

# The Darwin R. Barker Library & Museum Association



Robert Barker (1700-1760)  
In 1761, Robert Barker, the first black settler in  
Australia, was granted a license to trade.  
The portrait was painted by John  
Barker, who was married to Robert's  
daughter.



Elizabeth Barker  
The daughter of Robert Barker, the first  
black settler in Australia. She was  
married to John Barker in 1761. The  
portrait was painted by John Barker,  
who was married to Elizabeth's  
daughter.

## 2024 Annual Report

# Table of Contents

Letter from the Library Director.....3

Our History .....4

Statistics for the Year.....5

Budget .....6

Return on Investment .....7

An Interview with our Newest Board Member.....8-9

Letter from the Museum Curator.....10

Future Plans .....11

Letter from the President of the Board of Trustees.....12-13

Ways to Donate .....14





# A Letter from our Director

Dear Community Members,

I'm delighted to highlight the successes of the Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association in the past year, achieved through your dedicated support. As Director, I'm inspired by our community's commitment to education, culture, and personal growth, making our library a vital hub for knowledge and togetherness.

Notable Achievements:

- **Educational Programs:** Our library offers diverse educational initiatives, from early literacy programs to adult computer workshops.
- **Technology Access:** We've invested in cutting-edge technology for digital inclusion.
- **Community Engagement:** Vibrant book clubs, author talks, and events foster community and intellectual curiosity.
- **Establishment of a Seed Library,** so our patrons can share in the bounty of nature.
- **Youth Programs:** Our library nurtures creativity through activities like story times and arts and crafts.

Your Donations help us:

- Acquire New Materials
- Expand Our Programming
- Upgrade Our Technology
- Maintain Our Space

Consider a tax-deductible donation to support our community's future. Even a small contribution makes a significant impact. Donate at [www.BarkerLibrary.org](http://www.BarkerLibrary.org) or in person. Thank you for shaping a brighter future through knowledge, learning, and community.

Sincerely,

Graham Tedesco-Blair  
Director  
Darwin R. Barker Library



Photo of Graham Tedesco-Blair by Elizabeth Padgett

# Our History

## **The Library**

Established in 1883, our commitment to the Fredonia and Pomfret community spans over 120 years, dedicated to facilitating access to essential resources that might otherwise be out of reach. The Darwin R. Barker Library boasts an extensive collection, housing more than 40,000 books, 3,000 DVDs, and 29,000 eBooks and downloadable audiobooks. Beyond its wealth of materials, the library serves as a communal gathering space open to all, offering public meeting facilities and internet access.

In addition to its role as a resource hub, the library is a vibrant center for learning and enrichment. Various classes, including those focused on art, computer skills, and crafting, are hosted regularly. Furthermore, the library plays a pivotal role in promoting local literary talent, organizing book talks featuring regional authors, and fostering early childhood literacy through engaging story times. Embracing a multifaceted approach, the Darwin R. Barker Library continues to be a cornerstone of community engagement and knowledge dissemination.

## **The Museum**

The Darwin R. Barker Museum's collection encompasses material heritage spanning the comprehensive history of Fredonia, New York and its neighboring regions beginning with its earliest human occupation. The museum's collections storage facilities and three interpretive gallery spaces are located in a historic house built in 1821. The collection is composed of over 2,600 objects, 2,600 photographs, 1,900 archival artifacts, and 1000 books, all of which are stored on site and maintained by the curator, archivist, and volunteers. 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 900 artifacts accessioned since 2020, for a total of 8,100 artifacts.

Our internship program was launched in 2020 and has fostered the professional development of five paid interns from SUNY Fredonia, with two going on to be employed by Chautauqua County museums. We further assist in workforce training by accepting and training volunteers, three of whom have gone on to work in the educational sector. By helping build resumes during transitional life events, our museum plays a vital role in helping individuals achieve their career goals.



