

Spring 2019

# The Story Teller

MONTEZUMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

*If you have not renewed your 2018 membership, or if you would like to join, please use the form enclosed to send in your dues. THANK YOU!*



RICHMOND AQUEDUCT - PHOTO ENHANCEMENT BY BILL HECHT

## Historic landmark holds fond childhood memories



PETER CLARKE HOME, CHAPMAN RD — SITE OF MONTEZUMA WATER TOWERS TODAY



One of the earliest pioneer homes built in Montezuma became a landmark holding many memories for people growing up in Montezuma over several generations of families.

Dr. Peter Lynsen Clarke first visited Montezuma around 1798 by horseback, exploring the unsettled territory of this area with interest in the salt wells found here. Clarke was born on July 13, 1773, in Connecticut. He moved to New York City, and by profession, became a pioneer doctor, a dealer in powder, potions and salt, but he was born an adventurer and could see that New York was the land of the future.

He acquired several thousands of acres deeded from Israel Smith in the Eastern Cayuga Reservation located in what became known as Montezuma and other areas of Cayuga County in 1808. He then arranged to have a house built costing \$2000 while he returned to New York City to make arrangements to move his family here. *(continued)*

Clarke carved what was said to be an “empire out of a wasteland.”



“while decided and unyielding in his political views and preferences, his general spirit rendered him kind and conciliating.”

**CLARKE'S  
OBITUARY  
—AUBURN DAILY  
ADVERTISER,  
1858**

When Clarke returned the contractor had absconded with the monies, and he again contracted with another builder with sureties this time for the same price to complete the home. He moved in with his wife, Maria (Fisher) and young children around 1810.

The Clarke's raised 13 children while living in the new house, “*carving out what was said to be an empire out of a wasteland.*” He and his brother James, consequently became land speculators with vested interest in the manufacture of salt in Montezuma, Dr. Clarke and Colonel Comfort Tyler were interested in increasing transportation westward across the Montezuma Marshes. A company was incorporated to build the Montezuma Turnpike on March 31, 1815. The major achievement of this road was the bridging Montezuma Swamp for which a subsidiary company was formed. The bridge and causeway were built in 1816 with the entire road completed about 1825. Comfort Tyler was president and Peter Clarke, secretary-treasurer. Both Clarke and Tyler were proponents of building the Erie Canal and involved in boating lines in the early days of the canal.

The Clarke home had a gabled roof and design reflecting Dutch style influences of New York City, and it stood high on what was known as Prospect Hill majestically overlooking the marshes from the railed balcony,

a favorite vantage point. There were about twelve rooms, all furnished royally. The downstairs hall went right through to the rear of the house and carriage entrance. On the right of the hall was a double parlor and on the left were two dining rooms, the kitchen and downstairs bedroom. Every room in the house had a fireplace.

Clarke's mother-in-law, Hannah Fisher was living with the family at the time of her death. She is the first of the family to be buried in the Clarke family plot high in a cemetery on another drumlin, called Prospect Cemetery on McDonald Road south of the hamlet. Peter moved back to New York City in the 1840's, and died there in 1858. The Auburn Daily Advertiser published his obituary stating, “*while decided and unyielding in his political views and preferences, his general spirit rendered him kind and conciliating.*” Following the funeral in New York City, his son Colonel J.A. Clarke accompanied his remains to Montezuma to be buried in the family plot.

The house was passed down eventually to his son, James Anthony Clarke (1804-1872) and then grandson, James Wheaton Clarke (1845-1918). It later became a popular summer home for family members.

In 1859, 60 and 61, Professor Henry Barnes from Weedsport taught Select High school in the mansion. There was a debating society, called the Philomathean Society where all the great questions of the day were discussed including the slavery question and the right to hold property, the John Brown raid and the coming war between the North and the South. The young ladies of the school published a paper, “The Autumn Leaf.” It included interesting personal stories and poetry. The boys published a paper called, “The Independent Citizen.” These were read in school on alternate Saturday afternoons with speaking exercises.

