

GREECE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2021 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 like the Greece Historical Society 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.

With the retirement of the Town Historian Virginia Tomkiewicz in 1995 the Town of Greece contracted with the Greece Historical Society to provide the space and services of the Town Historian. In 2016 the contract ended and the Town Historian's office was moved to the Greece Public Library.

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.

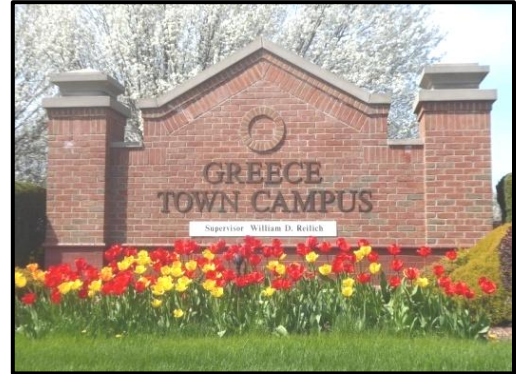
To accomplish its purpose the Society offers:

- 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
- GHS publications on various local topics
- a museum shop selling a variety of local history books and items
- Personal research for anyone asking for help.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, the Greece Historical Society shared space with the Town of Greece Historian in a Town-owned house on English Road. 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 circa 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 many recreational amenities.

The house, which is owned and maintained by the Society, contains the Society's administrative offices, research library, museum shop, and an exhibit hall wing that opened in 1998. 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.



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, lectures and programs are held throughout the year.

The following is a summary of the activities of the Greece Historical Society for 2021.

COVID 19 IMPACT

It goes without saying that the COVID Pandemic had a major impact on our operation. Although opened on our regularly scheduled Sunday afternoons, attendance was considerably lower than years past. We continued our board meetings via Zoom throughout the year. Our Tuesday evening lectures were also on Zoom until we held our first indoor, in-person program in September. Our major fundraiser, a June strawberry festival, was cancelled for the second year in a row.



MUSEUM VISITORS



During 2021, approximately 400 visitors signed our museum guest book. (about half of pre-COVID numbers) We are sure that many of the visitors did not sign in, so it can be assumed that we had many more.

We did welcome a few school groups, a group from the Town's Community Center, a retiree club, a group of retired teachers, and a group of volunteers from local historical societies.

EXHIBITS



In the spring we created a display on the former village of Charlotte and a display on wood working tools. In October we opened an exhibit on the history of Greece Olympia (the first high school in Greece). The exhibit opening was attended by several state and local dignitaries.

SOCIETY LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday Evening Lecture Series - Our first five Tuesday evening lecture/programs in 2021 were held via Zoom and most of the programs were recorded and uploaded to our website. Starting in September we went back to in-person programs, restricting attendance size and requiring reservations.

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 throughout the year in our museum. Because our facility is too small for a large group to maintain social distancing, we were unable to hold public meetings this year.

During 2021, we recorded two 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 June 19, we conducted an outdoor, socially distant program featuring a class on the history of the flower industry in Western New York. This gave our members the chance for an educational opportunity while socially interacting with others.

PUBLIC LECTURES, OUTREACH & PRESENTATIONS

In September **Bill Sauers** presented a program to the Kiwanis Club of Greece sharing what our historical society accomplished in 2020 despite the challenges brought on by COVID. He also presented programs to the Henrietta Historical Society, a Kodak retiree club and the Daughters of the American Revolution. **Marie Poinan** and **JoAnn Snyder** presented programs on researching one's family genealogy and on the process of writing the book *Pioneer Families of the Town of Greece*. **Maureen Whalen**, on behalf of the Charlotte Genesee Lighthouse, gave a tour of the Charlotte Cemetery. In October, **Alan Mueller** created a display about Halloween at the Greece Public Library.



CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

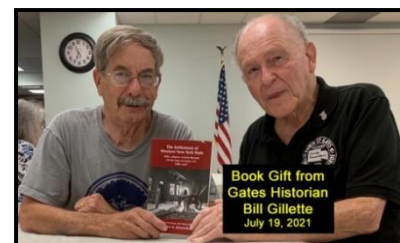
Registration and payment had already been made when the spring 2020 **Museum Association of New York** annual conference was cancelled. Our payment will be used for a future MANY conference. During 2021, several members of the Society attended numerous on-line conferences, workshops, and webinars, including the 6th Annual Rochester Archives Fair. We also participated in several Zoom meetings with the County Historian, appointed historians, an informal group of area historians, and hosted a newly formed group of western Monroe County historical society volunteers.



