

**LIVINGSTON COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY  
REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 2017**

**DEPARTMENT: County Historian**

**2017 PROGRAM SUMMARY:**

It is a privilege to submit my 14<sup>th</sup> annual report as County Historian. As in years past, I crisscrossed the county to do numerous programs and provided advice, assistance, and historical information for several county departments, the town historians, historical societies, schools and other organizations. To further strengthen the role of local government historians and advocate the role of NYS and local history, I represented this office at several events at the regional and state level as Past- Executive Chair of the Government Historians of Western New York, as a member of the New York State Historical Records Advisory Board, and as a member of the New York History Advisory Group convened by the State Historian.

Every year has a distinct flavor and this year national politics took center stage. The frenetic news coming out of Washington was a daily distraction as I chronicled the ripple effect locally with regard to immigration issues, protests, and the “Me Too” movement. Ironically, my research focused on two significant historical anniversaries that changed the course of American history - the centennial of U. S. entry into World War 1 and the centennial of passage of woman’s suffrage in New York State. Several programs and exhibits helped to bring about awareness that indeed all history is local.

For WWI, the results of my research have more fully documented those who sacrificed on the battlefield and life on the home front. The honor roll of those who were killed in battle or died while in service from Livingston County rose from about 38 to well over 50 as I uncovered several facts that corrected some misinformation and helped to fill in wide gaps in the arrival holdings of this office. Likewise, bits and pieces on the role of women in Livingston County directly involved with the woman suffrage (and anti-suffrage) movement at the local, state and national level were expanded into a more comprehensive picture of their broad influence in the passage of the vote in New York State and the subsequent passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

This office remains a hub of activity and I am thankful for my dedicated Deputy Historian Holly Watson. Holly assisted me with exhibits and programs, handled the multitude of research requests and undertook several large projects including digitization of thousands of documents (see her report attached). We continually get compliments for our quick responses to queries, informational website and our massive online search engine. In addition to an increase in online requests, visitation to the office also increased by 20% over 2016 with 50 % from locals, about 25 % from within NYS and the remainder from 12 states across the U.S. The office also benefited from the on-going commitment of volunteers Doreen DeCamp, Alberta Dunn and Mary Gremer whose combined efforts amounted to approximately 100 hours.

In these times of political upheaval and social change, the opportunity I’ve been given to record, analyze, and contextualize local history has never been more enlightening. Distinguishing fact from fiction takes patience and persistence and in my view essential to understanding who we are as a society. I am appreciative of the continuing support and encouragement of the County Administrator and Board of Supervisors. I look forward to 2018 with anticipation of maintaining high standards and expanding services to meet the ever-growing needs and curiosity of present and future generations.

## **I. Office Management, Collection Development**

### **1. Preservation and expansion of historical records collection:**

- a. **Public Research Room:** In 2017 approximately **150** people utilized the research room in addition to **392** requests for information were received via our online request form, phone, and email. The subject binders were routinely updated with references to current events from weekly newspapers and with documentary materials deemed to have permanent value for local history research.
- b. **Expansion of the County Historian's Web page and Online resources:**
  - i. Web page: Updates and resources were added throughout the year  
The County Historian's Online Records Index: The search engine increased by over **21,500** entries in 2017 and now includes over **327,000** entries. Series additions in 2017 included:
    - a. 7613 additional church record entries\*
    - b. 5803 additional ledger entries (includes marriages and school records)\*
    - c. 1135 additional naturalization entries \*
    - d. 6170 additional newspaper entries for births, deaths, marriages, and legal notices \*
    - e. 300 additional veterans \*
    - f. 507 obits from the current year newspapers  
\*see Deputy Historian Holly Watson's report attached for specific references.
  - ii. **Archives and Manuscript Inventory, indexing and cataloging updates:**
    - i. Newly acquired documents, manuscripts, etc. were continually accessioned, arranged, described, and appraised to determine long-term use and protection needs and then housed in archival quality storage containers and enclosures. Donations accepted included numerous archival documents, photographs, and scrapbooks related to people, places, and local historical events.
      - a. Digitization projects – Approximately **10,000** documents and photographs were digitized this past year. \*see Deputy Historian Holly Watson's report.
    - ii. Volunteer projects
      - a. Doreen DeCamp – began labeling documents in the Archival Files series.
      - b. Albert Dunn – finished indexing several 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century school records.
      - c. Mary Gremer – processed approximately 12 cubic feet of county poorhouse vouchers and miscellaneous papers dating from 1923-1938.

