

Newsletter 2019

The Warsaw Historical Society
and Gates House Museum

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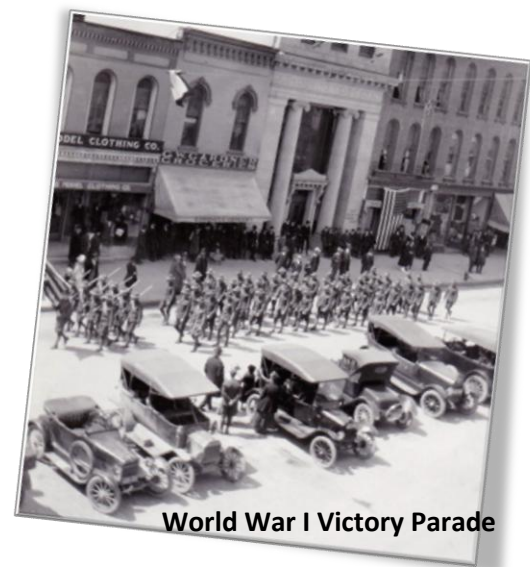
It was a record-setting year!

In March, new bylaws were adopted along with a state-required discrimination policy. With such mundane matters concluded, planning the year's activities began. From work on our new second floor "Hall of Heroes" and "School Room" to planning fundraisers and potluck dinners, our energetic volunteers went above and beyond. By December 2019, your Society had assumed leadership of the Wyoming County Federation of Historical Societies.

GIRL SCOUTS. Barb Aker, Mary Ann Reisdorf and George Almeter helped the girls make blocks for a Civil War era quilt. Each girl signed her block after cutting and applying a China doll pattern from authentic material Barb furnished. The girls also sang period songs from Susan Hengelsberg's song collection. Barb finished the quilt using genuine feed-sack material and won first place at the Wyoming County Fair. It's on display at the Gates House—stop by if you can!



VISITORS/RESEARCH. Over 350 visitors toured the house, a few from as far away as Canada and Poland. Many asked for house and building histories, ancestor searches and significant event stories such as Warsaw's biggest parade in 1919.



More than 20 historic photos of Warsaw’s Walter Klein Post, officers and downtown Warsaw military parades were loaned for display during the Post’s 100 year anniversary celebration.

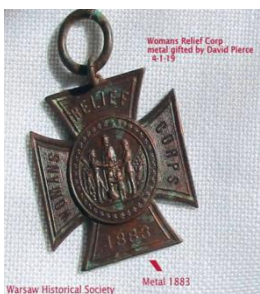
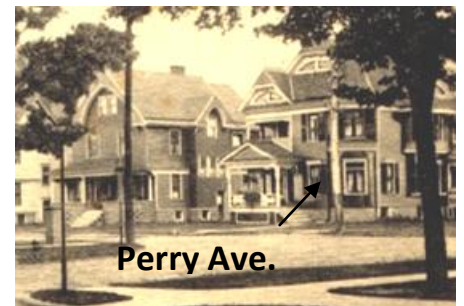
We found new stories about Warsaw’s famous people James Doolittle became the first president of the Village of Warsaw in 1843. Later, an Ohio Congressman and friend of Abraham Lincoln, he became known as an eloquent speaker against slavery.



The Amber Lantern originally Dr. Bartlett’s c. 1860 Office became an Ice Cream Shop; followed by the 44 Restaurant. It is probably the oldest structure on North Main.



Finding approximate build dates is not always easy! But we did it for three on Court Street and others on Perry Avenue, Genesee and Prospect Streets and on Blackhouse Road. Pictured is Dan Pierce’s home on Perry Avenue.



David Pierce’s gift of an 1883 “Woman’s Relief Corps” metal and our surprise in finding the Corps’ parade photo led to a Facebook story—“Things you May Not Know about Memorial Day”.



Discovery of Seth Gates’ 1848 letter in an Ohio Museum gave deeper insight into Gates’ strident anti-slavery activities.



PAINTING CLASSES. The first Monday of each month Dee Crouse teaches Bob Ross methods. Attendees are often seen smiling and winking while stroking their oil or water color paintings. Dee always contributes to the donations box.



FLOWERS. Thank you all-- Charlotte Hamon, Pam Dickes and Beth Russell for spring-time help pulling weeds and planting our beautiful flowers. Visitors often stop and comment. One LeRoy man went home and returned with his wife so she could enjoy the gardens too.