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.

Thanks to Battalion Chief **Brian Gebo** of the Ridge Road Fire District, we were able to acquire a few items from the now disbanded Greece Grange. Town of Gates historian **Bill Gillette** donated a book on notes of early Gates and Greece. Thanks to the efforts of **Marie Poinan** and **Jo Ann Ward Snyder** we were able to collect many photos and stories of pioneer families of Greece which resulted in the publication of a book.



SHARING WITH OTHERS



Occasionally our Society acquires or is offered items that do not meet our mission or that we cannot properly 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 a number of items.

In 2021 we donated an original Ogden Grange charter to the Ogden Historical Society and turned over some Town of Parma documents to the Parma historian. Those items had not been accessioned. We also transferred a print of former County Executive Gordon Howe to the Local History & Genealogy Division of the Rochester Public Library.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS & NETWORKING

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

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. We recently became associated with a group composed of leaders from Western Monroe County historical societies.

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.



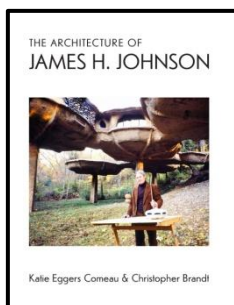
Salvaged Concrete Motif This past year the Greece Central School District gave us a concrete motif that had been salvaged from a 90-year-old school building that was recently demolished. That motif has been securely mounted outside our museum and was cleaned by a volunteer cemetery stone restoration expert.

Greece Post Newspapers In the spring the Greece Historical Society secured a \$10,900 technology grant and an additional grant in December of \$1,698 from the **Rochester Regional Library Council** to digitize a collection of *Greece Post* newspapers (1967-2009) that is owned by the Rochester Public Library. This project involved coordinating with Gatehouse Media, Gannett Corporation, the Rochester Regional Library Council, the Northern New York Library Network, the Local History & Genealogy Division of the Rochester Public Library, and the New York Historic Newspaper project. With the grants this collection of newspapers will be preserved digitally and be easily available to anyone, free of charge on <https://www.newspapers.com/>. The project is expected to be completed in 2022.



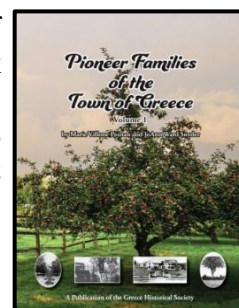
PUBLICATIONS

The Greece Historical Society published two books in 2021,



The Architecture of James H. Johnson - A \$2,000 grant from the Rochester Area Community Foundation's Historic Preservation, Restoration, and Literature Fund in 2020 allowed us this year to publish and print copies of *The Architecture of James Johnson*, a historic resources survey sponsored by the GHS and completed in 2018. Several copies were donated to the original project funders, the Johnson family, and several university libraries. The book has received both NY State and national recognition.

Pioneer Families of the Town of Greece - In celebration of the Bicentennial of the Town of Greece in 2022, the Greece Historical Society published a 150 page book honoring 40 families who settled in the area before 1872. This new book contains vignettes and photos that highlight each family's contribution to the town and was written by volunteers **Marie Villone Poinan** and **Jo Ann Ward Snyder** with input from descendants of each of these families. The book is for sale in our museum shop and on Amazon.



RESEARCH PROJECTS



In 2020 the Greece Historical Society was the recipient of two grants totaling \$30,000 to fund a Cultural Resource Survey of Rochester's first African American architect, **Thomas W. Boyde, Jr.** The grants enabled the Greece Historical Society to hire a professional project team to complete the survey. Due to COVID restrictions in 2020 and 2021, this project was extended through 2021 and is expected to be completed in 2022. 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.

During 2021 volunteers; **Joe Vitello**, **Tina Gouveia** and **Alan Mueller** began a quest to gain more material and information about past Greece supervisors. With information gleaned from cemeteries, libraries, historian's files, newspapers, Ancestry.com. etc. we now have a more complete inventory and a large collection of images of nearly 50 supervisors from the past 200 years. This inventory is now available in our library and will be part of a display in our museum in 2022 celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Town of Greece.

