointing authority. To make it more expedient, the New York State Historian has developed an online form for local government historians at www.nysm.nysed.gov/research-collections/state-history/resources/annualreport. The form can also be downloaded as a PDF on the same web page. The information submitted as part of the annual reports can also be used for when submitting the application to APHNYS to become a Registered Historian.

Women’s Suffrage: New York State created a Women’s Suffrage Commission to honor the centennial of women’s suffrage marking the 100th anniversary (2017-2020) from the women’s vote in New York State (1917) through the ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. You can check out how the commission is commemorating the anniversary at <https://www.ny.gov/programs/new-york-state-womens-suffrage-commission>.

100th Anniversary of the local historians’ law: The New York State Arts & Cultural Affairs law §57.07 required the appointment of a local historian for every town and village in the state in 1919. The law also advocates for the appointment of a county historian. Currently there are 1,641 municipal historians serving in New York State.

Proposed changes to National Register of Historic Places: The National Park Service’s (NPS) is proposing revisions to the listing of properties on the National Register of Historic Places. For more information visit: www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/nhparegs2019.htm

New York History Journal: Discussion of the renewed publication of the *New York History* journal. Editors are seeking “original works of scholarship related to the history of NYS, as well as information on new publications, exhibits, and online material.” Submission guidelines area available at www.nysm.nysed.gov/new-york-history-journal. Information can be sent to NYHJ@nysed.gov.

Historian Go-Around:

Dennis reported that Ames Museum is open one Saturday a month during the summer season. Last August approximately 70 former students gathered for an event a reunion of alumni from the Ames School coming from places such as New Mexico, Florida, and Arizona. The day started like a normal school day with the bell ringing, Pledge of Allegiance, singing songs, and attendees ate lunch under the trees. They had such a great time reenacting the day exactly as a typical school day was there, the group requested it again for this year. “Alumni Day” will be held on the first Saturday in August for anyone who attended the school prior to its closure in 1959. Also, the 21st of September will be the Summers’ End Festival where vendors will participate along with a 5K run/walk. The first Wednesday in December will be the lighting of the Christmas tree. He also reported that they are no longer receiving funding from the Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor for the Summers’ End festival as: (1) it isn’t a multi-day event and (2) not large enough attendance.

Bill reported that Root is trying to put together a commemoration for the 200th anniversary coming up in 2023. They are thinking about having a short parade, chicken barbecue and compiling a brief history of the town.

Lestra applied for and received funding last year from the Pomeroy Foundation “Legends & Lore” series to erect an historic marker for Widow Susan Road in the Town of Amsterdam. The marker has been received and the Town will host an unveiling ceremony anticipated for the 2nd week of June.



At the August unveiling of the “Widow Susan” historic marker from the Pomeroy Foundations’ *Legends & Lore* series were: Amsterdam Supervisor Tom DiMezza, Town of Mohawk Historian Earlene Melious, Town of Amsterdam Historian Lestra Vertucci, Montgomery County Historian Kelly Farquhar, & Amsterdam Town Clerk Linda Bartone-Hughes

Steve reported that the Village of Fultonville is creating an historic district as it was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. Approval is forthcoming. He received a query regarding town flags. As he and Bill are the admins for the Heritage & Genealogical Society of Montgomery County (friends group to Dept. of History & Archives), please send any event notices to either of them and they will publish on the H&G Facebook page. The H&G Society recently had a meeting and they will sponsor refreshments at the upcoming reception for the opening of the “Hidden in Plain Sight” photo exhibit of the Preservation League of New York State’s “Seven to Save” sites which will be on display in the lobby of the Old Courthouse for the month of August.

Rob C. discussed that the Minden History Fair will be moved this year to Sept. 21st and will be held under a tent in Haslett Park where there will be greater visibility. Events will include a display comparing our Minden to Minden, Germany; a village walk, scavenger hunt, dressing in period costume, chocolate jumble cookie competition. The committee may look at transition this history fair into the old-time street fairs, for which Fort Plain was well-known in the late 19th-early 20th c., with different events. Rob also writes articles for the *Pennysaver* a few times a month.

Lorraine discussed the Revolutionary War veterans who are lived in or are buried in the Town of Charleston. Thomas Machin, William McConkey, Samuel Tallmadge, and Elkanah Corbin who served as one of the guards for General Washington. She also mentioned the events for Charleston’s 7th annual Memorial Day parade. This year the parade will begin with a children’s parade and the day’s events will end with a free picnic at 4pm.

Eileen is applying to the special projects grant to 13-star U.S. flag at the serves on the board. She one needs to talk with the special project prior Palatine Church, an scripted history of the Cudmore will be placed Eileen also serves on the Library where they hold discussions each month. Cemetary board, Eileen be covered and restored. Last year she did a walk through the cemetery with the Fort Plain 8th graders but she will not be conducting a walking tour of the cemetery due to the upcoming Minden History fair.



