



History Happenings

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

[Events Calendar](#)

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Last Month at The History Center...

Haunted History Tours

Over 120 people joined us last month for our annual Haunted History Tours in Downtown Ithaca. Participants were led on an hour long walk through downtown, hearing grisly and heartbreaking stories from Ithaca's history.

Early evening tours were led by Heritage Ambassador and volunteer veteran Sherri La Torre, and late night tours were hosted by Theodore Zinck who lost his daughter in the 1903 typhoid epidemic in Ithaca (played by Ben Sandberg).

To maintain safety and distancing, each tour was capped at 12 participants, with masks, and distancing firmly enforced by our ghost criers who trailed each group.

Our thanks to local news outlets and journalists for helping spread the word about our Haunted October programs!

[Ithaca Week](#) - [WICB](#) - [Tompkins Weekly](#)



Cemetery Scavenger Hunt at Grove Cemetery

On September 25th we hosted a Cemetery Scavenger Hunt at Grove Cemetery in Trumansburg. Youth participants learned about some of the history of Grove from Ulysses Town Historian John Wertis and were then given an hour to complete their [Cemetery Scavenger Hunt](#), searching out gravestone shapes, names, and years.

Our thanks to the [New York Council on the Arts](#) and the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) for their funding of this program.

*** This activity can be done at any cemetery in Tompkins County. Stop by the museum to pick up copies of the Cemetery Scavenger Hunt booklet, or [download and print](#) a copy from our website. Send us pictures of your scavenger hunts! Our staff*



Upcoming Events - thehistorycenter.net/events

November is Native American Heritage Month!

Learn about the Haudenosaunee Confederacy from some of our museum partners in the region and review some of our previous programming on the indigenous history of Tompkins County on the [Native American Heritage Month](#) web page, which will be up until the end of November.

You can also pick up indigenous history handouts from the museum which highlight the Haudenosaunee history displayed in the [Two Row Mural](#) on Seneca St, and the [Women's Nomination Belt Mural](#) on Green St both by Brandon Lazore (*Onondaga*). These stops are an early look at our new mural walking tour which will go live in the new year!

Thursday-Sunday Every Week - EXHIBIT HALL IS OPEN!

[New Hours & Guidelines](#) - Book a [private visit!](#)

Visit us for your [READ LOCAL](#) book buying in Tompkins County!

Pick up a map, bookmark, and sticker from any participating location, and explore our [local history book collection](#) as you begin your holiday shopping this year!

Do at Your Own Leisure - [Cemetery Scavenger Hunt](#) - All Ages

Pick up free copies of [Cemeteries of Tompkins County](#) activity booklet from our Exhibit Hall! This self-guided field trip can be completed at any cemetery in Tompkins County, and includes pre and post-visit reflection questions, a vocabulary guide, 3-page Cemetery Scavenger Hunt, and a short history of local cemeteries from Historic Ithaca. The [Cemetery Scavenger Hunt](#) can also be downloaded from our [website](#). Fun for all ages (our staff agree!)

November 7th & 24th - [Virtual HistoryForge Transcription Sessions](#) - 11am-1pm

Help be a part of building history! THC's digital history project, HistoryForge, relies on volunteers like you. At our bi-weekly virtual transcription sessions we are currently entering records from the 1940 census for the City of Ithaca! **Learn more about the project [here](#).**

Contact Eve historyforge@thehistorycenter.net to join.

November 14th [Music of Central New York w/ Dave Ruch](#) (Virtual Youth Program) 2-3pm

Kids (ages 6-14) & families are invited to take a musical trip around Tompkins County and Central New York with songs and stories from the Erie Canal, the Haudenosaunee people, the Underground Railroad, rural farms, traveling circuses and more. Dave Ruch is a full-time musician and performer widely noted for his ability to engage audiences of all kinds. With banjo, mandolins, jaw harp, washboard, bones, spoons and more, his music has been featured on American Public Media, NPR, PBS, CBS Sunday Morning, and on stages across the United States, Canada and the UK.

www.daveruch.com

We are inviting 15 children to attend the live-streamed program at The History Center on the Ithaca Commons on November 14th ([Register Here](#)). These children will be given the opportunity to talk with

Dave in a live Q&A session following the presentation, and time to explore the History Center Exhibit Hall.