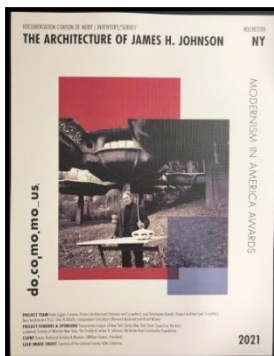


John Marshall Lowden
Town Supervisor
1888-89

Volunteers at the Greece Historical Society helped several individuals this past year with research involving individual history questions. We were able to supply NYS Assemblywoman **Jen Lunsford** with needed documentation for a project she is working on. With our network of other historians and organizations we were able to assist others in finding the information they needed that was outside the Greece area.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION

The Architecture of James H. Johnson, a historic resource survey and subsequent book sponsored by the Greece Historical Society about the life and work of Rochester architect James H. Johnson (1932-1916) received an Inventory/Survey Citation of Merit at the **Docomomo US** awards ceremony in New York City on November 11. Project team members **Christopher Brandt**, **Katie Eggers Comeau** and **Gina DiBella** accepted the award.



Docomomo US is a national organization dedicated to the preservation of modern architecture, landscape, and design. The Modernism in America Awards is the only national program that celebrates the people and projects working to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate our modern heritage sensitively and productively.

The Modernism in America Award is the third award for *The Architecture of James H. Johnson* survey. In 2019, prior to it being published in book format, it received the New York State Historic Preservation Award for Excellence in Historic Documentation from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and a Special Citation Preservation Award from The Landmark Society of Western New York.

EVENTS/CELEBRATIONS

On October 24 our new Greece Olympia exhibit opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Greece Olympia Principal **Marc Fleming** cut the ribbon and was joined by GHS Volunteer **Kathy Firkins**, New York Senator **Jeremy Cooney**, and Greece Central School District Superintendent **Kathleen Graupman**.



COMMUNITY SERVICE



As with many organizations COVID restrictions prevented us from doing many group projects in 2021. Although in April we did host an outdoor Girl Scout Cookie Sale.

COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION

Public Media - Unfortunately, local print news is becoming almost nonexistent and we depend more and more on social media. Although the local *POST** Newspaper, and the Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle* did feature our events a few times, and a local monthly magazine the *Greece News* regularly featured GHS stories and our programs.

*The *POST* newspaper ceased publication on October 28, 2021.



Social Media - We regularly add content to our Facebook page, which has over 1,300 “followers.” A monthly email blast is sent to over 850 people. We also have an active website: which includes current news, a calendar of events, an archive of past newsletters, historical articles and a collection of videos of past programs <http://www.greecehistoricalsociety.org>.

Society Newsletter - In 2021 the Greece Historical Society's newsletter *The Corinthian* was published monthly except for a combined July/August edition. Each issue, with 6 to 8 pages, contained society information, photographs about events and activities, and a local history story. It was mailed to all members and courtesy copies were emailed to local elected officials and other historical societies. It is also available on our website 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 new LED lighting for our outdoor sign, a landscaping project in front of our building, cleaning out some shrubbery in the back yard, and a massive tree trimming project by the Town DPW. Annual maintenance was also done on our HVAC system which included installing new thermostats and we had an annual inspection of our fire extinguishers.



In March we had an energy audit funded by NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.) The contractor was L&S Energy Services, Clifton Park, NY. A complete report was issued giving us energy savings recommendations. Over time we will be following through with many of the recommendations.

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 the Town of Greece.

Because of COVID restrictions, we were unable to hold our annual Strawberry festival fundraiser and a spring pasta dinner. However, we held a Bill Gray's restaurant fundraiser and were able to hold one pasta dinner in October. Unfortunately, an on-line popcorn sale fundraiser had to be cancelled due to technical scheduling problems.

Craft Sale - On November 20, the Greece Historical Society did host a scaled down version of our annual craft sale with 10 vendors selling their handmade crafts. Each vendor paid us a fee to display their wares. Approximately 90 people came during a five-hour period and purchased goods from the vendors and our museum shop. Modified COVID restrictions were in place.



Pasta Dinner - On October 17 we held our first Pasta Dinner fundraiser since April 2019, at the Barnard Restaurant and Party House. Nearly 100 of our friends and neighbors enjoyed the evening.

Museum Shop - Our museum gift shop continues to sell local history books and other items to museum visitors. A selection of our books was also offered for sale on our website and in the Friends of the Greece Public Library book store, "Second Hand Prose."



Donations - GHS received a large amount of memorial donations in 2021 and a \$500 gift from Canandaigua National Bank & Trust as part of their community giving program



Roc the Day - On November 30, GHS participated in "Roc the Day," Rochester's United Way "Giving Tuesday," event. We received \$200 in donations.

