



Winter 2021

Oswego County Historical Society

RICHARDSON-BATES HOUSE MUSEUM

2020 certainly presented many challenges for all of us!

We hope this finds you healthy as 2021 unfolds.

We, the board of the Oswego County Historical Society, cannot thank you enough for your unwavering support. In a year with no safe way to hold events and offer tours, you were there for us. Your responses to our Membership Drive and Annual Giving Appeal in 2020 were remarkable. This demonstrates your commitment to preserving our local history, and we are so very grateful.

This year we proudly celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Oswego County Historical Society and 75th anniversary of the Richardson-Bates House Museum. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is one of the most intact house museums in New York State and the society is the oldest historical and cultural repository of the remarkable history of Oswego County. Please join us through our yearlong celebration! Don't miss our Annual Meeting in the spring to learn more.

We look forward to better days and the opportunity to once again share the museum, lectures and celebratory events with you!

Board of Trustees, Oswego County Historical Society:

Mary Kay Stone, President
Charlene Mitchell, Vice President
Eva Corradino, Secretary
Jennifer Bertollini, Treasurer
Peg McKinstry
Justin White

Lyn Patterson
Mary Shanley
Mary Roman
Robert Perkins
Jim Cloonan
Jeremy Pekarek



Museum Remains Closed

There are many reasons the museum didn't open in 2020. The docents are all in a vulnerable population, ventilation of the museum is not possible, and tour routes are tight.

We hope to open in 2021 and will keep you posted!

Membership

Our membership appeal letter will be sent to you in February. You can mail in your membership or pay at our website at www.rbhousemuseum.org/membership/

This year, we welcome your permission to list you in our next newsletter as a member. You will be given an option to remain anonymous if you prefer.

Look for that letter—your support is appreciated and we know you will want to see the museum after this long hiatus!

32nd “Not So Silent” Auction Cancelled . . .

. . . and Replaced!

The Oswego County Historical Society Annual “Not So Silent” Auction fundraiser was only three weeks away in March 2020 when all in person events were cancelled.

Many businesses and individuals had already donated items to be auctioned, so those things were held for a few months in the hopes that the event could be rescheduled. In July, we had a safe outdoor lawn sale that successfully sold and raised money from these items. People were very generous and paid full asking price in most cases.

This year, with an uncertain spring and summer, we may also adapt our “Not So Silent” Auction to be a fixed price yard sale.

For more information about the sale or to make a donation, contact the museum at 315-343-1342 or email ochs@rbhousemuseum.org



Some of the lovely objects donated and sold in last year's Landmark Lawn Sale.



Thank you to the 2020 auction committee volunteers! From left to right: Lyn Patterson, Dave D'Ambrosio, Mary Shanley, Co-chair Jennifer Bertollini, Ella Bertollini, Co-chair Mary Kay Stone, Carol Shannon, Eva Corradino and Justin White. Absent from the photo are Peg McKinstry, Silvia Landon, Charlene Mitchell, Mary Roman and Meg Schneider

Auction Sponsors:

Pathfinder Bank
Shanley Law Firm
Eagle Beverage
Brian and Melissa Klefbeck
Laborers' Local #633
Scriba Electric
Canale Insurance & Accounting Services
Port City Copy Center

Thank you to the grant supporters for 2019/2020 projects:

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation and the Museum Association of NY provided a grant from the Pomeroy Fund for NYS History to purchase scanners and computer external hard drive storage. This enabled us to initiate a digitization project of our collections.

The Special Collections Grant from the Northern New York Library Network provided expert help to set up the digitization equipment we had purchased, create procedural manuals for the process, and digitize and share collections online.

The Oswego Community Foundation gave us part of the funds needed to replace the crumbling retaining wall with a safer new border between the lawn and the sidewalk.

The Oswego Renaissance Association contributed to the fund to replace the retaining wall around our lawn.

The Pandemic slowed us down . . .

. . . but it didn't stop work at the Museum!

Hallway Repainted

After a chronic leak in the roof was repaired in 2018, there was still visible damage to the elaborate plaster moldings and ceiling around the second floor skylight. Many hallway walls were just worn and dirty. A complete painting of the two story hallway and the ceiling around the skylight was planned while the museum was closed in winter 2019-2020, and it was completed by Dave Bock of Minetto Painting in February. Replacing of the hallway furniture, artifacts and paintings had just begun as the pandemic closed us down. Senna Handley continued to clean picture frames and the replace the furnishings when no one else could enter the house.



David Bock helped us remove paintings and this mirror before he painted. Here he was aided by volunteers Josh Gavin and David D'Ambrosio.

