

BLACK ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Review of the activities and events of the Black Rock Historical Society
serving the communities of Black Rock, Riverside, Grant Amherst and West
Hertel in the northwest section of the City of Buffalo, N.Y.

2016

This has been such an exciting and productive year for our museum. We have continued to grow our museum collection, our outreach activities and our networking. We are particularly proud to house our collection in our museum as we continue to increase the hours of availability to the community. Please check our website or Facebook page throughout the year for more exciting events.

Events

Unity Island Marker Ceremony After working throughout the year to get a new Unity Island historic marker replaced, the installation ceremony finally took place on November 4th thanks to funding from Seneca Nation President Maurice John, US Congressman Brian Higgins, County Legislator Peter Savage III, and North District Councilmember Joseph Golombek Jr.. It was a memorable event that will begin to repair the damage of the island's previous name that was disrespectful and bigoted towards all Native women.



150th Commemoration of the Fenian Invasion of Canada

Plans for the 150th Commemoration of the Fenian Invasion of Canada began in October of 2015, meeting at our museum with other cultural groups and historians. We were invited to participate in the Old First Ward Neighborhood Parade, had a banner made, and had a great time marching and meeting many people.



With Fenian commemoration plans in full gear, our 2nd quarterly newsletter included a history of the Fenian Invasion. An artifact in the collection is usually featured in every newsletter. Push Ball, the forgotten sport discussed its history and featured a photo of the Push Ball Trophy the Black Rock Cycle Club won in 1913.

In April the Fenian committee held a panel discussion hosted by the Buffalo History Museum: The Free Ireland Perspective on the Fenian Invasion, with Timothy Bohan (Historian/Author), James Hill (Niagara Parks Commission), Dr. Timothy Madigan (St. John Fisher College), James O'Brien (Ancient Order of Hibernians, AOH), William Patterson (AOH), Dr. Bridgette Slavin (Medaille College) with moderators: Douglas Kohler (Erie County Historian) and Edward Patton (Buffalo Irish Genealogical Society, BIGS).

May also became a memorable month for us as we were asked to host a luncheon for the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Criona Ni Dhalaiagh who requested to meet the members of the Fenian committee. Arranged by Senator Tim Kennedy's office, the museum was packed with public officials and historians.

Following lunch, a ceremony at the Fenian Monument took place and the Lord Mayor presented a scroll to me on behalf of the BRHS. This was a great honor and a similar event closely followed as we got closer to the Fenian Commemorations in June.

The Consul General of Ireland, Barbara Jones was our special guest for the culmination of our months in the planning of the final Fenian events. She arrived for the "Muster the Troops!" Hooley at the Buffalo Irish Center on Friday evening, shook hands with everyone, and had pizza, wings and Guinness that were provided by Senator Kennedy.



Rush the Growler and Union Volunteers Fife and Drum Corps entertained with songs and music from the era.

The Fenian commemorations continued the following day with a Living a History with the Buffalo 7th Regiment, Irish Army of Liberation and a parade beginning at Amherst St., moving up Niagara St. to the Fenian monument at the foot of Hertel with Barbara Jones and Tim Kennedy as grand marshals.

At the ceremony, speeches were given and Senator Kennedy presented me, on behalf of the BRHS with a Legislative Proclamation recognizing the 150th Anniversary of the Fenian Invasion of 1866 on June 4th, 2016 and its historical importance and "to express the highest admiration for the Black Rock Historical Society, and for all the individuals who have worked to bring proper attention to a place and time which merits recognition in the great panorama of the history of our State and Nation." Later a wreath of green and yellow flowers was tossed into the river and a reception for all followed at the museum.

4th of July Riverside Parade The 4th of July Riverside Parade is always fun and some of our members marched and gave out our walking and biking historic trail maps to the viewers standing along Tonawanda St.



D District Community Days In August we participated in the first D District Community Day in Riverside Park with an exhibit of vintage roller and ice skates that was enjoyed by all ages. We also had coloring for kids and adults, candy, fun tattoos and a variety of games.



Celtic Festival This was our first year participating in the Celtic Festival in Olcott, NY and it was a great opportunity to connect with other groups and individuals. During the two days we were there, we had approximately 300 people stop at our tent to see our exhibit and talk about the BRHS.



Rocktoberfest October featured the 2nd annual Rocktoberfest organized by the Grant Amherst Business Association that includes a shuttle bus to take patrons to a number of taverns in the area. Before keg tapping that begins the event, other groups are invited to display their wares.



Education

Art as History Displays coincided with an exhibit of winners from the first annual “Art as History” contest with grades 6-8 students from North Park Academy. This is one of two projects that we engage local schools in and introduces students to the important role that art has played throughout history. It also gives students the opportunity to recreate local historical events for greater understanding of their community. Topics included the Black Rock Canal and Lock, Curtiss-Wright Aero & Motor Co., and Railroads.



Education and working with area schools is a priority of the BRHS. The project was funded by the West Side Youth Development Coalition at Buffalo State College. An exhibit of all entries followed and despite blizzard conditions on a snowy Sunday afternoon, there was a great unexpected turnout.

History in Your Neighborhood Awards for the 3rd Annual History in Your Neighborhood essay contest were presented to students of Riverside HS in May. The purpose of the contest is to give students the opportunity to become familiar with local historical events and improve and enhance their writing skills.



Buffalo Arts Studio's Jump Start Attendance in November increased dramatically with tours of students from the Buffalo Arts Studio's Jump Start Program and two groups from Riverside HS.



