

2012 Annual Report - Records, Archives and Information Management Services (RAIMS)

The year 2012 saw one major change in personnel with the retirement of RMO Hans Finke in July. During his twenty plus years of dedicated service Dr. Finke has made Ontario County's Record and Archives Center a model organization in New York State. He has also answered and reviewed hundreds of Freedom of Information requests; assisted many researchers in retrieving historical information and captured one million dollars in grant money. We will all miss his quiet determination, quick wit and sense of fairness.

Rosemary Switzer was appointed the new RMO in his place in August and after a three month vacancy period; Brooke Morse was hired as Assistant RMO in late November.

The Microfilm Section, consisting of Kris Martin, Robin Cuppernell and Debbie Sawin, imaged and microfilmed 1,376,200 documents. Without this compression of records, the Records and Archives Center would have added an additional 500 cubic feet to storage; all of it for permanent retention. Compression of permanent records is absolutely essential in order to retain sufficient storage space for the future needs of the County.

One of the microfilers is still working on a backlog of nineteenth century records. This is a preservation task to prevent the use of fragile paper records by researchers.

The preservation of historical records is of major importance at the Department of RAIMS. Ontario County, which was the parent county of all other counties in Western New York, has records going back to its founding in 1789. In order to prevent damage to this valuable research resource, RAIMS microfilms and digitizes these records. The microfilers have also completed some special projects for the County including: creation of cd's of the Highway Department's Town Dedications books and scans and highway map digitization; Human Resource project which involved box prep, scanning and creating cd's.

During 2012, the Department of RAIMS received 945 cubic feet of records from the various departments and was able to destroy 665 cubic feet. This means that the Records and Archives Center received 280 cubic feet more than could be destroyed. The staff had to retrieve 2398 files and send them back to the departments. Of course, all of them were eventually returned to storage. In addition, 724 files needed to be interfiled in existing storage boxes. Donna McCormick was responsible for most of this work.

The Records and Archives Center housed a total of 15,808 cubic feet of records in 2012. It is obvious that the compression of records is absolutely essential to avoid filling the Center with paper. We will never avoid having paper, but we must find every possible means to keep that to an absolute minimum

In October, RAIMS celebrated Archives Month by displaying historical exhibits using our resources; offered tours of RAIMS in order for county staff to learn where we keep their

records and how we keep them safe; hosted a brown bag lunch with guest speaker Babette Huber, town historian of Victor, to talk about Victor's Bicentennial celebration and how it relates to Ontario County.

We sponsored several workshops to improve the skills of records managers from western New York and invited all county staff member to attend. To continue with our public service, we answered 109 email reference questions and 95 telephone inquiries. We also served 245 in house researchers.

In late December we received word from the State Archives that our LGRMIF grant was approved for \$38,300. This will allow us to complete the final phase of digitization of our Surrogate Courts Records and scan the County Clerk's mortgage books, 1978-1999. This project will become the priority the first half of 2013 because it is required to be completed by June 2013.

One additional time consuming task is FOIL. It does not only occupy the Records Access Officer 55% of the time, but has become a significant burden to the County Attorney's Office, particularly Kris Thorsness, the DA Michael Tantillo and the Sheriff's records center, especially Colleen Rice. My thanks go out to all of you.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the RAIMS staff for all their work and the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator and staff for their support of the Department of RAIMS. I hope to continue the diligent work of Dr. Hans Finke in order to maintain this department as a great example of a records management system.

THE STAFF:

Rosemary Switzer, Records Management Officer and Records Access (FOIL) Officer

Dr. Preston Pierce, County Historian (PT)

Brooke Morse, Assistant Records Management Officer

Donna McCormick, Retrieval Clerk

Robin Cuppernell, Microfilmer

Kristine Martin, Microfilmer

Debbie Sawin, Microfilmer

Elizabeth Alcivar, Clerk (PT)

County Historian: 2012

RESEARCH, WRITING, PUBLICATION:

Historian works closely with the county historical and genealogical societies to update information files on known county burial places concentrating on those known to be abandoned or at risk. He updates the historical marker survey and the National Register of Historic Sites list for the county and provides in-put to proposals for additions. The Historian works with the DAR and SAR in an on-going project to edit and document the burial sites of Revolutionary Patriots. Periodic books and essays are written for the media and for publication by the Ontario County Historical Society. Mounted displays are created for a wide variety of topics of public interest and placed in public places for short periods.

