



“What is essential is invisible to the eye.

From “The Little Prince” by Antoine de Saint-Exupery

THIS IS A TRUTH IN OUR MUSEUM. Some of the most important work of 2022 will never be seen by the general public. Although the past decade has seen many highly visible accomplishments: painting the house, rebuilding the octagonal shed roof and replacing the crumbling retaining wall around the sidewalk, this year’s important projects were subtle and invisible. You would only know that they happened if, in 20 years, our recent infrastructure improvements



and collections work mean that the house is still intact and researchers are remotely accessing our collections.

Two people need to be especially acknowledged for contributing to the success of 2022:



☞ **Neal Johnson** started volunteering in the summer of 2021 by repairing the back door. Its base was so swollen with rot that we couldn’t get it open and closed. He then undertook an evaluation of every window in the house (there are almost 100 of them!) and began by rebuilding the 5 worst. Along the way, he recruited a body of talented volunteers, all retirees from the Fitzpatrick nuclear power plant who have brought their considerable skills to work on the house. Neal replaced many feet of corroded and dripping plumbing pipes in the basement. He tackled basement flooding that’s been causing rot in the walls

and mold in upper floors and solved it with a sump pump and dehumidifiers. A crumbling structural wall in the basement was repaired because he deemed it essential.

He then started evaluating the 150 year old steam boiler and radiator system which is not functioning well and has leaking and blocked radiators. This is the biggest problem to tackle in 2023 and 2024.

☞ **Evelyn Frederiksen**, museum assistant since the summer of 2021, has transformed the management of the collections. Recently graduated from SUNY Oswego with a degree in Art and a minor in Museum Studies, she has brought database and graphics knowledge and strong organizational skills to manage the inner workings of the museum. Her efforts exceed the requirements of the part-time, minimum wage position for which she was hired. This spring, she recruited and is coordinating the schedule and tasks of six interns and several volunteers. Under her efficient management, this team is accelerating the digitization of collections and getting them online, as well as undertaking major cleaning and restoration projects. She has moved us into a system of file-sharing through Google Drive, where anyone can add to inventories and finding aids. She’s assisted with writing grants and was a major author of the new collections management policy. Oh, and she gives tours!

In the void left since 2009 by the loss of Terry Prior, our former director, Evelyn has stepped up to start to fill that professional role.

Mary Kay Stone

Mary Kay Stone

President, Board of Trustees



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Annual Giving

We set a lofty goal for 2022.

In honor of Max Richardson’s birth year, 1838, we set our sights on raising \$18,380. As of December 31st, your generosity brought us just over \$18,000! **Thank you so much to all who gave!**

Eva Corradino
Chair, Annual Giving

Except for an occasional grant for a special program, please remember that the Society relies primarily on the generosity of supporters like you, who recognize that preserving stories of the past gives meaning to the future.

Thank you to the recipients of this newsletter!



BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

We made the museum more structurally sound!

Excess moisture was causing this basement wall to crumble and erode to the point where it had a hole all the way through to the other side. Anthony M. Pauldine Construction and Burger Masonry rebuilt it with similar bricks.

We made the museum more accessible!

There is a new door and a resurfaced accessible ramp! Last year, we couldn’t even open the door because the bottom was so swollen with decay and separated joints that it stuck! The ramp supports were not in good shape and boards kept popping up. Neal Johnson replaced that door this year, with a fiberglass one that resembles the original and replaced the decking of the ramp with long lasting engineered wood planking. He was assisted by Brian Folgherait. This was funded by the 2021 COVID Recovery grant from the City of Oswego.

The front sidewalk to the entrance had sunk, making the first step onto the stairs much too high. With partial funding from the Oswego Renaissance Association block grant program, we were able to have D&S Landscaping lift all of the slate sidewalk

slabs and regrade them to the proper slope.

In addition, LED bulbs have replaced most of the standard bulbs in chandeliers and sconces in the period rooms, not only giving brighter light for visitors, but reducing harmful UV light on the collections.

We made the museum safer!

