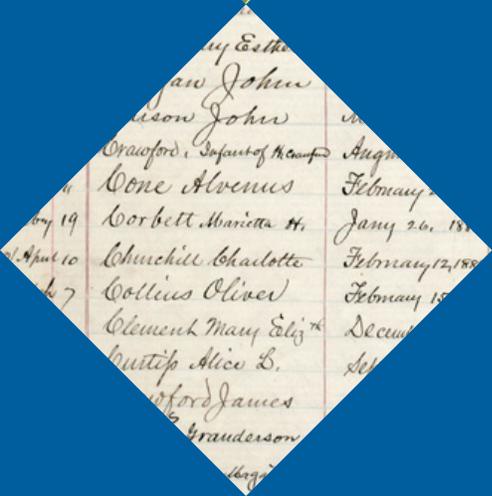
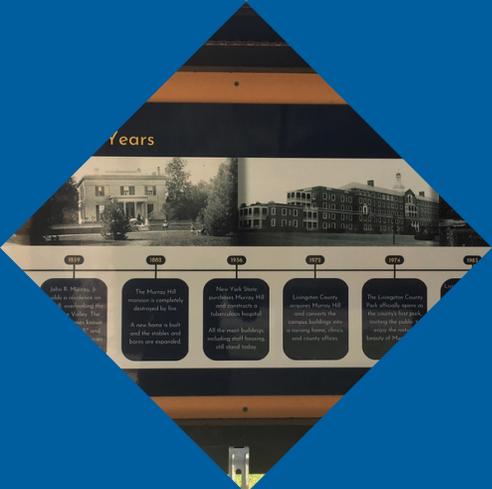




LIVINGSTON COUNTY
HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023





LETTER FROM THE HISTORIAN

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

It is a privilege to submit my second annual report as County Historian. As the eighth county historian in a lineage reaching back to 1933, I am proud and humbled to serve Livingston County in this role.

This year, the County Historian's Office completed several signature projects while simultaneously providing prompt and friendly customer service, and continuing daily mission-based activities.

The office marked accomplishments such as successful public presentations, an article about technological innovation for *NYSAC News*, maximizing storage space, and beginning an oral history campaign to document Craig Colony employee experiences. We offered personalized guidance and general support to the town historians in the county.

Deputy Historian Madeline Friedler has truly become part of the team over the past year and a half and a department head couldn't ask for a better deputy. Madeline manages the research room, responds to daily queries, and goes the extra mile for patrons. No collections management task is too large for her, and she takes on new projects eagerly.

This year, the department also gained a new weekly volunteer, Ron Browne. He has already indexed hundred of obituaries, Civil War records, and tax roll entries. Our volunteers dedicate considerable time, making our valuable collections more accessible to the public via the Online Records Index.

While the in-person-researcher count nudged up slightly this year, it has remained low. Conversely, demand for virtual research assistance hit an all-time high in 2023. Globally, as more information becomes available online, the public's expectation for virtual access has skyrocketed. This decisive trend directs and informs the office's focus on increasing accessibility of information and excellent customer service.

In the coming year, I plan to enhance educational resources and programming, further develop the Poorhouse Cemeteries, and continue utilizing technology to improve access to the archival collections.

My sincere thanks and appreciation goes to the Board of Supervisors and the county administration for their continued support of the County Historian's Office. The department is proud to grow, learn, and continue to offer unparalleled 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.

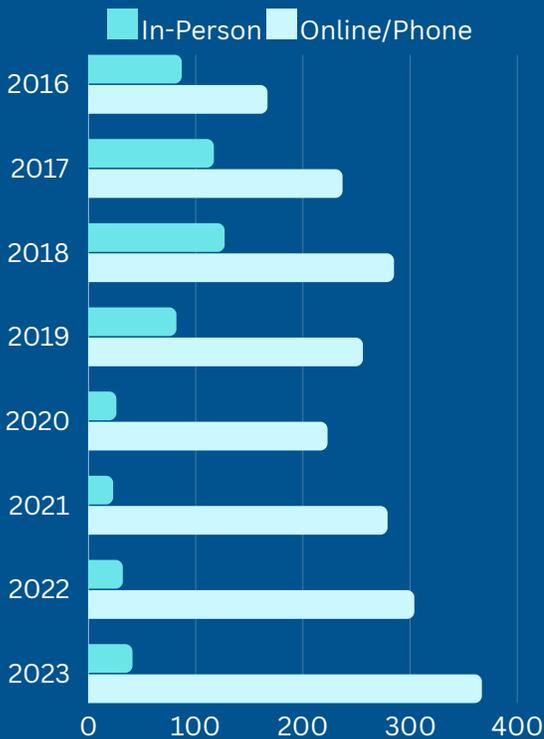
DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

