

Fall-Winter 2017

The Story Teller

MONTEZUMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTEZUMA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 476
Montezuma, NY 13117



WOMEN WORKING ON THE HOME FRONT DURING WWII

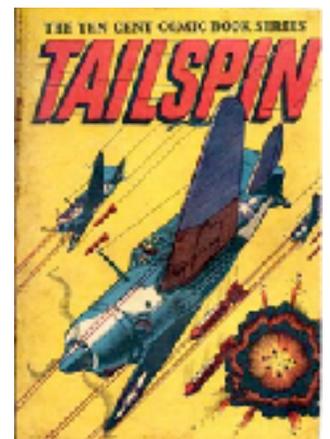
Stop 69 woman fatally
injured at aircraft plant
during the war



This month marks the anniversary of the US entering World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. On December 7, 1941, while Pearl Harbor was being bombed, the Grumman Aircraft Factory was holding a ceremony to open its new Plant 2 in Bethpage on Long Island, to display the new torpedo bomber to the public. Over the next few months, Grumman struggled to turn their hand-crafted prototype into a mass-produced airplane. By June, the company had delivered 145 TBF-1's to the Navy, a pace that would be dwarfed in the next three years.

One of the most famous men to fly an Avenger was George H.W. Bush, later the 41st President of the United States. He joined the Navy in 1942, and became the youngest naval aviator ever in June 1943. On September 2, 1944, he was shot down over Chichi Jima. While Bush parachuted safely and was rescued, neither of his crewmen survived.

Rosie the Riveter became a cultural icon of World War II, representing the women who inspired a social movement that increased the number of working American women from 12 million to 20 million by 1944, a 57% increase from 1940. One wartime woman who worked at the Grumman plant played a very important part in testing flying instruments. Grace Scanlan from Montezuma was employed as a plane captain in charge of the manufacture of the last Avenger off the Grumman assembly line.



The Avenger suffered a casualty, but not until its mission had been completed. It had a short, but venturesome career with many of attacks on the Japanese enemy before being downed on the morning of May 22, 1944. During its run it was hit in the engine with shrapnel and started losing power. The engine ran long enough for the plane to get clear of the target and fly over open water. The pilot

Newsletter Editor:
Cheryl Longyear

made a water landing, and he and the crew loaded safely onto a life raft. During its short but active career it was delivered first on December 31, 1943. It had flown a total of 161 hours, 130 of these in combat zones.

On January 5, 1944, at the age of 24, Grace Scanlan became the victim of an accident while working at the Grumman plant. Grace was fatally struck by a plane's propellor and died from the injury. She was the daughter of William and Helen Scanlan who lived at the time at Stop 69 and the great-granddaughter of Mary Fitzsimmons. The Scanlan home was later owned by Ed and Alice Fitzsimmons and remains in the family today.

2017 marked the kick-off of an eight-year celebration of the 200th Anniversary of building New York State's Erie Canal, and Montezuma was a part of it.

2017 Highlights

Erie Canal Play
kicks off an eight
year celebration of
the 200th
anniversary of
building the Erie
Canal

In 2010, I was contacted by a playwright, Hugh Pratt about a play he had written with his wife, Anne Paris from Buffalo. Hugh said that part of the play tells the story of the ditch diggers who worked on the canal in the Montezuma swamps, and he felt it would be an ideal location to commemorate the sacrifices made by so many to build a canal 363 miles through the wilderness.

There was only one person I knew who could pull off such an event in this area, and that was Joni Lincoln, Conquest Town Historian. I knew Joni's enthusiasm for canal history, and her special gift for directing would be perfect for the play. When I approached her she was involved teaching and directing school plays at Port Byron, and just didn't have the time. Well, Hugh never gave up on the dream and neither did I to bring this play to Montezuma.



Joni retired from her 30-plus year career at Port Byron and work in drama, and Hugh approached her coincidentally on the evening of her last school drama play. She accepted the invitation (or should I say challenge) and the rest is history! In June of this year four amazing performances were given to full house audiences at Devaney's Restaurant in Weedsport, and at the Montezuma VFW the last week of June. The timing was perfect to kick off the beginning of the centennial celebration of building the Erie Canal just prior to the 200th anniversary of the first shovel of dirt dug in Rome, NY, on July 4, 1817. This led the way to first completing and opening the middle section of the canal in Montezuma by 1819.

