

The Preservationist

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Society Members:

It is hard to believe the year is nearly gone. Each year seems to become busier and busier. The Society never slows down – there is always something to do.

I am very pleased that our monthly program meetings have been well attended this year. There has been a significant growth in attendance. We hope the 2020 year will continue this pattern. The program committee has been working hard to bring quality programming for next year. The program brochure will be tucked into this newsletter so keep it in a handy spot for future reference.

During the past few years much money has been spent to improve/repair the houses. Recently both museums have had furnace work done. I am hopeful that the major work has been accomplished and only minor issues will be needed in the future.

During the Capital Campaign we had an “adopt a window” campaign for the cupola windows. Our eleven donors who adopted a window have been honored with a plaque that will hang in the cupola. It will be hung soon so please view it when you come during the Christmas season.

We have been blessed with our donors, small and large, that sustain our society and museums. MANY thanks for all your contributions.

A new year will bring a few changes to our Executive Board. It is with a heavy heart I say goodbye to Harold Finger, Dottie Routledge and Bea Carey. These board members have been trusted stewards for the society. Their faithfulness to our mission is unsurpassed. They will be greatly missed on the Board. Kudos to these three!

The new slate of officers is printed later in the newsletter. I welcome Marlene Gehl, Dusty Balasko and David Hofmeier to the Board. Thank you for your willingness to continue our mission and serve on the Board.

After hearing about the Grant Pole Club at the Harvest Dinner, I began to wonder about the “AKRON” sign that once hung from the pole. If anyone knows what happened to the sign, please let me know. It may have been destroyed with the demise of the pole on Main Road, but it would be helpful to know exactly what happened.

Best wishes,

Pat Pearce

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

1

KSM

2

OCTAGON HOUSE

3

CENTURY HOMES 4 & 5

MURDER CREEK LEGEND 5 & 6

MEMBERSHIP & MISC. 7

BOARD, TRUSTEES, DIRECTORS

8

The Knight Sutton Museum Exhibit: A Creative Process

By Marybeth Whiting

Many people ask, "How do you choose exhibit topics?" The short answer is that it is a creative process that takes Laurel Jones and I months to research and plan, even though much of it we figure out as we go along. We take to heart and use as a guide the Newstead Historical Society's mission statement, "to ensure a sense of community by preserving and interpreting the town's rich social and cultural history through education and programming."

Over fifteen years ago, we put together a survey for the community as we were planning to open the museum. We wanted to know what people might be interested in learning about and seeing regarding the history of the Village of Akron and Town of Newstead. It was extremely helpful. We received about 90 surveys back, and over the years, we have used many of the ideas that we received in one form or another. Some exhibits have been fun and upbeat while others have had quite a solemn tone, but all have been interesting to research and display.

Through the years, we have worked with organizations like the VFW and the American Legion for the Veteran's exhibit, "Freedom Isn't Free" and the local farming community for the "Farms & Agriculture" exhibit, as well as others. We have coordinated with nearby historical societies, utilized professional help from "real" museums, and even pulled in friends and family when we've needed a hand. And, there have been many hours of research donated from a number of people over the years (thank you all!).

Other societies ask us how we do what we do – we were even asked to demonstrate at an Erie County Federation Annual Meeting. We just about always use the same supply staples: black foam board, artist's glue and tape, parchment paper, patterned and colored papers. We never know specifically how much we will need with any given exhibit but we do our best to conserve and keep costs to a minimum.

Pulling an exhibit together is a fluid process that includes constant brainstorming and loads of research. Sometimes we draw mainly from the artifacts that have been donated to the Newstead Historical Society over the last 60-plus years and other times we ask to borrow items from the public. Laurel and I can honestly say that we never know where an exhibit will take us. We might feel that we have a display completely figured out and then someone drops off an artifact that changes everything we are thinking – and that has actually happened a week or even days prior to an opening date! And there have been times when the research has led us to a completely new perspective and we've needed to completely change the path we were on.

Hopefully, you've taken the opportunity to enjoy and learn from past exhibits. If not, April 2020 is around the corner and we will be taking these next few months to think, plan for and create a new exhibit. We don't as yet have a title for it, but we want to concentrate on the "faces and places" from Akron/Newstead history. I'm have a feeling that it will be a fun exhibit to explore!



News From the Octagon House

by Laurel Jones

Our property is an absolute thick bed of leaves, and as I write this we've already had our first tiny bit of snow in Western New York, albeit practically invisible, so here we go! I love the return of the fall, and even the prospect of winter. And at the Octagon House, things will soon be very busy.

