

GREECE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2019 ANNUAL REPORT





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The Greece Historical Society was organized in 1969 by Greece Town Historian Virginia Tomkiewicz, with the encouragement of Town Supervisor Fred J. Eckert who became a charter member. The Society received its absolute charter from the New York State Department of Education Board of Regents as a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation on November 21, 1974.

The all-volunteer Society's purpose is to collect, preserve, research, and share local history with the community. Concerned and interested community volunteers of various backgrounds and education lend their talents to govern the organization as the Board of Trustees. We strive to provide the community with an awareness of the past, an appreciation of the present, and a vision for the future, giving a sense of "roots" and a greater feeling of belonging.

To accomplish its purpose the Society offers:

- public programs
- articles about local history
- group and school programs
- docent led tours of our museum, especially to school groups and scouts
- resource materials and books to area schools and libraries
- a resource library at our History Center
- special events
- a web site and Facebook page informing people of upcoming programs and events
- DVDs, videos and Power Point presentations of various history subjects, sites and architecture
- a museum shop selling a variety of local history books

Beginning in the mid-1970s, the Greece Historical Society shared space with the Town of Greece Historian in a Town-owned house on English Rd. In 1988, with the encouragement of then Town Supervisor Don Riley, the former home of Gordon Howe, Greece Town Supervisor for 26 years and former Monroe County Manager, was donated to the Society by Wegmans for our use and the office of the Town Historian.

The 1855 farm house was restored by the Society and sits on a one acre parcel of land leased from the Town of Greece on the **Greece Town Campus**. It was the first building on the campus, which now includes the Town Hall, Town Justice Court, Public Library, Community & Senior Center, Police Headquarters, and other recreational amenities.



The house, which is owned and maintained by the Society, contains the Society's administrative offices, research library, museum shop, an exhibit hall wing, and until 2016, the office of the Town Historian. The Society is not part of the Town government and receives no funds from the Town of Greece. The Town continues to cut the grass and plow the driveway.

Docent led tours are held Sunday afternoons from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. or by appointment. Office hours are Monday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon, or by appointment. Special events, exhibits, and programs are held throughout the year.

The following is a report of the activities of the Greece Historical Society for 2019.

MUSEUM NEWCOMB EXHIBIT HALL

We continue to update and maintain the permanent exhibits and displays in the Museum's Newcomb Hall.

This year we updated our schoolhouse exhibit and designed a display highlighting Longridge elementary school. Several displays were created featuring local families including the Newcombs and Ruggles and an exhibit of blacksmithing and coopers tools with items on loan from long-time member Don Newcomb. In September we opened a new major exhibit on prohibition era in Greece and Charlotte titled. "Rumrunners, Speakeasies, and Bathtub Gin.

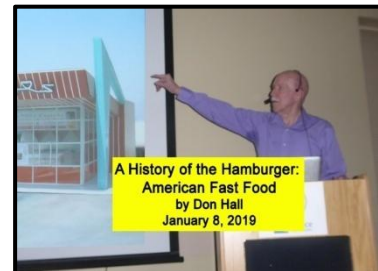
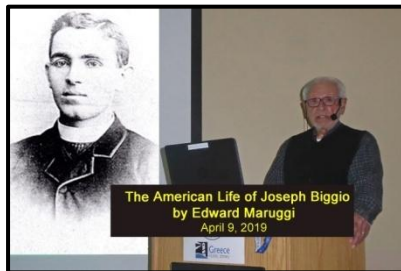


We also featured a display of more than a dozen "I Love NY" posters, all from the 1980s, a display of the old town hall, and a 1970s community made town quilt.



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Tuesday Evening Lecture Series - Our eight monthly Tuesday evening lectures featured local historians, authors, humanities scholars, and this year included a theatrical group. Our presentations have again proven to be very popular with the community. During 2019 we averaged 70 guests per evening. Our programs have earned a reputation throughout the region for providing high quality, professional and entertaining history lessons. Besides Greece residents, our guests regularly come from nearby towns and the City of Rochester. The monthly lectures are held at the Greece Public Library. We would like to thank library director Cassie Guthrie and her staff for being so supportive and accommodating to our needs.



Sunday Programs - During 2019, the Greece Historical Society hosted several informal programs on Sunday afternoons. These programs were varied with the intent to interest a wider range of people and ages. Subjects included stories about the Irish in Greece, the history of Lake Ontario, bottle collecting and African-Americans buried in Mt Hope Cemetery.

Scanning Day - For the fourth year in a row we hosted a free public scanning day. Several professional firms set up shop in our center and allowed the public to scan prints, negatives and slides. Photo restoration was also provided.



