



**Town of Ontario  
Historical & Landmark  
Preservation Society  
NEWSLETTER**

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[www.heritagesquaremuseum.org](http://www.heritagesquaremuseum.org)

April 2025

Volume 1



*Many small-town everyday people* in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries did not trust banks. Stories of bank robberies and failed or corrupt banks forced many of these early folks to find other ways to safeguard their small savings. Many an early farm wife hid her egg money in a jar on the pantry shelf. There are tales of farmers and merchants hiding their money under their mattress or in a box buried in the yard.

The following story is told to visitors to the Ruffell Log Cabin located at Heritage Square Museum on Ontario Center Road in Ontario. "An 1894 newspaper article printed in the *Williamson Sentinel* told the story of how 'old Jimmie Ruffell on his death bed pointed toward the clock and struggled to tell his family something.' He died before he could deliver his message. Years later when the Ruffell grandchildren were playing 'hide the marbles,' they found \$200 in gold and \$133 in silver stuffed in the logs behind the spot where the clock had been."

According to an article written by Johnson S. Albright for *The History of the Town of Ontario 1807 – 1957* edited by Augusta Trimble, the first bank in town was the State Bank of Ontario which was built by the old Young, Beach and Maher Lumber Company in 1913. The original certificate of incorporation was signed by David T. Craven, Charles A. Harris, Helena A. Grandin, Walter J. Mephram, William A. Tummonds, John Keymel, Glen C. Cone, Charles R. Pratt, Johnson S. Albright, Jonathan S. Pratt, Isaac Porrey, Arthur S. Pratt, Frank J. Pratt, Henry E. VanDerVeer, Martin F. Maher, James Colwell and Charles C. Young. Those of you familiar with the history of the Town of Ontario will recognize the names of many of Ontario's prominent citizens of that era.

The bank's total capital funds at incorporation were \$33,000.00. The bank opened for business in February of 1914 and received deposits of about \$24,000.00.

Cynthia Howk of the Landmark Society of Western New York spoke about the architecture of Ontario in a program for the Ontario Historical and Landmark Preservation Society in 2002. Speaking about the architecture of the bank building, she stated that during that period of history "banks were highly suspect. Therefore, they were designed to appear as a temple of commerce – very strong and safe." Town's people needed to feel that their money was safe. A bank was usually the most imposing building in town – built to look like a fortress.

The original bank building consisted of tellers cages on the first floor. The ceiling was open to the second floor where the offices were located. The bank officers could look down to the floor below to observe the activity. The president of the bank even kept a gun in his upstairs office in case of the threat of a robbery.

In his article about "Growing Up In Ontario in the 1940's and 50's" written for *Ontario's History 1807 – 1993* edited by Virginia Scully Hill, Bob Biviano remembers the Bank: "Across the street was a very important institution, the State Bank of Ontario, the financial district of town. It was overseen by Ray Peer, and the day-to-day activities were in the capable hands of such people as Fred Perrin, Howard Bassage, Mabel Brandt and, of course, Mary Conway – the lady with the beautiful hats. The façade of the bank was impressive with its high, arched, center windows and entrance. The brick front was covered with ivy giving a green contrast to the orange brick in spring and summer. Starting at about three feet off the pavement, there were horizontal rows of brick indented about three inches. These indented rows continued up the building to the large overhang that wrapped around the roof edge. On "slow" evenings some of us townies would use these narrow ledges as toe holds and scale the bank as if it were some dangerous precipice overlooking a bottomless gorge. It was a measure of one's courage to count the levels he could rise to without chickening out or sliding down using some contrived injury or cramp as an excuse."

Carol Slocum Boughton worked at the State Bank of Ontario from 1963 until it was taken over by Manufacturer's Hanover in 1974. She remembers the bank being opened Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. On Friday, it also reopened from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. "Friday nights were very busy. There were usually five or six tellers. People sometimes smelled of fish fry or aftershave because they usually had cleaned up and gone out to dinner before coming into town."

During the 1960s Carol remembers that everything was done manually. “Every check that came in was manually checked for signature and endorsement. They were also checked to make sure that the amount written numerically was the same amount as written out on the check. They also were checked for stale dates. They were then sorted alphabetically and posted. The checks were then filed in a drawer until it was time to make out the statements. Occasionally an error was made and a check ended up in the file of another person – usually a relative. At statement time, the checks were brought out and the statements were manually made up.”

