



LIVINGSTON COUNTY
HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022





LETTER FROM THE HISTORIAN

Dear Livingston County Board of Supervisors, Administrator, and residents:

It is a privilege to submit my first annual report as County Historian. I was appointed to the position on May 29, 2022, following County Historian Amie Alden's retirement after 18 years of service. As the eighth county historian in a lineage reaching back to 1933, I could not be more proud and humbled to serve Livingston County and its citizens in this role.

For much of the year, the focus at the County Historian's Office was maintaining daily operations through the transition in leadership. Besides handling the usual in-person and virtual research requests, several projects and new initiatives were completed.

In July, the County Historian's Office launched its improved online Records Index, which is at the core of the office's public offerings. The new custom solution supports advanced full-text searching and filtering of thousands of records, and it is freely available 24/7. This is a high-value investment in customer service and knowledge management, and the technology will be assessed for other possible uses as well.

In August, Madeline Friedler joined the County Historian's Office as deputy historian and jumped right into organizing and describing archival collections, digitizing, and assisting researchers. Additionally, she plans to work on outreach projects in 2023.

For the past several years, especially during the pandemic, rates of in-person research have remained low while the demand for virtual research assistance has risen. Globally, as more information becomes available online, the public's expectation for virtual access has skyrocketed. Even as COVID-19 has abated, this trend directs the office's focus to ever-increasing accessibility of information and excellent customer service.

As I reflect on 2022, I take pride in the office's accomplishments and am grateful to Amie Alden for her years of guidance. In the coming year, I plan to continue expanding educational resources and outreach and improving accessibility to the archival collections. My sincere thanks and appreciation goes to Deputy Historian Madeline Friedler and office volunteers for their enthusiastic and dedicated work.

I am grateful to the Board of Supervisors and the county administration for their longtime support of the County Historian's Office, which has allowed the department to grow and continue to offer phenomenal access to historical information. Thank you!

HOLLY WATSON

Livingston County Historian



MISSION

The mission of the County Historian's Office is to collect, preserve, and interpret the County's documentary heritage and manage historical records for the public.

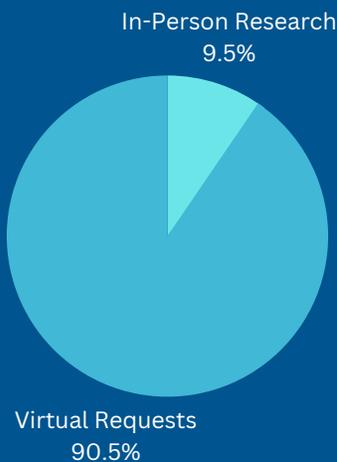
DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Collecting, preserving, and interpreting historical information
- Assisting county departments and the general public on research projects
- Offering displays and programming on topics of historical significance
- Providing guidance and support to the 17 town historians of Livingston County
- Attending events

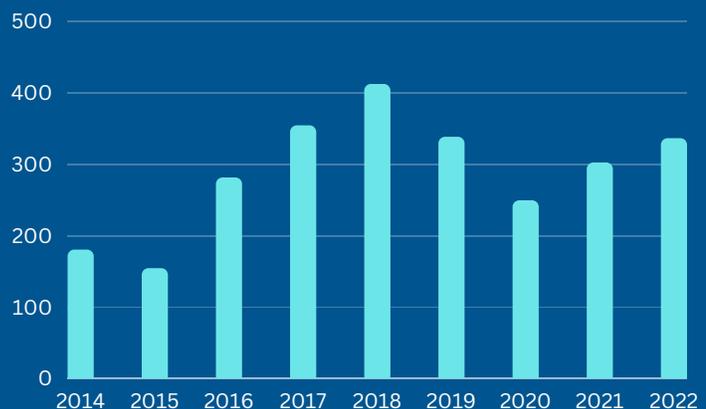
PUBLIC RESEARCH ROOM AND ARCHIVES

- In 2022, the County Historian's Office received the most requests ever by email and phone - over 300 - and saw a low rate of in-person research. The continued trend of information-seeking online directs the office's focus to making information readily available online.
- Reference binders were routinely updated with historical and current information. General reference books that were no longer within the scope of the collections policy were disposed of and storage space was optimized.
- New temperature and humidity monitoring system was installed in storage rooms.
- Created a new Collection Development and Management Policy; updated the Patron and Research Center Policy, Donation Policies, and Digital Files Policy.

