

2023 - Year in Review at The History Center

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Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 1:16 PM

2023 at The History Center in Tompkins County

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2023 at The History Center

Arts and culture institutions across the country have been in a space of contemplation, innovation, and self-discovery the last few years and we at The History Center have also been reflecting on our role in and with our community of Tompkins County. As we celebrate a year that had over 20% more in-person visitors than 2022, we also found growing numbers engaging with and learning from our online and virtual platforms including [Tompkins HistoryForge](#), our [YouTube Channel](#), and our [recently digitized collections](#). As

our staff innovate to meet expectations for both in-person and on-line engagement we stay true to our mission of connection generation to generation to our shared history of Tompkins County.



Volunteering here has been a very fun experience in seeing how local history has been uncovered and framed to be more restorative. I can tell everyone here is passionate about what they are doing, which makes every day feel important with the work I am doing...I felt I had a lot of control over what I did, but had a good amount of guidance."

UNDERGRADUATE SUMMER
INTERNSHIP - SUMMER 2023



Thank you for sharing a love of local history with us! - *Ben, Donna, Cindy, Eve, Jane, and Zoë* (and our many FABULOUS volunteers & student workers!)

Our exhibits this year...

The History Center welcomed over 6,000 visitors to our Exhibit Hall in 2023 (that's nearly 20% more visitors than we had in 2022)! History Center staff hosted over 60 events, and led more than 30 guided tours throughout the year in addition to collaborating on multiple exhibits with community partners including: [Women Swimmin' for Hospicare](#), the [Community Quilting Center](#), and [The Cherry Arts](#). What was your favorite local history experience in 2023?



[Knot Sew Fast: Patchwork of Tompkins County](#) was on display at The History Center in Tompkins County from February 2nd-December 31st 2023. [Knot Sew Fast](#) showcased over 30 historic quilts made by Tompkins County residents between the 1830's to the present day. We further explored the history of quilting and textiles in Tompkins County through multiple collaborative programs. Including the [1996 Quilted with Care Retrospective](#), discovering the history of [textile workers through HistoryForge](#), and hands-on sewing and painting workshops with the [Tompkins County Public Library MakerSpace](#) and [11th Hour Barn Quilts](#). We hope you had time to visit the exhibit and think of the many ways that textiles and sewing tell stories about our homes and the skill of historic

UPCOMING EVENTS MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

EXHIBIT HALL IS CLOSED

January 1st-31st for Winter Recess. Join us for the public opening of [A Sporting Chance: On and Off the Field](#) on February 2nd for Gallery Night! 5-8pm on the Ithaca Commons.

January 2024 - [Archives & Research Library](#) open by appointment only.

Thurs - February 1st - FIRST GLIMPSE of A Sporting Chance. For donors only. Check your inboxes for a private invitation.

Fri - February 2nd - 5-8pm - [Gallery Night](#) - Join us for OPENING NIGHT of [A Sporting Chance: On and Off the Field](#)

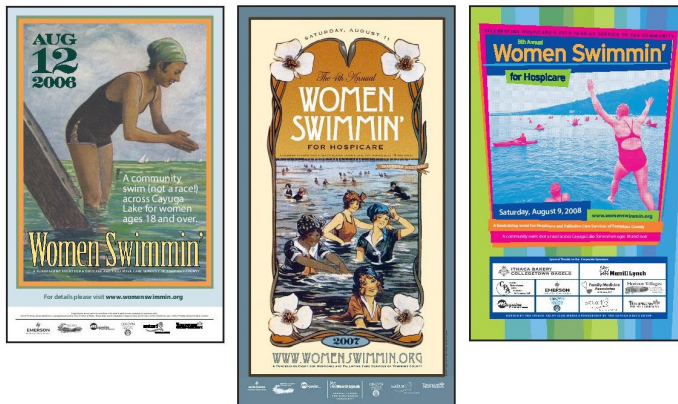
SAVE THE DATE:

Tompkins County women.

We also had two quilts on short term loan displayed in the Exhibit Hall as part of Knot Sew Fast:

- [Here Comes the Sun](#) on loan from the Community Quilting Center and Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County was on display from September-December. Connecting historic quilt activism in Tompkins with modern care for our community members going through the detox and recovery experience.

- [Women of Influence: Each Block a Story](#) - On loan from the Seneca Iroquois National Museum displayed modern Haudenosaunee women's beadwork and stories. Recognizing centuries of Haudenosaunee textile work across the region that today includes Tompkins County.



