

GREENE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

90 County Route 42

(518) 731-6490

[www.gchistory.org](http://www.gchistory.org)

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APR 08 2020

Greene Co Legislature

March 30, 2020

Greene County Legislature  
411 Main Street  
Suite 408  
Catskill, NY 12414

Attention: Tammy L. Sciavillo, Acting Clerk

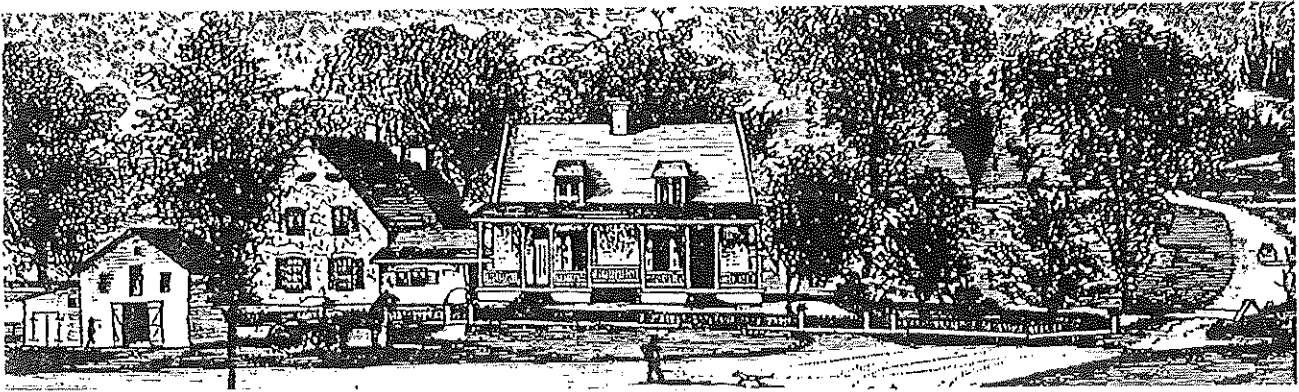
Dear Tammy:

Enclosed is the 2019 Annual Report of the Greene County Historical Society to the Greene County Legislature.

When our Annual Report is prepared for our annual meeting I will forward a copy of it to you. That report is a more detailed report, both programmatically and financially.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Hallock,  
President GCHS



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**2019 REPORT TO GREENE COUNTY  
GREENE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
GCHS PRESIDENT ROBERT C, HALLOCK**

Greene Co Legislature

Preservation of historical matter relating to Greene County is part of the Society's Charter from the State Board of Regents as an educational corporation, as well as a strong educational component. The Society has taken the preservation of historical matter and education as a serious charge.

In the past year we have continued the historic restoration of the Bronck Houses, consulting with our Historic Architects John Waite and Associates. Plans are being drawn up by the architect and we hope to apply for our DEC permit in order to begin restoration work on the courtyard and kitchen dependency at the site. A DEC permit is needed because the kitchen dependency is just a few feet away from the Cocksackie Creek. The Meadow Ridge Heritage Barn, moved from Earleton to our site, is now erected, sided partially and houses the 19<sup>th</sup> century Van Der Zee hay press. This year we plan to complete the siding and hire an architect and landscape architect to develop plans for the grounds and barn interior. Working with a group of volunteers from Athens, serving as an ad Hoc Committee of the Society, we are doing restoration work on the Van Loon House in Athens, which was deeded to the Society by a member of the Van Loon Family several years ago. A circa.1720's Dutch Scripture painting given to us by the Reuben Garcia family formerly of Leeds was restored by an expert during 2018 and 2019 and is now on display again. It is one of about 40 Dutch Scripture Paintings known to still exist in the United States. This year, we are considering restoration of a portrait of Peter Silvester, Sr. Silvester Sr., recently the subject of a book published by the Vermont Historical Society. He helped to resolve the problems of the Hampshire Land Grants to create the State of Vermont and was also attorney for Sir William Johnson, from whom Johnstown, NY is named. On October 8 the author of the book will present a program on Peter Silvester Sr. at the Vedder Research Library. We are also exploring the restoration of the Bronck Coat of Arms painted on a sleigh owned by Judge Leonard Bronk, c. 1800, first Judge of Greene County. The Bronck Coat of Arms forms the basis for the New York State seal..

