



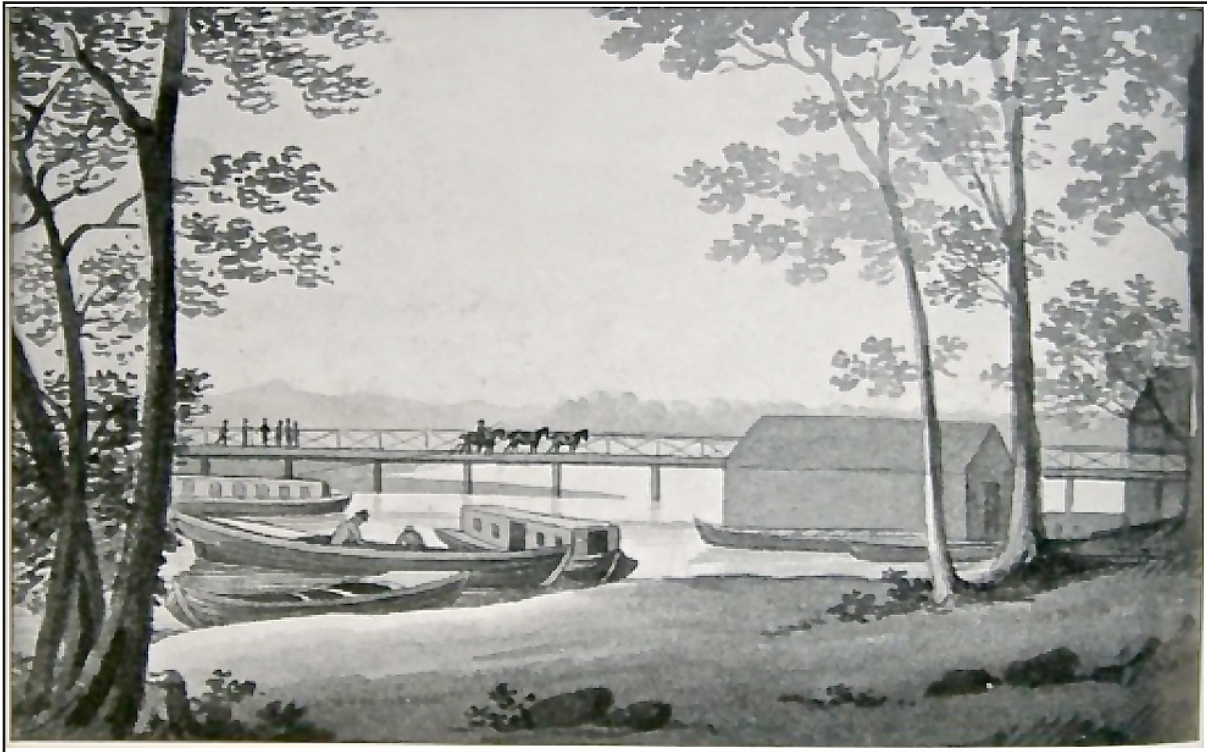
Lock 52 Chronicle

The Newsletter of the Lock 52 Historical Society
Preserving and Sharing the History of Port Byron and Montez

Spring

2023

“Preserving Culture & Community Through the Art of Historic Erie Canal”
2023 Series of Events Scheduled



In honor of the celebration of the building and opening of the Erie Canal, the Lock 52 Historical Society of Port Byron and Montezuma Historical Society have scheduled a 2023 series of programs “Preserving Culture & Community Through the Art of the Historic Erie Canal.” An opening event on Saturday, May 20 at 2 PM, at the Samuel Center for Canal History, 36 Rochester Street, Port Byron will bring together an internationally known artist and an underwater investigator who will weave together the exciting story of an adventurous expedition and the artistic interpretation of that discovery.

