

Onondaga historical association's HISTORY

OHA

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HISTORIC GENERAL ASSOCIATION DOCUMENT ON LOAN TO NEW EXHIBIT IN STATE CAPITOL BUILDING *BY GREGG A. TRIPOLI*



Left to right: Gregg Tripoli, Dennis Connors, unidentified, Dean Skelos, Governor Andrew Cuomo

In 1775, shortly after the confrontation between the Massachusetts militia and British forces at Lexington and Concord, the elected leaders of the Colony of New York decided that it was important to gather for the purpose of drafting a document that would formally “associate” themselves in unified opposition to the recent British actions and policies. The First Provincial Congress was, therefore, convened and the document, known as the “General Association for... the Rights and Liberties of America,” was signed by the 100 elected members on May 26, 1775. The document was, essentially, the first document of the first representative government of New York and it, effectively, declared that New York was no longer a colony of the British crown. It firmly placed New York in the Revolution, it strengthened the political bond among the colonies, and it helped secure a unified colonial statement of independence, paving the way for the Declaration of Independence, which was signed little more than a year later. Perhaps the most important document in the history of New York State, the original General Association document has been in the collections of the OHA since 1927.

Recently, the General Association document was loaned to be a centerpiece of a new historical exhibit in the Hall of Governors on the 2nd floor of the New York State Capitol building. The story of the document garnered major press attention in newspapers all across the U.S. and Great Britain. As a consequence of OHA’s loan of the document, Dennis Connors and I were invited by Governor Andrew Cuomo to be his guests at his second annual State of the State Address on January 4, 2012. During the drive to Albany, in-between Dennis’ telephone interviews with reporters about the document, we talked about how excited we were to see the exhibit, which was mounted under the direction of Harold Holzer, a renowned historian and Senior Vice President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

The Hall of Governors is an architecturally spectacular passageway to some of the Capitol building’s most important rooms, including the Governor’s suite of offices. The Hall is part of a major restoration project that is returning the building to its original splendor. Thanks to the Governor’s respect and love for history, the Hall has been transformed into an exhibit gallery and is newly lined with exhibit cases that contain dozens of New York State’s historic documents, assembled from some of our country’s most impressive collections. The General Association document holds a most prominent position as the very first document in the exhibit. It is housed in an exhibit case, along with the First

Constitution of the State of New York (dated April 20, 1777), located directly outside the Governor’s private office. The Governor enjoys giving tours of the Hall and Dennis and I were fortunate enough to be led on such a tour, along with a large delegation of State Legislators, during which the Governor displayed an impressive knowledge of the exhibit. I would also like to mention that the Governor’s entire staff, along with Mr. Holzer and State Archives and Museum officials, were extremely gracious and welcoming to us in every way.



Charles Loring Elliott’s painting of Governor Hamilton Fish

Though our invitation was due to OHA’s loan of the document, Dennis informed me of another connection that OHA has to the exhibit, regarding a portrait that is displayed there. On the walls of the Hall hang the portraits of New York’s Governors, accompanied by brief historical biographies of each man. Certainly one of the most stunning portraits is of Governor Hamilton Fish (who served in that office from 1849-1851), which was painted by Syracusan, Charles Loring Elliott. Elliott was, by all accounts, the most accomplished, and popular, portraitist of the mid-19th century. He painted the portraits of at least two sitting presidents along with many other notable politicians and leaders of industry, including Cornelius Vanderbilt and Samuel Colt. Elliott paintings are part of the collections of the world’s finest museums including the National Galleries of the U.S. and Great Britain, the National Academy of Design, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the New York Historical Society

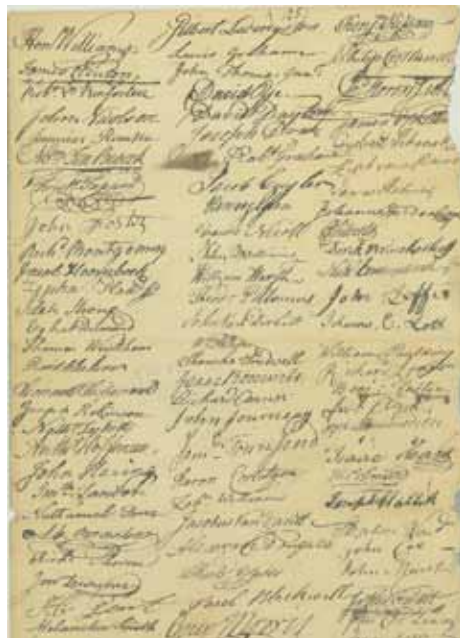
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in New York City, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. OHA holds the honored distinction of owning the largest private collection of Elliott portraits in the world. In addition, the OHA Research Center contains the most comprehensive collection of research and reference material on the life and career of Charles Loring Elliott.

Hamilton Fish, born in 1808, was the 16th Governor of New York. He was named for his father's good friend, Alexander Hamilton (the namesake of my undergraduate alma mater, Hamilton College). At 40 years of age, he was one of the youngest Governors in New York history and served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives (1843), Lieutenant Governor (1847), U.S. Senator from New York (1851), and as President Ulysses S. Grant's Secretary of State for an eight year tenure beginning in 1869. Grant stated that Fish was, above everyone else, the person whom he most trusted for political advice and Fish was Grant's longest serving cabinet member. Widely respected, Fish's biographer, Elwood Corning, described him as a man who commanded "men's confidence, and respect by his firmness, candor, and justice." Following in the footsteps of their ancestor, in a proud tradition of public service, the son, grandson, and great grandson of Hamilton Fish (all named Hamilton Fish, by the way) also served in the U.S. House of Representatives for the State of New York.

After our tour of the Hall of Governors, as I entered the convention hall for the Governor's Address, an usher led me to my seat. On the back of my chair was a sign that contained my name and the Great Seal of the State of New York. As I glanced at the seat next to mine, you can imagine my surprise when I noticed that the name on the back of that chair read "Hamilton Fish!" Yes, that seat was reserved for none other than Hamilton Fish V (though he doesn't use the Roman numeral in his title). A 1973



A page of the General Association Document

Harvard graduate, Hamilton is a publisher, social entrepreneur, environmental advocate and film producer in New York City. We both shared a good laugh over the coincidences concerning the fact that I had just been admiring the portrait and the biography of his great, great grandfather, that OHA has a connection to the portraitist, and that I had a collegiate connection to the origin of his first name.

During the Governor's Address, I was particularly pleased that he made a specific reference to the General Association document. One of the main themes of his speech was his desire to return New York to a position of leadership among the rest of the states. He spoke of the long and proud history of New York as the most progressive state in the nation and, as an example, he referred to the General Association as the document that New York signed to indicate its willingness to revolt against Great Britain over a year before the nation's Declaration of Independence.

I encourage everyone to stop by the Capitol building if you are in Albany to see the beautiful restoration and, especially, to visit the Hall of Governors and see the exhibit, which so prominently displays a part of OHA's collection, as well as a remarkable example of our community's artistic history. ❖

Dear Members,

Welcome to the latest issue of History Highlights. We've received so many compliments on this great member benefit, and all of us here at OHA are thrilled that you are enjoying our news magazine. Of course, it's not the only benefit of membership to OHA. Members also receive a 10% discount on all items in our new museum-related retail store, the Gift Gallery, as well as sizeable discounts on many programs and events, along with invitations to special "members only" exhibit preview receptions and several "additional discount" shopping events.

It's all about our effort to show you how much we appreciate your continued support. Your membership is the life-blood of OHA and we could never thank you enough, though we sure do try!

In this issue, we've added a new feature - guest writers, including articles by Keliy Anderson-Staley ("Americans and the Tintype Collection of the OHA"), by Kim Court ("Onondaga Community College and OHA: A Growing Partnership"), and by Richard Palmer ("The First Train to Syracuse - Auburn & Syracuse Railroad is 175 Years Old").

You will also be treated to an article on the General Association (a document from our collection that has garnered OHA international press coverage and is, probably, the most important document in the history of New York State), the final installment of my series on "A Brief History of Local Female Philanthropists", as well as articles on the 100-year history of the Girl Scouts, the War of 1812, Onondaga County's 19th Century Arsenal, the Patriot War, and many other topics.

If you haven't seen the "new" OHA Museum yet, make sure to plan a visit to downtown Syracuse, park in the garage on the corner of Montgomery and E. Fayette Streets (the cheapest parking venue downtown for a 2-hour stay), have a delicious lunch at Parisa, the new history-themed restaurant next door to OHA, check out the newly re-designed OHA Museum featuring a consistently changing array of temporary exhibits, and be sure to take advantage of your member discount by shopping at the Gift Gallery where you will find a tremendous selection of unique products that connect you to our rich heritage and that are only available at OHA.

With sincerest gratitude and appreciation for your continuing support,
Gregg A. Tripoli
Executive Director

The Sad Saga of the Onondaga Arsenal

By DENNIS J. CONNORS

Last year marked the start of the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War. Already, there have been numerous celebrations, conferences, books, TV specials, tours, editorials and special magazine editions offering reflections on the war, which remains one of the most seminal events in American history. This will continue for the next four years. Lingering in the shadows of this sesquicentennial, however, is another anniversary; one that traditionally gets the short straw in the pantheon of commemorating historical moments – the War of 1812.

America's hostilities with Great Britain and its Canadian colony officially began on June 18, 1812 and ended in December of 1814. New York State, with its long border with Canada, saw plenty of action. A large number of Central New Yorkers were involved in the fighting. The war, however, was not universally supported among Americans at the time, and the results were generally inconclusive; actually disappointing

the war as a successful defense of their land and a unifying event that would help motivate their evolution toward independence in 1867. Americans, however, placed the significance of the War of 1812 somewhere behind the more glorious victory of the American Revolution. And, by 1865, it was completely overshadowed by the tremendously bloodier, gut-wrenching and game-changing Civil War.

The fields, hills and streams within today's Onondaga County witnessed no actual War of 1812 battles, but enough were nearby at Oswego and Sackets Harbor to make local citizens quite concerned about their outcomes. New York State had prepared for the coming war, in part, by constructing a series of arsenals across the state for the storage of arms and supplies. With its central location, along a major east-west turnpike, and just south of the border with the enemy, the early settlement at Onondaga Hollow (today's Valley section of Syracuse) was chosen as one of the arsenal locations.

headed to battle. The site witnessed the movements of American troops to the front and the journey of the injured back. British prisoners were marched past the arsenal on their way to POW camps near Albany. After the war, the arsenal fell into disuse, eventually declared surplus in 1850 and essentially abandoned. It was a substantial structure, however, and its highly visible location on the hillside, then mostly cleared of trees, made it a well-known local landmark. But with no caretaker, a slow physical decay soon was underway.

Unfortunately for the arsenal, it had the misfortune of never having been built on the land that the state had purchased for that purpose in 1809. When the time had come to construct the building, a year or two later, either the contractor or the militia officer in charge, Colonel Thaddeus Wood, reportedly disapproved of the exact lay of the land and was given permission to erect the arsenal lower on the hillside, and so was launched a 200-year old mystery of who really owns the arsenal site.

As the structure slowly deteriorated during the years after the Civil War, descendents of the early pioneers of Onondaga began to see it as a symbol of their ancestors' hard work to carve out and defend the early settlement of this region. They had no battlefield or structures that played a direct role in the American Revolution. This early, "public" building relating to a war with Great Britain seemed to fill the bill. There was a renewed interest in the early history of Onondaga County as the community approached the 1894 centennial celebrating the creation of the county. Saving and restoring the arsenal soon became a goal for the Onondaga Historical Association. Immediately, however, the nagging question of who had title to the land reared its ugly, legal head.

The ensuing reality, detailed in numerous newspaper articles and files at the

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Onondaga Arsenal, 1880's

for many Americans. While there were notable victories by U. S. forces, those hoping that war would secure Canada as part of the United States were soundly defeated. Perhaps worse, we suffered the substantial embarrassment of having our nation's capital burned by the enemy. Canadians, rightly, still look upon

The 2 1/2-story stone structure was built about halfway up the east hill overlooking the valley, with easy access to the Seneca Turnpike. It was finished early in 1812, just in time for the pending war. The Onondaga Arsenal was an active military storehouse throughout the war, equipping units that were

NYPENN Pathways Girl Scout Council Celebrates 100-Year Anniversary of Girl Scouts USA

By **LYNNE PASCALE**

After a century of monumental changes for women, Girl Scouts USA will celebrate its 100th Anniversary in March 2012. To help mark this historic event, and to commemorate the national and local history of Girl Scouting, NYPENN Pathways Girl Scout Council has engaged OHA to produce a traveling exhibit of five panels, each representing a significant era in the ever-changing story of this iconic and important American institution. The social upheaval, international crises, and technological advances of American life all were reflected in the changing structure and processes of this mostly all-female organization. As viewers of the exhibit will see, through a century of change, the Girl Scouts' core mission of serving the diverse needs of girls has remained constant.



