

# The Chronicles

of the Ontario County Historical Society  
Museum and Research Center

Established 1902



Volume 51, Issue 1

Connecting our Community with its Past

March 2022

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## Introductions

By Benjamin Falter

As I sat down to write my first article for the Chronicles and introduce myself to you all, I set out to answer one simple question: why history? What path had led me to choosing history as my profession?

When I was attending High School in nearby Penn Yan, I, like many of my fellow students, had no idea what I wanted to do when I grew up. I had long thought that I might pursue a career in engineering, of all things, but when I took Pre-Calculus and a Principles of Engineering course my junior year, I realized immediately that I had no interest in that field after all. I was

at a loss for what I should pursue next. But I persisted and still had every intention on attending college after finishing high school. Lucky for me, the college I decided on, Brockport, allowed you to enter without declaring a major. Doubly lucky, they had an amazing Freshman study abroad program, which sent a few Freshmen to London for their second semester. I was very fortunate to be accepted to the program, and off I went to London. I could not have known that I would come back from my study abroad with a major decided on.

London is an amazing city, and rich with history. During my classes, I made visits to several of the many remarkable museums in London. And soon, I found myself making visits to these museums in my free time. I was fascinated by the artifacts and the history on display. I had always liked history well enough back in high school, but it was in the halls of London's museums that I truly fell in love with it. When I returned to Brockport and began taking history classes, my newfound love of history was confirmed, but more than that I wanted to share my love of history with others. At first, I thought I would want to be a high school history teacher, but quickly learned that the confines of the high school classroom did not suit me. By the time I finished college, I knew I wanted to teach people about history, but I was not sure in what setting. Then I got my first job after college at the Strong Museum in Rochester.



Benjamin Falter, Director of Education

*continued on page 2*

At the Strong Museum, I rediscovered the very fact that I had first discovered back in London: that physical artifacts served as a fascinating window into and teaching aid for history. While my job at the Strong Museum was in guest relations, not education, I did have several incredible opportunities to design and conduct tours of the museum to show off their artifacts to guests. This was always my favorite part of the job at the Strong Museum, and I realized that a museum setting was the perfect place to realize my love of teaching people history. When I first saw the job posting for the Director of Education at the Ontario County Historical Society, I immediately knew that this job would be the perfect chance for me to do just that.

Which brings me to the present day. During my first couple months here, I have begun to familiarize myself with the county's history and plan my first couple educational offerings. My first was a candle making tutorial and history lesson on the OCHS YouTube channel. If you have yet to watch it, I hope you do so and enjoy it! Coming up on March 10th is our History Happy Hour. Join us online and I'll teach you how to make a cocktail created by Jerry Thomas – the father of American Mixology – before our very own Wilma takes over and gives a talk on the Women's Suffrage Movement in Ontario County. And coming up soon is our newest tour offering: Historic Churches of North Main Street. The Ontario County Historical Society has long offered excellent tour packets for visitors coming in, and on special arrangement, in person tour offerings. With the Historic Churches of North Main Street tour, I am trying something a little different. I want to provide people with a regular and reoccurring opportunity to receive an in-person tour. Starting in mid-April (tentatively scheduled to begin on April 14th) I will be available to give anyone interested in joining me an in-person tour of the nearby historic churches. Every two weeks I will be making myself available in the afternoon to give tours to anyone who stops by and wants one. I hope that you will come join me for a tour one of these upcoming Thursdays.

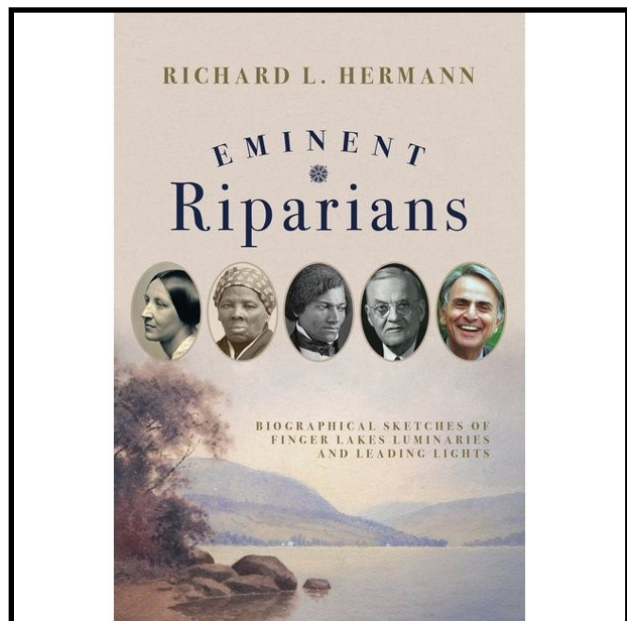
I have been enjoying my time at the Ontario County Historical Society. I'm looking forward to planning more programs and presenting new and unique opportunities to teach people about the fascinating history of our county. I'm excited to be aboard and meet all of you over the coming months!

