

LITTLE FALLS HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

The Little Falls Historical Society and Museum prospered in 2018. The officers and directors of our 55 year old organization are proud to report to our membership that the Society is in sound financial condition and that museum attendance and membership both saw increases in 2018. We are honored to be housed in the historic Old Bank Building (1833) and we take seriously the responsibility of carrying forward the work of those who preceded us by saving this building and establishing our organization.

Our primary goal is to preserve community history and make our artifacts and exhibits accessible to the greater community. The Historical Society also strives to make history as interesting as possible for younger generations. Like all Little Falls non-profits, we need “to get younger” in order to continue to prosper.

MUSEUM

Our Old Bank Building museum is open five days a week from mid-May through the end of October. We have extended hours of operation during each of our community festivals - Cheese Festival (July), Canal Celebration (August), Garlic Festival (September), and Christmas in Little Falls (December). When open, the museum also functions as a tourist information center and our docents and interns serve as community goodwill ambassadors. Additionally, to increasing numbers of relocated natives and expatriates, the museum has become a natural gathering place when they are in town.

Museum attendance in 2018 totaled over 1700 visitors. Attendance peaks during community festivals, particularly during Canal Celebration. Erie Canal boat traffic also contributes significantly to museum attendance. Museum visitors came from 31 states and 7 foreign countries - Canada, England, Germany, Nepal, Scotland, Slovakia, and Spain. Approximately 60% of our visitors are from Little Falls, 20% from other NYS communities, 19% from other states, and 1% from foreign nations.

Three new exhibits highlighted the museum in 2018. The Vietnam War exhibit honoring the service of the 131 Little Falls men who served during that conflict was the most heavily viewed exhibit. Our new pre-Urban Renewal commercial district and Native American exhibits (thanks to Peter Couser at the Fort Plain Museum) were also well received. Our 2017 History of Little Falls Music exhibit was downsized and our Little Falls Waterways and Lock 17 exhibits were combined. Permanent exhibit themes include: Little Falls 20th Century military history (WW I, WW II and Korean War), the Octagon and Indian Castle Churches, early Little Falls documents, Myjava / Little Falls sister city, and four mini exhibits in our vault. Smaller exhibits on the 1912 Textile Strike and the 1940 Gulf Curve Train Wreck were also brought back in 2018. Our Little Falls diamonds and Little Falls Cheese Market exhibits continue to impress visitors.

The construction and success of all of our exhibits is enhanced through the generosity of individuals and families who entrust us with their treasured artifacts and keepsakes for exhibit purposes; for that we are most grateful.

Our museum docents and volunteers give freely of their time, talents, and energy. Volunteerism is our lifeblood as we have no paid staff. In 2018, volunteers contributed over 2500 hours on duties related to exhibit construction, guiding tours, cleaning, maintenance work, landscaping, genealogy, finance, and outside presentations. Our three Herkimer County summer interns, Jenna and Hannah Tomei and Sarah Sagatis, provided important support services during the summer months. We are grateful to Herkimer County Working Solutions for these placements.

2018 HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTATIONS

- MARCH - Robert Van Alstyne spoke on “The Dorr and Van Alstyne Families in Little Falls”
- APRIL - Louie Baum spoke on “Urban Renewal: Good, Bad or Both?”
- MAY 22 - Opening reception at the museum honoring Little Falls Vietnam War veterans
- JUNE - Summer Picnic at Rotary Park
- JULY/AUGUST - No general membership meetings

SEPTEMBER - Peter Couser spoke on local Colonial Era history
OCTOBER - Diane Soper spoke on her father's early life on the Erie Canal
NOVEMBER - Elections
DECEMBER - Christmas luncheon at Travelodge

**Society member Mike Potter will highlight our March 26 meeting at the WCA with a presentation of historic images of Little Falls, some of which have never been shown publicly. Mike and his wife Gail have logged many hours over the past few years digitizing our large collection of old slides. On April 23, Society member Byron Roth will speak at the WCA on the role of DNA in genealogical research.

We are much indebted to the WCA for allowing us to conduct our monthly business meetings and presentations in their historic (1826) building, the home of our first village president Nathaniel Benton.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

MAY 22 OPENING RECEPTION - By far and away the most important event that the Historical Society sponsored in 2018 was our opening reception honoring the service of the 131 Little Falls residents who served in the Vietnam War. Our reception drew a SRO crowd to the museum, including 25 Vietnam vets and many of their family members. Our Vietnam War exhibit honoring the service and sacrifice of these individuals has resonated deeply in the community. Special thanks to Little Falls resident and professional photographer Tom Panko (Foot Hills Photography) for his services the evening of this reception.

