

# **GREECE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**







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## **GREECE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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 are recognized as 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.

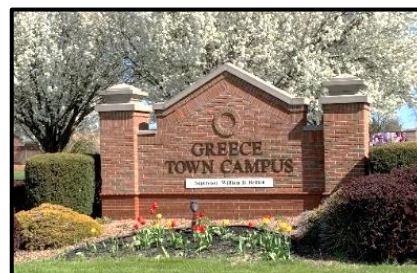
The all-volunteer Society's purpose is to preserve, collect, research, and share local history with the community. Concerned and interested community volunteers of various backgrounds and education lend their talents to govern the organization as the Board of Trustees. We strive to provide the community 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:

- a historic house and museum with rotating exhibits
- print and digital articles and publications about local history
- public programs and special events
- docent led tours of our museum
- a reference library at our History Center
- presentations on various history subjects, sites, and architecture
- a museum shop with a selection of local history books and items
- help with personal research
- a website and Facebook page

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 farmhouse was restored by the Society and sits on a 1.25-acre (300'x182') 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, Police Headquarters, and many recreational amenities including an enlarged Community Center, now called "The Center at Greece Town Hall."



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. For the past two years the Town has taken over the driveway and parking lot for use as a staging and parking area for the construction of the expansion of the Center. When the project is completed, the town has promised the construction of a new driveway and parking lot.

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 2023.**

## **MUSEUM VISITORS**

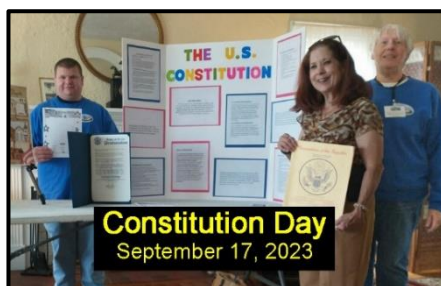
During 2023, approximately 300 visitors signed our museum guest book. We are sure that many of the visitors did not sign in, so it can be assumed that we had many more. Due to an adjacent town construction project our parking lot was either inaccessible or covered with mud, for most of the year. Although visitors could park on our lawn, we are sure attendance was affected because of that parking situation. We did however, welcome a few school groups, including retired teachers, the Athena Middle School History Club, and several descendants of pioneer families.





## EXHIBITS

In addition to the permanent and changing exhibits in our museum exhibit hall, we featured a one-day exhibit of ceramics by an RIT student and a Constitution Day special exhibit. We featured two fourth grade student-made quilts from 1975 and '76, and an exhibit on Paddy Hill School, a school first established in 1839. In November, a new exhibit was created titled "Treasures from the Attic."



## SOCIETY LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

Our eight monthly Tuesday evening lectures featured local historians, authors, and humanities scholars. Our presentations have again proven to be very popular with the community. During 2023 we averaged over 50 guests per program, although our September program was attended by more than 170 people. Our programs provide high quality, professional, and entertaining history lessons. The monthly lectures were held at the Greece Public Library until September when we moved to a Greece Central School District building. We would like to thank the Library Director, **Catherine Henderson**, and GCSD Superintendent **Kathleen Graupman** for being so supportive and accommodating of our needs.

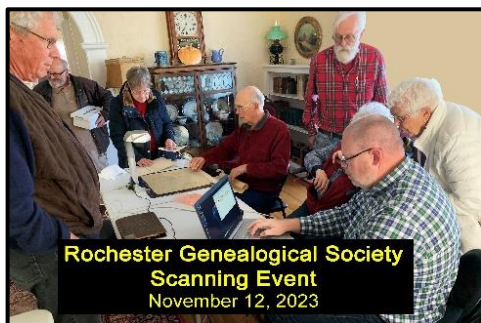
Our annual meeting was held at Paddy Hill Elementary School followed by a tour of the school.

We also conducted three Sunday afternoon programs at our museum: "Discovering "Exile" McBride," and "A Virtual Tour of Greece."



## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

In June, a Mother of Sorrows Cemetery tour was organized and conducted by volunteer **Maureen Whalen**. More than 50 attended the tour.



