

GREECE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT





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By definition, a historical society is an organization dedicated to preserving, collecting, researching, and interpreting historical information or items. Unlike many other states, which recognize cultural agencies as nonprofit private businesses, New York State sees them as educational organizations. Chartered historical societies in New York are a significant part of our educational system, are incorporated under Education Law, are subject to the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York and have the recognition of being a member of the University of the State of New York.

The Greece Historical Society (GHS) 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 preserve, collect, 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
- Personal research for anyone asking

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 and moved by Wegmans to its present site 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 that opened in 1998, 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. As per the lease agreement, the Town continues to cut the grass and plow the driveway.



During normal (non-pandemic) times docent led tours of the museum are held Sunday afternoons from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. (March through December) 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 summary of the activities of the Greece Historical Society for 2020.

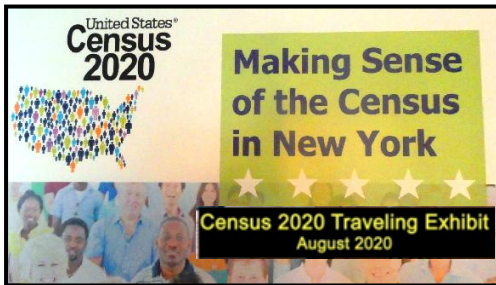
COVID 19 IMPACT

It goes without saying that the COVID 19 Pandemic had a major impact on our operation. We opened our museum to the public for the year on Sunday, March 1. On March 15 we closed our museum and cancelled our in-person programs. In order to keep our members engaged, we switched to on-line programming and like nearly every other organization we began to conduct our board meetings via Zoom. When we re-opened the museum on August 2, our attendance dropped nearly 75 percent.



We did solicit COVID-19 stories and photos throughout the year for the NYS Education Department's COVID 19 Personal History Initiative, but were disappointed in the response and only received about a dozen photographs depicting life during the shutdown.

EXHIBITS



With the museum closed and no group committee meetings for five months we did not create any new major exhibits. We did, however, host a "Census 2020" traveling exhibit for four weeks in August, courtesy of the Rochester Regional Library Council and we assembled two small displays: one of antique woodworking tools that were donated earlier this year and another about the old Greece Town Hall.

SOCIETY LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday Evening Lecture Series - Before the pandemic lockdown, which started in mid March, we had three in-person public Tuesday evening lectures with an average attendance of 70 guests. These monthly lectures were held at the Greece Public Library. Beginning in June, in order to keep our members engaged, we conducted our first Zoom program and continued Zoom presentations in September, October, and November. We did find that attendance at Zoom programs dropped considerably compared to in-person programs.

We would like to thank library director Cassie Guthrie and her staff, especially Cathy Henderson, for being so supportive and accommodating to our needs at the library and hosting our Zoom programs.



In House Programs - During normal times we would usually have at least six Sunday afternoon programs in our museum. Because we were unable to hold public meetings this year, beginning in April we uploaded to our website more than 20 past programs in hopes that our members and public could enjoy some of the programs they might have missed in the past.

In the fall we recorded two new programs, with a live audience of fewer than six people, then uploaded those programs to our website, allowing our members to feel more engaged and able to enjoy some new lectures.





Outdoor Program - On August 1, 2020, we conducted our first outdoor, socially distant program featuring a class on using archival materials. This gave our members the chance for an educational opportunity while socially interacting with others.

VISITORS

During 2020, approximately 100 visitors signed our museum guest book. We are sure that many of the visitors did not sign in, so it can be assumed that we had many more.

Because of the pandemic and the loss of school and group tours, in-house programs and events, our museum attendance was down 90%. We only hosted two very small group tours this past year: one small homeschooled family and a reduced-size group from the Friends & Fun group that meets at the Greece Community & Senior Center.



PUBLIC LECTURES, OUTREACH & PRESENTATIONS

Bill Sauers presented two local history programs to groups in January and in February and one via Zoom to the Henrietta Historical Society in October. Bill was also one of the featured speakers at the **Association of Public Historians of New York State** annual conference on September 21. Volunteer **Maureen Whalen** gave a presentation via Zoom on suffragist Jean Brooks Greenleaf to the Greece Regional Chamber of Commerce's Women's Interest Network in August. Board member, **Pam O'Sullivan** was one of four featured speakers at the **Rochester Archives Fair** on December 15. There were no presentations at schools this year due to COVID restrictions.