The Retaining Wall Replaced

Summer 2020 saw another planned construction project. We had received two grants toward the costs of the replacement of the low retaining wall that separated the lawn and the sidewalk on the front and side of the house. This project had to be completed or forfeit the grant money. So D&S Landscaping removed the crumbling stones of the original wall and replaced them with a precise, straight, sturdy and safe structure.



Digitization Project Begun

The Pomeroy Foundation in partnership with the Museum Association of New York (MANY) offered a series of grants to help museums and custodians of historic archives adapt to and survive the pandemic. We were among the first awardees. This crisis has revealed a gap in our disaster preparedness and ability to serve researchers and the public when we can't access the physical archives at the museum. The grant provided an Epson flatbed scanner for photos and documents, a film and slide scanner and a 10TB external hard drive for storage. Digitization

will ensure that we can share our archives more easily at all times. The Historical Society has a large group of willing volunteers; we just needed the equipment!

But the skills needed to set up and start the project were not to be found in our regular volunteers, so a grant from the Northern NY Library Network allowed us to hire some help.

Alicia Madonna, who was a SUNY Oswego intern at the R-B House in 2015, is heading a team of assistants, Joey Sweeney and Eddie Heinrichs, to create guides and manuals for the process. The project is focused on the three most important and requested collections in our care: the Dr. Mary Walker papers and photos, the Emergency Refugee Shelter documents and scrapbooks, and the Oswego City Directories collection. They will scan items and place finding aids online at NYHeritage.org and EmpireADC.org.

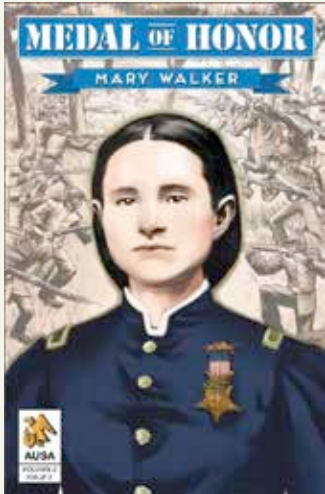


Joey Sweeney using the new scanner



Eddie Heinrichs organizing files

Dr. Mary Walker had a banner year!



Dr. Mary Walker, who famously predicted that she would not be well known until after she was dead, had an incredible year in 2019-2020, just 100 years after her death. The only woman in history to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor, Walker received a lot of attention from across the country. The Oswego County Historical Society and the Town of Oswego Historical Society collaborated to share information and artifacts with researchers and other museums.

The Charles H Coolidge Medal of Honor Heritage Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee sent curator Molly Randolph to Oswego in Dec 2019 to do research for a special exhibit on Dr. Walker. She met with Justin White, Oswego County Historian, and George DeMass, Town of Oswego Historian and perused the documents and artifacts at the museum. We loaned two artifacts, a medical kit, and the book "Hit" by Dr. Walker to their exhibit as well as images and scans of her photos, a letter and medical certificate.

Later in the month, Hollywood producer and former child actor Jimmy Hawkins, of *It's a Wonderful Life* fame, also spent a day at the museum and local sites associated with Dr Walker. He is planning a feature film on her Civil War service.

We were also contacted by a producer at Atherton Pictures who was doing a video for the Smithsonian Channel and a graphic artist at the Association of the US Army who was creating a graphic novel about her. Download a free copy of the graphic novel here:

<https://online.flowpaper.com/77a9072e/MedalofHonorMaryWalker/#page=1>

New Museum Assistant

David D'Ambrosio, pictured assisting researcher Jenifer Kahn Bakkula, was hired in August 2020 and continues to maintain the interior of the museum and its artifacts. David, who grew up in Fruit Valley, is a retired librarian from the Syracuse area public library system, and brings a wealth of experience and strong organizational skills to the position. Thirty years ago, he was a summer intern at the Richardson-Bates Museum and remembers typing accession cards and hunting down artifacts in the attic to restore Naomi's bedroom.



LEAVE A LEGACY® of Oswego County

www.oswegoleavealegacy.org

OCHS is a member of Leave A Legacy, Inc., a not-for-profit devoted to helping people learn about charitable giving through a will or estate plan. Leave a Legacy's program is a cooperative effort to educate community members as well as legal and professional advisors as to the importance and impact of charitable planned giving in our County. To make sure that your planned gift has the impact that you desire, and that the execution of it is easy for your heirs, please contact us at ochs@rbhousemuseum.org

Have you already planned a bequest to us in your will? Please let us know so that we can thank you in our next newsletter.

Notable Donations This Year

The Workmaster family, Joan, Beth Ann and Wally Jr., delivered the final donation of documents and photos from Katherine Kingsford to add to the Kingsford Collection.