The highlight of the fall has surely been our visit by the Akron Central School 4th graders. It's a fun couple of days while we watch them discover the closet that's a refrigerator, the dumb waiter, and so many other things. They call into the speaking tube to their classmates and sample some 19th century visual entertainment by looking through the stereoscope. Our hope is that they go away with an appreciation for what came before their time. We always ask, "Did you have fun, and did you learn a few things?" And the answer is always a resounding (and loud) "Yes!"



Fourth graders measuring themselves against the growth chart kept by one of the original owners, the Twinn family.

SEASONS GREETINGS!!

The house will be open for self-guided tours three consecutive Sunday afternoons beginning with Thanksgiving weekend, which being so late this year will be December 1st. We have opened on this weekend for several years now to give those with guests who may not be back for Christmas a chance to enjoy the house as their holiday season begins.

For the second year, we'll begin the Candlelight Tour one hour earlier so the doors will open at 5 pm instead of 6 pm. I can't say enough about how magical this evening is. If you haven't come ever, or even in a long time, please do. Every room glows from the warmth of candlelight, Christmas music is in the air and the aroma of gingerbread and hot mulled cider wafts through the house. It's a wonderful evening.

Scheduled Holiday Dates and Times

Sundays for self-guided tours: Dec. 1, 8, 15 from 1 - 3 p.m.

Candlelight Tour: December 1st from 5- 8 p.m.

Remember... To arrange a private tour on another day or at another time for a work group, organization or even for friends and family, please call 741-9633. There are currently some private tours booked for December which I know will be a Christmas highlight for our visitors.



Happy Holidays from all of us at the Octagon House to all of you!

CENTURY HOMES

The Newstead Historical Society recently designated three village homes as Century Homes. The first home is at 4 Pearl St., to be known as the Higgins-Daddario House.

The home's actual age was a puzzle to the society because the house didn't appear on any maps until 1939, although town records list it as being built in 1890. On the 1909 Sanborn map Pearl Street intersects a large baseball field with no houses on either side of it. It looks like the street was planned for development, but nothing had been built yet.

A tour of the home proved that all the features of a pre-1920 house were present. There were gas jets for lighting before electricity was available, stone walls in the basement. The poles in the basement supporting the main floor are trees shaved of their bark and painted and there is a particularly interesting workbench made of a slab of wood from a tree split lengthwise with a vice on it that looks like it is from the 1880's and is original to the house.

The owners of the house, Frank and Amy Daddario have done extensive renovations to the house, including building a garage addition with a large family room above it. (The property originally only had a shed which has been moved to the backyard.) They removed all the old carpeting on the main floor and replaced the floors, removed a partial wall between the dining room and kitchen which opened the floor plan for entertaining.

But without an abstract or maps to prove its age more research was needed. Mr. Daddario started diligently researching census records of prior owners of his home on what the census records referred to as Pearl Place. The history of prior owners include a molder for a cement company, a journalist with Russian ancestry who worked for the Washington Times, an Erie County Highway Superintendent, Dale Perry, grandson of the founder of Perry's Ice Cream, (in fact Pearl Street was Perry Country - the first ice cream the company produced was made in the kitchen at number 1 Pearl St and many family members grew up in various homes on the street). And finally, a sign maker for Erie County was the last tenant before Frank and Amy. When Frank and Amy moved in several of the prior owner's imperfect signs were staked into the ground lining the western border of the property, creating a small fence. Frank also found an interesting bit of trivia in his research. Except for one prior owner, all eight of the previous families that we know of, only had daughters for children.

With a lot of persistence, the puzzle got put together. Definite physical features, town records and census records verify its age. The Historical Society is pleased to award Century House plaque number 110 to 4 Pearl Street which will be called the Higgins-Daddario House.



Century House plaque # 111 was also recently awarded to Richard and Myra Hegmann, owners of the Queen Anne Victorian house on 27 Clinton Street in the village of Akron. The Hegmanns purchased the home in 1976 after, believe it or not, seeing an ad for it in the Pennysaver.

Appearing first on the 1909 map of the village as the home of E.S. Zimmerman, the home features all the hallmarks of a home of its age. It has a wraparound porch, a combination of parquet and original hardwood floors of pine. There is a formal grand staircase with a second-floor landing where you can pause to gaze out an original leaded glass window. A secondary back staircase leads from

the second floor to the kitchen. All 34 windows have their original glass except for one which was part of a 1989 addition and consequently purchased new.