Attendees including former Village of Fultonville historians Karen Chaplin and Ryan Weitz, at the opening reception of "Hidden in Plain Sight" photographic exhibit.

Pomeroy Foundation for a help with conservation of the Palatine Church where she discussed the protocol that Pomeroy Foundation about to applying. Also at the audio machine with a church, narrated by Bob in the church for visitors. board at the Fort Plain the "History Roundtable" As a member of the Fort Plain sent the cemetery records to

Mat reported on the formation of a new group that will highlight St. Johnsville native son Moses Quinby, the "Father of Bee-Keeping" who invented (not patented) the bellows smoker circa 1873 that is essential for bee-keeping and virtually anesthetizing bees and minimizing their aggression and stinging. The group's objective is to educate the public on Quinby's prominence in the bee-keeping industry whose design remains the standard still today while also promoting St. Johnsville.

Earlene reported that she continues to document the one-room schools, their locations, and whether they are still extant within the Town of Mohawk.

Bev conducted a tour of Fonda last fall. There were two trips around the village. Due to the success the village officials want to plan another tour for this year highlighting different sites. Bev also had the opportunity to talk with Austrian visitors to Fonda who are researching village namesake Douw Fonda.

John recently met with Hagaman officials to discuss the use of historic Pawling Hall. The village offices will be moving out of the hall and the building will be vacant. The village received Local Government Records Management Improvement (LGRMIF) funds from the NYS Archives in 2015 that allowed for an inventory of the historical records. The Hagaman Historical Society would like to take over the building and make it into a center of the community. The village will maintain the lawns and plowing to make it accessible while the historical society will be responsible for building maintenance.

Notes from Historians' meeting 7/15/19 - Margaret Reaney Memorial Library, St. Johnsville

Attendees: Kelly Farquhar (Mont Co. Historian), Lorraine Whiting (Town of Charleston), Mat Rapacz (St. Johnsville), John Tokarowski (Hagaman), Steve Helmin (Town of Glen), Rob Carter (Town of Minden), Earlene Melious (Town of Mohawk), Bill Maring (Town of Root) and Skip Barshied (Town of Palatine).

250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War: Plans are underway for New York State's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Meetings have been held around the state to discuss how NY can & should commemorate this significant event that culminated in our nation's beginnings. Discussion of the part that Montgomery County Historians

For FAQs and resources on historical records, please see the New York State Archives website at http://www.archives.nysed.gov/records/mr_hrecords.shtml

Historical Markers: Discussion about historical markers as aluminum markers don't hold up with the painting. The Heritage & Genealogical Society has had a program for many years of funding historical markers, however, past minutes have not reflected those markers. We are looking to compile a comprehensive list of historical markers throughout the county, making note of organizations who funded the marker and its location.

Historian Go-Around:

Bill is working on a list of those who died and owned property in Root at the time of their passing. He also continues work on Root's 220th anniversary for 2023.

Mat has been conducting tours of the museum at Reaney Library. The tourists vary from local residents to those from out of the area/state/country. He reported that a local group has formed to organize a Moses Quinby Day for 2020, possibly an event to be held at Fort Klock as well as an historic marker. Quinby, a St. Johnsville resident, was a beekeeper who invented the bellows smoker (Reaney Lib. Has one in their collection thanks to donor Skip Barshied). Mat will keep us apprised as plans proceed.

Rob C. reminded us of the upcoming Minden History Fair on Sept. 21st to be held in Haslett Park with various events including a walking tour by village historian Eileen Chambers, chocolate jumble contest, recreation of Smalley's theater showing older movies, etc. He also reported on the progress at the Geisenberg Cemetery. Curtis Lumber donated lumber for fenceposts, property owner Mr. Glick donated a small section of land to be used for a parking area, and the Wagner family will donate money for the area in the back. A gate and sign will be put up for the cemetery.

Steve reported that Fultonville's historic district has been approved for the State & National Registers of Historic Places. The district basically covers the entire village except the newer housing development on the western end of the village. The Erie Canalway is shoring up the earthen embankment program so Steve is going to investigate the project and see if they look at historic resources.

Lorraine discussed Charleston's Founder's Day in September. Last year was all free and geared more toward children. She also attended the Fort Plain Museum's Revolutionary War conference which had an amazing turnout. She is working on family history for the Christian Church cemetery.

Earlene is writing an article on the "Kitty West" canal boat that traversed the Erie Canal through Montgomery County. She is also looking for any photographs on Camp Dorn that sat outside the eastern limits of the City of Amsterdam.

John reported on cleanup being done at the Pawling Block in Hagaman. The Village of Hagaman has a verbal agreement to let the Hagaman Historical Society use Pawling Hall for meetings, events, etc. as well as other community events such as art shows.

