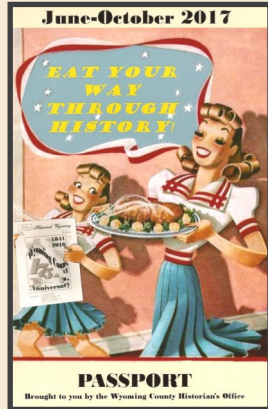




Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter

An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum "A New Look at Old News From our Town"

EAT YOUR WAY THROUGH HISTORY!



Summer of 2017 brought us an exciting new way to learn more about our county with "Eat Your Way Through History", a program created by our county historian, Cindy Amrhein, and sponsored by a grant from the Arts Council of Wyoming Co. It gave us a chance to visit twelve historical societies and museums in Wyoming County. We went to three museums each day, for a bite to eat, a brief talk by the host, and a tour. Cindy designed "passports" that were stamped at each location. We began at the Sheldon Museum on June 17, with breakfast prepared from recipes in their Bicentennial Cookbook. Sheldon and Orangeville were co-hosts, so displays were set up with the history of both towns. Betty Reisdorf gave a talk, followed by a spelling bee. It was exciting to have guests there who had never even

heard of us! We were off to a great start, and continued on to the Bennington museum for lunch in their gazebo. Bennington was once known for its covered bridges, which no longer exist. Their former locations are indicated by historical markers placed by the society. Dessert was at the Attica Prison Preservation Foundation Museum.

In July, our assignment was to visit the County Historian's Office in Warsaw, and August, see the historical buildings at the Wyoming Co. Fair in Pike. On August 26 our adventure resumed with breakfast at the Warsaw Historical Society Gates House. We then traveled to the museum of the Perry Fire Dept. for lunch in the midst of their antique fire trucks. Next we had dessert at the Wyoming Historical Pioneer Cabin at Silver Lake,

(Cont. on page 2)

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Betty Reisdorf giving a presentation on the history of the Sheldon Schoolhouse. County Historian Cindy Amrhein is on the right, in the chef's hat.

EAT YOUR WAY THROUGH HISTORY

(continued from page 1)

which has many buildings full of artifacts.

Sept. 30 found us in Attica at their museum having breakfast and a tour by Mr. Dean June. We were treated to a lunch of homemade soups and bread by the Historical Society at Middlebury Academy in Wyoming, which was the first academy of higher learning west of Canandaigua when it opened in 1817. Next was a trek to the Covington Historical Society, which just celebrated their Bicentennial with a driving tour of their historical buildings. We heard about the history of apple production and had a delicious apple dessert. Our last day, Oct. 21, began at the Eagle History Center for breakfast with a brief history of the town. Arcade Historical Society had lunch set up for us on the porch of the Gibby House on this beautiful day. Their display, "Ladies Choice - NY Women get the Vote",

commemorated the 100th anniversary of that day in 1917. It is hard to imagine that some of our grandmothers did not have that right. Arcade had a group of 128 women who were very active in the suffragette movement. Our last stop was Castile, where the historical society put on an interesting skit, along with dessert. Each museum had its own unique history and displays. This was a great opportunity to see what the other museums in our county are doing and get acquainted with new friends who share our love of history.

Cindy has a new project in the works for 2018: "Treasure Hunt Through History". We can't wait to see what she comes up with next!

By Jeanne Mest



Betty Reisdorf, Classroom Curator, shows maps, books and materials that were used by teachers and students in 1890.



Some Sheldon "students" having fun.



Laury Lakas, Town of Orangeville Historian

Spotlight on:

Laury Lakas, Town of Orangeville Historian

Eat Your Way Through History gave us a chance to get to know **Orangeville Historian, Laury Lakas**, and her husband **Steve**. We worked together on hosting the first event. Laury has a vast collection of history of the Town of Orangeville. She brought some very interesting displays of Orangeville history to the Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum, which were available to see throughout the summer. We look forward to many future projects together.

