



# FENTON HISTORY CENTER

museum and research center



## 2012 Annual Report

67 Washington St., Jamestown, NY  
716-664-6256 [www.fentonhistorycenter.org](http://www.fentonhistorycenter.org)

*From the President of the Board of Trustees*

January 15, 2013

Dear Members and Friends,

The purpose of the Fenton History Center is to preserve the past and the materials related to that past. The reason that we do this is so that the future will know from where we came. To preserve the past the Center must constantly look toward the future and how cultural and technological changes are going to make our job different. This past year has definitely been one in which we made strides in reaching our future goals and hopefully 2013 will see more of these take place.

2012 concludes my fifth year as president of the board of trustees and it was a year in which we tried new things and saw some things that we have been planning to take place for five years actually happen. Just this morning I visited the mansion and saw that the research library has made the move to the Hall House next door. Over the last half year all the archival records have been moved into the research center and work is now going to begin on making the Hall House a first class historical research center - it is a wonderful space and much nicer to work in than the crowded research area in the mansion. We are also moving our collections office and librarian/archivist office into the house. This will allow the mansion to create a new entrance and gift shop and to create a formal dining room and new exhibit area. All this was planned many years ago, but steps have been made that are now very noticeable. Our plan is that through this we will be better equipped to serve the future.

All this year we have also been developing ways to increase influence in the region, our membership, and our income. We have much that we would like to see happen, but we can only do as much as we have community and membership support and the financial ability to do. We started a few new programs this year, brown bag lunch speakers and walking tours. Both of which were strongly supported and very much enjoyed. We tried a new fundraiser using technology and cell phones to conduct a scavenger hunt throughout the city. Although we had just a few teams the event was a lot of fun for those who attended and was moderately profitable. We hope that in 2013 we can continue to do these things and others to teach people about our area and meet our fundraising goals. One thing that I would like to see in 2013 is \$1000 a month increase in revenue. This may sound like a lot but this amount would greatly improve our financial picture and allow us to move forward in improving the services that the Center provides to the region.

None of the work that the Fenton History Center does could be done without the support of our members, our community, our staff, our board members, and our volunteers. I want to thank all of you who have contributed and worked to make the things that the Center did in 2012 possible. Each year we meet as a board and discuss the good and the bad and our hopes for the next year. Sometimes we have lofty goals and sometimes we get frustrated, but when we look back on the year it is wonderful to see that positive things are happening. Have we reached the place that we want to be? Not exactly. But we are making progress and I want to thank all of you who are doing what you can to make this progress possible.

As I look forward to 2013 for the Fenton History Center what do I see? I see a continued outreach to the community through brown bag lunch speaker, walking tours of the downtown, Old-Fashioned Days, Lakeview Cemetery tours, Christmas decorations, and other possible events. I see a research center in the Hall House that is helping people discover the history that they need. I see an increase in membership and in volunteers. And hopefully I see a financial picture that shows improving financial health. This year will also mark the 50th anniversary of the Fenton Historical Society and the beginning of our next half century.

The Center's purpose is to preserve the past, but we are always looking toward the future. To shape that future we need you. We need you to continue to be generous with your time and money and we need you to encourage others to become involved. Please tell others about us and bring them with to future events. It is a privilege to serve as president of this outstanding institution and it is my desire to see what we do become even more outstanding in 2013.

Respectfully,

*Michael T. Rohlin*

Michael T. Rohlin, President, Fenton History Center Board of Trustees



*From the Director*

Dear Members and Friends,

Interestingly the two biggest complaints museums hear are “Why don’t you ever change anything?” followed by “Why did you change that?” 2012 was busy with change, and at the same time doing the same things as usual: saving Jamestown’s past while using it to teach future generations.

2012 was a year of building, both literally and figuratively. The Fenton Mansion’s exterior received a facelift. The bricks and mortar were repaired and in some cases replaced. After 150 years she was in need of repair. Thanks to the generosity of Fenton members, local foundations and New York State, the Fenton Mansion is ready for the next 100 years.