Neal Johnson has recruited an amazing band of volunteer technical experts! Outstanding in this group is Dan Ruddy, retired electrical engineer, who after replacing our phones last year, started on a comprehensive analysis of the electrical system in the house. He and his friend Brian Drain have traced 90% of the circuits to every light fixture, appliance, switch and outlet. When Dan discovered cracked circuit breakers in the 50 year old main service panel, he took immediate action to get estimates. Rombough Electric agreed to donate parts and gave us a very good deal on a replacement of the panel, which was completed with his licensed electrician and the help of our volunteers.

Dan Ruddy has also replaced broken switches on period light fixtures allowing us to use them again and found and repaired some other potential fire hazards in the wiring.

SIGNIFICANT DONATIONS

One of the most significant collections ever donated to the Oswego County Historical Society arrived in July.

Anne Prichard, descendent of Alfred Nathaniel Beadle and Mary Frances Bentley, donated a huge collection of family letters, diaries, documents and Civil War memorabilia from the 1850's to the early twentieth century. Beadle was a quartermaster for the 147th Regiment of Oswego which fought at Gettysburg. He later was a storekeeper in Pulaski and an Oswego County Sheriff.

Her son **Tim Dallet and his wife Joanne** drove the most precious items up from Arkansas, including two field desks, two swords and some items of clothing. The archive, beautifully organized in sixteen boxes by archivist **Tony Wappel** of Arkansas, will be a treasure trove for researchers of previously unknown primary resource documents.

We also received a collection of Oswego memorabilia from **Kathleen Haas**, including Oswego City Directories, postcards, and photos. Some of the duplicates, including several Oswego City Directories, will be sold in the Not So Silent Auction this year.



Joanne and Tim Dallett (left, center) and president Mary Kay Stone pose with their recently donated Civil War-era swords and field desk.

ONGOING RESEARCH

Natalie Woodall continues to use the archives for her famous Masons of Oswego articles in the Oswego Palladium Times and research on the Grand Army of the Republic.

Casey Smith, co-editor of the Paradox yearbook at Oswego High School, visited looking for some missing 1920's yearbooks,

Bob Perkins, board member, continues researching for his next book.

We continue to serve the public with dozens of inquiries each month from reporters, authors, educators, genealogists and the general public.



Natalie Woodall with a scrapbook from our archives.



Casey Smith views a 1920's "Mur-Mur."

DIGGING HISTORY

AT THE RICHARDSON-BATES HOUSE

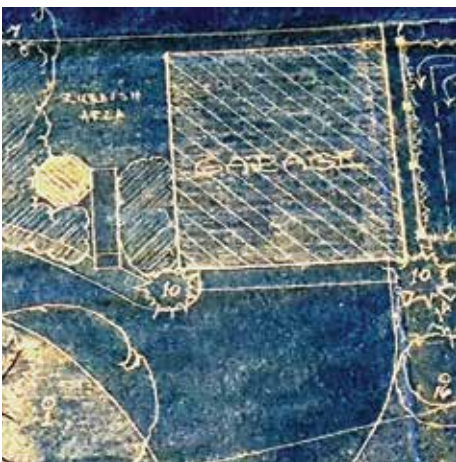
In June of last year, we were ecstatic to host a group of SUNY Oswego Anthropology students for an Archaeological Field School at the Richardson-Bates House. **Professor Alanna Ossa** secured grant funding to assess the area at the back of the house historically referred to as the “Rubbish Area”. The goal was to have a greater understanding of the eating and dining habits of the Richardson and Bates families, and to further gather information to assist in the interpretation of history at the museum.

Dr. Ossa and her students were extremely thorough. They measured the property, completed a survey of the ground, and mapped out where they were going

to put their plots—all before breaking ground! As with any archaeological dig, it isn’t a given that artifacts of note will be found. This is why detailed analysis of the history of the land as well as the visible ground is important to ensure the dig is worthwhile. Even so, Dr. Ossa was unsure of what the students would find.

In total, 440 pieces of ceramics and 164 faunal (animal related) artifacts were found. These provide incredible evidence for the kinds of things the family was eating, where they sourced their food, and what their eating habits were like.