2017 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Our 2017 Scholarship at **Pioneer High School** was awarded to **Miss Anna Brouse**, who is presently attending SUNY Brockport in their nursing program. In high school she excelled in Math and Science, but her best subject has always been History, because she truly enjoys learning about it and different cultures around the world. Her love of this subject inspired her to take every history class available at her high school, where she was exceptionally good in academics, as well as singing in school, church and musical festivals, and working as a restaurant cashier. Anna was a member of the National Honor Society and volunteered at Special Olympics and Red Cross blood drives. She has a passion for caring for others and hopes to spend her life helping and supporting those in need, volunteering in mission work and possibly serving in the Peace Corps. One of her recommendations came from a teacher: "It is Anna's extraordinary expertise and passion for perfection and dedication to the Music Department, Pioneer's administration, staff, student body, community and her family that distinguishes Anna from other students."

"History shapes the lives of every single person on this planet. It serves as a teacher, guiding us to make the right decisions and avoid the wrong ones. Preserving history shows respect for those who lived before us, solidifies a community's past and molds its future."

~Anna Brouse

Miss Jessica Perry was chosen to receive our scholarship at **Holland High School**. She is attending Mercyhurst University, pursuing a degree in Hospitality, Tourism Management and Marketing. Her best subject is math, but she also enjoys photography, using film to take pictures of old and vintage looking places. Jessica has been a cast member in school musicals and participated in Holland athletics, and church. Her recommendations from her teachers and community leaders describe her as being trustworthy and truthful, teachable, and having determination and perseverance. Jessica pointed out in her application that preserving old buildings, such as the Sheldon Schoolhouse, is beneficial not only for a community's culture, but also for its local economy.

"My favorite thing about history is that I get to learn so much about life before me and how events of the past shaped the world of the present. History lets me learn about a world that I otherwise would not have known."

~Jessica Perry

Miss Emily Bonner received our scholarship at **Attica High School**. Her goal is a teaching degree in Childhood Education. Her favorite class was Participation in Government. Emily belongs to the Varysburg Fire Dept. Auxiliary, volunteering there and at her church, along with working at a part-time job as a waitress. She enjoyed playing in the Attica Marching Band and JV Girls Basketball. Emily earned a place on the Honor Rolls at both Attica High School and the Genesee Valley Education Partnership. Happy, honest, caring, respectful, good listener, positive attitude, willing to work, teachable, loyal and ethical were some of Emily's characteristics mentioned in her recommendations. Emily hopes to be a strong role model to her future students, and instill in them the importance of volunteering and community service; helping them learn to give of their time and talent without expecting anything in return except the satisfaction of knowing they helped someone or something.

Years ago it was a challenge for kids to even get to school. Often they would have to quit, to work on the family farm, yet they were successful owning businesses and supporting their families as well as the community."

~Emily Bonner

I think **Miss Dorothea Kirsch**, who was the teacher at Sheldon Schoolhouse No. 10 for many decades, would have been pleased to see the students who are receiving our scholarships, some of whom are following in her footsteps.

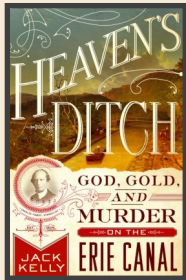
The Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Scholarship is one way we try to give back to the community, by encouraging our young people to continue their education, in hopes they will continue to give back to others. Scholarships are available at Pioneer, Holland and Attica High School. Applications can be obtained in the school guidance office.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY UPDATES

- This summer our Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum got a facelift, when it was painted and new doors were purchased. Special thank you all those that help to maintain our building and enhance our beautiful museum!
- We are closed for the winter, but are always available to help you with local or family history. We will open the museum for visitors upon request (weather permitting) Contact info is on page 8.
- Our monthly meetings will resume on March 15, at 7:00 pm at the Schoolhouse, and all are welcome. Its time to start thinking about new displays, so bring your ideas.
- In June we begin Summer Hours, We will be open Tuesday Afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00.

SPECIAL VISITORS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This winter we received an exciting addition to our records. **Elizabeth (Gerhardt) Love** and her husband Jim have done extensive work in recording cemetery listings, many of which can be seen on findagrave.com. This time she outdid herself! Elizabeth compiled an “**Index of Topics**” for **Historical Wyoming**, covering September 1947 to March 2017, Volumes 1 -63. Additionally, she shared a copy of her booklet “Names Printed in the Necrology Column for Historical Wyoming, Covering 1947-1983, 1988, and 1997”. This will be an invaluable resource for anyone researching any Wyoming County history recorded in Historical Wyoming during the last 70 years. For more information or to view the index, visit their website. Thank you so much, Elizabeth Love!