VISITORS

During 2019, approximately 850 visitors signed our museum guest book. We are sure that more than half the visitors did not sign in, so it can be assumed that we had well over 1,700 visitors, possibly 2,000.

Besides individuals and families, we conducted free tours for approximately 300 children from Greece public schools, private and home schools. Groups such as the Greece Athena History Club, senior groups, and scout troops also toured the museum. The Rochester Genealogical Society toured our museum after enjoying their annual picnic on our grounds.



PUBLIC LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

During 2019, member-volunteers of the Greece Historical Society presented programs to the Town of Gates Historical Society, the Rochester Genealogical Society, the Charlotte Branch Library, and on two occasions to the Kiwanis Club of Greece. We also gave a class to the Athena Middle School History Club on using source documents when researching a story.



CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS



During 2019, one board member, Bill Sauers, attended the Museum Association of New York's (MANY) annual conference. Board members also attended a class on the responsibilities of nonprofit board members conducted by board member and attorney Gregg Redmond. One member attended the Association of Public Historians of New York (APHNYS) annual conference. Greece Historical Society was also represented at a MANY meet-up at the

George Eastman Museum, a SUNY Geneseo Center for Local & Municipal History conference, and the Rochester Area Archives Fair.



In March, our volunteers had the privilege of a private tour of the Rochester Medical Museum & Archives. In November our group toured the Town of Greece Police Headquarters.



COLLECTIONS



This past year, in keeping with the Collection Management Policy, Greece Historical Society volunteers continued to organize the museum's collections, photographing and cataloguing them in our museum database using PastPerfect.

We have also been evaluating the clothing collection and have de-accessioned some items that are in poor condition, items that we cannot properly store, or items that do not meet our current mission. These items were either transferred to our education committee or donated to a local nonprofit costume exchange and are now being used in local theatrical productions.

Treasures from the Attic: Over the years many pieces of clothing have been donated to the museum. Because many of these items have not been part of exhibits, members don't know what treasures we have. This past year we have continued exhibiting one item of clothing each month so our visitors can enjoy our treasures.

COLLECTING & PRESERVING OUR HISTORY

During the past few years we have made a serious effort to only collect items and artifacts that meet our mission and for which we have adequate space or a proper way to store them. In 2019, we acquired a number of important artifacts that relate to the history of Greece, including a Skinner Family Bible, a photo album belonging to the Fleming family, cooper tools from the North Greece Cooper Shop, Longridge School memorabilia, and a collection of political items from the Preston family.



In addition we replaced some of the furniture in our dining room to better match the decor.

CONNECTING FAMILIES

Early this fall we had a visit from a family in Hudson, N.Y. The husband recently discovered he is related to the Allenson Britton family of Greece. We were able to add quite a bit of material about this pioneer family to his archive. They were visiting a cousin from Greece and we were also able to add several items to her Beaty family connection.

Soon after that visit, a lady from North Carolina visited us after we had corresponded several times in regard to her family having a summer cottage on the spit of land (actually a sandbar) jutting into Braddock Bay from the east shore. The sandbar has since washed away. A photo view she had plus one in our files show the family cottage with the Manitou Beach Trolley tracks immediately in front. Both photos are distant shots. She was unable to recognize the building in her photo until it was compared to our view. She allowed us to copy her photos, so we now have about 15 views of the family enjoying their summers at Braddock Bay along with several views of the family at their home in Rochester.

In conjunction with our exhibit on Prohibition (1919 – 1933), a grandson of the late owner of a roadhouse restaurant in Greece offered copies of his family photos and views of the restaurant from the 1920s until it closed in 1969. It never had a bar room until after Prohibition, but it was cited at least once for ignoring the Prohibition laws. Some of the photos and its history are in our exhibit.

In November, volunteer Marie Poinan had the opportunity to do a presentation at the Latta Family Annual Meeting in Niagara Falls, NY. Marie shared photos of the Latta-Meech house and the Kenmore Hotel at the corner of Lake/Latta Road and they let us copy a class photo of the old School No. 5 from the early 1920s.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Using some information from our Society and a follow-up from a property inventory initiated by preservation consultant and GHS member Gina DiBella and completed by Preservation Studios of Buffalo, one neighborhood in Greece, known as the KodaVista Neighborhood, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

RESEARCH

Maureen Whalen spent several months researching the Prohibition era in Greece and Charlotte using the information she gathered to create our newest exhibit, *Rumrunners, Speakeasies, and Bathtub Gin*.

Volunteers Joe Vitello and Judith Chefel have continued their research and cataloging of available information about Our Mother of Sorrows parish in anticipation of its 200th anniversary

SHARING INFORMATION

During 2019, the Greece Historical Society supplied requested photos and/or information to the *Democrat & Chronicle*, the Landmark Society of Western New York, and several freelance writers. In addition, we supplied information to help the Town of Greece Historian identify historic photographs. The Society also continues to provide free local history information to museum visitors and researchers.

