

The Preservationist

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Loyal Supporters:

Summer is flying by, and we will soon be in the fall mode. These uncertain times during the Covid pandemic make it difficult to predict what will happen once we are forced inside. Presently we are planning to have our September, October, and November program meetings. (See article)

Christmas at the Octagon is still a questionable event. By September, I hope to have a firm plan on future events at the Octagon House.

At this time, the new wallpaper has been ordered and should arrive by September. There will be installation and painting that will need to be finished and then cleaning of the entire house. It has been a long ordeal. Once the house is completed there will be a grand re-opening for our members who have been so supportive during this reconstruction. In June I asked for financial help and many members came forward with donations. I cannot express my gratitude to our loyal supporters. You are the BEST! You all recognize the need to finish this project and have our beautiful Victorian house open once again.

Have you picked up an EC 200 Passport yet? They are available at all Buffalo and Erie County Public Libraries and at local museums, such as the Knight-Sutton Museum. I have visited a few museums and realized there are many "hidden gems" in Erie County, plus it is a fun activity. Elma has a sawmill (not working the day I was there) that will be up and running soon. Springville (Concord) has a super mercantile store that will take you back to the 1800's plus a great display in the back (I will keep it a secret in hopes you will travel there and see for yourself). Springville also has a wonderful genealogy museum - who knew?? The passport enables you to find some great communities and museums you never knew about.

Our own Knight-Sutton Museum has a wonderful exhibit, "Akron Through the Years". Please stop in and see the many photos and artifacts that are on display. You will not be disappointed.

The society is always looking for volunteers. If you have interest in local history and/or looking for a new venture, give me a call (860-7316).

Stay healthy and safe.

Patricia Pearce

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FOURTH OF JULY

Wow! Our annual Fourth of July quilt raffle was another huge success due to the many wonderful donations that came along with the raffle ticket money. Also, the "Pick-A-Pie" raffle was a great substitute for the annual pie sale. Many thanks to all who contributed to these two fundraisers.

Winner of the Amish quilt: Gregg Brown

Winner of the pie raffle: Michael Charles

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

ALL PROGRAMS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

September will be the first meeting program since the summer break. "Cummings Cement" will be the topic by Newstead Supervisor David Cummings and Town Historian Don Holmes. It will be presented at the Newstead Cultural Center on September 9th at 7:00 PM. If the new electronics are finished at the Town Hall, the venue will be switched. Please watch for notifications in the *Akron Bugle*, website, and Facebook. **Masks will be required as per the present Covid restrictions.**

Our annual Harvest Dinner has been cancelled due to the Covid variant. The Board felt it prudent not to chance having this event with rising number of Covid cases. The substitute program will be April's *Antiques Appraisals* program that was cancelled. This program will take place at the Town Hall on October 14 at 7:00 PM with Gary Harkness. A two-dollar donation per item will be required along with a limit of two items.

November is still planned for "Rethinking Thanksgiving". It is difficult to predict what will happen as the year goes along. Please look for possible changes with this program. Calling 542-7022 will always give you up to date information.

Note: Our wonderful Harvest Dinner caterers, Collette and Dennis Remington, have retired. The Board extends a huge thank you for the many turkey dinners that were made by these great society members. Their hard work and dedication to the society is greatly appreciated. Kudos to you both and enjoy your retirement!

KUDOS TO THE GARDEN COMMITTEE

The garden committee has done a great job keeping the yard at the Octagon House in tip top shape. The weeding, pruning, and watering takes a great amount of time and effort. Many thanks to Linda Cowan and her crew for their effort.

UPDATE ON REPAIRS AT THE OCTAGON HOUSE

At the time of this writing, the inside of the Octagon House has not changed in five or six months. Hopefully, in September the wallpaper will be ready to be put up and painting will be next on the list of repairs. During the summer, you may have seen Brad Rehwaldt's crew working on the porch. The rotted fascia board all around the porch was removed and replaced. Also spindles on the two sides of the front stairway were made and installed. There are old photos of the house with spindles, so a decision was made to replicate them. It was also a safety feature. It would be a nasty fall onto the steps at the lower level.

