

Onondaga historical association's HISTORY

OHA *highlights*

winter 2005

FIRST QUARTER • VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 3



OHA'S CATASTROPHIC Main Break

On Saturday, October 22, at 11:30 pm, a major 24 inch water main broke in Montgomery Street directly in front of OHA. Almost immediately, the basement completely filled and the alarms went off summoning the Fire

Department. The basement filled in less than an hour attesting to the tremendous water pressure inside the OHA basement. Damage was limited to the basement and its contents. Neither the museum or the archives or collections suffered any direct water damage.

The City Water Department was on the scene and began to shut down the water main, a long and complicated process that did not achieve complete success until early Sunday afternoon. This due to the fact that, once shut down, water still had to drain from all the downtown buildings connected to the main between shutoff valves and the break in either direction. The Fire Dept immediately began pumping operations.

The Mayor visited the scene early Sunday and mobilized the City's resources to help. Ed Kochian was called and County Water arrived with two huge pumps. It is gratifying that we received about all the municipal support that we could have asked for and as soon as we requested it.

By noon, the water had receded to about six feet (it was originally about ten feet deep), but a significant amount of water



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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

This will be one of the most challenging times in OHA's history. Although the institution and the Board of directors had the foresight to have good insurance coverage, we are facing a long road to recovery. Virtually the entire infrastructure of the building has been destroyed or impacted: the elevator, the boiler, the phone system, the electrical grid, the dedicated air conditioner / humidifier for the Franklin automobile exhibit, the museum shop, tools, supplies, etc. We are making good progress and by the time that you are reading this will have had the entire basement emptied of debris and then professionally cleaned. This will allow workmen to enter the basement to begin repairing / replacing the infrastructure elements.

Almost certainly, some of this loss will not be fully covered by insurance, regardless of the quality of our coverage. OHA will need the help of everyone; city, county, state and federal as well as the general public to make itself whole again. We are launching a general Water Main Break Catastrophe appeal in November in place of our usual Lion's Share appeal. We need your support now more than ever. Thank you.



Paul H. Pflanz

NEW LEGISLATION FAVORS CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

You can now make a gift to OHA and receive an added tax deduction. Under the Katrina Relief Tax Bill, the limit for charitable cash deductions has been raised from 50 percent to 100 percent of adjusted gross income. This legislation covers cash gifts only made between August 28 and December 31, 2005. Contributions to OHA are covered.

Under this Bill, taxpayers 59 and older can also withdraw funds from qualified retirement plans and IRA accounts to make additional charitable contributions.

These withdrawals will be added to the donor's adjusted gross income and will be fully deductible, thereby eliminating any tax on the charitable gift.

Your consideration in making an additional contribution, or a larger than anticipated contribution to OHA, between now and December 31, is especially important to us as we strive to recover from the recent water disaster.

Thank you.



'TIS THE SEASON

We've decked the halls with balls of holly and more. Enjoy the atmosphere of a Victorian Christmas as the entry to the museum is transformed into an English marketplace. Visit 2nd floor exhibits and displays on the spirit of the season. Enjoy a collection of working model trains set up by the CNY Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Be amazed at the size of a miniature Victorian village collection from Vernon, NY. Experience a Mexican Christmas celebration. Learn about Christmas Past through an exhibit of holiday toys.

The holiday exhibits and displays will be open November 25, 2006 until January 8, 2006 during regular museum hours. Happy Holidays! and God Bless Us Everyone!



Syracuse University Chancellor Nancy Cantor tours OHA during Syracuse Welcomes 2005.

SYRACUSE WELCOMES 2005

Chancellor Nancy Cantor initiated a new program for incoming Syracuse University freshmen that was designed for them to discover the city they will be living in for the next four years. Called "Syracuse Welcomes 2005", the program introduced over 2000 freshmen to the "soul of Syracuse." Groups with guides toured OHA, Erie Canal Museum, the Everson and MOST. OHA looks forward to hosting the Class of 2010.

God
Bless Us,
Every One!



Teen Drama Troupe performer Matt Kidman portrays "Jacob Marley."



"Dickens" performers (Clockwise from left): Kaitlin Strathdee, Matt Kidman, Thomas Scalzo, Maurice Jones, Christine Scalzo, Ashley Arhurst and Tia Jones.