The program will also be live-streamed through The History Center's Facebook page (facebook.com/tompkinshistory) where it can be viewed by anyone from home (**You do not need a Facebook account to view the program just use the link above at the event time**).

November 14th - December 12th - Learn to Fly with Tommy - Saturdays at 11am
Join us for weekly premieres of our five-part web series exploring local aviation history with the Old Time Flight Instructor. These short episodes will be premiering on The History Center [YouTube channel](#) every Saturday morning at 11am November 14th - December 12th. [Subscribe](#) so you don't miss an episode!

November 27th--29th - [Enjoy a Thanksgiving Visit to The History Center!](#)

We know that Thanksgiving celebrations are likely looking very different for a lot of families this year. We want to invite you and your family (up to 15 people) to book a private exploration of our Exhibit Hall over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. We will be closed on Thursday the 26th, but open 10am-5pm Friday & Saturday, and 10-3pm on Sunday. Avoid the crowds and enjoy a sanitized and private visit in the museum. Safe and fun for the whole family!

Availability is limited each day, so book your time soon to reserve your space.

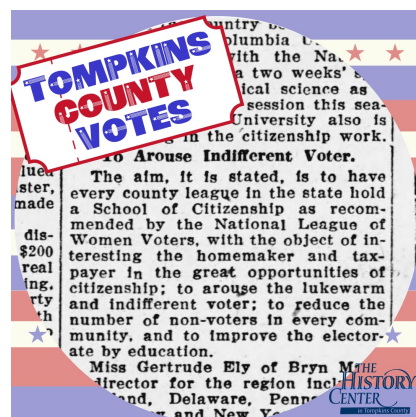
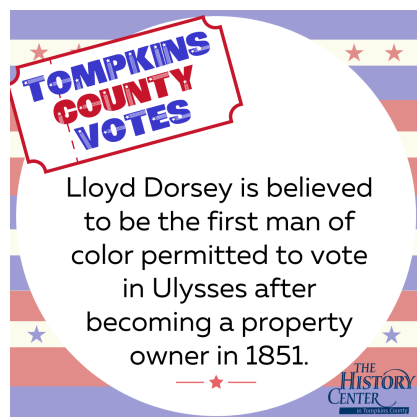
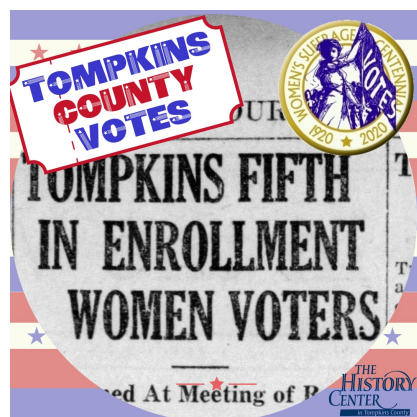
SAVE THE DATE Gingham Dog and the Calico Cat Film Screening (third weekend in December TBA)

[#TompkinsCountyVotes & Visits Suffragist Gravesites](#)

Throughout the month of October, we shared historical tidbits about the long history of voting rights in Tompkins County on our social media feeds.

We're also encouraging everyone to stop by the gravesites of Tompkins County suffragists on Election Day November 3rd (even if you voted early or by mail). Four women and close to 30 volunteers have researched suffragists across NYS, and created a website with a suffragist database and [interactive map of more than 250 suffragists](#) buried across the state to encourage people to "Vote and Visit" on Election Day in honor of the centennial of the 19th Amendment. At a number of the cemeteries, they will have filmmakers and producers there to interview visitors, with the plan of making a documentary called Election Day 2020 NYS. Even for cemeteries where there will be no filmmaker, they are **encouraging people to Vote and Visit**, and post selfies and video that they may use in the film. See more information at their website: www.womenandthevoteny.com and post any selfies or photos to: #WomenandTheVoteNYS #TompkinsCountyVotes.