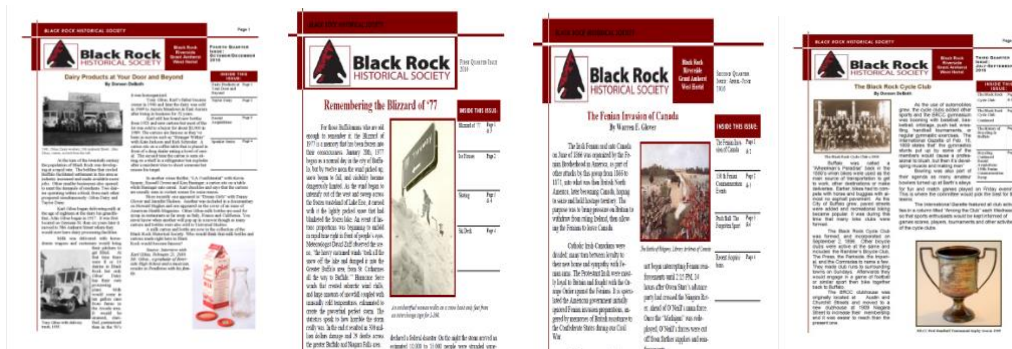
Art is History The year concluded with an awards ceremony for our 2nd annual Art as History contest at Riverside HS. Another will take place in late January at Our Lady of Black Rock. 'Envisioning the Scajaquada' was the topic and students made a tremendous effort to address the problems surrounding the creek. The contest was sponsored by the Ronald McDonald Foundation and the West Side Youth Development Coalition. An exhibit of works from both schools is currently on exhibit and will continue through February 28, 2017.



Quarterly Newsletter

This year marked the second year of our quarterly newsletter. We are proud to continue to bring information about our community to the forefront.

Remembering the Blizzard of 77, City Ice & Fuel Co. that was located on Amherst Street, the Buffalo Skating Club and speed skater Katherine “Kit” Klein, and the Ski Dek Center that was on Tonawanda Street were featured in the year’s first newsletter. Other Quarterly Newsletters included articles on the History of the Black Rock Cycle Club, the history of Bicycling in Buffalo, and a recap of Fenian commemorations.



Fall Speaker Series

The first speaker in our Fall Speaker Series was Rick Jamison, Councilor of the Seneca Nation who discussed the Unity Island name change and how devastating any derogatory terminology can be to whole nations of people. He was followed by Historian and author Edward Patton who showed high resolution photos of Black Rock from the 1930’s to a packed audience. Ending the series was Warren Hoy, plant manager at DuPont. He related the history of the plant, showed samples of their products and talked about their plans for the future.



Acquisitions

In 2016 we continued to accept and display local artifacts that were donated or loaned to the museum. Several such items include:



Exhibits

Michele Graves, our exhibits coordinator, installed a colorful display of antique Valentine cards, hearts, vintage handkerchiefs and other related items in February, followed by a Presidents Display that included photos, medals, books, articles and miniature models of all the presidents.



The theme for our exhibit at the Discover Amherst Street Festival's headquarters in June was Raggedy Ann & Andy, celebrating their 100th year. The exhibit then moved to the museum.



Awards & Citations:

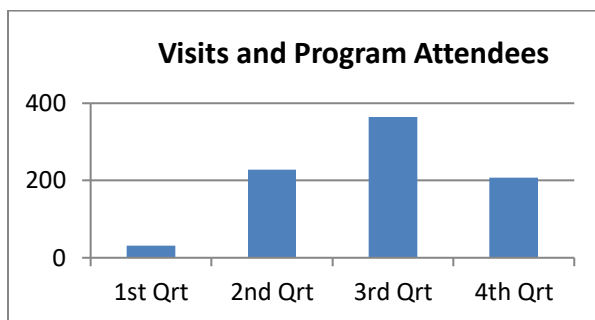


Operations

As you can see, we've had a wonderful productive and very busy year thanks to our dedicated volunteers and supporters. We look forward to new events, increased membership, an expanded collection, and will continue to preserve the history of Northwest Buffalo. We also have a new website where upcoming events, photos, etc. are available.

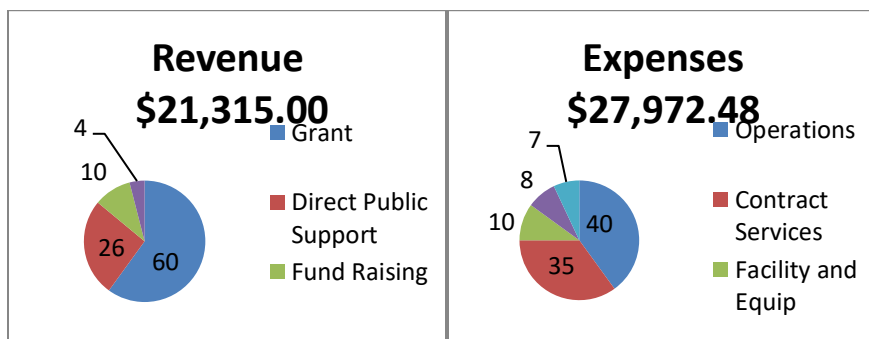
Our offices at 1902 Niagara St. continue to be a place of pride for the neighborhood. We look forward to continually changing exhibits and an approaching celebration of the Erie Canal.

Total visitors and Program Attendees for 2016 were up approximately 266% from our start up in 2015.



Financials

The Black Rock Historical Society is a subdivision of the BRRAlliance which is a 501-c-3 not for profit. A portion of the BRRAlliance funding is allocated for support of the BRHS and its functions. Grants, gifts and memberships associated with the BRHS are identified and restricted appropriately.



Equity at end of 2016 \$15,889.25