

Fall-Winter 2018

# The Story Teller

MONTEZUMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**2019 Membership – Please join us today!**

*The 2019 membership form is inclosed, please join or renew today.  
THANK YOU!*



RICHMOND AQUEDUCT - PHOTO ENHANCEMENT BY BILL HECHT

## A Centenary of Remembrance

One hundred years ago on November 11, 1918 at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month – millions of men laid down their guns with the signing of the Armistice to end World War I. Known as the Great War, ten million combatants died on the battle grounds sacrificing their life before it ended with Germany's defeat on November 11, 1918.

The United States had made a formal declaration of war on April 6, 1917 against Germany. Many men in the US volunteered for the military service soon after this declaration of war. The first United States troops arrived in France on June 27, 1917. Later, men ages 21 to 31 were selectively drafted into the military. Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, pulled numbers out of a fishbowl. Among those first draftees was Benjamin Earl Baldwin from Montezuma selected in July 1917 at the age of 24.

Benjamin was born in Aurelius, the son of Franklin P. Baldwin and Dorothy Roberts on May 8, 1893. Before being drafted he married Mary Vreeland (known as Freda) from Montezuma at the ME Church parsonage. While stationed at Fort Dix preparing to leave for the war front a son, Leon Earl Baldwin was born back in Montezuma on November 17, 1917.

Almost a year later Corporal Benjamin Earl Baldwin was killed in action on August 18, 1918 in France while serving as a mechanic in the 225th Machine Gun Company. He became the first casualty of the Odd Fellow's organization from Cayuga County. A memorial service was held on September 29, 1918 in honor of Baldwin in Montezuma. Members of the Rock Spring Lodge of Port Byron where he was a member made arrangements for several

Cayuga County lodge brothers to be met at Stop 70 (Purser Road) of the R. S. & E trolley to accompany the procession to the services at the Methodist Church.



Baldwin was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Today, the commemoration of the November 11 armistice is marked in many countries across the globe under various names including Armistice Day and Remembrance Day. Here in the states it's a day to commemorate veterans of all wars. For all who served we owe our grateful freedom for their sacrifices.

## Montezuma Historical Society Honored for Dedication to Community's Preservation

In October, MHS received a pleasant surprise letter from the Preservation Association of Central New York notifying MHS had been selected to receive the 2018 Jesena R. Foley Education Award in recognition of educating, promoting and advocating for the development of Montezuma Heritage Park.

Attending the Awards Presentation held at the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse were MHS Trustee members: Mellony Carner, Kathy and Jim Decker, Paul and Bunny Baker, Shirley Gillmore, Kathy Longyear, Stan and Cheryl Longyear.

A 1967 article in the Auburn Citizen reported:

MONTEZUMA  
Canal brings  
dreams

A certificate for the Award was presented by the PACNY Board President, Grant Johnson. Also speaking at the event was Daniel Mackay, Deputy Director of NYS Office of Preservation, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Daniel shared his wife, Jean and him had visited the Richmond Aqueduct site while on the Erie Canalway Bicycle Tours, and recognized our work to educate and preserve the park.

This was a wonderful honor to be recognized for the years of work dedicated to the Town for development of Park. Grant Johnson recognized MHS for carrying on the work started over fifty years ago when David Butler, Town Supervisor received word the Town would be awarded funding to purchase 135 acres of land for its historic significance. A 1967 article in the Auburn Citizen gave an account of the historic



canal resources with a headline that read:

***“Montezuma — Canal Brings Dreams.”*** Byron Lapp, Town Supervisor announced in the article the State had given approval for funding. It then took Byron several years of dedicated work to acquire the seven parcels. A planning committee worked with Byron including: Robert Dawson, Robert Dutcher, James Ryan, Tom Fraher, and Joseph Hutchings, Sr as Chair.

The Canal was created out of a dream for New York State to provide a waterway system through the early wilderness with towns and cities built along the way. It transported goods, people and ideas that grew America. Two hundred years later the Erie Canal System continues to re-invent itself to bring people to our communities on trails both by water and land to enjoy our historic and recreational resources.

The award stands as a testament that Montezuma's dream is still alive and being carried on. We are grateful for those who dreamed the dream before us and are proud to be standing on their shoulders keeping the dream alive.