THE KNOW-IT-ALLS... OHA EDUCATION DEPT

On the road describes the very busy fall schedule of the Know-it-Alls aka OHA Education Department. Staff were exhibitors at the Cicero-North Syracuse School District professional development day for instructional staff in grades K-12; SUNY Cortland's Professional Partnerships in Education: A Program For New Faculty at ONCENTER; CNY Council for the Social Studies annual conference at the State Fairgrounds; SU-ESF College at Moon Library; and the public program presented at the War Memorial Military Memorabilia Exhibit by the USS Constitution Museum from Boston. WHEW! The word is now out about our new school tour formats, availability of presentations for school district professional development days, interactive outreach programs and programs for the senior community. Orientation tours for new DESTINY USA staff were held at OHA in October along with tours for all 8th grade classes from the Onondaga Central School District.

Educational Assistant Scott Peal aka Syracuse's first Mayor Harvey Baldwin got the OHA Teen Drama Troupe ready for rehearsals for "A Touch of Dickens." This incredible group of children from all over Syracuse and Onondaga County performed Dickens, "A Christmas Carol" at OHA's Light Up Syracuse Holiday Program; in the Redhouse for Christmas at Armory Square; and the Liverpool Public Library. Planning is now in the works for school winter and spring break camps at OHA so keep watch at OHA's website for upcoming details. Finally, OHA Ed staff lost all accessories, props and drama troupe costumes when 10' of water from a water main outside OHA burst into the basement. If anyone has costuming that would be suitable for our presentations such as capes, shirts, bonnets, wiglets etc. please call Scott Peal at 478-0771.

The know-it-alls are everywhere. If you have a great idea for a program, do not hesitate to call 428-1864 to let us know what you know...

YOU'VE GOT MAIL...

As a valuable member of OHA we want to keep you up-to-date with the latest and greatest information streaming from our exciting organization from the comfort of your own home and computer! Just send an email message to Assistant Director, Tom Hunter (ohatomh@yahoo.com) with your email address today.



OLD IRONSIDES DOCKS IN SYRACUSE

The USS Constitution aka "Old Ironsides" came to Syracuse the week of October 24-30. US Naval staff and educational staff from the USS Constitution Museum gave 65 in-school presentations to 4th graders in Syracuse and Onondaga County schools. A free K-12 teacher workshop was held at the ONCENTER on October 25th and a free public program was given on October 29 & 30th at OHA's military exhibit area at the War Memorial. Staff demonstrated how to make sail and rope amid displays of 1812 Old Ironsides reproduction memorabilia ie: uniforms, hats, medical equipment, dietary needs and entertainment. Kids were treated to hands-on activities including making navy knots, coloring and writing their names in copper to be installed on the hull of Old Ironsides. Every hour naval staff demonstrated how the USS Constitution's large cannon was prepared for firing in true 1812 style. Retired military personnel, military re-enactors and enthusiasts plus children from some of the schools where in-class presentations were given attended the 2-day event and thanked the OHA for hosting such an incredible program!



OHA PARTNERS WITH THE WORLD

Well, not quite, but our staff and board have partnered with several businesses and organizations these past few months. We often hear these questions, "Does OHA ally itself with area businesses for volunteers?" or "Does OHA cooperate with other cultural and arts organizations to produce exhibits or programs?" The answer is a resounding, "YES!"