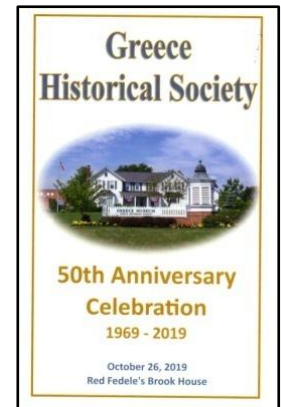
50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On November 23 we held a 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner; nearly 80 people attended. Including Monroe County Executive, Cheryl Dinolfo, Monroe County Clerk Adam Bello, NY State Senator Joe Robach, and NY State Historian Devin Lander who all took time from their busy schedules to attend our event and offer a few words of congratulations.



PUBLICATIONS

Although no major publication was published by the Society this year, we did produce a 50th Anniversary Celebration booklet which highlighted the history of the Greece Historical Society and our contributions to the community. The booklet was given out at our 50th anniversary dinner and copies were distributed to those who took out a paid ad. Extra copies are for sale in our museum shop.



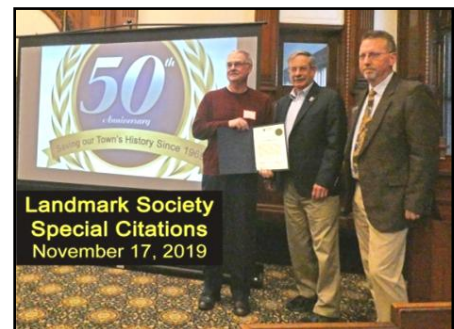
PUBLIC RECOGNITION



Proclamations - At our 50th anniversary dinner special proclamations were presented to the Greece Historical Society by New York State Senator Joe Robach and Monroe County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo.

Special Citation Awards - On November 17, the Greece Historical Society was honored to receive *two* special citations from the Landmark Society of Western New York at their annual awards ceremony held at Rochester's City Hall.

G.H.S. was presented a Special Citation for its role as sponsor of the Historic Resources Survey of The Architecture of James H. Johnson, along with preservation consultants Katie Eggers Comeau, Christopher Brandt, and Gina DiBella.

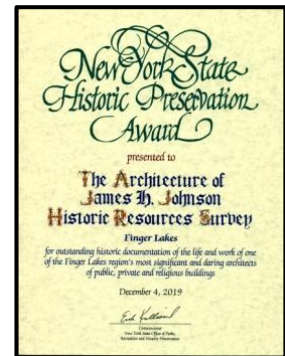


The Landmark Society Society also honored the Greece Historical Society with a Special Citation for its 50 years of supporting preservation initiatives and saving and preserving the history of the Town of Greece.



Arts & Culture Award - The Greece Regional Chamber of Commerce awarded the Greece Historical Society with its 2019 Arts & Cultural Award at their annual awards banquet in April.

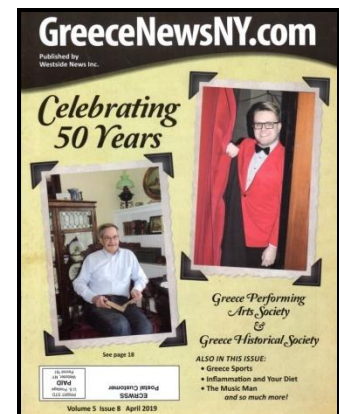
New York State Historic Preservation Award - On December 4, local preservationists Christopher Brandt and Katie Eggers Comeau of Bero Architecture PLLC and Gina DiBella and Bill Sauers of the Greece Historical Society were honored with a NYS Historic Preservation Award from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation for our work documenting the singular work of local architect James Johnson. The project documenting Johnson's career was organized and sponsored by the Greece Historical Society, and was funded by grants from the Preservation League of New York State, the Landmark Society of Western New York, and the Johnson family.



History Award - GHS volunteer Maureen Whalen was honored with the Greece Regional Chamber of Commerce's 2019 "History" award. This was the fifth History recognition award given to a G.H.S. member by the Greece Chamber in the past four years. Others recipients were, Alan Mueller in 2015, Marie Poinan, in 2016, Gina DiBella in 2017, and Bill Sauers 2018.

COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION

Public Media - The Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle*, the *Greece, Chili, Gates Post*, *City Newspaper*, and *GreeceNewsNY.com* magazine featured the Greece Historical Society in several articles, calendar items, and columns during the year. In June, the *GreeceNewsNY.com* magazine's April issue featured the Historical Society's 50th Anniversary. Unfortunately, local print news is becoming almost nonexistent and we are depending more and more on social media.