Dreams remain just dreams unless they are acted upon, and we are extremely grateful to the volunteers who have

put shovel to the dirt to make this dream a reality today and the donations and member support making it possible. There are now eleven connecting trails maintained throughout the year. The trails are all well marked, and signs interpreting the historic sites continue to be added as funding becomes available.

Two historic murals are now installed telling the story of the significance of the park. The Friends of the Park continue to implement the design plans created with consultants from Environmental Design Resources to make the Park accessible and educational to visitors. This past year the sign in register at the kiosks listed travelers from as far away as Australia and all across the United States and Canada. No where else on the Canal system can the story be told that includes resources of four stages of canals built through its 200-year old history. This is rural upstate New York at its best with grass root efforts making it happen. We look forward to 2019 to celebrating the anniversary of the middle section of the canal opening where it began here in 1819 and carry the dream on into the future.

## Reflections on the Year 2018

Several projects were undertaken this year to enhance Montezuma Heritage Park. We started with joining in the Annual Canal Clean Sweep event in April promoted by the New York State Canal Corporation and Parks & Trails, New York to help spruce up and beautify canal sites.

Volunteers spent the morning planting ten Norway Spruce trees, making a border of a total of 18 trees purchased by the MHS for the Town from generous donations received for the Park.

A new program was began to regularly schedule monthly work mornings from 9 to noon on the first Saturday of the month, called ParkWORKS Day. Volunteers were asked to donate whatever time they could give during that time period to a project in the park. Tasks completed included staining the picnic table, 13 benches, two kiosks and the bird lookout deck.

The Butterfly Garden received monthly loving attention with weeding and additional engraved bricks have been added to the growing walkway. Trail walkers picked up trash and reported any issues along the trails needing further attention. Brush clearing and larger jobs were tackled with



weed eaters along the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, the Richmond Aqueduct site, Lock 62 and Route 31.

Certainly one of the bigger projects this year was the installation of the new Richmond Aqueduct Mural on Route 31 and continuing to install a total of 34 new trail signs along the trails. Here's where team work was absolutely necessary. Lead by the muralist, Dawn Jordan volunteers help to install our newest mural. The installation and signs were funded through a grant received from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor with matching funds from the Cayuga Community Health Network. In addition, we were able to fund two new kiosk trail maps and two new interpretive signs now ready to be produced.

Once again the Mentz Church was filled with old time favorite hymn singing led by Kathy Wilt in May. The church

remains a landmark along the beautiful countryside built and organized in 1825 by the first pioneers who settled here looking for a better life in this country.

Kathy and Jim Decker along with Mellony Carner hosted a table for MHS at the Montezuma Audubon Wildlife event in May.

In June MHS celebrated its 13th year at Brenda's Restaurant with a special presentation at our Annual Meeting given by Kurt Jordan, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Anthropology and American Indian and Indigenous Studies at Cornell University. Since Montezuma was formed from the Cayuga Indian Reservation we enjoyed his fascinating talk that reviewed archaeological evidence for over thirteen thousand years of local indigenous lifeways ranging from Paleoindian hunter-gatherers at the end of the last Ice Age to the historically-known Cayuga Nation.

Mellony Carner organized a bus trip sponsored by MHS to Lockport to enjoy lunch, and a narrated two-hour boat trip past many historic sites and the "Flight of Five."

Lockport's staircase of five locks canal boat ride through the locks. We stopped at Becker Farms on the way home for a wagon ride through the farm and enjoyed fresh made pie. We left rainy Montezuma early that day, and sunshine followed us for a good time until we returned home.

In July, Alyssa Johnson, Environmental Educator at the Montezuma Audubon organized a group of birders for a birding and historic walking tour in the park.

Mike Riley once again led an interesting three-hour walking tour on August Canal Splash weekend through the park while I shared newspaper accounts of 19th century canal stories.

I have partnered with Wayne County Trails Works in developing a smartphone app that features 30 trails including the Richmond Aqueduct Trial. In August, Trail Works and MHS organized a Historic Paddle Ride from May's Point to the Richmond Aqueduct.

Finally, we topped off the year with a long but very successful annual Election Day Bake Sale.