The Society owes a special debt of gratitude to Vietnam vets John Frazier and Dave Teall for their help in organizing this exhibit and establishing our Vietnam vet data base. Thank you John and Dave!

2018 PATRIOTS DAY PROGRAM AT PAINES HOLLOW CHURCH - For the past nine years, the Historical Society has hosted a Patriots Day observance on the third Saturday in May. Past observances were held at: Yellow Church Road Cemetery, General Nicholas Herkimer Home, Fort Herkimer Church, Indian Castle Church, the former Masonic Temple in Little Falls, Snells Bush Church, Dutch Reformed Church at the Historic Four Corners in Herkimer, Historic Trinity in Fairfield, and, in 2018, at Paines Hollow Church.

2018 program speaking topics included: Welcome and Introduction – Barbara Connor, “History of Paines Hollow” – Ward Gerhardt, “Andrustown Massacre” - Anita Dulak, “Adam Helmer’s Run” – Pat Stock, “History of Paines Hollow Church” – Elizabeth Harter, “Preamble of the U.S. Constitution” – Pat Frezza-Gressler, “Iroquois Confederacy and Democracy” + Closing Remarks – Jeffrey Gressler, Laying of DAR Cemetery Wreath – Nancy Hanna and playing of “Taps” - Dr. Oscar Stivala. Robert Schmelcher also performed several musical pieces.

Society members who have never attended a Patriots Day observance may want to consider doing so, as it is an important way of honoring the contributions made by our ancestors in securing our nation's independence from England and bringing attention to important local historic buildings.

CHURCH STREET CEMETERY TOUR – On Thursday evening of Canal Celebration week, we hosted a tour of significant graves in the City's main burial ground. The tour featured 30 graves, including those of Nathaniel Benton, Arphaxed Loomis, the Gilbert Family, and Dean Miller and Enoch Moore in the African-American section. The event was very well attended. Presenters included Louie Baum, Barbara Connor, Joe Chapadeau, Nancy Earhart, Pat Frezza-Gressler, Jeffrey Gressler, Scott Kinville, Mike Potter, Mike Smith, and Pat Stock. We last held cemetery tours in 2011 and 2012.

SISTER CITY PEN PAL PROGRAM - Middle School teacher Susan Finkst is the new group adviser for our Myjava / Little Falls pen pal program. Susan's counterpart in Myjava is Alena Cilacova. Little Falls students have exchanged letters and gifts with their counterparts at Myjava Gymnasium in Slovakia. Our middle school group was also able to “Google video chat” with Slovakian native and Syracuse University basketball player Marek Dolezaj.

VISITING SLOVAKIAN SCHOLAR - Alzbeta (Betty) Lukacova spent two weeks in Little Falls researching the legendary Slovakian folk violinist Samco Dudik. The Historical Society partnered with the Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts for this project. Society member Lynn Osley Rosen graciously hosted Betty in her home. Special receptions were held at the Elk's Club and at the Museum.

SLOVAKIA TOUR - Additionally, a contingent of 30 mostly Little Falls natives and current residents visited Slovakia this past summer. Society members Peter Adasek and Martin Babinec helped orchestrate this visit and some of the Myjava Gymnasium pen pal students served as tour guides.

ANSON CASLER MEMORIALIZED - On May 8, members of the Little Falls Historical Society, along with officers from the Little Falls Police Department, attended the NYS Police Officers Memorial Remembrance Ceremony at the Empire State Plaza in Albany. During the ceremony, the name of Anson Casler, a Little Falls constable killed in the line of duty in 1865, was added to the memorial stone. It was through the efforts of David Krutz, the LF Police Department (Chief Masi), and the Historical Society that constable Casler was memorialized.

FOURTH GRADE VISITATION – We once again hosted a pre-Christmas in Little Falls combined museum visit and Christmas tree decorating visit by Benton Hall Academy fourth graders. Many of the students returned to the Museum during the community festival to proudly point out their handmade decorations festooning the Christmas tree. Thanks to the fourth grade teaching team at Benton Hall Academy for helping us make this annual event possible. Great fun for all!