Banking was very personal at that time. Customers even received a phone call if it appeared that their account would be overdrawn if a check was cashed. “We gave them an opportunity to come down to make a deposit to cover it.” Loans were sometimes begun with a handshake and the paperwork done later.

Carol also mentioned that it was a matter of great pride that the State Bank of Ontario never closed during the Depression years.

In 1973, the State Bank of Ontario became affiliated with Manufacturer’s Hanover Corporation and according to an article in the *Wayne County Mail* on September 14<sup>th</sup>, “changes its name . . . to Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company/Genesee /Region. . . The banking facility in Ontario will, of course, remain open and in full operation. Only the name will change.”

Over the years, the bank’s name has changed several times -- Chemical Bank; Fleet and finally Bank of America. In 2012, the Bank of America branch in Ontario closed its doors, and the building was eventually sold.

Banking for the average small town resident has also changed over the years. No longer does one need to rush to the bank on his or her lunch hour and wait in a long line at the teller’s window. Credit cards, checks, drive-thru windows, ATM machines, 24-hour telephone and on-line banking and federally insured accounts have drastically changed the way banks do business today. No longer do we feel the need to bury our savings in the backyard – or in the wall behind the clock!

## **2025 Membership Renewal and Volunteer Sign-Up**

**Another year has sped by and it’s now time to renew your membership in the Historical Society!**

Membership letters will be arriving in the mail around April 1<sup>st</sup>. Please return your membership form and payment promptly so that a costly second mailing will not be necessary. \*The following are the new membership rates: Youth \$15; Senior Citizen \$20; Senior Couple \$30; Individual \$25; Family \$40; Patron \$100; Business \$125.

## **Volunteer Sign-up Day**

**When:** April 26<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm  
**Where:** The Brick Church music room  
**Who:** Anyone wishing to volunteer for the following events ...

- Barn Sale
- School Tours
- Summer Kids Programs
- Weekend Guides
- Gift Shop
- Special Events

## **Heritage Square Barn Sale**

May 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> from 9 – 7  
Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> from 9 – 12  
\$5 bag sale or 50% off (bring your own Wegmans/Tops bag)

You never know what you will find: antiques, collectables, household items, tools, furniture, jewelry, dishes, toys, ornaments, books, games, puzzles. This is a great way for young people just starting out to furnish their apartments/homes. We are always surprised!

### **Donations may be made:**

Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> from 9 – 12,  
Thursday, April 24 & May 1 from 4 – 7  
(no clothing or electronics)

**This year we have a special donation from the Denisons's.**

**A Beautiful 9 Piece Dining Room Set!**

**\$500/best offer**

**Expandable table, 6 chairs, buffet and high boy**

**Call Rich Denison at 315-524-3726 after 4/9 to make an offer.**

**(See photo next page)**



**All proceeds go to Heritage Square Museum  
Make an offer!**

### **Barn Sale Help Wanted! For both set-up and sale days**

We do need help to make our Barn Sale a success. This is **one of our major fund raisers** for Heritage Square. Jean Johnson will be calling for your help for the days of the sale but there is a great deal of work to be done setting up and taking down. Remember: If you help on the Barn Sale you may come to the early sale on Wednesday, 5/7 from 4 - 6

Call Joyce Lyke (585-738-9476) to offer your time. The following are the days/times that we need help with organizing, tagging, etc. Some slots also include public drop-off times.

Monday, 4/14, 8 – 12  
Tuesday, 4/15, 8 – 12  
Saturday, 4/19, 9 – 1 Drop off

Monday, 4/21, 8 – 12  
Thursday, 4/24, 4 – 7 Drop off  
Friday, 4/25, 8 – 12  
Saturday, 4/26, 9 – 1 Drop off

Monday, 4/28, 8 – 12  
Thursday, 5/1, 4 – 7 Drop off  
Friday, 5/2, 8 – 12  
Monday, 5/5, 8 – 12

**By Popular Demand, another Barn Quilt Class!!**

**September 20, from 9 – 5**

**Everything will be provided! - \$105**

**Leave with a sign ready to be hung!**

**We can only accommodate 20 participants. So, sign up early! Call Joyce Lyke, 585-738-9476 for further information.**



Sunflower



Tulip



Cardinals



Lilies



Starburst



Hummingbird



Patriotic



Garden Walk



Two-Tone Carpenter Star

## School Tours

Our schedule is set for the spring.