Very few people still remember the house, but one woman raised in Montezuma has fond memories playing there as a child. Lila (Vreeland) Gay grew up on High Street near the Clarke mansion. The daughter of Ralph and Viola (Clarke) Vreeland, Lila and her friends would visit the house where Peace Justice William Beach and his wife, Ida (Gratz) lived at the time. Lila remembers Ida was born in Wisconsin, a former school teacher who later became William's mail-order-bride.

The children in the village loved to visit the Beach's. She recalls the house having an odd funny, musty kind of a smell. It seemed like a huge stately mansion back

*Clarke House continued...*

then, and Mrs. Beach would let the children go upstairs where there were trunks of old clothes including uniforms packed away.

They would play dress up for hours and then come down and Ida would give them cookies and a drink before heading home. The Beaches did not have any children of their own, but Lila said Ida loved having the children visit.

At age 15, Lila remembers the scary

day on March 25, 1944, when the house totally burned down. It seemed like whole hill was on fire and the villagers feared it would spread to the other houses. Her father and other men worked for hours covering the roofs with wet feed bags on the roofs of nearby houses to prevent them from catching a spark.

Today, the site remains a town landmark that holds the important source of the Town's water supply where this grand house once stood.

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## 200 Years of Canal History



The middle section of the Erie Canal started in 1817 in Rome and reached Montezuma by 1819. The Canal is widely considered one of the most important works of civil engineering in America and is said to be the first waterway

connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.

Today, Montezuma Heritage Park tells the story of the 200 years of the Canal's evolution. The Montezuma Historical Society considers the Park the Town's museum without walls and a testament to ingenuity that created this famous manmade waterway. We continue to invest in preserving its history.

## Butterfly Garden Continues to Grow



The historic site where the Exchange Hotel once greeted visitors along the Erie Canal has been transformed into a beautiful butterfly garden maintained by Friends of the Montezuma Heritage Park.

In celebration of this year's Canal 200-Year opening in Montezuma of the Erie Canal, and

in honor of the men who built the canal through one of the most difficult areas of swampland, Montezuma Historical Society has invited the Seneca Park Zoo, to revisit the site and help replant additional beautiful blooms for butterflies to find a home.

On June 27th, the Seneca Park Butterfly van will deliver a dozen more new plants provided through the Butterfly Beltway Program. The New York native plants are specifically chosen

to feed and support a host of native wildlife. Staff will help prepare the flower bed and do the plantings.

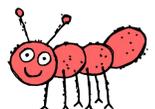
The journey of the monarch butterfly is one fraught with peril, immeasurable obstacles, and a multiple generational round trip over thousands of miles.

With the warming spring days we look forward to to sunshine, and fragrant flowers the garden offers with butterfly sightings after the long, winter months here in Central New York.

The Montezuma Historical Society established the garden and gazebo with a memorial brick walkway in 2016.

Bricks may be purchased and imprinted for yourself or a loved one as part of the brick walkway leading to the garden which will become handicap accessible as it is expanded and built.

Request a form to place your order on our membership page.



## 2019 Upcoming Programs

### Annual Meeting and Guest Speaker

**KURT A. JORDAN, PH.D.**

#### PART II

*“The Indigenous History of the Cayuga Lake Drainage: An Archaeological Prospective”*

**THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2019**

**BRENDA’S RESTAURANT, RT 31, PORT BYRON**

MHS celebrates our 14th anniversary with a returning guest for this year’s program at its annual meeting to share his experience and research done on *“The Indigenous History of the Cayuga Lake Drainage: An Archaeological Perspective.”*

Last year members and guests were intrigued by Professor Kurt Jordan’s talk on the archaeological evidence of 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.

With his wealth of knowledge on this subject, he has agreed to return to share the second part of his presentation.

Kurt A. Jordan is currently the director of the Cornell Institute of Archaeology and Material Studies (CIAMS). He has conducted field, museum, and archival research on Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) archaeology, history, and place names in collaboration with members of the Seneca and Cayuga Nations since 1995.

The program will follow dinner at Brenda’s

Restaurant, Rt 31, Port Byron. A short business meeting to elect officers and Board of Trustees will be held at 5:00 PM. A Buffet Dinner will be served at 5:30 and the talk begins at 6:30 PM.

