NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR
by Jane Babinsky
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Here we are at the end of another year. I would like to remind everyone to renew your membership if you have not already done so. Our memberships will coincide with our fiscal year, January 1st through December 31st every year. We would like to invite all of our members to attend the Annual Meeting at the Fenton Mansion on Wednesday, January 11, 2023 at 6:00 pm. We will elect new Board Members and the Annual Report will be presented. Please plan on attending!

We have hired a new Curator/Education Coordinator, Therese Avedillo. Therese and her husband are moving here from California. Therese will start at the Fenton on January 9, 2023 and will bring a new level of professionalism to the Fenton History Center. We will feature Therese in the January newsletter.

Speaking of January, the Museum and Research Center will be closed Monday, January 9 through Tuesday, January 31. We have a lot of repairs to do in the mansion and cleaning in both buildings. We would welcome some extra help, so, call us if you have some spare time to give us.

We are looking for some volunteers who would be willing to be trained to work with cataloging our objects, especially our textile collection, in PastPerfect. PastPerfect is our museum software where all of our collections are cataloged. Contact us at director@fentonhistorycenter.org if you would be willing to help with our collections.

The Fenton Historical Society of Jamestown will be celebrating our 60th Anniversary in 2023. We are planning a Gala Celebration to be held on Saturday, July 29, 2023. The theme is the Roaring 20s and will be held on the grounds of the Fenton Mansion. We will have good food, dancing, a speakeasy, raffle baskets and a silent auction. Put July 29, 2023 6-9 p.m., on your calendar!

May Your Holidays Be Merry and Bright! Best Wishes for a Healthy, Happy New Year.
CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE
at the Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion
67 Washington St., Jamestown, NY 14701

Saturday, December 17, 2022
10 AM - 4 PM

Admission: $10 (adults)
FREE (members and under 18)

Refreshments will be available and live music will be played in the dining room. Santa Claus will be here for the children from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

(716) 664-6256 FentonHistoryCenter.org
The Fenton History Center is finally back on track after the past two years of making it through the pandemic. We offered 47 in-person programs this year, with 2,254 people visiting the museum and attending our programs. Our Research Center at the Hall House served 444 researchers and visitors and our volunteers logged in more than 2,000 hours. The Saints and Sinners Cemetery Tours, the annual fundraiser, surpassed all years in attendance and funds raised thanks to our volunteers (including FHC Board Members) and staff.

It is now that time of year for the Fenton History Center Annual Fund Drive. The Fenton Historical Society of Jamestown will be celebrating its 60th Anniversary in 2023, so we will be making necessary repairs to the first floor of the Fenton Mansion. It has been many years since anything has been done in the first floor hallway where there has been 60 years of wear and tear to the walls, wallpaper and stains and cracks from roof leaks. The Orientation Room took a hit this year with a major roof leak, which will leave us no choice but to remove old plaster and replace it. We are asking that donations to this year’s Annual Fund Drive go directly to our first floor repairs, which total $17,800 for the hallway (walls and ceiling repairs) and $13,925 to repair the damage to the Orientation Room.

The Fenton Mansion is one of Jamestown’s treasures and is also a New York State treasure. Governor Reuben E. Fenton gave so much of his life as a public servant it is time for us to give back by helping to preserve this beautiful building. The Historical Society of Jamestown saved the mansion from demolition in 1963 and became the stewards of the Fenton Mansion. Please help us preserve this treasure for another 60 years! Anyone donating $1,000 or more to this project will have their name engraved on a plaque that will hang in the entrance to the hallway. Can’t afford to donate a large sum? Sponsor a square foot of wall for $20.00.

The Fenton History Center will survive for many years to come because of caring people like you. Donate today and don’t forget to renew your membership. If you are not a member, please consider joining us!
Ideally, with a moment’s thought or a few pokes at the computer, we should be able to tell you anything or everything that is in our museum and our collections. We are not able to do quite that well. If anyone reading this can achieve that level of efficiency, we are hiring. As it is, from time to time, it is smart to do an inventory. That is considered good practice for any museum, just as it is for any business. Things get set aside, neglected, forgotten, covered over, lost. Volunteer, John Collins, and I have been doing inventories of mainly archival items stashed in odd locations around the Hall House. Hidden from view, in a successor’s office, we found a tasteful brass and walnut plaque stating: THIS READING ROOM IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF EDNA INGHAM, FIRST FENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY GENEALOGIST. The plaque is not a document in the conventional sense. Nor is it an artifact we would normally accession. Ironically, I have not even found Mrs. Ingham’s death date, although I did find the year she retired, 1976.