There are two outstanding examples of carpenter's lace (wood cut trim) which grace the entrance between the foyer and the living room and between the living room and the dining room, which Myra and Richard found in the garage and reinstalled.

Built before electric lighting or central heating each room still has the original gas jets for lights and gas outlets for heaters.

The kitchen has many original cabinets and where they had to be replaced, they were created to match the existing cabinets. The pantry doors were reproduced to match the original cabinetry as well.

Built by the Corbett Lumber Company, an Akron company of the time, original boards which were numbered and had the Corbett Lumber Company name on them were found by the owners in the linen room and were preserved.

Down to the hinges on the doors, original doorknobs and bathroom fixtures every detail of this house has been lovingly preserved and maintained. Myra's father was a sculptor, painter and woodworker who taught at the University of Buffalo and his work is displayed throughout the main living areas.

The home was originally the home of Edson S. Zimmerman, who owned it from 1905-1916. Mr. Zimmerman was the owner of Zimmerman's Ice Cream Parlor and later a restaurant called The Model Restaurant at 31 Main Street in Akron. They served Wheat's ice cream in the days before Perry's, and advertised oysters and clams, "fresh daily" in their ads. From 1916-1920 the home was owned by Edward S. Shields and his wife Carrie. Mr. Shields was the Mayor of Akron from 1916-1917. At the time of their ownership it is believed there were formal gardens in the backyard.

The property has a rich local history as well as being a finely crafted and well-maintained property. Therefore, the Newstead Historical Society was pleased to designate this as Century House #111 - which shall be known as the Zimmerman-Hegmann House.



Every home has its own story to tell, as does this house at 156 Main Street, Akron, owned by Ryan and Alissa Lemieux. It seems when they first viewed the home in 2018 with the idea of buying it, they had to use a lot of imagination because the entire first floor was stripped down to the studs. The prior owner had died in January of that year and the home had been vacant during the winter with the utilities and heat turned off. A pipe had burst and flooded the first floor.

Luckily the insurance company stepped in and offered to re-drywall it and repair it to suit their needs. The main floor consists of a living room, dining room, breakfast nook, large kitchen, half bath, and back entrance way/first floor laundry. The upstairs has two bedrooms, two bathrooms, (one off the master bedroom) and a home office. One of the bedrooms is a nursery for their young son.

Still it has many features remaining that verify its 1886 age. It has the original banister, square nails on the 16, (yes, count them) steps leading up to the second floor, a pull-down staircase leading to the attic and a barn/garage with original stone walkway leading to it. The barn/two car garage is original to the house as well, although it too has been renovated. The basement still has intact a workbench that appears to have been built in the 1930's, stone and cement walls and remnants of what seems to be an old cistern. The exterior of the house has scalloped edge siding on the attic level and a second-floor octagon shaped window, seen on other local homes of the same period.

The property the home rests on was part of the 70-acre Townsend farm in the late 1800's. The land was also once owned by Harlow Cummings who was Mayor of Akron from 1872-1874. From 1913 -1970 it was owned by the Harold Borchert family and although they were the longest-term owners of the home, the historical society names Century homes by joining the first owner's name with the last. The first owner of the home was Albert Temple. Therefore, this home will be known as Century Home #112 The Temple-Lemieux home

Although much has been redone, the original floor plan and character of this home remain, and the Historical Society is pleased to make it a part of the Century Home family.

HAUNTED CORNERS: THE MANY LEGENDS OF MURDER CREEK

CONTINUED.....