The first panel of the NYPENN Pathways Girl Scouts Anniversary Traveling Exhibit, "In the Beginning," covers the early years when founder Juliette Low brought the idea of

scouting for girls from England in 1912. Central New York was the backdrop for several notable events in Girl Scout history. The Onondaga Nation troop established in 1922 was the first Native American Girl Scout troop in the country. Camp Hoover in Tully was one of the early camps offering boating, swimming and many other activities to both day and overnight campers. By the end of this period, scouts were no longer baking their cookies themselves but were starting to use commercially licensed bakeries.

The Depression, World War II and Cold War years were the historical backdrop to the second panel's theme, "Widening the Scope," when Girl Scouting adapted to the needs of the nation during these crises and grew rapidly with the post-war economic expansion and suburbanization. Girl Scouts continued its progressive views of inclusion by welcoming the daughters of migrant workers, military personnel, and those with physical challenges. By the beginning of the 1950's, Girl Scouts served over 1.5 million girls and adult volunteers.

The significant social upheaval of the 1960's was reflected in the organizational and programming changes of the Girl Scouts. Membership was at its highest level at this time with over 3.5 million. The third panel, "Program and Membership Expansion" covers the period from the early 1960's to the late 1970's when the scouting program went from three to four levels, namely, Brownie, Junior, Cadette, and Senior. Uniform changes also reflected the increasing desire from the membership for greater individualization. "Action 70" was an anti-racism project and in this period, Girl Scouts selected its first African-American president, Gloria D. Scott.

"Worlds to Explore" is the fourth panel in the series and examines how the Girl Scouts addressed contemporary social issues by adapting its programming to meet the needs of American families. *Project Safe Time* was introduced for girls whose parents were not at home after school. New badges such as Computer Fun, Aerospace, and Business Wise reflected the interests of the time. One more level, Daisy Scouts, was introduced in the 1980's. A national health and fitness service project, *Be Your Best*, was introduced in the 1990's.

The achievements of Elmira, NY native, Girl Scout, and Syracuse University graduate, Col. Eileen Collins, first female commander of a Shuttle mission (and first astronaut ever to fly the shuttle through a 360-degree pitch maneuver) epitomizes the theme of the final panel, "Twenty-first Century and Beyond." At the beginning of the new millennium, Girl Scouts USA underwent significant council re-structuring to increase the efficiency of its services and meet the challenges of the future. Girl Scouts USA has remained a viable and valuable American institution for 100 years and continues to modify its organization and programming to serve the needs of all American girls.

For locations where to view the traveling exhibit, check the OHA website for information at www.cnyhistory.org, or call Lynne Pascale at 428-1864 ext. 314. ❖

Americans and the Tintype Collection of the Onondaga Historical Association: The Wet-Plate Collodion Tintype Process

BY KELLY ANDERSON-STALEY

I started working with the wet plate collodion tintype process eight years ago, and I was immediately intrigued by the possibilities of the medium. I had already been working in darkrooms for years, but a lot of my graduate school friends were transitioning to digital, and I was thinking about making the change myself. I had also done a lot of work using alternative processes, but it was only by chance that I discovered wet plate. When the photo lab I worked at down-sized (even in New York City there was decreasing need for their services), I lost my job, but my boss took me on as an apprentice to assist him on photo shoots he was doing in the tintype process.

Within a few weeks I had decided my next photography project would be in this process and I began acquiring the equipment I would need to get started. I knew I would never be able to afford the high quality vintage equipment used by some of the other contemporary photographers also reviving 19th-century photographic processes. Many of these photographers strive for authenticity in their studios, trying to replicate the portrait studios of Mathew Brady and the other early practitioners of the tintype. Although I am deeply interested in the history, and I love the quality of the old brass lenses, my goal has never been historical accuracy—it is too expensive on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is almost impossible—so many of the chemicals I use and the photographic substrates could never be found in the same forms they existed in the nineteenth century. My concern has always been with the portrait, with using the process to produce the images I want to see. The process is not a gimmick, but rather a means to a very particular aesthetic and conceptual end.

Developed in the 1850s, the wet plate collodion process can be used to produce tintypes, ambrotypes and glass negatives.

A plate of either glass (ambrotype) or metal (tintype) is coated with a thin layer of collodion (gun cotton dissolved in ether). The collodion is viscous and forms a skin on the surface of the plate, almost like a liquid paper. The plate is then sensitized in a silver nitrate bath, placed in the back of the camera and exposed through the lens. The image is developed with a ferrous sulfate mixture and fixed in a potassium cyanide bath. With a tintype, only the one image is produced—once developed, it is a positive image permanently fixed to the surface of the tintype. The entire process must be completed while the plate is wet. This made it difficult for early photographers to work in the field, but this did not prevent them from photographing on location, including on the battlefields of the Crimean and Civil Wars.

I have always been more interested in portraiture than in the other photographic genres. My *Off the Grid* series (2004-2008) had a number of landscapes, and I photographed a lot of houses, but my main concern was always with representing the individuals who had chosen to live the lifestyle I was documenting. The collodion process, in general and the tintype in particular, are most often recognized for their use in portraiture. By embracing this medium, I felt that I was putting myself in touch with the history of photographic portraiture itself.

Tintype portraits in the late 19th century were relatively cheap to produce—certainly cheaper than the oil paintings that had immortalized noblemen and other powerful figures in the previous centuries. Photo historians often make note of the democratic spirit of the tintype—nearly anyone could have one made, from Abraham Lincoln to Billy the Kid, whose tintype recently sold for a couple million dollars. People usually wore their best clothes to have a tintype made, and they posed rigidly and proudly in front of the



Figure 1:
Top: Tintype image from the OHA Collection, Sixth Plate (2.75x3.35") (Family of six in front of backdrop)

Bottom: Contemporary Tintype Title: The Rose Family #3 Shot in Syracuse in 2011, 8x10"

painted backdrops and beside the formal props of the photographer's studio. Many tintype images directly reference, even imitate, the oil portraits of earlier generations. Still, there are a number of photographs from the 19th century depicting people in their work clothes with the tools of their trade, the so-called vocational portraits that not only capture a likeness but that also promote the dignity of labor and the virtues of the emerging middle class. Despite the growth of the industry in the period, photographic portraits were still rare, certainly by the measure of our generation and our thousands of Facebook and cell phone portraits. In the nineteenth century, one might sit for a photograph only once in



Figure 2:
Top: Tintype image from the OHA Collection, Sixth Plate (2.75x3.35")
(Girl standing by chair with books on table)

Bottom: Contemporary Tintype
Title: Nia
Shot in Syracuse in 2010, 11x14"

his or her lifetime. In fact, many people were only photographed after they were dead. As more and more photographers set up tintype studios in cities around the country, however, it was increasingly possible for middle class individuals and families to have one of their own. The fact that so many of us have tintypes among our family heirlooms and that so many tintypes from that era have been abandoned to thrift stores and antique shops is a testament to their ubiquity.

A number of collodion photographers in the 19th century strove to elevate

the medium to the level of an art form. Among these, my favorite is Julia Margaret Cameron. A master of the photographic portrait, she produced powerful images of some of the major figures of nineteenth century British society—Charles Darwin, Alfred Tennyson, Sir John Herschel. She also recreated a number of mythological scenes and literary scenes—the death of Arthur, for example. She was doing in photography what the Pre-Raphaelites were doing in painting. But while Dante Gabriel Rossetti and others were working in a medium that smoothed over individuality, Cameron’s photographs, by the very nature of the medium and despite her deliberate soft focus, were always of actual people, even when they were actors reenacting a literary scene. This tension between reality and fiction has always been at the heart of photography, and it is one of the ideas that has informed my work.

There was a darker side to photography in the nineteenth century, too. At a time when the scientific method was informing many human activities, photography perfectly matched the spirit of the age—it was mechanical, relied on the latest advances in optics and chemistry and it seemed to offer an accurate, objective depiction of reality. However, the process was frequently used for “scientific” ethnographic studies of the human face, many of which were based in racist assumptions about physiognomy. Simply by my choice of medium, I am alluding to this history, and with it I hope to draw attention to the fact that images of ourselves exist within a history of images. Our identities are linked to the visual history of social difference, a history in which photography has not always played an innocent role.

When my tintype project, *Americans*, was recently exhibited at Light Work in Syracuse and in New York City, tintypes on loan from the Onondaga Historical Association were also on view in a vitrine in the gallery. This fantastic collection of vintage images, many of them rarer images of African-Americans depicted in the same middle-class and upper-middle-class milieu as their European-American counterparts, provided an invaluable context for my work. Unlike the anthropological studies

described above, all of these antique portraits are individual and family portraits—mementos and keepsakes.

Many tintypes from the period are sixth-plate, meaning they are only 2.75 x 3.25 inches, so they can be held in a hand or framed in a delicate case. My portraits are much larger, so every detail of the face, even blemishes, can be seen. But there are a number of similarities—the tone and sheen of the image, the seriousness of the expressions, the surprising facial details captured by the collodion. And those somber and serious faces found in both the vintage tintypes and my own are not a product of a hard nineteenth-century life, but rather of the process. Because exposures are often long, subjects must hold their faces still for a dozen seconds or more—far too long to hold a smile.

For this essay, I have paired several of my tintypes with some drawn from the Onondaga Historical Association’s collection. Although I had not seen the Onondaga images before I made my tintypes (these were all made while I was at Light Work in Syracuse for an artist residency in 2010 or earlier), I have juxtaposed these images because of their uncanny similarities and echoes. My modern family portrait (fig. 1, bottom)—with their tattoos and modern clothes—contrasts sharply with the formally posed Victorian family (fig. 1, top), yet we recognize family dynamics and notice that the children in both portraits are increasingly able to hold still as



Figure 3:
Left: Tintype image from the OHA Collection, Sixth Plate (2.75x3.35")
(Woman wearing coat with many buttons)

Right: Contemporary Tintype
Title: Estephanie
Shot in NYC in 2009, 8x10"



*Figure 4:
Left: Tintype image from the OHA Collection, Fourth Plate (3.25x4.25")
(Man sitting in traditional posing chair)*

Right: Contemporary Tintype, Title: Kevin, Shot in Syracuse in 2010, 8x10"

they age. The family photo experience, it seems, has always been an awkward affair. When comparing a portrait of a Victorian girl (fig. 2, top) to one I photographed in Syracuse (fig. 2, bottom), we cannot help

but notice the change in fashion and even in the confidence with which young girls carry themselves, but both images offer a glimpse into the complicated world of childhood. "Esthaphanie" (fig. 3, right) and

an anonymous woman (fig. 3, left) both stare proudly at the lens, inviting us to look back and truly see them. Finally, my portrait of "Kevin" (fig. 4, right) and the 19th-century portrait of a seated African-American man (fig. 4, left), both capture men firmly in control of their posture and fully aware of their bodies. Once the difference of photographic technology has been removed and we see ourselves depicted in the same way our ancestors were, we realize that humanity has not changed all that much.

A large part of my practice as a photographer includes the involvement of my subjects in the creation of the images that represent them. Looking out at the viewer as if looking at themselves in a mirror, the individuals assert their selfhood and resist any imposed or external categorizing system. Once the image joins my installations, each individual becomes part of the larger collection, but is not lost, insisting with his or her intense gaze that we look back. ❖

The Sad Saga continued from page 3

OHA over the next 100 years, became a frustrating and confusing tangle of conflicting deeds, titles, transfers, sales, bequests and hopes. At one point early in the 20th century, after the OHA had abandoned its effort, it appears the original state land was acquired by a local, now defunct chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), but that was not the land that held the crumbling arsenal. In 1927, the Onondaga Chapter of the Daughters of 1812 did manage to erect a commemorative bronze plaque on a small boulder along Seneca Turnpike, a few hundred feet west of the ruins. It remains there today. In the 1930s, during the heyday of public works projects that built historic sites such as the Salt Museum and the original "French Fort," government officials considered a restoration project for the arsenal. But always, the uncertain land ownership issue stymied and eventually ended the effort.

Its slow physical decay is documented in dozens of photographs and paintings, as the building became a noted and romanticized ruin. By the 1920s, perhaps a third of the structure remained

standing. As late as 1956, large sections of four walls, including most of two complete corners of the building were still resisting collapse. But by the late 1980s, just a single corner was left, about what remains today. In 1987, the OHA seriously considered accepting title to the old DAR plot with the potential to expand the holding to include the actual arsenal, which seems to be privately owned. It appears, however, that any actual transfer was not acted upon.