RESEARCH REQUESTS - 2022



TOTAL RESEARCH REQUESTS 2014-2022





WEBPAGE AND ONLINE RESOURCES

- The County Historian’s Office webpage was updated throughout the year to reflect new resources, including a new page of hundreds of place names across all 17 towns.
- The County Historian’s Records Index, a core offering to the public, was launched on a brand-new platform hosted by Lucidea Technologies. It includes a new school records series and boasts many improved features. Users can now filter, search keywords, and browse collections. Over the database’s first six months, thousands of searches were performed.

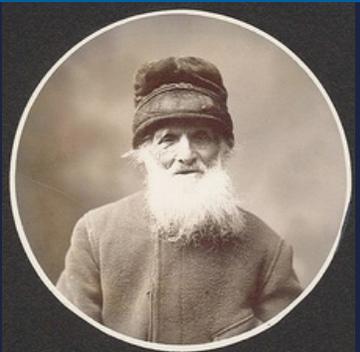
NEW RECORDS INDEX

388,800 RECORDS

10 RECORD TYPES

3,800+ USER LOGONS

4,100+ SEARCHES



- An improved online photo gallery was launched on Flickr.com, replacing the previous CivicPlus gallery. It showcases dozens of new photographs, including an album of Livingston County businesses from the past 150 years. Keyword and location tags also increase discoverability online.

NEW PHOTO GALLERY

12 ALBUMS

206 PHOTOGRAPHS

36,000+ VIEWS IN 3 MONTHS



HISTORICAL RECORDS PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

- **Donations and Inventory**
 - Donated documents were appraised, accessioned, arranged, described, and housed in archival-quality storage containers and enclosures. Accepted donations included numerous archival documents, diaries, photographs, slides, and a scrapbook, all related to people, places, and local historical events.
- **Digitization**
 - Hundreds of documents and photographs were digitized, including Avon Town Records 1797-1982, slides from the Livingston County Planning Department, Court of Common Pleas records 1835-1854, Lima Town Records 1797-1923, and Conesus Town Records 1820-1901.
 - A grant application was submitted to Rochester Regional Library Council to digitize over 50 obsolete audio-visual materials, including taped oral histories.
- **Finding Aids**
 - These guides assist researchers in locating collections and discovering information, especially online. Several new finding aids relating to diaries and personal collections were created over the year, bringing the total to about 70.
- **Indexing**
 - Thousands of entries from ledgers, school records, and voter records were typed up for internal indexes and the County Historian's Record Index online.
 - Routinely added obituaries from local newspaper to online searchable index.
- **Volunteer Projects**
 - Jane Oakes – Transcription of James B. Harrison diaries (Jan.-Dec.)
 - Madeline Friedler – Indexing and digitizing historical records (Jan.-Jul.)
 - Kayley Hill, SUNY Geneseo intern – Organized and described collections, processed James J. Wadsworth Collection, indexed wills, and retyped census information about Black residents (Feb.-May)

6
NEW FINDING
AIDS

18
COLLECTIONS
DONATED

350
VOLUNTEER
HOURS

7,900+
PAGES
DIGITIZED

9,000+
NEW INDEX
ENTRIES



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

• Livingston County Bicentennial

- *Women’s Biographical Review: Achievers, Leaders, and Role Models*, co-authored by Amie Alden and Holly Watson, features 200 women from all eras, all towns in the county, and all walks of life. The book was launched in January 2022 as the last event for the 2021 bicentennial year. Sales covered production costs, and public reception of the book has been overwhelmingly positive.
- Bicentennial Geocaching Trail – The 36-cache trail across the county has been live since July 2021 and continues to attract enthusiastic local and visiting geocachers. Several geocachers found all 36 hides, and caches averaged 62 logged finds each. The trail is a project led and managed by Marty DeMarte (ITS).

• STQRY Heritage Trails (Formerly OnCell)

- The OnCell platform for mapping and promoting countywide points of interest was upgraded to the company’s newer platform, STQRY. The improved user experience is streamlined and offers more features at the same price.

• Social Media and Publications

- Created a brochure about the Livingston County Poorhouse history and disseminated it to businesses located in the former poorhouse buildings on Millennium Drive, Geneseo.
- Wrote local Christmas history article for *Livingston County News*
- Regularly created social media posts, including posts about Black history, Italian American heritage, and announcements from the County Historian’s Office. Most posts performed significantly better than average on the county’s Facebook page, including 156 reactions and 123 shares on the top-performing story, which was about Seneca place names.