The Hall House, which the Fenton History Center acquired in 2008 with funds from a restricted New York State Department of Education grant, was renovated to house the research center, & collections and archival management. The Mansion has been freed up of the weight of the research center books, and small collections pieces. They are now at the Hall House where they can be better cared for and managed. The bulk of the Center’s computers are also in the Hall House – something else the Fenton Mansion is not ideally suited for. With financial assistance from the Sheldon Foundation the Hall House was been fitted with air conditioning for humidity control this past summer. The collections are in better conditions now than ever. The Mansion will continue to be the hub of the Center. If you would like to volunteer to help us in the research center please give me a call. Volunteers are going to be the back bone of the research center’s success.

The Center expanded adult education programming in 2012. The Brown Bag Lecture series was a great success with interesting speakers and a full classroom the second Wednesday of the month from April through October. The series will continue this year too. If you have a topic you would like to present, or learn about, please let me know. The weekly walking tours really blossomed in 2012. Most of the tour guides were Fenton History Center Trustees. Many new members joined to be able to take part in the tours for a reduced price. This year a new tour will be added to the rotation for a total of five rotating tours throughout the summer months. What a fun and easy way to learn about your community.

The Fenton Board of Trustees has adopted the new three-year strategic plan that will support the growth of the facilities and the programming. Fenton members and Jamestown citizens are encouraged to be a part of the plans. Among the plans is an endowment fund for the future maintenance and operation of the Hall House. It is a historic home on it’s own and now it is part of the Fenton’s campus. Help us take care of it!

Future plans call for an upgraded and appealing gift shop, new and re-furbished exhibits and an engaging orientation room that will help the visitor know more about the Fentons, the Mansion and Jamestown as they tour the Mansion.

The Fenton is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year “in business” this year. The Center started as a grassroots group that came together to save Gov. Reuben E. Fenton’s home from urban renewal and a year later obtained a New York State Charter from the Department of Education to collect and teach our history. The party starts in May. Stay tuned for your invitation!

Please read Trustee Tom Greer’s letter about the Walnut Grove Project. This spring we will begin the first phase of the work to study, document and strive to re-create Governor Fenton’s home, Walnut Grove.

I feel we are poised to better serve our past and meet the needs of the future with the building that has been done in 2012.

*Thank you to...*

- the **staff** for their willingness to work for a fraction of their worth with endless energy, compassion and great ideas.
- the **dedicated volunteers** for their enthusiasm, expertise and willingness to help us out whenever we call upon them.
- the **Board of Trustees** for their commitment to the Fenton and our local history.
- our **members, sponsors, and visitors** that make the work worthwhile.

*I feel we truly are a team!*

Thank you to our donors, grant funders and members for their generosity. Help us celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year. I wish everyone a prosperous and successful 2013!

Sincerely,

*Joni Blackman*





*The Walnut Grove Project*

In 2012 the Board of Trustees committed to a multi-year three phase endeavor dubbed the Walnut Grove Project. This consists of an historic landscape study, archaeological investigation and writing of the definitive biography of Reuben Fenton.

The landscape report should be completed in the near future. Over the summer we collaborated with the University of Buffalo to perform an archaeological survey of the entire property. Over 700 artifacts were recovered, including a number that are definitely Fenton related. A small portion of the foundation of the Fenton carriage house was identified as well as a foundation in the presumed location of a former greenhouse. The full archaeological survey report should be available soon.

Excavation will continue this summer on a limited scale until funding is secured for a full archaeological study. Watch for further updates as we continue to investigate the history of the Fentons at Walnut Grove.



**How you can help! If you have written information, photographs or personal recollections of the property that you would like to share, please call the Fenton History Center at (716)664-6256.**

Thank you – Tom Greer, Trustee, Board of Trustees

**THE FENTON HISTORY CENTER MISSION STATEMENT – WHAT WE DO**

The mission of the Fenton History Center – Museum & Research Center is to provide educational and cultural opportunities for the residents of Chautauqua County and its visitors through the collection, preservation and exhibition of artifacts and archival materials pertaining to Jamestown, New York and southern Chautauqua County.

