

**LIVINGSTON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY
REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 2018**

DEPARTMENT: County Historian

2018 PROGRAM SUMMARY:

It is a privilege to submit my 15th 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 representative of an Advisory Committee to survey sites relating to women's suffrage in Central, New York.

My research, programing, and exhibits continued to focus on the local impact of 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. In addition, documentation of the history of Murray Hill was expanded through multiple trips to the New York Historical Society in New York City where I reviewed hundreds of original documents from the late 18th and early 19th century related to the pioneer settlement of this property. Other projects included continued processing of the office's massive collection of County Poorhouse records, the launch of an official County Bicentennial Planning Committee to plan for the 200th anniversary in 2021, and the adoption of an official Bicentennial Logo.

The most significant and positive change in this office occurred with the conversion of the part time Deputy Historian position to full time. Holly Watson has capably filled the part time position since 2011 and I am thrilled that she is now in the full time position. Her enthusiasm and willingness to tackle projects large and small is admirable. (See her report attached.) This change opens up new opportunities to provide more efficient services to the public and undertake additional projects especially in light of the upcoming County Bicentennial.

We continually get compliments for our quick responses to queries, informational website and our massive online search engine. Despite the continued increase in online requests, visitors from around the county and out of state still seek out this office to do hands on research. The office has also provided historical information to many county departments.

In my 2017 report I wrote, "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 is essential to understanding who we are as a society." This remained true throughout 2018. The world is rapidly changing as traditional norms evolve and many days it is difficult to keep the relevance of local history alive. As many counties in New York State have marginalized or eliminated the important role of the County Historian's Office, I remain appreciative of the continuing support and encouragement of the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, and Department Heads. I look forward to 2019 with anticipation of maintaining high standards 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 2018 approximately **130** people utilized the research room in addition to **several hundred** requests for information 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 **12,854** entries in 2018 and now includes approx. **340,000** entries.
(See Deputy Historian Holly Watson's report attached for specific references.)
- c. **Archives and Manuscript Inventory - indexing, cataloging updates, volunteer projects, donations, etc.**
 - 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 – **6637** documents and photographs were digitized this past year.
 - b. Finding aids – existing finding aids were updated and several new ones created
 - c. Indexing projects – numerous ledgers, church records, census special schedule, and many others
(See Deputy Historian Holly Watson's report attached for specific references.)
 - ii. Volunteer projects
 - a. Doreen DeCamp – Finished labeling documents in the Archival Files series.
 - b. Lena Evers-Hillstrom, SUNY Geneseo intern – worked on arrangement and description of additional county poor house records, processed approximately 12 cubic feet of county poorhouse vouchers and miscellaneous papers dating from 1923-1938.
 - iii. Donations – significant donations included:
 1. Milne Library, SUNY Geneseo - Executions ledger (court related), Journal, and personal papers of Sheriff Wm. B. Wooster who served Livingston County 1877-1893.
 2. Department of Social Services – numerous ledgers and inactive records (1950-1998) found in Bldg 1, Murray Hill during renovations.
 3. Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation from retiring Director Frank Bassett – 10 photo albums and guest book from the former Skilled Nursing Facility and Livingston County Infirmary, and CNR (c. 1960s-2000s).
 4. M. Doyle – Craig Colony for Epileptics records, photos, maps, etc.
 5. S. Fox – Binders related to local chapter of Literacy Volunteers
 6. Livingston County Historical Society – Howd / Mosher family correspondence

II. Community Outreach and Advocacy

1. **Town Historian meetings** – Throughout the year this office provides guidance and support for the town historians. In 2018 we acknowledge with sadness the loss of Mary Ransom, former Portage Town Historian who passed away on May 30th. Our numbers were also diminished with the retirement of Springwater Town Historian Havalah Toland and Deputy Historian Judy Tripp-Neu. Three luncheon meetings were held at various locations around the county:
 - April 11 – Livingston County Historian’s Office luncheon
 - September 27 – Ossian Town Hall
 - December 6– American Hotel, Lima

2. **Special Projects - ongoing**
 - a) **World War 1 Centennial** – commemorative events (continued from 2017)
 - i. **Presentations:** February 8th – presented the *Impact of World War One* on Livingston County for the Geneseo Torch Club, Big Tree Inn.
September 16 – presented *The Impact of World War One* on Livingston County program for the Avon Historical Society, Avon Village Hall.
 - ii. **Exhibit:** October – November, *Expressions of World War One in Photographs & Letters Home*, interpretive exhibit on display at the Dansville Library, October – November.
 - b) **NYS Woman’s Suffrage Centennial** – commemorative events (began in 2017)
 - i. **Marker Dedication:** August 23rd – The County Historian’s Office was awarded grant funds from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation for a marker in commemoration of the Centennial of Women’s Suffrage in New York State. A dedication and unveiling was in honor the local, state, national and international contributions of the “Shaw Sisters.” Suffragists and Temperance Leaders, Nicolas Shaw Fraser and Eleanor Shaw Smith resided at 22 Main St, Geneseo.
 - ii. **Exhibit:** September – November, *The Local Woman’s Suffrage Movement* was on display at the Livingston County Government Center
 - iii. **Advisory Committee:** October 9th - Central NY Women’s Suffrage Historic Sites at Canandaigua Wood Library. Submitted sites related to Livingston County women for a state and national database.
 - iv. **Presentation:** November 7th - presented *Livingston County and the Local Woman’s Suffrage Movement* program for the West Sparta Historical Society at the Methodist Church, West Sparta
 - c) **Livingston County Bicentennial:** October – December - I convened an organizational planning committee comprised of representatives of several county departments to brainstorm ideas to celebrate and commemorate the County’s upcoming bicentennial in 2021. Numerous ideas and potential activities, partnership and collaborations, formation of sub-committees were discussed, and a competition was launched for the creation of an original bicentennial logo. 12 entries were received from county employees and the public. The final selection was created by Scott Gillette of Geneseo and plans were made to unveil the logo at the first Board of Supervisor’s meeting January 2019.

