

Walnut Grove Press

DECEMBER 2025

The Official Newsletter of the Fenton History Center VOLUME 6, ISSUE 12



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

by **Joni Blackman**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Happy Holidays! The Fenton History Center is ready for the season. The mansion is full of exhibits for the holiday season; from the upside-down tree to the Civil War era table top tree, the aluminum forest to the feather tree, plus, the favorite ceramic village of Jamestown and the Swedish St. Lucia exhibit – it's all waiting for you!

The **Fenton Gift Shop** is bursting with new gift items. We have games, puzzles, stocking stuffers, ornaments, and of course, local books. If you are looking for some unique gifts, we have them. Remember, if you are a member, you receive 10% off your purchase and you help the Fenton out! It's great for all of us.

The holiday exhibit is “Celebrations of Winter.” Learn about how Jamestown bundles up for the weather and enjoys

the season. Many interesting and nostalgic fur items were pulled from the collections to showcase the beautiful fur coats, hats, wraps and muffs. You can compare your modern sleds, skis and skates to those used in the past. Make a plan to bring your family and friends to see Jamestown's winter celebrations.

By now you have received your Holiday Appeal letter. **Why give to the Fenton Annual Fund?**

This year's annual fund focus is building on last year's success. Your donations will help us support our education and collection department needs. Our plan is to hire a part-time museum educator in the new year. With support from the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation and the Wilson Foundation we will be able to support start up costs for the position but will need donor support to move into 2027. Your donations this year will be earmarked for that support.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Notes from the Director Page 1
- 2025 Annual Letter Page 2
- Celebrations of Winter Page 3
- Vision 2030 Page 4
- Library Lock-In Page 5
- From the Textile Archives Page 6
- Sensory Sensitive Santa Page 7
- Holiday Craft Fair Pages 8-9
- Volunteers Needed Page 10
- Doors Open Page 11
- Honor Flight Reunion Pages 12-14
- Vets Finding Vets Page 15
- 64th Annual Meeting Page 16
- Genealogy Support Group Page 18
- Fenton Canteen Page 19
- A Call for Board Members Page 19
- In Memoriam Page 20
- Local Trivia Page 21
- Wanted: Maddox Table Page 21
- Membership Page 22
- Our Supporters Page 23

The other need is the ongoing expense of managing a growing collection of objects, paper and textiles. While we have some funds restricted for boxes, folders, etc., staff support is always needed. Thank you for helping us keep our staff full-time. We are making good progress in processing a large backlog of object and paper donations.

The Fenton History Center will be closed both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and New Year's Eve and January 1st. From all of us; Joni, Barb, Andrew, Matthew and the Board of Trustees, to all of you, **we wish you a joyous holiday season.**

2025 ANNUAL LETTER

Greetings,

Well, it's been a little over a year in the executive's seat. I am grateful for all the new and old friends I have become acquainted (and reacquainted) with this year. Between the volunteers and the staff, we are moving forward with plans to expand education programming, improve the collections storage and organize the special collections (paper collections).

All this would not be possible without your support of time, talent and treasure. Thank you!

As I say so often – your connections to Jamestown matter to the Fenton History Center. We want to know about your family history so we can tell Jamestown's story to future generations.

Along those lines, this year's annual fund focus is building on last year's success.

- We are **growing** our education programming by hiring an education director in February 2026. A portion of your donations last year helped us leverage a Chautauqua Region Community Foundation grant to support the position.
- Your donations will help us support the collections, the special collections (paper collections) plus the staff and volunteers that keep it safe, organized and searchable. The Fenton collections tell our local story. **It is our biggest responsibility.**
- In addition to your generous donations, you can further support the Fenton History Center by shopping at our **gift shop**, which is open year-round. The shop offers a wonderful variety of gifts suitable for all ages and interests, especially during the holiday season. We invite you to stop in and explore the selection—every purchase helps sustain our mission.

