



History Happenings

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Last Month at The History Center...

Music of Central New York w/ Dave Ruch

Since November 14th when the program aired, over 500 people have tuned in to watch parts of [Dave Ruch's virtual Music of Central New York program](#) on our Facebook page! This video will remain up, and we encourage everyone to watch and share it! No Facebook account is needed to view the video. Dave performed this virtual event live, and then after the program was able to answer questions over a private Zoom session from an eager family who came to the museum to watch the program "in-person." Dave was a fabulous teacher, covering instruments and songs from the Haudenosaunee, Erie Canal, and Underground Railroad. We hope to bring him back in the future for an in-person event!

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

Thursday-Sunday Every Week - EXHIBIT HALL IS OPEN!

[Hours & Safety Guidelines](#) - Schedule a [private visit](#)!

Visit us for your [READ LOCAL](#) holiday 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! You can also pick up History Center souvenirs from the Visit Ithaca gift shop in the Tompkins Center for History & Culture Thursday-Saturday each week.

December 5th, 12th, & 19th - Learning 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](#) Saturday mornings at 11am November 14th - December 19th. [Subscribe](#) so you don't miss an episode! Catch up by watching the first two on our [Tommy Plane playlist!](#)

December 5th & 19th - [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.

December 19th - Film Screening of *The Gingham Dog & the Calico Cat* - 1-2pm

Kids & families are invited to watch a film screening of the "The Gingham Dog & the Calico Cat" book adaptation. The film will be preceded by a musical performance by Paige Winn.

The film and song were both inspired by the Ithaca Kitty, which captured the hearts of millions of families around the world when it was first released for the holiday season in 1892. Join us for a holiday celebration of this world famous toy.

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

December 24th Ithaca Drag Story Hour - *The Gingham Dog & the Calico Cat* (Virtual Youth Program) 4-5pm

Kids & families are invited to join Tilia & Coraline from Ithaca Drag Story Hour on Christmas Eve for a special performance of "The Gingham Dog & the Calico Cat." A timeless holiday tale of two toys' misadventures on Christmas Eve. The book by Brigid Clark & Chris Noel was inspired by Eugene Fields' famous 1895 poem about two stuffed toys who could not get along. His Calico Cat character was inspired by the then-recently released Ithaca Kitty toy which first captured the hearts of millions of families around the world when it was released for the holiday season in 1892.

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

SAVE THE DATE Tommy Plane Printing Workshop (Youth Program) with Illuminated Press - January date TBA

[From Treman's Desk:
Why I Donate for Local History](#)

Year End Appeal
DONATE HERE

Many of you will see (or may have already received!) The History Center's annual appeal letter in your mailbox in the

coming weeks. We need you now more than ever to join us as we prepare for the coming year. A donation at the end of this year has outsized impact on our ability to recover from what has been a tumultuous 2020. Although 2021 brings its own uncertainty, the continued outpouring of support fills me with optimism for a brighter future.

I am in the enviable position of hearing everyone's reasons for their generous support of The History Center. The personal stories of connection and meaning are each powerful examples of the impact of our local history museum. I don't often get to share why I donate to The History Center, a gift that does not come from a sense of obligation or is written into my job requirement. Instead, I give because I see every day the importance of local history in our community.



We had the wonderful opportunity to collaborate with the [Dorothy Cotton Institute](#) on an exhibit and collection of programs titled *Sisters of Change: Unsung Sheroes for Racial Justice* this past year. The partnership was a powerful celebration of major contributions of women of color in Tompkins County, and across the country. Although I was familiar with some of the people and places, I relished the opportunity to explore many I did not. I gained a deep appreciation of the sacrifices needed to create our world. History matters because it allows us to acknowledge and celebrate our progress towards a more just and equitable society.

The initiative stood in stark contrast to the national reckoning driven by the murder of George Floyd. Our current moment drew the nation's attention to the vast inequities that continue to exist. It brought another part of our history into the spotlight – one that is often easier to overlook, and harder to confront. The History Center responded by creating a *Black Lives Matter* collection to try and document the ongoing racial justice struggle locally, and we continue to grow the collection in real time. This collection will be an asset for future generations of Tompkins County so that they can also celebrate and acknowledge the progress of their community.

