RENEE FREIFELD
APPOINTED DIRECTOR

by Janet Wahlberg
PRESIDENT

Renee Freifeld joined us on January 10, 2022, as the new Director of the Fenton. Her credentials are impressive, and her take charge spirit was obvious from the first day.

One of her first tasks was to create the Annual Report and she did it masterfully. Tours of the Mansion and the Hall House took place the first day. She immediately set out to review files both on paper and in the computer, giving her a grounding in the history and business of the Fenton.

by Renee Freifeld
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Her professional and business-like manner will serve the Fenton well with the community. We are all looking forward to working with Renee, to help her realize her goals and vision for the Fenton. And now for Renee’s story from her own voice.

ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT SHAWBUCKS
FOUR NEW TRUSTEES, 2022-2023 OFFICERS ELECTED

by Andrew Kolstee
SECRETARY

The Fenton History Center’s annual meeting was held Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 7 p.m. at Shawbucks.

The meeting continued the trend of new faces at the Fenton that began late last year when Noah Goodling stepped down as Executive Director. In addition to our new Executive Director Renee Freifeld, nearly half of the Board of Trustees 11 members finished another year on the Board. 5 Trustees left and 4 new Trustees joined the Board, and 3 of the 4 officer positions have new officeholders.

President Rick Lundquist called the meeting to order. The annual report was completed and distributed to those in the room. Renee Freifeld, the new Executive Director, was introduced, and all members of the Board and incoming Board members introduced themselves.

Officers and Trustee elections were conducted and all nominees were presented by Vice President Ashley Senske, Nominating Committee Chair. Dave Painter was elected to a third term while Janet Wahlberg and Ashley Senske were elected to their second terms. Four new Trustees were elected to the Board for their first term: Paul Bentley, Tom Goodwill, Mike Johnson, and Sharon Matson.
Rick Lundquist finished his third term on the Board, noting one of the benefits of term limits is that they bring new people and ideas to the Fenton. First elected in 2013, Lundquist served as President from 2014 to 2017 and from 2019 to 2022.

Steve Johnson finished his third term on the Board, having also been elected in 2013. Kurt Johnson completed his second term and opted to not run for a third term while Julie Hewitt completed her first term without renewing for a second.

Secretary Mike Rohlin made the decision to step down in the middle of his fifth non-consecutive term. He served on the Board from 2007 to 2016 and from 2017 to 2022. He was President from 2008 to 2014, Vice President from 2017 to 2020, and Secretary from 2021 to 2022.

Officers elected for the 2022-2023 term were Janet Wahlberg as President, Ashley Senske as Vice President, Andrew Kolstee as Secretary, and Ang Cimo as Treasurer.

Following the business of the annual meeting, the trivia fundraiser commenced at Shawbucks.

View the 2021 Annual Report

fentonhistorycenter.org/annual-report
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tising, marketing and business development, I have dedicated over 30 years to the Communications profession.

Creative thoughts and ideas have been at the forefront of imagining a world filled with light, color, purpose and meaning.

Having directed media and marketing functions for advertising agencies and clients, managing and directing strategic marketing initiatives within managerial capacities in radio and television, and developing consultative and collaborative environments for clients and colleagues both locally and nationally, has enabled me to nurture relationships and develop creative concepts that inspire and empower organizations to grow.

As a resident of Chautauqua County, New York for over 23 years I find inspiration daily in the beauty that surrounds us. Having lived in major metropolitan areas, I yearned for an opportunity to move my family to a place where my children could grow, and where greener pastures actually existed. Imagine the joy I now feel in knowing that I can actually say I am home, and feel at home both here at the Fenton History Center and in Western New York.

Both my husband of 39 years, two children, and yes, two rescue dogs, Finn and Emma make up our wonderful family unit. Together, we have been a part of the Western New York experience and remain committed to playing an integral part of moving forward in the years to come in this place we lovingly call home.

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CURATOR’S CORNER

by Victoria Parker
CURATOR

Some exciting changes have happened at the Fenton History Center over the past few weeks. The 2021 holiday exhibit is packed away, and our volunteers have been working hard at work. The second floor and third floor stairwell have gotten some much needed refreshing. Volunteers Tom Greer, John Gustafson, Jim Wahlberg, and Rick Lundquist have been patching plaster and painting.

