



WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Volume XXXIV #2

County Historic Markers

WCHS has an active Historic Markers and Sites committee. Committee members work to create an inventory of historic markers and sites in Washington County, doing research for and erecting new signs where needed and, in some cases, maintaining current signs to keep them in good condition. One of our volunteers, Sarah Hall, has repainted several signs, bringing local history back in focus along our roadsides.

Last fall, Sarah was alerted to a sign in Greenwich that needed attention: Burgoyne's Bridge of Boats. The Bridge of Boats marker recounts the makeshift bridge General Burgoyne's men constructed with bateaux in 1777. They needed to cross to Schuylerville as they chased the American Patriots toward Albany in the days leading up to the Battles of Saratoga. Since we are coming up on our 250th anniversary of the Revolution, it seemed a fitting marker to restore.

In April, Sarah Hall took her bag of tricks down to Greenwich to strip and repaint the sign, so it now looks brand new. A thank you goes to Sarah Huggins and Debi Craig who stopped by to lend a hand. The marker is located by the Dix Bridge that connects Rte. 70A to Hudson Crossing Park. Also, new QR codes have been placed on the sign. Anyone passing by can scan the QR code with their smart phone and link to the Hudson Crossing Park website to view additional historical details regarding the Bridge of Boats.



The marker as it was found before Sarah Hall's work.



The Bridge of Boats marker after it received its new coat of paint!



Sarah Hall, with paintbrush in hand, restoring the Bridge of Boats marker.



Last July, at the suggestion of David Devries, Sarah repainted the Allen Cabin marker in Argyle. During the Revolution, nine people at the Allen farm were massacred by Native Americans attached to Burgoyne's army. This happened the day before the murder of Jane McCrea as Burgoyne's army swept through Fort Edward. Their deaths contributed to the residents' feeling of fear and outrage, prompting new numbers of patriots to enlist in a rush to join the fight.

David Devries was instrumental in bringing that sign back to life by offering his home as a workshop and rallying his neighbors for help transporting the sign and pouring new cement for the post. Special thanks to Brian Neilson at Viking Fabrication in Greenwich, without whose time and welding skills this marker restoration would not have been possible. Thank you all!

Sarah Hall has been working on various projects and has repainted several markers as an on-going project. There is now a list of markers to repaint as calls come in from watchful members. Anyone interested in volunteering to be on the Historic Markers and Sites Committee at the WCHS should contact Jen LaRock or Sarah Hall. Everyone is welcome! Also, anyone interested in helping repaint one specific sign is welcome as well. Sarah will gladly work together with you. Please email us at info@wchs-ny.org or call the Historical Society. And don't forget to follow us on Facebook!

Washington County Historical Society Mission Statement

The Washington County Historical Society is an educational organization dedicated to engaging diverse audiences in the study and application of the collective heritage of Washington County, New York, and its environs.

- Rev. October 2005

WCHS has a constantly growing collection of information, original documents, and other items of interest about Washington County and its inhabitants, past and present.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering to help with the Heritage Research Library or other opportunities, please contact the Historical Society and let us know what interests you!

Heritage Research Library



Jennifer LaRock

The library is open for visitors! Inquiries can also be emailed to library@wchs-ny.org or by phone.

NEW Library and Bookshop Hours:
Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9:30-4:30
Monday evenings by appointment
(contact us)

Newsletter Editor:
Kelly Mead



How To Contact Us:

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info@wchs-ny.org

Visit us on Facebook
and Instagram!

WCHS President's Letter

A moment in history that changed the world, and it happened in Washington County

In my last President's letter, I asked the question "Did history really happen in Washington County?" That letter focused on the Burgoyne Campaign, in which the British Army passed through Washington County on its way to defeat at Saratoga, considered "the Turning Point of the American Revolution." So I now ask the question, what else may have happened in Washington County before the Battles of Saratoga in 1777? (After all, the British spent more time in Washington County than it did in today's Saratoga County.) And the answer is: The Knox Trail. In December 1775, Henry Knox's Noble Artillery Train passed through Charlotte County (Essex, Warren and Washington Counties).

From the beginning Washington County played a major role in the Patriot effort to defeat the British and gain independence. You may recall that Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen combined to take Fort Ticonderoga on May 10, 1775, in order to gain control of a deteriorating fort that had over one hundred artillery pieces.

