
Marcellus Historical Society Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 30-3



Note from the President:

Dear Members,

Dreams really do have roots—and in our case, they've been growing quietly for years. Doug Nightingale, Hollis Abbott, and a few other history-loving visionaries once imagined a brand new building for the Marcellus Historical Society, right on land we already own. Don't worry—the beloved Steadman House isn't going anywhere! This would be an additional space, desperately needed for storage, rotating displays, research, and showcasing the treasure-trove of photos, scrapbooks, slides and media we've got tucked away.

We even uncovered hand-drawn plans from Hollis (yes, really!) and another set from Doug. Their dream was more than just talk—some former members were so dedicated, they left money in their wills earmarked specifically for this building. Thanks to our Treasurer, Karen Pollard (a wizard with numbers and fine print), we discovered those funds are currently in a 6-month CD.

After Karen presented our finances at the April board meeting (we do have a Board meeting monthly!)—including the monthly costs of maintaining the Steadman House—the Board voted unanimously to officially dub that CD the “New Building Fund.” Moving forward, any donations made to MHS labeled “New Building Fund” (or anything close to it) will be designated for that account. Plus, every 6 months, any extra funds in our checking account will be added to the New Building Fund. We also have a separate savings account for bigger, unexpected expenses - just in case the roof decides to throw a tantrum or a 100-year-old hinge gives out.

Here's the takeaway: when you renew your membership, there will be a new line just for the “New Building Fund.” If you're feeling generous before then (we love you for that!), any amount helps us get closer to making this dream real. Every dollar we raise ourselves strengthens our case for grants and outside support.

In other exciting news...

This past July, our very own MHS members, John Curtin and Mallory Zabinski, teamed up at the request of MCSD Superintendent Jean Sharlow to design a Historical Scavenger Hunt for her Admin team's summer team-building event. With 15 riddles pointing to 15 historical gems throughout the Town, it was a hit—and a great reminder that history is alive, well, and way more fun than almost anyone believes.

Many thanks to the Village and Town of Marcellus DPW employees, who recently provided volunteer labor, repairing the stairs on the north side of the Steadman House. The stairs had been in much disrepair for some time and we are very grateful to the DPW workers for their efforts, not only constructing a new set of steps but for also improving the landscape surrounding the area and installing a new flag and rope.



Enjoy the weather, stay curious, and thank you for being part of this journey.

Warmly,
Linda Wilcox, President, Marcellus Historical Society

Donations In Memory of Bernard Reagan:

Michael Farrel, Stanley & Mary Finkle, Mary Ellen Koloski, David Loftus Jr., Robin Putman, Walt & Jennifer Zinn

Deceased Member: Margaret Woods

Wishlist Items/Services:

Landscaping/Mulch for garden beds
Painting/Paint for Garage and Porch
Mannequins
Anyone with knowledge of old postcards

Other Donations to Building Fund:

Beverly Parsons Dann in Memory of Seymour Mildred Parsons, Clara Clark, Maj. J.T. Coyne, Nancy Seely, Jerry Wilcox

Hours of Operation:

The Steadman House is open Sundays from 1pm-4pm (except MHS Meeting Dates which are located on page 5 of this Newsletter) and Thursdays from 1-4pm.

Guided tours are available or you can take in the great exhibits at your own pace. There will always be someone available to answer questions. We are also available, by appointment (315-430-7693), to open at other times. The Steadman House is handicap accessible for many of our exhibits.

From Liberty Pole to Village Flagpole

By. John P. Curtin

One of the earliest American political symbols was the Liberty Pole. This was a simple device which marked a meeting spot for those who espoused the cause of freedom. Though Boston had her earlier "liberty tree," New York seems to have been in the forefront when it came to erecting liberty poles. They began to appear about the time that the "Sons of Liberty" were secretly organized in 1765 to protest the Stamp Act. All through the colony of New York, other liberty poles were erected, ranging from crude upended logs to high, white-painted staffs, festooned with pennants and patriotic devices. After the purpose which they symbolized was achieved, they remained on squares and village greens for years, mute evidence of fervor for the revolutionary cause.

