



Lock 52 Chronicle

The Newsletter of the Lock 52 Historical Society of Port Byron, NY

Issue 6

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2020

What Have We Been Doing at the Historical Society?

Last year (2019) was another good year for the Lock 52 Historical Society. We continued to grow our collection, we held our first cemetery walk, and we shared a lot of our local history. Here is a brief recap and update of our activities.

Collections

I think everyone is now aware of the donation of photos from the Roberts family. The two large albums contained many group and portrait style photos and many were labeled. We scanned the photos so we could share the images by way of Facebook and the Find-a-Grave website. We also started our own Roberts family tree on Ancestry.com, so we could begin to figure out the connections between the various families.

The family of Rudy Schasel donated over 100 postcards after the death of Rene Schasel. Again, we scanned and cataloged the cards, and started to share them on Facebook. When the cards were donated, it was suggested that we use them to create a book on the history of Port Byron. As we are always looking for ways to increase our visibility and make money, we thought this to be a fine idea and have started on this project.

We also purchased a couple smaller collection's of photographs. We hate to spend money on these items and do hope that you will donate, however these collections had been purchased in estate sales and the seller needed to recoup their investment.

We also can borrow your photographs, scan and then return them to you. A very kind person allowed us to do this with their collection of 1950s Little League team photos.

We scan at a very high resolution and in a stable format so we can have very clear images. When we want to share them on the internet, we can reduce the resolution and clean them up a bit. If you have photos you wish to share and want to do your own scanning, contact us for guidelines.

We also received a number of single items, such as a 1947 village directory. All these items help us tell the story of the village and town.

Sharing and Education

Our philosophy is to share what we have in as many digital ways as possible. It doesn't cost us anything to do this and it is the best way to get our discoveries into your hands. Each month the Citizen carries a column on Mentz news, which is typically history based. If you are not a Citizen subscriber, we post a link to the column on Facebook, and we will post the article on the website.

Genealogy

At the heart of everything is the person, and it is safe to say that every item in our collection has a person behind it. Over the years, we have built up quite a collection family files. Sometimes they might simply hold clippings from newspapers, or they might have photos, letters, or whatever we have found. We continue to organize, clean, and inventory these files, and they are available for research. We also have Dorothy Walker's files of index cards to births, deaths, and marriages.

As noted prior, we started using our own Ancestry.com accounts to create mini family

Mission

The Lock 52 Historical Society of Port Byron is chartered by the NYS Department of Education to serve as the historic society for the town of Mentz and the village of Port Byron. The mission of the historical society is; to advocate for responsible preservation of historic materials, structures, and artifacts; to aid genealogists and researchers in their pursuit of local history; to share and educate about our shared history; and to encourage historic tourism.

Membership

Membership is open to anyone who wishes to help the Lock 52 Historical Society carry out its mission.

The Society is Governed by an All Volunteer and Independent Board of Trustees.

Officers

Michael Riley – President

Jeff Emerson - Vice-President

Mark Emerson- Treasurer

Hellen Davies – Secretary

At-Large

Joyce Biss – Newspaper Committee Chair

Evalyn Taylor – Collections Committee

Mel Carner

trees so we could see and workout the connections between families. We then decided to create one large village wide family tree under the name of the Port Byron family tree. As we find photos and documents, we can then simply upload these to the individual profiles and then family researchers can grab and use to their trees. However, a caution. Good genealogical practice dictates that you should check, double-check, and then triple-check any information that you put into your own family tree. While we are checking and cross-checking, you should be rechecking. And also, if you see something that is incorrect, please let us know.

Programs and Tours

In October 2019, we held our first cemetery tour. It was more like a “row in the cemetery” tour. And it was fascinating to see what life stories could be found in one row of monuments. We would like to do more of these, perhaps making the tour have a focus such as; people who worked on the canal, or Civil War vets, or Underground Railroad, or whatever. There are many stories to tell.

Utica Street Building

In the summer of 2019, we decided to purchase the old bakery building on Utica Street (right next to the new dollar store). We had hoped that we could use this building to have a store front in the downtown that would increase our visibility. While we got the building, we found that the construction of the new store had severely damaged the old store-front. Why this was allowed to happen is anyone's guess and I would expect that if the building had been occupied, this would have been caught and repaired. So our hopes have been put on hold while we try to find funding to make repairs and make the building usable again.

The question has been asked why we even wanted to buy this old building, and there are a number of reasons. Even though the Lock 52 Historical Society is 41 years old, a large percentage of the population doesn't know we exist. A store-front at the main crossroads in the village would help to create an awareness of the society. It would also put us onto the route of the Empire State Trail. This trail is the rebranding of the Erie Canalway Trail, the trail that connects Buffalo to Albany along the route of the Erie Canal. This is one of the longest recreational trails in the United States and heavily used by thousands of people each year. We also acknowledge that our house on Pine Street is very difficult for people to access. It has no off-street parking and you need to park on the shoulder of the road and then cross the grass. There is good on-street parking in front of the Utica Street building.