3. Public Speaking – various presentations

January 27th – presented a new power point program for the annual Mt. Morris Dam Lecture, *From Darkness to Light in a Flick of a Switch*, about the life and times of county resident Samuel Gardiner, Jr. whose inventions helped lay the foundation for modern electrification and technological change.

April 24 – presented a program for the Springwater- Webster Crossing Historical Society on upcoming County Historian's Office projects and events

May 21st – filmed an interview with Josh Williams at the Genesee Sun for Sunday Cup of Coffee series.

June 19th – presented an overview of the History of Murray Hill at the dedication ceremony of the newly renovated auditorium in Building 1.

June 26th – presented the History of Murray Hill for the Department of Health employees

August 6th – presented an overview of the services and resources available at the County Historian's Office for the Office of the Aging

September 15 – presented *Doing Research in Livingston County* program for the Western New York Genealogical Society, Buffalo History Museum.

September 18 – presented *Livingston Landmarks* program for the Garden of Life at the CNR

September 26 – presented office updates to the Board of Supervisors in conjunction with the opening of the Suffrage Movement exhibit in the lobby of the Government Center

Nov 11th – presented the County Historian's Veteran's Documentation program for the Lima Historical Society at the Lima Courthouse.

4. Other meeting/ events

January 2nd – attended the BOS organizational meeting

January 9th – attended the Genesee combined American Legion/ VFW meeting presentation of medals and recognition of Vietnam veteran Francis 'Butch' Rosebrugh who was killed in action in 1966.

January 24th – attended BOS meeting and reception for retiring Records Manager Kathy Montemarano

March 1st – attended the Department Head meeting at the EOC

March 10th – attended the Mt. Morris Dam lecture on the Genesee Valley Canal / Greenway

April 2nd – attended Historic Marker dedication in honor of the Delia Phillips formerly of Lima and the first woman who voted in LeRoy

April 10th – attended a presentation by the veterans involved in the Blue Devils in Vietnam book project sponsored by Finger Lakes Community College

April 18th – attended a presentation on the history of the Dansville Mt. Morris Railroad depot / Battle Street Brewery revitalization project at the Dansville Town Hall.

April 19th – met with the Esri Company reps for a GIS needs assessment update for the County Historian's Office at the Government Center

May 2nd – Public Services Committee meeting

May 2nd – Met with Sarah Durling, NYS Archives Regional Advisory Officer, to discuss possible grant project for historian's and records management archives.

May 14th – met with Karriann Edwards to discuss preservation and accessibility of historical archives stored at Records Management

June 21st – attended the County Department Head meeting at the EOC

June 27th – attended the County Employee Recognition Ceremony in conjunction with the Board of Supervisor’s meeting

July 9th – attended the re-opening dedication of the Avon Free Library

July 26th – attended the dedication of a historic marker in honor of John Hubbard Forsyth, South Avon

September 5th – Public Services Committee meeting

September 20 – Department Head meeting, EOC

October 15 – attended the Coffee with the County Administrator at the Groveland Town Hall

October 23 – attended a retirement recognition dinner honoring Springwater Town Historian Havailah Toland, at the American Legion in Springwater sponsored by the Springwater-Webster Crossing Historical Society.

October 25 – hosted the Hand-in-Hand community group for a tour of the County Historian’s Office.

December 3rd – met with Deborah Bump the new Executive Director of the Genesee Valley Council on the Arts

December 12th – attended the Department Head meeting at the EOC

III. Professional and Educational Development

- 1) 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). 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.

September 22 – attended the Government Appointed Historians of Western New York (annual meeting at the Seneca Nation Administration Building, Salamanca

October 24 – attended the GAHWNY Executive Board meeting in East Aurora.

- 2) New York State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB)** - member since 2014

May 8th – Attended the SHRAB at the Cultural Education Center, Albany

October 17 – attended the SHRAB meeting and the 2018 NYS Archives Award Ceremony and luncheon at the Cultural Education Center, Albany

- 3) Conferences / Preservation Initiatives**

Workshop: May 1st – Hosted a Documentary Heritage Program all-day workshop entitled “Red Flag! Identifying Preservation Needs While Processing Collections” for historians, librarians, and others involved in managing historical archives, at the Emergency Management Center.