Thank you to **Ken Winslow and Jean Tucker** of New York City for their gift of the book, *Heaven's Ditch; God, Gold and Murder on the Erie Canal*, for our historical library. In a future issue, we will learn about their research of their Revolutionary War ancestor, Job Winslow, who fought along with George Washington at Valley Forge. We enjoyed their visit and hope they will return again.

A special Thank You to **Douglas and Olga Kilian**, for their recent donation of an antique bean sorter. It looks great in our entryway!



We always appreciate donations of historical records and artifacts. We can scan your photos into our files, if you bring them in, so you can keep your originals. This information may be very helpful to visitors and researchers in the future.

WYOMING COUNTY HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

Don't forget when doing your research to check with our County Historian's Office in Warsaw. They have a wealth of historical records for the entire county. **Cindy Amrhein** and her assistant, **Sally Smith**, are always pleased to assist. They are open daily and on the third Saturday of the month.

Cindy Amrhein, Wyoming County Historian, 26 Linwood Ave. Warsaw, NY 14569 (585)786-8818;

Email: camrhein@wyomingco.net

<https://www.facebook.com/WyomingCountyHistoriansOffice>

WYOMING COUNTY FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

The Wyoming County Federation of Historical Societies hosted their yearly spring workshop at the Middlebury Historical Society on May 13, with special speakers and folk music. Their annual fall dinner and meeting was held October 23rd at the Glen Iris Inn. These events are open to everyone. We look forward to seeing what their plans will be in 2018.

BRINGING FAMILY HISTORY TO LIFE

Researching our family histories is so much more than listing names and dates in a genealogy form. What really brings that history to life are the adventures we have along the way, visiting the actual places where our ancestors lived and often finding previously unknown relatives, who can fill in details that we could not have known otherwise.

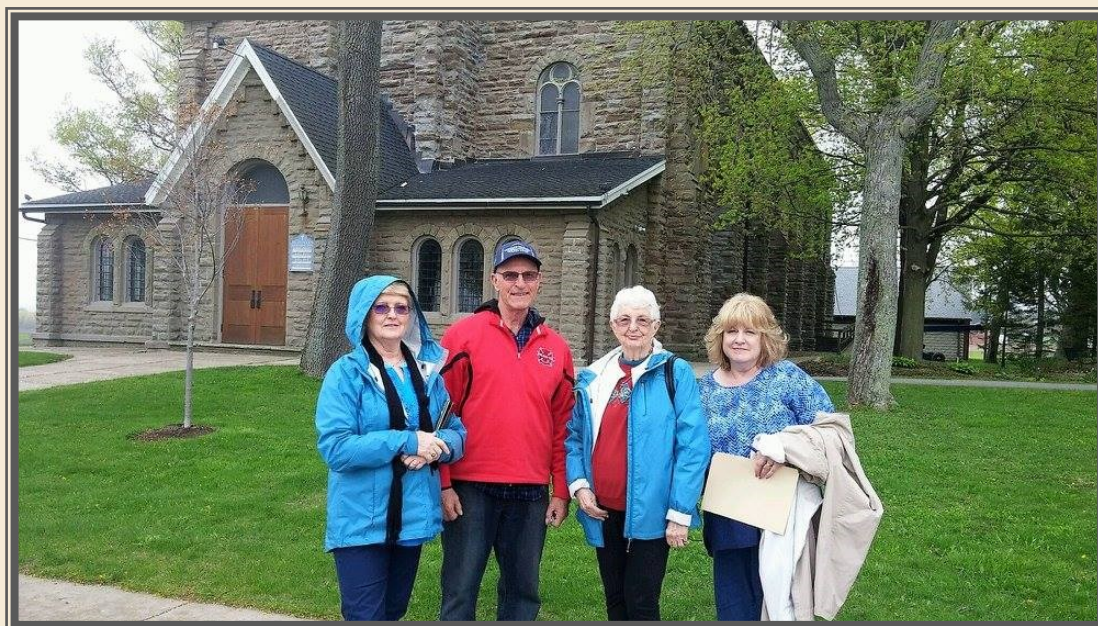
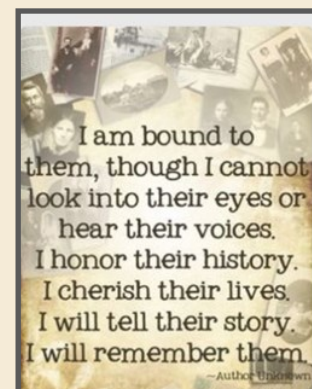
In this issue, **Connie Luker** tells how she got hooked on family history, and her memorable visit to Sheldon to find her ancestors here. After two years of emails, stories and research, we finally got to meet Connie, her sister Audrey and niece Renee, descendants of the Bauer family in Sheldon, when they traveled from Georgia and Texas to Sheldon in April. They enjoyed visiting the Schoolhouse Museum, lunch at the Flip Side and a tour of St. Cecilia's, the church of their ancestors. What a thrill it was for