As in the past few years, anyone donating \$1,000 or more to this appeal will have their name engraved on a plaque that hangs in the Fenton Mansion. If you can't afford to donate a large sum, consider supporting a few hours of our staff's time, or buy some archival boxes or folders – in any amount - and you will be recognized, with your permission, on our website and in our newsletter.

Another easy way to support this valuable work is to donate monthly. Visit www.fentonhistorycenter.org/donate and chose the amount that works for your budget.

If you qualify to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) or a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), please consider making a tax-free gift to the Fenton. Talk to your financial advisor about how you can make the most of your donation.

Donate today and don't forget to renew your membership. If you are not a member, please consider joining us!



Thomas Goodwill
President of the Board of Trustees



Joni Blackman
Executive Director

P.S. Your donations make a BIG difference!

Celebrations of WINTER

See How Jamestown Bundles Up,
Plays, and Enjoys Winter

Visit the Holiday Exhibit

**at the Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion
67 Washington Street, Jamestown, NY 14701**

Nov. 29, 2025 - Jan., 10, 2026

VISION 2030

FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

by **Joni Blackman**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This Giving Tuesday marks the beginning of a major new fundraising initiative for the Fenton History Center. Today, we are launching our **Vision 2030** campaign, a long-term effort to build the stability our institution needs to grow over the **next five years**.

To help us reach our ambitious goals listed below, consider a recurring gift, **whether \$10, \$20, or \$30 a month**, providing stable, predictable income that we can count on. This stability allows us to plan responsibly, invest in staff, strengthen preservation work, and move forward with confidence on the projects our community relies on.

Our first milestone, **\$1,500 in monthly support by the end of 2026**, is well within reach. That amount could come from **150 supporters giving \$10 a month, 15 supporters giving \$100 a month, or any combination in between**.

This campaign succeeds because many people give what they can, and together it adds up. Every monthly commitment, whether large or small, helps us reach our 2026 milestone and moves us steadily toward our **long-term goal of \$5,000 per month** by

2030.

And for those who prefer to give their time, volunteers remain one of Fenton's greatest strengths. **Your time, skills, and presence are just as valuable in helping us serve the community and preserve our shared history.**

Between now and 2030, we have ambitious but essential goals for strengthening and modernizing the Fenton:

Build a third building to bring our off-site storage back on-site, improving access, strengthening collections care, and providing much-needed exhibit and community space for expanded programs.

Sustain the Education Coordinator position beyond 2026 and expand our educational programming, bringing more programs into local schools and increasing opportunities for families and community groups.

Fund additional collections staff, including a long, overdue and critical full inventory of our artifacts and archival materials.

Complete major preservation projects, such as the Mansion roof.

Ensure we can continue to carry out all of our essential

work, from preserving collections to running programs and maintaining operations, without financial strain, supported by strong infrastructure and reliable funding.

We will continue to hold our annual funding campaigns, and we are deeply grateful for our annual donors whose generosity has carried the Fenton forward. In recent years, the annual fund has ranged from \$6,000 to \$16,000, and every gift has truly made a difference.

At the same time, annual giving can fluctuate and grants we budget for are never guaranteed. When that happens, we must sometimes delay projects or find last-minute funding. Monthly giving helps bridge this gap by providing steady, predictable support we can count on for long-term planning.

Together, we can build a stronger, more resilient Fenton. Your monthly support gives us the confidence to move forward with our plans, care for what we've been entrusted with, and expand what we offer to the community.

Thank you for helping us preserve the past while preparing for the future!

If you have questions, call Joni at (716) 664-6256.

DONATE: FENTONHISTORYCENTER.ORG/VISION2030

FENTON HISTORY CENTER'S

13TH ANNUAL

LIBRARY LOCK-IN

Saturday, January 10, 2026

12 PM - 10 PM

at the Hall House Research Center
73 Forest Ave., Jamestown, NY 14701

Spend the day exploring your ancestry with help from the Fenton History Center's expert staff and volunteers, no experience needed! Enjoy up to ten hours of research, food, prizes, and fun at the Hall House. Come for part or all of the event, every dollar supports the Fenton History Center.