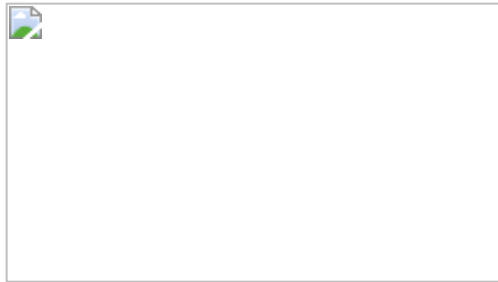
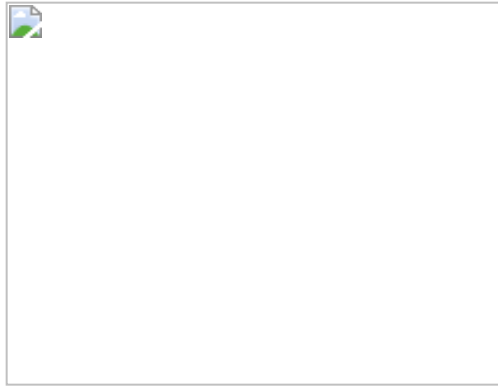
- 2/3 and 2/17 - [Tompkins HistoryForge Transcription Sessions](#)
- 2/14 Douglass Day Transcribe-a-thon
- 2/21 [CHAT Underground Railroad in Central New York w/ Gerard Aching](#)
- [Ithaca Loves Teachers - February 16th-28th](#) - The History Center will be offering its **annual local history book give-a-way, one-on-one consults** (by request) for how local educators can integrate our **history resources and exhibits in their classrooms**
- TBA Printing Women on the Bill w/ Laura Rowley

Collaborative Short Term Displays

- [True Crime - A Haunted History Special](#) (On display September & October 2023 in The History Center Exhibit Hall)
- [Women Swimmin' 20th - See How Far We've Swum!](#) (On display July-Present in Tompkins Center Atrium) a collaboration with [Women Swimmin' for Hospicare](#)



- [Genderqueer Pioneers: The Lavender Hill Legacy](#) (On display August - September 2023 at The Cherry ArtSpace) a collaboration with [The Cherry](#)
- [Present Conversations an Indigenous & POC Art Exhibit](#) (On display June 2023 in the CAP ArtSpace).



HistoryForge - 2023 Wrap-Up

Thanks to all our amazing HistoryForge volunteers in 2023 and over the years, and to collaborations with organizations both near and far, HistoryForge continues to expand in many directions!

In 2023 Tompkins HistoryForge Volunteers...

- Added over 6,000 photographs of buildings in the City of Ithaca from the 1950s and 1960s.
- We added six full county map layers to Tompkins HistoryForge covering 1806-1942; including 12 insets for rural townships, and 5 additional maps for the City of Ithaca, .
 - Completed 1950 census records for the Towns of: Newfield, and Ulysses
 - Completed 1940 census records for Town of Enfield
 - Completed 1910, 1920, and 1930 census records for the Town of Caroline
 - Made huge progress in the census records for 1950 for the Towns of: Ithaca, Lansing, Dryden, and Danby. In 2023 nearly 14,000 records for the City of Ithaca were completed out of 29,257 total for the 1950 census.
- Started transcription work on 1850, 1860, and 1870 census records for the City of Ithaca

Tompkins HistoryForge by the Numbers

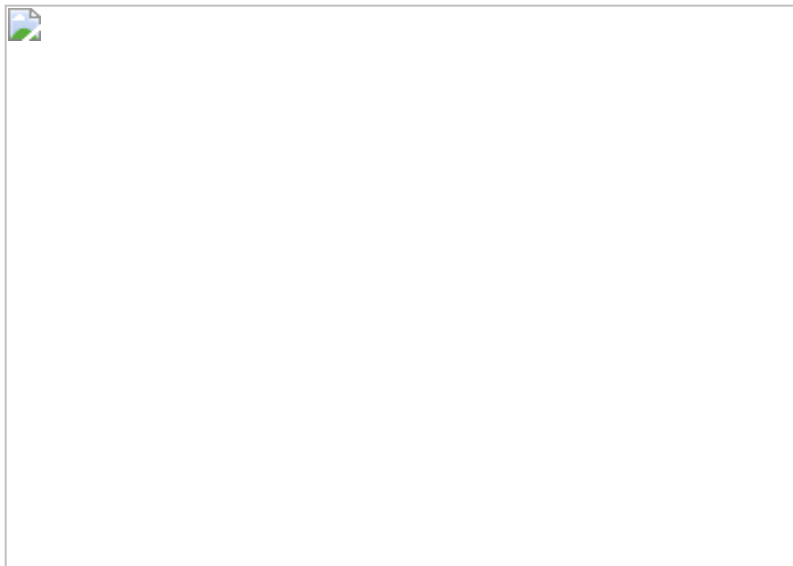
*Total census records available on Tompkins County HistoryForge
from 1850-1950*