Additional scraping, priming and painting of the porch floor will need to be done before winter. There are major peeling sections that need to be addressed.

As repairs are made, updates will be publicized on the website, Facebook and *Akron Bugle*.

Pat Pearce





Rich-Twinn Octagon House

Kate Stapleton Parzych

There are some very important “in-house” projects happening at the Rich-Twinn this summer. Jannette Potera (Collections), Pat Rodrigues (Director, KSM), Kimberley Burg (Museums Coordinator), and I (note: I’ve taken the liberty to dub us “the creative team”) are in the process of formulating designated storage spaces for our extensive collections when they are not on display. Attention has been given to the annex (the small triangle room) off the Gentlemen’s Bedroom, which had been a general storage space and not visible during tours.

The room has been cleared out, painted a quintessential Victorian color by Laurie Stapleton Baldwin, and outfitted with a coated-wire shelving unit complete with hanging rods for garments, installed by Bill Asmus. The space looks great, and soon will be housing the many garments, quilts, and other fabric and lace items that the Society has amassed. Thank you very much, Laurie and Bill, from the creative team and the NHS Board.

A future project from the creative team will be devising a storage space in the annex of the Children’s Bedroom for all the non-fabric items in our collection such as figurines, framed paintings and prints, and duplicate furniture pieces -- all that will take a turn to be on display in either of our museums. Already, that space has begun its transformation with a file cabinet moved to the KSM, and cabinets there moved to better location within the building, thanks to David Webster and Jim Parzych.

The outside of the Octagon is transforming as well – the new railings on either side of the main stairway are in place, nicely replicating the ones that are visible in the earliest photograph of the House. Also, a section of the porch floor and fascia boards were replaced, all as mentioned by the President in this issue. Beautiful work by Rehwaldt Builders. We also had a window washing party! Thank you to Nancy Frey, Mary Sellers Hanley, Marlene Gehl, Kimberley Burg, and Pat Pearce for braving the August heat. Pro Tip: a squeegee works wonders on all those small windowpanes.

We might not be able to tour the Octagon yet, however, we are beginning to have small outdoor events. Coordinating with Kristine Sutton at the Newstead Library, we recently hosted a Reading Invasion out on the lawn in the shade of the House. What is a Reading Invasion? At a designated time, participants bring a chair or a blanket and a book to read and settle in for an hour. A quiet version of a flash mob, it could be said. We will have another one in early autumn – look for the announcement for that in all the usual places and at the library -- we’d love to see the lawn full of avid readers for our next Invasion.

Membership

Linda Capan

Activity from April 30 – July 31, 2021

Sympathy: We are saddened to report the recent passing of Life Member Richard Hegmann on June 30, 2021. We extend our sincerest condolences to Myra and their family and friends.

WELCOME to new **LIFE** member Charles M. George.

WELCOME to the following new **ANNUAL** members:

- Jacob Halleck & Robin Woodruff

Thank you for the following MEMORIAL DONATIONS given

- Richard Komroy by Mary Nicotera

THANK YOU FOR DONATIONS received from:

Kimberley Burg, Richard Christiana, Jacob Halleck and John & Jan Lauridsen

AND

Mary Bonin and William & Shirley Reber for Octagon House repairs

Memberships are inexpensive and the perfect gift! Please consider a membership gift as you plan your upcoming Christmas list! Check our website, newsteadhistoricalsociety.org for membership information.

Memorials and donations to the Society are always appreciated and can be mailed to: Newstead Historical Society, PO Box 222, Akron, NY 14001. If you have any questions, please email Linda Capan at: membership@newsteadhistoricalsociety.org.

Pieces Too Short to Save

Knight-Sutton Museum

Pat Rodrigues

This month in the pieces too short to save category I want to share two experiences that remind me why I enjoy this job so much.