**Looking Forward to What's Ahead for 2019**



Central New York received a boost for projects to grow our economy and community development through this year's Regional Economic Council's funding initiative. The initiative empowers communities, business and academic leaders, as well as members of the public in each region of the state, to develop strategic plans specifically tailored to their region's unique strengths and resources to create jobs, improve quality of life and grow the economy.

Here in Montezuma our strengths include the valuable Erie Canal historic sites we have as well as the beautiful natural resources of this area. The canal once brought people, new ideas and prosperity to our small community. Now we have the opportunity to capitalize on this once again.

Montezuma was one of 17

projects selected from Cayuga County to receive \$147,425 to place a parking lot at the northern portion of the Montezuma Heritage Park where the park connects with the New York State Canalway Trail on Route 31. Other improvements will be made to the park, including a waterless accessible bathroom and a directional kiosk to assist visitors.

The project is being made possible through a partnership agreement to be made with Cayuga County Soil and Water to assist the Town in clearing the site and drainage.

The project will coincide with the closing of the gap of the New York State Canalway Trail along Route 31 between Lyons and Port Byron. The Canalway Trail is a network of approximately 300 miles of multiple-use

trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trail follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System. The complete story of the Erie Canal system can all be found in Montezuma Heritage Park along the Canalway Trail.

The Canalway Trail is not only a great long distance bicycling destination, but also an ideal regional recreational resource for biking, walking, jogging and other types of seasonal trail activities. Trailhead parking and interpretive kiosks with historic information about the Erie Canal and New York State Canal System will be important for the visitor experience.

We look forward to making this project a reality as we celebrate the 200th year building of the Erie Canal.

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**Farewell to MHS Outgoing Board Members**

MHS says farewell to four of our long standing board members this year. Bob Melvin, Barbara Black, Cynthia and Ed Laraway are stepping down after serving on the Board of Trustees.

They each have contributed to the success MHS has experienced over the years with several projects and fund raising events. We sincerely appreciate the time they have given.

Please let us know of someone who might be interested in joining the board. To continue our work we need to be able to fill these positions.

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## Exploring Erie Canal History from May's Point to Montezuma Heritage Park

### WHERE HISTORY MEETS NATURE

*For more on the history of this area, there is a wonderful Erie Canal YouTube video (Search "Swamp to River") by Steve Grout.*

### NOW: SITE OF THE

On Saturday, August 25, members of Wayne County Trail Works were led on a wonderful kayak experience from May's Point Lock 25 to the Richmond Aqueduct by Gary Abbott, originally from the May's Point area.

Once on the water the kayakers headed down the Erie Canal toward the Seneca River and the Richmond Aqueduct. It was a warm and beautiful blue-sky day, and the first thing they saw was an Egret resting on a branch, followed by Osprey, Blue Heron, Kingfisher, and Eagles. "This section of the Erie Canal is like paddling in the wilderness area of the Adirondacks," commented Mark DeCracker, Trail Works President.

Once the group arrived at the site of the Richmond Aqueduct, there was plenty of picture taking before heading onto shore. In fact, James Zeger, a teacher at



James Zeger, 3rd place winning photo in the 2018 Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Photo Calendar Contest

sponsored by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. After landing on shore just north of the Aqueduct, we met the group with coffee and donuts and shared the significance of this landing site where the original Clinton's Ditch crossed directly through the Seneca River. There was a 1400-foot long bridge for the mules to walk on pulling the boats through the river. This difficult crossing finally led to the building of the Richmond

Aqueduct to instead carry the canal waters over the River. Montezuma Heritage Park will be one of the sites listed in a new Water Trail Guidebook and Map Set to land here in the Park from the Seneca River. It is being produced by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor next year, and plans are being made for signage at the site.

The May's Point to Montezuma trip is about a 45 minute paddle, and makes a wonderful outing where history meets nature.



### SLACK WATER CROSSING TODAY.

Newark High School captured the above beautiful photo (top) from inside one of the magnificent aqueduct arches. It won 3rd Place in the 2018 Photo Calendar Contest.



THEN: 1825 SLACK WATER CROSSING OF ERIE CANAL THROUGH THE SENECA RIVER SOURCE: CLEMENTS LIBRARY, UNV. OF MI.

**Port Byron  
Central School  
Cross Country  
Team's Fall  
Season Runs in  
Montezuma  
Heritage Park**

Congratulations to the Boy's & Girl's Team for a successful year!

