

The Darwin R. Barker Library & Museum Association  
*For Generations to Come*

2023 Annual Report

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Dear Supporters,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support and involvement in the Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association. As you may know, the library is an important resource for our community, offering a wide range of books, media, and programs for people of all ages, while the museum is a place where we can learn about and celebrate the rich history of our community. We are a place for people of all ages to discover, learn, and be inspired!

However, running a public library and museum takes a lot of resources, and we rely on the support of our community to keep our doors open, our shelves stocked, our artifacts carefully preserved, and our exhibits up to date. That is why we are reaching out to ask for your help.

There are a few ways that you can support the association:

- ◆ **Make a donation:** Any amount, no matter how small, can make a big difference in helping us to maintain and improve our services. You can donate online or by mailing a check to the library or museum.
- ◆ **Volunteer your time:** If you have some free time and a love of books or history, we could use your help. We are always looking for volunteers to help with everything from shelving books to organizing events, or conducting research to leading tours.
- ◆ **Attend our programs and events:** One of the best ways to support the library and museum is to use it! Participate in our activities, check out books and media, and encourage others in the community to do the same.



With your help, we can continue to provide the educational, cultural, and recreational activities that have earned us the number three spot among the thirty-six library members of the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System. Only the cities of Jamestown and Olean circulate more than our cozy village!

Thank you for taking the time to consider how you can support us and make sure that the Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association remains an important resource for generations of readers, learners, explorers, and history buffs in our community! We hope that you will consider supporting the library and museum in one or more ways. Together, we can ensure that our association remains a vital resource for our community for years to come.

Sincerely,  
Graham Tedesco-Blair  
Library Director

## The Library

Chartered in 1895, we have served the Fredonia and Pomfret community for over 120 years, helping to provide access to resources the community might not otherwise be able to obtain.

The Darwin R. Barker Library holds over 40,000 books, 3,000 DVDs, 29,000 eBooks and online audio books, and more. It provides a public meeting space for any and all to use, as well as internet access for the public. The library also hosts a variety of classes in art, computer use, and crafting, as well as book talks from local authors and story times to help foster early childhood literacy.

## The Museum

The Darwin R. Barker Museum's collection encompasses cultural heritage spanning the comprehensive history of Fredonia, New York and its neighboring regions. Within the historic house, built in 1821, three interpretive gallery spaces display artifacts, beginning with the area's earliest human occupation.

The collection is composed of over 2,500 objects, 2,100 photographs, 1,800 archival artifacts, and 1000 books. Maintaining updated records of their artifacts is a key function of museums. 5,568 artifacts have been newly cataloged by staff and volunteers since 2020. Our collection continues to grow, with over 400 artifacts acquired since 2020, for a total of 7,400.

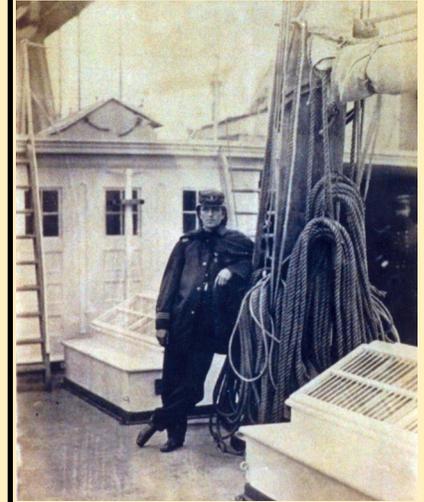


# Did you know that Fredonia...



...was home to Civil War heroes Alonzo and William B. Cushing?

Commander William Cushing gained an international reputation during the Civil War for leading a night raid in which he destroyed a Confederate ironclad warship, the *CSS Albemarle*, using an innovative strategy in which he personally detonated an early torpedo at close range. William undertook that nearly suicidal mission after swearing revenge for the death of his older brother Alonzo, who commanded an artillery unit before and during the Battle of Gettysburg, and was killed repelling Pickett's Charge. Alonzo is memorialized at Gettysburg National Park and was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor.



...was the birthplace of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the first women's mass movement in the United States?

A group of over 100 women made history on December 15, 1873, when they marched across Barker Commons and demanded the prohibition of the sale of alcohol in Fredonia. Within several months they successfully established a reading room as a precursor to founding a public library, a fulfillment of their pledge to establish a public library as an alcohol-free activity in the village. In 1884, the Darwin R. Barker Library was founded after its namesake, the husband of the WCTU President Helen Pettit Barker, who donated his childhood home for public use.