Conference: November 16th - attended Researching New York State History Conference at SUNY Albany

Preservation Survey Grant Award: from the Documentary Heritage & Preservation Services of New York to survey the County Historian’s and Records Management historical archival collections and examine the storage areas for environmental issues. A complete report with recommendations for improvements will be forthcoming in early 2019.

2019 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. Planning and organizing for Livingston County Bicentennial 2021

Submitted by Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian

April 16, 2019

Annual Report Form: January –December 2018

Holly C. Watson

General Responsibilities

- 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: 127
 - Number of research requests received via CivicPlus online form: 40
 - Number of research requests received via e-mail or phone: 141
 - Total number of research requests in 2018: 308
 - Total number of requests for digital materials fulfilled over e-mail: 104
- 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;
- Creating finding aids for collections and records series;
- Maintaining an online presence on the County Historian’s website with announcements, links, photographs, and lists of resources;
- Assisting County Historian with exhibits.

Other Related Activities

- Attended webinar, “Developing or Renewing a Records Management Plan” hosted by the NYS Archives, March;
- Attended day-long workshop, “Red Flag! Identifying Preservation Needs While Processing Collections,” presented by DHPSNY at Hampton Corners, May;
- Read Women and the Law of Property in Colonial America, by Marylynn Salmon, July;
- Attended portion of annual Government Appointed Historians of Western New York (GAHWNY) conference, Salamanca, NY, September;
- Attended “Bottles All Shapes and Sizes” by collector J. Bartholomew, November;
- Participated in County Bicentennial Planning Committee meetings and served as secretary (Oct-Dec)

Completed projects

Finding Aids - Created finding aids for collections and series; projects involved stating date range, extent, abstract, subject lists, biographical and arrangement notes, and contents list for each collection or series.

Completed the following finding aids in 2018:

- Coroner's Records Series
- Craig Colony (updated)
- Gov. John Young (1802-1852) Collection
- Howd – Mosher Family Collection
- Kellogg Collection
- Livingston County Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation (CNR)

Indexing – Involved indexed various small record groups, entering them onto the County Historian's Online Records Index to improve accessibility of information.

Completed the following indexing projects in 2018:

Census Series:

- 1865 Census, Special Schedules
 - Deaths of Officers & Enlisted Men: 354 entries (141 of them new veterans' listings)
 - Marriages: 290 entries, representing 145 marriages
 - Deaths: 354 entries

Church Records Series:

- Minutes, Associate Church of York and Covington, 1828-1912 (466 entries)

Ledgers Series:

- Record Book, Union Corners School Dist. #4, 1840-1853 (2,097 entries)
- Geneseo Town Clerk's Book of Estrays, 1824-1880 (460 entries)
- Guardianship records and letters of administration, 1821-1825 (about 72 entries)
- Record of Registered Nurses Certificates and Affidavits, 1904-1952 (367 entries)
- Record of Optometrists' Certificates, 1908-1948 (47 entries)
- Registers of Physicians and Surgeons, 1880-1963 (400 entries)
- Veterinary Medical Register, 1886-1959 (88 entries)

Newspapers Series:

- Indexed Newspaper Accessibility Project
 - Typed entries from hard-copy Indexed Newspaper binders into online database. Newspaper references concerning births, deaths, marriages, and other notices spanned the surnames Spencer to Zwerger, and totaled approximately 7,000 entries.

Other indexing projects:

- Repairing index to wills, 1821-1935 (6,952 entries)
- Adding 108 names of Gulf War veterans to the online database

Digitizing – involved scanning, verifying images, and digital filing of digitized material.

Completed the following digitization projects in 2018:

- *Archival Files Series* – Completed digitization and entry of individual items to master inventory; total items scanned: 2,741
- *Coroner's Records Series* – Completed inventory to the document level of Coroner's Records, 1908-1974 (Bulk 1923-1936, 1971-1974). Scans have been uploaded to and OCR'd in Laserfiche, with shared access for the County Clerk's Office. (383 individual case files.)
- *Photographs Series* – Completed digitization of town photograph series, comprising images from towns of Geneseo, Groveland, and Leicester; total images scanned: approx. 3,313. Included were 269 images of the Homestead, Hartford House, and other Wadsworth homes that had previously been uninventoried.
- *Slides Series* – Completed digitization of scattered images not scanned in a previous digitizing project; approx. 200 images

Projects in Progress

- *Cemetery Information Update Survey* - Created online CivicPlus forms to gather updated information about cemetery caretaker contact details and cemetery records holdings. Project targets associations, caretakers, and town clerks, and requires follow-up by phone or email regarding types of records and accessibility.
- *Indexing Alms House Register, 1877-1921*

Comments

2018 was a great year to get significant digitization and indexing underway, and with my full-time presence in the office, I am looking forward to accomplishing more in 2019. The detailed processing of the Poor House Series is one exciting focus, as is the digitization of the last drawer of Livingston County photographs.