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WATERTOWN
HISTORY MUSEUM

The Westbury

Preserving the History of Watertown and Oakville since 1945

We are closed until further notice. Look for more details on our website and facebook page.

We appreciate your continuing support and hope to welcome you into our new home again soon.

President's Message

As we begin 2021, I am looking forward to many wonderful things for our Watertown History Museum!!!

We have many ideas that we will be working on in the coming year. Since we have been closed and will be closed for the foreseeable future, we are going to be using electronics to keep in touch.

We have done extensive revisions to our website and are continuing to update it. Please mark it as a favorite on your menu bar so that you can check it occasionally: watertownhistorymuseum.org.

Working with the Town Times, we will be writing an article every couple of weeks about an event or person that connects to Watertown. Right now we are working on the Spanish Flu of 1918 and how it affected Watertown back then, using records from Evergreen Cemetery, newspaper articles, and archival materials.

Last spring we worked with the school system and are looking forward to working with them again. The students were very interested in the artifacts that we shared with them

last. It was a guess what it is and how it might be used? That and more is on our website.

Ever been to an Escape Room online? Me neither!!!! It's coming in 2021.

Besides the website and other online possibilities, we are vigorously working on the new look for the inside of the museum. We are redesigning and reimagining what the museum will look like going forward.

Stay tuned in for more exciting news.

Happy New Year!
Linda Merriman, President

Curator's Corner

So many projects are underway this winter, here is just a brief note about several of them:

The Pandemic of 1918

In 1918, a worldwide pandemic began. About 1/3 of the world's population eventually became infected with Influenza, also known as the Spanish Flu. About 675,000 persons died in the United States from this virus. Using records from Evergreen Cemetery, articles from the Waterbury Republican newspaper, and the archives of the Museum, we are starting to document the full extent of this pandemic's impact on Watertown and Oakville. This spring, we hope to prepare a walking tour highlighting the lives and monuments of those who died between October 1918 and March 1919 including World War I veteran, [Harold A. Beers](#) and his sister, Helen. For more info, visit our website: [The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-1919](#)

Thanks to Jeff Pelletier and the Evergreen Cemetery Association for their support of this project.

The Streets of Watertown

Have you wondered about Watertown street names? Who were they named for? When were they first named? Using information from a 1916 City Directory and other sources, we have begun to explore this fascinating subject. We are hoping for input from you and other community members.

Streets are grouped alphabetically so the first listing is [Academy Hill - Cutler](#). On that webpage, you will see two street names. If you click on "Academy Hill," a section opens up with a description of how the street was named and people who lived on that street, along with the years of their birth and death. To close that section, click on "Academy Hill" a

second time. When you click on "Cutler," the section asks the question: Was Cutler Street named after [Younglove Cutler](#), or his son, [Leman](#)? Their names contain links to brief personal histories.

We hope this will be an ongoing collaboration with residents of Watertown and Oakville. A general description can be found at: [The Streets of Watertown](#). If you have info you would like to submit, visit: [On the Street Where you Live](#) or email streets@watertownhistorymuseum.org.

World War I Memorial

The monument on Veterans Hill memorializing the men and women who served in the First World War was dedicated on May 31, 1921. In honor of the 100th anniversary of that event, we have started to honor those veterans with a webpage dedicated to telling their stories. Visit "[The World War I Memorial](#)" on our webpage to learn more.

Diane Ciba, Curator

Watertown Appoints History Museum Board Member as Town Historian

Hello! I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Christine Shields, your newly appointed town historian, and I LOVE history! No, not the kind that is dry-as-dust, blah-blah, that you had to memorize in history books back in school. I love learning that my house was inhabited by the same family for 5 generations. I get chills learning about property in my neighborhood being one of the first mills when Watertown was still a wilderness. It is eye-opening to think that my house was inhabited by people who were talking about the Civil War and President Lincoln as current events. I love researching the backgrounds of people's homes and commercial buildings and learning about the people's lives who built these still-standing buildings. What did they do, who were they, what were their characteristics, their connections, their contributions to our town, their legacies?

When I led the first walking tour in October 2019, which was attended by about 20 people, it was a labor of love, doing research, talking to townspeople who knew of these buildings first-hand. It was exciting to find pictures of these landmarks from years ago, and realizing that although some aspects had changed, the bones were still the same. That walking tour was, I hope, the first of many interesting, informational and fun offerings, although the COVID crisis is temporarily hindering life experiences for us all. Stay tuned!

I look forward to being Watertown's Historian for a long time to come. I am busily hunting for topics to present, to stir a passion in all of us about what came before, and who left their marks on this town.

Christine Shields
Member of the History Museum Board of Directors and
Town Historian

Grant Corner

Eversource

The coronavirus has delayed the opening of our "Stories in Stone" exhibit. We continue to prepare for a special event highlighting the Old Burying Ground and other monuments and buildings in Watertown. Thanks to the grant we received from [Eversource](#) earlier this year, our display will include interactive maps and links to online resources.

Woodward Foundation

Volunteers have worked hard to finish the interior of a new climate-controlled building, dubbed "The Annex." This building, made possible by funds from the Woodward Foundation, will house special exhibits and provide additional event space as we look forward to reopening, hopefully by early summer. Currently in the planning stage, the first exhibit will focus on local farmers and growers, and will feature items from our Dairy Farming, Tools and Trades, Cultivation and Harvesting, and Animal Husbandry Collections.

The Woodward Foundation grant has also supported the project to climate control and update the attic of 401 Main Street, with a goal of providing safe storage for textiles, archives, and many other artifacts in our care.

