



**Our Museum in Action** by Doreen DeBoth, *President*

As we moved into a new year, many exciting events, speakers and increased attendance have taken place at the museum.

Planning began in January for our annual fundraiser with Rick Falkowski, music and entertainment historian and author of the book “The History of Music and Entertainment in Buffalo.” Rick gave a presentation at our fall Speakers Series last year and brought many happy memories to the audience, so we decided to ask him to come back for our fundraiser. This may be an unprecedented event as musicians will also take the stage in between Rick’s presentation. The event will be held at Sportsman’s Tavern to accommodate the anticipated large audience (see page 4 for more info). You really won’t want to miss this one!

Black Rock Sundays at Sportsman’s began its three part series with Canadian musician, performer and cultural ambassador Ian Bell. His concert highlighted the role of Lake Erie and the Great Lakes on the development of our area. Viewers learned about various shipping vessels used on the Great Lakes, the importance of the Erie Canal that facilitated the western movement, and how the port of Buffalo grew to be a major port for wheat, grain, coal, iron ore, etc.. The series was organized by Dave Ruck who performed for us last Spring with Erie Canal songs and played various instruments that were used during that time. The series was sponsored by a Humanities NY grant.



A four-part Preservation series also began in February with Christiana Limniatis, PBN’s Director of Preservation Services, who provided an overview of the history of historic preservation and discussed how preservation projects are accomplished.



She also explored the social, economic & environmental benefits to preserving our historic built environment.

Ms. Limniatis returned the following week to expand on the basics of preservation, this time discussing the different types of historic designations that exist, and explore the rules and regulations associated with each nominating process.

BRHS exhibits/education coordinator

Michele Graves installed an exhibit on the relevance of the Underground Railroad in Black Rock (see pages 2-3). This added to Reggie Bell’s performance, the second of Black Rock Sundays at Sportsman’s. He is a musician, international performer and cultural ambassador who performed a concert of music and stories from the Underground Railroad. He has a gift for relating stories with style and elegance, and the audience was captivated.



Gretchen Sepik concluded the series with her portrayal of “Surly Sal McMurray” an Irish cook working on a packet boat in 1840. There was much audience participation and laughter as she made us feel like we were on a packet boat cruising the Erie Canal.

The Preservation series continued in March with a presentation by Scott Glasgow on Pre Civil War houses and construction techniques in Old Black Rock.

Scott, also a board member at BRHS, has done extensive research on the subject and has plenty of experience as the restorer of the Jacob Smith House at the corner of Amherst and East Streets. His presentation included a short history of the Village of Black Rock and a look at the oldest homes in the neighborhood. Information about early construction techniques and clues to dating early structures was also given.



Scott Glasgow in center, with preservation enthusiasts.

The series ended with a presentation on The Black Rock Neighborhood from 1870-1920 by Mary Ann Kedron MBA PhD, founding

member of the Black Rock Historical Society, President of the Black Rock Riverside Alliance, and a Board Member of the Buffalo Niagara Land Trust. She highlighted the growth of the Black Rock neighborhood



Mary Ann Kedron (center) and attendees examine a map of Black Rock from 1827.

beyond the original village into Grant Amherst, Riverside and West Hertel, including the differences and similarities in types of homes.

Both Mary Ann Kedron and Scott Glasgow are founding members of the BRHS and members of the Preservation Committee of the Black Rock Historical Society.

Also in March we were notified that we were approved for the Wm. Pomeroy Professional Development grant of \$1,000 to pay for expenses to attend Museum Association of New York conference in Cooperstown in April.

Our fifth annual "History in Your Neighborhood" essay contest with local schools was launched in January. The winners from the two participating schools will be announced in the next newsletter.

## The Importance of African American History in Black Rock

By Michele Graves



To complement the recent BRHS sponsored Sunday concert *Music of the Underground Railroad* by singer/story teller/performer Reggie Harris, the museum has a display of items related to the Underground Railroad and African American Sailors (War of 1812) in WNY. On display are books, sheet music, song books, rag dolls from the Civil War, topsy turvy dolls, historical reproductions of documents and other items. Also displayed is a piece of a patchwork quilt representing the often disputed symbols and use of quilts to guide those fleeing slavery along the paths to freedom in the North.

