

Good evening.

My name is Dale Freier Jr and I speak to you tonight on behalf of the Fayette Historical Society. I am the current president of the society having taken over the position in October 2022, a little less than a year ago. Tonight, I have with me multiple members of the Board of Trustees.

First, I would like to thank you on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the membership of the society for your financial support of 3,000 dollars from the town budget for 2022 and 2023. These funds, along with privately donated monies and volunteer hours have allowed the Fayette Historical Society to make significant strides forward this past year. I would like to take a few moments to outline some of these accomplishments for you tonight. And by way of beginning, let me first point out that the current board of trustees and officers were all new to their positions on the board since last October. This year has in many ways been a rebirth of society.

The first accomplishment was reestablishing the legal framework of the society as the original organization charter with the Board of Regents had expired and not been renewed for some time and the not-for-profit tax-exempt status (501c3) had been revoked for failing to file straightforward, but nevertheless necessary tax filings and paperwork with the IRS annually for several years in a row. Neither of these two things (the expired charter and losing tax exempt status) are necessarily uncommon with small historical societies or similar small not for profit organizations but neither were they inevitable. This personally was my most significant undertaking for the society for the year as it required enormous effort and time and research over most of the year to successfully navigate reinstatement.

Last fall, after the annual elections, on obtaining its initial access to the historical society building the new board of trustees immediately took note of the condition of our collection within the historical society. It had deteriorated to a critical situation. This required the immediate removal of nearly all affected salvageable material from the building and consultation with document and artifact preservation experts regarding steps at halting the decay process and then cleaning and saving as much material as possible. This was a major undertaking involving countless hours of boxing up, moving, drying and in some cases freezing material before beginning the process of further cleaning. All stabilized material was then taken to a climate-controlled storage unit for safe keeping. This may be our greatest accomplishments as a group for the year as we have recovered and thus saved important documents dating from the founding of Seneca County in 1804 including the initial meeting record of the formation of the Seneca County Medical Society in 1807, General Court records from 1835, election canvases, indentured servant records, various town records, school records and more. These documents bear witness to the rapid development and growth of Seneca County from its very earliest moments. Additionally, private material describing life in Fayette and Seneca County from letters, journals, books, and photos were also recovered. These are priceless and irreplaceable parts of our local history that are now being secured for future generations to research and learn from and enjoy.

This brings me to the next area of accomplishment, which is our building, the original 1846 brick structure that was once the home of the Lutheran Church in the Hamlet of Fayette and then after 1930 a Masonic Temple, and then finally the home of the Fayette Historical Society after 2004.

We are grateful that with the assistance of Town funds a metal roof was placed in 2018 after the original slate roof had failed. This was absolutely necessary at the time; however, the original

water damage through the building and exhibits on the first and second floors and especially along the south side of the building with subsequent mold development and rot have taken a significant toll on the building. To begin with, one of our first acts was to clean up the overgrowth around the building and then paint the front doors. These were small things but readily doable, and they signaled to the community that people were caring for the property.

Electric service had been turned off by prior leadership and this needed to be reconnected, inspected and then new wiring and outlets placed in a safe area of the building. I mentioned earlier that our collection had to be removed from the building and placed in offsite climate-controlled storage. Well, this comes at a monthly expense and limits any real access to the material. Facing this situation, our board made the decision to solve this problem by renovating a small area of the building, the portion least affected from prior damage which was the west end kitchen. This area was cleared of material, cleansed thoroughly, painted, electrified, had new lighting installed, and was heavily insulated. Finally, a new mini split heating/cooling unit and dehumidifier were installed to create a safe fully climate-controlled environment for our document collection. The work was all done by volunteers and with both donated and purchased supplies. In addition to this, a sump pump and drainage line were also placed to dry out the basement of the building which had been holding water secondary to drainage issues and was leading to further damage to the structure. These are all very significant improvements which we carried out and are a huge improvement compared to the situation of last October. Our plan now is to stabilize the building by keeping it dry and ventilated and continuing to remove all damaged material until further professional assessments and fund raising/ financing efforts can be undertaken.

The society held several activities for the community over the last year beginning with our Holiday Happening held at the Fayette Firehouse in December. This featured historic Christmas trees and a Christmas card display representative of various time periods, a raffle, a cookie walk fundraiser, crafts for children and historical dancing. This was attended by over 80 individuals including 26 children. We also hosted a game night focused on local games historically played in Fayette. This took place at the Romulus firehouse in June with approximately 50 people attending including almost 20 youth. Several members of the society hosted a well-attended historic tea in Waterloo this spring and we had a large group of members participate in Rose Hill Mansion's family day in August with demonstrations of butter making, ice cream making, historic games and agriculture which included a working team of oxen and a display of heritage sheep and wool. We also initiated a focus on our local history resources and set up a tour of the Seneca Falls Historical Society which was well attended. We plan to visit more locations in the future. We debuted an official website at [Fayettehistory.org](http://Fayettehistory.org) which we hope to build on for communication purposes as well as an eventual repository of digital archives available for all. We prepared a well-designed informative newsletter which was well received by the membership and will continue twice a year. In addition to these activities, we spent time pursuing our most valuable resources by recording hours of oral interviews with some of our oldest residents documenting their life and experiences and thoughts. These are now preserved for future generations. We also received donations of items of historic significance from the community and recovered a great deal of material including a 19 century carpet loom with 3 generations of local history items extending back into the late 1800's including letters, diaries, and photos and belongings from the Schaffer family home on Poormon Rd before it was torn

down by new owners" last fall. It would have been a tragic loss if this material had not been saved by the Fayette Historical Society.

In conclusion, we have been very busy! I have had a great group of trustees to work with who are all very committed to the success of our historical society and want the best for the Town of Fayette. We will build off this new beginning and develop programming for our community that teaches Fayette's and Seneca County's remarkable history, work to engage our youth, and expand and preserve our collection. Fayette's history is so very significant in many areas, and it has not fully been told. Our history deserves to be investigated and recovered and then taught. When a community understands the history of its "place" it better understands itself and better appreciates its value. Understanding something's value encourages us to be good caretakers of what we have been given by those who came before us. The Fayette Historical Society exists to carry out this role in our community.

Thank you for listening and again thank you for your financial support. I am happy to answer any questions.