This is why I donate to The History Center. History – and specifically local history – is a critical tool for celebrating and understanding how much we've grown and achieved. It is also the tool for understanding how much work is left for us to accomplish today so that the next generation inherits a better world.

This year, I'm doubling my donation to The History Center because I know how significantly COVID-19 has impacted our finances, and I can't imagine Tompkins County without the museum. I'm asking you to please make a gift to The History Center as we close out 2020. However we have impacted your life, it's only possible because you are part of our generous local history community. From everyone at The History Center, thank you for your past generosity. We're looking forward to our future explorations of Tompkins County with you.

Ben Sandberg
Executive Director at
The History Center in Tompkins County



[Tompkins County Schoolhouse Photos - Featured Collection on New York Heritage Digital Collections](#)

Schools have always been the main social enterprise of any community. This centrality



is illustrated by New York State's directive to ensure that adequate funding be put aside for the establishment of schools when Tompkins County was first formed in 1817. These hubs of learning were scattered throughout the county; many were small one-room buildings placed in or near villages, hamlets and other population centers. Classes were often mixed, with older students sharing space, teachers, and resources with their younger sisters and brothers. It wasn't until the mid-20th century that districts consolidated and small village schools were closed, and Tompkins County and communities throughout the state established the modern public school system that we know today.

The History Center is delighted to add a new digital collection to the beautiful New York Heritage Digital Collections website celebrating [Tompkins County schools and students](#). It includes black and white photographs of Tompkins County school buildings, classes, and assorted groups from ca. 1863-1963. The work of many different, mostly unknown photographers, these images range from small 19th century one-room school houses with a scattering of students to large class groups of hundreds of students in mid-20th century public schools.

In this era of Covid-19 we have seen how unsettling life can become without schools in our communities as they have been forced to close and learning was pushed online. This fall these community anchors are beginning to reopen, and students, teachers and administrators are trying to adapt to the new "normal." This display is especially timely and meaningful in these grim times, and it can be seen at <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/history-center-tompkins-county>; this is the sixth [Tompkins County collection](#) digitized and added to New York Heritage.

This photograph display was made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities CARES Act funding.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this collection do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

[Join the Ithaca Kitty for the Holidays with our "Gingham Dog & Calico Cat" Virtual Program Series](#)

When researching the history of the Ithaca Kitty last winter for the "[Tale of Caesar Grimalkin](#)" brochure, our staff were reminded that Eugene Fields' (American humorist & poet) 1895 poem "[The Duel](#)" had been inspired by his own Ithaca Kitty toy. This poem which features a toy dog made of gingham, and a cat made of calico cloth in turn inspired a children's Christmas story published in 1990 nearly 100 years later.

"The Gingham Dog & the Calico Cat" by Brigid Clark & Chris Noel features two quarrelsome toys who tumble out of Santa's sleigh on Christmas Eve and need to work together to find their new home.

We're excited to offer two virtual events for what we hope will become an annual tradition. On December 19th we will be streaming the film adaptation of the book (produced in 1990 by Rabbit

Ears Entertainment), preceded by a musical performance by Paige Winn of a song rendition of Eugene Fields' poem, first recorded in 1960 by Dorothy Olsen for her [Songs About Animals, Birds for Children](#) album.

On December 24th we will stream a pre-recorded video of Tilia and Coraline from Ithaca Drag Story Hour reading the book aloud for a [special Christmas Eve performance](#).

Both these programs will be available to watch through our [Facebook page](#) (no account is necessary to see the programs), and [YouTube channel](#) during the scheduled times and will remain available afterwards.

We hope you'll join us for these holiday programs, and enjoy bringing local history and it's many artistic re-interpretations into your homes this holiday season. *You can purchase your own piece of Ithaca-made history, and bring the Ithaca Kitty home for the holidays [here](#). All purchases support The History Center in Tompkins County.*

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

Gingham Dog & the Calico Cat

Musical Performance & Film Screening

Join us for a virtual screening of this timeless holiday tale inspired by the Ithaca Kitty.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 19TH
1-2PM - FREE - VIRTUAL

Kids & families are invited to watch a film screening of the "The Gingham Dog & the Calico Cat" book adaptation. The film will be preceded by a musical performance by Paige Winn.