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## In the OCHS Bookstore

Author Richard Hermann's 15th book, *Eminent Riparians: Biographical Sketches of Finger Lakes Luminaries and Leading Lights*, encompasses more than 50 biographies of some of the most prominent individuals who either hail from the Finger Lakes or spent considerable time here on their way to national prominence and, in many cases, global fame.

This book is fresh off the press and you can purchase it from our bookstore located in the museum. 395 pages. \$24.99.



## From the Director's Desk

By Cody Grabhorn

### 120 Years is a Long Time!

The year 2022 is a year to celebrate here at the museum because it marks our 120th anniversary! Wow, 120 years! However, it can be easy to overlook such a milestone if it isn't put into perspective. There are some businesses that have been around just as long as our museum such as Target and JCPenney. Then there are others that you might be surprised to find out are even younger than our museum! Would you believe me if I told you that when we celebrated our first full year at the museum back in 1903, Buick and Harley Davidson were just being founded? Then when the museum celebrated 10 years of success, the Shell Oil Company and Universal Pictures were first emerging. Maybe you remember the Atari gaming system? By the time Atari Inc. was founded, our museum was celebrating 70 years of success! Well, I could keep going but hopefully you get the point that our museum has a storied history.



Cody Grabhorn, Executive Director

As a way to celebrate, I would like to reflect on a crucial aspect that makes us a strong institution – membership. A major pillar of our success has always been our loyal and supportive members who help us in numerous ways. First, it is important to note the impact a membership has when it comes to word of mouth. The more members we have, the more conversation there is about what we offer at the museum. Secondly, our members have been active and show their support for the programs and exhibits we plan. This allows us to adapt to what our community wants. Lastly, our members provide financial support that allows our staff to educate the public.

While word of mouth and mental support are very important, the financial support allows our museum to be truly unique. OCHS takes pride in the fact that we are a free admission museum because of our members. In this regard, we operate in a fundamentally different way, which insures everyone can have access to our museum. When it comes to most museums, many groups of people are priced out. Our admission free policy means that large families, low-income families, college students, and residents living on a fixed income, just to name a few don't have to break the bank to have an educational experience. It truly is a way to make sure that we are making our community better, and it is something that we as a staff and a successful museum should be proud of.

Unfortunately though, our membership has decreased during the pandemic. It was nearly 500 and now hovers around 300. However, there is hope. At the end of 2021 the total membership was at about 250 and now we are at 300 as I stated above. Renewed efforts to reach those whose memberships lapsed and interactions with people who were not members yet have helped us to retain those 250 and gain 50 more members. We hope that through different approaches we will see continued growth throughout 2022. In fact, we set a goal to reach 370 members by the end of 2022. If you do the math, that means we would gain 120 members in our 120th year. If we achieve that goal, there is a bright future for our exhibits and programming! Not only will we be able to create more programming, we will also connect with more people because our membership is that much larger.

So, huzzah for 120 years and the hope for 120 (renewed or new) members!



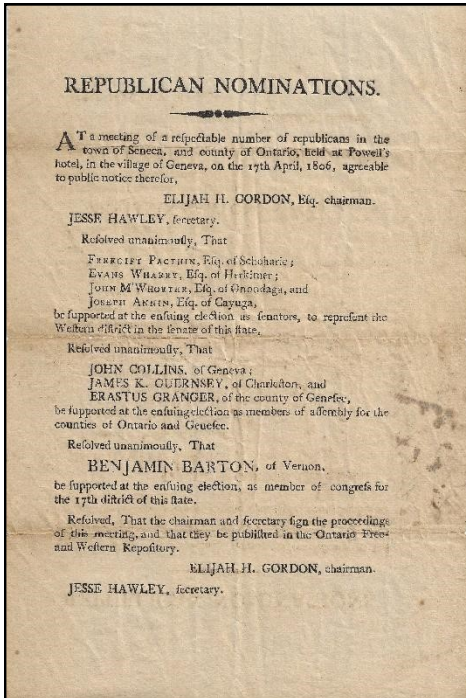
## What's in the Collection?