The reading room in the Fenton Mansion that is mentioned on the plaque was opened in 1980 (after Mrs. Ingham’s retirement) and was closed in January, 2013 when the library was moved to the Hall House. That room is now the gift shop. The original library was in room 116 of the mansion, which currently serves as a meeting and event room. It was opened July 25, 1967, the first public room opened in the new Fenton History Center (not yet so called). Following the 2013 move there didn’t seem to be any appropriate place for the plaque. It was moved over with the library books and was set aside.

Given our small staff, both now and in the past, library, archives, and research have always worked together and sometimes overlapped. I remember Edna and will refer to her by first name from here on. She was a tremendous force in getting Fenton going, especially in those three fields: library, archives, and research. Edna was DAR, Daughters of the American Revolution, as DAR as you can get. She had served and promoted that organization for many years before Fenton formed. It was in that capacity as early as the 1940’s that she was out in the weeds in obscure locations locating and transcribing the stones in forgotten and neglected cemeteries. Fortunately, her efforts in that direction were distilled into a series of articles in the Post-Journal now compiled in a binder on a library shelf here as well as transcribed on-line at Chautauqua Genweb.

A November 6, 1976 Post-Journal clipping by Molly Judge, in our files, gives some background on Edna.

“Mrs. Ingham became interested in genealogy as a young girl. “My grandfather gave me a list of my ancestors and told me to write a book about our family. I did. I finished it 25 years later in the 1940’s. ... In 1920, Mrs. Ingham joined the Penn Elk Chapter of the DAR in Ridgeway, Pa. She became a member of the James-town chapter in 1926.”

Edna retired before computers, let alone the internet, became a...
factor here at Fenton or for genealogy in general. She operated by old school methods, visiting libraries, local government and church offices, and writing letters that went via U.S. Mail. That plus getting out and finding those old cemeteries.

We can never adequately repay the memory of such pioneers of our institution, the people who provided the strong platform on which we build our own research and conduct our own efforts.

I could not write an article such as this without mentioning the other legendary local genealogist of that generation: Helen Traver Anderson. We still rely strongly on the accomplishments of these two women. Helen was an unforgettable character with a wrinkled skin and raspy voice from heavy cigarette smoking – which in those days was done in libraries and museums as well as just about every place else. Helen never aspired to nor achieved a Miss Congeniality award, but she was honest, generous, and helpful to me and many others starting on a path of genealogy and history in those days.

VIP: GUY DITONTO

by Janet Wahlberg
PRESIDENT

This month we are featuring Guy Ditonto, one of our outgoing Board members. Guy has served with us for several years on our Building and Grounds Committee. This committee serves an essential role at the Fenton in helping to maintain the grounds, making minor repairs, seeking contractors when there are more involved repairs to be made. This committee also has participated in general cleaning of the Mansion and Hall House. Hopefully we will be able to replace him with an equally dedicated board member.

My interview with Guy reveals that he is a Jamestown man born and bred. He was born here in Jamestown and attended Southwestern Central School, the JCC and finally SUNY Fredonia. Following his graduation Guy went to work at WKSN, WHUG, and WQFX in Radio Broadcasting Sale and Management and remained there for 20 years. He then spent 18 years at the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce as Director of Member Services.

Forty years ago, this last summer he married his wife, Ellen. Together they raised two children and have expanded the family to include four grandchildren. Guy and Ellen really enjoy making time to spend with their grandchildren. They are also active at First Lutheran Church in Jamestown. As time allows, he enjoys several hobbies including nature, photography, reading, gardening, and collecting books and coins.

Guy's deep interest in history, architecture and historical archive led him to volunteer at the Fenton. Specifically, he is interested in preserving and presenting the rich history of Jamestown for future generations. One of the early ways that he helped to share the history of Jamestown was his participation in the Saints and Sinners event. He lists the first time that he took part in the Saints and Sinners Tour as one of his fondest memory of volunteering. Just for the record, he has continued to be a part of the Saints and Sinners Tours over the years.