Cost: \$30 per person

Register at the Fenton, over the phone, or on our website.
register online: fentonhistorycenter.org/lockin

(716) 664-6256 FentonHistoryCenter.org

TALES FROM THE TEXTILE ARCHIVES: HILDA AND HESTER

by Cindy Dustin
VOLUNTEER

We recently catalogued several hats that were in old-fashioned hat boxes from HILDA and HESTER, a millinery shop that was located at 13 East Fourth Street, in the Thurston Block between Potters Alley and Pine Street.

Hilda C. Peterson and Hester E. Himes were partners in the business, which began in 1936. The ladies sold hats in their shop, but they were also in high demand for millinery and fashion shows at area clubs, churches, bridge groups, luncheons and various auxiliary meetings. Hilda and Hester would often cooperate with Jamestown dress shops and shoe stores to hold fashion events to show off the latest fashions in hats, dresses and shoes. Hilda and Hester also held Sunday



afternoon teas at their shop to showcase their hats.

Hilda's obituary in 2001 states that she was a native of Jamestown, however, the 1920 and 1930 census records show that she was born in Sweden in 1897. She immigrated with her parents and brother Harold in 1902. Hilda worked as a telephone operator in 1920, and by 1930 her occupation was listed as "milliner." Hilda was a charter member of the Marvin House and was also a

member of the Norden Women's Club. She was a Gray Lady at the former WCA Hospital and volunteered in the hospital gift shop.

After the death of her husband, Merritt, Hester retired to Florida in the mid-1960s. She was the financial secretary and office manager for the United Fund and Community Chest of Southern Chautauqua County for 20 years and had been the office manager at Par-Ket Motors.

The store closed in 1970.



Sensory Sensitive Santa

Sat., Dec. 13, 2025

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion

67 Washington Street, Jamestown, NY 14701

Free to the public; there will be refreshments and a gift for all children!

Join us for a calm and welcoming Santa experience designed for children and families who may find traditional visits overwhelming. Our Santa is experienced with individuals with disabilities, and the event offers a peaceful, festive atmosphere for all. Free and open to the community, parents or caregivers must accompany children.



HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

by Andrew Kolstee
OFFICE MANAGER

The Fenton History Center kicked off the holiday season on November 15 with its 6th Annual Fenton Holiday Craft Fair, welcoming visitors into the Fenton Mansion for a day of shopping from local crafters, a bake sale, and a festive, historic atmosphere.

Several vendors were set up throughout the historic rooms of the mansion, each offering unique handmade goods ranging from seasonal décor and gifts to jewelry, art, and specialty crafts.

The Fenton also hosted a bake sale, in which all items were donated and all proceeds support the Fenton.

The fair also highlighted the Fenton's gift shop, ready for the holiday season, with new items. Shoppers explored a wide variety of local-history books, ornaments, puzzles and games, and other items. Stop in to the gift shop during your Christmas shopping this year!

Staff and volunteers were on hand to answer questions and share more about the museum's programs and events.





VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We are always looking for volunteers for different tasks and projects.

Below are three major needs for volunteers.

Contact us at (716) 664-6256, info@fentonhistorycenter.org, or stop in and fill out a volunteer form.

LIST OF VOLUNTEER NEEDS

GIFT SHOP RECEPTION

We need reception coverage on certain days. This involves starting tours and selling merchandise in the gift shop.



SCAN LAB

We are in need of volunteers to help with digitization projects in the Scan Lab.
No prior experience necessary.

MOWING

We are also in need of volunteers to help mow the lawn at the Hall House Research Center.



GARDEN

We need volunteers to help maintain the Blue Star Memorial Garden.