Onondaga Arsenal, 2005

Likely there were concerns that the location lacked true public access and there was no identified plan or funding to develop the site. Also, at the time, OHA was heavily involved with development of its relatively new museum property at 321 Montgomery Street.

Now, upon reaching its 200th anniversary, the Onondaga Arsenal stubbornly refuses to disappear. The location and potential ownership, however, remain real challenges for any future public access - accessibility that would be required to justify an effort to even stabilize and preserve the small remaining section. Certainly, as a minimum, the arsenal location holds value as an archaeological site worth investigating. I am scheduled to present a paper about the saga of the Onondaga Arsenal at a War of 1812 conference in Kingston, Ontario this coming October. And perhaps, before the War of 1812 Bicentennial fades away in two years, this historic local connection to that earlier era can, at least, be properly recorded and documented. ❖

Patriot War

BY SARAH KOZMA

It was November 1838. A group of about 35 men from Onondaga County, along with roughly 700 others, stood on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, near Ogdensburg, NY, waiting for the right moment to cross the river into Canada. Spurred on by Canadian rebels, this group of Americans believed they were coming to the aid of the colonial Canadians who wanted to be free from their domineering British rulers. Unfortunately, the Americans were grossly misled. Although many Canadians were discontented with aspects of how their government was run, the majority of them were not disillusioned to the point of outright rebellion. The ensuing fight, on the Canadian shores of the St. Lawrence River, became known as the Battle of the Windmill and was only one of several incidents in the Patriot War, also known as the Canadian Rebellions of 1837/38. It would be safe to say that most Americans have never heard of this war, never learned about it in school or read about it in their history books. However, in the late 1830s and 1840s, this war and its consequences not only had an impact on the international relations between the U.S., Canada and Great Britain, but it forever changed the lives of those involved and those of their families.

The Lower and Upper Canadian Rebellions of 1837/38 had their beginnings in the social and economic tensions and political unrest of the 1820s and 30s. In Upper Canada, the Reform Party was established to address some of the political and governmental issues. In the 1830s, the reform movement split into several factions. The most radical faction was led by William Lyon MacKenzie, who became convinced that an armed revolt would be the only way to make the governmental changes Canada needed. In December 1837, while the British army was occupied with crushing uprisings in Lower Canada, MacKenzie and about 1000 followers marched on York, present day Toronto, in hopes of achieving his aims and rallying disgruntled Canadians. The rebels were quickly defeated by local militia and many fled to the United



Battle of the Windmill

States, continuing their work by setting up Hunter Lodges in the U.S. These Lodges were designed to gather support and men in the effort of liberating a supposedly oppressed Canada.

The Hunter Lodges sprang up all over the northern United States, especially among border states; Onondaga County had several. On the face of things, they were said to be setting up great hunts in northern New York, which gave them an excuse to collect and store weapons and munitions as well as practice in paramilitary training. The meetings they held were secret. Members needed signs, passwords and codes to gain entry and swore oaths of secrecy, pledging to pursue a republican form of government for the Canadians. However, in some Lodges there was little effort made to hide their activities from the public. In reality, the Hunter Lodges were used as places to organize, recruit, and train American men for the planned expedition to invade Canada. The propaganda and rousing speeches of the leaders stirred up the patriotic ideals of these young Americans and many were eager to play their part.

“I [Maj. John A. Haddock] was then an apprentice in the office of the old Eagle and Standard at Watertown and in that office we printed a paper for William Lyon Mackenzie, the one man most directly responsible for the misery he brought upon so many innocent and unsuspecting men. He had a plausible

tongue and a ready pen and must have been altogether unscrupulous, for he represented in all his speeches before the Hunter Lodges and in his newspaper, which we printed for him, that the people of Canada were ready for revolt and that as soon as a demonstration was made, no matter whether in the upper or lower province, thousands of men would rise up, like the giant's teeth down by Cadmus, fully armed and ready to aid in overthrowing the government.” (Syracuse Standard, March 1898)

This misleading information which led to misguided efforts would, in the end, cost them dearly.

Upon reaching Canada, the Hunters' first goal was to take Fort Wellington, in Prescott, Ontario. Once they arrived in the area, still on the American side, there were several small delays. Nils Von Schoultz, a former professional soldier residing in Syracuse, who served as second in command, was anxious that they should proceed. He feared that, when faced with the reality of the situation, the men's principles would break down and self-preservation would prevail. On the verge of battle, with the professional British military before them, the majority of the Hunters, once so impassioned with the idea of Canadian liberty, now slunk away home, abandoning their comrades to their fate. As

Cont. on page 9 under Patriot War

it turned out, Von Schoultz was right to be anxious: out of the 700 men who arrived on the shores of the St. Lawrence River, less than 250 of them crossed over into Canada.

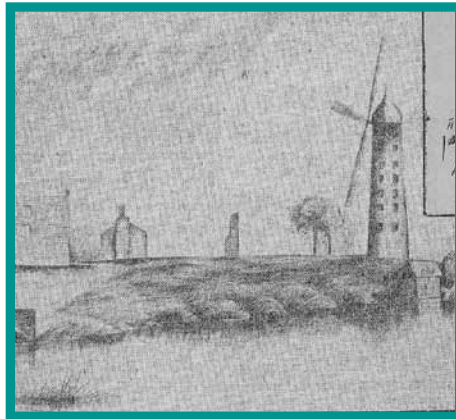
Already under fire from British ships, the remaining Americans landed on Canadian soil, and set their cannons and fortifications at a stone windmill which sat about a mile east of Prescott, Ontario, virtually across the river from Ogdensburg, NY. Initially, the Hunters succeeded in driving back the British army, but it wasn't long before the Hunters were forced to take refuge in the windmill. The fierce fighting continued intermittently for several days. With provisions and ammunition running low, and casualties mounting, the Hunters knew that, without reinforcements, there was only one inevitable conclusion. In the late afternoon of November 16, just five days after they landed on Canadian soil, the Hunters surrendered unconditionally to the British.

Influenced by propaganda, the Hunter Lodges were led to believe that the people of Canada would be eager to rise up with a little encouragement, but when they got there, this fighting force of thousands of rebel Canadians, who had been promised by the Canadian rebel leaders to join the fight with the Americans, was non-existent. Canada's desire for freedom from the British had been greatly exaggerated to the Hunters and, unfortunately for them, the rebel Canadian reinforcements never came. In fact, most of the Canadians who were fighting supported the British as part of the Canadian Militia.

In the aftermath of the battle a few lucky men escaped across the river, but most of those not killed in action, were captured and sent to the Kingston jail to await trial. Many of the men pleaded ignorance of the true reason for the expedition, while others denied they had any part, alleging that they had not picked up a gun during the entire battle. As one survivor admitted, it was "lie or die". The judges were not convinced by such feigned innocence. There had also been another skirmish shortly after the Battle of the Windmill and rumors of further invasions led to little leniency

for the prisoners, if only for the sake of ending the illegal war.

Almost a year earlier, in January 1838, President Martin Van Buren had declared the neutrality of the United States in the conflicts and rebellions of Canada. This meant that any person using American territory as a base for military actions against a country that was at peace with the U.S., namely Canada, was committing a federal crime. When the Hunter Lodges first appeared, the President, in an effort to avoid trouble with Britain, asked the American supporters of the Canadian rebels to abandon their activities. The request, however, had little impact on the Hunter Lodges, and their intentions and efforts to oust the British from North America and turn Canada into a republic remained unchanged. Little was done to enforce the neutrality laws in the border states, and in some places, officials actively supported the Hunters' cause. The eventual aggression by the American 'Hunters' towards the established Canadian government was seen as an illegal and unsanctioned act of war.



Battle of the Windmill

The Hunters were found guilty and their sentences were severe. About ten of the men, considered the leaders, were sentenced to death by hanging at Fort Henry in Kingston, Ontario. Around sixty men were to be transported and serve life sentences at the British penal colony on Van Diemen's Land, which is present day Tasmania, off the coast of Australia. The rest were imprisoned in Canada.

Many Canadians were satisfied with the verdicts of the trials. They saw the sen-

tences given as fair punishments for the havoc caused and the lives taken. A letter that really shows the angry bewilderment of a Canadian citizen towards what had occurred was printed in *The Albion*, January 19, 1839. It was from Canadian Judge Jonas Jones to John Fine, a congressman from Ogdensburg, NY. This is in response to the U.S. trying to get the prisoners released.

...think of our business prostrated, our property destroyed, and our friends and relations murdered; think of the "tears" of the widows and orphans of those who fell by the hands of the savage invaders of our soil; think of all these things when you call upon us in the sacred names of religion and humanity, to spare, and even liberate the offenders whom we have captured! Justice demands that some punishment, even in this world, should follow their murderous proceedings.

Americans, on the other hand, were outraged at the outcome of the trials. Petitions were signed, meetings were held and politicians were engaged to bring about, for the American prisoners, a favorable conclusion to the whole affair. The Canadians had quite a different perspective; not only did these prisoners participate in an armed invasion of their country, costing many lives and resources, but the American people had seemingly welcomed the Canadian rebel leaders when they fled to the United States.

Judge Jones, in his January 19, 1839 letter, published in *The Albion*, goes on to admonish the prisoners for their role in the invasion, yet gives hope that the pleas of the Americans may not have fallen on deaf ears.

All the prisoners concerned in the recent outrage, have justly forfeited their lives, and your people would have no right to complain if all were executed. Nevertheless, I am quite satisfied that the humane feelings of his Excellency will not sanction, nor will the injured people of Canada require, the infliction of the last penalty of the law upon these
Cont. on page 18 under Patriot War

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2011-2012
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In Memoriam

OHA was saddened to hear of the recent deaths of two former members of OHA's Board of Directors - Charles Shea and Victor Cole.



Victor Cole

Victor Cole passed away on November 22, 2011 at age 87. Mr. Cole, a long time employee of Carrier Corporation, succeeded Richard Wright as the Board President in 1986. Besides his interest in history, Mr. Cole enjoyed sailing, woodworking, the outdoors, astronomy and the arts.

Charles F Shea passed away January 6, 2012 at age 95. Mr. Shea was a resident of Fabius his entire life and the owner and operator of both the M. G. Shea Store and Fabius Hardware Co. He also served as the town clerk, councilman, supervisor, county legislator and county economic development director. His interest in history led him to OHA where he served on the Board as a member and Treasurer for a number of years.



Charles F. Shea

Many thanks to Paychex for providing top quality in-kind payroll and payroll tax services to OHA.



Dwight Hall Bruce (June 21, 1834 – August 19, 1908)

By THOMAS A. HUNTER

Dwight Hall Bruce was born on June 21, 1834 in the Town of Lenox, Madison County, NY. His family claimed to be descendants of Robert the Bruce, medieval king of Scotland who gained Scottish independence from England in 1328. Dwight Bruce was raised on the family farm in Lenox and received a public school education. However, his circumstances prevented him from going to college.

At 24, Bruce moved to Oswego where he worked as associate editor of the *Oswego Commercial Times*. While working for the newspaper in the late 1850s, he had the rare pleasure of ascending in a hot air balloon on Independence Day with Professor Coe, a notable local *aeronaut*. The ride started out fairly enjoyably, but soon a stiff breeze took the passengers out above Lake Ontario. The ground crew feared that the aeronauts inside the balloon's porous basket would go down over the water. However, the wind shifted and the balloon swayed back over *terra firma* before landing in a field outside of Elbridge, NY.

When his father became commissioner of the middle division of the New York State canal system in 1861, Bruce left the newspaper and moved to Syracuse to join his father as his assistant. From then on, Bruce resided in Syracuse and supported the new city in many endeavors. While assistant to the elder Bruce, he wrote a series of articles for the press titled, "Importance of the Canals in Their Relation to Commercial Development."

From the young age of 16, Dwight Bruce served with the NYS militia. He rose quickly through the ranks until being elected to the rank of brigadier general of first the Tenth Brigade in July 1880, and then the Seventh Brigade as the militia units were subsequently consolidated. Bruce also became the inspector of rifle practice for the Fifty-first regiment of the National Guard. He retired from the National Guard in 1885. During the American Civil War, Bruce organized and supervised a Syracuse chapter of the Union League of America, formed in 1862 to promote loyalty to the Union and the policies of President Lincoln during

the war and Reconstruction immediately following. As dedicated members of the Republican Party, Union League affiliates supported the U.S. Sanitary Commission, radical reconstruction and black suffrage.