In November, we hosted a free scanning event conducted by volunteers from **Rochester Genealogical Society**. They used a new ScanSnap SV600 Scanner and Vivid-Pix Restore Imaging software. Visitors could also learn about the programs and offerings available through RGS. **Archival Methods**, a Rochester-based manufacturer and supplier of archival storage supplies, was also there to give advice on storing precious memories.

## **PUBLIC LECTURES, OUTREACH & PRESENTATIONS**

There were several programs presented by our volunteers in 2023, including presentations at: Honeoye Falls-Town of Mendon Historical Society, Kiwanis Club of Greece, Parma Hilton Historical Society, Parma Senior Center, Daughters of the American Revolution, Northwest AARP, Charlotte Public Library, Village at Unity, St John Meadows, and the Ogden Senior Center. We also had an information table at a community family event held at a local high school.



## **CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS**



In 2023, volunteers of GHS attended a Museum Association of New York (MANY) conference held in Syracuse, an APHNYS, Region 11 meeting, a MANY Finger Lakes Meet Up, a Rochester Genealogical Society annual daylong session, and training on gravestone mending given by Hilton-Parma Historical Society. In addition, several of our volunteers participated in webinars offered by the Rochester Public Library, the New York State Archives, the New York City Department of Records and Information Services/Municipal Archives, and digpodcast.

Conferences, seminars, and workshops like these are a good chance for the Greece Historical Society to learn from and network with other museums, historians, and historical societies.

## TOWN OF GREECE BICENTENNIAL



To celebrate the Bicentennial of the Town of Greece, beginning in March 2022 and concluding in March 2023, GHS produced 54 weekly multimedia podcasts called “Bicentennial Snapshots.” Each Snapshot gave a brief look at a particular aspect of Greece history. Over the course of 12 months, we covered people and events that comprise the vibrant history of Greece from its earliest days to the present.

These Bicentennial Snapshots were researched, written, and narrated by GHS volunteer **Maureen Whalen** and assembled and produced by **Pat Worboys**, another GHS volunteer. Many other volunteers contributed ideas, information, and photographs. Although these Snapshots are available on our website, they are also available for purchase on DVDs.

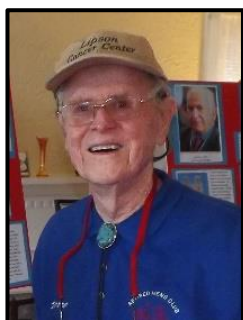
Our GHS Bicentennial logo\* was used on stationery through March of this year, as well as on tee shirts and other items and was on our Facebook page. It was also prominently displayed on the front of our building until the end of March.



*\* As stated earlier, we are not part of the Town government and therefore did not have permission to use the bicentennial logo developed by the Town that was used solely for official Town programs and publications.*

## SCHOLARSHIP

In November 2023, the Greece Historical Society announced a \$2,000.00 scholarship in memory of **Warren C. Crandell**, who left a portion of his estate to GHS. It will go to a graduating high school senior from the Town of Greece who plans to further their education as a history or history education major or minor at a two or four-year college or university. The winner of the scholarship will be announced in Spring 2024.



Warren was a World War II Navy veteran and a retired high school teacher. He was an enthusiastic amateur historian and attended many programs at the Greece Historical Society. He passed away in 2021 at age 95. The bequest he left to the Greece Historical Society will be used to honor his memory by paying it forward to graduating seniors who show the same enthusiasm he had for learning.



## 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. A few new acquisitions included:

- A large collection of Holland Miller Town photos from Don Riley
- An 1800s wine jug belonging to local wine maker JP Fetzner
- Scrapbook from the Fleming family
- A collection of diaries from the Losey family
- A school hand bell from school No. 17
- Two Student made quilts from the 1970s
- A Paddy Hill School tee shirt

**Marie Poinan** and **Jo Ann Ward Snyder** continue to collect information and documentation for an upcoming volume 2 of *Pioneer Families of the Town of Greece*, while others continue to document contemporary and/or photograph buildings and events.