By Wilma Townsend

Every year the Ontario County Historical Society receives hundreds of local history artifacts, photos, archival materials, and books from many generous donors across the country. All gifts are assigned a number and information about each item is entered into our database. While it would be impossible to list every gift in our newsletter, here are some interesting examples that have been donated recently. As always, we are so appreciative of every contribution made to our historical collection!



Wilma Townsend, Curator



Broadside

### Broadside Acc. # 2022.003

Broadside for "Republican Nominees" from Western New York and Ontario County for Election of Senators, Assembly Members for New York State, Member of Congress, April 17, 1806." Meeting held at Powell's Hotel, Village of Geneva. Names of individuals listed on document:

Elijah H. Gordon, Jesse Hawley, Freegift Patchin, Evans Wharry, John M'Whorter, Joseph Annin, John Collins, James K. Guernsey, Erastus Granger, Benjamin Barton.

### 1918 Presentation Sword and Scabbard Acc. # 2022.001

Sword has brass pommel and grip with attached gold tassel, metal blade with etched Naval symbols and designs, name "George W. Urstadt" is etched onto blade. Scabbard is made of leather and brass, inscribed on scabbard: "Presented to, Ass't Paymaster George W. Urstadt, U.S.N.P.F., by the Disbursing Office Force, Navy Yard, N.Y., on July 23, 1918, as a token of esteem and friendship." George W. Urstadt (1894-1989), Canandaigua, NY was Mayor of the City of Canandaigua from 1950 to 1956.



1918 Presentation Sword & Scabbard

### Collection of Food Household Management Pamphlets Acc. # 2021.091

Large Collection of Early to Mid-20th Century Booklets and Pamphlets on Food Preparation (cooking, baking, preserving) and Household Management. Originally collected and used by Rena Parrish, Ionia, NY.

Cont. on p. 9

## Research Team

*By Betty McMahon, Volunteer Researcher and Genealogist*

### Choices, Choices....

When asked to write an article about our recent research projects, it seemed like an easy request to fulfill. But then, which request to choose? We receive requests from states all across the country. We have even fielded requests from England, Belgium and Australia. But since February is Black History Month, we settled on the story of the John Bland family of Geneva, NY.

John was born in Virginia about 1788 to John and Maria Bland. We have not been able to verify how he came to live in Geneva, NY, but there are some definite possibilities. After the Phelps and Gorham purchase of land in western New York, entrepreneurs from the coast saw an opportunity to obtain large land holdings at minimal cost. Robert Rose and John Nicholas, Virginia planters, were two of those men. They were pioneer settlers in the Geneva area, bringing over 100 slaves with them. Robert Rose settled on acreage east of Seneca Lake in 1802, current site of Rose Hill Mansion. The Bland family could have been among those enslaved by Rose.

John Bland was about fourteen years old at that time and would have been treated as an adult farm laborer. John was freed at some point, although he may have never been considered a slave in New York. By 1815 or 1816, John married a woman named Maria. The 1820 census in the Town of Seneca listed four Black people in the household: John (32), Maria (24), daughter, Polly (3) and son, George (1).

We don't know where John and his family resided in 1820. Perhaps on the Rose farm. But there were choices of employment in the village of Geneva as well. There were two glass factories with a warehouse and fifty mechanical shops that offered employment to men with a range of skills. Perhaps they lived in town. No matter what the job, John was able to save enough money to purchase land in 1824 from John Woods for \$65.00. It was one acre of land on a dirt lane that became High Street in Geneva. It was described in the deed as "bounded east by the street leading north from Washington...." That street could have been Pulteney Street, one of only eight designated streets in Geneva at the time.

Between 1830 and 1845, John purchased three additional pieces of property, two of which were on High Street, extending from West Street toward Pulteney Street. The land purchased from the Methodist Church might have been on Castle Street and may have extended south enough to join his High Street property. These parcels represented a large amount of property at that time for a Black man. His property became the sites of the African Chapel, constructed in 1834 and the African School, completed in 1853.