Click the images below to learn more about the stories highlighted in our #TompkinsCountyVotes series.



Volunteer Projects from The History Center

Since lock-down our volunteer activities and opportunities have looked a little different, but we are thrilled with the many different projects our volunteers have created in recent months and the many ways they have continued to help History Center projects, grants, and research move forward. The projects highlighted below are just a small taste of the wonderful ingenuity and passion our volunteers bring to the team.

If you'd like to get involved please review the [Volunteer Opportunities](#) page on our website.

Archival Discovery Launches Learn-at-Home Web Series



The discovery in the museum's archives of a course catalog for the **Thomas School of Aviation - one of the first civilian flight academies in the country** – sparked development of the living history character who is the one constant in the scene-shifting, fast-moving series of learn-at-home series about enterprise and culture in World War I-era Tompkins County.

The Old Flight Instructor is my best guess at who was teaching “Aviation for Sport, War and Business,” as the catalog promises, a scant 15 years after the Wright brothers’ launch.

It was an exciting time to be in Ithaca: **The Thomas brothers employed more than a thousand skilled workers, building hundreds of Tommy trainers for the U.S. Army Signal Corps. The Wharton brothers brought famous names of the silent film industry to their studios in Renwick (now Stewart) Park. True enough, World War I raged on in Europe, and the influenza epidemic was spreading across the land.**

But what a time to be alive here!

I was able to perform the Old Flight Instructor skit, subtitled “Learn to Fly Tommy – First Lesson Free,” just a few times to museum audiences before the lockdown began. Zoom performances continued through spring and summer (distance dinner theater anyone?) until Executive Director Ben Sandberg ordered up a videotape session in front of Tommy. A [grant application](#) to cover five, learn-at-home episodes was successful.

All characters in the series are real and thoroughly researched. **Oliver Thomas really did give tours of the Brindley Street airplane factory** (company offices were upstairs). **Edith Day, star of “A Romance of the Air,” was impressed with the Tommy that shared credits in her silent film.** Lansing-born astronomer **David Todd touted “canals” on Mars as proof of extra-terrestrial agriculture** – although he failed to teach celestial navigation by speakerphone to Thomas School students. And **Cornell’s James A. Meissner shot down numerous enemy aircraft** – while colliding in midair with at least one.

Only the Old Flight Instructor is speculative.

He would be 130 years old this month. So please pay heed as he adjusts the mask over his snowy white beard, peers at his virtual students through foggy wire-rimmed lenses, and growls “A high-flying welcome to the Class of 1918 in the Thomas School of Aviation.”

He still thinks it’s then.

H. Roger Segelken is a volunteer docent with The History Center

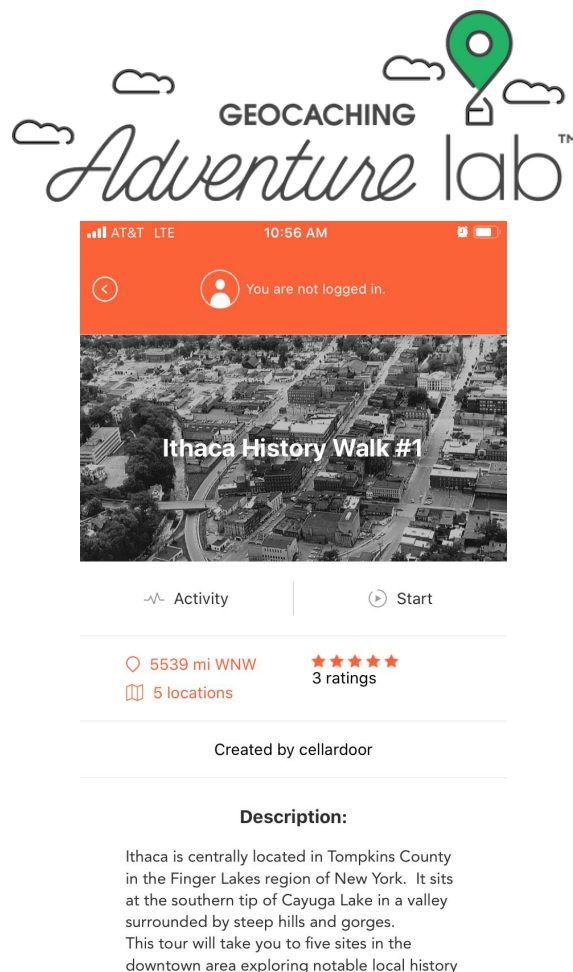
This five-part web series will be premiering on The History Center [YouTube channel](#) every Saturday morning at 11am November 14th - December 12th. [Subscribe](#) so you don't miss an episode!