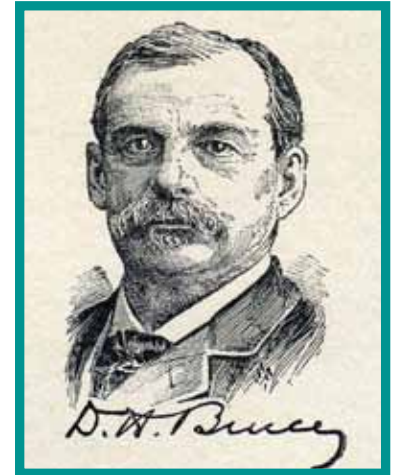
Also interested in politics, Bruce cast his first vote for U.S. president for John C. Fremont in 1856. Fremont, the first Republican candidate, lost the election to James Buchanan, the Democratic candidate that year. Bruce remained loyal to the Republican Party and was local Secretary of the Republican Central Committee in 1864, a position he held for ten consecutive years.

In 1866 and 1867, Bruce was an Onondaga County Supervisor for the Seventh Ward, which was located in Syracuse. He was instrumental in drafting a legislative bill for more efficiently collecting taxes in Onondaga County. The legislature adopted the bill as law. Apparently, the law made collecting taxes in Onondaga County so successful that other counties afterward emulated it.

In 1869, Bruce resigned his position in the canal office, and the following year, he returned to the newspaper business as part owner and editor of *The Syracuse Journal*. Bruce stayed with the Journal until August, 1885.

On March 25, 1871, President U.S. Grant appointed Bruce as Postmaster for the City of Syracuse. Bruce held his position for a total of five years, one year past the normal tenure. While postmaster, Bruce tripled the post office's business, instituted night window service, reduced Sunday work, and obtained free transportation on street cars for letter carriers making their rounds. He was subsequently reappointed to Postmaster of Syracuse by Presidents McKinley in 1897 and Theodore Roosevelt in 1906.

Dwight Bruce also had a keen interest in animal welfare. He was one of the organizers of the local chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1872. He served as the organization's president for several years. He became the president of the New York Association for



Dwight Hall Bruce

the Protection of Fish, Game, and Forests and for many years was president of the Anglers' Association of Onondaga County.

Because of his attraction to journalism, literature, and history, Bruce wrote some well-known local history texts: the single volume, *Memorial History of Syracuse, N.Y.*, published in 1891; the two volume, *Onondaga's Centennial*, published in 1896; and the three volume, *History of the Empire State*, published in 1900. By 1900, Bruce had accumulated one of the best historical and reference libraries in Syracuse. These volumes are still useful local histories and provide researchers with helpful information.

Dwight Bruce married Miss Emilie Northrup on October 13, 1859. They had three girls – Anne, Llola, and Jessica. Anne married Frederick Davies White, the only son of Andrew D. White, U.S. diplomat and co-founder of Cornell University. Llola and Jessica never married. Mrs. Bruce was a well-rounded woman who loved music and was an excellent pianist. She also was a philanthropist who supported women's concerns, including the Y.W.C.A., the women's employment agency, the Needlework Guild. She also was the first board president of Syracuse General Hospital when it opened in 1895. Mrs. Bruce demonstrated her right to vote once the 19th constitutional amendment was ratified in 1920 by casting ballots through the 1928 national election when she was 90 years old. Mrs. Bruce died at 92 in 1931. ❖

FEMALE PHILANTHROPISTS

PART 4 BY GREGG A. TRIPOLI

In this series, I have summarized the general history of female philanthropy from the 19th to the 21st century, covering the early volunteer associations as well as the growth in female philanthropy as society evolved and as women gained more rights and more self-consciousness. I have highlighted the philanthropy and the lives of early philanthropists, like Margaret Treadwell Redfield Smith and Mary Elizabeth Wieting Johnson, as well as later philanthropists with famous names such as Everson and Gifford. In this last part of the series, you will meet two remarkable women who have come close to “breaking the mold” when it comes to local female philanthropists. They are two very different women from two very different eras but both have definitely changed our world for the better because of their altruism, their love of mankind, and their astounding benevolent gifts – the true nature and definition of philanthropy!

MARGARET OLIVIA SLOCUM SAGE (1828 – 1918)

Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage led a fascinating life of ironic extremes: from serious poverty to immense wealth and from an ultra-conservative upbringing to a progressive reformist legacy. As



Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage

a young adult, she struggled to prove herself as a woman who was prepared to live a life of “single blessedness”, free from the Victorian-era’s stereotype of a woman who was subordinate to, and financially dependent upon, a man. That freedom and financial independence, however, were eventually achieved later in life only through the all too typical inheritance from a filthy rich husband. As an elderly widow, the convergence of her long-standing charitable inclinations, her mission to improve society and open opportunities for women, and her newly overflowing purse allowed her to become one of the greatest female philanthropists our world has ever known.

Historically, philanthropy has been shaped by the culture and social norms in which it took place, along with the particular life experiences of the individual philanthropist. This is especially true for the female philanthropists of the 19th and early 20th centuries – a progressive era that witnessed great change in the role of women in society. Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage’s life and philanthropy are, in many ways, emblematic of that progression.

Olivia, as she preferred to be called, grew up in Syracuse as a child of privilege. By all accounts she was very smart, fun, vivacious, well liked, and socially conscious. Her devoutly religious family was a member of the conservative First Presbyterian Church, which remained staunchly opposed to reform movements such as women’s rights and the abolition of slavery. Her father, Joseph Slocum, lost his fortune in bad business deals before Olivia reached her teenage years but, thanks to sponsorship from a wealthy uncle, Olivia was educated at the prestigious, and expensive, Troy Female Seminary.

The Seminary was an academically rigorous school that quietly advocated financial independence for women through education. There, Olivia became enchanted by the potential for reform

regarding the traditionally conservative, and dependant, role of women in 19th century society. The school’s founder and headmistress, Emma Willard (for whom the school was eventually named) became Olivia’s greatest mentor.

Syracuse and upstate New York in the mid-1800’s was a particularly active area for the women’s rights movement. Olivia herself marks 1848, the year of the “Declaration of Sentiments” in Seneca Falls, as the beginning of her interest in women’s rights. In 1852, the Third National Women’s Rights Convention was held in Syracuse while Olivia was living there.

Shortly after her graduation, out of financial necessity, Olivia became a teacher (one of the only acceptable female professions of the time). As a working woman, she experienced the limited opportunities and overworked/underpaid difficulties common to all working women of the 19th century.



St. Paul's Female School, Syracuse, NY, 1852. Olivia is a teacher, probably at the far left, third row from the bottom.

As she moved from teaching job to job, she was always involved in voluntary work and always gave a portion of her small salary to charity. Though she made very little money (averaging about \$200 per year), she traveled in prominent circles with the social contacts she made as a young girl. By 1854, the Slocum family was forced to abandon their home and they disbursed, living off the generosity of others in the grand homes of relatives and friends. Though certainly not a destitute existence, it was nevertheless humbling and embarrassing and Olivia

had the occasional experience of living in shared one-room hovels.

At times she worked as a governess/teacher/guest in the mansions of some of Syracuse's wealthiest families, like the Leavenworths, the Barnes, and the Longstreets of Yates Castle. These positions embodied the ironic combination of a working professional woman within a domestic setting and they are, in a way, emblematic of her life as a progressive advocate within the general confines of acceptable 19th century restrictions and limitations.

She declined a few marriage proposals because she felt that they were not to her advantage and were too restricting. Olivia was not the kind of woman who would have been satisfied with domestic life on the farm. Though she had no money, she had expensive tastes and lots of rich friends who enjoyed her intellectually stimulating and charmingly entertaining company.

Finally, in 1869, at 41 years of age, she became the 2nd wife of widower, financier and railroad baron Russell Sage, one of the richest men in America. Unfortunately, for Olivia, he was also a terrible miser. She became a tireless volunteer supporting a wide range of causes from social work to the humane treatment of animals but she could rarely get Russell to part with more than token financial assistance for her charitable ventures. In a 1903 interview for a Syracuse newspaper, Olivia commented that the most frequent cause of unhappy marriages was the "absence of individual incomes".

Her work with voluntary associations often challenged the status quo of male dominance and dealt heavily with the education of women and women's advancement into paid work and professions. Her philanthropy in progressive realms was tempered, however, by social convention and her evangelic Christian values, as she remained very conscious of the "proper" role of women in society. Later, when women were allowed to attend certain colleges, her philanthropy was geared toward protecting the morals and the standards of conduct of female

undergraduates where she advocated a conservative, paternalistic environment that protected girls from dancing, drinking, smoking, and, of course boys (except in a strictly academic setting).

In 1905, Olivia wrote an essay entitled "Opportunities and Responsibilities of Leisured Women" in which she wrote "Woman is responsible in proportion to the wealth and time at her command. While one woman is working for bread and butter, the other must devote her time to the amelioration of her laboring sister".

In 1906, Russell died, leaving almost \$75,000,000 (the equivalent of about \$1.8 billion in today's dollars) to Olivia and she began one of the most aggressive philanthropic binges in American history. There is scarcely an organization or educational institution in Syracuse that did not benefit greatly from her largesse, which included the purchase of Yates Castle, where she once worked teaching the Longstreet children, as the home of a new teacher's college for Syracuse University.

A list of the countless beneficiaries of her gifts would fill pages but you will have some idea of the number when you consider that in the remaining 12 years of her life she gave away over \$45,000,000. She received over 300 "begging" letters per day and hired an entire staff to sort through the requests. She was a careful and conservative benefactor who believed in serious investigation of

potential beneficiaries and she only gave to those who showed the inclination and motivation to help themselves.

By 1907, when she became the nation's largest individual taxpayer, thirteen years before women had the right to vote, her support for women's suffrage and representation took on an understandably greater urgency.

Olivia was still, however, a woman of her times and she named many of her gifts after her husband and the other men in her family, including the Russell Sage Foundation, which she founded with an initial gift of \$10,000,000. Even the college for women she founded was given the name Russell Sage. Many believe that her motive in these regards, including her many gifts to prestigious universities (regardless of their attitude toward accepting and educating women) was her attempt to salvage Russell's reputation, which was less than stellar on several counts.

Although Olivia had the best intentions, some of her gifts also demonstrate the misguided, morally elitist attitudes of the day. She was one of the lady managers of the New York Women's Hospital whose practices are extremely upsetting to modern day feminists and humanitarians. She was also a large benefactor of the Carlisle School, which tried to purge Native Americans of their rich heritage, by any means necessary, in order to absorb them into the mainstream of white American Christian culture.



Funeral of MARGARET OLIVIA SLOCUM SAGE

For the most part, though, there is no denying that Olivia's gifts allowed major advances in numerous and varied social services and causes including education, women's rights, and healthcare among many others. The Russell Sage Foundation is still active in improving the social and living conditions in the United States.

She was very generous to her family as well, though a woman of principle, she was not afraid to say no, even to them. One of her great nephews once wrote to her saying "Please send money - am one jump ahead of the sheriff". Olivia's short two-word reply was "Keep jumping".

She managed her own investments and was able, in the remaining 12 years of her life, to turn her \$75,000,000 inheritance into almost \$100,000,000. Her local roots proved beneficial to the Shubert brothers of Syracuse (who provided an excellent return on her investment) as she helped fund their New York City expansion and, together with other Syracuse investors, helped them build Broadway as we know it today.

Her estate at the time of her death consisted of close to \$50,000,000, almost all of which went to charity. Her bequests also demonstrated her personal evolution as she went against conventional trends (as well as her own historical record of giving) and provided generously for two African American institutions - Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes.

She chose to be buried next to her parents at Syracuse's Oakwood Cemetery, as opposed to the Troy, New York cemetery where her husband was buried. The OHA archives contain a very rare (and, perhaps the only) photograph of a funeral in progress at Oakwood from the time, capturing the small but solemn scene at Olivia's graveside.

Though not consciously, Olivia spent the great majority of her ninety-year life preparing for the final twelve years of her philanthropic existence. Her life experiences created a strong sense of purpose and benevolence. The influence of Emma Willard and the reform environment of Syracuse instilled

a feminist discontent tempered by her conservative Christian foundation. Her prominent marriage provided the time, and the social expectation, to immerse herself in voluntary associations. Though she had the good intentions, the inclination, the determination, and the experience, she was constantly frustrated, even during her marriage, about not having the financial resources that would enable her to affect any real change. It's no wonder that, after one year into widowhood, Olivia exclaimed, "I am nearly eighty years old and I feel as though I were just beginning to live". In her final twelve years, Olivia gave and gave until she was physically exhausted. And even today, ninety-three years after her death, she is still giving.