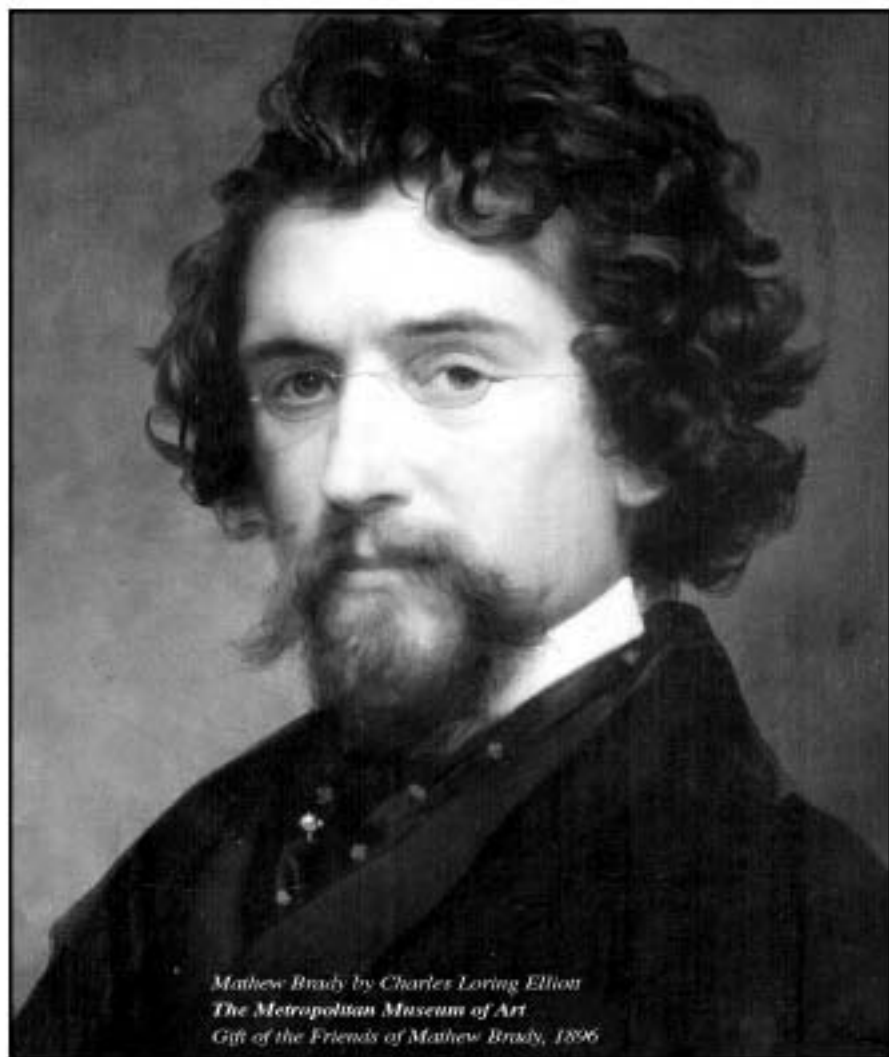
As part of our normal function as the largest history museum and research center in CNY, OHA routinely assists smaller historical organizations with professional matters. Recently, OHA worked with volunteers at the Cicero Historical Society and Sainte Marie Among the Iroquois assisting them with drafting museum policies that will help their staffs collect objects and documents appropriate to their mission statements, employ proper exhibit techniques, and make loans from individual lenders. We also have supplied other organizations with our complete Collections Management Policy, a 25+-page document that covers many policies pertinent to proper museum practice. Along with disseminating this information to our sister community organizations, OHA guides members of the general public who want to properly preserve grandmother's wedding dress, Uncle Fred's military documents, or cousin Sue's family photographs. People are genuinely interested in knowing how to correctly preserve precious materials and family heirlooms.

Our Education Director, Elaine Wisowaty, is affiliated with many educational organizations that provide professional development to teachers. Some of these organizations include the CNY Teaching Center, the Syracuse City School District Teachers Center, Onondaga County, Lemoyne College, Syracuse University, West Genesee-SU Teacher's Center, Jamesville-Dewitt-SU Teacher's Center, SUNY Cortland; Onondaga Community College.

Our Curator of History, Dennis Connors, is very busy with his own list of cooperative projects in the community. Here is a sampling of some of his past, present, and future associations:

- Annual guest lecturer for Leadership Greater Syracuse, where he makes a presentation on Syracuse history to the conference attendees.
- On-air tour guide at WCNY for a program that interprets the history of local railroads.
- Planning for a future major traveling exhibition 19th century portraitist Charles Loring Elliott that will premier at the Everson Museum of Art.

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*Mathew Brady by Charles Loring Elliott
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Gift of the Friends of Mathew Brady, 1896*

OHA PLANS NATIONAL ELLIOTT EXHIBITION

The name of Charles Loring Elliott (1812-1868) may not ring a bell with the average New Yorker, today, but in the 1850s he was considered one of the premier portrait artists working in the United States. At that time, he was based in the New York City area but Elliott was a native of Central New York and really launched his career with commissions in and around Syracuse. In an era when the potential of photography was just beginning to be explored, painting portraiture was still a highly regarded profession. Its best practitioners were well known and highly sought after by leaders in business, politics and society.