CHEESE MARKET SIGNAGE - Through targeted donations and non-profit collaboration, the Historical Society managed the replacement of all three of the “History of the Little Falls Cheese Market” outdoor signs along South Ann Street. Donations to the Society by Ken and Lily Bagley (Texas), the Cheese Festival board of directors, and an anonymous individual made possible the replacement of the final two signs in 2018.

FROG FOUNTAIN DEDICATION - The restoration process for our 130-year old frog fountain culminated in a Sunday August 12 (Canal Celebration) well attended dedication ceremony. The \$2500 restoration project (Antique Cast Iron, LLC. / Cherry Valley) was possible due to targeted donations to the Historical Society made by a number of our members, with the largest donation given by the Robert Mucica family (California).

NOT-FOR-PROFIT COALITION - Along with a number of other Little Falls NFP's, the Historical Society is working to help establish a shared website and related electronic platform where all community volunteer organizations will combine event calendars and volunteer needs and opportunities. This collaborative effort will allow longtime residents and newcomers alike to best match their volunteer interests and skills with the needs of each of our community NFP's.

ODDS AND ENDS - We were also able to make presentations to the Astrogren Chapter of the DAR on the Iroquois Confederacy, to a group of seniors at Little Falls Hospital on the history of Little Falls, and to the Herkimer Depression Boys on our area during the Revolution.

In November, the Historical Society hosted a book signing by Little Falls native Donald Staffo (Alabama) for his new book “Jim Boeheim and Syracuse Basketball: In the Zone.”

MUSIC AT THE MUSEUM - 1960's-70's rock and rollers and Little Falls natives Joe Chapadeau and Stevie Rigo performed twice at the museum in 2018, once on the Saturday afternoon of Canal Celebration and again during Christmas in Little Falls. Both events were well attended and the Historical Society wishes to thank these two musicians for their generous support. During their Canal Celebration performance in August, Caroline Feldmeier sat in for a few songs with Joe and Stevie.

MEMBERSHIP

As with most non-profit organizations, the vitality of the Historical Society depends on a strong membership base, ours has grown substantially to nearly 300 individual members. Additionally, we now have 36 corporate and business members, whereas we had none a decade ago. The recent suspension of operations by the Rochester Historical Society due to a lack of funding once again reminds our officers and board directors of our good fortune at having a strong membership.

The Historical Society's membership base includes 70 Individual Members (\$10), 32 Family Groups (\$15), 42 Sustaining Members (\$25), 59 Patron Members (\$50), and 36 Corporate and Business Members (up from 22 in 2017).

Our Business and Corporate members are extremely important to the Society and we ask that you support these businesses whenever possible. Shop local, we all benefit!

Our membership is broad based. Many of our new members are from outside of Little Falls and the Mohawk Valley. Some former residents join during visits to the museum during Canal Celebration and class reunions. 45% of our membership is from Little Falls, 22% from other NYS communities and 32% from 28 other states. One member lives in Germany and another lives in Slovakia. We take pride in the geographical diversity of our membership as it reflects a deep and abiding loyalty to Little Falls.

2018 Business and Corporate Members

A.M. Blask Reality	Empire Fibreglass Products	One Leaf Genealogy
Adirondack Bank	Enea Family Funeral Homes	Paca Gardens
Bassett Healthcare	Feldmeier Equipment Company	PEM's Tool and Machine
Beardslee Castle	Floor and Furniture Restoration	Pohlig's Enterprises
Bonita's Sandwich Chef	George Aney Law Office	Price Chopper
Burrell Fisher Engineering	George Lumber Company	RD's Mountain View Trucking
Burrows Foundation	H. & H. Accounting	Ruggerio's Tratorria
Canal Side Restaurant	Hummel's Office Plus	Stewart's Shops, Inc.
Chapman-Moser Funeral Home	Kress Physical Therapy	Travelodge
Cooper Moose Ale House	Little Falls Hardware	Twin Rivers Paper Company
David Chlus: Morgan Stanley	Little Falls Dental: Dr. Yallowitz	Van Meter & Van Meter
Dunteman Corporation	Little Falls Veterinary Clinic	White Rose Bakery

WRITING SERIES - A number of individuals authored newspaper articles for our fourth annual writing series, most relating to the Vietnam War. Mike Malavasic, Ted Feldmeier, John Frazier, and Bernie Spraker all authored articles on their wartime experiences. Additionally, Pat Stock (Dr. Fred Sabin), Diane Ptak (Little Falls Cheese Market), and Jeffrey Gressler (Frog Fountain) also authored writing series articles. The four Vietnam War articles were particularly well received. The Historical Society wishes to thank Times-Telegram editor Rob Juteau for his ongoing and longtime support of our writing series work over the past four years.