## **II. Community Outreach and Advocacy**

1. **Town Historian meetings** – Throughout the year this office provides guidance and support for the 17 town historians. Quarterly luncheon meetings were held at various locations around the county. All meetings were well attended with an average of 14 out of the 17 towns represented at each meeting in addition to office staff, volunteers, and guests. Due to scheduling, this is the first year we did not have a summer meeting.
  - April 11 – Livingston County Historian's Office luncheon
  - September 27 – County Government Center luncheon and attendance and individual recognitions of the town historians at the Board of Supervisor's meeting.
  - December 12 – Tom Wahl's for lunch and tour of the newly renovated Avon Inn

## 2. Special Projects

- a. **Livingston Landmarks OnCell Audio Tour** (*Livingston.OnCell.com*) this is 4<sup>th</sup> in a series of audio tours of historic sites in the county. The tour has 15 stops divided into three sections
  - 1) *On the Main Drag* - includes distinctive landmarks along state highways
  - 2) *Around the Bend* - includes several places just off the main drag a turn or two
  - 3) *Off the Beaten Path* - out of the way places that connect culture and the natural landscape.

- b. **World War 1 Centennial** – several commemorative events took place in 2017.

*The Impact of WWI on Livingston County: Life on the Homefront* – I presented a new power point program for the Mt. Morris Dam Winter Lecture Series in January. The program was also presented later in the year for the Big Springs Historical Society in Caledonia, the Springwater-Webster Crossings Historical Society, and the Ossian Historical Society.

*Expressions of World War One in Photographs & Letters Home* – I created an interpretive exhibit that opened at Livingston Arts in Mt. Morris in May then from September – November moved to the lobby of the County Government Center in Geneseo.

- c. **NYS Woman's Suffrage Centennial**

*The Female Perspective: Local Women in the Woman's Suffrage Movement* – a new power point program in the Female Perspective series was presented in March for Women's History Month at Nunda Historical Society and in October for the York Historical Society at the town hall.

*The Female Perspective: Livingston County Women who changed the status quo* – this exhibit was on display May – October at the Livingston County Historical Society Museum.

- d. **Livingston County Bicentennial** - I convened an organizational planning committee meeting in October to brainstorm ideas to celebrate and commemorate the County's upcoming bicentennial in 2021.

## 3. Other Meetings/Public Speaking/etc.

January 18 – met with Josh Williams at the Genesee Sun broadcast studio to discuss a video project to record Vietnam veterans involved in the *Blue Devils in Vietnam* book project. Two of three five minute videos were produced and posted on social media.

July 14<sup>th</sup> – attended the Woman's Rights Conference Days lectures at Seneca Falls.

July 31 – Met with Dansville Mayor, downtown representatives, and Heather Grant to discuss project ideas and funding for an interpretive/interactive walking tour of Dansville's Historic District.

August 5 – Participated in the Letchworth State Park Civilian Conservation Corps Dedication Ceremony

September 19 – Presented the *Sullivan Campaign of the Revolutionary War: The Impact on Livingston County* for the Lima Historical Society

October 19 – Presented the *Sullivan Campaign of the Revolutionary War: the Impact on Livingston County* for the D.A.R. at Swain.

November 21 – Presented an overview of the County Historian's Office services for the Office of the Aging Advisory Council meeting.

### **III. Professional and Educational Development**

**Government Appointed Historians of Western New York** - This regional organization was formed in 2009 to provide assistance and support to officially appointed local government historians for 11 counties in Western New York. The organization maintains a membership database and sponsors meetings with a variety of educational and training programs.