John Bland gained recognition from Genevans for the pomegranate trees he grew on his property. Although they are normally grown in a Mediterranean climate, John was able to adapt the trees to our area. The trees grew from 16 to as much as 30 feet tall. The red fruit was in season from October through February. He harvested the fruit and sold it at market in the village. Women purchased pomegranates for use in baking and cooking and as garnishes. They could also be used to make wine.



*Cont. on p. 7*



## Your Historical Society



Our newest rotating exhibit “Aprons: Plain and Fancy” highlights all kinds of aprons from our collection. Some of which were made by The Cuddeback & Co.



Ben filming his candle making demo for our YouTube channel



Wilma with Architect Richard Osgood talking about building designs



New handmade cats for sale at our bookstore in recognition of our current pet exhibit and future fiber exhibit

## Arts Corner

By Judi Cermak, President OCAC

### Arts Council Update

I've been looking forward to 2022 as this is the year that The Ontario County arts Council has planned to exhibit fabric and fibers throughout the year. The first exhibit opens April 2 with the emphasis on items made with fabric such as art quilts. Along with this focus on fabric will be the installation of a crocheted, knitted coral reef. The coral reef will fill the North gallery with a colorful display of organic forms and textures that represent the living ocean.

While developing the project I discovered the serious problems we have with the ocean sea life, sea turtles being one of the them. Opening day Saturday, April 2 at 1 o'clock there will be a "happening". This event is designed to draw attention to the plight of the sea turtles and the coral reefs. It is our hope to educate plus raise money for the Sea Turtle Conservatory. Join us for a unique experience, refreshments and view the new exhibit the Celebration of Fabrics and Fibers.



Sea turtle that will be in the installation

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*Cont. from p. 5*

Polly, born in 1817, did not live to adulthood. She died on April 1, 1829 at the age of twelve. Her parents buried her in the Washington Street Cemetery, only two blocks away from their home on West Street. Her mother, Maria, died on August 1, 1845. She was 49 years old. She was buried with her daughter in the Washington Street Cemetery.

John Bland's story does not end here. He lived another twenty years and the second chapter of his life was just as productive. In the next newsletter, see "From Pomegranates to Community Leader."



The Union Chapel served as both a church and school. With Black children barred from attending Geneva schools, the Union Chapel housed the first and only public school for the Black community until the village of Geneva built the High School Street School.



## News and Announcements

**Covid-19 and Masks**—Since the CDC renewed their guidelines, we will no longer require masks in the museum. We still strongly suggest wearing one out of respect for anyone who might be immunocompromised or unable to receive the vaccine. Thank you for understanding during these odd times.

**Our 2022 exhibit “Fibers of Our Lives: From Practical Craft to Decorative Art” will open May 27.** This exhibit will be held in conjunction with the Ontario County Arts Council’s exhibits, programs and workshops on art created with a variety of fibers including wool, silk, cotton, flax, and other natural fibers.

**Richard Hemann’s book “Eminent Riparians” is now in our book store!** A book talk for the spring or summer is being planned.

**Visit our new blog at [OCHS.org/Blog/](http://OCHS.org/Blog/)** to read even more stories about Ontario County’s history!

**Change at Ganondagan State Historic Site.** We would like to congratulate and thank Peter Jemison for his service at Ganondagan State Historic Site. It has recently been announced that he is retiring from his role as site manager and his successor will be Michael Galban who has served as curator at Ganondagan. We would like to congratulate him too and express our excitement for a continued bright future.

**A few education programs to highlight one more time are our March History Happy Hour and Church Walking Tour.** The History Happy Hour will be conducted virtually March 10 from 7-8. Anyone interested can sign up on our website or call the museum. The Church Walking Tour will take you up and down Canandaigua’s Main Street while talking about the history of religion in Ontario County. This event will start at the museum on April 14 at 1 P.M.

**Our first fundraiser of 2022 will be a British Car Show held at Onanda Park.** On May 14 Spectators can come for free and if you have a British car you want to enter in the show, sign up on our website. There is a \$20 entry fee for cars. We hope to have a great day for cars, food, and history!

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## IN MEMORIAM

We were saddened to learn of the recent loss of member:

**Barbara Fuge**

And former board member:

**Chuck Callari**

The society is grateful for their friendship and support and will remember them fondly.