George Washington took command of the American army outside of Boston. There had been military actions in 1775, such as the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Battle of Bunker Hill, and the American occupation of Canada (American troops passed through Charlotte County on their way to Canada). The American forces had been stalemated by British forces. In the fall of 1775, General Washington decided that, with the captured artillery located in Forts Crown Point and Ticonderoga, he could force the British out of Boston. Washington chose a young volunteer, Henry Knox, to carry out that task. Washington and Knox, a Boston bookseller, had become friends, and Washington was impressed by Knox's knowledge of artillery. So Knox was then commissioned a colonel, developed a plan to bring the artillery to Boston, and was then sent to bring that artillery to Boston.

Henry Knox arrived in Fort Ticonderoga on December 5, 1775. It is believed the Northern Department Commander, Philip Schuyler, had selected the artillery pieces and sleds and had arranged for oxen, horses and drivers. Fifty-nine pieces of artillery were chosen to be transported by Knox's expedition to Boston. The artillery was transported by boat around the Ticonderoga peninsula to the La Chute River and, once transferred to carts or wagons, up the portage road to Lake George. Once at the Lake George landing, they were placed on different types of watercraft. The whole process of transporting the artillery began on December 6 and would be done in series (sections), depending on the size and type of the artillery. The large pieces were placed in the first series of boats headed for Fort George, at the southern tip of the lake. Once all pieces were brought to the Lake George landing, the flotilla of boats was loaded and eventually got underway December 9. The process of moving cannon that weighed as much as 4,500 pounds was backbreaking and complicated.

Once on the water it took two days to reach Fort George. It was critical that the flotilla arrive before Lake George froze. Once the ice froze, it would have to have to freeze deep enough to hold upwards of 4,500 pounds, the largest of the artillery pieces with Knox. Because Knox paid off the boatmen on December 15 and 16, it is believed that is when all the pieces had arrived at Fort George. Knox wrote General Washington from Fort George on December 17 that he had contracted 42 sleds to transport the artillery from Fort George to Boston. Knox went ahead of the expedition to search for sleds, oxen and horses to transport the artillery. According to sources, Knox traveled by foot as far as Fort Miller by December 24. (According to Judge William Duer of Fort Miller, Charlotte County, Knox stayed long enough at Duer's home to have dinner and left at 3 p.m. during a significant snowstorm. Duer provided a carriage and horses to allow Knox to travel further along the transportation route.) Knox made it as far as Ensign Tavern, just outside the entrance to today's Saratoga National Historical Park, where he dined and stayed that evening. The next morning, December 25, Knox woke to an accumulation of two feet of snow on the ground. The snow was a good thing since it was necessary to transport the artillery pieces along the Military Road, which was nothing more than farm roads today. Knox moved further south finding another sled in Stillwater. At Stillwater, Knox acquired a sleigh that transported him as far as today's Lansingburg, where he stayed that evening. He would eventually cross the Hudson River twice before arriving in Albany. From December 27 through 29, Knox located and sent sleds and teams to Fort George to transport the artillery south. By December 30 through January 1, sleds began to arrive at Fort George. Once the sleds arrived, they were loaded and sent south, but unfortunately the weather wasn't cold enough to freeze the Hudson River. By January 4 the first of the guns arrived at Lansing's Ferry and were transported across the Hudson to Albany. The guns would eventually travel further south to today's Columbia County and eventually into Massachusetts, where the guns arrived on January 24, 1776. The guns were not deployed until the second week of March 1776, forcing the British to evacuate Boston on March 17, 1776.

The Knox Noble Artillery Train will be celebrated in 2025. The counties of Warren, Washington, Saratoga, Rensselaer, and Albany have formed the Knox Trail Committee to plan a celebration for the second weekend of December 2025. My hope is that the people of not only Washington County but also the rest of the Northeast Region will come out to celebrate a critical moment of our American history. Leading military and political leaders combined to arrange and execute the expedition. Charlotte County was not only the geographic location Knox's Artillery Train traversed, but our leaders helped organize this critical mission of the American Revolution. The Knox Committee is hoping to have educational programs, student participation in the building of the sleds, historical programs for those interested in learning more about the Knox Noble Artillery Train, and finally a series of celebrations from Lake George to Albany and hopefully beyond. The Washington County Historical Society is a strong supporter for the Washington County 250th Committee, having five board members on the 250th Committee. The Washington County Historical Society is also the fiduciary sponsor of the Washington County 250th Committee. Both are volunteer organizations, so if you have the time or desire to help bring history to your community, please contact the Washington County Historical Society.