**COLLECTION MANAGEMENT** This past year we have made an extensive effort to re-organize our collection of artifacts. In December a new collection management committee, chaired by **Deborah Cole Myers**, was formed with the purpose of updating our collection policy, and oversee acquisitions, and care of the collection. This committee will continue its objectives in 2024.



## 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.

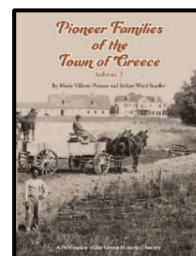
In 2023 we transferred several items from our collection that were duplicates or had no connection to the Town of Greece to the Irondequoit Historical Society, Parma Hilton Historical Society, the Rochester City Historian, the Charlotte Genesee-Lighthouse, and an Athenia High School theatrical group.

Other items that we have collected and accessioned over the years that we determined no longer fit our mission, were duplicates, or were in poor condition beyond repair were de-accessioned.



## PUBLICATIONS

Work continues on volume 2 of *Pioneer Families of the Town of Greece*, with an anticipated publication in the Spring of 2024. This new book will contain vignettes and photos that highlight each family's contribution to the town and is written by volunteers **Marie Villone Poinan** and **Jo Ann Ward Snyder** with input from descendants of each of these families.



## 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 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 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.

**Greece Post Newspapers:** A several-year project to digitize and upload a collection of *Greece Post* newspapers (1967-2009) to New York State Historical Newspapers has been completed.

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. This collection of a local newspaper has been preserved digitally and is now easily available to anyone, free of charge, on <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org>.



## RESEARCH PROJECTS



In the fall of 2020, the Greece Historical Society contracted with Bero Architecture to conduct a Cultural Resource Survey of the work of Thomas W. Boyde, Jr., Rochester's first African American architect. Initially funded through grants from the Preservation League of New York State/New York Council on the Arts and the Rochester Area Community Foundation, the Greece Historical Society provided additional funds.

The project continues to expand and grow beyond its original scope. The project team uncovered hundreds of additional projects designed by Boyde and integrated this new-found information into their inventory and evaluation of Boyde's work. They hoped to gain access to even more drawings and materials, but after several unsuccessful attempts, concluded it wouldn't be possible at this time.

In terms of the context of Boyde's work, the team is examining his career in relation to some of the most significant figures in early to mid-20th century African American architecture. Research has uncovered that Boyde was mentored by some of the key luminaries in architecture of his time.

The publicity this project has received has led to inquiries from researchers outside our region including Syracuse and Princeton universities, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In February, the Syracuse University School of Architecture and student chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects held a series of events, including a two-day symposium with a presentation by the project team and month-long exhibit on Boyde's career, based on information gathered for the project.



While continuing their research, the team gave three additional presentations on Boyde's life and work around the Rochester community in 2023. They look forward to completing the survey in 2024.

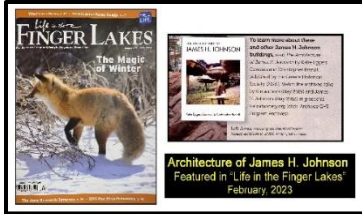
Extensive research was also conducted in creating the weekly *Bicentennial Snapshots* and in preparation of the book *Pioneer Families of the Town of Greece, Volume 2*. Additionally, volunteers at the Greece Historical Society helped several individuals this past year with research involving individual history questions. 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

We are proud and honored that on September 19, GHS Volunteer **Marie Poinan** was awarded the Association of Public Historians of New York (APHNYS) **Excellence in Promoting Local History** citing "the promotion of local history through research, writing, and other related accomplishments."



*The Association of Public Historians of New York State is the professional organization that represents the 1,600+ government-appointed historians in the State.*



In February, *Life in the Finger Lakes* Magazine highlighted our book *The Architecture of James H. Johnson* that we published in 2019.

New York State Senator **Jeremy Cooney** used our Greece Museum on the cover of a promotional brochure highlighting his support for the Town of Greece.



## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**



In March, we hosted an outdoor Girl Scout cookie sale. We also gave them the opportunity to sell drinks and cookies at our annual strawberry festival. Our strawberry festival also invited community groups to set up information tables. The groups included: Honor Flight, Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, Veterans Outreach Center, Kiwanis Club of Greece, Charlotte Genesee-Lighthouse, Greece Ecumenical Food Shelf & Clothing Closet, the Greece Public Library, and GRASP.