We also added a couple of new artifacts to our exhibit spaces. The most notable is a large desk made by the Art Metal Company. The desk was given to the Fenton last summer and we were fortunate to have volunteers from the Armory come help us move it into place in the “Made in Jamestown, How Furniture Built a City” exhibit on the second floor of the museum. This desk was made at the Art Metal factory in Jamestown and is a very early example of their metal desks believed to be from about 1900. While the volunteers were they also brought in a safe, made by Fenton Metallic, the forerunner to Art Metal, which is on loan to the Fenton for two years. You can read more about the safe, and the wonderful volunteers from the Armory in the Vets Finding Vets section of this newsletter, as well as a photo of the desk.
The Second Annual Chautauqua Regional Genealogical Conference

Saturday April 30, 2022
Fluvanna Community Church
3363 Fluvanna Ext.
Jamestown, NY 14701
9am-4pm

This one-day conference is an exciting opportunity for anyone interested in Genealogy, from novice to expert. Visit our website crgconference.com for information on speakers and topics. Registration opens March 15, 2022. Visit crgconference.com or call 716-664-6256 to register.
We have a need for volunteers of all skills and talents. There is a need for people to photograph textiles, those who can type, those who are willing to file articles and clippings and those who can scan.

We also need volunteers to man the Gift Shop and generally assist at the mansion. Those willing to help put up displays are most welcome.

Tour guides and actors can be used year-round but are especially needed at the time of the Cemetery tours.

If you are not sure of your skill level, training is offered for each position. If you would like to be a part of the volunteer brigade, call the Fenton at 716-664-6256.
Like most local history museums, Fenton has a number of stone projectile points, generally called “arrowheads,” recovered from various locations in the area. In Chautauqua County these were made, used, and lost before anyone began recording written history locally, long before.

Nearly every local historian who writes a book feels obligated to say something about the Indians on the first page. So he or she goes to some book published in the 19th or early 20th century, adds a dash of contemporary political correctness and feels well satisfied. Frankly, it would be unreasonable to expect much better. But the old works are terribly inadequate by the standards of modern knowledge. Even if the current local historian had access to up to date information, he would find that present archeologists agree on almost nothing and disagree on more questions than the old historians ever dreamed of. Even if the true story could be known, it would be long and complicated, vastly different from the convenient, simple, and satisfying stories we like to read.

Prehistory is everything that happened to human beings before the written record began. Our earliest year date for any event in the county is 1739 and our first exact date is July 16, 1749. Both relate to French expeditions. Chautauqua County Indian prehistory effectively ended in 1656 with the defeat of the Eries. With the possible exception of a village at Cattaraugus Creek in the late 18th century, Indians, the Cornplanter band of Senecas, did not re-occupy Chautauqua County until May, 1782.

The human mind has great difficulty mustering interest for anything much beyond “me and now.” Total human history, Old World history, reaching back to the invention of writing in Sumeria, is on the order of 5,500 years, roughly 220 generations, give or take 40 or 50. People have tread the soil of Chautauqua County for more than twice that long.

Until the 1920s, American prehistory was thought to extend only a few thousand years into the past. By the mid 20th century we knew that people, in small numbers, began to appear on the continent soon after the Ice Age glacier melted away starting 12 or 14 thousand years ago. In the last 20 years, the majority of scholars have come to believe there were inhabitants in America thousands of years earlier, people few in number with a few unprepossessing tools. Last year (2021) tracks were discovered in New Mexico 23,000 years old and extreme advocates believe in human presence 100,000 or more years ago. This is not relevant to Chautauqua County, covered as it was by Pleistocene ice until about 14,000 years ago.

After the immensity of the time involved, the second most misunderstood feature in our prehistory is how small the populations were. There is a popular idea, upheld by some legitimate scholars, of a large population across the North American continent decimated at rates of 90% or 95% by European diseases some time between Columbus and the Mayflower (which was almost 130 years). Epidemics of European diseases did cause devastation in some places but archeologists find no evidence of such a large number of lives or deaths on a continent wide basis and certainly not in Chautauqua County. There seem to have been long stretches of time, repeatedly throughout prehistory when nobody or next to nobody at all lived here and at no time in prehistory did the entire Indian population of what is now New York State equal the population of the present greater Jamestown area. In their times of greatest power and historical influence, the combined population of all the Iroquois tribes was about equivalent to the present population of the City of Dunkirk. None of their individual villages ever reached the population of Falconer. No village in Chautauqua County probably ever reached 300. But for most of prehistory there were no villages - anywhere. I suspect there were many entire centuries in which there were never 100 people in Chautauqua County at any one time and the resident population probably never exceeded 500.