The celebration of the Knox Artillery Train is an opportunity to learn, experience and create memories for America's next generation. As you drive along the Old Military Trail, you might notice stone markers put in place to signify that the Henry Knox Noble Artillery Train passed by that area. In 1928 the states of New York and Massachusetts placed fifty-six monuments to mark the Knox Trail. It is my hope that the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution will bring Americans together to celebrate our national, state, and our local history. This will be a great time to get out and read the markers, plaques, and signs that tell our nation's history.

Sources: <https://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/knox-trail>, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA623628.pdf>, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2019/02/henry-knoxs-noble-train-of-artillery-no-ox-for-knox/>, https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=463&img_step=1&pid=15&mode=transcript#page1

- Pat Niles, WCHS President

WCHS Events

Mark your calendars to join WCHS at our upcoming events. Programs are free and open to the public (donations accepted). Questions? Please contact the Washington County Historical Society at 518-747-9108 during our new open hours on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.



SPECIAL EVENT! WCHS Trash and Treasure Yard Sale

Join us on **Saturday, July 20, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.** for a yard sale at the Historical Society's headquarters, 167 Broadway, Fort Edward, NY. All proceeds from the sale will benefit WCHS.

As a fundraiser for the Society, there will be items of historical interest and other items for sale on the front lawn of the Wing-Northup House. We encourage donations of items for the sale from our members. Good condition collectibles or household items will be gratefully accepted (no appliances or large furniture).

Please bring your items you wish to donate to the Wing-Northup House starting at 9 a.m. on the day of the sale. If you have questions about the event or items you'd like to consider as a donation, please contact the Society. We encourage our members and the public to stop by to see what treasures you can take home!

July 11, 2024 / 5:30 p.m. / Greenwich Cemetery Walk

Presented by Sandy McReynolds

Location: Greenwich Cemetery, Cottage Street, Greenwich, NY

The Washington County Historical Society with the 250th Committee of Washington County invites the public to tour the historic Greenwich Cemetery with Sandy McReynolds on Thursday July 11 at 5:30 p.m. in Greenwich, NY. Join us as we visit the final resting places of some of the town's most influential people. Along the way enjoy the lovely examples of early tombstone art and symbolism. Attendees should note that as we explore the grounds, walking on uneven ground, slight hills, and dirt walkways is to be expected.

Tour guide Sandy McReynolds is the Town of Greenwich Historian as well as the Greenwich Free Library's I.V.H. Gill Room Historian. The tour will begin at the first roadway entrance to the cemetery on Cottage Street at 5:30 pm.

July 27, 2024 / 2:00 p.m. / An Exhibition on the Postal Service of Washington County

Presented by Stephen Matte

Location: Slate Valley Museum, 17 Water Street, Granville, NY



The Washington County Historical Society and the Slate Valley Museum will host the program **"An Exhibition on the Postal Service of Washington County"**.

Our presenter, Stephen Matte, has been an avid collector of postal memorabilia for over 30 years and his extensive collection contains items from about 66 local post offices (approximately 90% of all post offices that ever existed in Washington County), with many items from offices that no longer exist.

With the talk being held in Granville, Stephen will be bringing 40 extra Granville postal system items and in celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America he will also be bringing two items from the 1700s.

August 7, 2024 / 6:30 p.m. / Lime Kilns of Bald Mountain (Greenwich/Easton Area)

Presented by Sandy McReynolds, Ken Perry and KC Scott

Location: Fort Miller Reformed Church, 1239 Fort Miller Road, Fort Edward, NY
(Town of Fort Edward, off Route 4)

Attendees at this presentation will travel back in time to look at the lost lime industry of Bald Mountain and the man who made the hamlet into a thriving, industrious community of the time, Robert Lowber. Lime was a prosperous industry in the early to mid-19th century. Though already in production in Bald Mountain, it wasn't until Robert Lowber purchased the kilns that the hamlet became a bustling hub. An enterprising and forceful personality, Lowber was an early captain of industry in the Greenwich area, developing a community in Bald Mountain that would promote the lime industry and become notable for its high-quality product.

Sandy McReynolds is the Town of Greenwich Historian as well as the Greenwich Free Library's I.V.H. Gill Room Historian. Ken Perry is a former resident of Bald Mountain, artist, author, genealogist and local historian. KC Scott is a Greenwich Free Library staff member and Greenwich resident.