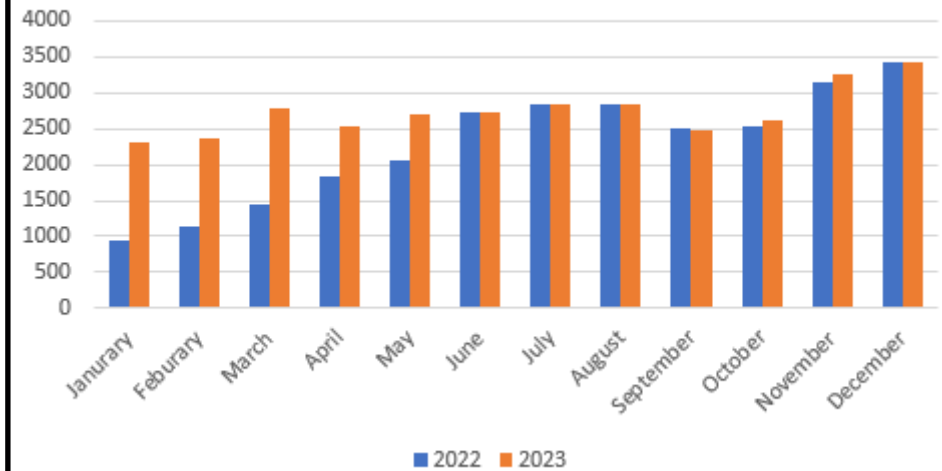
# Statistics for the Year

32,865 Total Library Visits - Up 19.8% from 2022

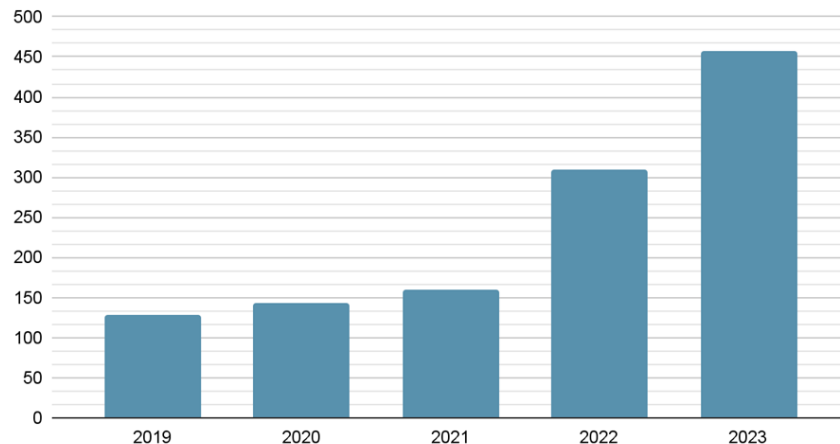
## Your Library Collection:

16,135 Adult Fiction  
 11,993 Adult Non-fiction  
 7,099 Children's Fiction  
 5,062 Children's Non-fiction  
 20,580 eBooks  
 8,660 Online Audiobooks  
 2,849 CDs  
 3,112 DVDs  
 2 Ukuleles

Library Monthly Door Count



Annual Gallery Visitation



457 Museum Visitors - Up 47.4% from 2022

## Your Museum Collection

2,600 objects  
 2,600 photographs  
 1,900 archival artifacts  
 1000 books  
 8,100 total objects

# 2024 Budget

## Funds

Municipal Funds: \$113,000  
Endowment Income: \$254,000  
Other Sources of Funding (Library):  
\$16,500  
Other Sources of Funding  
(Museum): \$11,300

## Expenses

Media Purchases (Library):  
\$31,000  
Employees: \$318,190  
Operations: \$59,065  
Preservations (Museum): \$60,000



Dedication ceremony for our Lafayette's Tour marker with the Daughters of the American Revolution