City of Ithaca: 108,877
Town of Caroline: 8,150
Town of Ulysses: 3,487
Town of Dryden: 2,000
Town of Newfield: 1,895
Town of Enfield: 1,015
Town of Ithaca-Forest Home: 693
Town of Danby: 168
Town of Lansing: 20

We have so many exciting records still to complete! Join us and help us complete transcription for all the towns of Tompkins County! Contact historyforge@thehistorycenter.net to get involved.

Tompkins HistoryForge: Expanding to our whole county!

In 2022 HistoryForge was awarded a [two-year grant](#) from the National Endowment for the Humanities, with special recognition as part of the 'A More Perfect Union Initiative.' In 2023 this funding made real the long-term dream of expanding the HistoryForge project from the City of Ithaca to include all of Tompkins County. Our phenomenal volunteers have now



completed 23,693 census records of historic Tompkins County residents from 7 of Tompkins 9 townships. This massive effort has largely focused on the 1950 census, but as that decade is completed we will move backward in time. Filling in our

understanding of local communities from the 20th and 19th centuries.

Part of expanding this effort to include all of Tompkins County necessitated adding additional digitized map layers from [The History Center's archival collection of over 1,200 local maps](#) to the platform. In 2023 we added:

- **1853 Tompkins County Map**
- **1914 American Agriculturist Farm Directory Map of Tompkins County**

- 1919-1920 “Clock System” Rural Index Maps for the Towns of Tompkins County
- 1937 “Compass System” Rural Index Map for Tompkins County
- 1938 Tompkins County Development Association Map for the Town of Caroline, and insets for Brooktondale, Caroline, Caroline Center, Speedsville, and Slaterville
- 1940 NYS Highway Planning Survey Map of Tompkins County with insets for Brooktondale, Cayuga Heights, Forest Home, Jacksonville, Ludlowville, Newfield, Peruville

2024 is the final year of funding from this NEH grant, and we're excited to complete even more work. Both on the back-end software programming for the [HistoryForge](#) platform, and in continuing to expand this project to other communities across the U.S. We recently confirmed four new HistoryForge sites including:

- [Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies](#) (University of New Orleans, LA)
- [Schenectady County Historical Society](#) (Schenectady, NY)
- [Senator John Heinz History Center](#) (Pittsburgh, PA)
- [Walnut Hills Historical Society](#) (Cincinnati, OH)

It is a testament to nearly a decade of work on the [Tompkins HistoryForge](#) project and hundreds of local volunteers that we can communicate the value of this program to historically passionate communities across the country who are now beginning their own process of transcription, map digitization and georectification, and historic discovery. Get involved by contacting Eve at historyforge@thehistorycenter.net.

Research & Preservation Work in the Archives

2023 has been a fruitful and rewarding year in the [Research Library](#) and [Archives](#). We served several hundred researchers of all ages, including [Historic Preservation and Planning](#) students from Cornell and Journalism students from Ithaca College. [Genealogy](#), a perennial favorite of local history researchers, drew visitors to our library from states across the US, including Wisconsin, California, Ohio, and Texas. Homeowners searched for the histories of their homes, while scholars dug into timely topics including environmental history and the [trail of the Underground Railroad](#) through central New York.

The archives were enriched with the acquisition of major collections covering a



wide range of areas this year. We continued important work that had begun in 2022 with local environmental [activists who fought against fracking in New York](#), and accessioned major collections from several donors who preserved the records of this unique and important movement. [Thousands of photographs](#) came

in, including more than 1,400 digital images of the noted Ithaca photographer [C. Hadley Smith](#). We have been working with the late photographer's son to gradually add more of his important images to our collection.



Other photographs include family collections, as well as many hundreds of images of the local built environment from the [City of Ithaca Planning Department](#). A generous Canadian antiquarian donated a rich collection of materials celebrating the history of [Taughannock Falls State Park](#) including

postcards, photographs, stoneware, maps, and banners. The Ithaca Players, a small amateur theater group who worked from 1988-1997 are highlighted in a new collection as well.



Barbara Mink plays Romaine to Benjamin Strout's Leonard at dress rehearsal.