Guy expressed his desire that more people take an interest in the amazing local history that Jamestown has to offer. He believes that we must continue to preserve it for the future generations. He told me that the Fenton and Hall House have something for everyone and encourages people to take the time to explore your interests as you will not be disappointed. He also encourages everyone to consider joining the Fenton.
Discover your family’s roots with the help of the Fenton History Center’s skilled and knowledgeable research center staff and volunteers. No prior research experience is required to attend this event. Researchers will enjoy twelve hours of uninterrupted research. Enjoy a day/evening of discoveries, food, and prizes at the Hall House for an excellent cause! Come to all or part of the entire event. All proceeds go to support the Fenton History Center.

Cost: $30 per person. You can register at the Fenton, over the phone, or on our website.

(716) 664-6256  FentonHistoryCenter.org

Saturday, January 14, 2023
10 AM - 10 PM
at the Hall House Research Center
73 Forest Ave., Jamestown, NY 14701
CHRISTMAS AT THE FENTON MUSEUM STORE

by Andrew Kolstee
OFFICE MANAGER

The Fenton Museum Store’s Christmas items are now out! We have numerous items, from tree ornaments and other decorations, stickers, custom-made mittens and Christmas cards, and more.

In addition, all items in our gift shop make perfect gifts for Christmas—from our selection of books on local history and numerous stocking stuffers.

Our online store continues to expand and now features 43 books from our book store. More products will be added over the coming months. We will also have special sales for our online gift shop, so make sure you are subscribed to our email list to get these deals!

If you are a member at the Fenton, you get a 10% discount at our store. Not a member? Come down to the Fenton and join, and you will get a 10% discount off of your purchase.

All proceeds from the Fenton Museum Store go directly into supporting the Fenton History Center and its mission to collect, document, preserve, and share the history of our community.
On occasion when I hit a wall I need a break while volunteering at the Research Center, and I like to take this opportunity to look at what is on the “Book Sale” shelf. Things come and go there. Once I saw a *History of Chautauqua County and Its People* two-volume set, and I felt the need to purchase that. Nice, and a bargain at $15.

Currently there is a stack of cancelled cashier’s checks from the First National Bank of Jamestown. Mostly from the year 1899 and typically made out to one business or another. A few of them are made out to individuals and thus have their signatures on the back. I was looking through them hoping to find some locally famous individual but the 1900 City Directory turned up nobody. Next I searched names on Ancestry, figuring at least I would find somebody noteworthy. One was made out to a lady who lived in Manhattan, and one was a guy probably from Ashtabula, Ohio – possibly locally famous but not locally famous around here. And then I looked up Lurissa G. Wilson.

According to the 1905 Census Lurissa was living on James-town Street in Sinclairville. So I sense that I am on the right trail because one of the stamps on the back refers to Schofield, Cipperly & Chessman of Sinclairville, New York. In 1905, Lurissa was 80 years old, living by herself and doing housework. This would mean she was born somewhere around 1825.

The 1850 census has her at age 25 living in the Town of Gerry and married to Wm. W. Wilson with a son named Marvin E. All were born in New York. The 1855 Census shows them living in Ellicott, among the few people on that page of the census who own land. They had been there for two years and all had been born in Chautauqua County. This would make both William and Lurissa born during the “Pioneer Period” in Chautauqua County. Of course I am more interested in Lurissa because I have her autograph.

The next step I took was to go to Ancestry. Lurissa Wilson is mentioned several times but no marriage record could be found. Find A Grave refers to her as Lurissa Cutting Wilson, born 12-17-1824 and daughter of Calvin Cutting and Mary (or Polly) Wal-worth. Now Find A Grave is a fine resource but information there can be put in by anybody...

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and so I need a little more evidence. As Ronald Reagan said, “trust but verify” and that saying applies here. I was still dabbling in Find a Grave only this time I was looking for Calvin Cutting. And here is where I found pay-dirt – someone had attached an excerpt from History of Chautauqua County, New York by Obed Edson, a whole paragraph about Calvin Cutting in the Town of Gerry. As we have this book in the library I went to it and found the paragraph (top right).