them to see the stained glass window with the name of their great uncle Nicholas Bauer, brother of Connie's "Mysterious Grandfather" (see Sept. 2015). We searched and found the graves of their Sheldon ancestors at St. Cecilia's and St. Joseph's cemeteries in Varysburg and they saw the home of their great grandparents. Dinner at the Byrnclyff finished off that day perfectly. They returned the next day for a trip to our county historian's office, then to the county building for some records, and a drive to see Letchworth Park. They also enjoyed seeing Niagara Falls, and the Lucille Ball - Desi Arnaz Museum in Jamestown, where they had fun appearing in a Vitameatavegamin commercial! We hope they will visit us again.

Thank you, Connie, for sharing your story. In our next newsletter, we will learn about Trish Hackett Nicola and her memorable trip to trace her ancestry in Leimersheim, Germany.

"I must say that being there was worth everything. Even though we had begun to understand more as we worked on the family history on paper, being there has made it real."

Connie Luker



PJ Almeter giving our guests a tour of St. Cecilia's Church and Cemetery

ADVENTURES IN FAMILY HISTORY

Why Should You Trace Your Ancestors' Roots?

By Connie Luker, Cumming, Georgia

In a lonely little cemetery in the center of Illinois, with farmland all around, I stood in wonder where all four of my paternal great grandparents were buried. As the wind blew gently across the prairie and the tall native grass waved back and forth, I felt a strange and moving reverence. Here I was, standing in the exact same atmosphere where these ancestors lived, raised their children, farmed the land, worshiped their God, and where their days on this earth ended. I had never been there before and I was in awe.

I was also hooked. That trip was with my husband, but I made another trip to that cemetery with my sister and niece. We contacted a cousin who took us there and showed us many more relatives and explained the layout of the cemetery. Now we were all hooked!

We found another cemetery that day where our paternal great-great grandparents were buried. Again, the strange and reverent feelings were with us as we stood where these ancestors lived, worshiped and died. I had already begun to research our roots, but from that point on I have been on a constant quest to find out all I can about our ancestors and their lives. We found that even though I researched, mapped, charted and wrote, the experience of standing where they stood produced a unique understanding of our roots. Tracing our ancestors' emigration movements and land ownership in America so we could actually go where they had been and stand on their ground has opened our eyes to some very different understandings of how we came to be.

As we were planning a trip to visit our birthplaces, my sister's in Belvidere, IL and mine in DeKalb, IL, an almost surreal thing happened. I received a note on Find A Grave from a young lady who wanted to know if I had any information about the 14 year old girl, Bernita Frances Bowers, who had passed away in 1914. I responded that she was my aunt. We began to email and I found that her interest was in researching the house where she was living, the house where my aunt was born. We agreed to meet in two weeks when we would be in Belvidere. The local history



Grave of Great Grandfather Frank Bauer at St. Cecilia's

librarian had been working with this lady and was amazingly helpful. We met with both of them. Unbelievable! This young woman lived in the house my Great Grandfather Grover had built for my grandmother! Grandma Bowers was married there, had the first daughter there, and lo and behold, we discovered that our own mother was also born there, not in the second house as we thought. The young lady took us into the very house our great grandfather built and showed us original windows, woodwork, the attic bracing, and all around. What an experience it was to be inside the house where the grandmother we knew was a young lady, got married, and had her children! And to realize our great grandfather built it with his own hands! We then drove to the second house which we remembered, and had only really ever thought of as Grandma's house. It was right where we remembered, but after driving from one house to the other and to the cemetery where grandmother walked every week to take flowers, we were gripped with an understanding of so much more about our mother, her parents, and their life.

