Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection 2023

Coming out from COVID made the year 2023 very unique for the Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection (HHHC). In many ways, researchers were eager to get back to work hammering us with queries that were unable to be answered online. While other patrons were eager to start projects that were delayed by the pandemic. Some patrons were still hesitant to travel and we received many notes from our out-of-town regulars that usually come and stay here for a week explaining their hesitancy. Hopefully, they will come in 2024. The pandemic certainly changed researching both local history and genealogy forever.

Our biggest accomplishment for the year is completing the $349,999 National Endowment for the Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Implementation Grant that we were awarded in 2020. The New Paltz Historic Document Project was a collaboration between four New Paltz institutions with historical documents: HHHC, Historic Huguenot Street, the Town of New Paltz, and the Reformed Church of New Paltz. These documents include personal papers created or kept by individuals and families chiefly of southern Ulster County, falling into three major categories: 1) legal and financial documents such as wills, deeds, estate inventories, contracts, court records, property survey maps, account books, promissory notes, and receipts; 2) military records from the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 such as soldiers' correspondence, company rosters, equipment lists, orderly books, certificates of appointment and discharges, and 3) family items such as scrapbooks; diaries, family letters, marriage certificates, ciphering books, genealogical notes, and other records. The majority of the papers date from the mid-1600s through 1830, with a few documents through the late 19th century included. 2,724 pages were digitized, of which 163 were single-page objects. These documents are now all online at New York Heritage:

<https://nyheritage.org/organizations/elting-memorial-library-haviland-heidgerd-historical-collection>

The above project was so successful that we were encouraged to apply for a similar grant this year for the amount of $349,955.46. This time the project is focused on various documents from the mid-18th century through the late nineteenth century, with emphasis on the Revolutionary War period to enhance civic education for the upcoming 250th anniversary of the War and the founding of our nation. The quantity of our materials included in this grant is 768 pages. Two other significant collections include papers from the Deyo and Hasbrouck families, the Deyos being direct descendants of a founding family of New Paltz and John Hasbrouck being born to an enslaved woman in 1806. The Daniel Deyo Papers consist of documents in English dating from 1798-1834, and include a receipt of purchase for “a negro man Thom,” two letters of manumission for “my black man James” and “my black woman Dinah,” and receipts pertaining to the building of the first school house on North Front Street. The papers of Leah Catherine Deyo document the life of a mother in the mid-19th century, who loses both of her infant children to disease before losing the battle with her own health, dying at the age of 31. John Hasbrouck was believed to be the first black man eligible to vote in New Paltz. His papers include an account book, personal notes, letters, and receipts.

Since its inception in 1965, HHHC has been assisting other regional non-profits by archiving their institutional records and providing materials for their publications and exhibits. Our working relationship with local organizations such as the Margaret Wade-Lewis Center, Historic Huguenot Street, and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust continues. HHHC’s collection on the history of every building in New Paltz and beyond has been extensively used in various online and physical exhibits, not only at HHS but in the schools and various other institutions. Our research is the backbone for the creation of the newly formed Margaret Wade-Lewis Black History and Cultural Center.

HHHC is very committed to the education of local residents to not only their personal genealogical history but that of the local history of the area. The Lifetime Learning Institute at the State University of New York at New Paltz offers stimulating and fun, non-credit, non-competitive courses for adults 55 years and older. Many of their courses are specific to the Hudson River Valley and HHHC is very instrumental in their offerings. Unfortunately, local history is no longer a part of the State of New York’s educational curriculum. It is up to local civic organizations like HHHC to educate local residents on their surroundings both past and present. The library sponsors not only many history-themed programs, but also lecture series, programs, and exhibits for the New Paltz community as a whole. The new Sally Rhoads Lecture Series focusing on local history was a big hit in October. The featured speaker was Lee Glazer, Director of Museum Programs at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Ms. Glazer was the former curator of the Freer Gallery of Art and asked for our help back in 2016 when she was writing a book on Charles Lang Freer, a local boy who founded the Smithsonian’s art gallery in 1923. Not only was the program highly regarded, it brought back many of our donors to the library for the first time since the pandemic ended.

HHHC assists many patrons, both local and from afar with research and/or images, whether they are interested in the history of the house that they live in or their family tree. Many of these images later show up on Facebook or ancestry.com. Many patrons come in to use our computers to access materials from the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. We have been an affiliate of that library since 2004.

For the past ten years the HHHC has been dedicated to assisting the cause of land preservation through the Wallkill Valley Land Trust (WVLT) and the Mohonk Preserve. An annual house tour sponsored by the WVLT was a special event highlighting historic homes in the Hudson Valley and a major fund-raiser for the non-profit. Volunteers actively researched the house's unique histories and compiled the histories into valuable tour booklets. With our help, these booklets are now being transformed into a soon-to-be-released publication, *Historic Houses and Landscapes of the Mid-Hudson Valley.*

A very time-consuming project that will continue into 2024 was asked of us by the local VFW and the Ulster County Veterans Office. They have asked us to find the graves of local Revolutionary War soldiers so that they can be honored during the upcoming semi-quincentennial. Many of these soldiers are buried in old family grounds throughout the county.

Our volunteers continue to devote their time and efforts to the collection. This year they donated 781 hours. Our volunteers this year include Dave DeMers, Joan Scandariato, Linda Paquin, Sally Vasse, Anne Wandres, Dede Smith, Marilou Abramshe and 96-year-old Ann Thek. This year we also had Rosalie Burke, a student from the Syracuse School of Library Science, fulfill a six-credit internship with us over the summer. Rosalie was required to fulfill 300 work hours with us.

We are thrilled that we were able to restore four of the Library’s early charters including the original 1909 provisional charter of the New Paltz Free Library. We are very thankful to Donna Dixon for transporting them to Philadelphia and back for us. They were restored there, at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts.

2024 will be an interesting year and we are already documenting events such as the removal of the bridge on Brookside Road over the Thruway, the completion of the Empire State Trail through the village, and the construction of a large apartment complex on Route 32 South.

Respectfully,

Carol Johnson

Collection Coordinator