



1902 Niagara Street  
Buffalo, New York, 14207

### Spring Hours

April-June  
Thursday & Friday 11 am – 3 pm

*We apologize but our museum is closed until further notice. We will see you soon!*

Find us online:

[www.blackrockhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.blackrockhistoricalsociety.com)



@blackrockhistorical

### The BRHS Seeks Volunteers

Your interest and love of history are the best reasons to volunteer! Students, seniors, and everyone in-between are welcome to share your various areas of interest. Every volunteer can make a difference.

To volunteer, contact us via email ([info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com)) or call 716-913-5447.

### Artifact Donations

We continue to seek historic objects, documents, or photographs that tell the story of our community.

Please call to schedule an appointment or discuss your finds. (call 716-913-5447).



Rebecca Torres and Jeanine Baran

### Welcome New Members!

◇ Ward Bray

### Thank You for Renewing Your Membership!

◇ Gary Astridge  
◇ William Butler  
◇ Doreen DeBoth  
◇ Stephen Golyski  
◇ Phyllis Horton  
◇ Mary Ann + Joe Kedron  
◇ Priscilla Knisley  
◇ Noreen + Joe Korona  
◇ James Lee  
◇ Tom Lenz  
◇ Diana + Richard Martin  
◇ Margaret McCarthy  
◇ Marilyn McKenzie  
◇ Dennis Uminski

### Thank You for Your Donation!

◇ Buffalo Maritime Center  
◇ Stephen Golyski  
◇ Phyllis Horton  
◇ James Lee  
◇ Marilyn McKenzie  
◇ Mary Quinn-Stanbro

### Thank you Collection Donors!

◇ All Saints R.C. Church  
◇ Ben Brown  
◇ Joseph Gardner  
◇ Al Killian  
◇ Tom Lenz  
◇ Paul Redding  
◇ Mark Zauner



*We wish to extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Chuck "Big Wheelie" Vicario.*

*(Big Wheelie & Doreen DeBoth, BRHS "Music of the Ages" Fundraiser, 2019)*

### Submissions:

Are you knowledgeable about historic people, places and events in the Black Rock, Riverside, Grant-Amherst or West Hertel neighborhoods? We always welcome members to submit articles to the BRHS newsletter. If you wish to include your stories in our next newsletter, please provide your submission via email ([info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com)) no later than June 15, 2020. Thank you.



1st Quarter Newsletter  
January/March 2020

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### Our Museum in Action by William Butler

The Year 2020 has certainly taught us all how to adapt to change on several different levels. First, we have had to significantly adjust museum operations in order to protect public health and safety during the nationwide response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a consequence, our museum has been closed to the public since early March 2020. We continue to learn to work together while we are apart and deeply apologize for any disruption to our service to our members and the community. As conditions permit our volunteers are using this downtime to reorganize our collections and exhibits, and we anxiously look forward to your return.

As you may be aware, the Black Rock Historical Society was fully certified as a 501(3)(c) nonprofit corporation by the Internal Revenue Service on November 4, 2019. Although we now operate separately as an independent organization, we continue to share resources and staff with the Black Rock-Riverside Alliance, Inc. at 1902 Niagara Street through a Memorandum of Understanding.

The new year also brought a momentous change in leadership for the Society. Doreen DeBoth has decided to step down as President. As the Society's first president and founding trustee, Doreen has been the welcoming face of the Black Rock Historical Society since its inception in 2013. On December 12, 2019, North District Councilmember Joe Golombek acknowledged Doreen with a Buffalo Common Council proclamation recognizing Doreen for her selfless service, notably the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration, Tonawanda Street Historical Mural and Grant-Amherst Business Association's *Pictorial History of Black Rock* book project as well as her many accomplishments as artist, preservationist, historian and Grant Amherst business owner. Thankfully, Doreen will continue her service to the BRHS as Board Member, Museum Curator, and Exhibit Coordinator.



Doreen DeBoth and Joe Golombek

To fill Doreen's formidable shoes, the BRHS Board of Directors approved Bill Butler as our new president. Bill has worked as a BRHS volunteer and Board Member since 2014, and since his



New BRHS President Bill Butler

retirement from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2016 has now been able to commit more time to help us accomplish our mission. The Board also approved Mark Peszko, Esq. as Vice President and Mary Ann Kedron, PhD. as Treasurer.