The film and song were both inspired by the Ithaca Kitty, which captured the hearts of millions of families around the world when it was released for the holiday season in 1892. Join us for a holiday celebration of this world famous toy, which was invented by two Ithaca women over 120 years ago.

LOCATION:

Comfort of your own home!!

Tune in to The History Center in Tompkins County Facebook page [facebook.com/TompkinsHistory](#) (No account needed to watch).



Contact Zoë Van Nostrand at community@thehistorycenter.net with any questions.



Seeking Experienced Transcribers for the Winter

Dear THC Community,

Since [HistoryForge](#) began four years ago it has grown from a small local volunteer project into a national model for a public participatory historical project.

Over the past year, with the help of our tireless volunteers and support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), we have created a new, more user-friendly [website](#), rolled out new data entry pages that more accurately reflect the census questions, increased our transcription accuracy, finished transcribing the 1920 and 1930 censuses (creating a total of four complete datasets of the 1900-1930 US Census for the City of Ithaca), and started on the 1940 census.



HistoryForge Project Coordinator Eve Snyder was interviewed in November by IthacaWeek reporter Antonio Ferme about the HistoryForge project.

All of this has been in preparation for expanding HistoryForge into additional communities as part of year two of our grant. We will soon be partnering with the [Seymour Library](#) in Auburn, and the [Chemung Valley Historical Society](#) in Elmira. We also have strong interest from an out-of-state institution that we are hoping will translate into a partnership in order to expand HistoryForge beyond the boundaries of New York State. Over the next year, these communities will begin to create their own versions of HistoryForge based on our model. This will entail transcribing the 1910 census, creating a historical map layer, and adding digitized archival material for their communities.

As we get ready to start working with these organizations, we would like to pull together a group of experienced transcribers from the Ithaca project to help with training new transcribers from these

communities. If you didn't start until after the 1910 census or haven't volunteered with us for a while, that is okay! We would like to start fresh with a brief overview and teaching session on how to train the new volunteers. If you are interested, please send Eve an email at HistoryForge@thehistorycenter.net.

Thanks,
Bob Kibbee and Eve Snyder

Inclined Planes of the Ithaca & Owego Railroad



The Ithaca & Owego Railroad was organized in 1827 and is reputed to have been the third railroad built in North America. It was the missing transportation link in an otherwise water route between the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay. It connected Ithaca, on the southern shore of Cayuga Lake with the Susquehanna River at Owego. Ithaca was a rapidly-developing small city with a population of 5,000 by 1840.

Pre-dating a "zig-zag" or switchback system were two inclined planes which overcame the steep South Hill. From the summit it was a "flat land" 30-mile railroad to Owego. Although the planes were abandoned in 1850, they have long captured the interest of railroad historians. For generations remnants could be found on the Ithaca College campus. A similar operation existed with the Mohawk & Hudson Railroad in Albany...

READ MORE

Richard Palmer is a historian with a specialty in railroad history. He is also a member of the [Cornell Railroad Historical Society](#).

Tompkins Trust Company Honors History Center Volunteer

'James J. Byrnes Awards for Excellence' Recognizes Martha Preston



Excerpted from The Ithaca Times "Biz Briefs"

Issue from November 18th-24th 2020 pg. 15

"Tompkins Trust Company honored two individuals and four groups with James J. Byrnes Awards for Excellence for their outstanding volunteer service to the community. Twelve thousand dollars was donated to local charitable organizations from the bank's endowment fund through the Legacy Foundation of Tompkins County. The honorees each designated their monetary awards to the not-for-profit organizations of their choice... The James J. Byrnes Awards for Excellence program was established during the bank's Sesquicentennial Celebration in 1986 as a means of sharing its success with community members who have helped to enrich the quality of life in Tompkins County...Martha K. Preston, for her tireless work volunteering with The History Center and centering her life's work on local history and preservation."

Laurel Southard & Martha Preston

pictured at a History Center event in 2019.

Martha is a Tompkins County Heritage Ambassador, tour guide, and docent at The History Center. We are endlessly grateful for the energy, support, and passion she brings to programming at The History Center. Stop by the museum to see the new George Washington portrait hung in our Eight Square Schoolhouse replica in honor of her financial contributions to the [Children's Play Area](#) during construction at our new location.

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 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!