The Marcellus Observer, July 2, 1975



It is not known when a liberty pole was erected in the Village of Marcellus, but it might be assumed that it took place early in its history, perhaps prior to the American Civil War, which espoused the cause of freedom, and probably in what was then known as Alvord Square. The earliest reference to a liberty pole that has been found in *The Marcellus Observer* dates from the June 3, 1880, edition, which notes that "flags were displayed at half-mast on Monday from the town liberty pole . . ." Another 19th century reference, from the May 27, 1898, edition states: "the citizens of Marcellus having been holding a celebration over Dewey at Manila, ended, in their joy, by throwing a hundred-foot flagpole over the wires."



By the 20th century, the Marcellus liberty pole was an established feature of the Marcellus community, maintained it appears by members of the G.A.R., the Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal organization, composed of Union veterans from the American Civil War. In July 1914, "a big wind the first morning of our Old Home Week celebration, broke the former flagpole in front of the Alvord House, on which the fine big G.A.R. flag had been swung to the breeze but a few hours before. Since that time, our village has been without a flagpole, which should not be." On July 2, 1915, the Observer asked: "Shall Marcellus Have a Flagpole? Every citizen of Marcellus village and community will find a very good way to air their patriotism by attending in large numbers a special meeting to be held in Parsons Hall, Tuesday evening, July 6, to consider the purchase of a new steel flagpole to be erected in Marcellus village."

The community responded favorably, and the "Marcellus Board of Education bought a new steel flagpole at the same time that the one was bought for Marcellus village by effort of E. V. Baker by subscription, and both were shipped from Boston together. . . The committee in charge of preparing exercises and a suitable and enjoyable program in connection with the new steel flagpole in Marcellus met Thursday afternoon and set the date for Friday of next week, Oct. 22, at 2 o'clock." - The Marcellus Observer, October 15, 1915.

In 1926, the Dedication and Unveiling of a Memorial to the Marcellus boys who made the supreme sacrifice during the World War took place. The memorial, a large boulder and bronze plaque was made possible by the Marcellus Soldiers' Comfort League after six years of effort. The Methodist people gave the site, which is ideal. (*The Marcellus Observer*, June 2, 1926.)

In 1953, it was decided to move the flagpole from its long-time position in front of the Alvord House to its present location in front of the Methodist Church, in this, the centennial year of the Village's incorporation.

"The Village Flagpole was removed to its new location on the Methodist Church lawn, Tuesday, May 26th. The removal of the pole is a fine improvement to Main St., not only from taking it out of the road, but having it directly in front of all transients coming into the village from East Hill to see this pole fronted by the Monument which was erected to the memory of Marcellus's War Heroes. Mayor E. Bartlett says that he not only painted it the first time, but finished painting it at noon, Thursday. This time with the help of Nate Edwards." - *The Marcellus Observer*, May 29, 1953.



Today, the Village flagpole, maintained by the Village of Marcellus, continues its vigil on what has been called the Village Green, fronted by the Monument, and two plaques that recognize heroes of the past, Marcellus residents who gave their lives in service to our country. Every Memorial Day, the American Legion Ralph Share Post #279 organizes a parade and a ceremony in commemoration of that memorable day, while also promoting the cause of freedom for which so many gave their lives.

ACQUISITIONS:

Box of school materials, composition books, and other artifacts from estate of Carl Woods Farm on New Seneca Tpke by Gary Schoonmaker; Boxes of miscellaneous books and memorabilia from estate of Doug and Jean Nightingale by Elizabeth Alfred; Match holder from The Corner Store by Pat Dailey; 1942 *Marcellian* belonged to Shirley Nightingale (Doug Nightingale's Aunt) by Ann Murphy; Original Ruth Anne Reagan painting of Lower Crown Mill and memorabilia from estate of Jerry Muldoon by Nancy Mark; Personal Scrapbook of Marcellus Football years (1960-1963) by Stanley Stopyro; Handwritten Diary, unknown source, located at Marcellus High School by Phil Coccia; Ruth Reed Cummings original on wood by Cathy Flitcroft Roberts

Upcoming Speakers & Events

Our next Meetings are scheduled for October 5, & November 2 at 2 PM at the Library. There will be a brief business session followed by the Guest Speaker.

October 5 - The Board will discuss dues, present the candidates for Nov. election, and bylaw revisions, with Mayor Chad Clark as the guest speaker.

October 31: Village Cemetery Walking Tour 3pm-7pm. See article on this page!

November 2: Election of Officers and membership vote on dues and bylaw revisions; Guest Speaker: Barbara Parsons Hildreth - a direct descendant of one of the founding families of Marcellus.