State Grant- In December the Greece Historical Society received a \$5,000 grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The grant was secured by NYS Senator **Jeremy Cooney**. It will be used to purchase a new computer server and upgrade other IT equipment at our historic center. Thank you to Senator Cooney for reaching out to us and appreciating the importance of the Greece Historical Society to our community.

Sale of Ad Space - For the sixth 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.

BICENTENNIAL

In anticipation of the Town of Greece celebrating it's 200th birthday, GHS formed a committee to develop projects that would not only help celebrate the Town's Bicentennial, but also make our town's citizens aware of it's history.

In December we published the first of a two volume set of books on the *Pioneer Families of the Town of Greece*. Work is progressing on a childrens coloring book featuring buildings in Greece. A local cemetery tour is scheduled for next summer. We plan to post periodic history spots on our website and Facebook page and a PowerPoint program on the history of the Town is planned.

We also developed a Bicentennial logo that we will use throughout 2022. (As stated earlier, we are not part of the Town government and therefore cannot use the logo developed by the Town that will be used only for official programs and publications.)



TOM SAWNOR

This past year we were saddened to report that Greece Historical Society trustee and vice-president Tom "TJ" Sawnor passed away on August 22, 2021.

Tom, who joined the GHS board in 2014, was always ready to give a hand with many projects and acted as a docent on Sunday afternoons. In 2015 he presented a program titled "Biography of a Neighborhood," a history of mansion row on Lake Avenue of old.



He wrote several stories for our Corinthian newsletter about local sports figures and later, curated an exhibit on local sports athletes. With the help of Marie Poinan, he wrote and published a book in conjunction with the exhibit, *Hometown Sports Heroes of Greece, NY*. This past year he helped write and edit our recently adopted sexual harassment policy.

Tom was a wealth of knowledge and a delight to be around, as well as being such an asset to the Society. He was always willing to help whenever the occasion arose. We will miss Tom.

TREASURER'S REPORT 2021

Operations of the Greece Historical Society opened up this year. We held our first pasta dinner fund raiser in two years, held the annual craft show in November, and made preparations for the 200th anniversary of Greece in 2022. Donations and membership revenue exceeded expectations and the gift shop sold \$2,000 worth of *The Architecture of James H. Johnson* and \$1,500 of the *Pioneer Families of the Town of Greece* books. We also received a \$5000 New York State grant to upgrade our computers. All of which resulted in revenue to the society of \$33,000, 38% above expectations. Expenses for 2021 were \$49,800. The principal reasons for this difference were the \$19,000 spent on the Boyde Study, \$2,400 for the completion of the Johnson study, and \$1,300 for landscaping and cupola electric repair. The funds for these special projects were received in 2016 through 2021 and were reserved for those projects. The funds were withdrawn from our restricted funds account, where the funds had been held. The restricted account was drawn down by \$19,800 this year.

A statement of financial position and/or budget summary for 2021 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. 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.



Volunteer of the Year - It is our tradition each year to recognize one special volunteer. At our holiday open house on December 19, we presented **Faye Cole** with the **2021 Volunteer of the Year** award. Faye has been a member of GHS for almost 25 years. Not only is she a faithful Sunday docent but she is always ready to help with school tours, strawberry festival, craft show and any other event we have. She also does the shopping needed to keep the house equipped with essential paper products, hand soap, cleaning supplies, etc. She also takes over the scheduling of Docents during the winter months.

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



Thank you to our supporters from the business community, our volunteers, our members, and our elected officials who encourage us, and to all our friends for your continued commitment to preserving the past for the future! Whether it is through programs, exhibits, collections, or online content we tell Greece's stories. To keep sharing these stories we rely heavily on the support from community members like you. 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 your town's historical society. Membership information is available on our website at <http://greecehistoricalsociety.org/join-us/membership/>

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.

2021 GHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William M. Sauers (*President*)
Tom Sawnor (*Vice President*) *Deceased*
Gretchen Kozlowski (*Secretary*)
Bill Peeck (*Treasurer*)
Cynthia Shevlin (*Newsletter Editor*)
Paula Smith
Ruth Curchoe
Dave Richardson
Gregg Redmond, Esq.
Pam O'Sullivan
Sandy Peck
Deborah Whitt
Donald C. Newcomb (*Honorary Trustee*)



William M. Sauers
President

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