In June, just before school got out, the NHS team of Pat Pearce, Kate Stapleton Parzych, Jannette Potera and me conducted walking tours of upper Main Street for four classes of fourth graders (73 students). The tour started at Russell Park and included its history. We also covered the Crane-Ross and Hoag-Bernhardt Century Homes, Knight-Sutton Museum and Rich-Twinn Octagon House. We also included a few facts about churches that used to be on Main Street and aren't any longer.

It went well, but the real reward occurred the next day. As I was walking to the Sidewalk Sale in the village, I saw a young girl who had been on the tour the previous day. She was at the Crane-Ross mansion and as I passed by, she was explaining to her dad some of the facts we had covered on the tour. It absolutely made my day, week and month! Sometimes when you think no one is listening, they are. Amazing!

The next story has to do with the kind of people Akronites are. I was recently approached by a relative of the Beeman family from Ohio. She was researching her family history. While we don't do genealogical research if we have anything to share, we are glad to help. I compiled a small notebook of info from the Maple Lawn and Beeman Cemeteries indicating where her ancestors were buried. I told her about Beeman Park and Beeman Creek and most importantly that we had a Century home - the Beeman-Baker house. It had a chain of title in the application showing the home belonged to her ancestors. We spent four hours together at the museum. This was followed by a few hours more as we went to all these locations together, photographed the graves and the park and went to the home, hoping to get a few pictures from the outside with the owner's consent.

When we got there the owner who was outside, went in the house and got his wife and they took us on a tour of the house, a tour of what is believed to be the original homestead, (now a storage garage), and the barn. On the second floor of the barn was a horse-drawn sleigh from the turn of the century. We took pictures and visited and were invited to stay for a family cookout! It was now 7 p.m. and so we thought we should go. We thanked the Bakers. They said they wanted her trip to be a success as she had come so far. You just can't beat Akron people.

I would also like to say a big thank you to Chuck George, our retiring local pharmacist for his many donations to the society, including office supplies, mannequins, easels and display pieces for museum use, his antique hat box collection and good deals on two fixtures we are using for the yearbook collection. Happy retirement!

Finally, we are working with a digital metadata specialist from the U.B. who is photographing our Civil War collection for a piece on the New York Heritage.org site. She has been working with all the Erie County museums to collect and photograph their collections. It promises to be an exciting addition to the site, and we are happy to be part of it.

The antique book of the month on display in the Red Room is Washington Irving's "Life of Washington" published in 1887. It is one of the many special treasures in our collection waiting for you to view.

Stop in - the museum is free and fun. Bring the kids and grandkids - help them find the lantern that is the symbol of the Erie County Heritage Passport program. (We can help them if they get stuck - we know where it is!)

Charles A. Clark Family

Pat Rodrigues

Of all the former inhabitants of the Octagon House, perhaps the least known or spoken about, is Charles A. Clark, its second owner.

Sometimes the things left behind by a person after their death help fill in the blanks about their life. In Mr. Clark's case, the growth chart of his family discovered on the cold cupboard door during the original renovation and still existing today, is an enchanting thing. It is there, in pencil on a green door, that he charts the growth from 1873-1878 of his family, with a few friends thrown in as well.

When Charles B. Rich died in May of 1870 he willed his home to his fourth wife, Caroline Dolbeer Rich and his three surviving children from his first and second marriages. A year later they sold it to Charles Clark and his wife Helen for \$4000.00. Helen and Charles lived there from 1871-1879.

But what else do we know about Charles? The census records give us some clues. In the 1870 census Charles was listed as a "clerk in a cutworks". His personal property was valued at \$1500 and his real estate holdings amounted to \$6000. He was 31 and Helen was 28. They had three children - Seth C. age 7, Charles Jr., age 4, Catherine J. age 1. A 17-year-old domestic servant named Polly Hartnuff, also is listed.

Life was good.

