

2023 Annual Report of Greene County Historian Submitted by Jonathan Palmer

Introduction:

This is my third annual report submitted as Greene County Historian for the period covering 1/1/2023 to 1/1/2024. This reporting period was defined primarily by my departure in April 2023 from the role of Archivist at the Greene County Historical Society, a position which presented considerable overlap and occasional conflict with my role as appointed public historian for the County of Greene. During this reporting period I have either corresponded, provided reference assistance, or held in-person meetings with every municipal historian working in the fourteen towns and five villages that comprise Greene County excepting the Towns of Halcott, Cairo, and Ashland. At the end of this reporting period there were no appointed municipal historians for the Village of Athens, the Village of Catskill, Village of Tannersville, Town of Catskill, nor Town of Jewett.

Lectures, Public Events, and Presentations:

Total Attendance for public events and lectures: 500

19 January - Mountain House Documentary Screening for Cairo Historical Society

13 February - Office Hours at Mountain Top Library

22 February - Office Hours at Catskill Public Library

26 March - Lecture for Greene Land Trust about Slavery at the Willows

29 March - Office Hours at Catskill Public Library

8 April - Lecture for On-Ti-Ora Chapter, DAR.

26 April - Office Hours at Catskill Public Library

7 May - Lecture on Slavery in Greene County for Beattie-Powers House

31 May - Office Hours at Catskill Public Library

26 July - "Pints and the Past" Event at Left Bank Ciders in Catskill

10 September - Hay Press Lecture at Greene County Historical Society

16 September - Hudson Valley Ramble Event at Ramshorn-Livingston Preserve

4 October - "Pints and the Past" event at Left Bank Ciders in Catskill

14 October - Mount Hope Cemetery Living History Event

23 October - Catskill Senior Center Lecture on Local Legends and Ghost Stories

29 October - Lecture on the Murder of Anna Swartz for the Pratt Museum

9 December - Victorian Stroll Cemetery Talk

Reference Assistance/Public Interactions:

This past year I continued to receive and field inquiries about property and house histories from new local homeowners. These inquiries represent the largest portion of email and phone inquiries I receive as historian - genealogical questions represent the second largest number of requests.

I continued to assist Debra Bruno with ongoing research related to her book examining her family's local connections with the institution of slavery. This book is set to be released in late 2024. I assisted research fellows from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site with their respective research topics. I gave two cemetery walks for families on request that were not advertised to the public.

In the Spring of 2023 I had the pleasure to meet with the Catskill Town Supervisor to discuss possible preservation and stabilization work on the Little Red Schoolhouse in Jefferson Heights. Also in the Spring I had two roadside history markers installed in the Village of Athens - one commemorating the wreck of the Swallow, the other commemorating the first illumination of the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse.

This Summer I was pleased to join in interviews conducted by WMHT on the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse which were used to create a short feature that was aired on their television station as well as online. I also had the pleasure to be asked for letters of support for several of the Lighthouse's ongoing grant applications.

This year I also held two initial meetings for the Greene County 250 committee. No committee has been officially formed, but these meetings addressed possible programs/activities to be held or prepared in advance of the National 250th in 2025, 2026, and 2027.

Scholarship/Publications:

This year I broke with the longstanding tradition of weekly articles submitted to local newspapers. Having a separate full-time job precludes me from having the time to research, draft, and submit weekly history content bearing any merit or utility. Nonetheless, I was pleased to have an article published in the Greene County Historical Society's quarterly journal that examined local hay presses in detail, and also had a short piece published in a collection by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site celebrating the history and story of a daguerreotype in their permanent collections.

I continued with research on local Ice Yachts of the 19th century, and also drafted an article on the history of the Office of Greene County Historian. I also had the chance to examine the bell currently installed in the former Trinity Church in Athens to see if it was the same bell commissioned in the original church c. 1812. Lastly, it should be indicated that the 16 programs and events I hosted or participated in over the course of 2023 required research, refreshers, reading of published materials, and reference visits in all cases.

End of Summary Report