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## We Welcome These New Members

Leslie Mast

Doug Emblidge

Marcia McMahon

James Davern

Shirley Jendrick

Aimee Dewar

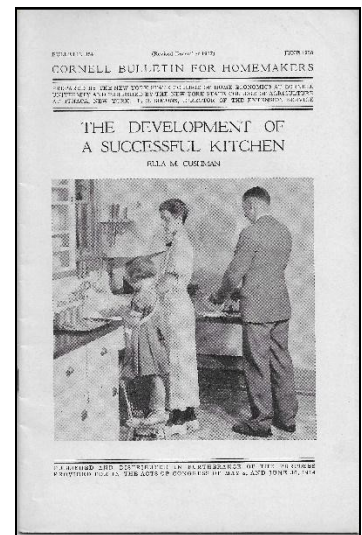
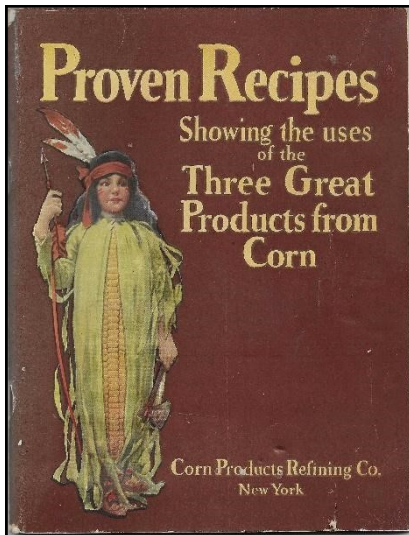
John Michalko

Alana Bernhardt

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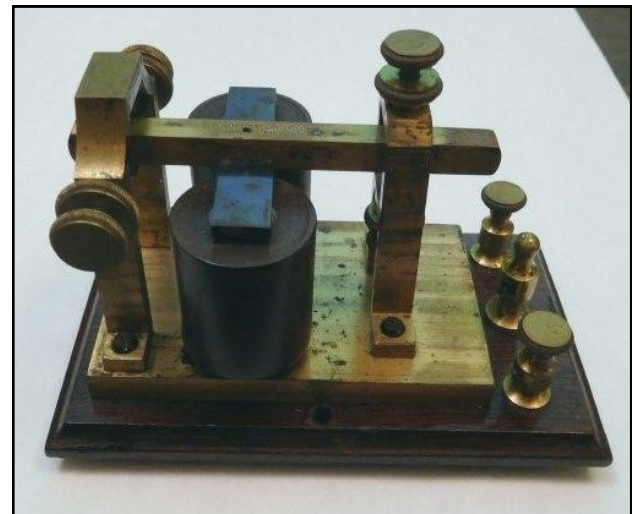
Cont. from p. 4



Food household management pamphlets

**Telegraph Sounder** Acc. # 2021.085

Telegraph Sounder is a late 1800s electromechanical device used as a receiver on electrical telegraph lines. On a brass base, the armature with an iron piece above an electromagnet "clicks" when receiving electrical pulses to make the Morse code message audible. Stamped on armature: "L. G. Tillotson & Co., 8 Dey St., New York. Daniel J. Tillotson (no relation) used this instrument when a telegraph operator at the railroad station in Chapinville (now Chapin, NY). He moved to Victor in 1883 to be an operator at the New York Central depot. He later went to medical college in Buffalo and was physician in Rochester for 30 years.



Telegraph Sounder

**Quilts** Acc. #2021.099

Quilt in Irish Chain pattern in dark blue sprigged print and white fabric. Quilt in Basket pattern in dark brown and white fabric. Both were hand pieced and quilted as wedding quilts in 1877 by Aurelia Ketch for her marriage to Martin Lyon, They lived in Naples, NY.



Left and Right:  
Wedding quilts.