The public is invited to attend, and cost for the dinner is \$22/per person including tip and gratuity.

**Reservations are required. Please mail the enclosed form by June 1st or call Cheryl at 315-776-4656.**

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### Join us for a trip to Canalside Buffalo

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2019**

A trip has been planned to visit the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park on the shore of Lake Erie in Buffalo.

A deluxe motor coach will depart from Montezuma Town Hall at 7:15 AM on Wednesday, July 17th,, and the public is invited to come along on the trip.

The Park is home to several decommissioned US Naval vessels,

including the Cleveland-class cruiser USS Little Rock, the Fletcher-class destroyer USS The Sullivans, and the submarine USS, the Croaker.

The day will include an enjoyable lunch at the famous Chef’s Restaurant, one of Buffalo’s favorite Italian restaurants since 1923.

A sightseeing boat cruise is scheduled for 2:45 PM to travel through four bodies of water on an international boundary that includes the

Black Rock Lock and Canal, original lighthouse built in 1833 and Old Fort Erie in Canada.

For more information about the trip and cost, please contact Mellony Carner, your tour hostess at 315-234-2245.

**Reservations must be made by June 1st and payment is due by June 19th.**

## MHS Welcomes Riders

Two long-distance popular bicycling events have scheduled rest stops and MHS volunteers will welcome riders on their stop in Montezuma

On Wednesday, July 10th, the 21st Cycling the Erie Canal event will be stopping in

come through Montezuma with more than 650 cyclists traveling from Buffalo pedaling their way along the historic Erie Canalway Trail to Albany. The 400-mile journey celebrates the Canal's Bicentennial as a legendary journey along Erie Canal. Along the way, cyclists will enjoy some of the finest scenery, most interesting history in

the northeastern United States.

Then, on September 7th also in its 21st year the AIDS RIDE FOR LIFE bike tour starts in Ithaca with a stop in many communities to raise money and awareness in HIV/AIDS prevention and Harm Reduction regarding substance use. Every

year, this landmark ride includes a one-day ride around Cayuga Lake with a rest stop held at A-Verdi's parking lot.

Join us in welcoming the riders to Montezuma, and wishing them a safe and fun journey!

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## Canal Clean Sweep Readies Park for Visitors

Twenty-six brave volunteers weathered one of the coldest spring days of the year to help Friends of Montezuma Heritage Park clean and ready the Park for visitors this year.

As part of the yearly statewide event, several work projects were completed

including planting a new tree, mulching trails, picking up trash, clearing brush and installing two new interpretive signs were accomplished. Joining local volunteers this year were Boy Scouts and their leaders from Troop 5 in Binghamton who received youth certificates of

participation. Also receiving a youth certificate was Nolan Carner from Weedsport.

Volunteers enjoyed pizza, hot soup and Shirley's cookies after a full morning's work.

Thank you everyone who participated!

## New Water Trail Guidebook

A new **Water Trail Guidebook and Navigational Map Set** has been produced by Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. This guidebook and set of four water and tear resistant maps will become an indispensable resource for paddlers to experience the waterway. The mile-by-mile guide includes amenities, and places

of interest for over 450 miles of the NYS Canal System Montezuma Heritage Park's landing site near the Richmond Aqueduct is featured in the guidebook.

For more information and to download or order a complimentary copy of the guidebook, visit:

[www.eriecanalway.org/watertrail](http://www.eriecanalway.org/watertrail)

## 2019 MHS Membership

Enclosed is a membership card for those who have enrolled for 2019. We appreciate your continued support.

If you have not renewed yet in 2019, please consider enrolling today. Your dues make a huge difference to help to preserve our heritage and important historic resources in Montezuma.

MHS welcomes three new board members this year: Lori Fletcher, Carol Fordyce, and Patricia Glimpse.

Meetings are normally held on the second Thursdays at 5:30 PM. We discuss and make plans for upcoming programs.

Members are welcome to attend the meeting. If you are not a member, please consider joining!