On that same trip, we spent some time reconnecting with some friends and relatives in DeKalb, IL, finding the hospital where I was born, and meeting with a stranger whom I had made contact with a few months earlier. He had information about the Interstate Aircraft Corporation that took over the Wurlitzer Organ plant for war production during WWII. Our interest in that came from the fact that we knew our father resigned from his teaching position and went to work in that plant for a year, but we didn't know much about it. This fellow had been doing research and looking for descendants of those who worked there. Oh my! What an evening we had with the researcher and his wife! We were treated to dinner, a lovely presentation about the history of the Interstate Aircraft Corporation and a history video of the town where we had grown up. At the end of the evening we were presented with a certificate of appreciation for my father's participation in the War effort and a unique item – a left-over nose lens from the DRONES they were building and testing! These were the **original test DRONES!** My dad never knew. Each person and department only did their own job and knew little of other areas-classified. Dad always said he was just a number cruncher. Later I found his resignation to go back to teaching with all his information and he was listed as a 'clerk'. If we hadn't made these trips we would never have known these wonderful things. Our own remembrances and the stories we had heard were only a small beginning of the understanding we now have of our family's history.

Another experience we had was in Potter County, PA, where we wanted to find the grave of our maternal great grandmother, Cynthia Perkins Grover. We followed my mother's journal instructions and found the cemetery and our great grandmother's stone. As other historians, the county historian was tremendously helpful as she and her husband took us around to our family's properties and cemeteries. Again, just being there gave us a whole new

perspective on where my grandmother Bowers was born and grew up. The history of the area, the migration patterns and reasons for migration gave us further understanding of how and why our Grover family moved from New York to Pennsylvania and on to Northern Illinois where they lived out their lives.

A really amazing trip was when our goal was to visit Plymouth, MA and see where our Mayflower ancestors came upon this land. The place we wound up staying turned out to be in Jamestown, RI. Well, that was good in a number of ways as we had many ancestors in the migration to Pawling, New York who came through various parts of this area. And so much more, as we discovered! The Pilgrim history was everything we had hoped for and more because we were able to find Rocky Nook where our Pilgrim ancestors, John Howland and Elizabeth Tilley, lived and raised their family. Again, it was a humbling and moving experience to stand on the same place on this earth where they had been, to see where they had lived and breathed, and to feel a connection to them. Another aspect presented itself, as well, when we met some other descendants and found out their connection to us. Later, standing there at Rocky Nook, we could think about a young ancestor, Hannah Howland, playing with her brothers and sisters. It was another kind of understanding that began to seep into our thoughts. We had been mainly thinking of family trees on paper, not so much about children, living, growing and interacting, and the true realities of family life.

Later on that same trip, we went to Providence, RI, where another ancestor was an original land owner. At the Roger Williams National Park, a ranger was particularly helpful in giving us the history of the land and was able to point out the exact land today that was their portion. We would never have known if he hadn't explained how the property started where it did today, because part of the river had been filled in. So the actual property that had originally been on the river began a half mile or so above where the river is today. We also learned a great deal more about the part that different religious groups played, in who married whom and where they moved to and lived. Several cemeteries later, we finally found the one we were looking for in West Warwick, RI. While being in this area, we realized that our ancestors would have traveled by sea for the most part in the 1600s and early 1700s, from Boston to Newport, Providence, Little Compton, and New Bedford, and their occupations were often related to shipping and ship building. This was another new perspective we hadn't thought much about previously. As has now become a common occurrence, we felt so much more understanding of how our ancestors lived and moved through history toward where we were born and raised in Northern Illinois.