To learn more about the dig and its findings, [visit the new exhibit on view in our Temporary Gallery April 1st.](#) ↪



ABOVE FROM LEFT Architectural plan circa 1937 of the Richardson-Bates gardens—note the “Rubbish Area” marked in the top-left corner; Wolfgang Pierce, left, and Amanda Cali sift through dirt to find small shards of ceramics, glass, and bone during the archeological dig; two shards of ceramics that were found early in the dig.

INTERNSHIP CORNER

IN 2022, WE HAD FIVE STELLAR INTERNS who worked at the museum. Here are their highlights, their accomplishments, and where they're headed next.



GABBY BELMONT-KLUCK

is a graduate of SUNY Oswego's History program. As part of her preparation for pursuing a career as a museum curator, she developed an exhibit in our temporary gallery titled "The Perfect Woman: Women's Role in the Gilded Age". She used artifacts in the collection to serve as a case study of Oswego women and their experiences living at the turn of the 20th century. Gabby also learned important archival skills such as working with our database management systems and inventorying collections. She went on to work with us when we received funding for a digital preservation project from CNY Arts, and is now working in multiple museums where she lives in Rhode Island.



NERISSA CONKLIN primarily focused on collections preservation by deep cleaning the period rooms. She learned important archival cleaning techniques that allowed her to clean a variety of materials including metals, textiles, wood, and glass. One of her largest projects was cleaning every inch of the 1910s era carpet in the library, a task that took her three weeks to complete. Like Gabby, she was hired as a temporary archivist under the CNY

Arts grant we received. Nerissa will graduate from SUNY Oswego's Anthropology program later this year, and she is now applying to graduate programs in Museum Studies in hopes of working further with database systems and museum collections.



BRYAN MORANO, SUNY Oswego History major, was unsure of his career goals when he started his archival internship here at the house. As part of his internship, he focused on inventorying, researching, and scanning collections, as well as entering our records into a digital database for easy access. He also gained experience in archival cleaning and image processing. He is now considering a career in museums, potentially as an archivist.



LATRELL LEWIS is a SUNY Oswego senior majoring in History. As a future social studies teacher, he focused primarily on researching documents in the OCHS archives. He was able to delve deep into the history of Oswego's 147th infantry as well as the Fitzgibbons boiler company, from which his family descends. One of the most interesting artifacts he was able to work with was a

letter written three days after the Battle of Gettysburg. The letter remarks on the battle's considerable bloodshed. Latrell also learned to docent tours which allowed him to teach and interact with a variety of people visiting the museum.



AMANDA CALI is a senior SUNY Oswego Anthropology and Native American Studies student. While her primary project was conducting interviews for an Oral History project on Oswego county residents, she found her niche with the Native American artifacts in our collection. She was able to inventory and research many of the artifacts. This semester, she will continue to work with us to rehouse them. She will soon apply to graduate programs in museum studies to pursue a career in museums.



Looking for Tour Guides for 2023 Season

We are actively recruiting tour guides in preparation for the 2023 season. The museum opens April 1 for tours, but our busiest months are June, July, and August. Schedules are flexible—you can give tours as often as you'd like! If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a tour guide, please contact us at ochs@rbhousemuseum.org or 315-343-1342.



VISITORS ON VIEW

We were pleased to host a tea given by the **Phi Lambda Phi Sorority Sisters** at their SUNY Oswego College reunion. They enjoyed a tour of the museum and refreshments on the lawn in addition to a special peek at College archives and a visit from Anthropology professor Dr. Alanna Ossa who was conducting an archeological field school on our grounds at the time.

Doris Schecter, who at the age of five was one of the residents of the Fort Ontario

Emergency Refugee Shelter in WWII, arrived looking for photos of herself that we had in scrapbooks of newspaper clippings about the shelter. She visited with friends Saul Troen and Arlene and Larry Spizman of Oswego.

The descendants of **Neil McMullen**, first settler in the City of Oswego, Sharon Innes and Katie Humwick, with their husbands, stopped in the museum during their cross-county genealogy research tour. Mary Kay

gave them lots of information and took them on a driving tour of sites associated with the family. Here they pose in the approximate location of McMullen's 1796 house at the foot of West Seneca Street. The Cahill building is in the background.