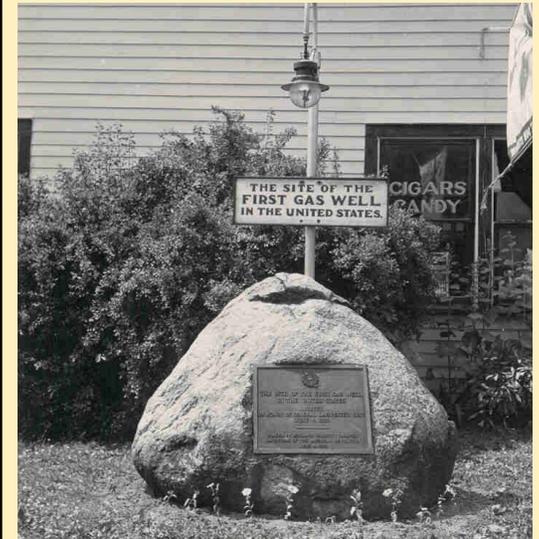
By 1920, 47 years after their march across Barker Commons, the 'women crusaders,' as they were often referred to, had achieved their goals of prohibition and women's suffrage with the passage of the 18th and 19th amendments.

# Did you know that Fredonia...

...is the birthplace of the natural gas industry?

Fredonia saw the nation's first commercial use of natural gas, and later the first use of explosives to extract trapped natural gas. In 1825, gunsmith and inventor William A. Hart successfully piped natural gas to five buildings on Fredonia's West Main St. These early efforts brought throngs of visitors to Fredonia to see the lights provided by this newly controlled fuel source.

In 1857, the first natural gas company in the United States was formed here. Preston Barmore, one of the company's directors, pioneered a technique wherein he sank an 8-lbs explosive canister into a borehole and ignited it by dropping a hot iron through a tin shaft, thus allowing more gas to escape the well. In the late 1850s, there was enough gas to power 1,200 lights and burners in a village of just over 2,000 residents. Fredonia's village seal commemorates the pioneering use of natural gas.

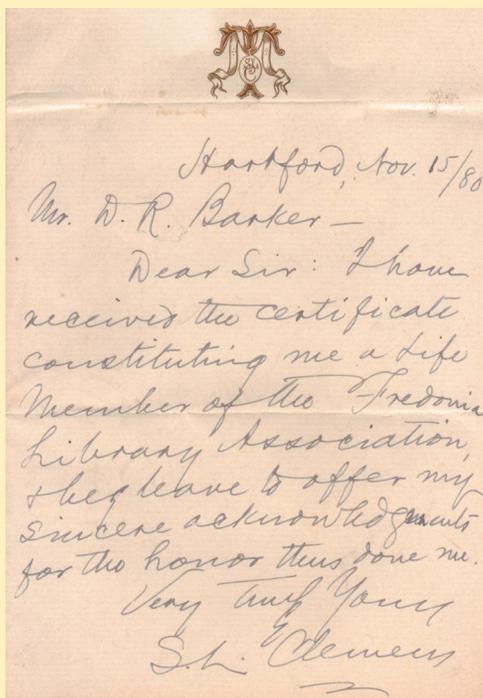


...was the home of Mark Twain's mother and sister?

Mark Twain was a lifetime member of the Barker Library and provided some of our first books. After visiting Fredonia on a speaking tour in 1870, Twain urged his widowed mother and sister to consider moving to the village to be closer to his new home in Buffalo, NY.