**THE FENTON HISTORY CENTER VISION STATEMENT – WHERE WE WANT TO BE**

As a trusted steward of the community's heritage, the Fenton History Center – Museum & Research Center will champion the preservation and interpretation of regional history by maintaining the foremost historical center of its kind in southwestern New York. Research based exhibits and innovative programming will inspire people of all ages to enjoy, appreciate, and understand the rich history of Jamestown and the surrounding area, as reflected by the FHC's extensive collection and library holdings. The dedicated staff, membership and Board of Trustees will work together to build a strong, dynamic organization and expand the reach and scope of the FHC's activities.

The Fenton History Center will ensure the preservation of the Fenton Mansion, while providing adequate facilities to meet the growing needs of the organization and the people it serves. A superior regional history and genealogy research center will accommodate local and visiting researchers. The facilities will also afford space for state-of-the-art storage, educational programs, collections management, exhibit preparation, and visitor orientation

The staff and Board of Trustees will offer responsible and enthusiastic leadership for the future. Professionally trained, the staff will provide direction in the implementation of current best practices. To strengthen the FHC's ability to accomplish its mission, an informed Board of Trustees will provide additional guidance and strive to secure the fiscal health of the organization for years to come.

The Fenton History Center will also reach beyond the walls of the Fenton Mansion to engage area residents, students, visitors, and institutions with an increasing variety of activities. Off-site, traveling, and web-based exhibits will compliment multi-media in-house exhibits. Web-based technology will enhance the services offered by the library and research center. Whenever possible, the FHC will collaborate with other historical agencies, non-profit organizations, schools, and businesses. The FHC will be recognized as an indispensable asset to the intellectual and cultural life of the surrounding community.

**FENTON HISTORY CENTER STAFF**

Joni Blackman, Director

Paula Bechmann, Office Manager & Housekeeping

Norman Carlson, Collections Manager

Barbara Cessna, Researcher

Frances Fair, Education Director

Museum Teachers: Julie Hull, Gesele Koehler, Sara Reale

Phoebe Forbes, Volunteer Textile Curator

Karen Livsey, Librarian/Archivist

Jeanne Oag, Event Coordinator



**FINANCIAL REPORT 2012****General Operating Income, unrestricted**

	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Municipal Assistance	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 16,000.00
County Assistance	\$ 6,900.00	\$ 7,600.00
Fundraising	\$ 27,805.01	\$ 49,250.00
Donations	\$ 4,966.14	\$ 6,200.00
CRCF Fund and interest	\$ 13,100.18	\$ 11,080.00
Memberships	\$ 16,685.00	\$ 31,900.00
Gift Shop sales	\$ 5,723.61	\$ 3,000.00
Memorials	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 700.00
Earned Income	\$ 23,684.67	\$ 26,900.00

<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 116,064.61</b>	<b>\$ 152,630.00</b>
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**Expenses, Unrestricted**

Payroll Expenses, Administration (incl. all taxes)	\$ 62,798.35	\$ 65,598.00
Insurance	\$ 5,023.87	\$ 5,600.00
Supplies	\$ 1,125.27	\$ 1,000.00
Printing	\$ 1,896.28	\$ 1,500.00
Telephone/Internet	\$ 1,909.75	\$ 1,700.00
Postage	\$ 1,073.78	\$ 1,200.00
Gift Shop	\$ 2,585.34	\$ 1,300.00
Advertising & Fundraising	\$ 7,192.18	\$ 6,200.00
Maintenance & Repairs	\$ 4,094.28	\$ 5,400.00
Education Dept.	\$ 13,039.73	\$ 16,764.00
Collections Dept.	\$ 14,151.31	\$ 16,765.00
Exhibits Dept.	\$ 411.01	\$ 2,000.00
Research Ctr.	\$ 8,211.14	\$ 9,053.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 4,454.84	\$ 4,625.00

<b>General Operating Expense</b>	<b>\$ 127,967.13</b>	<b>\$ 138,705.00</b>
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<b>Net Gain/(Loss)</b>	<b>\$ (11,902.52)</b>	<b>\$ 13,925.00</b>
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The **loss** at the end of the year is due to a shortfall in fundraising returns and minimal membership recruitment.