What does it mean to paint history? How can one look back in time to find clues about how a person or a place looked hundreds or even thousands of years ago? Artist Len Tantillo describes the creative and investigative process he works through in order to best recreate history on canvas. He will unveil his newest painting inspired by a unique towpath bridge spanning the Seneca River in Montezuma to allow vessels to make the crossing to continue their journey on the newly opened Erie Canal. The site of the pilings still remaining at the river’s edge in Montezuma Heritage Park are remnants and a testimony of a time where the first navigation on the newly built Canal took place. Len has captured this important time in history in which he thoroughly researched the setting and added important elements to tell the story. His reconstructed canal boat and its passengers are featured in his painting, “Martin’s Journey West.” The making of this work will be the subject of his presentation. Joining Len will be Art Cohn, a historian and archaeologist whose team has uncovered sunken early canal boats in Seneca Lake.

During Art Cohn’s long tenure in museum, historical and archaeologist interpretation, he has used artwork

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Lock 52 Historical Society

For memberships,
subscriptions, change of
address, and other business
matters, c/o Mark Emerson
at mark63pb@yahoo.com

For archives, donations and
questions, or other matters:
Contact Michael Riley at
mriley20@twcnv.rr.com

The Lock 52 Historical
Society is dedicated to the
preservation and education
of the history of the town of
Mentz and the village of Port
Byron. The society is
chartered by the New York
State Education Department
to serve as the local historical
society.

You can find us online at
www.portbyronhistorical.org
[www.facebook.com/
Lock52HS](http://www.facebook.com/Lock52HS)

Or visit us at the society's
building located at 73 Pine
Street

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extensively to maximize the effectiveness of story-telling and to make it easier for people to understand the context of their efforts. Art shares, "Our recent multi-year project surveying the entire bottom of Seneca Lake now provides us with a unique opportunity to engage the public, through art, in the history and archaeology of New York State's canal system." Since beginning the project in 2018, more than 50 historic shipwrecks have been discovered from the early canal era resting intact on the deep bottom of Seneca Lake.

On the morning of Saturday, May 20th, 10 AM-11:30, (weather permitting) prior to the afternoon program a Walking Tour will be held in Montezuma Heritage Park to visit the site where Len's painting tells the story of early packet boats venturing across this towpath bridge crossing. The tour is open to the public to join the presenters with Mike Riley, canal historian leading the walk beginning at High Street just north of the Montezuma Fire Department. Mike will guide the tour pointing out several features along the way including the original Erie Canal Lock 62 that served as a guard lock into the river. A visit will be made to the remains of the Richmond Aqueduct built twenty-five years later with the expanded Enlarged Canal to elevate the difficult slack water crossing towpath bridge depicted in Len's painting.

During Art's and Len's visit here, a special presentation will be held on Friday, May 19th for a morning assembly with Port Byron high school art students and a trip to the Samuel Center for Canal Research in the afternoon for fourth grade students.

Throughout the remainder of the Bicentennial years leading up to the celebration of the 1825 Grand Opening of the Erie Canal, Lock 52 and Montezuma Historical Societies will feature an exhibit of canal site artwork. The exhibit will be on display at the Lock 52 Museum House, 73 Pine Street in Port Byron scheduled for 2023 from May 13 through September 16. The museum will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 1 - 3 PM and on Saturdays by appointment. An Open House on Saturday, June 10, 10 AM to 2 PM, will feature Muralist Dawn Jordan, as the Artist in Residence for 2023 who will be joined by town historians Mike Riley and Cheryl Longyear for a talk on her locally displayed murals and the fascinating history behind them.

For exhibit times and more information visit the website at
<https://www.portbyronhistorical.org/port-byron-historical-events>



So how will Art interpret this site? Come to the unveiling on May 20th!

Society News

A New Beginning

As you can see from the lead article, 2023 is going to be an exciting year. And yet, there is more.

After a couple years of discussion between the boards of the Lock 52 Historical Society and the Montezuma Historical Society, we have decided to merge the two organizations. Our merged society will actually represent the old Mentz, when Montezuma was a part of the larger town.

So what does that mean, and what will this merged organization look like?

Both organizations were built on the idea that the history of Mentz, Montezuma, and Port Byron should not be forgotten, although both have carried out their missions in two very different manners. Since 1979, the volunteers of Lock 52 have been collecting and preserving photos, prints, documents and artifacts that help to tell the story of what it was like to live and work in Mentz and Port Byron. And since 2000, the focus of the Montezuma Historical Society has been the preservation of the old Mentz Church and the creation of the 188-acre Montezuma Heritage Park. I think it is safe to say that both groups have successfully carried out these missions. So what will change?