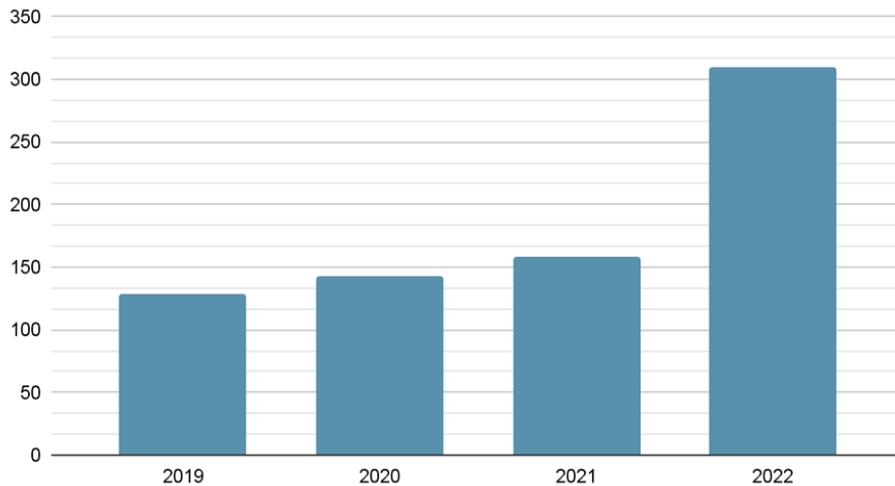
Twain's mother, Jane Clemens, sister Pamela Moffett, and niece Annie Webster moved to Fredonia in 1870, and Annie's marriage to a flamboyant local surveyor Charles Webster would produce three children who grew up in Fredonia: author Samuel Webster, artist William Webster, and nationally-renowned novelist Jean Webster. Twain left a lasting legacy in Fredonia despite the brief time he spent here, although his most significant contribution to local culture may have been his choice to urge his mother and sister to move here.

The Clemens women, Jane, Pamela, and Annie quickly became cornerstones in the community through their leading roles in local organizations including the local suffrage movement, the WCA Home, the Shakespeare Club, the Library Association, and in the first female-led mass movement in US history, the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

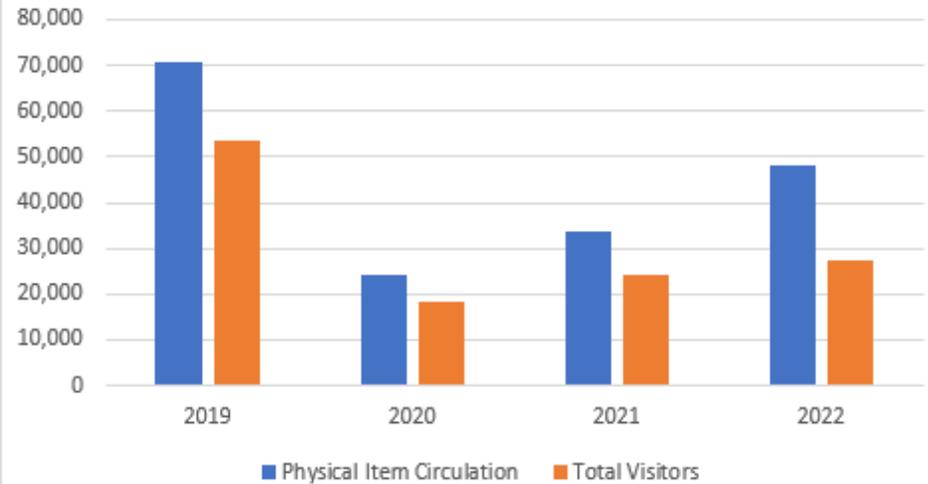


# Growth and Recovery

Annual Gallery Visitation



Library Circulation and Usage



## Museum Visitation

2019: 129 guests signed  
 2020: 143 guests signed  
 2021: 159 guests signed  
 2022: 310 guests signed

## Library Visitation and Circulation

2019	70,876	53,380 (Pre Pandemic)
2020	24,075	18,108 (Pandemic Reduction in Hours)
2021	33,606	24,286 (Reopening and Recovery)
2022	48,082	27,425

Since the reopening of the museum, and the winding down of the pandemic, we have seen our usage numbers increase substantially, and that makes your support more crucial than ever!

# 2023 Budget

## Funds

## Expenses

Municipal Funds: \$113,000  
Endowment Income: \$235,000  
Withdrawals from Savings: \$150,000  
Other Sources of Funding (Library):  
\$34,000  
Other Sources of Funding (Museum):  
\$11,300

Media Purchases (Library):  
\$25,500  
Employees: \$326,880  
Operations: \$60,740  
Preservations (Museum):  
\$60,000