Another surprise for most people who think about local Indians...CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
is that few of the “arrow heads” in collections are really arrow heads. They are spear or dart points made before the introduction of the bow and arrow. When was that? The conventional answer has been about 1000 years ago when the little triangular points became universal and replaced the iconic “arrowhead” styles. But no one really knows and scholars do not agree. In any event “arrowheads,” more correctly called projectile points, have been picked up by the thousands in Chautauqua County. How could so few people drop so many points? They had a very long time in which to do it, perhaps about 9,000 years. So if just one point a year in the whole county was lost or thrust into the body of an animal that got away and carried the point to a remote spot where the animal died, there would be 9,000 points in the soil of Chautauqua County by 1000 A.D. waiting to be found once plowing began around 1800. That’s not counting another 600 years for the triangles (both scattered and at village sites) and at least 1,300 for the beautiful and distinctive fluted points that preceded the notched points. That would amount to a little less than one point for every 100 acres. If hunters lost just one point on each acre, not per year but over the entire 9,000 years, it would be 9,600 points over the whole county, not much different from the other figure. If any collector would like to make an estimate of the actual average number of points per acre, we could get an idea of the usage rate averaged over that immense length of time. There are many acres where nothing has been found and other locations where caches of a dozen or more have been discovered.

I often think of the lives of the Indians here on my familiar home ground, but so mind bogglingly remote in the distant past. Life would be a fabric of tragedy, worry, fear, brutality, and disappointment. I think of the women, pregnant most of the time, caring for babies and little children with runny noses and runny rears, no sanitation, no textiles, no paper. Smoke, dust, grit, and dog hair filled the air and food. There was no escape from the cold except summer, no privacy except the forest, no medical care except herbs and rituals that didn’t work. With butchering and raw meat, they would be working in blood and raw flesh all the time. And always there was the horror of a possible brutal and deadly surprise attack at any time that could mean terrible torture and death for them and their children.

That was life in 1500 A.D.. In 8,000 or 10,000 B. C. it was far worse. That was the Paleolithic, the Pleistocene. All that distinguished humans from animals was language and the skill to chip stones and use them as tools. It had taken three million years for us to go from scavengers in Africa to hunters all over the earth. Local people like everyone on earth had stone tipped spears, bone needles to sew hides, fire, basketry and cordage, language,
and dogs. Nothing else: no permanent shelter, no textiles, no metal, no pottery, no corn or crops of any sort. They had very few if any axes so no ability to cut down trees or work with wood of any serious dimensions. They lived in bands of 35 to 50 people which would mean six to ten young men capable of the most strenuous work and dangerous hunting. Everyone had to have skills and if you lost an adult with necessary skills, your band was doomed. If you became old or ill or injured - man, woman, or child, you could not keep up with the moves, an average of about 10 miles every few days, you were left behind. I cannot imagine how they survived even a single blizzard, let alone a winter. When they moved, they had to carry everything they had: whatever they used for temporary shelter, whatever food stores they had, their heavy stone tools and their toolstone, their babies and their toddlers. Winters were colder and summers were hotter. There were huge hairy elephants that could trample you. There were fierce big bears and cats that could prey on you and certainly on your children.

The children and maybe women, if they didn’t have their hands full with other tasks, probably trapped and snared small game and fished as well as gathered nuts and berries. There was no bow and arrow. Hunting had to be done up close and personal by throwing or thrusting a spear or possibly using nets. That meant use of ambush, patience, organization, and dogs.

They had the most impressive flint knapping skills of anyone on earth, ever. Why they made such extravagantly beautiful and difficult to produce spear points we do not know. Some must have been for ritual or social purposes, trade, or prestige. They had strong preferences for certain toolstone and were willing to go many miles or in some cases hundreds of miles to get it.

I wish I could know, if we placed every one of the 367 million people living today in the United States and Canada into a real Pleistocene Park, how many would come out alive at the end of a year. As soon as our original-equipment straw sandals or fur boots wore out, we couldn’t even walk. A few young men in California and Florida might survive, maybe some trappers, survivalists, and former Alaskans. None of the philosophers, feminists, and food fadists who dream of an egalitarian Eden back there would make it, and no vegetarians.

www.patreon.com/FentonHistoryCenter
Genealogy Support Group

The Fenton History Center’s Genealogy Support Group serves to support both experienced and amateur researchers. Meetings feature invaluable lectures, discussions, and are an excellent way to become familiar with the Fenton History Center’s impressive collection of resources.

