



# History Happenings

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## Last Month at The History Center...

### *Biking Tompkins County Roads Fundraiser a Great Success!*

On Monday September 7th at 12:01am, Executive Director Ben Sandberg embarked on a **24-hour biking marathon of Tompkins County**. He began at the [Eight Square Schoolhouse](#) in Dryden NY, and **biked an impressive 175.1 miles in under 15 hours!** As you might remember there were strong winds across the county on Labor Day, and Ben also slogged through a number of unpaved seasonal highways as he traced a rough outline of the county. These rough roads led to a flat tire later in the day around 120 miles in. A quick visit from a friend replace the wheel and Ben biked another 50-odd miles, before stopping for his well-deserved sleep around 9pm.

We had nearly 90 people pledge to support Ben's ride, **raising a whopping \$7,500+ dollars** in both online and off-line donations. All pledgers received email and video updates from Ben's ride throughout the day highlighting both his cycling knowledge and experience, and local history information as he rode.

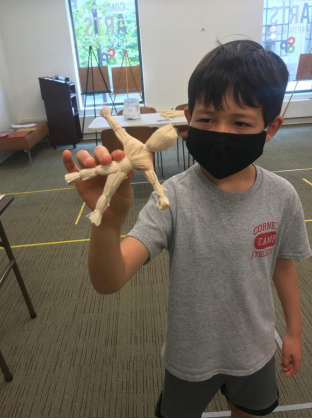
Ben is eager and excited to expand this fundraiser in future years by recruiting more cycling enthusiasts from the around the region for their own rides in Tompkins County.



### *Corn Husk Doll Youth Workshop*

On September 27th we hosted our second annual Corn Husk Doll Workshop with Seneca artist Penny Minner. Over twenty children during two sessions learned the legend of why the Corn Husk Doll has no face, and were able to make their own dolls to take home. This program was part of our From Seeds to Wisdom - Exploring Haudenosaunee Culture youth series.

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



## **Upcoming Events** - [thehistorycenter.net/events](https://thehistorycenter.net/events)

October is **American Archives Month**! We're also highlighting Tompkins County Latinx history on our social media channels for **Hispanic Heritage Month** (September 15th-October 15th).

**Thursday-Sunday Every Week - EXHIBIT HALL IS OPEN!**

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

\*Stay tuned for upcoming details for our **Haunted History Walking Tours** for adults!\*

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**October 1st - [Hart Island - Cemetery of Strangers Virtual Program](#) - 11-11:30am**

Michael Keene, a New York local history author, has produced a unique online program to present his latest work, titled, "New York City's Hart Island: A Cemetery of Strangers" exploring the individual stories of those buried in NYC's Hart Island over the last 150 years. Tune in to hear the story of Dawn Powell and their connection to medical research at Cornell University! This virtual program is available to anyone who [pre-registers](#). This program is free.

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**October 10th & 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](mailto:historyforge@thehistorycenter.net) to join.

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**October 17th - [Make Your Own Comic - Virtual Youth Program](#) 10:30am-12pm**

Join comic book writer and video editor Michael Watson on Saturday, October 17th from 10:30am-12pm for a fun and creative lesson on how comic books are made.

Michael will talk a bit about how comics get made and how he got interested in creating them. Then you'll make your own comic page in small groups. There's a role for everyone, whether you like telling stories, drawing pictures, coloring in pictures, or even if you simply have excellent handwriting!

We are excited to be able to offer a virtual version of this program, after the original event scheduled for March 28th was postponed. Our thanks to Buffalo Street Books who offered to host the virtual event, and to the author Michael Watson for his enthusiasm for re-imagining the program for this new format. This virtual program is available to youth ages 9-16. [Pre-registration required](#). This program is free.

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## October 25th - [Cemetery Scavenger Hunt](#) - Youth Program - 12pm - 2:30pm

Children (Ages 7-14) are invited to spend the afternoon at Grove Cemetery for a Cemetery Scavenger Hunt! John Wertis, Ulysses Town Historian, will share about the history of the cemetery, and some of the unique stories of those buried there. Children will then be given an hour to explore the cemetery with their parent/guardian to seek out hidden symbols and hidden graves. The Cemetery Scavenger Hunt can also be downloaded from our [website](#) and used as a self-guided field trip for parents and home educators.