There is an argument about whether Sage's philanthropy actually affected major change on a grand scale due to the fact that her funds were disbursed among so many organizations. I would say that, collectively, because her gifts were so large, she *did* affect major change, but probably not in any one particular field. In addition, because her philanthropy was centered in the Northeastern United States, the change she *did* effect would most likely not be considered as being on a "grand" scale.

But the question remains - can anyone effect major change on a grand scale without having millions or, these days, billions of dollars?

The answer to that question comes in the last local female philanthropist to be highlighted in this series where I would like to bring us up to date with an all too brief mention of a local female philanthropist who is still among us.

RUTH COLVIN (1917 -)

Through passion, dedication, expertise, and a commitment to addressing one of our world's most pressing problems, Ruth Colvin *has* effected *major* change on a *grand* scale to help eradicate illiteracy.

Speaking for myself, as someone who has spent a good portion of my life

living outside of the United States, much of that time in countries and cultures that are seriously misunderstood by the western world, I completely agree with Ruth's contention that our world would be a much happier and more peaceful place if we knew more about each other's histories, traditions, cultures, and religions. Since most people don't have the ability to physically immerse themselves in other cultures, the next best step in being able to understand them is to read about them. In Ruth's own words, "to live in peace, we must respect others' beliefs or nonbeliefs. We must search out and stress our similarities even while we celebrate our differences."

Ruth Johnson Colvin was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 16, 1917. She met her husband, Robert Colvin, at Northwestern University and was married in 1940. They settled in Syracuse, where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Syracuse University in 1959, while raising their 2 children. Ruth became aware of the issue of illiteracy locally in 1961 when she learned that, in Syracuse alone, 11,000 people were functionally illiterate. Typical of Ruth's "can do" attitude, she decided to take action and do something about it. In 1962, Ruth formed the national nonprofit organization that would become Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. to train volunteers to teach basic reading, writing, and conversational English.

She started her campaign against illiteracy by working with professional reading specialists to create tutor training and instructional materials. She developed two training manuals, which are considered the authoritative sources for training volunteer tutors to teach adults basic literacy or English as a second language. Her program stressed the importance of a learner-centered collaborative approach to teaching that involves the student in the learning process and that emphasizes familiar language taken from the student's own life. Always active in her church, it's no surprise that the first recruits who completed Ruth's program were from her own church's women's group. Working from home and making do with what she had, Ruth's first file

cabinet for Literacy Volunteers of America was an empty refrigerator in her basement. Since then, Ruth has authored ten books affiliated with her teaching principles. She and her husband have traveled to over 60 different countries, often at the invitation of organizations that have sought her out to give lectures and trainings in order to help improve native language literacy. Her latest book, *Off the Beaten Path*, is a compilation of short stories about the people, places, and experiences that she and Bob have encountered in their many travels. The national launch of *Off the Beaten Path* was held at OHA and the book is available in our store, the Gift Gallery.

In 2002, Literacy Volunteers of America merged with Laubach Literacy International to form the organization Pro-literacy. Headquartered in Syracuse, Pro-literacy is present in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as in 30 developing foreign nations. Ruth is the recipient of nine honorary doctorates and countless awards for her work. She is the recipient of the President's Volunteer Action Award and the Presidential Medal of Freedom and she is a member of the



*Photo courtesy of The Post-Standard
Ruth Colvin at her home in Syracuse with the Presidential Medal of Freedom given to her on December 15, 2006. She is the founder of Literacy Volunteers of America, and has worked in 61 countries around the world.*

National Women's Hall of Fame. The lives she has improved easily number in the hundreds of thousands. Her motivation is the knowledge that she has helped others and her true reward is the meaning that her passion has brought to her life. Ruth's passion is teaching literacy and, as she says, "when you find your passion, life takes on real meaning; there's no room for boredom or self-centeredness. You'll want to share that passion through your own gift. Doors will open, as they did for me." Through her fight to eradicate illiteracy, Ruth has helped create a bridge between diverse populations that has resulted in a better world for all of us.

As you may recall from the very first installment of this series, philanthropy isn't always about the money purse. The history of many of our most beneficial organizations reminds us that they were born of, and nurtured by, volunteer efforts and the volunteer associations that women started. Financial support is always important but Ruth Colvin has taught *all* of us what can be accomplished when your purse is filled with passion. ❖

HOLIDAY WINDOWS AT OHA

BY GREGG A. TRIPOLI

I hope many of you had the opportunity to see OHA's holiday window displays. Our Education Associate, Scott Peal, and volunteers, Kathy and Bob Brown, did a fantastic job decorating our new street level windows in holiday themes. We received many compliments from passersby and the windows became a new attraction for anyone visiting downtown during the festive season. Each window highlighted a different aspect of the holidays throughout history, from the era of Jesuit missionaries to the toy section of Edwards Department Store in the 1960's. If you missed them, you'll just have to wait until December 2012 to catch the next versions of OHA's holiday windows. However, you can come to OHA



The French Jesuit Missionaries at the Mission of Saint Marie de Ghanentaba on Onondaga Lake came to the area in 1656. They were the first to celebrate the Christmastide mass in now what is Central New York.

anytime to see great window displays that highlight the Museum's exhibits and the Gift Gallery's unique products. Currently,

our windows provide a glimpse into the exhibits honoring the Girl Scouts' 100th anniversary, and political cartoons. ❖



"Father Christmas" visited the homes of early English settlers in Central New York to fill stockings hung by the chimney.

Onondaga Community College and the OHA: A Growing Partnership

BY KIM COURT, ADVANCEMENT COMMUNICATIONS, ONONDAGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The land atop Onondaga Hill on which the Onondaga Community College campus sits is rich in history. For many years, the College has taken a broad approach toward understanding and honoring this site. And that approach has led to a number of collaborations and a strong, growing partnership with the Onondaga Historical Association (OHA).



1878 Engraving of the Onondaga County Poorhouse complex

For more than a century, the Onondaga County Poorhouse served as a safe haven for the community's most vulnerable citizens, providing a place of refuge for thousands of patients, residents and those who cared for them.

Prior to renovating and restoring the H-1 Hall, great care was taken by the College to learn about the historical significance of the property.

The Onondaga Historical Association worked with the College from the very beginning.

"Onondaga Community College engaged the services of Onondaga Historical Association from the very inception of this exciting project in its desire to ensure that proper and accurate respect for the historical significance of the property is honored. OCC has continued to be conscientiously sensitive to the historic nature and importance of the site throughout the planning and construction processes. Its commitment to the use of historic perspective, both in the renovation and in the finished product, is a fitting tribute to the tremendous history that encompasses the entire property,"

said Gregg Tripoli, Executive Director of the OHA.

During the renovations, archaeologists from the Public Archaeological Facility at Binghamton University discovered 71 sets of human remains buried in unmarked gravesites, among the many other artifacts. The remains were exhumed and transported to Binghamton University for examination by a forensic archaeology team. The Town of Onondaga Historical Society has also provided historic records. Following completion of the archaeologists' work, the human remains will be released back to the College and the College will work with the County Medical Examiner to respectfully reinter the remains.

The building that once served as the former County Poorhouse hospital is now transformed into a modern educational facility, H-1 Hall, at Onondaga Community College.



H-1 Hall

H-1 Hall is the community's campus, providing bachelor's and master's degrees to local citizens through a regional higher education center, as well as a wide array of services including Business Workforce Development, the Small Business Development Center, the Center for Business Information Technology (CBIT), the Public Safety Training Center and Lifelong Learning programming.

"The transformation of H-1 Hall is part of a comprehensive approach by the College to honor the poignant history of the people who lived and worked on the land that is now the Onondaga Community College campus," said Onondaga Community

College President Debbie L. Sydow, Ph.D. "As educators, we know that there is much to learn from our history and, in partnership with the Onondaga Historical Association, we are re-discovering the property's past, preserving the historical integrity, and paying tribute to the individuals who came before us."

Shortly after H-1 Hall opened in summer 2011, work continued on another collaborative project between Dennis Connors of the Onondaga Historical Association, Jane Tracy of the Onondaga Historical Society and a College committee, including OHA Board member and social sciences professor Tara Ross. A seven-panel exhibit now welcomes visitors as they enter H-1 Hall. The black and white and sepia-tone images chronicle the history of the land, the buildings and the people that the Poorhouse once served.



Part of Panel Exhibition prepared by Onondaga Historical Association

In partnership with the OHS, the College also hopes to secure grant funds to aid in the restoration of the General Ellis cemetery, located on the College campus just off Route 173. Currently, the College is refurbishing the wrought-iron fence, repairing the headstones and improving the landscaping to help restore this historical landmark.

Finally, in celebration of the College's 50th anniversary, the OHA graciously hosted a public exhibit featuring hundreds of photographs, College artifacts, educational equipment, historic flags, microscopes, uniforms, newspaper clippings, student newspapers, and archival footage of the campus in the late 1960s. ❖

The First Train to Syracuse Auburn & Syracuse Railroad is 175 Years Old

BY RICHARD F. PALMER

The Auburn & Syracuse Railroad was the third line to be opened on what was commonly referred to as the “chain” of lines across the state that eventually became the New York Central. The first was the Mohawk & Hudson between Albany and Schenectady and the second was the Utica & Schenectady.

The Central New York Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, is currently making plans for an appropriate observance of this anniversary, with possibly a train excursion over the line.

Construction of the Auburn & Syracuse Railroad in the mid-1830s forms an interesting chapter in the early development of internal improvements in central New York. From the beginning, it was an Auburn project. The idea of connecting this thriving community with the Erie Canal had been a popular topic of discussion as long ago as 1828.

The original plan was to build a railroad from Auburn to either Port Byron or Weedsport. Various schemes, including the incorporation of a number of railroad and even canal companies never materialized and it wasn't until 1832 that the matter of building a railroad from Auburn to Syracuse was put on the table.

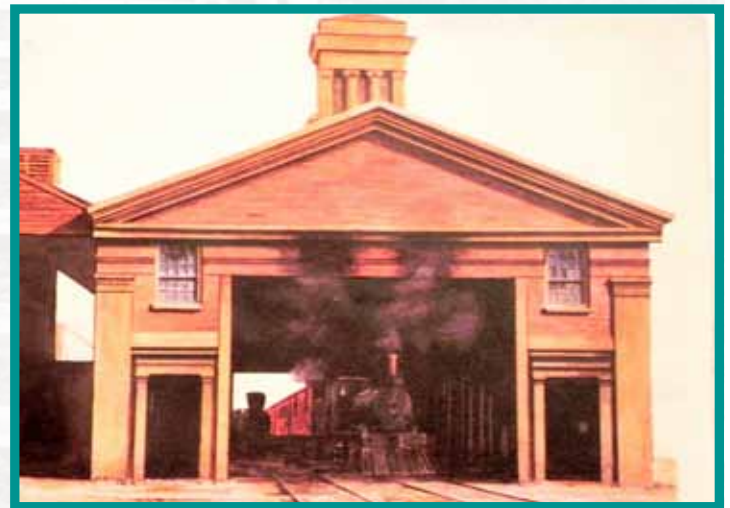
Lobbying in Albany, with the support of state Senator William H. Seward, resulted in the incorporation of the Auburn & Syracuse Railroad on May 1, 1834, with a capital of \$400,000. Auburn historian Henry Hall wrote that the venture “began existence under inauspicious circumstances. The construction of the railroad from Auburn to Syracuse was, from the broken nature of the ground over which a large part of it must necessarily pass, and from the retired and unfavorable location of Auburn, regarded in many places an act of unspeakable folly. Hundreds prophesied the total failure of the enterprise, predicting that every dollar invested in the road would be a positive loss.”

The company was organized on January 20, 1835. Stock subscriptions were quickly taken up. The engineering department was organized the following April, the Chief Engineer being Edwin F. Johnson. That summer, Johnson, assisted by Levi Williams, the resident engineer, prepared the necessary surveys and examinations preliminary to the location of the route. The line of the road was officially chosen on August 22, 1835 and on September 11, certificates of location were filed with the Cayuga and Onondaga county clerks.

With these preliminaries out of the way, Hugh Lee, another civil engineer, proceeded to prepare contract specifications. Soon a depot was erected near the southeast corner of VanAnden and State streets in Auburn. Work quickly got underway under the supervision of Colonel Levi Lewis, the first superintendent. On August 22, 1835, Johnson advertised for bids for grading,

masonry and bridges. Bids would be received until noon on October 15th. Plans for the different structures were available for examination at Johnson's office in Auburn. The bids were received and let, and work commenced on May 1, 1836.

