

Ticonderoga Historical Society
President's Annual Report
9 June 2023

As we complete this fiscal year, we can report that finally the residual effects of the COVID pandemic on the Society's program, events and Hancock House operation have been pushed into the past. During its multi-year run it affected our staff and trustees and their families and created administrative challenges.

Onto happier things. Our 125th Anniversary. In the fall of 1897, a group of regional citizens were disturbed about the situation of the ruins and grounds around the old fort. The surge of tourist visiting, removal of historical artifacts for souvenirs along with the pillage of the fort's building material for non-historical purposes generated great interest in the need to preserve this historical place – a major national treasure needed to be preserved. The Society was organized to bring this situation to wider national attention. During the next decade their focus was changed primarily by the major 1909 300th Anniversary of the Champlain Celebration. At that time the Society was chartered by the New York State Regents with the purpose of safeguarding and interpreting the Adirondacks and Lakes Champlain and George region's rich history.

To honor this milestone, we chose August to have a grand fete on the lawn. Staff, trustees, and families created a treasure trove of tasty delights presented in a most pleasing visual array of colors and designs. The dessert was fruit cupcakes sculptured in unique spirals with fresh berries throughout. A special Anniversary toast was enjoyed by all. I gave the featured presentation of a selection of old Ticonderoga photographs, many never shown before. We are very thankful to both the Town of Ticonderoga Town Board, the Essex County Board of Supervisors as well as the State of New York for their Resolutions on the recognition of our first 125 years.

Our Director scheduled a diverse subject Anniversary program: "Black Baseball in the North Country," "The Last Days of John Brown," "Reggie Harris in Concert," the Vermont traveling teen theatre presentation of The "Music Man," "Mapping the Adirondacks," "The Traitor Who Saved Ticonderoga," "Painting the Forever Wild - Landscaping Painters of the Adirondacks," "Songs to Keep: the Legacy of Marjorie Lansing Porter," "Haunted Hancock," "David Rocco: Dixie Kiefer and the USS Ticonderoga," and to close out the program season the ever popular "Festival of Trees."

During the year the Society, with the approval of the managers of the Fenimore Art Museum, engaged the services of the Albany architectural firm of John G. Waite Associates to inspect and report on Hancock House's condition and needs. This report has taken several months; however, it has been completed at the most opportune time. Recently, the Town of Ticonderoga has been awarded a ten-million-dollar Downtown Revitalization Improvement (DRI) grant, of which the Society had submitted two applications, one of which was for financial assistance for the rehabilitation of the Hancock House. This Waite Report will be most valuable in developing our Hancock House grant request as well as in the future as we search for additional funds to complete the current rehabilitation needs of the building and possible future expansions. We recognize these types of grants are rather lengthy projects, we are hopeful that significant progress may be completed by the Hancock House's 100th Anniversary in 1926.

Unfortunately, I cannot provide any new news on the Society's purchase of the several parcels under contract with Moses Ludington Hospital/University of Vermont. The latter is actively engaged in the process of dissolving the old Moses Ludington Hospital, of which these properties are part, but the paperwork is still under review at two federal departments. It is our understanding that once they are completed, there should be no further major obstacles and finalizing their endeavor will advance more quickly.

When this investment is completed, the Society will have met two of the original purposes of both 1897 and 1909 charters. After 125 years it was this board that was pro-active in fulfilling two of the objectives from those charters: first to **preserve** lands that have French and Indian War significance and those that encompasses military transits used during the American Revolution, and secondly – a **scientific** opportunity to protect and study lands that are important to help protect and provide access to an expansive riparian area surround the confluences of primary and secondary tributaries of Lake Champlain.

With all these activities being undertaken it has also necessitated the review and updating, and in some cases preparing new ones, of our policy and procedures and governance documentation and changes to our accounting system. To mention a few: By-Laws, Investment, Sexual Harassment, Chart of Accounts, and organizational name change. I am so thankful and here recognize the members of the Executive and Investment Committees: Virginia LaPointe, Linda Bhatia, Susan Hayes and David Hayes for their many hours needed to research and prepare those documents.

During the year we have made investments in new computers for accounting - including an upgrading of its operating system - and the library, leased a new printer, purchased a larger "smart" TV for the Meeting Room, and installed new security lights at the back of the Hancock House and around the carriage shed. We have purchased some new display/exhibit items and archival materials for our collections. This year we also spent many hours cleaning and waxing all the floors and stairs, except for the third floor. As these floors have been treaded upon for nearly one hundred years, they needed protection. Runway floor mats have been purchased to help protect them.

In board development we are very happy to introduce Karlene Gonyeau, a recently retired educator, to our family of trustees. She has many interests and associations in the region, especially with the younger demographics.

This has been a very active year and it has taken many hands to accomplish what we have done - my very special thanks to all of you – staff, volunteers and my fellow board members for your generous and thoughtful assistance.

William G. Dolback, President