- Founding member, appointed treasurer (2008-2010), Elected treasurer for 2-year term (2010-2012). Elected Executive Chair September 2012 for 2-year term (2013-2014); re-elected Chair September 2014 for 2-year term (2015-2016).
- October 14 – Attended the GAHWNY Annual meeting in Batavia.
- November 8 – Attended the GAHWNY Executive Board meeting in East Aurora.
- Currently serving as Past-Executive Chair and manage the GAHWNY website (GAHWNY.ORG), Facebook page, and assist with nominations for the organization's Julia Reinstein Career Achievement Award and Student History Award.

#### **New York State Conferences /Advisory Board participation**

- May 12<sup>th</sup> – attended the New York State Historian's History Advisory Board meeting in Albany
- June 8<sup>th</sup> – attended the New York State Archives Conference at Utica College.
- October 24 – Attended the New York State Historical Records Advisory Board meeting and 2017 NYS Archives Awards Ceremony at the Cultural Education Center in Albany

#### **2018 PROGRAM SUMMARY:**

1. Prioritizing and processing of more series collections for digitization.
2. Further expansion of the County Historian's web page to include more resources.
3. Continuing commemoration of the centennial of American involvement in World War One and the centennial of the passage of woman suffrage in New York State.
4. Planning and organizing for Livingston County Bicentennial 2021

Submitted by Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian  
January 9, 2018

**Photographs from 2017**

January 21, 2017 at Women's March, Seneca Falls  
 L to R: Sue Conklin, Amie Alden, Sarah Neal  
 Dep. Hist.



May 5, 2017 WWI exhibit opening reception at  
 Livingston Arts. Amie and Holly Watson,  
 Dep. Hist.



Timeline Photos

**EXPRESSIONS OF WORLD WAR ONE  
 IN PHOTOGRAPHS AND LETTERS HOME**

Livingston County, New York State

Exhibit opening Friday, May 5, 2017 at Livingston Arts, Murray Hill, Mt. Morris.  
 Presented by Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian

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**Livingston County, New York** Page Liked · May 3, 2017 ·

Livingston Arts displays County Historian Exhibit: Expressions of World War One in Photographs and Letters Home features original photographs, correspondence, and war related documents from the archives of the County Historian's Office and items gathered from some of the town historians and local historical societies. The exhibit opens at 5pm on Friday, May 5th and runs through the end of May and hours are Tuesday-Friday, 11am-4pm Saturday 11am-3pm. Also open by appointment. Contact(585) 243-6785 or info@livingstonarts.org. for more information.

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WWI exhibit at Livingston County  
Government Center, Geneseo Sept –  
Nov. 2017



Town Historian's tour of the newly restored Avon  
Inn. December 12, 2017

## Annual Report form: 2017

Name: Holly C. Watson

### Overview:

General responsibilities included:

- Answering the phone, directing calls and resolving questions;
- Assisting visitors in the research room with queries and fulfilling online research requests.
  - Number of research request received in person in the Research Room: 117
  - Number of research requests received via CivicPlus online form: 52
  - Number of research requests received via e-mail or phone: 123
  - Total number of research requests in 2017: 292
  - Total number of requests for digital materials fulfilled over e-mail: 62
- Attending quarterly staff meetings;
- Tidying the research room, work area, and storage areas as needed and attending to ongoing digital files management;
- Accessioning new acquisitions and donations, creating accession sheets, and describing items and specifying locations in master inventory;
- Maintaining an online presence on the County Historian's website with announcements, links, photographs, and lists of resources.