The contract specifications for the wooden rails initially used were very specific. They called for one million board feet of Norway pine for rail timbers to measure 5.5 by 6.5 inches, in lengths of 18, 21, 24 and 27 feet, or of the same dimensions in yellow pine. Also called for was one million board feet of bed timbers of white cedar and chestnut, 4 by 8 inches, not less than 18 feet in length. Also needed were 50,000 cross-ties of white cedar, chestnut, white oak or red beech, 5.5 by 6.5 inches, 8 feet in length, and framed and ready to receive the rail timbers.

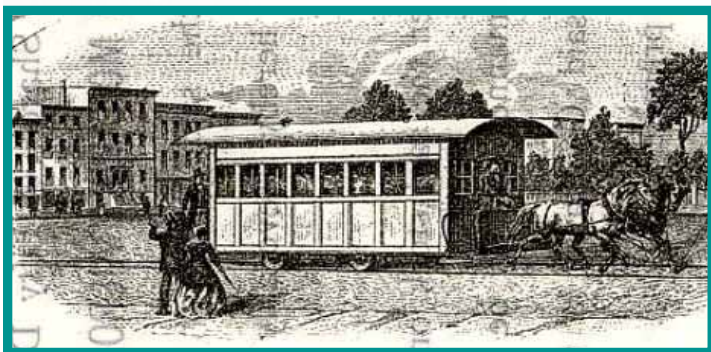


Syracuse's first permanent railroad station was built in 1839 to accommodate trains of both the Auburn & Syracuse and Syracuse & Utica Railroads. It was designed by Daniel Elliott, a local architect, and existed for 30 years. It stood on East Washington Street between South Salina and South Warren Streets at a location known as "Vanderbilt Square."

Opening of the railroad was celebrated on Christmas Day, 1837 with an excursion from Auburn to Syracuse and return. A special horse-drawn train, consisting of two 24-person capacity cars drawn by horses in tandem, left at 11:20 a.m. from Auburn with a group of 50 people on the first trip. The horses were provided by Col. John M. Sherwood, the famous stagecoach proprietor. Some have said these cars were improvised from stagecoaches. However, stagecoaches of the day could only accommodate a maximum of 10 or 12 passengers.

June 4, 1839 marked the first train pulled by a steam engine into Syracuse. It was pulled by the 10½ ton locomotive "Syracuse."

Cont. on page 18



Train similar to what was first used on the Auburn & Syracuse Railroad

The four-car train somehow squeezed 200 people into the small space, according to newspaper reports. On board were many famous local people, including William H. Seward, the controversial Thurlow Weed, and Syracuse's own John Wilkinson.

At about 2 p.m., a newspaper reported, "the party sat down to a very sumptuous dinner prepared in Mr. Rust's best style." Mr. (Philo) Rust was proprietor of the Syracuse House, which stood

on the site of M&T Bank. After several appropriate toasts and a half dozen long-winded speeches, the party, in company with a brass band, piled into the train on top of each other and returned to Auburn in fine spirits.

Three days before, a bridge was completed across Onondaga Creek, giving the railroad access to the village. A strip of iron was laid over the wooden tracks so the locomotive could stay on the track. These strips of iron were called "snakeheads" because of their habit of coming loose and ripping through the bottom of the train. When such an incident occurred, the engineer had to grab his hammer and nails, and go under the train and hammer the rail back into place. This became such a common occurrence that a keg of nails and a mallet became fixtures on the locomotives.

An early timetable shows the average speed of a train at a hair-raising 12½ miles an hour.

Small and insignificant as it may seem today, the Auburn & Syracuse Railroad was a marvelous achievement for that time. ❖

Patriot War continued from page 9

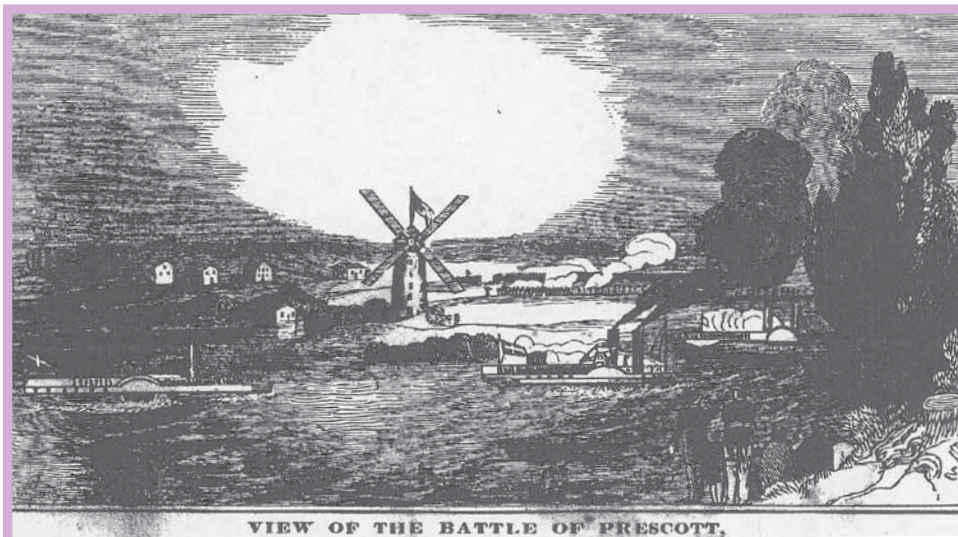
guilty youths to whom you refer; indeed I have reason to believe that, if no change of circumstances require a different course, many of them will be permitted to return to their families.

Due in part to the American efforts and also Canada's magnanimous attitude, most of those imprisoned were pardoned and deported back to the United States several months after the trials. Those who were transported were also eventually pardoned, though some of the men had to spend almost ten years

in the harsh penal colony. Of the 35 men from Onondaga County, it is known that five were killed in action; at least fourteen were imprisoned then pardoned; four, including Nils Von Schoultz, were executed, and twelve were transported. Unfortunately, upon their pardon and release from Van Diemen's Land only a few returned to settle in Central New York.

The Canadian Rebellions of 1837/38, including the Battle of the Windmill, led to increased tensions not only along the shared border of the U.S. and Canada but also among the governments of the United

States, Canada and Great Britain. The U.S. harbored and welcomed the rebel political fugitives of Canada and until their exile ended, there was uneasiness in the relations between the countries. There were also consequences for many of the participants and their families, though they were often life-long rather than temporary. Grief, separation and extreme hardship were just some of the ways their lives were changed forever. Perhaps the biggest tragedy of it all is that if the Canadian rebel leaders had taken an honest assessment of their countrymen's convictions, all the bloodshed and misery may have been avoided.



VIEW OF THE BATTLE OF PRESCOTT.

To learn more about the Patriot War and its connections to Onondaga County, visit us at the Research Center. To mark the 175th anniversary of this event, OHA is hosting a lecture on the Patriot War (please see OHA's events calendar). Our speaker will be Dr. John Carter, a Patriot War historian and professor at the University of Tasmania. His presentation will include details of the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1838 and focus more specifically on the experiences of those transported to Van Diemen's Land as a result, including several Central New Yorkers. ❖

Battle at Prescott, Ontario, Canada

General Ellis and the War of 1812: It's Not Easy Being Rich

By *LYNNE PASCALE*

Wealth, status, respect, General John Ellis seemed to have it all. His military bearing, attractive wife and children, and large farm on Onondaga Hill, all made him widely admired and universally acclaimed. But being rich on the central New York frontier in the days of the early American republic had its responsibilities. At the time, a man with some money and military experience was expected to serve as an officer in the militia. For John Ellis, the privilege of command during the War of 1812 came at a price.

As a teenager living in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Ellis was drawn into military service as the drama of the American Revolution unfolded. In 1779, he enlisted in a Massachusetts regiment and served until the end of hostilities. He also served in the militia after the war. Historian Donald Hickey, writing in his book, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, observed that New England militias in the post-Revolutionary era were the most organized and efficient in the country. Some of that excellence rubbed off on Ellis who would continue his military experience when he migrated to the central New York frontier at age twenty-three.

John Ellis became a significant settler. He was one of the 134 original signers of a petition to establish Onondaga County in 1794. In 1796, he returned to New England, courted, and married a woman

named Submit Olds from Hebron, CT, bringing her back to New York to raise a family. In 1797 Ellis became adjutant in Col. Asa Danforth's regiment, advanced to the rank of colonel, and was eventually commissioned brigadier general of Onondaga County's militia by Governor Tompkins.

Like so many frontier developers with capital to invest, Ellis speculated in land while operating a large farm and a variety of other business concerns. He was one of the founding members of the First Presbyterian Church in Onondaga Hollow. Despite coming from Massachusetts, the first state to abolish slavery, John and Submit became slaveholders in the Town of Onondaga, as were many of the more affluent central New York settler-developers. In 1808, the Ellises had the largest assessed property value for the Town of Onondaga, worth \$3,682. By comparison, the average assessed value in the town as a whole was \$333.

Money and assets were far less secure in those days. During an economic crisis, it was common for the rich to lose everything and end up in debtor's prison. In addition, those with even modest amounts of wealth were expected to make road repairs out of their own pocket, see to it that the Pound Master was doing his job rounding up stray farm animals, serve in a variety of public offices including postmaster, judge,

sheriff, and coroner, and donate money to build churches and schools. Ellis juggled it all very well. But the War of 1812 had its price.

Even before the war, the local economy became depressed. As a result of the embargoes of 1807 and 1809, salt production drastically declined as the Canadian markets of Montreal and Kingston were closed. This continued through the War of 1812. Uncertainties about frontier safety during the war led to a reduction in land values as the stream of settlers dropped precipitously. Many speculators found themselves sitting on large inventories of land without any takers. The Ellis family began to feel the pinch.

When war broke out in 1812, Ellis was in command of the 6th Onondaga regiment of the 27th brigade of infantry. Militia duty was a burden on time and resources. Through the Uniform Militia Act of 1792, the militia man was expected to supply himself with "a good musket or firelock, a sufficient bayonet and belt, two spare flints, and a knapsack, a pouch with a box therein to contain not less than twenty-four cartridges, suited to the bore of his musket or firelock . . ." In addition to this, a commander would also have been responsible for outfitting members of his company who didn't have the means to supply their own arms. He would also need to shod and feed his horse and perhaps some of

Continued on page 20



Photos courtesy of the Town of Onondaga Historical Society
House of John and Submit Ellis on Onondaga Road, built in the early 19th century. From 1934 to 1957, the house served as the Henry E. Makayes American Legion Post. However, it had suffered extensive fire damage and was eventually torn down.

the junior officers. Plus, he might even have to pay them out of his own pocket when the payroll was late. Also, muster days, drilling, and service took men of all classes and ranks away from their home and work responsibilities.

In 1812, the security concerns over the port at Oswego prompted a general order from the governor's office. Ellis was to have "in readiness to march to Oswego, at a moment's warning, two companies of infantry, or one company of artillery of not less than forty men, and one company of infantry of one hundred men, including officers"

Ellis brought his troops to Sackets Harbor in response to the attack there of June 2, 1813. On the 19th of June, the British were also repulsed at Oswego, and Ellis was there with the 27th Onondaga brigade. In a letter to Ellis dated July 17, 1813, Governor Tompkins enthused:

"your conduct in relation to the defence [sic] of Oswego was prompt & military, for which I tended you my sincere thanks, & by you to communicate to the officers & soldiers who turned out on that occasion my high sense of their patriotism and zeal."

On May 8th of the following year, Ellis marched his militia to Oswego and Oswego Falls after the British cannonaded the port village's old, decrepit stockade in an attempt to destroy a large cache of naval stores they believed were there (the stores were actually at Oswego Falls, what we now call Fulton). A few days later, Ellis again had to call up "two to three thousand" militia and march again to Oswego. Later in the month, he and his brigade oversaw the safe departure from Oswego Falls of the military stores, which then headed north up Lake Ontario to Sandy Creek and Sackets Harbor. By June 4th, 1814

Ellis was done with his duty but had no pay to show for it. Four years later in April of 1818 he finally appealed to now Vice President Daniel Tompkins. Ellis claimed he didn't receive "any pay or Rations or any compensation whatever from the State of New York or the United States" for a period of twenty days while in service at Oswego. It's unknown if Ellis ever did receive his pay.

