

March 2021



History Happenings

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

[Events Calendar](#)

[Schedule A Visit](#)

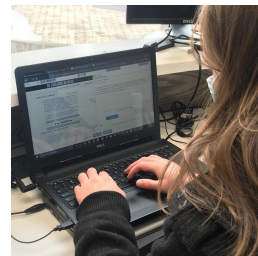
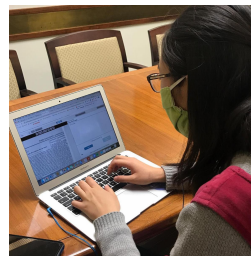
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Last Month at The History Center...

THC Volunteers Transcribe for #DouglassDay

Over the Valentines weekend, volunteers at The History Center in Tompkins County participated in [#DouglassDay](#). Douglass Day is an annual national event to celebrate February 14th, the day that Frederick Douglass celebrated his birthday. Frederick Douglass [visited Tompkins County multiple times](#) during his life. Speaking to abolitionist crowds at St James AME Zion Church, and other local congregations and community groups in the 1850's.



This year Douglass Day citizen transcribers across the country helped to transcribe the papers of African-American educator, activist, and suffragist [Mary Church Terrell](#). The Library of Congress holds a scanned collection of nearly 25,000 documents in their Mary Church Terrell Collection. Our volunteers joined over 3,400 transcribers across the country in re-typing these documents to help save the collection and improve its searchability for researchers. There are still 500+ documents that haven't been transcribed, and anyone can join in the virtual research fun by spending some time to help complete these documents.

Explore here: <https://crowd.loc.gov/campaigns/mary-church-terrell-advocate-for-african-americans-and-women/>

Upcoming Events - thehistorycenter.net/events

March is Women's History Month! Explore Women's History in Tompkins County, historic local women, and engage with curriculum and virtual exhibits on our [Women's History Month](#) web page. Stop by our Exhibit Hall and learn about the phenomenal lives of women civil rights leaders in the "Sisters of Change" exhibit in our atrium, and other historic women throughout our [Exhibit Hall](#).

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

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

March 4th - [Fab5 Young Professional Award Ceremony \(Virtual\)](#) - 5:30-7:30pm

Join us on Zoom to celebrate Ben Sandberg's "Rookie of the Year" Young Professional Award! All members of the community are invited to honor and celebrate these young professionals at the free virtual 2021 Fab5 Young Professional Awards Celebration on Thursday, March 4, 2021 from 6:00 to 7:30pm. The event will be live-streamed via YouTube with a watch party option via Zoom for those who would like to virtually attend and chat with other guests in attendance. Additionally, there will be a special signature Fab5 cocktail that can be purchased from **Monks on the Commons** and enjoyed at home while watching the event.

[Register Here](#). *This event is free to attend.*

March 6th & 20th - [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.

March 6th & 13th - Learning to Fly with Tommy - Saturdays at 10am

Join us for weekly premieres on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) (IGTV) 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 [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) profiles Saturday mornings at 10am February 13th-March 13th. [Like](#) & [Follow](#) so you don't miss an episode! Parents and educators can download worksheets for each episode on our [Learn with Tommy!](#) page on the website.

[Move When the Spirit Says Move](#) [A Documentary to Carry Forward the Legacy of Dorothy Foreman Cotton](#)

DONATE



The [Dorothy Cotton Institute](#) is excited to partner with [PhotoSynthesis Productions](#) (PSP), an Ithaca-based film company, to produce a documentary that will be a tribute to the life and ongoing legacy of Dr. Dorothy Foreman Cotton, a civil rights icon of the Southern Freedom Movement. Dr. Cotton lived in Ithaca from the 1980's until her death in 2018. She worked as

the Director of Student Activities at Cornell University and co-founded the Dorothy Cotton Institute (a partner at the Tompkins Center for History & Culture).