Joni enlisted an amazing cast and crew to bring the epic story of the building alive, including acting as a fill-in for the Indian woman. Live

musical accompaniment was provided by CNY's well-known musical artists, Merry Mischief. Producing this locally took a tremendous amount of support by local artists, technical support, and volunteers that made this possible. We are grateful for all who contributed to the success of this event. I cannot think of a better way to have honored those who sacrificed so much to build this amazing canal that forever changed America.



Montezuma's Erie
Canal history
highlighted on TV

Two TV shows were aired highlighting the Erie Canal, and Montezuma was a part of both of them. ***“Erie: The Canal that Made America”*** aired on PBS as a one-hour documentary that tells the story of an almost impossible dream to build the Erie Canal that became the nation's first great innovation and gateway to prominence. Scenes from the Richmond Aqueduct and the High Street kiosk at the Byron Lapp Memorial trail were featured in it.

We now have TV personalities from Montezuma thanks to retired canal tugboat captain, Steve Wunder who starred in an episode on the Travel Channel's Bizarre Foods with host of the show, Andrew Zimmern filmed in Montezuma to highlight the Erie Canal. Steve toured Zimmern and crew through the Montezuma Heritage Park foraging for food. To Andrew's surprise Steve revealed a local delicacy, *“marsh-mallows.”* The show featured some amazing aerial views of the Richmond Aqueduct while in the park. Steve then cooked lunch including his specialty, fried potato sandwiches at his home along the Canal for the cast and crew. Many family and friends joined them including our historical society members, Mellony Carner and Shirley Gillmore.

Funding for new
Park signage

A grant received from the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor matched with funds from Cayuga County Community Health Network funded 26 new trail signs for the Park. The new signs were installed by volunteers this year that also provided a match for the grant. There are now eleven cleared trails. The newest Trail #9 Fitz's Marsh Trail was cleared by Councilman Tom Fitzsimmons located off the east side of Chapman Road along the marsh.



“The Richmond
Aqueduct: Now
and Then” —
newest mural

Montezuma’s latest mural, “The Richmond Aqueduct: Now and Then,” painted by Dawn Jordan at the Global Mural Conference in Fairport, NY, last year was featured on display at the Office of General Services in Albany to commemorate the Erie Canal 200th



Anniversary. Following its return it was shown at a Public Event on opening day of the World Canal Conference in Syracuse in September. It’s now awaiting for a warm weather day to be installed at its permanent location in Montezuma Heritage Park along Route 31 just east of the Seneca River Bridge. The installation also was covered by the grant mentioned above.

Youth leadership
project
Creates
New Trail



Involving youth to learn leadership skills and appreciate the value of our historic and natural resources is important to the Town’s heritage, well being and future growth. So, when Josh Lindstrom was looking for an Eagle Scout project, he was invited to create a new spur trail and do clearing work at the old paper mill site along Trail #4 on the berm side of the former Enlarged Erie Canal. He worked with our Park Planning Committee to plan the

event in April for the Annual Clean Sweep.

Josh lead twenty volunteers who worked in April to clear the site and mulch a new trail around the cement foundation remains of the paper mill building.



We will be continuing the celebration through 2025, to celebrate the Wedding of the Waters, so stay updated on local events highlighting the Erie’s centennial. Today the Erie lives on as a treasured landmark. We are enjoying a renaissance as a socio-economic lifeline to our communities here in New York State drawing tourists from around the world to cruise the waters, bike and hike its historic towpaths introducing a new generation to our amazing Erie Canal history. Whether by boat, car, bicycle, the Richmond Aqueduct has been used for a variety reasons other than hoagies and mules that originally pulled boats across in the Erie Canal over the Seneca River.



Closing the Gap
between Wayne
and Cayuga
County

Join the Wegmans
Hit the Trail
Passport
Program

Here's an interesting photo taken in 1912, with a car cruising the towpath of the aqueduct from the Montezuma east side of the river heading towards the Tyre side on the west of the river. Today, we no longer can cross the river, but the aqueduct is still an amazing sight to be seen, and visitors come from all over to see it.



On the Left is a photo of this year's Close the Gap Macedon to Montezuma Bike Ride on National Trails Day in June.

The Close the Gap Ad Hoc committee organized this event to celebrate the work that our local communities have been doing to close the statewide Erie Canalway Trail from Buffalo to Albany.