Stay updated on Facebook for speakers & events.

Email address:

histoc@windstream.net

Telephone: 315-673-4839

www.facebook.com/MarcellusNYHistorical/

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Old Village Cemetery

By John P. Curtin

The first burying ground in Marcellus was a plot located behind the Isaac Bradley home at 13 South Street. About twenty bodies were interred there, the first one being a Thomas Miller, who died in 1801, as the age of thirty-two.

After the building of the first meeting house on the corner of North Street, a site adjacent to the church seemed more desirable. In 1804, the Village Cemetery on North Street was opened and bodies from the original plot were transferred to the new burial ground. The old cemetery sextons kept no records, and until William Machan, the first Mayor of the Village, made a map of the entire plot (about 1850), the only record of burials were provided by the inscriptions on the headstones. Those inscriptions reflect the trend toward names of classical and spiritual dignity - Clarissa, Gad, Mindwell, Deliverance, Clarity, Electa, Jephthah.

Old Village Cemetery Continued...

The stones reveal that death claimed the lives of many young children and the hardships of pioneer living, although longevity was not uncommon. In this cemetery are buried the early pioneer settlers of Marcellus, including Dan Bradley and Samuel Rice and their families.

By 1899, the old hawthorn hedge that surrounded the cemetery was replaced with a new iron fence, and a permanent cemetery fund was started to maintain upkeep. In that same year, Belus F. North, a Civil War veteran and dedicated patriot, re-mapped the cemetery, showing 500 lots and three sections labelled public grounds.

The cemetery was well-cared for the next thirty years, but there then followed three decades of neglect. Maintenance funds were not forth-coming and it was common, during some summers, to allow pasturing sheep as a way of keeping the grass from becoming hay.

The Presbyterian Session then appealed to all residents concerned with historic Marcellus, to come forward and help to preserve the site. Enthusiastic volunteers, who came to be called “the stone gang”, labored through several seasons to turn what had become a symbol of neglect into a symbol of community pride. Dr. Joseph Centrone and his daughter, Betty, developed a scale map of the cemetery using the 1899 map of Belus North, showing the location of 2100 graves. Among them are the graves of 47 veterans of the Revolutionary War, 19 veterans of the War of 1812, 1 veteran of Mexican War, 17 veterans of the Civil War, and 1 veteran of World War I. It was estimated that about five or six hundred gravestones are now missing from the cemetery.

Since the opening of Highland Cemetery, many bodies from the old cemetery have been transferred to lots there. Now and then, however, a burial still takes place in the old cemetery. *You can visit the Old Village Cemetery on Halloween from 3pm-7pm! We have an exciting event planned inside the grounds of this most hallowed place. Email Diana Spencer for more details or to volunteer*

Historical Society Officers:

Trustees and Term End:

President: Linda Wilcox.....315-430-7693	2026 Diana Spencer
Vice President: Chuck Paul.....315-673-4432	2026 Mary Ellen Popyk.....407-494-9817
email: cpaul@twcny.rr.com	2025 John Curtin.....315-673-3660
Treasurer: Karen Pollard.....315-673-1309	2025 Dave Gallinger....gallinger.dave@gmail.com
email: karenpollard13@yahoo.com	2024 Carol Armstrong.....315-673-3443
Secretary: Diana Spencer.....email: Sedagive007@yahoo.com	2024 Maria Catanzaro.....315-447-0645

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LEGAL SERVICES

**REAGAN & DAILEY,
 ATTORNEYS AT LAW.....315-673-4864**
 Mary Reagan Dailey
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 18 East Main St, PO Box 196, Marcellus 13108
 marydailey@reagananddailey.com (FAX: 315-673-4864)

PHYSICAL THERAPY

**REBOUND SPORTS & ORTHOPEDIC PHYSICAL
 THERAPY, PC.....315-673-1007**
 37 South Street, Marcellus 13108 (Fax) 673-2008)
 go2reboundpt@gmail.com
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\$10/Person per year ~ \$15/Family per year
Sustaining Membership = 5 years (dues x5)
Number Joining? _____ Renewal? _____
Donation to New Building Fund: \$ _____

Marcellus Historical Society
P.O. Box 165, 18 North St.
Marcellus, NY 13108-0165

Inside:

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(Your dues are paid through
Dec. 31st of the year on the label.)