October 8, 2024 / 5:30 p.m. / Patriots of Washington County (Series Lecture #1)

Presented by Sarah Hall

Location: South Granville Congregational Church, 7179 State Route 149, Granville, NY 12832

WCHS and the Washington County 250th Committee will co-host a program about the lives of several famous patriots in Washington County. There are many Revolutionary War Soldiers buried in our towns and this talk will include not only where they are from and their service record, but also snippets we've learned about their lives. Some are funny, some are strange, and you can be sure, all are interesting. A bit of the timeline of the Revolutionary War will be included, but you don't need to be a history buff to enjoy the talk.

You will hear new stories of the 18th century people who lived in our towns after the Revolutionary War. Some of the soldiers in the first lecture include Lemuel Haynes, Israel Harris, Joseph McCracken, and Tobias Van Veghten.

Other County News**Skenesborough Museum Announces Special Event**

The Whitehall Chamber of Commerce is hosting a fundraising event for the Skenesborough Museum in Whitehall on Friday, July 19, from 6-8 p.m. The "North County Jazz Project" is an 18-piece jazz group that will play on the lawn in front of The USS Ticonderoga for the event. The museum will be open to stroll through...come and enjoy light refreshments, drinks and participate in the scavenger hunt! There will be a brief program at 7 p.m. The M.C. for the evening will be Dan Miner, from Hits 95 WWSC, out of Glens Falls. Dan grew up in Whitehall!

This museum is a gem in the community. As with many small museums, they often get overlooked or taken for granted. The Skenesborough Museum wants to grow, offer more, and especially offer a children's area with activities and books.

Tickets are \$23 each or 2 for \$40. For reservations, a check can be made out to Skenesborough Museum and sent to Cheryl Putorti, 140 Broadway, Whitehall, NY 12887. Please call 518-222-5593 with any questions. Attendees should plan to bring a lawn chair to enjoy the music.

Washington County 250th Living History Weekend Held



The Washington County 250th: Celebrate America's History In Your Own Backyard Committee held a living history event on May 18 and 19, 2024 at the Old Fort House Museum and Rogers Island Visitor Center.

The weekend featured 15 reenactment groups, along with several local historical organizations such as the Hartford Recruitment Center, the Washington County Historical Society and the Hebron Preservation Society. The Visitor Center and the Old Fort House Museum were open for visitors.

The event was well attended, and planning is already beginning now for a similar event next year. We hope to expand the number of reenacting groups, historical organizations, and have a series of lectures throughout the weekend. Interested in getting involved? Please contact WCHS to find out more about opportunities to work with the 250th Committee or the Historical Society.



WCHS Volunteer Opportunities Available

Volunteering with the Washington County Historical Society is an excellent way to learn about our county's history while helping to protect and preserve the past. We welcome all who wish to help; all types of skills are needed, including:

- Reading cursive/transcribing old documents
- Helping with programs and events
- Conducting genealogical research
- Help with mailings
- Serve on the Board of Trustees
- Work with and digitize photographs
- Assist with gardening

Another way to get involved is joining one of our committees. Various committee roles offer flexible opportunities to participate and help the Society further its mission and goals. A list of committees is shown below, please join us!

- Finance
- Nominating
- Building
- Programs
- Historic Preservation
- Washington County Fair
- Historic Markers and Sites
- Publications
- Membership
- Library

There are so many ways you can help us in our endeavors and we would be happy to have you. Please call or email us with your interests.



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The Washington County Historical Society would like to thank Casella Waste Systems, Inc. for their generous donation of service for the Wing-Northup House. Thank you!





WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY EST. 1940

167 Broadway, Fort Edward NY 12828-1709

Telephone (518) 747-9108

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Summer 2024 Newsletter

Full Name (please print)

NEW MEMBER

RENEWAL

Address

City/State

Zip

E-Mail

Phone No.

Please note WCHS membership year runs January 1st thru December 31. New memberships received after October 1st will be honored for the following year. Annual memberships and donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Membership Categories:

- Benefactor \$500
- Sustaining \$150
- Contributing \$75

- Patron \$50
- Individual/Family \$35
- Senior/Senior Couple/Student \$25

Sign Up Online
at www.wchs-ny.org

I would like to include an additional gift of \$ _____

Check Enclosed (Payable to: Washington County Historical Society)

OR

Name on Credit Card

Card Number

Exp. Date

CSV Code

Questions (please answer):

1. I would like to receive my newsletter by email

Yes No

2. I would like to be contacted about volunteering

Yes No