Sign-up for docents is Saturday, April 26 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the North Ontario Methodist church (Brick Church) music room. **Bring your calendars!**

May 20 – Gananda – 4<sup>th</sup> grade

May 22 and 23 – Plank South – 4<sup>th</sup> grade

May 28 and 29 – Wayne – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

May 30 – Sodus – 5<sup>th</sup> grade

June 6 – Marion- 4<sup>th</sup> grade and Rochester Christian – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Tours begin around 9:30 with the arrival of the students, teachers and chaperones.

Students line up in front of the barn in ten groups. Each group follows a docent to their first building:

**Group 1** goes to the Barn, **Group 2** goes to the Carpentry Shop, and so on.

After 10 to twelve minutes of instruction on the building's history and purpose (information sheet provided) the school bell rings and the students progress in an orderly way to the next building.

A map is provided to direct the group. **The docent stays with his/her building.** After the students have toured all the buildings, they return to the barn to board the buses or to enjoy a bag lunch in the pavilion. The docents may visit with the students and chaperones or go directly home. The total time required for docents is two hours. Period dress is encouraged but not required.

Volunteer for one tour or several, and enjoy a fun morning at Heritage Square. Can't make the sign-up? Call Ann Welker at 315-524-9330.

## Stepping Back in Time at Heritage Square – Part 2

A free educational program for children ages 6 – 10 focusing on daily life during the 1860's. Each session will include an interactive glimpse into history, a craft activity, and an opportunity to play games of the period.

**Thursday, June 26 – 10:00 – 11:30 AM – Children's Activities in the 1860's**

**Thursday, July 24 – 10:00 – 11:30 AM – Apples, Apples, Apples**

**Thursday, August 28 – 10:00 – 11:30 AM – Music in the 1860's**

## In Passing

We would like to offer our condolences to the following members:

Jean Davis on the passing of her sister-in-law and brother-in-law,  
Joyce Smith on November 15, 2024 and Donald Smith on November 30, 2024  
Sue Yantch on the passing of her mother, Janet Yantch, on March 16, 2025  
Bill Bridson on the passing of his wife Marge Bridson

# Heritage Square Highlights: Preserving Ontario's Past, Together

Dear Ontario Members,

As we look back on a successful year at the Town of Ontario Heritage Square Historical Society and Museum, we want to share some exciting highlights from our programs and initiatives. Thanks to your ongoing support, we continue to preserve and share Ontario's unique history in ways that educate, inspire, and strengthen our community.

Over the past year, the Society has organized impactful programs and events that directly benefited our community. Here are some key achievements and statistics highlighting our work:

**Youth Education Programs:** We welcomed over 500 students from the Ontario school district and neighboring areas on field trips to Heritage Square. These educational tours included interactive activities, where students engaged with 19th-century farming tools, historic artifacts, and learned about local industrial milestones. Feedback from teachers shows that 95% of them rated the program as "highly effective" for enriching students' understanding of local history. We held summer sessions for kids 5-10: "Stepping Back in Time" that included games, crafts and discussions. This program will be repeated this year.

**Community Heritage Square Events -- Workshops, Lectures, and Cultural Programs:** Our events drew more than 1,200 attendees in 2024 alone—a 20% increase from last year. These events offered live historical reenactments, blacksmithing demonstrations, Fall Festival, Ice Cream Socials, Apple Dry House demonstrations, and more. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with attendees indicating they would return for future events. Most participants expressed a greater sense of local pride and historical awareness after attending.

**Historic Preservation and Restoration:** In the past year, we completed the restoration of several buildings and chinking the 1820s Log House on our museum grounds, funded by community donations and small grants. This work preserves key historical structures that are among the few remaining of their kind in Ontario, allowing them to be safely accessible for generations to come. However, due to the many structures on the grounds and their historic nature, maintenance is costly and requires constant attention. Any additional support to offset these costs would be invaluable, helping us protect these historical treasures. We currently maintain a collection of over 5,000 artifacts and documents, catalogued meticulously by volunteers, which has doubled in size in the past five years due to ongoing preservation initiatives.