## **The OCHS Organization**

### **Staff**

Cody Grabhorn	Executive Director
Wilma Townsend	Curator
Benjamin Falter	Director of Education
Katie Labbe	Administrative Assistant
Barb Hill	Part-time Receptionist
Webmaster	TLC for Coaches
Betty McMahon	Research Coordinator*
Gene Rogers	Building Support*
Linda Alexander	Librarian*
*Volunteer	

### **Board of Trustees**

Chris Hubler – President  
Charles Parkhurst – Vice President  
Tricia Carey – Treasurer  
Carole Lillis – Secretary  
Geoff Astles  
Alana Bernhardt  
Gloria Dancause  
Natalie DeTraglia  
Linda Hawks  
Kathleen Hendrix  
John Michalko  
Dave Sanford  
Jeanna Savage  
Jack Schuppenhauer  
David White

**We wish to extend a special thanks to all of the volunteers who donate so many countless hours in support of the Historical Society.**

Address correspondence to:  
Ontario County Historical Society  
55 North Main Street  
Canandaigua, New York 14424

Phone: 585-394-4975  
Webpage: [www.ochs.org](http://www.ochs.org)  
Email: [newsfromochs@gmail.com](mailto:newsfromochs@gmail.com)  
Please “Like” us on Facebook! Just go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for the Ontario County Historical Society.

We are open Tuesday through Friday 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.,  
Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

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## **Business Members**

We wish to thank the business members listed below for their continued support. Please consider them when purchasing goods and services. In addition to these business members, we also appreciate the small donations we receive from dozens of local businesses in Ontario County each year.

Allen County Public Library	In.Site:Architecture	Renaissance - The Goodie II Shoppe
B & E Electric	J. D. Chapman Agency Inc.	Saralinda Hooker Planning and Development Consultant
Bella Rose Bed & Breakfast	Johnson-Kennedy Funeral Home Inc.	Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion
CJ Meder Library - Periodical Dept.	Lyons National Bank	Stomping Grounds
Canandaigua Insurance Agency	Mayflower Gardens Ltd.	Town of Farmington
Canandaigua National Bank	Mid Continent Public Library	Velmex Inc.
Cindy’s Glass, Crafts & Collectibles	Mitchell Pierson Jr. Inc. Realtors	Veterans HVAC, LLC dba Potter Heating and Cooling
Clifton Springs Historical Society	Naples Historical Society	Village of Clifton Springs Historian
Dancause & Sons Inc.	Paychex	VR Food Equipment Inc.
Edelweiss Properties Realtors LLC	Phelps Community Historical Society	West Bloomfield Town Historian
Farmington Historical Society	Preston Pierce	Willow Bend Farms
G.W. Lisk Company Inc.	Rachel’s Heartfelt Designs	Wizard of Clay
Granger Homestead Society	Randall Farnsworth Auto	



## Membership and Benefits

The Ontario County Historical Society

55 North Main Street

Canandaigua, NY 14424

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address \_\_\_\_\_

**General Membership:** \_\_\_ Sr Citizen \$30 \_\_\_ Individual \$35 \_\_\_ Family \$50 \_\_\_ Friend \$75

**Centennial Club:** \_\_\_ Centennial \$100 \_\_\_ Benefactor \$150 \_\_\_ Heritage \$250 \_\_\_ Director \$500+

**Business:** \_\_\_ Small \$100 \_\_\_ Business \$250 \_\_\_ Corporate \$550 \_\_\_ President/CEO \$1000+

Additional tax-deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment: \_\_\_ Cash \_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_ Credit Card M/C or Visa No \_\_\_ - \_\_\_ - \_\_\_ -  
\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_ VC \_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Member Benefits

- Subscription to our quarterly newsletter
- Free access to our research room
- 10% off in museum gift shop
- Discounts on certain events and programming



Historical Museum and Wood Library, Canandaigua, N. Y. The Gateway to the Finger Lakes



## Calendar of Events - Call or visit website for more details

**March 10th, 7pm-8pm:** Women's History Month Happy Hour (Virtual)

**March 21st, 12pm-1pm:** OCHS & Wood Library, Book Sandwiched In, with OCHS Executive Director Cody Grabhorn

**April 2nd, 1pm-3pm:** OCAC Coral Reef Exhibit Opening Reception

**April 9th, 1pm-3pm:** OCAC Upcycle Scarf to Aprons Workshop

**April 9th, 5pm-8pm:** Retro Nigh at the Museum: Vinyl Record Night

**April 14th, 1 pm:** Historic Church Walking Tour

**May 7th, 1pm-2:30pm:** OCAC Book Talk "Golden Thread," Joyce Kowba

**May 14th, 10am-2pm:** OCHS Classic British Car Show at Onanda Park

NOTICE: If your address changes seasonally, please let us know the alternative address and the effective dates.

Or Current Resident



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Canandaigua, New York 14424

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