As you can see, Lurissa is mentioned in this paragraph along with her husband. And so I can make the argument that the back of the cancelled cashier’s check has the autograph of a pioneer of Chautauqua County. She may not have been rich or famous but she is noteworthy.

**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. Program topics and speakers are subject to change. Most meetings are also often held via Zoom in addition to in-person.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Wednesday, December 28, 2022 @ 6:30 PM**

Christmas Party

**Saturday, January 14, 2023 @ 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM**

10th Annual Library Lock-In

**Wednesday, January 25, 2023**

Research Night 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Program - Beginning Research @ 6:30 PM - presented by Janet Wahlberg

**Thursday, February 23, 2023**

Research Night 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

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Calvin Cutting, son of Jonah and Sarah Cutting, was born in Guilford, Vt., June 6, 1796. He married in 1815 Polly Walworth. She was born May 13, 1797, in Franklin county, Mass. Mr. Cutting came to Gerry in the spring of 1816. He bought land, built a small log house on lot 45, on what is now the main highway between Gerry village and Sinclairville. In 1822 he completed a large addition to his frame building and opened an inn which was known as the Cutting stand, and the opening ball held on the 4th of July, 1834, was attended from far and wide. Mr. Cutting died Nov. 16, 1832, and his wife died September 26, 1853. Their children were: 1, Lewis, who married Susan B. Richmond March 7, 1847. Children: Mary L., Charles R., Henry B., Clara A., William G., Harriet A., Fred L.; 2, Lucius C., married Eunice Salisbury. He died in 1891; 3, Jonah B., married Mila Wilson. Children: Calvin, Rebecca, Ceylon and Lucien. 4, Sarah, married Chester Wilson, died in May, 1855; 5, Lurissa G., married William Wilson; 6, Laura, who died in 1861.
THE BACK STORY

Elwood J. Hanson, a young man from Ashville, New York, enlisted in the U.S. Army during World War II. Unfortunately, he was killed in action near the Roer River in Germany on November 25, 1944. Elwood is just one of 83,000 American Soldiers buried in the American military cemetery near Margraten, Netherlands.

In that same town, a fourteen-year-old girl named Catharina, witnessed with overwhelming emotion, the liberation of her country after four long years of German occupation. Those years of fear, hardship, and extreme uncertainty left a large impression on her young life. Her gratefulness for freedom lead her to adopt the graves of two American soldiers in 1946. One soldier was repatriated to his home in the states; the other soldier was Elwood J. Hanson.

Catharina visited his grave often, and repeatedly attempted to gain the address of his family in the United States in an attempt to set their minds at ease. The American gatekeeper was restricted from divulging any information about living descendants of the deceased soldiers, but after having watched her solemn devotion for two years, he finally gave in. Catharina corresponded with Elwood’s parents until their deaths, and then with his sister Hilda until her death. Contact was then lost in 1991.

THE REST OF THE STORY

A December 2010 email from Pieter van der Woude in the Netherlands, to Jamestown City Hall and a few other organizations were left unanswered. On December 24, Norm Carlson and I were buttoning up loose ends at work when an email appeared from Jamestown City Hall. They were forwarding Pieter’s email but warned us to be careful as it had come from another country. Without opening it we could see that it was regarding a local World War II soldier and it wasn’t long before the History of North Harmony divulged the sad fact that Ashville had lost a soldier named Elwood Hanson during

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A Call for Board Members

The Fenton History Center is governed by a Board of Trustees. We are a “working board,” meaning we discuss, plan, strategize, and work with staff to coordinate activities at the Fenton. We currently have open positions on the Board. We are always looking for new members, with diverse skills and backgrounds that can help aid in the Fenton’s mission.