Skip has items that he donates to different places in memory of various people. He has a coverlet sampler made by Mercy Hamilton Garlock's sister who was from Charleston. He may try to get the sampler back to Charleston. He has watched over the years as Stone Arabia has lost various buildings that have been removed. He would like to see things become more active and have interest from the younger generation.

Thank you to Mat Rapacz and Margaret Reaney Memorial Library for hosting the meeting!

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 1:00pm on Thursday, Dec. 3rd 2020. Because Montgomery County Dept. of History & Archives remains closed to the public, historians meetings will be held virtually. A link will be sent a week prior to the meeting.

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



Viewing the Preservation League's "Hidden in Plain Sight" photographic exhibit at the Dept. of History & Archives, Aug. 2, 2019.

A Historian's Quest to Research an Artifact –

by Lorraine Whiting

I recently purchased from Ebay, a portable writing desk. ¹ The person selling the desk advertised there was a signature on the desk reading, “Aron H Bresson, 1865.” ²

When the desk arrived, the name on the box clearly read, “Anne H Cresson.” I looked up both names on Ancestry. I found no information on Aron H Bresson.

In my search for Anne H Cresson, I found eight different Annes or Anns or Annas. The one I thought best fit the owner of a portable writing desk was Anne Hannum Cresson of Philadelphia, PA. Census records indicated that her profession was a genealogist. ³

Anne Hannum Cresson was born April 1, 1847, to Walter and Alice (Hannum) Cresson. Anne would have been 18 years of age when she signed her name in ink on the inside of the desk. Anne's father, Walter Cresson, was a merchant, importing goods from England and France to sell in Philadelphia. Perhaps it would not have been out of the question to present Anne with a mahogany portable writing desk, especially if she was an aspiring writer. ⁴

In the 1900 Federal Census for Philadelphia, PA, Alice (Hannum) Cresson was head of household and a widow. (Anne's father died in 1893.) Anne's occupation was listed as a genealogist, (her sister, Sarah, was listed as a copyist) and Anne kept that designation in the census records, until her death in 1921. ⁵ Anne was also listed in business directories as a genealogist in 1900, 1902, 1905, 1908, and 1909. ⁶

I found on the internet that a great amount of the Cresson family papers were located in the Historical Society of Montgomery County, Norristown, PA. To be more specific, 8 file drawers and 30 metal boxes. I contacted the Historical Society to inquire about these holdings and asked if the archivist would send me a picture of Anne Cresson's signature with a date. She sent me two pictures of handwriting with no date or signature. I thanked her and asked again, if she would send me a picture of Anne Cresson's signature and a date. She sent me, “two examples of her signature on the endpapers of two of her genealogy notebooks.” Again, no date. I thanked the archivist once again, and decided that unless I drove to Philadelphia and looked for myself, this avenue was closed. ⁷

With a little more searching, I found on line, a copy of Alice H. Cresson's will. The will had signatures of Alice (Hannum) Cresson, and her two daughters, Anne and Sarah. ⁸

I contacted by email, the person on Ebay that had sold me the desk. He said it was purchased from an auction in Greenwich, Connecticut. I got the phone number of the auction house but they didn't keep records.

I went back to Ebay, and saw another portable writing desk for sale, exactly like the one I just bought, in slightly better condition, without a signature. I would have to assume then, that this particular writing desk was mass-produced during that time period. But what was the time period? 1865? ⁹

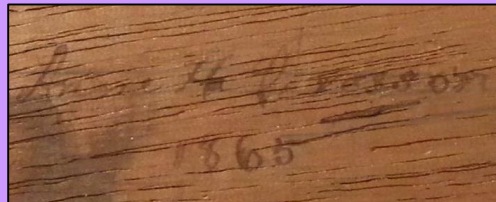
On the top of the writing desk was a small brass plaque with the handwritten initials, “A H C.”

Anne's mother's name was Alice Hannum Cresson. Could this portable desk have belonged to Anne's mother? On the inside, scratched in the wood, and above Anne's signature, are the initials, “A H.” ^{10,11}

Anne Hannum Cresson never married. She lived her life with her mother and a younger sister, Sarah, (who also never married), at 244 West School Lane, Germantown, PA, until her death on 15 January 1921, at age 73. ¹²



Writing Desk



"Ann H Cresson 1865" inscribed on desk

Endnotes:

1 - Antique Mahogany Laptop Travel Campaign Desk. Signed by Aron H. Bresson. 1865, viewed at *Ebay* (<http://www.ebay.com/itm/254501665628> : viewed on 04 August 2020).

2 - Mc_antiques (http://www.myworld.ebay.com/mc_antiques : viewed on 04 August 2020).