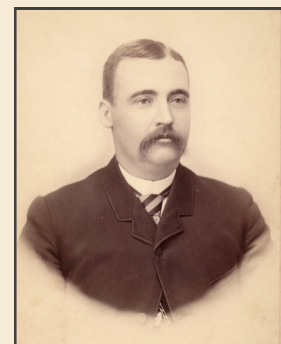
The latest and one of our best trips, was last April, when we went to the **Town of Sheldon, in Wyoming County, Western New York**. This was a particularly special place that we have always wondered about, where Frank Bowers (Bauer), our maternal grandfather, was born and raised. (See "**My Mysterious Grandfather**", Sept. 2015). Our mother made her first trip there in 1930 and again in the 1970s and 1980s. She met a number of

her aunts and uncles and cousins, but my sister and I had never met any of this family until meeting one cousin through Find A Grave. We had always been very curious about everything involving our mysterious grandfather. We were surprised in a number of ways on our visit. The landscape of the area was incredibly beautiful! The farm where my grandfather's family lived and 10 children grew to adulthood is still there and is a lovely working farm. The most amazing thing is that the original family home (added to and remodeled over time) still stands in the same place!

Our lifelong ideas of what it was like there were nothing like the reality of being there. "**Buffalo Hill**" that was written in Bible records as the birthplace of some of the children, was nothing at all like what we expected. When I first began researching, I was looking for a town, or a cemetery, something with the name, Buffalo Hill. Nothing showed up anywhere. Later, when I found the only cousin we know, everything became more clear about the area. But, I must say that being there was worth everything. Now we are content that we actually know the lay of the land where Buffalo Hill is a ridge behind the original farm. That landform was an everyday presence in our family's life. Even though we had begun to understand more as we worked on the family history on paper, being there has made it real. As often before, we were befriended by the local historical society and a dedicated volunteer, who created an itinerary that best helped us see everything and make the most use of our time.

It has been extremely rewarding to trace our roots. It has been enlightening as to the reality of how and why different family members merged and then migrated further into the heart of the country as time progressed. The history of our country and regions where our ancestors lived is now real to us! In most cases, religion or religious persecution was the catalyst for movement and change. In other cases, they could not produce enough on the land and moved on. In almost every case, family members stayed close and often moved together to the same area. It was always a quest for land. They all wanted to own the best piece they could find.

My dad used to say that if you owned a piece of God's Green Earth, you should cherish it and make it beautiful, produce something good on it, and be thankful for it. That must be why I love to dig in the dirt on my little piece of land and the reason I love to dig in my roots, to understand my ancestry, thankful for the lives of those who came before me.



Frank A. Bowers

November 26, 2017

Constance L. (Leach) (Robnett) Luker



Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main Street
Strykersville, NY 14145
Phone: 585-457-9509
585-457-3444 or 585-457-3061
Email: jgreenmest@hotmail.com or
metzgermaryann@gmail.com

Sheldon Historical Society Officers:

President - Michael Szucs
Vice President - Carol Felski
Secretary - Jeanne Mest
Financial Secretary - Donna Kirsch
Board Members:
P.J. Almeter, Chairman; Janet Kirsch,
Elizabeth Reisdorf, Elaine Almeter,
Marilyn Smithley, Gertrude Hyman.
Classroom Curator - Elizabeth Reisdorf
Archival Curator - Jeanne Mest
Museum Curator - Marilyn Smithley

Newsletter compiled by Mary Ann Metzger and
Jeanne Mest, with the help of many volunteers.
Submissions are welcome. Send to the email
above, or call (716) 474-3156 for information.

IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER AND WISH TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER, PLEASE JOIN!

The Sheldon Historical Society always welcomes new members! If you find local history interesting, we hope you will make a membership contribution and join us. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the history of Sheldon, or a desire to volunteer services, without restriction to age or place of residence. We maintain a State-Chartered Schoolhouse Museum. There is always work to do to maintain the structure, continue our research of data and archives and preserve treasured artifacts.

Do you love history and being a part of preserving it??



For only **\$10 a year**, you can have access to all our member benefits:

- Monthly meeting and voting privileges for all members
- Access to specific historical information, pictures, resources
- Complimentary tours of the school house museum
- Complimentary newsletters (like this one!)

Its easy to sign up, just send us your name, address, phone, and email along with a check payable to the Town of Sheldon Historical Society.

Mail to: Donna Kirsch, Financial Secretary, 4458 Richardson Rd, Arcade NY 14009

Current Members: Please update your membership. Dues to be paid yearly by July 1.

Thank you for your support!