In February, Alan Mueller created a display at the Greece Public Library about Prohibition in Greece and Charlotte.



CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

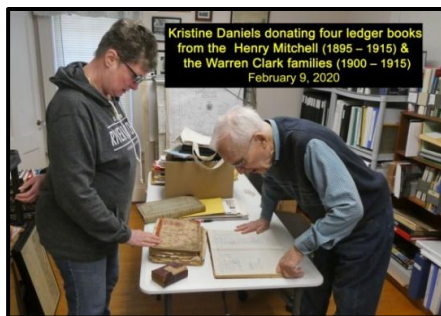
Registration and payment had already been made when the spring 2020 **Museum Association of New York** annual conference was cancelled. Our payment will be used for a future MANY conference. As the year progressed, several members of the Society attended numerous on-line conferences, workshops, and webinars. Two members were featured speakers at on-line conferences.

COLLECTING & DOCUMENTING OUR HISTORY

During the past few years we have made a serious effort to only collect items and artifacts that meet our mission of telling the story of Greece and for which we have adequate space or a proper way to store them.

In 2020, we acquired a number of important artifacts that relate to the history of Greece, including a photo album from an early farm family, the Flemings. Additionally we acquired farm ledgers from the Henry Mitchell and Warren Clark families and a pre-Civil War oil lamp and a vintage clock from the Howe family that were used in our house more than 50 years ago.

We also received several antique woodworking tools, some bricks from the old Town Hall, and three memorial plaques from former Greece Schools.



SHARING WITH OTHERS

Occasionally our Society acquires or is offered items that do not meet our mission or we are not able to care for. With storage space at a premium and keeping in mind the cost of caring for these items, we insist that any object or document we acquire will help to tell the story of Greece. This past year we coordinated finding the best "homes" for several items.

After being offered a memorial stone that had been located at their old location, GHS suggested to members of the now disbanded Greece Volunteer Ambulance (GVA) to work with the Town in relocating the GVA memorial stone to a more public area on the Town Campus. The Town agreed and the memorial stone will be placed at an appropriate location on the campus in the spring 2021.



This past spring, we were given a collection of 8mm movies produced by Eastman Kodak in the early 1930s for the home market. They were primarily cartoons, live comedies and travelogues, nothing to do with the Town of Greece. We donated them to ROC Archive a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit regional audiovisual education archive dedicated to collecting, preserving and providing access to an artistic and historical record across the region.

An old display case that was too large to store and no longer needed by the society was donated to the Town of Gates Historian.



PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS & NETWORKING

It is imperative that the Greece Historical Society maintains a working relationship with professional, educational and community organizations and other historians.

The following are the organizations that the Society is a member of: the Association for Public Historians of New York State, Greece Regional Chamber of Commerce, Landmark Society of Western New York, Museum Association of New York, and the Rochester Regional Library Council.

The Society also has a close relationship with: the Greece Central School District, the Greece Public Library, the NYS Historian, and the NYS Archival Partnership Trust along with other local historical societies, especially the Charlotte Genesee Lighthouse and the Hilton Parma Historical Society. Several GHS volunteers also meet regularly with local historians and are members of other historical and genealogical societies and professional organizations.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In the Town of Greece, Historic Preservation falls under the purview of the Town Planning Board. While not part of the Town of Greece government, GHS still continues to monitor local preservation issues. One of our volunteers has a master's degree in Historic Preservation and GHS is a member of the Landmark Society of Western New York.

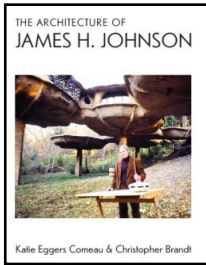


School No. 5 - In June, we were awarded a contract with the Greece Central School District to document the 90-year-old former Greece School No. 5, located at 1790 Latta Road, which was about to be demolished. Photo documentation and measurements were done in the summer and the project is expected to be completed next year. Additionally with the cooperation of the Greece Central School District, we were able to salvage some concrete decorative items, including one representing the "torch of knowledge," from that school building prior to its demolition. We plan to use them in an up-graded landscape project next year.