Any money that is donated to the society for the building will be used to meet any funding matches as we seek out grants.

Pine Street Building

The building at 73 Pine Street continues to serve as our headquarters and will do so for awhile. Last spring we hired Wayne Marten to get the water damage from our broken pipe heater pipe repaired. It is a old building and we always have a lot of work to do to keep it safe and sound. We do heat it throughout the winter so we can work in there when we need to and to keep the collection safe.

Tourism Promotion

Another part of our mission to to promote the village and town as places to visit, and while we don't claim to be a tourism office, we feel that the information we put out there helps to bring attention to what sights we have to visit. As an example, as people follow the Empire State Trail, they want to see canal related sites and the villages that the canal helped to create. After they visit the great Erie Canal park on the Thruway, we hope they will then spend some time wandering through the rest of the village. Or as people dig into their family history, we want them to come see where their ancestors lived. Or we want people in the LDS faith to see where Brigham Young married, lived, and worked for a few years. We know that tourism spending adds millions of dollars to the upstate economy and we hope to get people to spend a few of those dollars here in Port Byron.

Local Biographies

One of our volunteers continued in her historical journey by conducting interviews with willing residents and then writing up a short article. These are very popular and always receive a number of views when they are posted to the website.

Our New Newspaper Committee

Late last year we attended an auction at the O'Neil house. When we have notice of these auctions, we will attend to see if we can save any local history before it is sold off. At this auction

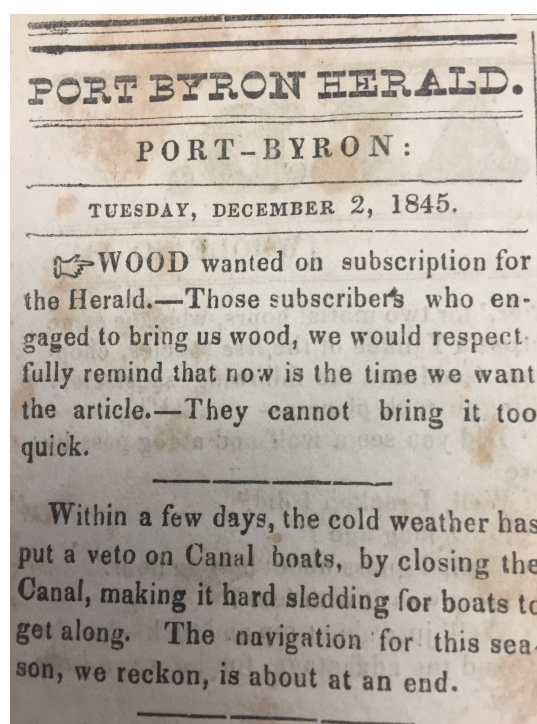
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Blog- lock52hs.blogspot.com

Or simply search for the
Lock 52 Historical Society

Wanted Your Old Newspapers

If you have old copies of the Port Byron Chronicle, Port Byron Gazette, or Port Byron Herald, we would like to see them for inclusion in our newspaper project.



we purchased a box of old newspapers, which had a number of Port Byron Chronicles. People don't do this much anymore, but in the past, people would save the papers that carried headlines of noteworthy events. Happily for us, inside these papers you can find obituaries and marriage notices, and so much more. This small collection of papers started one of our volunteer's on a quest to see what was available, but not online. What she has found that what is online is just a small percentage of what is out there in many historic societies, museums, libraries and other collections. As an example, if you have used the Old Fulton website, you know that the copies of the Chronicle begin around 1905. And yet, the committee has unearthed in local museums some of the earliest newspapers printed in Port Byron from the 1840s. So we have formed a Newspaper Committee to find and inventory these hidden collections, seek out permission to digitize them, and then make them available online. We thank the Wayuga Newspapers who have already given us permission to use the later copies of the Chronicle. The Lock 52 Historical Society will be partnering with the Port Byron Library, Montezuma Historical Society, Cayuga County Historian, Cayuga Museum of History and Art, and the Seymour Library Learning Discovery Center to seek out funding and make these papers available to everyone. It is an exciting project.

If you missed it, we have a history of Port Byron's newspapers up on the website;
<http://portbyronhistorical.org/newspapers-port-byron/>

So there you have a quick run down of what we have been doing in the past year. While we have a great group of volunteers, our numbers continue to decrease each passing year. As you can see, we have a wide range of on-going and very exciting projects which will help us preserve and share the history of Port Byron and Mentz. We would very much enjoy having more people available to help us carry out these tasks. Young or old, there are ways you can help.

Want to pay on-line?

Use our Pay-Pal account by
searching
for Lock 52 Historical Society
or use the link on the website
About Us page.

<http://portbyronhistorical.org/about-us/>

Your membership support and donations help the Lock 52 Historical Society carry out its mission of preserving and sharing local history. Please consider joining today. Individual \$10/year, Family \$15/year, Supporting \$50/year, Other \$??

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Make check out to Lock 52 Historical Society, and return to:
Mark Emerson, Treasurer, 94 Halsey St, Port Byron, NY 13140