

2015

Annual Report



**Ravena Coeymans  
Historical Society**

# Ravena Coeymans Historical Society

## 2015 Annual Report

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### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Ravena Coeymans Historical Society is to recall the past by preserving, sharing and educating.

### **Vision Statement**

As custodians of the past, the Ravena Coeymans Historical Society preserves the rich history and diverse culture of our community. We educate through exhibits, programs and outreach.

### **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees met monthly to conduct business of the organization. At the society's annual meeting held in September, members voted for trustees whose terms had expired and who had agreed to serve again. Members of the 2015-2016 board are Ralph Bianco, John Bonafide, Joe Boehlke, Nancy Bruno, Suzanne Celella, Paul Lawler, Linda Peterman, David Ross, Marie Sturges, Dennis Whalen and Roger Wilber.

In October the following officers were elected to serve for the 2015-2016 term: Ralph Bianco, President; David Ross, Vice-President; Marie Sturges, Treasurer; Linda Peterman, Secretary. Joseph Boehlke was appointed Museum Curator and Historian.

### **Location**

The Ravena Coeymans Historical Society is located on the second floor of the Village of Ravena municipal building at 15 Mountain Road, Ravena, New York. Its meetings were conducted in the Village courtroom on the first floor, generally during the second Sunday of the fall, winter and spring months.

The Board of Trustees continued to be grateful for and continues to be appreciative of the number of years the Village Board has supported the society.

## **Museum**

Information and objects collected and donated were generally from the Town of Coeymans or surrounding areas. Each item was accessioned, cataloged and preserved before being added to the collection, and to avoid damage maintained at a proper temperature and humidity.

Most Thursdays the society continued to host visitors interested particularly in learning more about their ancestors. Some were local residents while others were from out of town.

- **Exhibits**

The museum has designed permanent and special exhibits. One permanent exhibit illustrates diverse businesses in the Town of Coeymans, especially those which had existed on Main Street, Ravena. There are examples of household products (e.g., milk and medicine bottles), fixtures found in grocery stores, business advertisements, school books, and places of social activities. Others include genealogy of the Coeymans family, a reconstructed head of the skull found near the Coeymans House, objects from the Coeymans Reformed Church, Native American artifacts and a railroad mural. And on the first floor of the village offices, there is an exhibit of railroad artifacts.

This year's special exhibits focused on the Civil War sesquicentennial and the hundredth anniversary of the incorporation of Ravena. These were replaced in December with the Blaisdell exhibit.

Earlier in the year the society created a new design for the newly named "Harry A. Sturges Archives and Research Center." Walls were moved, office space modified and a new entrance opened. The changes gave easier access to the ice harvesting exhibit.

- **Acquisitions**

Many artifacts were donated to the museum this year. For example, the Blaisdell family donated forty items, augmenting the family's existing collection. Many were on display at the Annual Open House held in December. In addition, the museum received from the Friday family surveying equipment, maps and plans

used by professional engineer and land surveyor, Claude Friday. Another significant donation came from the Johnson Newspaper Corp., which donated the remaining bound copies of the *Ravena News Herald*, issues from 1959 to 2009. During the entire year they also donated weekly copies of the paper. The society now has in its archives a nearly complete collection of local Town of Coeymans newspapers.

## Historian

The historian responded to many inquiries about local history and/or guided a researcher to locate resources (e.g., museum's archives, cemeteries, state library, Internet). Requests were more often from those living outside the community who had been seeking family history. Also, when some people asked questions about local history on the society's Facebook page and other social media, the historian in collaboration with the Town of Coeymans historian responded.

## Preservation

- Overview

The year was a busy one in preserving many of the collection's oversized items. Most of the maps were stored in a "rolled up" fashion, which meant they needed to be flattened and, in some instances, repaired before they could be placed in Mylar sleeves. The other oversized items included documents and framed pictures featuring different subjects—school photographs, diplomas, certificates and even copies of the surrender of the Germans and Japanese from World War II. Although most of them were perfectly safe in frames, storage in the museum is finite. Therefore, frames were removed, documents/pictures placed in Mylar sleeves and for easier access filed in an oversized cabinet.

- Methodology

When objects had been donated, only acid-free containers were used because acidic products can emit gases, causing damage over time.

Preservation was performed based on the amount of time a procedure takes: Level 1, up to 15 minutes; Level 2, 16 minutes up to 2 hours; Level 3, over 2 hours.

Level 1

✚ Mylar sleeves	172
✚ Repairs	97
✚ Surface Cleaning	3
✚ Removed from Frames	55
✚ Maps rolled (too large for Mylar)	14

## Level 2

✚ Rehang book	2
✚ Repairs	3

## Level 3

✚ None

## **Outreach**

### ▪ Education

The impact of education is vital to the historical society. Sharing, connecting and engaging the community were evident this year via exhibits, guest speakers, tours, website ([coeymanshistory.org](http://coeymanshistory.org)), social media ([facebook.com/Ravena Coeymans Historical Society](https://facebook.com/RavenaCoeymansHistoricalSociety)) and the Annual Open House.

In December the museum hosted four second-grade classes from Pieter B. Coeymans Elementary School. The students were enthusiastic about their visit, asked many questions and became fascinated with the Coeymans skull.

In August the society held its annual picnic at Joralemon Park, which was well attended and open to the public.

### • Partnerships

At a monthly meeting Judith Wines, the new director of the RCS Community Library, suggested possibilities of how the library could partner with the society.