Explore Ithaca with a new Geocaching Adventure Lab!

History Center docent Steve Siegert and his family are champion geocachers, so when Geocaching launched their new [Adventure Lab](#) app they invited premium members to create the first adventures! Steve created a 5-part adventure with coordinates directing players to different historic sites in downtown Ithaca. We're excited that even though this app is brand new, a number of people explored the **Ithaca History Walk #1** the first week it was up! *(The tour can only be seen after downloading the app).*

We hope to create more Adventure Labs and self-guided explorations across Tompkins County!

WHAT IS GEOCACHING? Geocaching is a worldwide treasure hunt. Players download the app and then search for hidden items in public places around the globe (and in their own backyard!) using coordinates and clues. The [Geocaching Adventure Lab](#) app guides players through the process of finding clues, solving puzzles, and completing Adventures one location at a time. Geocaching Adventure Lab expands the boundaries of traditional geocaching into new spaces and experiences while introducing innovative and fresh ideas that make geocaching even more fun!



Research Library Volunteers Hard at Work

The [Research Library](#) volunteers are working behind the scenes carefully social distancing to help us continue caring for our collections even though the Research Library is closed to the public.

Mary Tomlan is providing essential support to current research projects and also processing an important archival collection. George Dillman is working on an inventory of our library collection. Galen March, a new archival intern, is helping us with a digitizing project, enabling us to add some of our historical photographs to a useful online platform.

Their gift of time, energy, and expertise is an invaluable part of our work, and we are more grateful to them than we can say. If you want to see what kind of work our Research Library volunteers do, check out this [video](#)!



HistoryForge Goes Virtual and Spreads to Auburn & Elmira!



Under challenging conditions our [HistoryForge volunteers](#) began transcribing the 1940 Ithaca census in September. 1940 is a complex census with a lot of new and fascinating elements. Our intrepid transcribers have entered 2,100 records at this point (out of 19,700) and set new records for accuracy!

We are thankful that many of our veteran transcribers have continued to attend our now [Virtual HistoryForge Transcription Sessions](#) to both transcribe records and train

new volunteers. As much as we wish that we could work together in person, switching to zoom has allowed us to engage more transcribers from outside Tompkins County.

The cities of Auburn and Elmira have agreed to partner with HistoryForge and will begin the process of planning and hiring project coordinators for their own projects this fall! A big thanks to Claire Lovell of [SCRLC](#) for initiating the Auburn connection. Once we've trained their coordinators, we're hoping to plan some joint transcription sessions with new volunteers from both cities, a good way for them to learn and good for us too. Our web developer and [History Center Trustee, David Furber](#), has done a truly impressive job in making it possible for other cities to install and use HistoryForge for their own use.

We also wanted to acknowledge once again some of the behind-the-scenes efforts that make HistoryForge so impressive. Carol Devine and Elaine Engst have been working through the [buildings](#) block-by-block flagging any problems (and there are plenty) with location, description, inhabitants, etc. A strong, accurate connection between building records and people records is at the heart of HistoryForge, and Carol and Elaine are making sure it all comes together.