If you are interested in joining the Board of Trustees, the only eligibility requirement is that you need to be a dues-paying member of the Fenton. Members of the Board of Trustees are elected at the annual meeting. If you are interested, fill out the application on our website at the link below. Prospective Board Members have also been typically invited to meetings of the Board of Trustees to get a better idea of how the Board operates.

fentonhistorycenter.org/joinboard
Recycle your household bags and wrap! The Fenton is collecting 500 pounds of plastic in order to get a heavy duty, weather-resistant bench for seating in our Blue Star Memorial Garden! We have a box inside the Fenton Mansion and at the Hall House Research Center!
61st Annual Meeting
of the Fenton Historical Society of Jamestown, New York

Wed., January 11, 2023 at 6 PM
at the Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion
67 Washington Street, Jamestown, NY 14701

Notice is hereby given for the 2023 Annual Meeting, which shall include Election of Trustees, Officers, and Presentation of the Annual Report.

SENSORY SANTA VISITS

by Jane Babinsky
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A special thank you to Jed Philips who played Santa and Robb Will who played Santa’s Elf for our Sensory Santa Visits on Sunday, December 4th. The visits were a success and all who attended were extremely pleased.

Many of the special needs children and adults left in awe of seeing Santa. For many it was the first time that their families could go together for a Santa visit. We had 24 adults and 25 special needs visitors.
RECIPES OF THE MONTH

Transcribed by Cindy Dustin
VOLUNTEER

The Fenton History Center has an extensive collection of local cookbooks in its archives. This recipe comes from the Chautauqua County Home Country Cookbook published around 1984. The editor was Patricia VanEtten.

HAM & NOODLE CASSEROLE

Patricia Woodin

- 1 lb. Egg Noodles
- 1/2 c. butter, melted
- 1/2 c. flour
- 5-6 cups of milk
  (depending on consistency)
- 3 1/2 lbs. sharp cheddar cheese, grated
  (set aside 1/2 cup)
- 1/4 t. black pepper
- 4 lbs. ground ham
- 2 Tablespoons Paprika
- 1 small box of frozen peas

Cook noodles until done, about 8 minutes, and drain well. Make a roux by adding the flour to the melted butter. Meanwhile, warm the milk in a saucepan. When the roux is golden brown, add to the warmed milk, stirring until smooth. Cook over medium heat for about 5 minutes, adding seasonings. Add the grated cheese to the milk and stir until melted.

Add the ground ham and stir. Then add the noodles and combine well. Stir in the peas.

Pour into a large casserole dish (or 5 smaller casserole dishes for freezing). Sprinkle with the remaining grated cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour or until the top is golden brown.

NOTE: A very large recipe, but good for make-ahead meals in the winter and for the working “Mom.” Recipe can be cut in half.

NEED FOR A DEHUMIDIFIER

Caring for our exhibits and artifacts requires constant temperatures and levels of humidity. Our basement area can get quite damp in the summer and requires that we run a dehumidifier continuously. We would welcome a new one if you are able to help us out.
GENERAL INFORMATION
• Your membership is vital for keeping the museum and research center running!
• As of the summer of 2022, memberships now run January - December. Memberships purchased between September 1 and December 31 are good through December 31 of the following year.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS
• Unlimited complimentary admission to the Governor Reuben Fenton Mansion.
• Unlimited access to the Hall House Research Center.
• Reduced fee for Fenton events and programs unless specified.
• A 10% discount to the museum gift shop.
• Members only e-mail updates.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS
• Student $15
• Senior (age 62+) $30
• Individual (under age 62) $40
• Family $75. Includes 2 adults. All children in the household under 18 are included.

SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP LEVELS
• Supporting $120, can be paid monthly ($10). Includes 4 complimentary admission passes for guests.
• Friend of Fenton $250, can be paid monthly ($20.83). Includes 6 complimentary admission passes for guests.
• Representative’s Circle $360, can be paid monthly ($30). Includes 8 complimentary admission passes for guests.
• Senator’s Circle $500, can be paid monthly ($41.67). Includes 16 complimentary admissions for guests, lunch with Executive Director, and a behind the scenes tour of the Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion for up to four people, a free book from our gift shop, and a Fenton branded t-shirt.
• Governor’s Circle $1,000, can be paid monthly ($83.33). Includes unlimited complimentary admissions for guests, lunch with Executive Director, a behind the scenes tour of Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion for up to four people, a behind the scenes tour of Hall House Research Center for four people, a free book from our gift shop, and a Fenton branded t-shirt.

You can also process your membership payment online and have the option to set your membership to automatically renew each year. Thank you for your support!
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