The headquarters of the new organization will be the house at 73 Pine Street in Port Byron. The society will continue to collect and share those items that we feel are worthy of preservation, but now with an expanded focus on the town of Montezuma. To be honest, with the shared families, school, the Erie Canal, and so much more, Lock 52 has always been collecting items about Montezuma, but now, it will be an official part of the mission.

To continue the great work at the Heritage Park, a special committee will be formed. Any funds that the MHS currently has dedicated to the park will be segregated and under the supervision of this committee. And, they will continue to hold the monthly work parties.

The websites and social media feeds will be combined so that there is one united presence, and there will be a quarterly printed newsletter sent to all members.

The two boards will continue to serve, and we have given ourselves a bit of time to work out who will be doing what.

So what will this new merged society be named? Well, this has been the most difficult item on the merge agenda. We have kicked around many ideas such as something as simple as the *Mentz, Montezuma and Port Byron Historic*

Society, and ideas such as the *Bucksville Historic Society*, or even the *Old Mentz HS*. Nothing is really clicking at the moment, so we ask you, “What is a suitable name that pulls in the heritage of the two towns, the village, and the hamlet?”

Although we have been discussing this for years, the merge will need to go through the official process at the NYS Education Department. Both groups have a charter from the education department to serve as the local historical society and this needs to be combined and given official blessing. This gives you time to make comments or raise any concerns, however, we hope you will find this to be an exciting opportunity for local history.

We are always looking for new folks to join the crew as we have a lot going on. You can help at the Montezuma Heritage Park, help with the cemetery crew, help with the Thursday work crew at the house, or even more. It is a fun way to give back and help the community.

Plus, we hope you will continue to be a member and maybe consider giving memberships as a gift. Our dues will not be changing and your membership helps us continue with all our projects, maintain the house and the collection, keep the website running, put out the newsletter, work in the cemetery and so much more. If you have been a member of the Montezuma Historical Society as a Friend of the Heritage park and want your membership or donation to go to the Heritage Park only, just make that clear when you send in your dues.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR
Canal Clean Sweep in
Montezuma Heritage Park
High Street Trailhead Kiosk
Sat. Apr. 22, 2023 - 9 AM - 1 PM
FOR MORE INFORMATION -**

Email: montezumaparks@tds.net; Register at:
<https://www.ptny.org/events/canal-clean-sweep>

Erie Canal Bicentennial Artwork Exhibit

It's a new season here at the Lock 52 Pine Street Museum! This year we are teaming with the Montezuma Historical Society to showcase an Erie Canal art exhibit, featuring images of canal sites from Centerport to Port Byron to Montezuma. We have been busy reacquainting with pieces from our society's core collection, and now we reach out to you for any leads you may have for additional artwork for us to showcase.

This exhibit will extend through the 2025 Erie Canal Bicentennial which requires a long-term loan. However with your permission, we could photograph your artwork, print the image on artwork quality paper, and have our friends at Nash's Framing & Art professionally mat and frame your artwork.

Included with our exhibit are originals by local artists Henry Aadahl, Lindy-Burke-Eiben, and Mary Dean. We have also just recently located a piece by Maria Van Detto. We have received permissions to include reproductions by Frank Barney, Walter Long, and Yolanda Fiorentino-Schofield. Thanks to Montezuma Historian, Cheryl Longyear, we have also been granted permission by the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto to include a reprint of Sir Henry William Barnard's watercolor of the Montezuma Erie Canal slack water crossing. The Montezuma Historical Society has also graciously shared their copy of John Henry Hopkin's 1825 print of the Montezuma towpath crossing over the Seneca River which you'll see on the first page of this newsletter.

To date our exhibit includes over 25 pieces - all featuring local canal sites and we would be honored to include an image from your collection. If you find any representations of Port Byron or Montezuma Erie Canal sites, we would be interested to hear from you. Please feel free to call Joyce Biss at (315) 480-5733. Thank you so much – we hope to see you soon at our Pine Street Museum.



This canal scene by Lindy Burke was her interpretation of a black and white postcard.