An ad for C.A. Clark and H.P. Hall's Akron Foundry said they "were the manufacturers of the Hecla stove and the Akron Plow as well as other agricultural implements, farm tools and stove castings".

Every week Mr. Clark ran two ads: one as head of Akron Lodge #527 F&A.M. (Masons) inviting "transient brethren to attend meetings" on the first and third Tuesdays of the month and the other inviting people to join the Akron Musical Association, of which he was director. They met every Friday. He was an active, successful and prominent man in Akron's heyday.

Then in 1879 the Clark and Hall Foundry is sold to a Mr. Goslin. The mortgage on the Octagon House is foreclosed upon. The Clarks leave Akron.

We next find Mr. Clark living at 142 Park Street in Buffalo. In the 1879 -1882 Buffalo City Directory he is listed as a clerk at the J.H. Jewett Co., book printer in the Chapin Block in Buffalo. In the 1880 census Helen is listed as keeping house, Seth age 16 is listed as an organist, Charles, Jr. age 13 is a clerk in a store, Catherine age 11 and "at home" and now "Nellie" age 6 has been added to the family since the last census. A 32-year-old brother named George lives with the family too. He is listed as being "idiotic, demented".

We then lose track of the family for a while as the 1890 census was burned in a fire - only 6,000 records survived of over 63 million. In 1900 only Charles, Helen and Nellie are listed. Nellie has become a music teacher. A grandson, age 9, appears also along with a servant from Canada, Minnie Kelley, who is 20. Mr. Clark's occupation is crossed out. Then in the 1910 census Mr. and Mrs. Clark are listed as "lodgers" at 297 Delaware. He lists his job as a clerk in a government department. He would have been 71 at this point. They list that they had five children - three of whom are living.

Although many articles through the years about the residents of the Octagon House have said Mr. Clark left Akron to work in the U.S. Government Pension Office. However, his great granddaughter told NHS in 2011 he moved to Buffalo after leaving Akron and the census supports this.

We do have a picture of Mr. Clark and family in Washington D. C. in 1901. He and his wife, daughter-in-law and grandson are in front of the U.S. Capital along with several other family members. We don't know what they were doing in Washington, a job, a business trip, a vacation? It is one of only two pictures we have of him - one as a young man and this one when he was 62. The picture is very dark and gloomy-looking and not able to be reproduced effectively. Somehow, he is one of the few figures who stand out. He looks very dignified and has a presence none of the other figures have.

He looks like he has lived a life.

2021 NHS Executive Board

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<u>Trustees: 2019-2021</u>	<u>Trustees: 2020-2022</u>	<u>Trustees: 2021-2023</u>
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Rich-Twinn Octagon House Director	Kate Stapleton Parzych
Knight-Sutton Museum Director	Pat Rodrigues
Collections Manager	Jannette Potera
Research & Design Team	Laurel Jones & Marybeth Whiting
Publicity	Michele Asmus
Website	Michele Asmus/Patty Buckley
Sales	
Century Homes & Landmarks	Pat Rodrigues
Newsletter	Donald Holmes/Julie Brady
Town and Village Historian	Donald Holmes

NHS Website provides information about the society and a gallery of pictures about the Octagon House, Knight-Sutton displays, and Century Homes. Check it out at www.newsteadhistoricalsociety.org



Don't forget that you can donate your refund when you return cans to the Bottle & Can Retrieval Centers at 52 Cedar St. Akron. Just tell them when you drop off your cans.

Thank you!



If you would like to receive notifications and information by e-mail, please email Linda Capan with NHS in the subject line to membership@newsteadhistoricalsociety.org Rest assured - You will *not* receive numerous messages; this is meant to be a convenience for those who would like it.

Newstead Historical Society
 P.O. Box 222
 Akron, New York 14001
 Office Phone: 716-542-7022
 Visit us on the Web:
www.newsteadhistoricalsociety.org

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 6
Akron, NY 14001



The Newstead Historical Society deeply appreciates the support of the County of Erie, the Town of Newstead, our members and the community at large.