2018 ELECTRONIC UPGRADES - The Historical Society took a great leap forward with our electronic presence over the past year. Society member Nancy Earhart designed and maintains our Facebook page "Little Falls NY Historical Society Museum" and Ginny and Jim Rogers designed a new Society website: littlefallshistoricalsociety.org. Ginny will be training several Society members so that we will be able to maintain this new website. Special thanks to Robin Critser-Prinzhorn for having designed and maintained our first website for a number of years.

2018 OFFICE RENOVATION - Thanks to the combined generosity of Society members Louie Baum and Phil Spine, we were able to significantly upgrade our office facility. Louie financed the project in memory of Terry Tippin and Phil put in many long hours installing new office cabinetry and building matching shelving and a desk. These renovations provide us with much greater storage capacity.

UPCOMING FOR 2019 - One of our primary goals for winter / spring 2019 is to better organize our research materials now that we have enhanced storage space. This will allow us to better utilize our materials and better serve the public. Our Vietnam War and Pre-Urban Renewal Commercial District exhibits will likely remain in place for 2019. The 18th Amendment (Prohibition) was ratified in 1919. In this centennial year, we hope to construct an exhibit telling “the Little Falls prohibition story.” Themes for additional 2019 exhibits are also being discussed.

REQUEST - Anyone who is in possession of any Prohibition-related historical artifacts, memorabilia, or “family stories” and is willing to loan us these items for 2019 exhibit purposes is urged to contact us.

FINANCIAL - Income in 2018 was \$20,449 and expenses were \$17,065, leaving a surplus of \$3384. The great majority of income, 97%, was due to the generosity of our members and benefactors. Donations were \$12,599 (much if it targeted for specific projects) - up 80% versus 2017 - and dues were \$7280 - up 18% versus 2017. Major expenses in 2018 were restoration of the “frog fountain,” renovation of the museum’s office, and revamping of our website. These projects accounted for 32% of our expenses. Other major expenses were museum utilities (heat, electric and water/sewer) 24% and museum maintenance, archival preservation, and general museum operation, which accounted for 22% of overall expenses.

Dr. Peter Adasek, Ken and Lily Bagley, Louis Baum, David and Evelyn Blovat, Victoria and Hank Bjorklund, Blaise and Leslie Carrig, Bob and Alison Kasner, Bob and Mary Ann Mucica, and De Forest and Arlene Tinkler all made significant donations to the Historical Society in 2018.

We would also like to thank the City of Little Falls for its annual financial support of \$1000.

SUMMARY

The Little Falls Historical Society continued to expand our contributions to the greater community in 2018. Our entire operation is only possible through the ongoing financial support, involvement, and commitment of our general membership, board, and officers. Thank you.

Sadly, 2018 also witnessed the passing of Society members Keith Davy (past Society president), John Wayne Johnson, David Lundstrom, David E. Miller (Little Falls), Frances Moynihan, George “Bud” Rieman, and Karl Wurzbacher.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Louis Baum - immediate past president
Jeffrey Gressler - president
Scott Kinville - vice-president
Gail Potter
Michael Smith
Pat Stock - City Historian
Maryanne Terzi

OTHER OFFICERS

Anita Dulak - Secretary
David Krutz - Treasurer

Pat Frezza-Gressler - membership director

“We must bring back the past in order to teach and learn in the present.” ~ Bertrand Russell

“A community’s sense of self begins with the appreciation of its past.” ~ Anonymous

2018 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



LINE 1: Veterans' Group Picture & Frog Fountain Ceremony With Mucica Family

**LINE 2: Museum Members at Anson Casler Ceremony
(Mike & Missy Smith, Louie Baum, Joan & David Krutz)**

LINE 3: Sister City Pen Pals & Patriots Day Musicians (Robert Schmelcher & Dr. Oscar Stivala)

LINE 4: Paines Hollow Church Interior & Thanks to LF 4th Graders for Tree Decorations