GIFTS. World War I and II uniforms from the families of John Ames and Guy Kovacs arrived in July. Ray Steele's Vietnam dress uniform, courtesy of his widow, Fay, is complete with ceremonial sword. All will be exhibited in our "Hall of Heroes". An open-house is set for June.



Gordon Link's family delivered an 1853 map of Wyoming County. Unique graphics of Indians, Wyoming County's first courthouse and the wooden train trestle at Letchworth State Park highlight the early map. We have maps from 1853 to 1978 and enjoy finding stories of people, places and events in Warsaw's history.

Ernie Morris' numerous gifts include early Embury lanterns and a Flutter. Cast iron Fluters were used to crimp decorative designs onto collars and cuffs. Their use was most popular in the mid 1870's.



Carrie Humphrey's c. 1880's paintings were gifted by Dick and Shirley Humphrey. Carrie was a student of Lemuel Wiles of the famed Hudson River School and the mother of Lewis Humphrey Bishop. Lewis was a founding officer of the Warsaw Historical Society in 1938 and for the following 42 years our museum's curator until his passing in 1981.



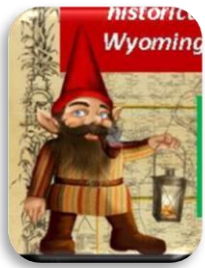
This beautiful 1850's Melodeon with intact leather bellows safely arrived at the Gates House with help from Sue and Ray Rohauer. Melodeons or reed organs were popular because they could be easily transported to and from homes and churches. The musical instrument well complements our "Victorian Life in Warsaw" themed parlor. Donor Barb Hughes of Gainesville is delighted we have her contribution.

FUNDRAISERS: Todd Smith's plan for the Society's first craft fair worked well. The Artisan Villa ladies helped set up at least 20 vendors and provided refreshments at Warsaw's Legion Hall. Proceeds helped fund the high costs of repairing the gutters. Mark your calendars! This year's fundraiser is set for June 16th. Many vendors have already reserved their tables.



We want to especially thank Ernie Morris for gifting a beautiful c. 1870 Victorian quilt for the Society's first raffle. Jen Cooke was overjoyed to win the pristine quilt.

DAR. We welcomed members of the **Mary Jemison Chapter of the NY State Daughters of the American Revolution** for their quarterly luncheon. The ladies of the DAR have graced our meeting room and kitchen since 1938 when the Gates House Museum first appeared on Perry Avenue.



GNOME HUNT. County-wide hunters stepped through our doorway looking for the Gnome which was hidden on the first floor. The County Historian's "Where in Wyoming County is the History Gnome?" was so successful, it will be repeated in 2020. Participants compete for prizes after touring the county's historical societies, the Perry Fire Department and the Attica Prison Museum.

Congratulations, Tara, for winning first prize!

GRANTS. The Wyoming Foundation awarded \$1,200 for reproduction and conservation of about 550 glass photographic plates of Warsaw and Letchworth State Park. Photographer Robert Doyle is presently producing three copies from each plate. All images will be saved to an external drive and many will be uploaded to our website and Facebook page.

We are also thankful for Dr. Reagan's work. When completed, all plates will have been cleaned, wrapped in Mylar sleeves and stored in acid free boxes.



POTLUCK. Our June sunset dinner was enjoyed in the gardens of the Artisan Villa. Everyone was able to meet new members. Wyoming County Tourism Director Eric Szucs presented the Wyoming Foundation's check which funded in part our glass plates conservation project. He also discussed the potential listing of the Gates House on the New York State Haunted Trail.

ANNUAL MEETING. Election of Officers was had with Tara Alexander, President; Dan Seewaldt, Vice-President; Lisa Seewaldt Treasurer; Deanna Flint, Secretary; Kathy Bell, Corresponding Secretary and George Almeter, Curator. We thank all members who attended various committee meetings.

TECHNOLOGY. Facebook likes increased to almost 1,200. Many videos especially “Warsaw’s Worst Fire” brought numerous page comments and visitors to the Museum. We also changed our website server and domain name to www.warsawnyhistory.org thereby reducing the high cost of subscriptions.



MUSEUM CHARTER. While the Society has been quietly serving the public since 1938, our museum received official recognition on June 4. The New York State Board of Regents chartered our organization **The Warsaw Historical Society and Gates House Museum**. This will help garner grants for programs and recruitment of college interns.