If lack of pay was aggravating enough, Ellis had a hard time keeping all his interests afloat in the soft wartime economy. After the war, the Ellises managed, but in 1820, John died at the age of 56. Submit and her children continued to work the farm and managed to bring it back to prosperity. However, as was the case with militia officers, John Ellis was for the remainder of his life, referred to as "General," one of the few perks of militia command. ❖

Everson and OHA Partnering for New Exhibition

BY DENNIS J. CONNORS



Central New York artist Lee Brown Coye (1907-1981) paints one of the last surviving brine wells in Tully during the 1950s. OHA Collection

This coming summer offers a chance for visitors to, and workers in, downtown Syracuse to enjoy a unique collaboration between the Everson Museum of Art and

the Onondaga Historical Association. The Everson will be hosting an exhibition entitled: **People, Place and Progress: Local Landscapes in Paint and Print.** This exhibit will feature paintings from the collections of both institutions showcasing local historical scenes. The works will include views of the Erie Canal, rural vistas, area waterfalls and gorges, plus local architectural landmarks such as former breweries, mills and stagecoach inns. But beyond this display of fine paintings, the exhibition will also pair these works with historic photos of the same scene, documenting either the particular image or the actual historic landscape that inspired the artists. The exhibition will uncover how the artist chose to interpret that Central New York setting and why those places help shape our regional identity.

Featured artists from the Everson collection will include Beatrice Wose-Smith, whose *Winter Night - Fayette Park* offers a classic Syracuse street scene, one that captures the magic light

that settles over an urban setting as dusk falls. Also represented from the Everson will be Levi Wells Prentice's *Hopper's Gorge, Onondaga Valley*, among several others. OHA's *Syracuse by Moonlight*, painted by Johann Culverhouse in 1872, is an iconic scene of Clinton Square by moonlight that will be included along with lesser-known works from OHA's collection including *Oran Hotel* by Fernando Carter and an impressionistic Erie Canal scene by James Cantwell. Both Carter and Cantwell were well known local artists during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The exhibit will run from June 3 through September 2, 2012 in one of the Everson's largest main galleries. It is being co-curated by Dennis Connors and Thomas Hunter of the OHA staff, along with Sarah Grzymala and Deborah Ryan of the Everson Museum of Art, with support from the New York State Council for the Humanities. ❖

Ruthless Rufus: Hero or Tyrant? OHA's Twitter Project, In Their Own Words: Personal Perspectives' of the Civil War

By **MATTHEW MACVITTIE**

"If I had my way I would burn down every house in Virginia and plow up every street." - Capt Rufus Petit, Dec 28th 1862

Last April 12th marked the 150th anniversary of the start of the American Civil War. In celebration of this remarkable era of American history, OHA launched an exciting new twitter project that follows the lives of five local soldiers who served in the Union forces. Through daily twitter entries from their own diaries and letters now in the OHA collections, Rufus Petit, Herbert Wells, Alonzo Clapp, David Nelson and Edward Hopkins recount their experiences and eyewitness accounts of the most devastating war in America's history. OHA has provided background information of various newspaper accounts, anonymous local letters, and information regarding local units, and for the last several months has tweeted excerpts of letters from our first soldier, Rufus Petit.

In 1835, at the age of eight, a bright young boy by the name of Rufus came to live with his aunt and uncle at a farm near Baldwinsville having lost his parents several years before. It is here that he was raised and worked his family farm until the age of 18 when he became an apprentice to architect Elijah Hayden of Syracuse, who was also an ardent abolitionist.

In 1846, when Petit was 22, the United States went to war with Mexico. Serving in Company A of the 1st New York Volunteers, he quickly found he had a great talent for soldiering. He fought in a total of eight battles including those at Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo and Mexico City where it is said his marksmanship was so great "It knocked a Mexican Flag from its pole." After the war, Rufus was presented with a silver medal from the city of New

York for his gallant service. Although never wounded, he came down with a chronic illness.

For the next 13 years he would reside at his family farm in Cold Springs near Baldwinsville. When the Civil War broke out, he decided to sign up once again for the army. With his experience in the Mexican War, and the creditability it lent, he recruited a unit from among his friends and neighbors of Baldwinsville, originally named the "Cold Springs Rifles." The unit was being transferred to the artillery Company B of the 1st New York Light Artillery in the fall of 1861.

Throughout the next few years Rufus would come to be known as a fierce soldier and a tough, but fair, disciplinarian by his men. A softer side is seen through his heartfelt correspondence with his wife, Elvira, whom he constantly writes of his distress over the separation they must endure, "Oh Elvira, I think of you a thousand times each day, I see the tears spring to your eyes as I tell you my thoughts."

We will follow the story of Rufus Petit and his stouthearted journey throughout some of the most notable battles of the Civil War for the next two years. Then the story of Rufus Petit takes a much darker turn, where the nickname of "Ruthless Rufus" is bestowed upon him. . . . Join us for the story at <https://twitter.com/#!/OnondagaHisAssn>, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Onondaga-Historical-Association/48636186355> ❖



Company B of the 1st New York Light Artillery

OHA

Newsletter: Email vs. US Mail *BY KAREN COONEY*

Several of our members have chosen to receive their issues of History Highlights via e-mail in order to help us cut down on mailing costs. If you would also like to receive your copy of the OHA newsletter via your e-mail please let us know. Just call 428-1864 X 312 or by e-mailing Karen Cooney at Karen.Cooney@cnyhistory.org.

TWO LOCALS, FROM DIFFERENT ERAS, SHINE IN THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

BY GREGG A. TRIPOLI

Our County Executive, Joanie Mahoney, was recently honored by *Governing*, a national monthly magazine, as one of nine “2011 Public Officials of the Year.” Founded in 1987, *Governing*’s subject area is state and local government in the United States and has a circulation of approximately 85,000. The honorees of this annual national distinction are chosen for their leadership, courage, innovation, creativity, and good management, especially in a year marked by “increasingly strained public revenues.” County Executive Mahoney was particularly cited for her “Save the Rain” initiative, which has “become a national model for dealing with overloaded sewer systems and toxic runoff.”

While in Washington, D.C. to accept her award, the County Executive, and her family, decided to do a little sightseeing in our nation’s capitol. At the Smithsonian Institution, they made a point to stop in at the National Air and Space Museum to see an exhibit that puts another Onondaga County local, from about 100 years ago, on the national stage.

Herman Ecker was our community’s first aviator. Just a few short years after the Wright brothers’ momentous flight, Ecker was creating his own invention here in Syracuse – a flying boat! Made from items that could be found in the local hardware store, or in one’s own garage, Ecker fashioned a homemade biplane that, by 1910, was circling the waters, and the airspace, of Onondaga Lake. The fascinating story of this invention can be found in OHA’s newest book, *Windows Into the Past* (available at OHA’s Gift Gallery) in a chapter titled “Who the Heck is Herman Ecker?” Ecker’s boat is now on permanent display in the early Flight Gallery at the National Air and Space Museum.

OHA is proud of our County Executive, Joanie Mahoney, *and* our first aviator, Herman Ecker, who have each in their own way helped put Onondaga County in the national spotlight for their respective contributions to our community and to our country. Congratulations Joanie! And thanks for sending OHA the great photo of your “Ecker encounter.” ❖



Mark Overdyk, husband of county Executive Mahoney at the Ecker exhibition in the Smithsonian Institute

Bruce Harvey – OHA Volunteer

BY DENNIS J. CONNORS



Interior of Sacred Heart Church

OHA is extremely fortunate to enjoy a cadre of talented volunteers. One individual, who has been extremely generous with his time and talents is Bruce Harvey. Bruce is a professional photographer who specializes in cultural resource documentation. This includes historic research, architectural surveys, and visual record-making utilizing a large-format camera. He has degrees from Allegheny College, the University of South Carolina and a PhD in history from Vanderbilt University. His work has taken him throughout the Northeast, documenting architectural structures for a variety of environmental review and mitigation purposes. Historic hydroelectric facilities and dams are a particular specialty. The resulting archival images then become a permanent historical record, on file with state and federal agencies, once the building is altered or demolished.

Over the last few years, Bruce has performed documentary work as a volunteer for the OHA, including photographing the historic site of William Sweet’s c1870 steel plant on Syracuse’s Near West Side prior to its 2005 demolition. He also documented the facilities of the historic Will & Baumer candle company before its closure in 2010, with images donated to the OHA. Most recently, Bruce contributed a number of stunning B&W photos of local landmarks as part of an adjunct exhibit that accompanied the traveling *Landmarks of New York* exhibition here at the museum. These included sites such as Syracuse’s Sacred Heart Basilica, the Salt Museum in Liverpool and downtown’s Hamilton White House. These large format, archival prints will now be added to OHA’s permanent collection.

We are most grateful to Bruce for his generosity in helping interpret and record the significant architectural and industrial history of Onondaga County. ❖

Our Glorious Workplaces 2011 – Syracuse University

BY LYNNE PASCALE



Cocktails at Crouse College.

Celebrating one of central New York's noteworthy institutions of higher learning, OHA's 15th annual gala event, "Our Glorious Workplaces", was held November 19, 2011 on the beautiful campus of Syracuse University.

The evening began with over two hundred guests for cocktails at Crouse College. This castle-like, Romanesque Revival structure, with its iconic bell tower, was designed by Archimedes Russell. Glorious guests enjoyed violin and organ music as students of the College of Visual and Performing Arts played in practice rooms and the auditorium. A small group was led on a special tour of the bell tower where they watched the chimes master play the three-story chimes. Guests also enjoyed tours of Holden Observatory where SU staff described some of the observatory's features and led guests up the spiral stairs to view the original, still-functioning telescope.

The Life Sciences Complex served as the venue for dinner, the menu for which was

inspired by historic 19th century banquets. In what is becoming an annual tradition, OHA Executive Director Gregg Tripoli serenaded the room with his witty musical tribute to the presenting sponsor, Syracuse University. Dennis Connors, OHA's Curator of History, enlightened those attending with "Birth of a Glorious Landmark: Mr. Crouse Builds a College," an exploration of the life of John Crouse and his son Edgar, describing how their monumental and inspirational building for Syracuse University became reality. Each guest also received a special commemorative plate of historic images of Syracuse University, designed by Lucie Wellner and created solely for "Our Glorious Workplaces."

OHA recognizes the special efforts provided by the event committee: Committee Co-Chairs Lisa Loftus and Jennifer Wells, Nancy Bottar, Donna Flook, Michele Johnson, and Pam Reilly.

OHA and its Board of Directors acknowledge the event's major sponsors:



Mary Cotter, Bob and Diane Miron make an entrance.



Glorious dinner guests sitting l. to r. Sharye Skinner; Ron Thiele; standing Suzanne Thorin, Chuck Goodman, Suzanne McAuliffe, Kevin McAuliffe; seated, Marilyn Pinsky, Richard Tuttle and Karen Goodman.

Syracuse University Office of Community Engagement and Economic Development, Bottar Leone PLLC, and Cathedral Candle Company ❖



OHA Board President Tom Burton presenting the commemorative plate to the University's Dean of Libraries, Suzanne Thorin and Marilyn Higgins, Vice President of Syracuse University's Office of Community Engagement and Economic Development

SPIRITS OF GHOSTWALK PAST BY SCOTT PEAL

Adventurous souls braving the uncertain autumn weather of early October, encountered the spirited ladies of OHA's fall ghost walk, "The Feminine Side of Fayetteville". Guests began their journey into the past at the United Church of Fayetteville. From there, the Matilda Joslyn Gage House, The Beard Morgan Bed and Breakfast, and the Falso, Adams and Polhamus homes provided the backdrops for the characters drawn from Fayetteville's history. The featured ladies included suffragist, Matilda Joslyn Gage; her niece, actress and journalist, Ramona Baxter Bowden; herb expert, Harriet Johnson; philanthropist, Emma Beard; and murder victim, Gladys Blaich. Thanks to Wegmans, Tops Friendly Markets, Pascale Restaurant, Sue Boland and the members of the United Church Of Fayetteville, Linda Ryan of the Fayetteville Free Library History Department, Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, our hosts and our guides, and last but not least, our talented performers. ❖



Annette Adams Brown as Harriet Jefferson, Stanley Adams as Mr. Bell & Bertha Adams as Miss Mary

*Susan Greebagen as Morgan Beard Housekeeper
Jennie Russo as Gladys Blaich*



Dorothy DeAngelo as Sara & Susan Barbour as Matilda Joslyn Gage

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Cherry Hill School	Liverpool Public Library	Syracuse Stamp Club
Chittenango Middle School	Manlius Public Library	Syracuse University
City of Syracuse	Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation	Syracuse University - Syracuse Urban Family History
County of Onondaga	Monday Morning Club	Town of Fayetteville
Cultural Resources Council	Nate Perry School	United Way of CNY, Inc.
Delta Academy	National Abolition Hall of Fame	University College of Syracuse University
Dewitt 9/11 Memorial Foundation Committee	NYS Retired Teachers Association	Woodland Elementary School
Dewitt Community Library	Onondaga Community College	
Erwin Methodist Church	Onondaga County Chapter of NYSArc, Inc.	
Expeditionary Learning Middle School	Pine Grove Jr. High School	
Fayetteville Free Library	Seymour School	
Gem and Mineral Society Learning Center	Sierra Club	

OHA ALSO WANTS TO THANK THE PEOPLE & ORGANIZATIONS THAT USE THE CAROLYN & RICHARD WRIGHT RESEARCH CENTER.