Tilly Grey, granddaughter of Norman and Florence Bates donated her grandmother's recipe notebook, started when Florence was single.

Sarah Barber, granddaughter of Norman and Florence Bates, donated multiple original professional pictures of the Bates family, along with contemporary magazines featuring her mother Sally Bates Lorentz Thomkins's career as an actress on Broadway.

Jane Lorentz, daughter-in-law of Sally Bates Lorentz Tomkins, donated the family's three-piece Stag Horn Antler Carving Set.

John Heagerty Family donated a secretary that had been given to their grandmother from the Bates estate since she had been Florence Bates's companion in her final years.

Anthony Pauldine donated items from the house of Rosemary Nesbitt, which he bought and is restoring: some books, papers and two rare glass slides of the Richardson Theatre.

Wish List

Since most of our fundraising efforts necessarily go to the fixed costs of upkeep of the museum, we always have a wishlist of projects we would like to do. We would welcome donations to any of these specific projects:

Tapestry Restoration Fund – When the hall was repainted, the large original wall hanging that is a centerpiece in the main entrance hall was too worn by time to rehang after 150 years. (Restoration with new backing and velvet border - \$7,500)

Rubbish Shed Restoration – the rare original 19th century octagonal rubbish shed near the garage is in dire need of roof restoration. (No estimate yet)

Ultraviolet Light filtering film for all the windows in the period rooms and galleries – Necessary protection since sunlight fades fabrics, paint and wood, and deteriorates everything. (Approximate cost \$4,000)

Rose Garden - A new fence is needed for the eastern border of the south lawn, so that plans can proceed for the restoration of Florence Bates's Garden. (The fence is approximately \$1,200 and then donations toward the cost of topsoil, roses and annual flowers will be appreciated.)



Tapestry wall hanging in 1880's photo



Octagonal Rubbish Shed

Several small projects were undertaken!



David D'Ambrosio sanded and put a fresh coat of marine varnish on the front doors.



The Garden Club started a flower bed on the south side of the house near the ramp, and added hostas around the yard. Garden Club: L. to R. Mary Gilbert, Debbie O'Malley, Charlene Mitchell, Evelyn Baldwin and Deb Jaskula



Helen Hester-Ossa and her husband Eugene Ossa donated the fabric to rebuild the window shades in the second floor sunporch on the back of the house. She sewed them with help from Sonia Berlin of Oswego Players.

SUNY Oswego Student Interns



Amanda Costa (front) working on exhibit with Senna Handley



Giovanni Anastasio scanning photos



Bailey Maier cleaning the frame of the portrait of Harriet Richardson-Bates

Volunteers



Ken Sturtz



Colleen Manion



Nan Moore



Rita Syrell

Photos taken without masks are either pre-COVID or volunteers momentarily removing masks.

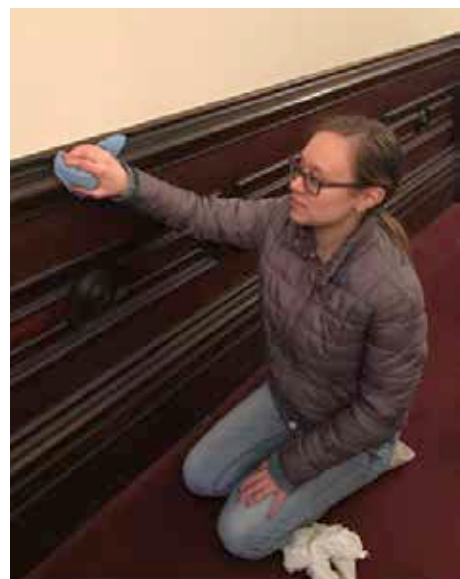


Joe Corradino

Students from the New Vision Specialized Careers Program



Sarah Jones making sketches for the next scavenger hunt



Kirsten Bell dusting the hallway molding

Calendar of Events

All events are tentative, pending the guidelines for gathering in groups. In every event we will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Oswego County Historical Society and the 75th anniversary of the Richardson-Bates House Museum.
Please check our website for updates www.rbhousemuseum.org or follow us on Facebook at Richardson-Bates House Museum.

June

Annual Meeting Oswego County Historical Society

Sunday, June 27 at 1:30 pm — Breitbeck Park Pavilion

Guest Speaker — Justin White

Presentation Titled: "Honoring and Remembering the Remarkable Pioneers & Founders of the Oswego County Historical Society & Richardson-Bates House Museum"

July

Landmark Lawn Sale Fundraiser at Richardson Bates House Museum, Date TBA

September

Historic District Walking Tour, Date TBA

December 5

Holiday Open House, Sunday, December 5, 1:00 to 5:00 pm