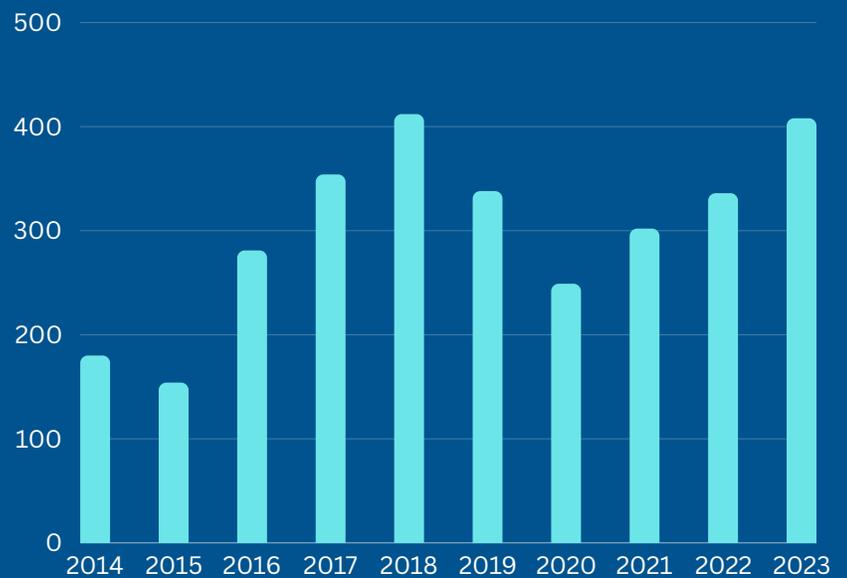
PUBLIC RESEARCH ROOM AND ARCHIVES

In 2023, the Historian's Office received 365 research requests online or by phone, exceeding last year's record by 22%. The continued trend of information-seeking remotely is undeniable. This strong trend directs the office's focus to making information readily available online and providing excellent customer service.

IN-PERSON VS. REMOTE REQUESTS



TOTAL RESEARCH REQUESTS, 2014-2023



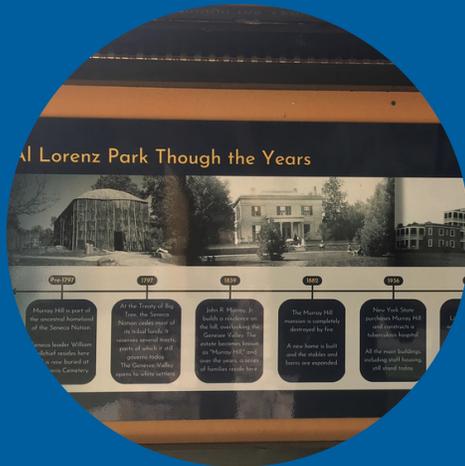
SIGNATURE PROJECTS

1

COUNTY POORHOUSE CEMETERIES

September brought the long-awaited ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey of the County Poorhouse Cemeteries in Geneseo. The Historian's Office located and marked 75 unmarked graves and had new signs installed at both cemeteries. A partnership with Central Services and ingenuity landed the project \$7,120 under budget.

The Historian's Office is committed to continued development of the poorhouse cemeteries, including adding interpretive signage.



AL LORENZ PARK SIGNS

2

In May, the County Historian's Office designed and installed interpretive panels in each of the six kiosks around Al Lorenz Park. The panels provide context for the park and Murray Hill, including its historical uses and milestones.

As part of the major improvements to Al Lorenz Park recently, the panels are a highly visible addition to the visitor experience.

3

AUDIO/VIDEO COLLECTION

Thanks to a fully-funded Collections and Access Grant from the RRLC, fifty-seven oral histories, historical programs, and videos are now freely available on NY Heritage. This supports the Historian's Office's mission to provide patron access to information.

The Historian's Office is a new contributor to the statewide initiative, and hopes to increase visibility on the platform by adding more digital collections in the coming year.





WEBPAGE AND ONLINE RESOURCES

- The County Historian’s Office webpage was updated throughout the year to reflect new resources and announcements.
- The historian assisted in creating the new Find Records page on the county website to direct patrons to various departments and resources.

RECORDS INDEX

Lucidea Technologies has hosted the County Historian’s Records Index, a core public offering, since summer 2022. This has been an excellent success.

The database **expanded by 16,700 new entries** this year, including a new Births series. During 2023, over 13,000 searches were performed by more than 2,000 users, showing that the database is reaching a wide audience.

405,500
RECORDS

16,700
NEW RECORDS

11
RECORD TYPES

2,000+
USERS

13.5K+
SEARCHES

FLICKR PHOTO GALLERY

The historian’s Flickr photostream is an easy way to share a sampling of archival images with patrons. Several photos have thousands of views, and the gallery has logged over 73,400 views since its launch in 2022. A new Railroads album expanded the offerings this year, complete with keywords and location tags to enhance discoverability .