**FENTON
HISTORY CENTER**

FREE ADMISSION
to the Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion
67 Washington St., Jamestown, NY 14701

**SAT. JAN 24, 2026
10 AM - 4 PM**



LIMITED AVAILABILITY
You must register in advance at
fentonhistorycenter.org/doorsopen

HONOR FLIGHT REUNION 2025

by Barbara Cessna
VETS FINDING VETS COORDINATOR

The November Walnut Press covered two Vets Finding Vets events held in October – Patriotic Bingo and the All-Women Veterans Honor Flight. But, October was very busy for veterans as there was also our annual Honor Flight Reunion. We keep the reunion in October as we wait until after the October flight to Washington, D.C., so that those veterans can attend as well, and we hope to catch those who winter in warmer areas before they leave.

The 2025 reunion was held at the Cassadaga American Legion, the perfect setting for our gathering, and we were very grateful for their hospitality.

Vets Finding Vets first began participating in Buffalo Niagara Honor Flights in October 2017, when three World War II veterans and one Korean War veteran excitedly began their journey from Jamestown to Buffalo. At that time, there was a spring and fall flight, but after three flights were missed during the COVID pandemic, an extra flight was added to catch up on the long list of potential travelers.

We began having an annual reunion for this very special “Band of Brothers” in 2018, and it is always a joyful time. They enjoy seeing each other again, the vet-



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erans who were on their own flight, and other veterans they know.

The speaker this year was Eric Hamilton, the 2024 Vets Finding Vets Soldier's Friend Scholarship recipient. (The SFS is the beneficiary of the Patriotic Bingo fundraisers.) The applicants must be a Chautauqua County graduate or undergraduate with a concrete plan of either entering the service, or obtaining a civilian occupation offered by a military branch in support of serving members. In this case, service came first, as Eric entered the Marine Corps after high school and at the time he applied for the \$1,000 scholarship, he was struggling with the cost of books at Northeastern Seminary, while working locally for the Department of Defense.

His message that day certainly resonated with the Honor Flight veterans and their guests as he reminded them that their service gave younger veterans heroes to look up to. He made the point that in Washington, D.C., they had seen the war memorials, but that they were granite. They, themselves, are the real memorials of their service and he encouraged them to pass down their own stories to their families. He ended with some of his Marine experiences in Iraq, coming home broken in many ways, and how they led him to join the seminary.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



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Fifty veterans and their guests enjoyed the day, chatting about their favorite subject "The Trip of a Lifetime." It was so good to see them again and we all look forward to the next Reunion.

Our speaker, Eric, didn't mention it at the reunion, but he has a street ministry in Jamestown, focusing mostly on the homeless population. He is currently collecting coats to give out as the temperatures settle into real winter. There are also children who need to stay warm. Most of us have one or two coats we know we will never wear again, and if you would like them to make their way to people who need them, please call 716-397-7079.



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ATTENTION VETERANS!

Vets Finding Vets is a free program for Chautauqua County veterans at the Fenton History Center.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- ★ **Research Services.** We provide family genealogy and local history research services, helping veterans discover their roots and also connect with those in which they have served.
- ★ **Fenton Canteen.** A monthly gathering for veterans to enjoy coffee, cookies, and camaraderie. Held the second Saturday each month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the dining room at the Fenton.
- ★ **Buffalo Niagara Honor Flight.** We help facilitate the application process for veterans wishing to participate in the Honor Flight to see the war monuments in Washington, D.C.
- ★ **Quilts of Valor.** Family members can nominate veterans to receive a handmade quilt through this program.
- ★ **News and Events:** We share information about veteran-related events and happenings in the community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Barb Cessna, Vets Finding Vets Project Coordinator

(716) 664-6256 | veterans@fentonhistorycenter.org

Fenton History Center | 67 Washington Street | Jamestown, NY 14701

64TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK

AGENDA

Election of Trustees

Election of Officers

Presentation
of the Annual Report

SUN. JAN. 25, 2026
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

There will be refreshments!