Other related activities:

- Attended local history lectures, including
  - "Non-traditional 19<sup>th</sup> Century Women of Nunda" by Joan Schumaker, March;
  - "Women's Roles in the Civil War" by Rebecca Budinger-Mulhearn, March;
  - "How Woman Won the Vote in New York State" by Christine Ridarsky, May;
  - Two lectures on Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Gerrit Smith, and the women's rights movement in Seneca Falls at Seneca Falls Convention Days, July
- Participated in an Emergency Planning and Preparedness webinar through DHPSNY, January;
- Assisted County Historian with projects as needed, including the Impact of World War I in Livingston County exhibit, May and September;
- Attended the Government Appointed Historians of Western New York (GAHWNY) Fall Conference, October; and Town Historian's Meetings, April and September
- Fieldtrips to Oak Valley Inn (Geneseo), 17 Locks area (Nunda/Portage), Boyd and Parker Shrine (Cuylerville); Cobblestone Museum (Albion)
- Participated in CivicPlus website update committee and attended CivicPlus training, January to July.

### Completed projects

**Finding Aids** - Created finding aids for collections and series; involved stating date range, extent, abstract, subject lists, biographical or provenance notes, and contents list for each collection or series. The following finding aids have been completed:

- Glass Negatives Series
- Vital Records Series

**Indexing** – Indexed various small record groups, entering them onto the County Historian’s Online Records Index to improve accessibility of information.

Completed the following indexes in 2017:

*Church Records Series:*

- Geneseo Village Presbyterian Church records from centennial Celebration book, 1910 (3,370 entries)
- Rev. Levi Parsons’ registers of baptisms, deaths, and admissions to the Mt. Morris Presbyterian Church, 1856-1901 (1,424 entries)
- Rev. Levi Parsons’ registers of marriages, 1854-1901 (326 entries, 163 marriages)
- Membership of the Presbyterian Church of Mt. Morris, 1814-1896 (1,500 entries)
- Lakeville Christian Church Record Book, 1818-1902 (993 entries)

*Ledgers Series:*

- Marriages from Livingston County Vital Records, 1847-1849 (3,471 entries or about 1,735 marriages)
- School attendance registers from Sparta Dist. #19, 1841-1842; Springwater Dist. #4, 1866-1868; Portage Dist. #4, 1905-1906; Livonia Dist. #13, 1899-1900; Nunda Dist. #4/#3, 1841-1864; Avon Dist. #6, 1917-1918; Avon Dist. #4 1901, 1902, 1903, 1905, and 1906 (2,332 total entries on database);
- Cascade House Vol. 2, 1900-1904 (1,323 entries)

*Naturalizations Series:*

- County Clerk’s Declaration of Intention Register, 1848-1859 (1,135 entries)

*Newspapers Series:*

- Indexed Livingston Republican list of military exemptions from Livingston County in 1863 onto online database (870 names)

*Veterans’ Series:*

- Entered names of veterans from the Revolutionary War through the Vietnam War from *History of Retsof, 1884-1986* into Veterans’ Records Series on database (186 names)
- Inventoried Veteran Services Agency Collection (WW I papers) and synced index with Veterans Records Series on online database (114 names)

**Digitization** - Scanned the following items and records series:

*Archival Files Series:*

- Archival file documents (1,809 documents from Avon through North Dansville)

*Naturalizations Series:*

- County Clerk’s Declaration of Intention Register, 1848-1859 (1,135 entries)
- Naturalization Court Records, 1818-1906 (48 folders, 6,170 document images)

*Photographs*

- Veterans' Photograph Series (271 images from Historian's Collection)
- Operation Morale Collection images (86 images)

*Other*

- Veterans' Services Agency Collection (117 individual files)

**Other Projects**

- Updated Wikipedia.com page on Livingston County, NY; included updated early history section, as well as important sites, events, and people. Added several new pages for significant people associated with Livingston County.
- Created list of all religious societies and associated structures in Livingston County from 1795-2017; includes brief timeline, if possible, of each society/structure with list of pastors and important events

Projects In Progress

- Indexed Newspaper Accessibility Project
  - Typed entries from hard-copy Indexed Newspaper Collection into online database for ease of patron access to records. Newspaper references concerning births, deaths, marriages, and other notices spanned the surnames Ramsey to Spencer, and totaled approximately 5,304 entries.