The Ithaca Players are everyone and they aren't playing around

A major donation begun in 2023 that will surely overflow into the next year is the records of the [Ithaca Aviation Heritage Foundation](#). Working closely with the organization's former head,

Don Funke, we are collecting records on the history of this extraordinary initiative to find, research, refurbish, and rebuild a [1917 Thomas Morse Scout airplane](#). The "Tommy," having taken its [centennial flight in 2018](#), is now one of the largest artifacts in our collection, and the materials documenting this

extraordinary achievement will be a large and significant addition to the archives.

Another major initiative begun in 2023 was our careful search for a suitable Content Management System. This effort to assess several offerings from museum software companies led us toward a final decision to adopt a [PastPerfect system](#) to make our collections as accessible as possible to our public now and into the future.

Return of K-12 Field Trips!

In 2023 we hired Jane Koestler, long time Eight Square Schoolmarm as our part-time Youth Education and Eight Square School House coordinator. After a long covid-induced pause in our field trip programming to our museum and archives we are thrilled to be coordinating with educators across ICSD to bring their classes to our museum to learn and engage with local history.



Jane is also coordinating our [Eight Square Schoolhouse 1892](#) field trips with Kids Discover the Trail! Spaces fill quickly, and looking to 2024 we're excited to offer Eight Square experiences in the summer and fall again! Contact Jane at eightsquare@thehistorycenter.net to schedule a field trips!

Accessibility & Engagement

In 2023 our volunteers prioritized projects that made our digital content more accessible to our community members.


We completed audio versions of over 30 self-guided walking tours recording hundreds of tour stops, now available for free on [SoundCloud](#) and [PocketSights](#). In addition we updated all our existing PocketSights tours to indicate elevation, tour length, and recommendations for walking, cycling, or

driving for each tour.

(Name(s))

Social Narrative

Pre-Visit Guide to The History Center in
Tompkins County for Visitors on the
Autism Spectrum



The History Center in Tompkins County
Located inside the Tompkins Center for History & Culture
on the Ithaca Commons
110 North Tioga St.
Ithaca NY, 14850
Gayogohó:nq' Territory

Contact community@thehistorycenter.net with
questions about this guide or current displays.



Completed and made public a the '[Pre-Visit Guide for Visitors on the Autism Spectrum](#)'

Completed subtitles for over 30 videos and lectures available on our [YouTube Channel](#). In addition to making these videos accessible for our [Deaf and hard of hearing community](#), this also makes the videos easier to translate for non-English speakers.

Transcripts were completed for over 140 interviews in our [Oral](#)

[Histories of Tompkins County](#) collection. We are very excited that our Deaf, hard of hearing, and non-English speakers and researchers now have options for engaging with this collection!

[Our Thanks to our Grant Funders!](#)

Our work in preserving Tompkins County history is made possible through our generous local history family, and through specific grant funded projects and initiatives. In 2022 our largest projects were supported by the following organizations and foundations:

- [HistoryForge: Mapping Census Data to Visualize Local History](#) - Grant coordinated by the National Endowment for the Humanities, special recognition for our project under the '[A More Perfect Union](#)' initiative.

- [Digitization of Historic Ithaca's 1954 Ithaca Tax Photograph Index Cards Collection](#) - A Collaboration of the Tompkins HistoryForge project and Historic Ithaca coordinated by the South Central Regional Library Council

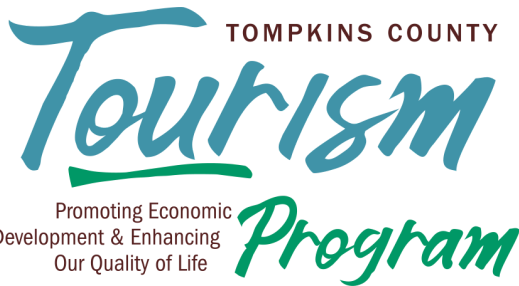
- [Preserving Community Oral Histories](#) - Grant coordinated by the American Historical Association



MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
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Promoting Economic
Development & Enhancing
Our Quality of Life



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

AMERICAN
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION



The History Center in Tompkins County
Exhibit Hall, Research Library & Archives
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Ithaca, N.Y. 14850
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Update your email preferences or **unsubscribe** from this list.

Web: thehistorycenter.net

Phone: 607-273-8284

Email: Staff emails can be
found here

Museum Hours: Wednesday-
Saturday 10am-6pm
CLOSED JANUARY 2024

Research Library & Archives:
By appointment Contact