Two newly elected Directors also came "on board" in January-February 2020. Rebecca Torres is a professional violinist and teacher. John Dracup is a full-time student at the University at Buffalo who is currently pursuing an MBA concentrating on data modeling and analytics, and a JD with a focus on entrepreneurship and intellectual property. Welcome, Rebecca and John!

Exhibit Coordinator Doreen DeBoth continues her diligent work on organizing the exhibit space at our museum. Repainted and reworked cabinets will include thematic exhibits of artifacts and displays of Early Black Rock, War of 1812, Erie Canal, Fenian Invasion, Early Shipping, and Commerce and Industry. Volunteers Jeanine Baran, Bill Butler, Doreen and Richard DeBoth, and Rebecca Torres spared no elbow grease in polishing and shining century old trophies from the Black Rock Cycling Club trophies donated by Black Rock-Riverside Neighborhood Housing Services. The trophies now have dedicated display space in the museum.



Black Rock Cycling Club Trophies

In March, Father Angelo Chimera generously donated an archive of historic photographs and documents from All Saints R.C. Church located at 127 Chaddock Avenue. The parish was originally established in Riverside in 1911 with the present-day church completed in 1938. The All Saints collection memorializes the church's ceremonies and celebrations, elementary school faculty and students, and social and sports activities.

Our museum also received a donation of Western New York Heritage magazines from BRHS member Ward Bray. The collection will be a great addition to our local history research resources. To complete the set, we are still looking for editions from the years 1997 through 2001 as well as the Summer 2008 edition.

On February 6, 2020, the BRHS Preservation Committee met and was provided a tour of the former Precinct 13 station at

## Our Museum in Action (cont'd)

346 Austin Street. The committee was also given an update on the status of the City of Buffalo's landmark designation review for St. John's UCC Church at 85 Amherst Street and discussed an interest in potential landmark status for the Ukrainian-American Civic Center at 205 Military Road.

Doreen DeBoth and Bill Butler are working with the Erie County Bicentennial Planning Committee to develop and organize activities and events to commemorate the establishment of Erie County in 1821. Under the leadership of Doug Kohler, Erie County Historian, and Melissa Brown, Buffalo History Museum Executive Director, several cultural organizations are joining together to create, organize and promote signature experiences throughout the county that will help celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



Mary Ann Kedron speaks about Black Rock History at Buffalo Maritime Center's Black Rock Community Day.

On February 8, 2020, BRHS Treasurer Mary Ann Kedron gave an entertaining and enlightening presentation at the Buffalo Maritime Center's Black Rock Community Day. Mary Ann spoke to a standing room-only audience about the first land allotments in Black Rock-Riverside, the importance of early salt and lumber trade, the area's strategic significance during the War of 1812, and how Black Rock and Black Rock Harbor were shaped by the construction of the Erie Canal and subsequent industrial development as well as the various ethnic groups who formed our community. BRHS volunteers Jeanine Baran, Doreen DeBoth and Bill Butler were also on hand to welcome visitors and provide information on our Erie Canal displays. We thank the Buffalo Maritime Center for including us in this enjoyable event as well as their generous donation to the BRHS!

Mary Ann Kedron and our Preservation Committee are involved with Preservation Buffalo Niagara's 1850 Project. In 1996, preservation experts surveyed the city of Buffalo to identify structures built prior to 1860 with Black Rock containing the highest percentage of these buildings. Of the total 215 buildings identified during this survey, nearly 30 percent of the structures

have been lost. Of the remaining structures, over 80 percent currently have no formal historic designation. The 1850 Project will be training volunteers to research these buildings and pursue proper preservation protections.

## U.S. Hame Company by William Butler

A hame is one of the two curved wooden or metal pieces of a harness or collar that fits around the neck of a horse or other draft animal to which the traces of the reins are attached.

U.S. Hame Company and its predecessors manufactured hundreds of thousands of them in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The U.S. Hame Company was formed in 1902 as the result of the consolidation of two 19<sup>th</sup> century hame and saddlery manufacturers, the United Hame Company of Buffalo, New York and the Consolidated Hame Company of Andover, New Hampshire. United Hame, the manufacturer of "Buffalo Wood Hames", was headed by O. P. Letchworth, a relative of the Buffalo millionaire industrialist, philanthropist and environmentalist William Pryor Letchworth who co-founded Pratt & Letchworth, a large Buffalo-based manufacturer of saddlery hardware, rings, buckles, trees, and hames. According to a January 27, 1872 article in the New York Times, "Pratt & Letchworth were...the largest manufacturers of saddlery hardware in the United States". Pratt & Letchworth is also remembered today as the manufacturers of a line of highly detailed cast-iron horse-drawn military toys produced in the late 1890s. Pristine examples have been known to fetch as much as \$100,000.