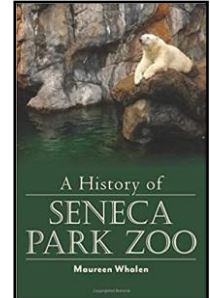
Greece Post Newspapers - In December GHS began the process of applying for a grant to have *Greece Post* newspapers (1967-2009) scanned and made available on <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>. This project involves coordinating with Gatehouse Media, the Rochester Regional Library Council, the Local History & Genealogy Division of the Rochester Public Library and the New York Historic Newspaper project. If the grant is awarded, this collection of newspapers will be preserved digitally and be easily available to anyone, free of charge, within a year.

HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS



In the spring of 2020, GHS received a \$2,000 grant from the Rochester Area Community Foundation's Historic Preservation, Restoration, and Literature Fund to support the printing copies of *The Architecture of James Johnson*, a historic resources survey sponsored by the GHS. The book should be printed and available for distribution in early 2021.

Although not published by GHS, one of our long-time volunteers, **Maureen Whalen**, wrote and published *A History of Seneca Park Zoo*. This is the first comprehensive history of Seneca Park Zoo in Rochester, New York. The book is for sale on Amazon and available for purchase in our museum gift shop.



RESEARCH PROJECTS



The Greece Historical Society was the recipient of two grants totaling \$30,000 to fund a Cultural Resource Survey of the architecture of Rochester's first African American architect, Thomas W. Boyde, Jr. A \$15,000 Preserve New York grant from the Preservation League and NYSCA and a \$15,000 Preserving Historical Assets Vitality Grant from the Rochester Area Community Foundation. This grant will enable the Greece Historical Society to hire a project team that includes: architectural historian Katie Eggers Comeau and architect Christopher Brandt from Bero Architecture PLLC;

independent historian and historic preservation consultant Jeffrey A. "Free" Harris from Hampton, Virginia; preservation consultant Gina M. DiBella of Greece; and research assistant Alexis Rivers, a 2020 graduate from SUNY Geneseo, to complete this survey. GHS is proud to support this unique project that will enhance appreciation for Boyde's work and the significance of his contributions to local architecture.

Volunteers at the Greece Historical Society have helped several individuals this past year with research involving individual history questions. Also with our network of other historians and organizations we have been able to assist others where to find their needed information.

COMMUNITY SERVICE



During the first weeks of the pandemic lock down (New York Pause) we realized that nearby community drop off points for the Greece Ecumenical Food Shelf, Inc. were unavailable. So the Greece Historical Society partnered with the Food Shelf and placed a donation box on the front porch of our museum. From April through November more than 2000 pounds of food was donated by our neighbors. It was our way of helping those in the community in need.

In late March we planned a Girl Scout cookie sale, Unfortunately that event was cancelled due to the pandemic lock down.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION



On July 22 the Rotary Club of Greece New York presented GHS President **Bill Sauers** with its "Community Person of the Year" award for his dedication to the Greece Historical Society and keeping the history of Greece alive.

EVENTS/CELEBRATIONS

On September 1, Monroe County Executive, **Adam Bello** conducted a dedication of a new Historical Marker at Genesee Valley Park commemorating a World War I airfield. Research was done by the Greece Historical Society in collaboration with the Local History & Genealogy Division of the Rochester Public Library. The event was shown on the local Spectrum cable news channel.



COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION

Public Media - Unfortunately, local print news is becoming almost nonexistent and we are depending more and more on social media. Although the local POST Newspaper, the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle did each featured a one-page story about our Thomas Boyde project and the Greece News magazine regularly publicizes our upcoming programs. Additionally the New York Archives magazine featured and sponsored our October Tuesday program.



Social Media - We regularly add content to our Facebook page, which has over 1090 "followers." A monthly email blast is sent to over 850 people, and we have an active website: <http://www.greecehistoricalsociety.org>.