All are welcome to attend. All dues paying members of the Fenton Historical Society are entitled to vote in the elections.
This notice satisfies the requirements of the bylaws.

FENTON HISTORY CENTER

Stay up to date with the latest at the Fenton!

JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST!
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HELD AT THE HALL HOUSE RESEARCH CENTER

73 Forest Avenue, Jamestown, New York 14701 Phone: (716) 664-6256

2025 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sat., January 11, 2025	12 PM - 10 PM	12th Annual Library Lock-In
Wed., January 29, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Thurs., February 27, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Wed., March 26, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Wed., April 30, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Wed., May 28, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Sat., June 14, 2025	*	Trip to Buffalo
Wed., June 25, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Wed., July 30, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Wed., August 27, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Open House / Research Night
Wed., September 24, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Research Night
Wed., October 29, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Documentary Night
Wed., November 19, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Brick Walls
Wed., December 17, 2025	4 PM - 8 PM	Christmas Party

*contact us if you would like to go!

About the Genealogy Support Group

The Fenton's Genealogy Support Group serves to support both experienced and amateur researchers. We offer lectures, workshops, discussions, and research nights. These events are an excellent way to become familiar with the Fenton History Center's impressive collection of resources. Our Research Night expands the hours of operation of our research center to one evening per month.

LEARN MORE:

www.FentonHistoryCenter.org

NEXT FENTON CANTEENS

AT THE GOV. REUBEN FENTON MANSION

SAT. DEC. 13, 2025 10 AM - 12 PM

SAT. JAN. 10, 2026 10 AM - 12 PM

SAT. FEB. 14, 2026 10 AM - 12 PM

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 two open positions on the Board** and 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, usually held in February of each year. 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.

Questions? Call Joni Blackman at 716-664-6256

fentonhistorycenter.org/joinboard

In Memoriam
Members Who Have Passed

G. William “Bill” Samuelson
1941–2025

Cheryl A. Collins
1954–2025

Robert H. “Bob” Munson
1935–2025

John C. Shupp
1941–2025

Local Trivia

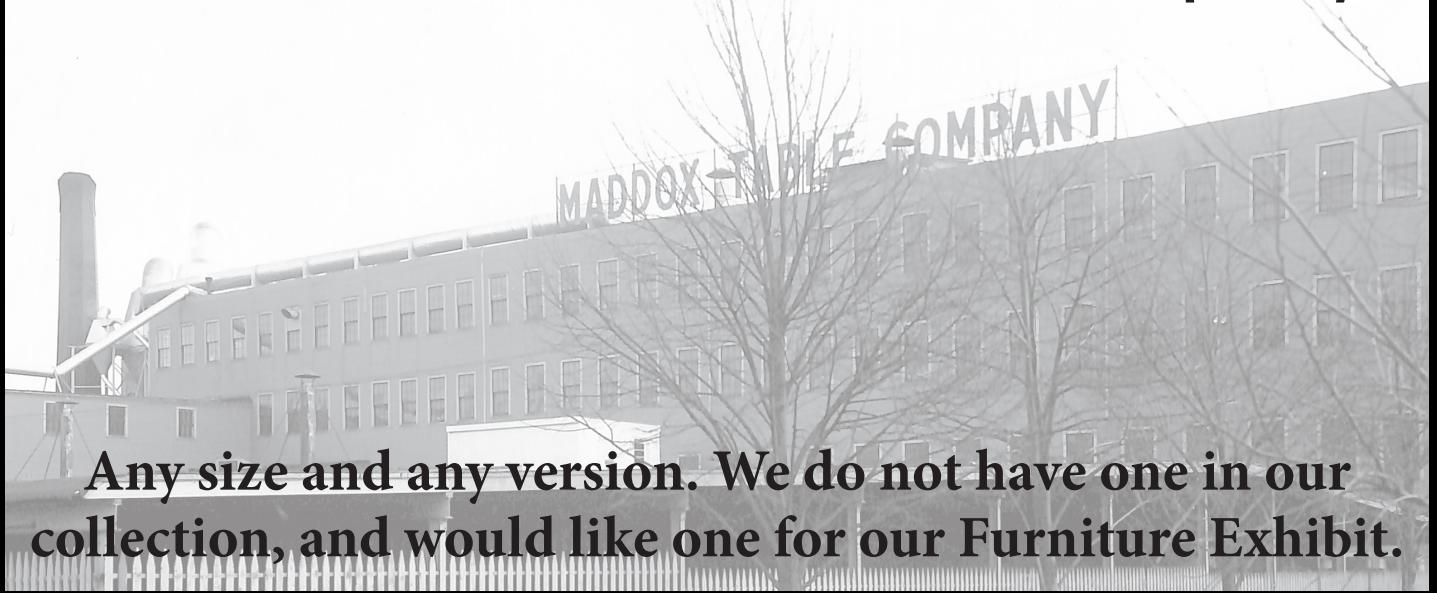
- Q1. How did Shea's Cleaners get its name?
- Q2. What was the theme song for the JHS Band in the 1985-1986 season?
- Q3. Who owned the Columbia Market?
- Q4. Which Jamestown composer wrote a march in honor of Arthur R. Goranson?
- Q5. What is the team name for Jefferson School?