by Mark Saglian

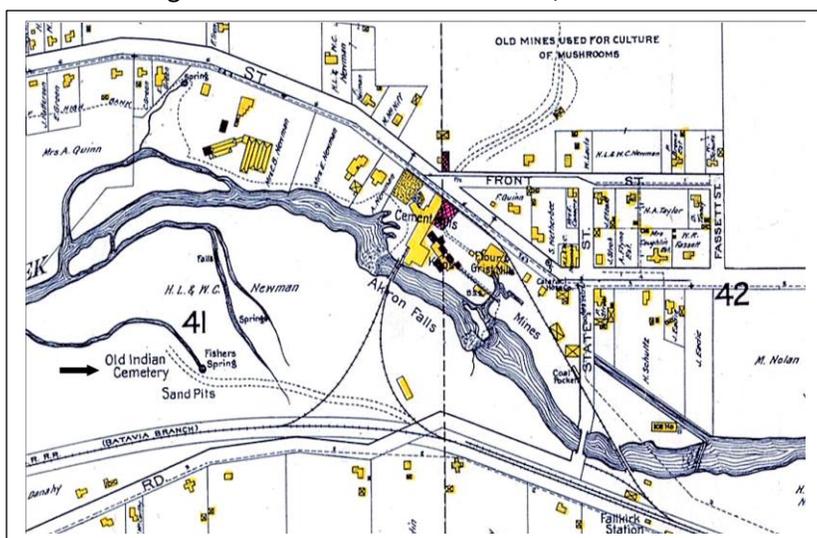
There is a story that has been told in Akron for generations that purports to answer the question: How did Murder Creek get its name? The so-called "Legend of Murder Creek" story seems to have first made its appearance in 1947 in a pamphlet created by the Erie County Parks Department to help promote the new Park at Akron Falls. The tragic tale of "Wild Rose" or Ah-Weh-Hah as she was known in the Seneca language, has appeared and re-appeared in print for over seventy-years. It has even been taught in our elementary school as part of the local history curriculum. But DOES the "Legend" story answer the question? IS the "Legend of Murder Creek" history?

The "Legend of Murder Creek" is a crime story and a love story. It has all the elements of a great 'Shakespearean tragedy'. But WHERE did the story come from and, is it true? And if it IS true, does it explain the naming of Murder Creek?

The Senecas called the sulphur spring crossing 'De-On-Go-Te Ga-hun-dah' or 'The Hearing Place'. The name, or so the story goes, was a reference to the fact that a person standing at the crossing (located below the Mechanic Street Bridge) could hear the waterfall a mile or so away. "The Legend of Murder Creek" story is a crime story and the story goes like this: A young Indian woman named 'Wild Rose' is living at a village near Spirit Lake (where Indian Falls is located today). A White pioneer named 'Sanders' has become obsessed with her and will not let her alone. Rose's father, an old chief named 'Great Fire', knows that he needs to protect his daughter and decides to move her away from Spirit Lake. As they are traveling west along the Seneca Trail, they are surprised by Sanders at the Sulphur Spring Crossing. Sanders convinces them that he means them no harm and asks if he can travel with them as he is on his way to the village of Buffalo. 'Great Fire' reluctantly agrees and the three stop to camp for the night at a crossroads in the Seneca Trail. The men build a campfire as Rose notices a flickering light in the valley below. Suddenly, Rose hears a thud and she turns to see Sanders standing over her fallen father, a club in his hand. Rose screams in terror and flees down the embankment and toward the flickering light she'd noticed below. The light is coming from the cabin of a Dutch settler named John Dolph and his wife Sarah. The pioneer couple bravely hides Rose from her father's killer and after he has gone, John Dolph calls on another nearby settler named Peter VanDeventer. The two men find the body of 'Great Fire' atop the Ledge where he fell and hastily bury him. The next day, Rose's fiancé, Gray Wolf rushes to Rose's side. Sanders confronts the couple as they chant prayers at her father's grave, and Sanders and Gray Wolf fight ferociously. Rose passes out and when she comes to, she finds that both Sanders and her beloved Gray Wolf are dead. John Dolph buries Sanders and Gray Wolf near the spot, just as he had Great Fire. The Dolphs take Rose in to protect her and one day, when Rose goes missing, John Dolph finds her body outstretched across the grave of Gray Wolf – the story states that she had 'died of a broken heart'. The "Legend of Murder Creek" says that from that day to this, the voices of the lovers can be heard in the place atop the Ledge where they died.

Researching Akron history, as has already been stated, can be unnerving. In 1922, a team of men working in the region of what would later become Akron Falls Park made a grisly find: Human remains. Workers constructing the 'state road' uncovered several skeletons, buried but two feet below the ground. Were these the graves near the Creek the victims of the "Legend of Murder Creek" tragedy? In 1924, the Buffalo Commercial published an article written by the Director of Buffalo's Natural History Museum. The Director, who had been called in to study the remains, uncovered a vast, Native American cemetery beside Fisher's Spring (the spot where the first skeletons had been unearthed). The Director hailed the find as one of his 'greatest discoveries', despite the fact residents of Akron had known of its existence for generations. A 1909 Map taken from the Erie County Atlas reveals the existence of the old Indian cemetery on the hilltop just to the west of 'Fisher's Spring'. Today's residents know the spot by another name: The Akron Falls Park 'Rock Garden'.