Over the last few years the Albany County Historical Society has been reaching out to other county historical societies with a goal of sharing information about preserving area history for future generations. In fall 2014, Board members attended the first meeting of this group at the Knox Historical Society. Several meetings have since been held, and at an early spring meeting this year, the group decided to be called the Albany County History Collaborative. Spearheaded by the Albany County Historical Society, which is headquartered at the Ten Broeck mansion in Albany, its staff applied for and received a grant used to create a website for the Collaborative to increase awareness about Albany County and its communities. This opportunity will allow all historical societies in the county to link their websites to a primary site, giving all groups more visibility and researchers additional resources.

On Saturday, July 11, our society hosted the group's quarterly meeting in Ravena. It was an opportunity for many board members to hear about the Collaborative, view progress made on the website and meet with members of

other historical societies. We also had the opportunity to listen to David Palmquist, former head of Museum Chartering for the NYS Education Department and currently executive director of ESCOT, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation that provides support for other non-profits. Palmquist highlighted the responsibilities of a historical society and leadership needed to sustain it.

## **Newsletter**

Published twice during the year, *The Hitching Post* featured articles of local historical interest, one a community member submitted and the other a society member wrote. Rev. Antonio Booth's article "Riverview Missionary Baptist Church: An Historical Perspective" appeared in the first issue, while Lynn Van derzee Christie's "The Ziegler Family: Immigrant Opportunists" was published in the second. The editorial staff encouraged members to submit articles, photos, maps and letters.

In addition to articles, the newsletter included a list of members and business sponsors, information about joining the society, and museum hours. Hard copies of the newsletter were mailed to members and placed in the RCS Community Library. Both issues appeared on the society's website.

## **Monthly Meetings/Guest Speakers**

For September-November and January-May monthly meetings, program coordinator Mary Farinelli scheduled guest speakers. Two speakers graduated from RCS High School—Cynthia Elliot and Richard A. Fuhrman, Esq. The programs were recorded and available for viewing on the website.

January 11, 2015 - ***Of Dartmoor Prison I'll Tell All I Can***

In this musical program, Paul Mercer told the little-known story of the American prisoners of war held in the notorious Dartmoor Prison during the War of 1812.

Feb. 15, 2015 - ***Clifford Mealy's Version of "12 Years a Slave"***

Historical re-enactor Clifford Oliver Mealy told the story of Solomon Northup, whose kidnapping in 1841 and his time spent in slavery was brought to the screen.

Mar. 8, 2015 - ***Wicked Albany: Lawlessness and Liquor in the Prohibition Era***

Criminal Justice Professor and author Dr. Frankie Bailey provided a vivid picture of crime, violence and law enforcement in Albany during the Prohibition Era (1919 – 1932).

Apr. 12, 2015 - ***Coping With Life's Necessaries: Cleanliness and Sanitation in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century***

Schuyler Mansion Staff presented a program on the challenges of daily life faced by our ancestors - washing dishes, going to the bathroom, taking a bath, disposing of garbage.

May 17, 2015 - ***An Examination of the 1915 New York State Census***

Richard A. Fuhrman, Esq. led an examination of the 1915 Census for the Town of Coeymans and what it reveals about civic, social, and economic life here 100 years ago.

September 13, 2015 - ***The Art of Surveying Now and Then***  
Cynthia Elliot, a local surveyor, provided an historical overview of the art of surveying and the equipment used with some famous and not so famous local highlights.

October 11, 2015 - ***The Ice Harvesting Industry***  
Tom Ragosta of the Watervliet Historical Society presented a history of the ice harvesting industry along the Hudson River, including Watervliet and Coeymans Landing.

November 8, 2015 - ***Wee Willie Winter's Eve***  
Shelby Mattice, curator at the Bronck Museum, presented a program exploring the challenges of winter and life on a Hudson Valley Dutch farmstead in the 1600s.

## **Finance**

- **Banks**

The society has savings and checking accounts in two banks—The National Bank of Coxsackie and The Bank of Greene County. The treasurer prepared monthly reports citing beginning and closing balances, expenditures and revenues.

- **Budget**

At the January Board of Trustees meeting, the treasurer distributed a spreadsheet of 2010-2014 expenditures used to draft a proposed budget. After discussion, a revised budget was approved on 5 February. The Board also received four quarterly reports, indicating the amount spent in each budget category.

- **End-of-Year Report**

The treasurer prepared a spreadsheet which listed each month's expenditures, revenues, and bank balances, with a final balance of bank accounts on 12/31/2015.

- **Membership/Sponsorship Drives**

Letters to previous and potential members and sponsors were sent and acknowledged. During the year 121 members joined the society. Twenty-eight lifetime members, an increase of 2 from the previous year. Twenty-six business sponsors contributed three becoming new members.

## Looking Ahead

- **Direction**

The society will consider options about its future. Are there changes that should be made to our constitution? Should better goals and plans be set for how to achieve them?

- **Outreach**

The society will continue to work with local schools and other community organizations to share the rich history of our area.

- **Space**

Although the trustees of the historical society are uncertain about the number of artifacts that might be donated in the coming year, they have become increasingly aware of the museum's capacity to store them. The research and archives center has remained cramped, making it difficult to locate needed resources. The curator has had to make hard decisions about what could be accepted, and the Board of Trustees continues to grapple with alternatives.

- **Preservation**

The society will continue to examine how to sustain collections, making them more accessible and giving them proper protection.

- **Exhibits**

The society will continue to update and change some of the special exhibits based on the interests of Town of Coeymans residents.

- **Membership**

The society will continue outreach efforts, trying to encourage young families to join and students to volunteer. Most of all, it will continue to rely on valued members, friends and associates to sustain interest in our rich local history.