Our education programs include the regular and special tours of the Museum grounds. In 2019 we had 3 "Sundays Along the River" programs – "The Toiling Tinsmith", The Whittler and Weaver", and "Spiders and Salamanders". They were about, respectively,

the tinsmith craft, whittling and weaving, and food preparation, and all were done by local crafts people except the food preparation done by Museum Staff. The tinsmith program was done by former Greenville Central School teacher Art Thorman; the whittler was Dick Brooks, former County Legislator; the weaver was Charlotte Carter, attorney and active in the Coxsackie Food Pantry.

For 2020 our Sunday programs will be on the Indian Trails with Archeologist Ed Curtin, Dutch Barns and architecture with Keith Cramer, and Mahican and paleoindian presence in Greene County with Bonnie Hartley, Stockbridge Munsee Tribal Representative for this area.

In 2019 Our lecture series included the following topics: "Catskill in the Jacksonian Period", done by our Librarian Archivist Jonathan Palmer; "The Influenza Pandemic in Greene County" done by Richard Muggeo, Society Trustee from Catskill; and "50 Years after Gettysburg" done by Ron Gabriele of Catskill. Little did we know how prophetic Muggeo's program was.

Our 2019 offsite programs reached almost 600 people around the Capital District including programs such as "Preparations for Winter in Colonial America", "The History of Baseball" and General Nathanael Greene. Although our 2020 Olga Santora Women's History Lecture has been cancelled due to the Corona Virus restrictions, we have other programs scheduled

In order to preserve our library collections, from the late 1600's deed of DuBois property in Flatbush (now Brooklyn) to our collections of glass plate negatives, we have begun a digitalization process, particularly the glass plate negatives. Cataloging our items in the library to convert to a finding aid on the Library website has begun so people searching the internet will be able to find us and visit the Library and Museum. The Society and Library Facebook pages have regular visitors and a image posted on the Library's Instagram page of the four corners (Main and Bridge) drew over 20,000 hits.

The Society is working on two new exhibits for the Barrack Space dealing with Apple Farming in Greene County and Dr. Willard's Buggy (Dr. Willard was from Catskill). Another exhibit in the works is a cooperative effort between the Greene County IDA, the Stockbridge Munsee Tribal Nation, archaeologist Ed Curtin, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Society to develop a Native American exhibit featuring a wigwam and signage telling the story of the Paleoindians and the Mahicans (Stockbridge Munsee) in the Greene County area using archeological finds from digs done in Greene County.

While not an exhibit, the Society negotiated with the Dutch Barn Preservation Society and the Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture organizations to use the Society's Education Center as their official address and hold their meetings in the Education Center. They have held some meetings there already and are awaiting NY State Board of Regents decision on a charter for their new merged organization. The Dutch Barn and Hudson Valley organizations had been headquartered at a museum site in Schenectady County and will now be headquartered at the Society Campus. This will mean three to four times a year people from the Capital Region, Hudson Valley and northern New Jersey will be coming to the Society campus for a meeting, generally with a visit to a local eatery after the meeting. They will also be holding tours of Dutch Barns and Historic Homes in Greene County as well as elsewhere in the Hudson Valley area.

We also continue to loan collection items such as a bark spud for removing hemlock bark to the New York Historical Society in 2019, and in 2020 a model of the steamboat Mary Powell to the Kingston Maritime Museum, with clear credit being given to the fact the items came from Greene County,.

Our museum and outreach programs reached over 2,200 people in 2019 and the library visitation added about 750 people to that. Off site programs went not only to Greene County but to Rensselaer, Schenectady, Columbia and Albany counties. This was a slight increase over 2018. Visitors come from across the country and the world to visit the Bronck House National Historic Landmark. Visitors came from 27 states and 6 foreign countries, based on information from visitors who designated where they lived in the Museum Visitor Book. Pennsylvania, Texas and California and Connecticut were the states with the most visitors. The United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, France and New Zealand were the only foreign countries listed. A Washington State university professor came to the Library searching for his African American ancestors. An Ohio graduate student did research for his thesis on Justice of the Peace records from the then Town of Durham in the early 1800's shortly after the County was formed. The author of the book on Peter Silvester, Sr. came here from Vermont to do research and got permission to use the portrait of Peter Sr. from our collections in his book.

As this is being submitted the Society is in the process of postponing their annual meeting, home tour, and considering postponing or cancelling other events. The staff, except for the caretakers, are working from home. The Library is closed to the public, and the Museum season opening is uncertain. Education programs, offsite programs, school visits are all in limbo. The Society is looking at our finances and considering ways to save money. All of this is due to the Corona Virus Pandemic.