## Hit the Trails

**DISCOVER ALL YOU CAN DO ALONG NEW YORK'S CANALS.**



**WEGMANS HIT THE TRAIL PASSPORT PROGRAM**

## Sign Up Now for the Canalway Challenge!

**ENJOY FUN TRACING HISTORY WHILE TRACKING MILES**

## Trace History....Track Miles

Montezuma Heritage Park is now part of the newly expanded 30-trail passport program sponsored by Wegmans. It is coordinated by a partnership with Wayne County Trails Works, Inc. villages and towns, and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service Eat Well Play Hard Coalition

You are invited to explore the region and the diverse outdoor adventures in your own backyard!

Set your goal, track your miles, and find adventure and fun on the NYS Canal System and Canalway Trail in 2019!

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Program is free and registration is open to individuals, organizations, and groups.

Simply sign up online and choose a mileage goal; then walk, run, cycle, or paddle on the Canalway Trail and NYS Canal System to achieve it. You can complete the Canalway Challenge in one big trip or many small ones.

### How it works:

Pick up a **Passport book** located in Montezuma Heritage Park at the trailheads on Chapman Road or High Street. You may also download an app directly to your phone.

**Hit the Trail #2 to the Richmond Aqueduct** where the marker is located. Rub the trail marker in your passport book. Then head out to visit the other 29 trails in Wayne County.

Like a hiker seeking to become an Adirondack 46-er, you can strive for mileage status and recognition through the **Canalway Challenge**.

Upon completion, you can show off your accomplishment with a photo finish, car/kayak decal, and gear bag.

**Eastern Mountain Sports** is supporting the Canalway Challenge with special discounts for signing up and reaching your mileage goal.

The program runs continuously. In order to enter for a chance to win a \$250 Wegmans gift card, you need to complete 15 of the 30 trails in the booklet, and bring it to Cornell Cooperative Extension on Rt 88 in Newark. If you complete all 30 trails, you will have two entries in the drawing held annually in the Fall, and your entry remains in the pool.

**INFORMATION AT:**  
**[HTTP:// TRAILWORKS.ORG/ PASSPORT-TRAILS/](http://trailworks.org/passport-trails/)**

Your registration will include a free online mileage tracker to tally your miles on the waterway and Canalway Trail.

You may also use your own fitness app or GPS-based bike computer. There are several good apps that use GPS-based tracking systems to record your route, distance, speed, and more.

To Register visit the website at:  
<https://eriecanalway.org/explore/challenge/signup>



## 2019 Membership

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

**Friends of the Montezuma Heritage Park:**

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

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

Yes, I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ brick(s) in honor of a living or deceased loved one. Please send me order form(s).

Yes, please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ (number attending) for the Jun. 13th Annual Dinner at Brenda's (Reservations due by Mon., Jun. 1st or call Cheryl Longyear at 315-776-4656).

Yes, please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ (number attending) for the July 17th trip to Canalside Buffalo (An itinerary will be sent upon receipt of your reservation, or call Mellony Carner at 315-776-5390; reservations are due by June 1st and payment by June 19th).

No, I cannot attend the above programs, but enclosed is my ballot for the 2019 election of officers and board of trustees listed below.



### 2019-2020 Montezuma Historical Society Election Ballot

(Vote for one of each officer position and eight trustees. Return by June 1st)

- |                |  |                                      |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| President      | <input type="checkbox"/> Mellony Carner    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Vice President | <input type="checkbox"/> Lori Fletcher     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Treasurer      | <input type="checkbox"/> Kathleen Decker   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Secretary      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheryl Longyear   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Paul Baker        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Roberta Baker     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> James Decker      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Carol Fordyce     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Shirley Gillmore  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Patricia Glimpse  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Kathleen Longyear | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| Trustee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Stanley Longyear  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

# The Story Teller

MONTEZUMA  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Friends-of-Montezuma-  
Heritage-Park](https://www.facebook.com/Montezuma-Historical-Society-Friends-of-Montezuma-Heritage-Park)**

**Newsletter Editor  
Cheryl Longyear  
Town Historian**