13
ALBUMS

243
PHOTOGRAPHS

73,400+
VIEWS SINCE
INCEPTION





HISTORICAL RECORDS PRESERVATION AND ACCESS



55
DONATIONS

- Donated items were appraised, arranged, and described. Physical items were housed in archival-quality storage containers and digital items were stored on the secure county server. Accepted donations included numerous archival documents, diaries, photographs, oral histories about Craig Colony, and record books, all related to people, places, and local historical events.



7,900+
PAGES DIGITIZED

- Hundreds of documents, photographs, and media were digitized, including Temple Hill Cemetery records, early Leicester field notes, oral histories, videos, and Craig Colony photos.



4
NEW FINDING AIDS

- Finding aids 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 nearly 100.



9,000+
NEW INDEX ENTRIES

- Thousands of entries from ledgers, school records, and voter records were typed up for the County Historian's Record Index online.
- Hundreds of obituaries from local papers were added to online index.



235
VOLUNTEER HOURS

- Jane Oakes – Transcription of James B. Harrison diaries (Jan.-Dec.)
- Ron Browne – Indexing historical records (Jul.-Dec.)



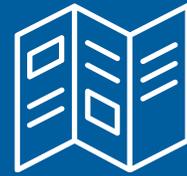
COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY



13
PRESENTATIONS



206
IN-PERSON
ATTENDEES



900+
POORHOUSE
BROCHURES
DISTRIBUTED



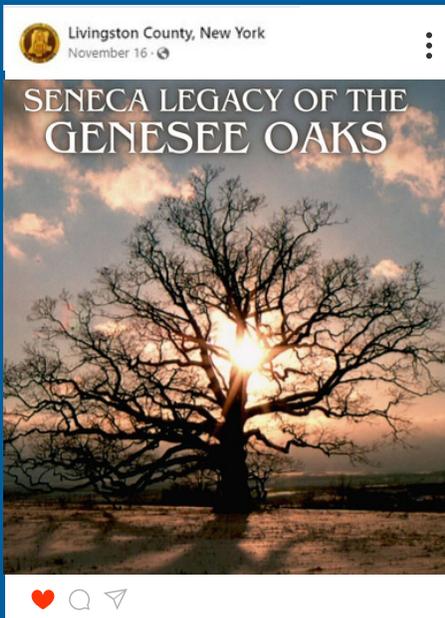
32
SOCIAL MEDIA
POSTS



14,700+
ENGAGEMENTS
ON 4 TOP POSTS



283,500+
IMPRESSIONS/
POST REACH
ON TOP 4 POSTS



The year's top Facebook post reached about 100,000 accounts, gathered 860 reactions, and was shared 290 times - the all-time best-performing post on the county Facebook page.



The historian's new program about pioneering entomologist and fly-tier Sara Jane McBride of Caledonia and Mumford was well-received at two public presentations. Above is its debut at Letchworth State Park's Summer Lecture Series.



COMMITTEE AND ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT

County Historian Holly Watson

- 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 Batavia on 10/7.
- Attended county SHAPE Advisory Board meetings as Building 5 representative.
- Served as ex-officio member of Livingston County Records Advisory Board.

Deputy County Historian Madeline Friedler

- Served on Al Lorenz Family Fest planning committee and participated in Family Fest.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

County Historian Holly Watson

- Completed Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) training from the National Association of Interpretation (4 weeks).
- Attended several county trainings on department business processes.

Office-wide

- Staff attended several in-person and online conferences and trainings related to archives, historical topics, and research.
- Visited local and regional repositories and museums to compare interpretive techniques and network, including Ganondagan, the Seneca-Iroquois National Museum, and Ontario County Records and Archives.



PATRON COMMENTS

"I am so very appreciative of all the help given me by the Livingston County, NY Historian's Office. They answered my emails promptly. They went the extra mile to help me find and access records I was interested in."

"Thank you and please know I am impressed with such a speedy response from you—less than 24 hours. Wow!!"

"This is amazing information! I have the biggest smile on my face right now, I'm so excited."

"...Thank you both for your knowledge and insights. Murray Hill is indeed a special place and an outstanding example of historic preservation and adaptive reuse."





2024 GOALS



Prioritizing security, efficiency, and access to records through implementation of a professional content management system.



Completing interpretive signage and improvements at the Poorhouse Cemeteries in Geneseo to further preserve and dignify the cemeteries.



Developing new educational resources and programming to reach a wider audience and increase office visibility.



LIVINGSTON COUNTY HISTORIAN'S OFFICE



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Madeline Friedler, Deputy Historian



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