The Support Group typically meets on the last Wednesday of each month at the Fenton History Center in the historic Hall House building, located at 73 Forest Avenue in Jamestown, New York. Doors open at 6, and the meeting begins at 6:30 with a brief business meeting followed by a program. Program topics and speakers are subject to change. Meetings are also often held via Zoom.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, March 30, 2022 @ 6:30 PM
News and Updates Regarding the 1950 U.S. Federal Census
presented by Andrew Kolstee

Saturday, April 30, 2022
Chautauqua Regional Genealogical Conference

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 @ 6:30 PM
Introduction to the 1921 Census of England and Wales
presented by Janet Wahlberg

Wednesday, June 29, 2022 @ 6:30 PM
Immigration and Naturalization
speaker to be announced
Although there are a couple of loose ends to tie up with the documentation of National Guard Enlistments Project at the Jamestown Armory, I have decided to use this opportunity to expand on the overview that I included in the Annual Report.

The Armory Project began when member Joan Lindquist, former resident and author, asked if we had a photo of the Governor’s son, Reuben Earle, in his Fenton Guard uniform for an upcoming story she was writing for the Gazette. We did not, and after contacting the Armory, the offer to look for ourselves was made in the spring of 2020 by SSG James Weaver. He took great pride in showing us what they had while adding that their limited staff wouldn’t have time to search for us. Once he showed us the old wooden cabinet in the basement and gave permission to scan scrapbooks and photos, and document the old enlistments as well, we were over the moon. Sadly, a photo of “Earle” never materialized, but we can console ourselves with other intriguing connections. We still have hope of spotting him in group photos that are unidentified but clear enough to verify that it is him.

I should stop here to point out that the Fenton Guards were mustered into service on August 25, 1875, and named themselves Fenton Guards out of respect for Ex-Gov. Fenton. Albert Gilbert, Fenton Guard officer, and married to Reuben and Elizabeth’s youngest daughter, Jeannette Fenton Hegeman, was possibly the source of this proposition.

Muddling through the many pages of correspondence, and covering so many categories, had its rewards. I had at first thought the reward was finding enlistments mixed in with so many other documents in those old acid filled boxes, complete with rusted paperclips and hardened rubber bands, now stuck like glue to the items they were holding. Happily, that was only one of the rewards.

One puzzle from Reuben Earle Fenton’s correspondence in the Fenton archives was a thank you for the gift of the “Metal cabinet for the storage of firearms”. I mentioned the cabinet to the SSG who did search around for it, but there are many cabinets it could have been, so that seemed to be something we might never resolve.

Weeks later, another correspondence appeared, this time in the many Armory documents, and was a “sloppy copy” of a letter sent to Jeannette Gilbert’s son, who was the Executor of her estate. The letter thanked the family for $500, which had been given in hopes that a plaque in honor of Capt. Albert Gilbert and his many years of devoted service to the Fenton Guards could be placed somewhere near the entrance of the Armory. The Captain relayed that they were most grateful for the gift and suggestion, and they had decided to make a new flag pole area, and a plaque to honor Capt. Gilbert would be displayed there. When SSG Weaver had some time, he went on a search for the plaque, starting outside and continuing inside. Since the Armory...
it would have been displayed at was the prior one in Brooklyn Square, he knew it may even be in storage, but continued to look as he had time. At one point he messaged me that instead of the plaque, he might have found the firearm storage cabinet.

Indeed, it was found. The low key description was apparently intentional, but in reality is anything but low key. It is clearly a safe, just the right size for pistols, not the rifles we were envisioning. Those of you who have kept up with the saga of the safe and its origins as a Fenton Metallic Company piece, can appreciate the excitement we feel. Although Earle had resigned his commission two years before, this was a Christmas gift, dated Dec. 25, 1894, just prior to traveling abroad with his wife and his untimely death due to a fever he succumbed to in Naples, Italy, on March 25, 1895.

Good News! The Fenton Metallic pistol safe has been loaned for a two year period, and thanks to four muscled Guardsmen, the safe arrived on Saturday, January 29th, and now resides temporarily as part of the Jamestown Furniture Exhibit.
One of the ways you can support the Fenton History Center is through our Amazon Wishlist. Of course we accept gifts purchased in other places, or monetary donations too!

www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1PU3BVS0HQ5E0