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\*SAVE THE DATE\* 11/14 [Music of Central New York w/ Dave Ruch](#) (Virtual Youth Program), 11/??  
From Seeds to Wisdom Youth Program

## From Treman's Desk - Notes from the Director

### [DeWitt Park Plaque To Be Added to Artifact Collections](#)



At the beginning of September, The City of Ithaca announced their intention to remove the “White Settlers” plaque in DeWitt Park. The monument, consisting of a bronze plaque bolted to a boulder, identifies two Revolutionary soldiers, Jonathan Woodworth and Robert McDowell, who are described as the “First White Settlers” in Ithaca. The plaque has become the frequent focus of protests that decry its exclusionary message and the people the plaque ignores. **The City of Ithaca will donate the plaque to The History Center’s collections, if approved for removal at the October Common Council meeting.**

I don’t profess to be an expert local historian, so I feel uncomfortable speaking to the veracity of the plaque’s historical claims. Others much more knowledgeable than I highlight the complex realities at the end of the 18th century and how our understanding of that history has changed over time. The plaque’s simplistic and definitive statement flattens these complexities, and we are left with an incomplete understanding of our community. I am also a white male-identified person, which carries an obligation to listen when others state that the plaque’s language creates an environment of exclusion and oppression.

I can attest to the learning opportunity the plaque has afforded me. The removal process offered me a gateway to better understand multiple periods of Tompkins County’s past. It took active engagement to move beyond Woodworth or McDowell. **Only through purposeful exploration does the engaged audience discover the histories of the many peoples who called this land home before them, like the Tutelo or the Gayogohó:nø’.** Nor does it mention Yapple and Dumond, another pair of “first settlers” identified on a New York Historic Marker on nearby Buffalo Street. The plaque’s inherently reductive representation of local history erases the powerful complexity of the moment it commemorates.

As an engaged audience, we should also aspire to understand the moment in time that produced the memorialization. The Cayuga Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution installed the plaque as part of an effort to honor the sesquicentennial of the American Revolution. Again, our responsibility as an engaged audience is to pursue the diversity of stories and people. The narrative surrounding the D.A.R.’s early monument work focuses on their commemoration of largely male, white colonizers. The narrative is justified, but also ignores some efforts of the Cayuga Chapter of the D.A.R. For example, they did attempt to honor indigenous communities by collaborating on programs and historical markers. As always, the depth of our local past requires us to be active participants in the exploration of our past.

That leaves the lessons of the plaque for the current moment and the discussion today. Future



generations will understand us, in part, by our decision to remove the plaque. Our challenge in this third moment is to capture the multifaceted voices of our time for future generations. I'm thankful for the public discourse the plaque's removal inspired and to live in a community where such a debate is possible. Once the plaque is accessioned into The History Center's collections, we will strive to represent the diverse voices involved in its history through exhibits, programs, and other learning opportunities. This allows us to continue recording the diversity of our current moment for future generations – a vital aspect of recording and memorializing the people and places of Tompkins County.



Ben Sandberg  
Executive Director  
The History Center in Tompkins County

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## Resources for Local Schools & Homeschool Educators

It's time to head back to school! Although school and classrooms are looking different this year for a lot of educators and families we wanted to share our local history resources with all educators, whether you're a teacher creating virtual programs, or a homeschool educator coordinating learning at home.

The History Center in Tompkins County has **four \*EDUCATOR SPECIALS\*** available in our online bookstore ([thehistorycenter.net/books](http://thehistorycenter.net/books)). These bulk discounts are for some of our more popular educational titles, and a variety pack of activities and guided field trips for homeschoolers. You can read details about each of these "Back to School" specials on our website at [thehistorycenter.net/books](http://thehistorycenter.net/books), or stop by our Exhibit Hall during our [open hours](#) to learn more.