# Library Return on Investment

Library Services & Activities	2021 Library Statistic	Average Service	Comparable Non-Public Service	2021 Value to residents
Annual Circulation	33,606	\$30	Books, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers, music, & films	\$1,008,180
Annual Interlibrary Loans Received	3,590	\$40	Journal articles, books, audiobooks, music, & films	\$143,600
Annual Digital Circulation	11,357	\$25	Downloadables: e-books, e-audio, & streaming video	\$283,925
Annual Database Usage	568	\$40	Specialized information via electronic databases	\$22,720
Annual Attendance at Library Events & Literacy Programs	1,265	\$10	Programs, concerts, & classes	\$12,650
Annual Visitor Count	24,286	\$2	Community meeting & study space, microfilm reader, newspapers, & literacy items	\$48,572
Annual Public Internet Use, Not Including Wi-Fi	3,686	\$10	Internet, printers, fax, scanners, & specialized software	\$36,860
Annual Reference Questions	773	\$10	Information & reference support	\$7,730
Total Value to Residents				\$1,564,237
2021 Library Operating Budget				\$280,406
Ratio				5.58

That's \$5.58 in value for every \$1 invested!

## Why Study History?

During moments of crisis, the memories of the past can be both reassuring and instructive. Starting at the Barker Museum in February 2020 was perhaps the ideal time, because, although the Covid pandemic began only a month later, I found myself at the museum sifting through local records from the past two hundred years—a timespan stretching back far enough to include comparably frightening events like the 1918 Spanish Influenza. Looking through *The Fredonia Censor* from that time, it was hard to miss the many parallels to the contemporary Covid pandemic; overwhelmed medical facilities, a cycle of quarantines being enforced and lifted, an emphasis on social distancing and cleanliness, and most striking of all: a lack of knowledge about the disease. Seeing the familiar reactions of people from over 100 years earlier, the apparently unprecedented moment suddenly seemed like a familiar script.

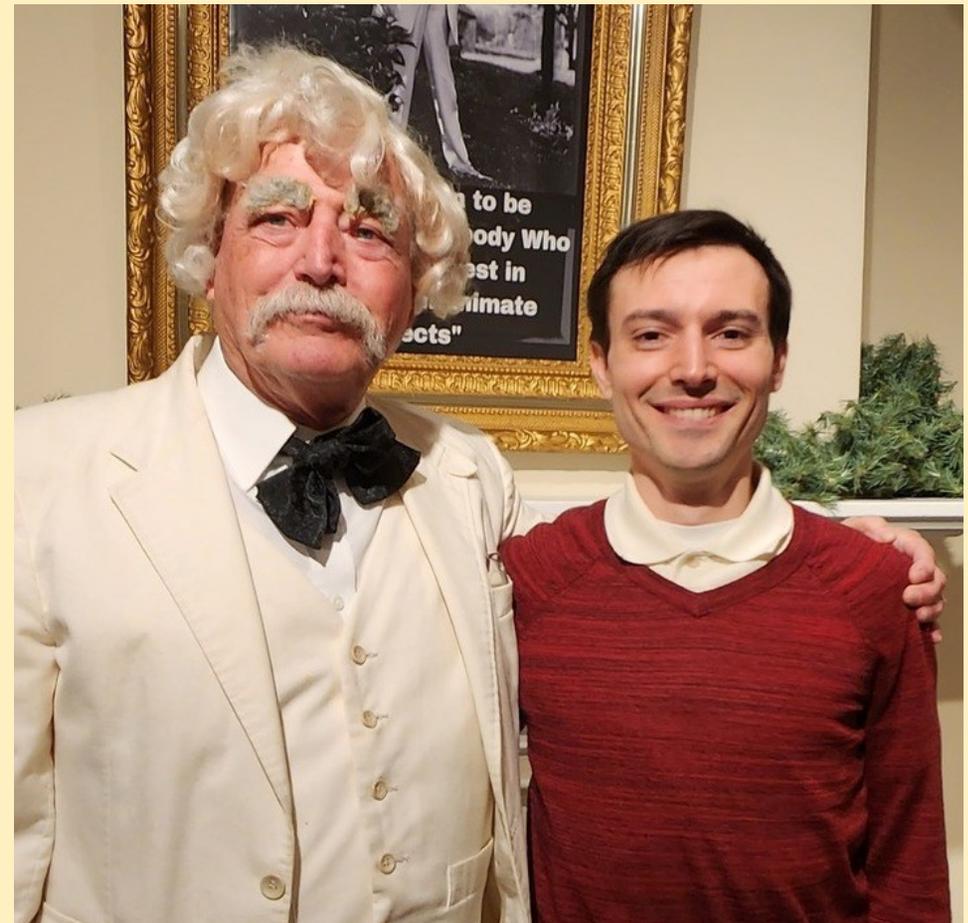
I pursued a career in museums because of my lifelong interest in history, a topic that is intrinsically interesting with its fascinating events and people, and with the explanations it provides about how our present circumstances came into existence. But far from being merely a source for intrigue and trivia, knowledge of the past is also essential for creating a vision for the future.