3 - Ann Hannum Cresson in Enos Public Tree, viewed at *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : viewed on 04 August 2020).

4 - *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1847* (Philadelphia, Pa, Edward C. & John Biddle, 1847); viewed at (<http://www.archive.org/details/mcelroysphiladel1847amce> : viewed on 01 September 2020), image 72.

- 5 - 1900 U.S. Census, Philadelphia Co, Pa, population schedule, Philadelphia, enumeration district 0493, sheet 7, house number 244, dwelling 131, family 129, Alice H. Cresson household; viewed at *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com>) : viewed on 04 August 2020), image 14.
- 6 - 1920 U.S. Census, Philadelphia Co, Pa, population schedule, Philadelphia, enumeration district 594, sheet 6A, house number 244, dwelling 115, family 126, Anne H Crisson household; viewed at *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com>) : viewed on 04 August 2020), image 11. Indexed at Ancestry as "Crisson." U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995, Philadelphia, PA, City Directory, 1900, p.490, Anne H. Cresson; viewed at *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com>) : viewed on 04 August 2020), image 269.
- 7 - Images of genealogy notes of Anne Cresson in an email from Nancy Sullivan, Archivist, viewed on 12 August 2020; Historical Society of Montgomery Co., 1654 DeKalb St., Norristown, Pa. Images of endpapers of Ann Cresson genealogy notebooks in an email from Nancy Sullivan, Archivist, viewed on 13 August 2020; Historical Society of Montgomery Co., 1654 DeKalb St., Norristown, Pa.
- 8 - Alice (Hannum) Cresson will (1915), file no. 1062, Register of Wills for the City and Co. of Philadelphia, Commonwealth of Pa., viewed at *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com>) : viewed on 13 August 2020), *Pennsylvania, Wills and Probate Records, 1683-1993* [database on-line] Provo, Ut, images 74-82.
- 9 - Vintage Folding Document Writing Slope Lap Desk Campaign Box, viewed at *Ebay* (<http://www.ebay.com/itm264783277064>) : viewed on 18 August 2020).
- 10 - Memorial page for Alice (Hannum) Cresson, Find a Grave Memorial no. 104346671, citing Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Co., Pa.; viewed at *Find a Grave* (<http://www.findagrave.com>) : viewed on 06 August 2020).
- 11 - Curtis Hoopes Hannum, *Genealogy of the Hannum family: descended from John and Margery Hannum, settlers in Chester County* [Pa.] (West Chester, Pa., H. F. Temple, 1911), p. 168, 472. Alice Hannum; viewed at *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com>) : viewed on 06 August 2020), *North America, Family Histories, 1500-2000* [database on-line]. Provo, Ut, image 174.
- 12 - Obituary of Anne Hannum Cresson, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pa., 18 January 1921, as added to Find a Grave memorial page, Memorial no. 104348013, citing Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Co., Pa.; viewed at *Find a Grave* (<http://www.findagrave.com>) : viewed on 06 August 2020).

Upcoming Events

- **"Coffee with a Historian" – Bob Cudmore** – Friday, Oct. 16th 2020, 9:00-11am, Virtual meeting. Grab your cup of coffee and join us as Montgomery County Department of History & Archives will host Bob Cudmore as our featured historian for this month's free event "Coffee with a Historian." If you have any questions or topic to discuss with Mr. Cudmore, please feel free to join us during the session. He will discuss his books on local history, [Lost Mohawk Valley](#) and [Hidden History of The Mohawk Valley](#), that he has available for purchase.
- **"Coffee with a Historian" – NYS Historian Devin Lander** – Friday, Nov. 13th 2020, 9:00-11am, Virtual meeting. Grab your cup of coffee and join us as Montgomery County Department of History & Archives will host New York State Historian Devin Lander as our featured historian for this month's free event. Devin specializes in 1960s New York State history as well as New York State political history.

While the Montgomery County Department of History & Archives currently remains closed to the public during this national health crisis, "Coffee with a Historian" events are held virtually. As there may be limited participant capacity, please register for the event by sending an email to kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us. For more information, please contact the Department of History & Archives at 518-853-8186.

- **.NYS History Month series** – To recognize New York State History Month, Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site will offer the following programs for free and via the online platform Webex. The link can be found on the Schoharie Crossing Facebook, the NYS Parks Website, or by contacting the site.
 - *The Schuyler Sisters* with Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site staff Jessica Serfilippi on Tuesday, October 20th at 6:30pm.
 - *The Life and Times of DeWitt Clinton* with Ashley Maready of the Erie Canal Museum on Wednesday, October 21st at 1:00pm.
 - *Converging on the Canal: the 19th Century Through Food* with Amanda Massie and Valerie Balint on Tuesday, October 27th at 6:30pm.
 - *10 Stories* with Bob Cudmore on Wednesday, October 28th at 1pm.

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