The **Fenton History Center** has three restricted endowment funds at the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation totaling \$152,949.00.

**Thank you to all of our members!! Your support is our future.**

**SERVING THROUGH INFORMATION**

- Your story is our community's story: a center for inquiry, investigation and scholarly research where you can explore your family history and discover how you are a part of this community's history.
- 675 people used the library and archives for genealogical and historical research
- Researchers responded to 34 written, 33 e-mail, and 1,478 phone research requests from around the world

- 8,199 unique visits to the library/archive website pages

**Librarian/Archivist**

Karen E. Livsey

**Researcher**

Barb Cessna

**Volunteer Researchers**

Sharon Terwilliger Kathy Barber Del Mee  
Harold Bennett Marty Hagstrom

## PRESERVING THE COMMUNITY'S PAST



One of the greatest donations to the Fenton collection is a Garfield family (Busti) diary with a contemporary record of the outbreak of the Revolutionary War.

- Caring for a collection that is the community's cultural heritage.
- 167 separate donations were accessioned and processed in 2012. These collections included approximately 1,800 separate artifacts. 592 collections from previous years were also accessioned, including a 1,900 piece photograph collection from a local real estate office.
- On-going physical maintenance of the Fenton Mansion is a fundamental activity with the brick restoration project being completed by the end of the fall.
- With the invaluable help of volunteers and other staff members most of the on-site collections were moved to the Hall House for better storage conditions.
- 2 items were added to the Education collection, 7 items were taken in as loans, 3 items were loaned out for copying.
- 10 requests for photograph reproductions from the FHC collection with 44 photographs processed.
- 2 items were deaccessioned.

### Collections Manager

Norman P. Carlson

### Housekeeping

Paula Bechmann

### Textiles

Phoebe Forbes

### Volunteers

Loretta Smith, Don Lauger, Kate Wescott, Anna Wager, Romana Schaeffer, Pat & Bill Locke

## PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE THROUGH EDUCATION



Museum Teacher Gesele Koehler leads a holiday tour of the Fenton Mansion.

- Helping schools meet curriculum goals and providing resources for lifelong learning.
- 10,336 members and non-members took part in various educational programs for all ages; bus tours, Fenton Institute, History Detectives Club, student summer camps, and community events.
- 65 programs were presented to area school students, community groups and special programming for all ages.
- This year the summer campers toured Jamestown two remaining Theaters and learned about the City's rich theater past using the "From Stage to Talkies" exhibit. They performed a memorable vaudeville show!
- The Fenton Education department taught in 8 of the 16 public school districts in Chautauqua County, at the GA Learning Center, and JCC and the Homeschoolers group.
- Over 2,400 members and friends participated in the Fenton events:

*Doors Open 2012, the new Brown Bag Lecture Series, the new Walking Tours, Finding Jamestown Scavenger Hunt, Old-Fashion Day, Blue and Gray Civil War encampment, Saints and Sinners Lake View Cemetery Tours and Mausoleum & More Tours, & the "Dear Santa ... exhibit.*

**Education Director** Frances Fair

**Museum Teachers** Gesele Koehler, Julie Hull, Sara Reale



Museum Teacher Julie Hull teaches about Victorian times in the Drawina Room.

## TELLING THE COMMUNITY'S STORY

- Exhibits serve as a bridge to awareness and knowledge of our unique local history by presenting a personal understanding the collection.

### **“From Stage to Talkies: Jamestown’s Theaters”**

was about the buildings that bring out the nostalgic feelings of your first movie, your first stage play – over 23 theaters were in Jamestown in the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century!