Educators are encouraged to **explore our learning resources and available curriculum materials** at [thehistorycenter.net/educator-resources](http://thehistorycenter.net/educator-resources).

We also offer **self guided "field-trips"** of our Exhibit Hall through our Exhibit Hall Scavenger Hunt which can be booked at any time through [thehistorycenter.net/schedule](http://thehistorycenter.net/schedule), and more than **40 self-guided tours of Tompkins County** which can be reviewed on our website at [thehistorycenter.net/tours](http://thehistorycenter.net/tours).

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## Many Archives Available for Exploring Local and Family History

October is American Archives Month, a time when we celebrate the importance of archives and historical records in our lives. At this uncertain time when communities and cultural institutions are grappling with Covid, it is important to remember how archives preserve our history and heritage. The materials that archives contain are essential to understanding our past and guide us in pointing the way forward through this difficult present.

Small local repositories like The History Center specialize in preserving the records of our immediate community. We have collections on local families, businesses, and institutions, including photographs, newspapers, ledgers, periodicals, maps and scrapbooks, all documenting the



history of Tompkins County. Genealogists, for example, can find information on the history of more than 2,000 local and regional families in our Genealogy Files, or family photographs in one of our many photo collections. <https://thehistorycenter.net/archives>

Tompkins County has other small repositories in Lansing, <https://www.lansinghistory.com/> Ulysses, <https://ulysses.ny.us/history/index.html> Newfield, <https://newfieldhistoricalsociety.org/> Dryden, <https://drydennyhistory.org/> Groton, and Caroline. Each one of these specializes in preserving the material culture of their towns.

The Ithaca College Archives contain materials on the history of the college, including from the early days when it was still the Ithaca Conservatory of Music. It also has the collection of Rod Serling, famous for *The Twilight Zone*, a classic Science Fiction TV series from the 1960s. <https://library.ithaca.edu/archives/>

Cornell University's Kroch Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections contains world-renowned collections covering a wide array of topics, including an extensive regional collection that is useful for local researchers interested in the history of Upstate New York. <https://rare.library.cornell.edu/finding-aids-for-archival-and-manuscript-collections/>

The New York State Archives contains a wealth of historical records concerning many aspects of state history, including birth, death, and marriage records for New Yorkers dating back to the 1880s. <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/>

The National Archives is one of the world's premier repositories, containing millions of historical records, including our Founding Documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. For genealogists it contains invaluable resources such as military records and immigration records. <https://www.archives.gov/veterans>

Since many repositories, including The History Center's Research Library, are closed now due to Covid, it's best to check online to see what might be available on websites or by appointment. All of these institutions are charged with the preservation of our history for our benefit, and they are determined to keep visitors, staff, and volunteers as safe as possible during this pandemic. Some archives have introductions to collections available on their websites.

Check out our new [video](#) welcoming patrons to our Research Library and get a taste of what is available to researchers on Tompkins County's past. <https://thehistorycenter.net/archives>

For more information email [archives@thehistorycenter.net](mailto:archives@thehistorycenter.net).

## Then & Now - Ithaca Journal Column

### HistoryForge Compiles Historical Census Information in Ithaca

By Bob Kibbee - HistoryForge Co-Founder and Trustee of The History Center



"Examine the flow of immigration. In 1910, the largest non-English-speaking immigrant group in Ithaca was from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ethnic Hungarians and Slovaks. Many of these families are still here. Look for Syrians (listed strangely as "Turk as Syrian"), and you'll recognize the Abbotts, Deebes and Josephs.

Delve into the business and the industrial landscape. Did you know there was a salt mine in Ithaca? Do you know what and where the "Cornell Incubator Factory" was?"

Also searchable are over 6,000 buildings — your house included — and the results of all searches are displayed on those historical maps — where did the salt workers live? Irish immigrants? Or

compare — homeowners vs. renters? The 1930 census records the value of the house.

[READ MORE](#)

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Contact HistoryForge Project Coordinator [Eve Snyder](#) to learn how to get involved.

### **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](http://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.*

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