By law, the Historian is responsible for public education. He continues to produce new slide programs on regional history for use with civic groups and schools. In addition, older programs are revised. Emphasis for the next several years will be on the Civil War and the War of 1812 since they are both the subject of national anniversaries.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

The Historian assists other levels of government, and other county offices. He advises municipal historians and assists their research when asked. He meets with them periodically as a group. One county-wide meeting with the local historians is held each year.

The Historian works closely with RAIMS on all projects and is co-located there. The Historian also completes all required "Whistle blowing and Compliance Training" as well as periodically driver training. As a trained archivist, he also works with the State Archives on projects and training.

The County Historian is a co-sponsor and regional judge at the annual school-based National History Day competition in the Finger Lakes Region. In addition, the Historian works with the American Legion to carry out the annual Trail of Remembrance essay competition and Armed Forces Day observance in Canandaigua.

The Historian continues to work closely with a variety of heritage groups including the DAR and SAR to promote the study of history and assist their research.

By law, the Historian plays an advocacy role for historic preservation. In that capacity he advises on all National Register and similar activities through the county. He is often asked to sign off on legal actions that require environmental quality reviews. He assists with National Register applications when asked.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES:

The County Historian researched the text and assisted in providing the images found on the historical markers that are displayed on the path walk throughout the County campus.

The Historian's office provides on-call research and advice to a variety of people. Many of them simply call the Historian at RAIMS. The State Education Department directs that local government historians should not engage in genealogical research unless it enhances the study of local history by the community at large. Appropriate referrals to the Assistant Records Manager at RAIMS (tasked with fee-based research), or local societies, are made.

Escorted tours are prepared and carried out for the Ontario County Historical Society, the Office of Court Administration (Court House), the Honeoye French Club, and other groups. Special tour booklets have been prepared for several tours.

2012 was the bicentennial of the Town of Victor. The County Historian researched and produced the first full study of the life and accomplishments of Claudius Victor Boughton, for whom the town is named. He also produced a short article on the local coal business for Ontario Pathways's newsletter; and a booklet outlining the historic accomplishments of the Canandaigua Rotary Club.

The County Historian also conducted the research and completed the application procedures for the nomination of the Cheshire Meeting Hall to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Historian also began production of a major program on the history of the Village of Canandaigua to be shown as part of the City's Centennial celebration in April 2013.

By law, the Historian engages in tourism promotion and the conduct of community celebrations. He is a frequent speaker, organizer, or provider of historical reference material.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES:

The Historian is a frequent speaker/presenter of historical programs for many churches, senior citizen, and community groups throughout the year. Over the last few years, nearly two dozen programs were carried out each year. In 2012, the Historian provided programs, or was a featured speaker at the following organizations:

Canandaigua Congregational Church (2 programs; 6 historical posters)
Sonnenberg Gardens (2 times historical drama participant)
Cheshire Community Action Team
Finger Lakes Community College (2)
Ontario County Historical Society (5 programs; 2 times historical reenactment participant)
Genesee Valley Antique Car Society
Crosswinds Church, Canandaigua
Ontario County Genealogical Society
Canandaigua American Legion Post 256 (2)
Canandaigua Rotary Club

Phelps Historical Society
Ontario County and the Bar Association (Statue of Justice rededication)
Daughters of the American Revolution

Special Recognition

Dr. Preston Pierce received the prestigious National DAR Medal of Honor on Sunday April 15, 2012. The recipient of this award must be a native born American who has shown extraordinary qualities of leadership, trustworthiness, service, and patriotism. The recipient must have made unusual and lasting contributions to our American heritage by truly giving of himself/herself to his/her community, state, country, and fellow man. Dr. Pierce has worked with local historical societies, veterans and patriotic groups, museums, and family historians for nearly 29 years.