The topsy-turvy doll (black doll on one side,



flipped over is a white doll), as it's known, most likely originated

in American plantation nurseries of the early 19th century. The dolls depicted the inherent power white children had over the enslaved children they frequently played with.

Also displayed is a piece of a patchwork quilt representing the often disputed symbols and use of quilts to guide those fleeing slavery along the paths to freedom in the North. Two conflicting schools of thought on the subject of quilts is also part of the exhibit. The most commonly held belief is the one that has been handed down through oral histories. The use of distinct quilt patterns offered secret codes that guided enslaved people on their way to freedom in the North. The opposing view contends that the use of quilts as a guide is a myth. Some historians take this view, citing that there is no factual documentation. So few quilts are in existence today (they were well used, washed in lye soap) and therefore, oral histories are often embellished or made up. We leave the viewer to make their own conclusions. There is no dispute that enslaved people sewed beautifully patterned quilts, and that the plantation owners felt this was a productive and good pastime.



During research on Buffalo's history of enslaved people,\* records and correspondence show that Peter Porter's wife Letitia, brought with her slaves from the State of Kentucky. They became the property of her husband upon their marriage. They filed an affidavit in Buffalo dated July 28, 1820 that allowed for enslaved people to not be held beyond the age of 28 for males and 25 for females. History shows that while it was morally wrong, many of the founding fathers enslaved people for their own profit. It was a part of history that should not be buried, but acknowledged for the unspeakable way enslaved people had to live and how it shaped America.

Buffalonians can be proud of the numerous free men of color, white abolitionists and sympathizers who aided enslaved people to freedom in Canada. The crossing on the Niagara River (Black Rock Ferry) is now the historic site at Broderick Park and a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom location.

In 1830 Buffalo's population consisted of 219 African Americans. By 1860 there were 809 African Americans recorded in Buffalo's population.

BRHS Board member Warren Glover conducted\*\* research on the African American sailors who served in the 1813 Battle of Lake Erie. Some interesting facts were found during his research. There were 4000 black sailors, predominately those escaping slavery who were in the battle. Upon enlistment they immediately became free men. They still ran the risk of being caught by slave runners. The ages of the soldiers ranged from 17-43 and many were unable to provide a birthplace. Some came from New York State, Massachusetts, Delaware, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont and even Ireland! Of the 24 identified by name who served during the 1813 Lake Erie Battle, only one died in battle and one other died in 1814. The entire battle was three days. All who survived revived a cash award in gold coins of about \$214. For "acts beyond the call of duty", they were awarded a silver medal of honor. One soldier, Jess Williams received the silver medal in 1820 for rescuing fellow sailors from a carriage canon explosion. For the rank of Officer, an award of \$2,295 was given. Black sailors served on the following ships- The Constitution, the Lawrence, The Ariel, the Niagara, the Caledonia, the Trippe, the Scorpion, and the Caledonia.

Name	Ship assigned	Age	Birthplace	Fate	Postbattle
Charles Ball	– served on the "Constitution"	42	MA.	Survived	Unknown
James Bennett	– served on the "Lawrence"	30	DEL.	Died in 1814	Ordinary Seaman
David Debias	– served on the "Constitution"	18	R.I.	Survived	Rank of boy
Dulancy Forest	– served on the "Constitution"	35	Unknown	Survived	** Made Acting LT.
John H. Packet	– served on the "Ariel"	39	Mass.	Survived	*** LT. Commandant
John Smith	– served on the "Lawrence"	24	Unknown	Died in battle	Rank of boy
John C. Cummings	– served on the "Niagara"	28	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$811.
William Johnson	– served on the "Lawrence"	19	Unknown	Survived	Unknown
Jesse Williams	– served on the "Lawrence"	40	PA.	Survived	* Awarded \$214.
James D. Hammond	– served on the "Lawrence"	32	CT.	Survived	Awarded \$214.
William Dawson	– served on the "Lawrence"	17	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
James Campbell	– served on the "Lawrence"	26	Ireland	Survived	Unknown
Ezekial Hatch	– served on the "Caledonia"	20	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
John Saunders	– served on the "Caledonia"	21	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
William D. Edwards	– served on the "Niagara"	23	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
Peter Dunn	– served on the "Trippe"	22	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
Samuel Dunn	– served on the "Trippe" – brothers.	22	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
Samuel Parsons	– served on the "Scorpion"	27	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
John Barnes	– served on the "Lawrence"	20	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
James Garner	– served on the "Trippe"	18	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
Thomas Jones	– served on the "Trippe"	22	Unknown	Survived	Awarded \$214.
Daniel Turner	– served on the "Caledonia"	43	CT.	Survived	Awarded \$2,295.
Tyrone G. Martin	– served on the "Constitution"	29	VT.	Survived	Unknown
Matthew Breckle	– served on the "Constitution"	30	NYS	Survived	Unknown