PATRON COMMENTS

"Out of over 200 historians I emailed, you were the first to respond - impressive!" - Patron, 2022

"When I started my research about 4 months ago, I had no idea what a deep history my family has in Livingston County. Thanks again for all your wonderful assistance!" - Patron, 2022





PRESENTATIONS, CONSULTATIONS, & RELATED EVENTS

MAR

Holly Watson held *Women's Biographical Review* book-signing events with former County Historian Amie Alden in Dansville, Livonia, and Geneseo (3/22-3/26)

MAY

Presented via Zoom about County Historian's Office resources and services to nationwide genealogy class, hosted by Truckee Meadows Community College in NV (5/27)

JUN

Attended historical marker dedication at Papermill Park, Avon (6/9)

JUN

Presented at Bee Ball at 3 Bricks Collective, Geneseo, about history of County Poorhouse (6/25)

JUL

Historian and deputy historian consulted weekly with Livingston County Records Management on potential historical value of county records at Building 6 (7/15-12/31)

AUG

Historian and deputy historian consulted with Springwater town historian regarding the town historian's collection (8/2-11/15)

OCT

County Historian Holly Watson met twice with group regarding Craig Colony documentation project (10-5-11/2)

OCT

Presented on the *Women's Biographical Review* book with retired County Historian Amie Alden for Delta Kappa Gamma group, Geneseo (10/25)

OCT

Presented twice on history of County Poorhouse and cemetery at Haunted Harvest Festival at 3 Bricks Collective, Geneseo (10/29-10/30)

NOV

Attended historical marker dedication, Cuylerville (11/5)

DEC

Presented a public program on Christmas and holiday traditions in Livingston County at 3 Bricks Collective, Geneseo (12/3)



COMMITTEE AND ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT

County Historian Holly Watson

- Participated in county Intranet update committee meetings (6/24 and 7/8)
- Served as secretary for GAHWNY (Government-Appointed Historians of Western NY); handled all communications with members, processed meeting registrations, and updated website and social media; assisted with planning and organization of annual conference in East Aurora on 10/1
- Attended virtual regional planning meeting regarding 250th anniversary of Revolutionary War (11/7)
- Joined county SHAPE Advisory Board as Building 5 representative

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

County Historian Holly Watson

- Completed NACo Professional Development Academy leadership course (12 weeks)
- Attended day-long conference, “Consider the Source NY: Diversity and Collaborative Knowledge Institute” for partnering with educators (5/5)
- Attended several online trainings related to online repositories Consider the Source NY, NY Heritage, and Empire ADC
- Attended NY Statewide Preservation Conference in Syracuse (9/23)
- Attended webinars “Keeping Current: Tips & Tricks for Policy Updates,” “Our Role as Collecting Organizations,” and “Making Your Website More Accessible”
- Attended virtual presentation “Remembering Washington’s ‘Sullivan Expedition’ of 1779 in Contemporary Times” as part of the Conference on Iroquois Research (10/14)

Deputy Historian Madeline Friedler

- Attended annual Government-Appointed Historians of Western NY (GAHWNY) conference “Documenting the Rich Cultural Diversity of Your Community” (10/1)
- Attended virtual presentation “The Most Valuable Lands: Seneca Oil, Seneca’s Oil, and the Struggle for Land Rights at the Birthplace of an Industry” as part of the Conference on Iroquois Research (10/14)



WELCOME, MADELINE FRIEDLER!

Madeline was hired as full-time deputy historian in August and has already processed and digitized several collections, indexed thousands of names, and launched a new online photo gallery. Her strong work ethic, relevant experience, and inquisitiveness is a perfect fit for the office.



2023 GOALS

1

Prioritizing access to materials through digitization, indexing, and findability online

2

Completing a non-invasive physical survey of burials at the Poorhouse Cemeteries in Geneseo in order to preserve, rehabilitate, and dignify the cemeteries

3

Designing both temporary and permanent exhibits on county historical subjects





LIVINGSTON COUNTY HISTORIAN'S OFFICE



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Monday-Friday, 1:00pm-4:30pm
Closed legal holidays
Research Center open by appointment only

VETERAN
FILES

LOCAL
HISTORY
BOOKS

REFERENCE
FILES

DIARIES

CHURCH
RECORDS

MAPS

FAMILY
FILES

SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS

PHOTOS

DIRECTORIES