See page 22 for answers.



WANTED: A Table

from the Maddox Table Company



Any size and any version. We do not have one in our collection, and would like one for our Furniture Exhibit.

FENTON HISTORY CENTER MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Your membership is vital for keeping the museum and research center running!
- Memberships 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
- Veteran \$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. Includes 4 complimentary admission passes for guests.
- Friend of Fenton \$250. Includes 6 complimentary admission passes for guests.
- Representative's Circle \$360. Includes 8 complimentary admission passes for guests.
- Senator's Circle \$500. 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. 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!

FENTONHISTORYCENTER.ORG/MEMBERSHIP

Trivia answers from page 21.

(A1) It was located under the old Shea's Theater (A2) California Girls (A3) The Mazzurco's
(A4) Frank Giunta (A5) Jaguars

Thank You to Our Supporters!

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COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



RALPH C. WILSON, JR.
FOUNDATION



Community Foundation
for Greater Buffalo

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR GENEROSITY

Support the Fenton through recycling!

Bring your plastic and aluminum beverage containers to Southside Redemption Center in the name of the Fenton History Center. Proceeds will directly benefit the Fenton History Center. Plastic and aluminum must be separated. Just drop them off in the name of the Fenton and that's it!



Southside Redemption Center

1752 Foote Avenue
Jamestown, NY 14701

Mon-Wed 9 AM to 5 PM
Thursday 9 AM to 2 PM
Friday 9 AM to 5 PM
Saturday 10 AM to 4 PM



FENTON HISTORY CENTER

STAFF MEMBERS

Joni Blackman Executive Director
Andrew Kolstee Office Manager
Barbara Cessna Hall House Manager,
Vets Finding Vets Coordinator
Matthew Tsitso Archivist/Curator

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LEARN MORE

Fenton History Center Museum
67 Washington Street
Jamestown, New York 14701
Hours: Mon. - Sat. 10 AM - 4 PM

Hall House Research Center
73 Forest Avenue
Jamestown, NY 14701
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 10 AM - 4 PM
(716) 664-6256
www.fentonhistorycenter.org



Fenton History Center's amazon Wishlist

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](http://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1PU3BVS0HQ5E0)

Admission Prices

Includes entry to Gov. Reuben Fenton Mansion & Museum and William Hall House Research Center

Members	FREE
Adults (18+)	\$10
Children (under 18)	FREE
Veterans (with military ID)	\$8
Seniors (62+, first Tuesdays only)	\$5
Active Military and Family (May 16-Sept. 7, 2026)	FREE

Become a member today and your admission to the museum and research center is free!