\*\* (Source- Altoff and Skaggs. "Manning the U. S. Fleet during the Battle of Lake Erie-September 1813.) In a children's book about Black History, Eva Doyle (Buffalo author and educator) indicates that Black

Sailors fought bravely with Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry. Peter Porter Papers Mss. CBO-1,Folder1 Slave Extraditions. Collection of the Buffalo History Museum

\*\* Research on the African American sailors who served in the 1813 Battle of Lake Erie. (Source- Altoff and Skaggs. "Manning the U. S. Fleet during the Battle of Lake Erie-September 1813.)



**Black Rock**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1902 Niagara Street  
Buffalo, New York, 14207

### Museum Hours:

Tues. & Thurs. 10– 4 PM  
Fri. & Saturday 11-3 PM

### Find us online!

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



### The BRHS

#### Seeks Volunteers

Your interest and/or love of history are the best reasons to volunteer! Students, seniors and everyone in-between are welcome to volunteer in various areas of interest: office/computer, education, outreach, maintenance, etc. You can strengthen your community, learn about preservation, and meet new people. Every volunteer can make a difference. To volunteer, contact us via email on our website or call 716-510-4007.

#### Artifact Donations

We continue to seek items and photos that tell the story and history of our area. Cleaning out an attic or basement, not sure if the family items are important or not? Give us a call or bring the items to the museum for donation or loan. Things that depict local family and or commerce history such as artifacts, vintage household items, old tools, period clothing, written history, photos, etc. can be brought to the museum for review or we can pick up. Please call to set up an appointment or discuss your finds.

(call 716-510-4007).

*You don't want to miss this—also door prizes!*

# MUSIC of the AGES

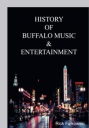
Fundraiser for the Black Rock Historical Society



326 Amherst Street Buffalo, NY

**Sunday, May 5, 2019 at 2 PM**

**Presentation by Music & Entertainment Historian  
Rick Falkowski**



**Erie Canal Blues by  
The Heenan Brothers**



**1950's & 60's Music by  
Big Wheelie**



**1940's & 50's Jazz by  
Joe Giambra Jazz  
Quartet**

**Tickets \$20.00 at the door or on Eventbrite**

includes one drink ticket for pop, beer or wine  
Kitchen will be open



**Black Rock**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**BRR|Alliance**  
Black Rock Riverside Alliance

#### Welcome new members:

Dave and Nadine Kowalski & Family

#### Thank you renewing members:

Black Rock Pharmacy  
Judy Brown  
Doreen & Richard DeBoth  
George Hofheins & Suzanne Fenger  
Stephen Golyski

#### Thank you Artifact Donors:

James Biggie  
Jackie Dillon  
Scott Glasgow  
Phyllis Horton  
Rich Mack  
BRR Neighborhood Housing Services

Joseph & Mary Ann Kedron  
Joseph & Noreen Korona  
James E. Lee  
Richard & Diana Martin  
Mary Ann Moriarity  
Marilyn McKenzie

Cynthia Van Ness  
Gretchen Sepik  
Judi Stanley  
Max Willig  
Evelyn Vossler