The Senecas saw the region near the Falls as sacred: For centuries they laid their forebears to rest near the spot that would later become Akron Falls Park. It was a place where they spoke to the spirits of their ancestors and, where they listened. For generations of Native Americans, it was 'De-On-Go-Te Ga-hun-dah', the 'hearing place'. While all the leads



in what has become Akron's greatest mystery are intriguing, none of them definitively answered the question: How did Murder Creek get its name? The trail appeared to have grown cold.

Then one day, a break in the case came. On an early spring visit to Ledge Lawn Cemetery, on Main Road near the corner of Havens, two headstones whispered in the mist. There in one of Newstead's oldest cemeteries, stood the headstones of two early settlers. The stones mark the graves of John and Sarah Dolph.

COMING NEXT..... THE CONCLUSION OF THE HAUNTED CORNERS: THE MANY LEGENDS OF MURDER CREEK...



Membership Report

By: Carole Borchert

AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2019

WELCOME to the following new **ANNUAL** member:
Renny Staples

WELCOME to a transfer from **Annual** to **LIFE** Member:
Dale L. Borchert
Darlene R. Borchert

MEMORIAL DONATIONS was given for Bob Anderson and Bernie Thoma from Laurel Jones.

DONATION from John and Janis Lauridisen

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL ENVELOPES AND ANNUAL LETTER WERE MAILED NOVEMBER 1, 2019 FOR THE YEAR 2020.

Membership year runs from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Memorials or Donations to the Society can be made by using the same envelope.

LEGACY GIFT

Keep in mind your Will can be a way to continue to support the mission of the NHS. Consult your attorney for assistance in achieving a long-lasting gift.

KUDOS TO THE LIONS

The Executive Board extends a huge thank you to the Akron Lions Club. A portion of the proceeds from their Steak Roast will be given to the Society. The dinner was delicious, and your donation greatly appreciated.

Support the NHS by recycling your bottles and cans at

Deposit Depot

52 Cedar St.

Make sure to tell them that they are for the benefit of the NHS



BY-LAWS

Recently revisions have been made to the NHS By-laws and were presented at the Harvest Dinner. The revisions will be voted on at the November program meeting. Changes were needed to follow the New York State Not for Profit Laws. We have added Whistleblower, Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest Policies and created a Policies and Procedures Handbook. There are a few other changes. Anyone interested in viewing the by-laws should contact a Board member.

SLATE OF OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES FOR 2020

President
Vice President
Treasurer
Recording Secretary
Membership Secretary

Patricia Pearce
Adam Burg
Annette Komroy
Kimberley Burg
Linda Capan

Trustees: 2018-2020

John Jendrowski
Carole Borchert
Dusty Blasko

Trustees: 2019-2021

Pat Rodrigues
Janette Potera
David Hofmeier

Trustees 2020-2022

David Wakeman
Mary Sellers Hanley
Marlene Gehl

2019 NHS Executive Board

President	Patricia Pearce 542-4191
Vice President	Harold Finger 542-4835
Treasurer	Annette Komroy 542-4714
Recording Secretary	Kimberly Burg 907-2720
Membership Secretary	Carole Borchert 542-2296

Trustees

<u>Trustees 2017-2019</u>	<u>Trustees: 2018-2020</u>	<u>Trustees: 2019-2021</u>
David Wakeman	John Jendrowski	Dottie Routledge
Mary Sellers Hanley	Linda Capan	Pat Rodrigues
Bea Carey	Adam Burg	Jannette Potera

Directors and Committees

Rich-Twinn Octagon House Director	Laurel Jones
Knight-Sutton Museum Director	Marybeth Whiting
Publicity	Michele Asmus
Website	Colleen Salmon
Sales	
Century Homes & Landmarks	Pat Rodrigues
Newsletter	Julie Brady
Town and Village Historian	Donald Holmes

**E - MAIL
NOTIFICATION
AVAILABLE**



If you would like to receive notifications and information by e-mail, please send a note to Carole Borchert with NHS in the subject line to caroleborchert@gmail.com. Rest assured - You will *not* receive numerous messages; this is meant to be a convenience for those who would like it.

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

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE SOCIETY!

Newstead Historical Society
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 Visit us on the Web:
www.newsteadhistoricalsociety.org

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