Society Newsletter - In 2020 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 courtesy copies were emailed to local elected officials and other historical societies. It is also available on our web site and distributed at the museum.

BUILDING & PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Like any property, there is always something to fix, update, or replace. Projects this past year included the rebuilding of our back deck, painting the front porch floor, the replacement of a basement window, cleaning out our basement and the continued upkeep our gardens. 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.

Because of COVID restrictions, we were unable to hold our annual Strawberry festival fundraiser and two pasta dinners.

Craft Sale - On November 21, the Greece Historical Society did host a scaled down version of our annual craft sale with 7 vendors selling their handmade crafts. Each vendor paid us a fee to display their wares. Approximately 75 people came during a six hour period and purchased goods from the vendors and our museum shop. COVID restrictions were in place requiring everyone to sign in and there was plenty of hand sanitizer, plastic gloves, and wipes available



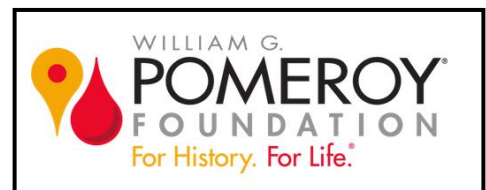


Museum Shop - Our museum gift shop continues to sell local history books and other items to museum visitors. Because of limited public access to our museum shop this year, we held an outside book sale in July and participated in the Greece Kiwanis Club vendor sale in August.

A selection of our books was also offered for sale in the Friends of the Greece Public Library book store, "Second Hand Prose." That store was closed for nearly half the year because of COVID restrictions and now because of the large volume of donations they do not have room for our books. Hopefully they begin selling our books again in the near future.



Pomeroy Grant - In June the Greece Historical Society received a \$1,000 unrestricted grant to help fund our operating expenses during the COVID lock down.



Roc the Day - On December 1, GHS participated in "Roc the Day," Rochester's United Way "Giving Tuesday," event. We received over \$300 in donations.

Sale of Ad Space - For the fifth consecutive year, we have sold ad space in our newsletter, the "*Corinthian*" to help offset the cost of printing while illustrating community support for the Greece Historical Society from local businesses



TREASURER'S REPORT

The Greece Historical Society faced the same challenges from covid-19 that any home owner or small business did. All the things said in the news about continuing operations for them apply to the society. The gift shop was closed except for internet sales for a majority of the year. While we are certainly not Amazon, our internet sales reflected the same trend of increased internet sales. In 2019 the internet represented 15% of our sales, in 2020 30% of our sales. Over all gift shop sales were only 56% of 2019. We held one out door book sale in July and attended one craft sale event to sell our merchandise. The Friends of the Greece Library, usually a source of 20% of our sales, was closed almost all year.

As noted elsewhere in this report, we received funds for several special studies. While this sounds great, none of that money can be used of operational support of the society. It is all restricted to be used only on those studies (the Johnson Study book publishing, and the Thomas Boyde study).

We did start the School #5 study which brought in some funds that were not expected, and the William Pomeroy foundation grant for \$1,000 helped. Over all our operational revenue was only 73% of forecast. Membership and donations matched 2019 so that carried us through the year. We attempted to cut expenses, and spent only 76% of budget. So the results for 2020, excluding the special study funds, were revenue of \$16,667, and expenses of \$17,398, a loss of \$731 on the year.

A statement of financial position and/or budget summery for 2020 is available to our members on request.

Thank You! - We depend on many volunteers to run our organization. Some may loan or donate to us a treasured heirloom, repair a broken light fixture, help with a single event, conduct research 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, but be assured we truly appreciate all the great work they do for the Society.

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 nominating 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 your continued commitment to preserving the past for the future! With your support, the Greece Historical Society will continue to seek innovative ways to preserve and share the history of our town.

If you are not a member of the Greece Historical Society, we encourage you to join and help support our organization. Membership information is available on our website at <http://greecehistoricalsociety.org/join-us/membership/>

2020 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Gregg Redmond, Esq.
Pam O'Sullivan
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Deborah Whitt
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A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "William M. Sauers", is written over a horizontal line.

William M. Sauers
President

This 2020 Annual Report was published January 21, 2021