With the construction of the new athletic field at Port Byron School this year, the Cross Country team needed a place where they could practice and hold their meets. The Town of Montezuma was pleased to welcome the opportunity to be host for the team's activities and to work with the coaching staff to make this possible.



Port Byron's Haley Yorkey, front, and her sister Molly lead the pack against Weedsport and Bishop Grimes at Montezuma Heritage Park

**History  
is Essential for  
Ourselves**

As the MHS continues to raise funds for the future of Montezuma Heritage Park, it is important to express why the project is very significant for our community.

On the next page are seven ways that history is relevant in contemporary life. This Value Statement was created by the History Relevance Campaign, a group of diverse history

professionals posing questions about what makes the past relevant today. They believe that with common agreement, commitment, and open conversation about why history is important, the historical community can change the common perception that history is nice, but not essential. Please read the list MHS has endorsed to discover why we need your continued support

through membership or gift donations in 2019. This makes it possible to promote an interest in Montezuma's past and how history helps each of us to understand who we are. We will work to let the public know that history isn't just something we have to memorize to pass a test, but that it's real stories about real people. Thank you for your support, and best wishes for the holidays!



**Wishing everyone a very Happy Holidays  
and wonderful New Year.**

Thank you for your support!

## Seven Ways That History Is Essential

- 1) **IDENTITY** » History nurtures personal identity in an intercultural world. History enables people to discover their place in the stories of their families, communities, and nation. They learn the stories of the individuals and groups that have come before them and shaped the world in which they live. Through these varied stories, they create systems of personal values that guide their approach to life and relationships with others.
- 2) **CRITICAL SKILLS** » History teaches critical 21st century skills and independent thinking. The practice of history teaches research, judgment of the accuracy and reliability of sources, validation of facts, awareness of multiple perspectives and biases, analysis of conflicting evidence, sequencing to discern causes, synthesis to present a coherent interpretation, clear and persuasive written and oral communication, and other skills that have been identified as critical to a successful, productive life. History is Essential for Our Communities
- 3) **VITAL PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK** » History lays the groundwork for strong, resilient communities. No place really becomes a community until it is wrapped in human memory. No place is a community until it has awareness of its history. Our connections and commitment to one another are strengthened when we share stories and experiences.
- 4) **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** » History is a catalyst for economic growth. People are drawn to communities that have preserved a strong sense of historical identity and character. Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset that attracts talent and enhances business development. History is Essential for our Future
- 5) **ENGAGED CITIZENS** » History helps people craft better solutions. At the heart of democracy is the practice of individuals coming together to express views and take action. By bringing history into discussions about contemporary issues, we can better understand the origins of and multiple perspectives on the challenges facing our communities and nation.
- 6) **LEADERSHIP** » History inspires local and global leaders. History provides leaders with inspiration and role models for meeting the complex challenges that face our communities, nation, and the world. It may be a parent, grandparent or distant ancestor, a local or national hero, or someone famous or someone little known. Their stories reveal how they met the challenges of their day, which can give new leaders the courage and wisdom to confront the challenges of our time.
- 7) **LEGACY** » History, saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. History is crucial to preserving democracy for the future by explaining our shared past. Through the preservation of authentic, meaningful places, documents, artifacts, images, and stories, we leave a foundation upon which future Americans can build.

— Value Statement by the History Relevance Group

### 2019 Membership

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member or  Renewing

Our mailing and printing costs keep increasing. Newsletters can now be received via email and are posted on our website. We would appreciate adding \$2 to your dues to cover printing and postage costs. If you prefer to have a copy mailed please check below.

Yes, please mail the newsletter

General Membership:

\$10 Individual

\$15 Family

\$50 Supporter

\$25 Business Basic

\$50 Business Supporter

Other Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Friends of Montezuma Heritage Park

\$10 Ditch Digger

\$25 Hoggee

\$50 Sal the Mule

\$100 Lock Tender

\$500 Canaller

Mail check payable to:

Montezuma Historical Society  
PO Box 476  
Montezuma, NY 13117

Thank you!

MHS is a non-profit 501C3 organization and your donations are tax deductible

## The Story Teller

MONTEZUMA  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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