During school I was very taken by broad historical topics like industrialization and its impacts on culture and politics, but I've become increasingly interested in narrowing in on the stories of specific people and small communities. This approach reveals fascinating glimpses into life during different eras, and it infuses a human element into the broad and abstract historical narratives we study in school, which often results in studying statistics rather than studying people.

Museums exist as places to collect and preserve artifacts, and ultimately to use them to tell the story of how we came to be. I am pleased to be able to bring to life the many stories and significant events of Fredonia with exhibits and programs that inform, reassure, and inspire visitors.

Maxwell Walters  
Barker Museum Curator

*“...far from being merely a source for intrigue and trivia, knowledge of the past is also essential for creating a vision for the future.”*

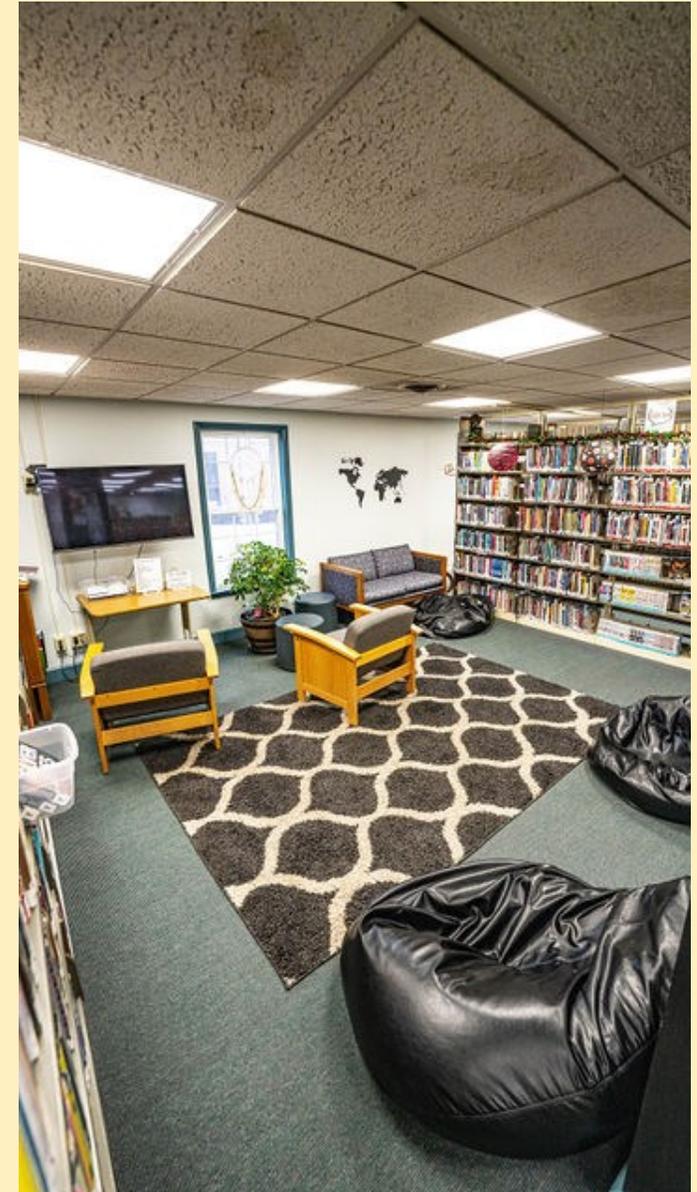


# Future Plans

**Expand open hours:** beginning with the Covid-19 pandemic, hours were cut drastically. When combined with the costs to re-open the museum (which lost its curator to budget cuts by the Village, with the funding dropping from \$121,750 to \$117,000 in 2010, then trending further downwards, with the biggest drop from \$90,000 to \$50,000 in 2015), we have seen our operating budget drop drastically. With the reopening of the museum in 2019 combined with the cut in hours from the pandemic, the cost of essentially running two organizations on one budget has not allowed the Association to return to its previous schedule. Increased funding would allow for the hiring of more staff, so that the hours could expand again.