### **“Dear Santa...”**

highlighted the evolution of the Santa figure. Exhibits about Santa were placed throughout the Mansion among the traditional festive



**Visitors:** on-site 3,631  
via website 13,408

*Give the gift of membership, One size fits all.*

## PLANNED GIVING AND BEQUESTS

Winslow T. Shearman – purchase of a life insurance policy which will contribute the sum of at least \$50,000 in unrestricted funds.

If you would like information regarding opportunities for Planned Giving, leaving a legacy in your will (a bequest) or the benefits of a gift of appreciated securities or other property please contact Joni Blackman, Director.

**MEMORIALS** are a meaningful way to show the family you care and to support the work of the Fenton History Center.

## Thank You for Your Support

### GRANTS

#### Operating and Programming Grants:

Chautauqua Region Community Foundation \$9,185

Johnson Foundation \$5,000 R.C.Sheldon Foundation \$20,050 Jesse Smith Darrah Foundation \$3,500

### GOVERNOR’S CIRCLE \$1000+

City of Jamestown  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Plyler

Chautauqua County  
Mr. Carl Hagberg  
Chautauqua Region Community Foundation, Reg & Betty Lenna Fund

George C. Fowler Fund  
Mr. & Mrs. Rod Drake

### CONTRIBUTORS \$100+

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The Resource Center	Axiom Business Machines	

### **GOODS & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

Media One Group, WDOE/WKIX, The Post-Journal, The Dunkirk Observer, The Warren Times, Westfield Republican, The Chautauqua Star, The Word, The Jamestown Gazette, The Coffee Exchange, Axiom Business Machines, Jeff at Labyrinth Press Co., Dan Gates at the Frame & Glass Shoppe, Jack Ericson, Tom Goodwill, Bill Lucas, Jim and Ann Buffone, Streetwise Creative Group, Doug Hoisington for Earth Spark, Tops Markets, Harrington Sandberg Architecture & Engineering, Adrienne Ploss, The City of Jamestown Parks Department, Lake View Cemetery Association, Downtown Jamestown Development Corporation, Gary Lynn, BOCES, Jamestown Public Schools, Walgreen's.

## **THANK YOU— WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!**

### **ACTIVE MEMBERS AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2012**

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Mr. John Sherwood	Ms. Candace Schupp	Mr. Jack W. Scott	Ms. Audrey Shelgren
	Ms. Mary Shearman	Mr. Winslow T. Shearman	Ms. Judy L. Simpson
	Ms. Joan Shevory	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Siegel	

Mr. Scott Sadowski	Ms. Patricia Smith	Slone-Melhuish & Co.	Mr. & Mrs. Gene Smith
Mr. Peter F. Smith	Ms. Rebecca J. Smith	Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Snyder	Mrs. T. Solomonson
Mrs. Carol Sorg	South Hills Country Club	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Stahlman	Ms. Sally Stauffer
Ms. Marilyn Stearns	Dr. & Mrs. T. Steegmann	Ms. Janice Steele	Ms. Jo Stewart
Stormer Mechanical	Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Strickler	Mr. Jerome Swanson	Mrs. Linda Swanson
Ms. Lois L. Swanson	Mr. Richard Swanson	Mr. Robert Swanson	Mr. & Mrs. S. Szwejbka
Ms. Billie J. Taylor	Mr. Devon Taylor	Mrs. Ginny Taylor	Mr. & Mrs. Donald Teater
Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Teresi	Mr. Robert J. Terreberry	Mrs. Sharon Terwilliger	Mrs. B. Dolores Thompson
Ms. Shirley Thompson	Ms. Ann Thorpe	Mr. & Mrs. James Trethewey	Mr. David C. Videll
Ms. Marlene Volpe	Mr. Alfred Vullo	Mr. Lamont Wager	Mr. & Mrs. James Wahlberg
Ms. Anna Waite	Mr. A.E.P. Wall	Mr. DeForest Warn	Mr. & Mrs. Terry Warner
Ms. Catherine Way	Mrs. Helen E. Weaver	Mr. & Mrs. Barclay Wellman	Ms. Sarah Wells
Ms. Carla Westerlund	Mr. Curt Westrom	Mr. & Mrs. Michael Whiting	Mr. Leo Wilcox
Mr. Dwight Willson	Mrs. Bonnie Wilson	Ms. Jane Winter	Ms. Claudia Wittenbrook
Mrs. Connie Wright	Mr. Ric Wyman	Mr. Allen Yahn	Mr. Flip Yates

## SERVING THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

- For every paid staff member 12 people volunteer their time and services.