Society Newsletter - In 2019 the Greece Historical Society's newsletter "The Corinthian" was published monthly except for a combined July/August edition. Each issue, averaging eight pages, contained Society information, photographs about events and activities and a local history story. It was mailed to all the members and emailed to local elected officials and other historical societies. It is also available on our web site and distributed at the museum and at our monthly programs. For the fourth year, we have sold ad space to help defray the cost of this newsletter.

Social Media - We regularly add content to our Facebook page, which has over 975 “followers.” A monthly e-mail blast is sent to over 750 people, and we have an active web site: <http://www.greecehistoricalsociety.org>



BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Like any property, there is always something to fix, update or replace. Several projects this past year included a new water heater, repairs to and new paint for our front porch and the replacement of the porch railing. We replaced an outdoor flood light, installed new windows in our museum gift shop, and upgraded our outdated security system. Annual maintenance was also done on our HVAC system and we had our annual inspection of our fire extinguishers.



FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is a necessary part of every non-profit organization. Our income comes from fundraising events, membership dues, donations, an occasional grant, and sales in our museum shop. We receive no monetary funds from local government.

Strawberry Festival – Our annual Strawberry and Dessert Tasting Festival in June included five area vendors offering samples of their dessert products. Entertainment was also provided along with information displays from several local non-profit organizations, activities for children and a Chinese auction. Approximately 500 attended.



Pasta Dinners - We hosted a successful pasta dinner in 2019, attended by nearly 150 of our members, friends and neighbors.

Craft Sale - On November 23, the Greece Historical Society held a craft sale with 11 vendors selling their handmade crafts. Each vendor paid us a fee to display their wares. Approximately 100 people came and purchased goods from the vendors and our museum shop.



Museum Shop - Our museum gift shop continues to sell local history books and other items to museum visitors. This past year a large collection of "Snow Babies" were donated to us; we were able to sell them at a substantial profit.

A selection of our books is also offered for sale in the Friends of the Greece Public Library book store, "Second Hand Prose."

Donations - In 2019, we were pleased to receive a generous gift of \$500.00 from Canandaigua National Bank & Trust as part of its philanthropic giving plan for 2019. We also received several large personal donations and two large estate gifts. (*see Treasurer's Report*). With no government funding these donations are critical to our continued success.

Sale of Ad Space - For the fourth consecutive year, we have sold ad space in our newsletter, the "Corinthian" to help offset the cost of printing and we raised additional funds by selling ad space in our 50th anniversary booklet.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Society Revenue for 2019 was \$54,350, doubling the projected revenue for the year. Expenses were \$21,632, \$2,153 below the planned budget for the year. The reason for the large increase in revenue was twofold: we received two large bequests from estates of former members totaling \$25,500 and our special events were a financial success, netting the society almost \$6,228 profit.

With the unexpected revenue we took an opportunity to complete some needed capital improvements. The front porch columns and railing were replaced with vinyl coverings, making it more maintenance free. The original building security system failed in November and could not be repaired. It was replaced by a new one in early December. The windows in the gift shop, whose seals had failed, were also replaced. Finally, we replaced our computers with newer rebuilt machines and upgraded the software to Windows 10. The financial impact of these upgrades shows on the balance sheet with an increase of \$26,196 in bank accounts. An increase in fixed assets, after depreciation, of \$701 in physical assets, and an overall increase of total assets of \$26,898 over year-end 2018.

Thank You! - We depend on many volunteers to run our organization. Some may loan us a treasured heirloom, repair a broken light fixture, help with a single event, or guide visitors through our museum on Sunday afternoons. Still others of our loyal volunteers spend hundreds of hours during the year to keep the place going. With so many it is impossible to list everyone by name (especially with all the help we received in 2019), but be assured we truly appreciate all the great work they do for the Society.

The monthly newsletter, exhibits, events and projects each took many hours of volunteer time; the exhibit teams spent countless hours researching and installing new exhibits; our retired teachers from our education committee conducted many school and scout tours. Then there were our Sunday docents, the program presenters, the museum shop, finance, and marketing committees, the regular Monday morning group, and the people helping to photograph, scan and inventory our collections.

We also can't forget the **Lakeview** and **Shorewood** Garden Clubs who maintain our gardens, and the local businesses who sponsor our events and advertise in our newsletter.



Vital to any not-for-profit organization is the tireless dedication, energy and support of its volunteer board of trustees. Our nomination committee is always on the lookout to fill vacant positions with individuals interested in joining this dedicated team.

Thank you to our supporters from the business community, our volunteers, members, and friends for their continued commitment to preserving the past for the future!

2019 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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William M. Sauers
President

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