Dorothy Cotton served for eight years as Education Director of the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#) (SCLC) in the 1960's and was the only woman on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Executive Staff. The centerpiece of her leadership was the Citizenship Education Program (CEP), a popular-education program that moved thousands of people from a mindset of "victim" to that of a fully-engaged "citizen."

The CEP equipped grassroots activists throughout the southern United States with a grounding in their constitutional rights and how to use the principles of nonviolent direct action. In a brutal context where racial segregation hatred, and the threat of terrorism were daily realities, CEP participants went on to risk their lives to register voters, organize communities, demonstrations, strikes & boycotts, run for office, and ultimately overturn Jim Crow laws. The CEP is a model for popular education & movement building that has empowered freedom struggles across the globe.

The film will focus not only on Dorothy Cotton's role with the CEP, but will also highlight several other unsung s/heroes of the movement whose names & contributions the public should know. Dorothy Cotton's work on nonviolence, the power of freedom songs, and taking action did not end in the 60's. The film will include interviews with her colleagues & friends, archival footage of her talks & workshops, and the impact of her remarkable life.

This [fundraiser](#) will support the completion of the film and support continuing education around Dorothy's vital contributions to the Civil Rights movement.

[THC Executive Director Wins "Rookie of the Year" Fab5 Young Professional Award](#)

Ben's very first year as Executive Director had many unexpected challenges and adjustments, and Ben rose to meet all of them with innovation, generosity, and humor. We're very proud of his many accomplishments in his first year at The History Center, only some of which are highlighted below, and our organization looks forward to many more years under his thoughtful direction.

Congratulations to Ben Sandberg, the new Executive Director of [The History Center in Tompkins County](#) for winning the Young Professional Rookie of the Year award for his creativity and commitment as a new leader of The History Center during this challenging year.



Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Ben worked tirelessly to support the staff and stakeholders of the History Center in Tompkins County by securing ongoing funding in spite of challenging times and implementing plans to ensure employee safety.

Ben has sought to make The History Center more diverse and inclusive for patrons of Tompkins County and beyond. To achieve this goal, he has collaborated with other community organizations to launch new programs and exhibits, most recently The Sisters of Change Exhibit, The Ceremony to honor Alex Haley, and building a Black Lives Matter Collection at The History Center.

In his new role, he has undergone many successful grant writing efforts, one of which resulted

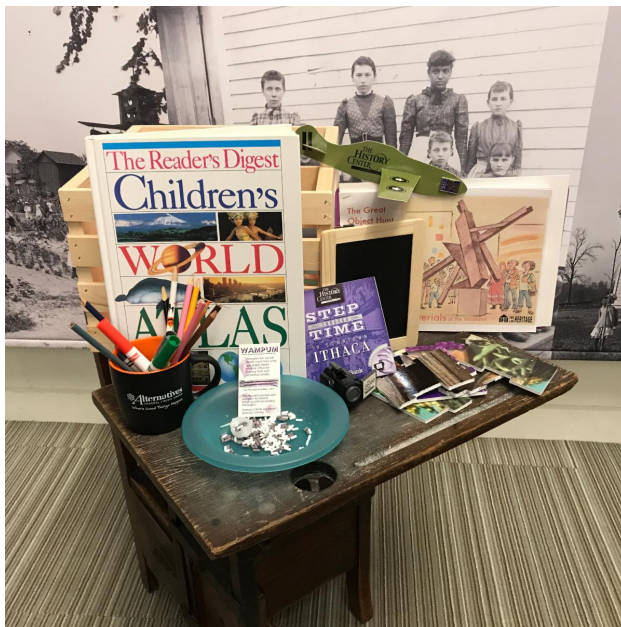
in The History Center being selected as one of 317 funded applications for the NEH CARES relief grants and receiving \$79,814. Through the development of and participation in various fundraisers, including “24 Hours of Biking”, “Haunted History Tours”, and “Giving is Gorges,” Ben has demonstrated strong innovation skills and has been able to instill an interest in local history in a younger demographic.

Ben leads by example and is constantly thinking of ways to adapt the organization to the current conditions while continuing to strategize for a strong future.