### Board Officers 2012

Michael Rohlin, President  
Sally Martinez, Vice President  
Arthur Osterdahl, Secretary  
Martin Lydell, Treasurer

### Trustees 2012

Clarence Carlson  
Samuel Genco  
Thomas Greer, M.D.  
Barbara Bumsted  
James Goodling  
Robert Karbacka  
Traci Langworthy  
Robert Plyler

## **Volunteers 2012**

### **Education**

Julie Hull  
Sara Reale  
Frances Wolinsky  
Gesele Koehler  
Tracy Dougherty  
Greg Johnson  
Steven Johnson  
Rob Black  
Lily Kates

### **Textiles**

Phoebe Forbes

### **Library/Research**

Kathy Barber  
Anna Wager  
Sharon Terwilliger  
Delbert Mee  
Pam Brown  
Gene Smith  
Harold Bennett  
Martin Hagstrom

### **Collections Management**

Loretta Smith Pat & Bill Locke  
Don Lauger Romana Schaeffer  
Carl Till Kate Wescott  
Scott Lawson Joey Scoma

### **Events**

Gene and Loretta Smith  
Jeanne & Al Oag, Catherine Oag  
Sally Martinez  
Ron Reiff  
Martin & Patsy Lydell  
Sara Reale  
Robert Karbacka  
Tom Andolora  
Grant & Lucas Olson  
Clarence Carlson  
Tim Warnick  
Mark Olson  
Mike & Megan Rohlin  
Sam Genco  
Steve Sandberg  
Art Osterdahl  
Tom & Sally Greer  
Patty Lefford  
Julie & Greg Hull  
Meredith Rohlin Andrew Osterdahl  
BOCES, Workplace Experience Program:  
Larry Kestner, Instructor  
Dennis Wright  
Robert Plyler Ashley Senske  
Bonnie Wilson Gary & Betty Dickenson  
Marilyn Meyers Jim Goodling  
Don and Gale Lauger The Fenton Staff

### **Saints and Sinners Lake View**

### **Cemetery Tour Actors & Guides Lucy Tours @ Lake View Cemetery Fireball Run**

Greg Rabb  
Martha Zenns  
Marlene Mudge  
Kate Armbruster  
Glenn Wahl  
Skip Anderson  
Rick & Patty Lundquist  
Ann Thorpe  
Deacon Pierce  
Sam Genco  
Merle Szydlo  
Traci Langworthy  
Jennifer Champ  
Barbara Krudys  
Josef Genco  
Matt & Nolan Kraft  
Bob Terreberry  
Hugh Golden  
Norman Carlson  
Patty Lefford  
Steve Johnson  
Sue Turnquist  
Francis Fair  
Gesele Koehler  
Julie Hull

### **Other**

David Anderson  
Doug Hoisington  
Lane Hagberg  
Pat & Bill Locke

## Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Business Meeting of the Fenton History Center will be held at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, February 6, 2013 at the Fenton Mansion, 67 Washington St. Jamestown. All current members of the Fenton Historical Society are invited to attend. The membership will be electing Officers to serve the 2013-2014 term.



## The Museum Shop

Valentine's Day Cards    Valentine's Day gifts

*Many* Local History Books - Wooden Toys

Children's Books - "Celoron Park" by T. Goodwill

"Jamestown: Postcard Series" by Karen Livsey and Dorothy Levin

"Historic Chautauqua County, a Bicentennial History" by Doug Houck

*Members receive a 10% discount!*

THE JAMESTOWN COVERLET    MAKES A GREAT WEDDING GIFT!