Volunteer Spotlight

Although closed to the public, volunteers continue to help organize our Library, document the textile collection, and help with data entry and collection management. These volunteers deserve special recognition for going above and beyond!

- Thanks to members of the Collections Committee for their hard work this fall. Via

Zoom and sometimes in person, many hours were spent this fall organizing the collection and discussing the future needs of the Museum.

- Thanks to Linda Merriman, Jeff Grenier, Nancy Maton, Beth Porter, Nancy Byrnes, Anna McDonald, Sue Woodward, and Fran Stiklus who are so willing to do whatever is at hand. Whether documenting textiles, searching files in the Archives, or making "poppers," without their help, many projects would have been impossible.
- Thanks to Ryan Kalis for his computer skills. Quick to learn, his assistance has helped to improve record management and his enthusiasm lifts our spirit.
- A huge thank you to Ivan Cyr, Gerry Ryan and Sue Woodward for the many hours they supplied while finishing the interior of the Annex.
- Thanks also to Stephen Yonych from the Watertown Lions Club and Ethan Hoyt for their help safely returning a precious artifact to the Museum.

Volunteer Opportunities

We need many hands to accomplish our goals. The top priority at this point is forming committees to help plan for the Museum's future. You can choose your hours, choose your focus, even choose to sit or stand.... [just kidding]... If you have an hour or more, once a week, once a month, or once a year, we can use your help. For complete information on the variety of options available, see our website: [How You Can Help!](#)

Membership Update

Thank you if you are one of the individuals and families that have recently donated to the Annual Appeal. To date, we have received over \$7,000 thanks to your generosity.

The challenges we've all faced this past year were unexpected, and despite having to be closed to visitors since last March, we've had a busy year!

In keeping with our goal - collecting, sharing, and preserving the heritage and history of Watertown and Oakville, our team of volunteers has been working diligently throughout the pandemic to better organize and catalog our collection and to develop exciting new exhibits and programs. We cannot wait to welcome members and visitors to the new and improved Watertown History Museum, and are currently putting the finishing touches on our in-house exhibits with the expectation that we will be able to re-open this summer. Watch our quarterly newsletters for more details about our Grand Reopening!

New Membership Year

We appreciate your membership support. To acknowledge the pandemic restrictions, we're adding three months to our current annual membership year extending membership from the end of February to the end of May 2021. That means the new membership year will begin on 6/1/2021 and go through to 5/31/2022. If you already renewed your 21-22 membership, we thank you for continuing your membership support and will be extending your membership through May 31, 2022.

Although we've been unable to safely open our doors, during this time of social distancing, we invite you to visit our website at www.watertownhistorymuseum.org to learn more about the Important People who helped make our town successful, the 1918 Influenza Epidemic, the 1920s election, the Streets of Watertown, Historic

Watertown/Oakville and much, much more.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and programs very soon.

More Ways to Show your Support

Voting has begun for the 12th Annual Community Awards Program, so please help us earn grant money! We will receive a \$25 donation from the Ion Bank Foundation for every vote we receive! Voting is open to all Ion Bank customers.



Look under the Arts & Culture section to select the "Watertown Historical Society" or go directly to the donor page [here](#).

Every vote counts! If you are an Ion Bank customer, please visit ionbank.com for more information and to cast your **VOTE** until March 31, 2021. For more information, see: <https://cap.ionbank.com/CAP/>



Save your LaBonne's receipts and place them in a ziplock bag. Drop them off in the mailbox at the Museum (401 Main Street). Through their "Cash for Charities" programs, LaBonne's donates to the Watertown History Museum based on the total of the receipts we submit. Thank them by your continued purchases at our local markets.

If you shop on Amazon, use the Amazon Smile program to select the Watertown Historical Society, Inc. as your designated charity. One-half percent (0.5%) of your purchase will be forwarded to our organization. Use this [link](#) to get started. Help us spread the word!



Donors and Business Partners

As thanks for their support, we hope you will shop at these local businesses.

Agnew Florist

Allyn's Cleaner

Ami Marshall

Anthony's Pizza

Barbara Getsinger

Barbers & Company

Bethlehem Winery

Black Market Kitchen

Mangia with Gigi & Mike

Mark's Garder Center

Millette's Pest Control

Michael Lawrence

Michaela Kusaila

Nancy Byrnes

Nejaime's Liguor

Nonna Lucia's Restaurant

- Buddha Bistro
 - Cakes & Sweets by Emanuela
 - Choppers Barber Shop
 - Daveluy's
 - Diane's
 - Essential Healing Arts, Natural Wellness
 - Evergreen Cemetery
 - Fascia's Chocolate
 - G's Burger/Carvel
 - Gayle's Farm Shoppe
 - Hair on Main
 - Hartford Yard Goats
 - Hawk Ridge Winery
 - Health Complex
 - Highgate Liquors
 - Hosking Nursery
 - Jimmy's of Watertown
 - Liquor Superstore
 - Liza Zambero
 - Oakville Pizza
 - Onyx
 - Ordinary Joes
 - Papparazzi
 - Pasta Heaven
 - Pasta Gallery
 - Quiet Zone
 - Raymond's Jewelry
 - Rebers Plumbing
 - Ro's Pizza
 - Rock Garden
 - Roma Ristorante
 - Sakura Japanese Steakhouse
 - Starbucks
 - Sunset Grille
 - Sweet Pea Florist
 - Tony's Seafood
 - Town & Country Liquor
 - Uncommon Grille
 - Watertown Golf Course
 - Watertown Meat Center
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Watertown History Channel

presents

"The Old Leather Man"

We hope you enjoyed this YouTube [video](#) about "The Old Leather Man."

[Additional information](#) about this iconic figure is also on our website.



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