**Volunteer Involvement:** This year we had more than 100 volunteers who contributed 2,000 hours to our work. We are fortunate to have such a passionate and dedicated team supporting Heritage Square. Our volunteers make every event possible and keep our museum running smoothly. Please volunteer for the events this year. It's guaranteed you will have a enjoyable time.

**2025 Scheduled Events and Programs:** Our commitment to inspire and educate our community includes some new programs this next year, such as talks on the Erie Canal, Unique Cobblestones discussion, barn square painting, Celebrate Our Independence Festival in July, Fall Leaves bus trip in October, Getting to Know the Alpacas Day with processing, felting, etc., and a family camp out adventure.

**Looking Ahead:** Thanks to our members, Heritage Square is more vibrant than ever. We're reaching more people, making history come alive, and preserving Ontario's story for generations to come. Thans you for being a part of this journey with us. With your help. We'll continue to preserve Ontario's legacy, share its stories, and strengthen our community ties. Here's to more wonderful events and shared memories in the coming year!

Warm regards,  
Frank Robusto  
President

Heritage Square Museum and  
The Town of Ontario Historical and Landmark Preservation Society

Board of Directors  
2024-2025

President	Frank Robusto	585-721-0833
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Trustee	Jan Kunzer	315-524-2274
Trustee	Phil McTigue	585-703-0441
Trustee	Barbara Sanger	585-354-8682
Non-Voting Member	Liz Albright	315-524-8671
Ontario Town Historian		
Past President	Joyce Lyke	585-738-9476

## Business Member

<p>Bay-to-Bay Realtor 1915 Lake Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 585-281-8076</p> <p>Best Construction of Wayne County P.O. Box 39 Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-2456</p> <p>Concord Insurance Agency 6270 Dean Parkway Ontario, NY 14519 585-265-6060</p> <p>Cornerstone Realty Associates 6186 Willow Dr. Williamson, NY 14589 585-370-1725</p> <p>Crown Electric Supply Co. 75 Route 104 Union Hill, NY 14563 585-265-2480</p> <p>Dennis Dey Plumbing &amp; Heating 197 Haley Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 585-729-4067</p> <p>Don &amp; Jon Lawn &amp; Tree Services LLC P. O. Box 5 Ontario, NY 14519 585-737-9891 Empire Wrecking Co., Inc. 6372 Knickerbocker Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-4099</p> <p>Gilson &amp; Tobin, DDS 6200 Slocum Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-7433</p> <p>Joe's Meat Market 6845 N. Slocum Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-8252</p> <p>Konstantinou's Liquor LLC 2024 NYS Route 104 Ontario, NY 14519 585-509-3829</p>	<p>Konstantinou Restaurant &amp; Brick Oven Sports Bar 2030 NYS Route 104 Ontario, NY 14519 585-509-3829</p> <p>Lakeside Restaurant 6270 Lakeside Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 585-507-1484</p> <p>Richard A. Leszyk, Attorney 322 Ridge Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 585-748-7416</p> <p>Lyons National Bank 6280 Furnace Rd., #200 Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-9661</p> <p>McDonald's of Ontario 1204 NYS Route 104 Ontario, NY 14519 315-573-2877</p> <p>Murphy Funeral &amp; Cremation Chapels 1961 Ridge Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-4621</p> <p>Ontario Family Dentistry, PC 6277 Furnace Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-4135</p> <p>Pardi Design 1128 Hillsboro Cove Circle Webster, NY 14580 585-451-2000</p> <p>Phil's Automotive of Route 104, Inc. 1364 NYS Route 104 Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-8129</p> <p>Save A Lot Ontario 1250 NYS Route 104 Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-3810</p> <p>Steve's Custom Canvas 2999 Lake Rd. Williamson, NY 14589 585-265-1170</p>	<p>The Town of Ontario 1850 Ridge Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-7105</p> <p>Weller Group LLC 6206 Slocum Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-8000</p> <p>Wilbert's Lakeside, LLC 6333 Lakeside Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 315-524-8800</p> <p>Wolfe Tire 175 County Line Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 585-265-0851</p> <p>Furnaceville Mini Storage LLC 6405 Furnace Rd. Ontario, NY 14519 585-690-1521</p>
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Town of Ontario Historical & Landmark Preservation Society  
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costs nearly \$2.