All members of the community are invited to honor and celebrate these young professionals at the free virtual awards ceremony on Thursday, March 4, 2021 from 6:00 to 7:30pm. Register here: <https://www.tompkinschamber.org/fab5awards>

The Tompkins Connect Fab5 Awards are presented by [Tompkins Trust Company](#).

Explore the Museum - Hands On Activity Crates



Last year, as coronavirus cases began to be announced in the United States, one of the first things we changed was the removal of our hands on activities in the Eight Square Schoolhouse replica in our Exhibit Hall.

This area was our [children's play area](#), complete with a dress up bin, 19th century schoolbooks, slates and chalk, and a working antique cash register with money that children had great joy in counting and rearranging.

The loss of these activities because of the pandemic left us feeling that our space didn't have as many opportunities for engagement with younger generations. We've finally found a covid-safe work-around for kids and families to explore local history in a safe hands on way!

Check out our new "[Explore the Museum Activity Crates](#)"! By pre-booking your visit on [FareHarbor](#), for \$5 you can reserve an activity crate with a wampum beading activity, children's books, puzzles, scavenger hunt, children's encyclopedia, coloring sheets, and a make your own Tommy Plane paper glider and flying activity. Following each use crates and activities will be quarantined for 3 days before going through a full sanitation process. Thanks to grant funds from the [New York State Council on the Arts](#), we were able to purchase multiple sets of activities in each crate, allowing us to rotate them while maintaining necessary health and safety standards. *Our thanks to these local businesses for helping us with supplies for these programs: [Autumn Leaves Used Books](#), [Ithaca ReUse](#), and [Ithaca Home Depot](#).*

We look forward to adding new activities to the crates in future years to keep them exciting and connected with current exhibits in the museum. (*While we planned these activities with youth in mind, adults are also welcome to check out activity crates for added fun in their museum visits*)

Community partners and educators are invited to contact us at community@thehistorycenter.net to request a limited number of "free coupons" for these activity sets and museum visits that can be shared with families to waive the booking fee.

These activities and materials were funded through a generous grant from the [New York State Council on the Arts](#).

Recently Published Books on Local History!

[Explaining Tompkins: It's Growth & Government - by](#)

[Carol Kammen & Joe Mareane](#) (\$5) discusses, with stunning maps, how towns in the county expanded, then decreased until we have ended up with 9 towns and a City. The second half of the pamphlet, written by Joe Mareane, former county-supervisor, in lively prose discusses the things the county does: those that the state imposes, those that people want, and some of those in the middle that happen. He begins his march through the 20th century with Pinkerton detectives chasing the county treasurer around the country in an attempt to retrieve some money he just happened to leave with. This essay explains the many duties that the county performs, some like collecting taxes quite obvious, others like insuring that a gallon of gasoline at the pump is actually a gallon. It is a civics lesson well-told.

[On the Trail of Coffin Man - Researching 19th Century Gravestone Carvers of Central New York State - by](#)