Kathy Chiang is continuing to create accurate, informative [building records](#). Remember that the census is a census of inhabitants, not buildings. She has recorded several thousand buildings at this point. She's also capturing information about buildings that aren't residences--businesses, churches, government buildings, etc. When we're able to add an institution database to HF, we'll have the data ready to go thanks to her hard work.

Lauren Winkler, a GIS specialist and cartographer from Pittsburgh, has volunteered to georectify the Library of Congress [Sanborn Maps from 1919](#) and create a layer for that year. To get an idea of her skill level, take a look at the site for which she created the maps: Homestead Hebrews [homesteadhebrews.com](#). It combines impressive historical overlays with in-depth descriptions of the Jewish community in Homestead, PA. We are thrilled to have her expertise and knowledge contribute to HistoryForge!

We are amazed and grateful for all of our wonderful volunteers who have worked so tirelessly (and under extraordinary conditions this year) to build the HistoryForge project and their continuing support in helping it improve and grow.

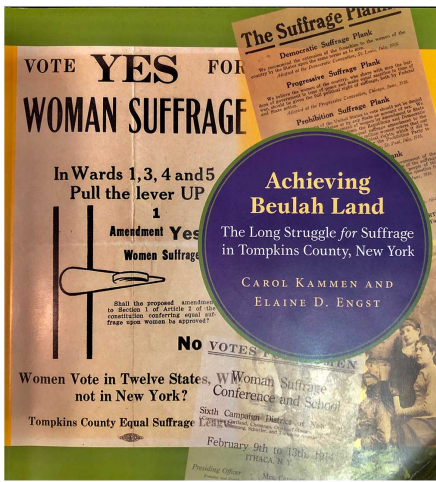
Take a few minutes and see who (and where) you can find on [HistoryForge!](#)

Bob Kibbee is a Co-Founder of HistoryForge and a [Trustee](#) of The History Center in Tompkins County

Then & Now - Ithaca Journal Column

Tompkins County has Long Storied History with Women's Rights

By Donna Eschenbrenner - Director of Archives & Research Services



"Two recent books examine women's suffrage in Tompkins County and in New York State: [Achieving Beulah Land – The Long Struggle for Suffrage in Tompkins County, New York](#) by Carol Kammen and Elaine Engst, and [Women Will Vote – Winning Suffrage in New York State](#) by Karen Pastorello and Susan Goodier. Both provide an essential window into the issue of women's rights in general, and suffrage in particular, beginning in the mid-19th century.

In Tompkins County the first recorded suffrage activity was in 1869, when a public debate on the topic was held in Ludlowville, in the town of Lansing. In 1894 the Political Equality League was founded, and an Ithaca Woman's Club, with an Equal Suffrage Section, was founded in 1895. (This section broke off to form the independent Political Study Club in 1899.) Similar groups were formed

in Newfield and Groton, as well as at Cornell University. These organizations advocated for more than just suffrage: Women's property rights, standards for nurses' training, education, philanthropy, and other broader gender issues were their focus as well."

[READ MORE](#)

The History Center and Downtown Visitor Center are stops on the new [Read Local](#) map which encourages everyone to harvest (buy) their books locally this holiday season. Stop by any participating downtown location for a map and bookmark and peruse the local book selection!

Explore our many local history options at thehistorycenter.net/books.

The History Center in Tompkins County

Exhibit Hall, Research Library, Archives, and staff offices are located at 110 North Tioga St. (Inside the [Tompkins Center for History & Culture](#)) Ithaca, N.Y. 14850

Web: www.thehistorycenter.net

Phone: 607-273-8284

Email: Staff emails can be found [here](#)

Hours: *Thursday-Saturday 10am-5pm*, Sunday 10am-3pm**

**Please note all our hours have changed due to COVID-19 and may be adjusted on a week to week basis depending on local health recommendations.*

Follow us on social media
[@tompkinshistory](#)



[Contact Us!](#)