## **COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION**

**Public Media** - Unfortunately, local print news has become almost nonexistent, and we depend more and more on social media. One local monthly magazine, the *Greece News*, regularly features stories about GHS and our programs.



**Social Media** - We regularly add content to our Facebook page, which has more than 1,645 “followers.” A monthly email blast is sent to over 800 individuals and organizations. Greece Historical Society also has 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 2023, 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. In 2023, besides general maintenance, we had a new outdoor light fixture installed, our furnace and AC checked, had our fire extinguishers inspected, and replaced a toilet.



## **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.

**Annual Strawberry Festival** - Because of adjacent Town construction in close proximity to our leased area, the town offered us the use of the pavilion on the town campus for the second year. The event was a huge success with over 500 attending.



**Bicentennial Items Available Online** - In March 2022 we contracted with a local on-line merchandise vendor to sell and print, on-demand, various products with the GHS bicentennial logo celebrating our Town's Bicentennial. These items are available only online; we do not carry them in our museum gift shop. This initiative has been marginally successful and will continue for several more months.

**Pasta Dinner** – For the past several years we have held two Pasta Dinner fundraisers each year at the Barnard Restaurant and Party House. With their closing and no other place available that could accommodate us, we cancelled this event until we find a new venue.

**Craft Sale** - On November 19, the Greece Historical Society hosted our sixth annual craft sale with 8 vendors selling their handmade crafts. Each vendor paid us a fee to display their wares. Approximately 60 people came during a five-hour period 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. A selection of our books is also offered for sale on our website.

**Sale of Ad Space** - For the eighth 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.

**Roc the Day** - On November 28, GHS participated in "Roc the Day," Rochester's United Way "Giving Tuesday," event.



## **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: Dave Seibert**



During the volunteer holiday open house on December 17, volunteer **Dave Seibert** was awarded our 2023 Volunteer of the Year. Dave is a graduate of SUNY Brockport, with a degree in Anthropology and a minor in Museum Studies. He has been volunteering with us for about 3 years. He stopped in one day to see how he could help us. As usual we had many opportunities for him. His first interest was to be a docent on Sunday afternoons. He was immediately trained and in no time, he became a permanent docent. He is always willing to help out if needed at the last minute. He also offered his services for many of our other activities, such as our pasta dinners, the Strawberry Festival, and the annual craft sale. He is a valued member of our staff.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT 2023**

We had a reasonably good year financially. Revenue for 2023 was \$18,549 and expenses were \$21,474 excluding depreciation, endowment fund result, and capital improvements. This results in a net drawdown of our reserve account of \$2,925. Overall, including everything (depreciation, endowment fund result and capital improvements) our net income was \$17,659 due to a good year for the endowment account. The society held only two fund-raising events, netting \$5,190 after expenses. The number of events was down due to Barnard's Exempt closing as a catering service, eliminating our pasta dinner fund raisers. Work on the Boyde Study continued in 2023 and is expected to be completed next year.

A statement of financial position and/or expense/budget summary for 2023 is available to our members on request to the treasurer at email [greecehistoricalsociety@yahoo.com](mailto:greecehistoricalsociety@yahoo.com).

**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.



We also can't forget the **Lakeview** Garden Club, who maintain some of 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, the 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 publications, programs, exhibits, or online content, we strive to tell the story of our Town of Greece. 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.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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.

### **2023 Board of Trustees**

William M. Sauers (*President*)  
Bridget O'Toole, Esq. (*Vice President*)  
Gretchen Kozlowski (*Secretary*)  
Bill Peeck (*Treasurer*)  
Cynthia Shevlin (*Newsletter Editor*)  
Ruth Curchoe  
David Richardson  
Gregg Redmond, Esq.  
Pam O'Sullivan, MLS  
Sandy Peck  
Deborah Whitt, CLU, ChFC  
Robert Cunningham, MLS

William M. Sauers  
President





**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/>**

*This 2023 Annual Report was published January 18, 2024*