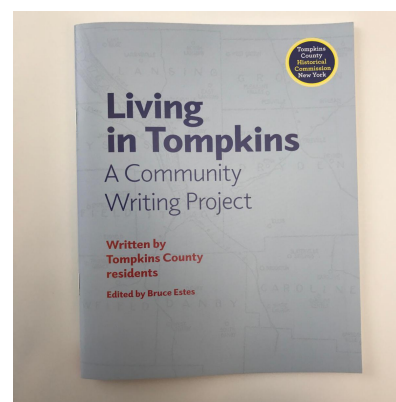
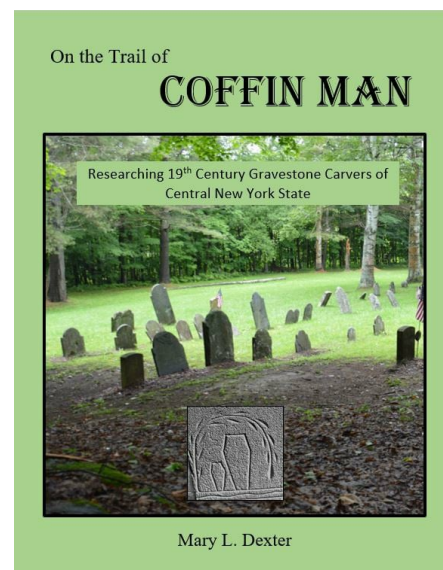
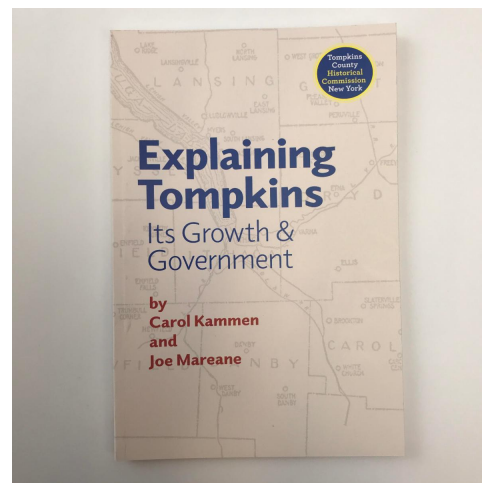
[Mary L. Dexter](#) (\$20) is based on the author's 45 years of research into the cemeteries and gravestones in Central New York. A look at the carver Jonas Stewart, 2nd (aka Coffin Man), his apprentices "Open Urn" and "Eclectic Man" in NY & PA. This journey also includes the Stewart/Stuart family of gravestone carvers in VT, NH and MA. There is also a look at other gravestone carvers in Central NY including J. Crandall. She focuses on the stories, skills, and creativity of five gravestone carvers with examples of their work.

[Living in Tompkins: A Community Writing Project](#) (\$5)

resulted from an attempt to give everyone a chance to have a say about our community. Rather than leaving comments to the journalists, politicians or even historians, Living in Tompkins contains the thoughts of people from all parts of the county and from all walks of life who describe what makes living here special—or difficult—or pleasant—or the reason to return from elsewhere. These 37 essays were selected from several hundred submitted: they tell us about an appreciation of nature [Darlington and Alper], comments about friends [Rabbi Scott Glass], to putting in a garden [Lesser], to watching birds [Kimble-Dugan]. Annoyances do creep in: one needs to deal with the weather [Lazzaro], deal with travel about the county without a car [Ferriss], and how we come to understand, if not like, change [see Franklin Crawford, our home-town close-observer of life in Tiny-Town].

[The Last Flight of El Flako: A Nephew's Tribute to a Gallant Crew on their First and last B-24 Mission - By](#)

[Robert J. Steele](#) (\$10) Sgt Dewey Dey Steele was one of ten crewmembers aboard a B-24 nicknamed "El Flako." He and his entire crew perished on their first and only mission on November 2, 1944. Steele was the uncle of the author and was raised in Freeville-Malloryville area in the north-east corner of Tompkins County. His nephew Robert J. Steele researched and wrote the book to honor the sacrifice of his uncle, his crew members, and all WWII veterans.



Recognizing Martha Van Rensselaer's Lasting Impact -

by Kate Delaney - Writing Intern with The History Center



Martha Van Rensselaer, was one of the first two full time female professors hired by @Cornell University. Born in 1864, she was inspired by her mother's involvement in the suffrage movement. After working as a school commissioner in Cattaraugus County, she was passionate about improving the lives of rural farming families. This led to her accepting an invitation in 1900 from Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell to create a program specifically for rural women in the area. After more than 20,000 women enrolled in the program, Cornell realized how important home economics courses were and went on to offer these courses full time in 1908. Van Rensselaer worked alongside Flora Rose, who had been employed by Cornell in the previous year, to co-run the Department of Home Economics. The department flourished under their guidance and by 1919, the department expanded into the School of Home Economics...

[READ MORE](#)

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**

**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!](#)