



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Orleans County Historians met on Nov 19. Those present included, from left, standing: Adrienne Daniels, Matt Ballard, Dawn Metty, Ian Mowatt, Neil Johnson; and seated, Melissa Eerlan and Al Capruso.

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Historians performed notable work in 2015

COLLABORATION: Efforts are ongoing to preserve the past

By **MATT BALLARD**
ORLEANS COUNTY HISTORIAN

ALBION — Although February marks the conclusion of my first full year as county historian, I am amazed at the progress I have witnessed over the last ten months.

Orleans County is fortunate to have the backing of a core group of very active historians and enthusiasts who continue to devote all of their extra time to the promotion of our heritage.

On Nov. 19 we hosted a meeting of the local municipal historians at the Hoag Library's Local History room. The last gathering of this group was nearly ten years prior, and with a great deal of transitioning over the past several years, our hope was to provide a venue for becoming familiar with each other and establishing an opportunity to develop collaborative projects. Naturally, the meeting was a huge success and showed much promise for the development of heritage tourism and local history projects in the county.

I wanted to share a few of the accomplishments of our local historians over the previous year, some highlights of things to come, and introduce our newest historians.

■ **Al Capruso, Town of Gaines**, was recently appointed to the post of town historian.

With remarkable haste, Capruso has led efforts with the Orleans County Historical Association to acquire the Gaines District No. 2 Cobblestone Schoolhouse on Gaines

Basin Road. With assistance from OCHA members and volunteers — including retired County Historian Bill Lattin — the group has restored front windows and made extensive repairs to the roof. Interior renovations will begin in the spring.

■ **Ian Mowatt, Town of Albion**, was recently appointed to the post of town historian this past year.

■ **Melissa Ierlan, Town of Clarendon**, as president of the Clarendon Historical Society and with members of that group, including Erin Anheier, have made outstanding progress on preserving the chapel at Hillside Cemetery.

Most recently, the group was awarded over \$125,000 in matching grant funding to start restoration work at the site.

■ **Adrienne Daniels, Town of Barre**, is in the early stages of planning the bicentennial celebration for Barre set to take place in 2018.

■ **Heather Koch, Town of Kendall**, was recently appointed to the post of town historian this past year.

Our historians are working collaboratively on updating the 2001 inventory of historic markers compiled by Neil Johnson, our long-tenured Village of Albion Historian, and Bill Lattin. Through the Orleans County Department of History, we would like to make this database of historic sites available for easy access online.

Alongside of these efforts, Melissa Ierlan continues to

contribute countless volunteer hours towards the restoration of many of our existing blue and gold historic markers.

Over the last year, the county's history department has developed a website to catalog this column and host a number of digitized items from the historian's office.

In 2016, we hope to publish the first edition of "The Pioneer Record, a local history publication aimed at preserving the development of Orleans County history across all eras."

Thanks to the Drake Memorial Library at SUNY College at Brockport, the publication will be hosted through their Digital Commons and available across the country.

My other large project for the 2016 year is to compile a history of Mt. Albion Cemetery, consisting of biographical sketches and photography.

This article, concluding the 2015 year, would fill an entire paper if all of the preservation and heritage exploits were covered.

We are a community that is forever dedicated to the continued dissemination of our cultural heritage and the scope of extensive projects occurring in our area is a testament to that. The residents of Orleans County are filled with great ideas for promoting our region and the collaboration that has developed between our "movers and shakers" shows great promise for the future.