The Betsey Baldwin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Baldwinsville, Camillus Senior Center and SUNY Oswego New Faculty and Staff Orientation group were other group tours.



WE'RE THANKFUL FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS!

In addition to volunteers mentioned elsewhere, we would like to thank the following for the days they've spent at the museum this season.

☞ **Alyson DeCosa** (*pictured, right*), who is inventorying and putting into PastPerfect the clothing collection. She will be adding new dresses to Naomi's room this spring.

☞ **Nan Moore, Rosemarie Puppardo, Eva Corradino, Ryan Lance** (*pictured, left*), **Josh Gavin-Hall** and **Colleen Manion** who spent hours detailing and creating finding aids for the archive collections.

☞ **Eva Corradino, Eugene Ossa, Peg McKinstry, Meg Schneider, Mary Watson** and **Ryan Lance** who give tours.

☞ **Barbara Wall and Amanda Pirie** who are putting the Dewey Decimal card catalog of our collection of research books into a searchable spreadsheet.

☞ **The Garden Club of Oswego**, who tend the garden plots around the house.

☞ **Sororities and Fraternities of SUNY Oswego** for the fall cleanup of the lawn.

OF THINGS GREAT AND SMALL: OUR NEW COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Collections Committee spent the better half of 2021 and 2022 overhauling our Collections Management Policy. The goal of this policy is to redefine how we collect objects for our collections, and outline the ways in which we get our collections to the public.

This overhaul was in response to a couple of questions: How do we make our previous policy, written in 1991, up to date and relevant to our institution again? How do we increase public access to our collections, and which collections take priority? And: How can we address longstanding questions about the ethics of collecting specific to our institution?

Under the guidance of our previous chair, Jeremy Pekarek, the Collections Committee met over many months to overhaul OCHS' Collections Management Policy. This policy is a standard in modern museums to guide organizations on what to collect and how to make their collections accessible to the public. The resulting effort brings the policy to 16 pages from its previous five, and adds new governance



to areas of records management, ethics, accessioning and deaccessioning, and more.

We're in the process of adding our new policy (including the above brochure for prospective donors!) to our website. If you're a donor interested in bringing historic Oswego items to the museum, you can request a brochure by giving us a call or stopping by the museum when we're open.

The next step for the committee is to develop a supplemental **Collections Development Policy**, outlining further ways to define and cultivate our existing collections. This type of document outlines the specific needs of individual collections, such as budgeting requirements.

More immediately, we are utilizing the overhauled collections policy to work through our backlog of donations.



West First and Bridge circa 1908, one of the thousands of photos that were digitized last summer!



Scan the QR Code to visit OCHS on NYHeritage.

NYH.ORG AND CNY ARTS

Through a gracious grant from CNY Arts, two of the largest collections in the historical society's archives were organized, inventoried, and digitized in the hopes of making them more accessible to the public. With the help of three archivists, Alyson DeCosa, Gabby Belmont-Kluck,

and Nerissa Conklin, and our project lead, Evie Frederiksen, over 30 boxes containing nearly 2500 photographs of buildings and prominent individuals in Oswego County were processed.

Now that these items have been digitized, the intention is to upload these

images to the website NYHeritage, a communal online database giving members of the public free access to collections from a variety of New York historic organizations. Keep an eye out on our page, as we are uploading new photos every week.



Oswego County Historical Society

Richardson-Bates House Museum
135 East Third Street, Oswego, NY 13126

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 1	Opening Day	TBA	Riverside Cemetery Bus Tour
April 14	Not-So-Silent Auction Lake Ontario Event & Conference Center	August 20	Family Fun Day
May 18	International Museum Day	September TBA	End of Summer Soiree
May 20	Annual Meeting Oswego Public Library	October TBA	Classic Movie Night Oswego Cinema 7
June TBA	Tea on the Lawn	December 2	Christmas Open House
July TBA	Canandaigua Bus Tour	<p><i>Dates are subject to change.</i> <i>For more information, visit our website at</i> www.rbhousemuseum.org</p>	