Today, portraits by Elliott are found in major museums throughout the country. Institutions such as the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts all have Elliott works in their collections.

His subjects represent a marvelous cross section of Americans from the 1830s to 1860s. They range from John Ericsson, builder of the Civil War ironclad, the Monitor, to Frederick Church, one of the most famous of the Hudson River School artists. His portrait of Samuel Colt,

inventor of the famous handgun, hangs in the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. The artist's monumental portrait of Matthew Vassar occupies an honored place at the college that bears his name. And Elliott's likeness of Mathew Brady is found at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He painted governors, industrialists, merchants, authors, artists, senators, actors, financiers, and even presidents.

The Onondaga Historical Association owns 20 portraits by Elliott, the largest single collection in the nation. OHA's portraits document Central New York personages and stories, and have periodically been exhibited here. But OHA has long believed that this artist deserves a national exhibition that showcases the body of his life's work.

A small grant in 2004 allowed OHA historian Dennis Connors to begin working to update former OHA Director Richard Wright's research and to assemble a group of advisors to explore the concepts for a national show and first-time catalog. Connors traveled to New York City and met with several curators from institutions that own Elliott works. Both the committee and the New York curators were encouraging and agreed that an Elliott exhibition is long overdue. The hope is to launch the show in Syracuse, likely in cooperation with the Everson Museum. The Everson owns a self-portrait by Elliott and a likeness of Samuel Larned, namesake of the Larned Building in Hanover Square.

A considerable amount of planning and fundraising work remains. It is hoped that the exhibit can open before the end of the decade. Connors is continuing to assemble research and information about Elliott and his subjects. He is also very interested to learn of other works by Elliott that still may be in private hands around Central New York. Those with such information are encouraged to contact Dennis Connors at the OHA by phone, 315-428-1864, or by e-mail at djcoha@Juno.com.

OHA SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

November 25 - January 8, Christmas at OHA. \$2 Adult / \$1 Child.

December 18, Illustrated Lecture: A History Mystery: How a 230 Year Old Document Starting the American Revolution in New York Wound Up in Syracuse. Presentation by Curator of History, Dennis Connors in conjunction with the ongoing exhibit, History Rediscovered: A Document's Story. Lecture held at 2:00 pm at OHA Museum, 321 Montgomery St., Syracuse, New York. Call 428-1864 for more information. \$3 members / \$5 non-members.

December 24 & 25, OHA Closed for Christmas.

December 31 & January 1, OHA Closed for New Year's Day.

January 15, 2006, CNY Reads Northstar Conspiracy. OHA Drama Troupe enacts a chapter of 19th century abolitionist history for Martin Luther King Day. Admission: Donation.

January 16, OHA Closed for Martin Luther King Day.

February 2006, CNY Reads Northstar Conspiracy vs Firebell in the Night - A Discussion of African American Relations in 1850 & 1950 for Black History Month. Admission: Donation.

February 12, 2-4pm, Diaries of Adam & Eve by Mark Twain. Opening of Special Valentine Exhibit. Light Refreshments. Admission: Donation.

History Highlights

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Subscription is available as a benefit of membership

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Visit our website at:

www.cnyhistory.org

or email us at:

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OHA PARTNERS WITH THE WORLD

-cont'd from page 6- Our new kid on the block is Charlane Wainwright who has recently come to OHA through the Onondaga County Department of Aging. Charlane is special assistant in the development office. Charlane has participated in a senior fair sponsored by NYS Senator John DeFrancisco.

Our Research Center staff, Michael Flanagan, Archivist, and Sarah Kozma, Research Associate, recently worked on an exhibit for the Central New York Jazz Appreciation Foundation's event Jazz in the Square. The exhibit featured some of OHA's photographs of the early jazz era in Syracuse. The Jazz Appreciation Foundation held a reception at the museum to promote jazz appreciation throughout the CNY region.

The Research Center staff continues to submit electronic catalog records to the NYS Archives for inclusion in the Historic Document Inventory online catalog. Anyone in the world who has access to the world wide web can now see the diversity and significance of our archival holdings.

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