IN-KIND GIFTS FROM APRIL 1, 2011 - MARCH 31, 2012

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Computer Related Technologies	Lisa Loftus	Syracuse University Office of Special Events
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Gaylord Bros.	Onondaga Community College	Visual Technologies
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Jerry Klineberg Photography, Inc.	Pascale's Liquor Square	Lucy Wellner
Karen Cooney	PayChex	
Karen Grimm	Rick Kelley Electric	

OHA TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS:**"Tales, Talents and Treasures of the Diocese of Syracuse: A 125th Anniversary" Exhibition****Through April 30, 2012 OHA Museum**

An exhibit honoring the 125th anniversary of the Catholic Diocese of Syracuse.

Journey of a Lifetime: NYPENN Pathways Celebrates 100 Years of Girl Scouts USA**Through August 26, 2012 at the OHA Museum**

From cookies to camping to badges and more, NYPENN Pathways' 100th Anniversary Celebration will highlight the accomplishments and significance of Girl Scouting since its founding. The exhibit will reflect important elements of the Girl Scout movement as well as important milestones in the Girl Scout organization with a particular emphasis upon the five legacy councils from New York State and Pennsylvania that now comprise NYPENN Pathways.

TAKE NO PRISONERS: Political Cartoons Over Time and Place**May 15, 2012-November 15, 2012 at the OHA Museum**

Using both recent and historic examples, this exhibition will showcase editorial cartoons by both local and national illustrators, as it uncovers the tragedies and triumphs of our past, as seen through their creative eyes.

Associated Artists of Central New York 85th Anniversary
May 15, 2012-September 9, 2012 at the OHA Museum

Associated Artists of Central New York was founded in 1926 by Syracuse University art teachers. Through the years, A.A.S. has held juried art exhibitions in diverse venues, most recently at the Manlius Library. For the 85th anniversary, OHA will host the group and the juried exhibit will feature paintings, ceramics, and postage stamps created by members of the Associated Artists of Central NY since its inception. The anniversary exhibit runs from May 16-Sept 9. A reception will be held on Sunday, May 20th.

Stereoscopic Photographs**September 22, 2012-April 1, 2013 at the OHA Museum**

An exhibit of modern and historic stereoscopic cards using a stereoscopic viewer.

Collaborative Exhibitions:**People, Place and Progress: Local Landscapes in Paint and Print****June 3, 2012-September 2, 2012 at the Everson Museum of Art**

Using examples from both the Everson and OHA collections, this exhibition will pair historical photographs of local scenes with a selection of paintings showing those same locations. It will uncover how the artist chose to interpret that Central New York setting and how those places help shape our regional identity.

Patently Syracuse**Currently at the Syracuse Technology Garden**

"Patently Syracuse" an exhibit in collaboration with curator Ty Marshall that explores some of the inventions and inventors from Syracuse.

OHA EVENTS:**Girl Scouts Presentation by Gregg Tripoli****April 4, 2012, 1PM, Manlius Library**

"A Centennial Celebration: 100 Years of the Girls Scouts, as Told Through the Story of Founder, Juliette Gordon Low" is a presentation, produced by the Onondaga Historical Association, that simultaneously tells two compelling and inspirational stories from our nation's history. The fascinating, epic life of Juliette Low and the remarkable evolution of one of the world's most beloved and well known organizations are combined in this presentation to entertain and enlighten as it highlights their strong sense of adventure tempered by the social importance of proper etiquette and behavior,

their progressive attitude founded in traditional values, and their journeys toward self-realization and leadership while emphasizing the charitable concept of helping others.

Debut of Restored Betty Munro Civic Center Suite Paintings
April 5, 2012, 4-6PM, 2nd floor Civic Center.

Join County Executive Joanie Mahoney for a reception to view the "Civic Center Suite", a collection of 27 paintings by Betty Munro that chronicle the building of the John Mulroy Civic Center. \$20/person, \$35/couple. Reservations can be made by calling Karen Cooney at 428-1864, ext. 312. Proceeds benefit TONY 2012, a community-wide multi-venue biennial exhibition highlighting artists of Upstate New York through a collaboration of 14 local arts organizations.

OHA Presentations in collaboration with S.U. and DIAVOLO
April 9-14, Landmark Theater

Presentations by OHA in collaboration with S.U. and DIAVOLO, an internationally renowned modern acrobatic dance company that will be in residence at the Landmark Theater from April 9 - 14. Check OHA's website for details about the following programs:

- "Syracuse Theaters" by Dennis Connors
- "The Shuberts of Syracuse: The Brothers Who Built Broadway" by Gregg Tripoli
- "When the Circus Came to Town" by Scott Peal

Hall Groat, Sr. Presentation and Book Signing**April 11, Noon, OHA Museum***They Called Me the Brush Slinger: Creating a Career in Art* offers valuable information and insight into the life of an artist. Author Hall Groat Sr., a resident of Manlius, provides an overview of marketing skills necessary to succeed in the art world, and his tales of both the bright and dark sides of being a self-employed artist serve as a reality check for anyone planning a career in art. Following the artist around the world on his wonderful journey full of soul searching and hilarious experiences makes this book a fun read for art lovers and students of all ages.**The Shuberts of Syracuse: The Brothers Who Built Broadway, by Gregg Tripoli****April 17, 2012, 7PM, DeWitt Community Library.**

A true rags to riches story from Syracuse. Three brothers from an immigrant family worked their way up through the local Syracuse theatre scene to become producers and theatre managers/owners. By their teens, they managed the top three theatres in Syracuse, and began building a small empire of theatres across upstate New York. They went on to build the largest theatrical empire in the world, creating Broadway as we know it today. DeWitt Community Library, with OHA's Executive Director, Gregg Tripoli,

A Creekwalk Crawl - A Walking Tour of the Onondaga Creekwalk led by Dennis Connors**April 28 at 10am co-sponsored with PACNY. Meet at Creekwalk park area adjacent to Sound Garden.**

Pre-registration required by calling 428-1864 x312 \$10 Members, \$15 Non-Members for either PACNY and/or OHA.

Cathedral Square Organ Crawl**April 29, 2012, 1-3pm, beginning at Park Central Presbyterian Church, \$10**The Cathedral Square Organ Crawl provides an historic tour led by OHA's Executive Director, Gregg Tripoli, with organ concerts at Park Central Presbyterian Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Plymouth Church, and Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Proceeds to benefit the Cathedral Square Neighborhood Assn. **For more information and reservations, please call Karen Cooney at 428-1864 ext. 312.****To the Outskirts of Habitable Creation: North American Political Prisoners in Van Diemen's Land Penal System****May 10, Noon, OHA Museum.****Part of the Donald Pomeroy Lecture Series.**

2012 marks the 175th anniversary of the 1837/38 Upper Canadian rebellions. Dr. John Carter will provide an illustrated presentation

which deals with the incursions into Upper Canada in 1838 and the consequences of these rebellious acts. He looks specifically at what happened to those who were transported as political prisoners to Van Diemen's Land, today's Tasmania.

Opening Reception**May 20, 2PM, OHA Museum.**

TAKE NO PRISONERS: Political Cartoons Over Time and Place Exhibition

Associated Artists of Syracuse 85th Anniversary Exhibition - 1926-2012

2012 Fine Arts Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony**May 20, 2012, 2PM, Liverpool High School Auditorium.**

Join Gregg Tripoli, Master of Ceremonies for the 2012 Fine Arts Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

Oakwood Revisted Ghostwalk**June 15, 16, 22, 23**Beneath the peaceful hills of Oakwood Cemetery rest the elite of the Salt City. But all is not so quiet. They possess many compelling stories to tell. Join the Onondaga Historical Association for their second summer Oakwood Ghostwalk to meet new restless spirits and learn why they feel they should be remembered today. **Friday, June 15th & 22nd and Saturday, June 16th & 23rd. Tours start at 6:00pm each evening and leave every 15 minutes from Oakwood Cemetery's Chapel. Reservations made by June 12th: OHA Members: \$8, Non-Members: \$10; After June 12th OHA Members: \$10, Non-Members: \$12. For more information and reservations please call 428 1864 x 312. RESERVATIONS ARE STRONGLY ADVISED.****The Civil War Battle that Saved Washington****June 20 at 10 am at OASIS**

Lecture by OHA's Curator of History, Dennis Connors. Syracuse OASIS is a program for adults over 50. To register for this lecture, call 464-6555.

Class Location: 6333 State Route 298; East Syracuse, NY 13057
<http://www.oasisnet.org/Cities/East/SyracuseNY.aspx>**OHA Medal Breakfast****June 21, Genesee Grande Hotel, 8-9AM, \$50.00 per person**For the 21st time since its inception in 1945, the Onondaga Historical Association (OHA) Medal will be awarded to recognize distinguished contributions to local history and to the preservation and interpretation of the history of Onondaga County. This year's honorees: Robert Bitz, Pompey Historical Society, and King + King Architects. **For more information and reservations, please call Karen Cooney at 428-1864 ext. 312.****University Hill: The Evolution of a Distinctive Syracuse Neighborhood****June 25 at 10am at OASIS**

Lecture by OHA's Curator of History, Dennis Connors. Syracuse OASIS is a program for adults over 50. To register for this lecture, call 464-6555.

Class Location: 6333 State Route 298; East Syracuse, NY 13057
<http://www.oasisnet.org/Cities/East/SyracuseNY.aspx>**1812 Conference at Kingston Historical Society**

October 27 and 28,

http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/1812_Conference.html**The Onondaga Arsenal: Reflections on the War of 1812 in Memory and Loss**

Lecture by OHA's Curator of History, Dennis Connors

Stick to Your Guns! The Third US Artillery and the Battle of Oswego 1814

Lecture by OHA's Assistant Curator of History, Matthew MacVitie

Onondaga historical association's **HISTORY**

OHA

HIGHLIGHTS

www.cnyhistory.org

Onondaga Historical Association
321 Montgomery Street
Syracuse, New York 13202-2098
315.428.1864

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HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

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Thomas A. Burton

President, Board of Directors

Gregg A. Tripoli

Executive Director

Onondaga Historical Association has engaged Dupli for the design and printing of this magazine.

Visit our website at:

cnyhistory.org

Or email us at:

karen.cooney@cnyhistory.org

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OHA HOURS

History Museum and Gift Gallery

Wed-Fri 10am-4pm

Sat-Sun 11am-4pm

Research Center

Wed-Fri 10am-2pm

Sat 11am-3:30pm

VOLUNTEERS APPEAL

Gift Gallery Volunteers Needed! We're looking for great volunteers or "staff" to run our gift shop for a few hours or more each week from 10-4 WF and 11-4 Sat-Sun. If you're interested in volunteering, please let us know! 315-428-1864 ext 324. To download our volunteer application, please visit our website at cnyhistory.org

E-MAIL ADDRESSES NEEDED!

In order to keep up to date with OHA's current events, please send us your email address and we will add you to our distribution lists. We do not inundate our members with emails. Periodically you will receive an update when we add items to our calendar of events. We love to see our members at all of our events!

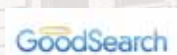
All images in this newsletter are from OHA collections, unless otherwise noted.



Find the Onondaga Historical Association on Facebook!



Find the Onondaga Historical Association's daily Civil War tweets on twitter at [OnondagaHisAssn](https://twitter.com/OnondagaHisAssn).



Raise money for the Onondaga Historical Association by using GoodSearch and GoodShop.

GoodSearch.com is a Yahoo-powered search engine that donates half its advertising revenue (approximately a penny per search) to the charities its users designate. GoodShop.com donates up to 37 percent of each purchase to the Onondaga Historical Association.

Go to goodsearch.com and enter Onondaga Historical Association (Syracuse, NY) as the charity you want to support.

OHA WISH LIST

- Flat screen TV's (32" or larger)
- Flat screen computer monitors
- New or used power or hand tools
- Computers or laptops with Windows XP Professional or newer

We are looking for new or used items with current or recent technology. For used items we ask that they have a reasonable useful life remaining. Donations of items themselves or contributions toward the purchase of these items will be appreciated.