**Increase community engagement:** One of the primary goals of public libraries and museums is to serve the needs of their communities. In the next five years, we will work to increase community engagement by hosting events and programs that reflect their diverse interests and needs. This will include more classes, workshops, and lectures. We will also work to increase outreach to underrepresented groups, such as seniors, teenagers, and low-income individuals.

**Expand and improve digital resources:** In the digital age, it is important for libraries and museums to provide access to a wide range of digital resources. In the next five years, we will work to expand and improve our digital offerings, including even more online archives, e-books, online databases, and digital media. We will also work to improve our digital infrastructure, including upgrading our website and implementing new technologies to improve the user experience.



# Future Plans



**Enhance physical spaces:** In addition to expanding our digital offerings, we will also focus on improving and enhancing our physical spaces. This will include updating and renovating existing spaces, as well as adding new spaces for specific purposes, such as a makerspace, and new technologies like 3D printers. We will also work to make our spaces more welcoming and accessible to all members of our community.

**Develop partnerships and collaborations:** Public libraries and museums are an important resource for their communities, and we will work to strengthen our partnerships and collaborations with other organizations in the area. This will include continuing to partner with our local schools, community center, literacy groups, historical societies and other non-profit organizations to offer joint programs and events. We will also work to establish new partnerships with local businesses and other organizations to expand the range of resources and services we offer.

**Increase funding and resources:** Finally, we will work to increase funding and resources for the Association. This will include seeking grants and donations, as well as working with local government to secure additional funding. Increasing our funding and resources will allow us to better serve our community and achieve our other strategic goals.

*“For over 100 years, our Association has nurtured the young minds of the community’s children, creating not only life-long memories, but also contributing to the development and advancement of the leaders of tomorrow.”*



Dear Supporters and Barker Community Members,

Both business units comprising the Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association offer a unique and inspiring benefit to the local community. It’s not a very common occurrence where we see a library and a museum bound together under one roof; and yet, because one was borne from the other it is the combined strength of both family members that creates a sense of civic pride and a source of ongoing educational enhancement. The old building that currently houses the Historical Museum is the oldest brick building standing in the Village of Fredonia. Through the foresight of the original champions of the Barker Library Association, this building has grown and expanded through new construction to become a beacon of resilience throughout these trying times.

For over 100 years, our Association has nurtured the young minds of the community’s children, creating not only life-long memories, but also contributing to the development and advancement of the leaders of tomorrow. And now, we find ourselves in the midst of an ever-evolving society where we continually seek ways to perform tasks in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. With this in mind, The Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that the library and museum legacy is maintained for generations to come to experience and enjoy.

We are fortunate to be the beneficiaries of ongoing financial support through patron endowments, municipal contributions and from donations by our many supporters. However, we have reached the point in our growth where in order to move forward and to continue to provide a high level of service and engagement our community expects, we must seek additional sources of financial security. We constantly chase the ever-changing technological evolution that enhances the learning experience and strive to educate and engage the community in the rich history of our village. The upkeep, resources and supplies required to provide these treasured programs to the community far extend beyond the municipal contributions and current endowment support. We would like to ask that you help us to be able to continue by joining us in our campaign to raise additional funding necessary.

If you choose to contribute, you will give more than just a monetary amount, you will be taking part in keeping the library and museum thriving and able to expand for future growth and prosperity. All of us from the Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Adams  
Board President

# How Can You Help?

## Sponsor a Project:

### *Document Digitization*

\$6000 to digitize the Fredonia Censor, a newspaper published between 1821-1964

### *Additional Website Services*

\$500/year to host digital archives on the website through PastPerfect software.

### *Specialists for Preservation and Restoration*

\$2,000 for each exhibition.

### *Museum-quality Collection Supplies*

\$100 per archival textile box. Only ten more are needed to house our collection of historical costumes.

## Ways To Give:

- ♦ Pledges and monetary contributions
- ♦ Gifts of stock or property / real estate
- ♦ Estate Planning
- ♦ Planned giving
- ♦ Naming opportunities