JULY WALKING TOUR. During Warsaw’s Valley Fest two college-age volunteers, Brianna Cook and Alex Bellaire took several groups on a tour of the “Downtown Warsaw Historical District. “Enjoyed it!” was the most reported comment after learning about Warsaw during its stagecoach days. The Society had listed the District comprising 36 downtown buildings on the National Register in 2012.



JULY 4TH PARADE. Dan Seewaldt and his trusty horse Ike transported suffragist Ella Crossett and anti-slavery Congressman Seth Gates in Dan’s beautifully restored carriage. Impersonators Barb Aker and Dave Almeter happily waved at the many smiles faces on their way to winning first place. The trio and Ike garnered third place in the Wyoming County Fair parade.



FAIR EXHIBIT. Volunteers designed their exhibit the “Bounty of the County” for judging at the Wyoming County Fair. Winning third place, our box highlighted age-old methods in producing many Warsaw-made products including wool, eggs, meat, dairy, salt, and buttons.



PARANORMAL. October brought paranormal investigators and liberal donations. While sleuthing in the cellar, a pile of unusual rocks was discovered. They turned out to be rare Indian anvil stones used for flint working until the cavities

became too large—then they were used for cracking nuts.

HALLOWEEN. Ghouls and other assorted friendly spirits appeared at our Trick or Treat Open House. The scene could only be described as amazing!



CHRISTMAS during “Moonlight Magic” was especially fun. Light refreshments were served along with Betty Bark’s tasty chili.

Lisa and Tara had decorated our tree with delicate sparking lights, old-time ornaments and tinsel. Candle lights in the garland and wreaths highlighted many artifacts from our collections. From the road one could see Lisa’s antique horse

sleigh with lighted presents, skis and sleds on the front door.

CHRISTMAS DINNER once again pleased the crowd. Specialty dishes were served along with two turkeys, dressing, mashed and sweet potatoes courtesy of Sue and George. Tara's Coquito punch continues to be a favorite. Laughter broke out when Dave appeared dressed as homeless "Father Time", and again when he won a talking fly swatter in our Ugly Sweater Contest. Thanks Mary Ann for suggesting it!



NOTES

Harvey Granite's passing in January 2019 gave many of us time to reminisce his humor, love of literature and writing. Over the years, he shared all of this and more. His play "The Woman in the Box" came alive in 2003. It was during Warsaw's Bicentennial that the story of seven-year old Eliza and her mother's escape from slavery became real. In 1850 the two had traveled 22 days hidden in a box built into a horse-drawn wagon before arriving here from Maryland. The play brought more than a 1,000 people to three performances on stage at the United Church of Warsaw. We are often asked when will Harvey's play be presented again? Thank you so much Harvey and Pat for contributing so much to our Society and the Warsaw community.

We wish to thank Sarah Wrede, Paul Griffith and Mary Lou Dumbleton for their heartfelt words and donations which helped accomplish much needed repairs

SECURITY AND CONSERVATION UPDATES

Installation of the 2018-planned security cameras and gutter repairs were made in January 2019. For the first time in about 30 years, serious cracks in the kitchen walls were fixed, doors, moldings and kitchen cabinets cleaned and painted. Weather proofing the ill-fitting back door stopped cold air from penetrating the house. Extensive plaster repairs and paint applied to second-floor rooms provides a warm backdrop for our new display rooms. If you're interested

in helping arrange the “Hall of Heroes” and or “School Room” exhibits, please be sure and let us know. Work will start soon!

MORE IS NEEDED

Most of the framed artwork, lithographs, maps and papers need acid and moisture protection. A new de-humidifier for the cellar as well as parts for the gas fire place and furnace will help keep systems running smoothly. We’re also suggesting new stone or brick replace the crumbling concrete front porch and steps. If you’re interested donating or helping, we would be grateful for any.

SUPPORT AND MEETINGS

Please help keep the Gates House Museum dynamic by renewing your membership. Don’t forget to invite your partner, your friends and neighbors to join. The Society relies on membership dues, donations and hands-on assistance. We are a fully accredited NY State chartered museum and a registered 501(c)3 educational non-profit. All donations are tax deductible.

Everyone is invited to our IDEA meetings. They are fun and held on the 4th Thursday of each month from March until November. Any idea is a good idea! Bring one or more along to our first meeting in 2020. It’s on March 26 at 6 p.m. at the Gates House.

Thank you--everyone!

P.S. Please complete and return the attached to the Gates House!