Now to close the gap between Wayne and Cayuga County even

further we have joined with Trail Works of Wayne County in a trail passport program. The **Hit the Trail Passport Program** is sponsored by Wegmans and is being expanded to include the Montezuma Heritage Park Aqueduct Trail joining with 29 other trails in Wayne County to participate in this program. A booklet will soon be available at our trailhead kiosks to bring with you to each trail you visit where you will find a rubbing marker pictured on the right. Here you can rub with a pencil over the marker in your booklet. The Hit the Trail Passport program runs continuously. In order to enter for the chance to win a \$250 Wegmans gift card, you need to complete 15 of the 30 trails in the booklet and bring it or mail to Cornell Cooperative Extension on Rt. 38 in Newark, NY 14513. If you complete all 30 trails, you will have 2 entries in the drawing. The drawing will be held annually in the Fall and your entry remains in the pool.



Also in the works is a new phone app that will locate all 30 trails with maps and additional information at each trail site to visit while walking the trails. Here's your opportunity to discover the beauty and solitude of nature, explore many historic sites, a variety of wildlife, the magnificence of natural settings. Most of all receive the health benefits of being more active all in your own "backyard!"

Share the wonders of the great outdoors with family and friends and get to know this beautiful part of our region up close and personal. If you have any questions: contact Trail Works at the website: www.trailworks.org.

Looking for a special gift that's a memento of the heritage of our hometown. Montezuma has some options available to purchase:

Gift Giving Ideas



Mug - Cost: \$10.00



Note Cards - Cost per set: 5 x 7 - \$7.00 and 4 x 6 - \$5.00.

- Our newest mural by Artist, Dawn Jordan, The Richmond Aqueduct: Then and Now is colorfully pictured beautifully on a mug.
- Beautiful notecards are available in two sizes that include photos of wood ducks photographed by photographers, Laurie Dirx and Rebecca Carver. The notecards were designed to honor Foster Parker, a naturalist from Montezuma who is noted for saving the wood duck from extinction. There are three different photos in the set including envelopes.
- Post Cards - \$1.00/each from historic sites in Town.
- Bricks in honor of a loved one, yourself or a beloved pet may be purchased to be placed in the new Butterfly Garden walkway that is being created for the Town on the Byron Lapp Memorial Trailhead entrance. Proceeds from this project are helping fund the walkway where the new gazebo and walkway to the garden are being created. Cost for a 4" x 8" engraved brick is \$50.

Three new benches have been installed in the gazebo built by park friend volunteer, Dan Randolph.

Contact Cheryl at 315-776-4656 if you would like to place an order for any of these items. An additional charged will be added for mailing postage.

As an added appreciation for your 2018



membership, a 10% discount will be given to all MHS members. Please use the form enclosed, and help us continue to contribute to preserve hometown history!

Thank you for
your support!

Volunteers have done so much to help to support MHS this year. With new trails, signs, exhibits, Board participation, the Friends' Park Design Committee and our membership have supported the Town in preserving our historic and natural resources.



Our newest addition to the High Street trailhead is eight new Norway Spruce trees made possible by a generous donation and planted by volunteers making this entrance to the park a peaceful and enjoyable place to visit.



Four new holly berry bushes were planted at the Historic Mentz Church this year.

Whether helping with a project, making a donation, contributing to our bake sale or through your membership, you are making it possible for the preservation of our community's most valuable resources — the Mentz Church building and a historic landmark “museum without walls” for generations to come!

Many thanks goes out to all the many volunteers who made these projects possible. You truly continue to make a HUGE difference in our community.



REMINDER — 2018 MEMBERSHIP IS DUE

Your support is needed to help us continue to preserve, promote, and protect the heritage of our community. We are an independent non-profit educational 501(c)3 organization, which means we are not funded by the Town of Montezuma, county, state or federal taxes. Your membership fee helps us cover operating expenses, matching grants for projects done in Montezuma Heritage Park, minor maintenance on the Mentz Church and programs offered during the year. **Thank you for your support!**

2018 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____ New or _____ Renewing Membership

Our mailing and printing costs keep increasing. Newsletters can now be received via email and posted on our website. We would appreciate adding \$2 to your dues if you would like a copy mailed. _____ Yes, please mail the newsletter.

General Membership*:

\$10 Individual \$25 Business Basic
 \$15 Family \$50 Business Supporter
 \$50 Supporter Other Donation

Friends of the Montezuma Heritage Park:

\$10 Ditch Digger \$25 Hoggee
 \$50 Sal the Mule \$100 Lock Tender
 \$500 Canaller

Yes, I'm interested in Volunteer Opportunities with MHS; please contact me!

*includes a 10% discount on gift items listed on page 6

The Montezuma Historical Society is a Private 501(c)(3) organization, and your donations and contributions are tax deductible.

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MONTEZUMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY -
FRIENDS OF MONTEZUMA
HERITAGE PARK