Hames and U.S. Hame Co./USHCO promotional saddlery brush (BRHS Collection)



Horse collar with hames

Following Pratt & Letchworth's takeover of Buffalo Malleable Steel in 1890, O. P. Letchworth created United Hame Co. to focus attention on the firm's successful line of horse collars, hames, and other saddlery hardware. By the turn of the century, O. P. was running both Pratt & Letchworth and United Hame. Letchworth was also an avid yachting enthusiast and operated his own steam yacht, the *Alcina*, along the Niagara River. In addition, he was also a major stockholder in the Great Lakes Engineering Company, one of the nation's largest shipbuilders.

United Hame built a new factory at 135 Tonawanda Street in 1900 and two years later merged with Clarence Edgar Carr's Consolidated Hame, forming the U.S. Hame Company.



U.S. Hame Company, 135 Tonawanda Street

In the late 1920s, U.S. Hame Co. reorganized as USHCO Mfg. Co. with Robert U. Carr as president. A wholly-owned subsidiary, U.S. Body & Forging Co. Inc. was created to market truck and automobile bodies across the country as USHCO no longer wished to be associated with their horse-drawn beginnings. For a good number of years, the firm was alternately known as USHCO, U.S. Body & Forging or sometimes both. In addition to truck bodies the firm also manufactured drop-forged hand tools in their Buffalo factory during the 1920s. A popular item at the time was their 8-inch, 10-inch, 12-inch and 14-inch adjustable pipe wrenches that were built using Gottfrid C. Lawson's patent.



Lawson USHCO Mfg. Co., 6-inch adjustable pipe wrench (BRHS Collection, donated by Mark Zauner)

## A New Parish for Riverside, 1911 by William Butler

The All Saints R.C. Church document collection beckons us to recall the foundation of the first Catholic church in the Riverside community. With expanding growth in both Black Rock and Riverside, Rev. Charles Schaus, pastor of St. Xavier R.C. Church

on East Street, recommended and Buffalo Diocesan Bishop Charles Colton approved the establishment of a new parish in the Riverside area. In 1911, the bishop chose Rev. Henry Dolan to begin the planning work. Rev. Dolan surveyed the area and held meetings in neighborhood homes to determine the prospect for success of a new parish. Convinced with the positive public response, the diocese let a contract for the construction of the first simple wood-frame church. Within 11 days, the 200-seat building was completed and the congregation celebrated the first mass on Christmas Day 1911. In its early days, the building served as both a church and school however in March 1913 it was destroyed by fire. Fortunately, a school building for the parish was already under construction. Without a place to worship, the parish expedited the completion of the school and began holding church services in its basement.

When Chevrolet announced the construction of its new factory in the 1930's, Riverside experienced further rapid growth. Many plant workers and their families chose All Saints as their center for both spiritual and social communion. As the congregation grew, the need for a new house of worship became clear. In 1937, planning began for the construction of a church at its current 127 Chaddock Avenue location. Ground was broken on October 17, 1937 and the cornerstone was placed on December 27. The 840-seat building was completed in November 1938 and the very first service held was the funeral for Rev. William Meegan, the man responsible for its construction.

The new church was designed by Bley and Lyman, Architects. Other notable Bley and Lyman works in Buffalo include the Saturn Club (Delaware Avenue) and Federal Courthouse (Court Street). The Colonial Style building is distinguished by four stately white columns supporting its entrance portico. This motif is carried throughout the barrel-vaulted interior with its dentiled cove moldings and broken pediments above the doorways. The church's 1923 Wurlitzer organ, acquired in June 1938, was a gift of Ellsworth Statler. Originally in the Golden Ballroom of the Statler Hotel on Niagara Square, it was removed during hotel renovations. The organ was rebuilt in 1991.

[Sources: James Napora, *Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York*; Buffalo Architecture and History]



All Saints R.C. Church



1923 Wurlitzer Organ console