# Library Statistics & Return on Investment

<b>Library Services &amp; Activities</b>	<b>2022 Library Statistic</b>	<b>Average Service Price</b>	<b>Comparable Non-Public Service</b>	<b>2022 Value to residents</b>
Annual Circulation	36,877	\$30	Books, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers, music, & films	\$1,106,310
Annual Interlibrary Loans Received	3,778	\$40	Journal articles, books, audiobooks, music, & films	\$151,120
Annual Digital Circulation	48,445	\$25	Downloadables: e-books, e-audio, & streaming video	\$1,211,125
Annual Database Usage	11,205	\$40	Specialized information via electronic databases	\$448,200
Annual Attendance at Library Events & Literacy Programs	4,539	\$10	Programs, concerts, & classes	\$45,390
Annual Visitor Count	27,425	\$2	Community meeting & study space, microfilm reader, newspapers, & literacy items	\$54,580
Annual Public Internet Use Not Including Wi-Fi	3,854	\$10	Internet, printers, fax, scanners, & specialized software	\$38,540
Annual Reference Questions	1,040	\$10	Information & reference support	\$10,400
Total Value to Residents				\$3,065,665
2022 Library Operating Budget				\$280,990
Ratio				9.16

That's \$9.16 in value for every \$1 invested!

## Interview with our newest board member Margaret Gray



Photo of Margaret Gray by Patrick Stokes

### **Can you tell us a little about yourself?**

After graduating from Fredonia High School, I went to school at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. There, I received a degree in environmental biology with a minor in environmental writing and rhetoric. I worked in Syracuse, NY as an environmental educator for several years before moving back to Chautauqua County to become a naturalist at Audubon Community Nature Center in Jamestown, NY. On top of providing nature programming to elementary students across Chautauqua and Warren counties, I also served as the volunteer coordinator for our nature center. In 2019 I returned to school to earn my masters in early childhood and childhood education at the University at Buffalo. Since then, I have worked as an elementary teacher at Pine Valley Central Schools and Fredonia Central School District.

I currently live in Fredonia with my husband, Landon. When I am not teaching STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) at Wheelock Primary School or Fredonia Elementary School I am spending time outside hiking or gardening or snuggling up on the couch with a good book.

### **Can you describe your earliest memories of visiting the library and museum as a child? What role did the Association play in your early education and development?**

Truth be told, I had to talk to my mom to help me recall some of my earliest memories of visiting the library because I was so young when our weekly visits started. According to my mom, my siblings and I started visiting the library when I was somewhere around two years old. Once a week our babysitter would walk us down the street to attend story time with Miss Kathy. During our time together we would read and sing and spend time with other families that were visiting the library.

As an older reader, I remember visiting the children's room to attend the summer reading program. One summer Miss Kathy had us play a game of Bookopoly. Every week we read we had a chance to move our game piece across the board, closer and closer to a prize at the end of our journey. I actually have pretty vivid memories of moving my game piece across the Hundred Acre Woods game board.

For me, the library played a big part in helping me develop my love of reading. While my parents definitely cultivated a love of reading in me and my siblings, the library inspired me and allowed me to explore a variety of authors and genres that I otherwise would not have experienced.



**What motivated you to become involved with the library and museum as an adult, eventually leading to your role as a board member?**

I've always loved spending time at libraries, but it wasn't until I moved back to Fredonia that I started visiting the Barker Library again as an adult. At first I would visit to check out a book, but slowly I found myself spending more time at the library reading. I had never imagined that I would join the board of directors, but when a fellow board member asked if I would consider joining it seemed like a no brainer. It feels right to give back to a place and a community that has given so much to me.

**What is your vision for the library and museum's future, and how does it align with the broader goals and needs of the community it serves?**

I have always seen our library as one of the major hubs of Fredonia. It is a place to share information, ideas, and passions. As our immediate community and the community at large continues to evolve, I hope our library can continue to be a space for people of all different backgrounds to come together to learn, celebrate, and inspire.

**As a library user and now a board member, how do you communicate the value and impact of the library and museum to others who may not be aware of its services or benefits?**

As a teacher I often have the opportunity to share resources and opportunities with my students and their families. I often recommend the library and the museum as spaces for families to visit to attend programs and utilize community resources.

**In your opinion, what are the most pressing issues facing public libraries and museums today, and how is the Association addressing these challenges?**

Our relationship with books has changed a lot over the years. Growing up, books were one of my only sources of entertainment when I wanted to spend time alone. Today my attention is divided- do I want to sit and read a great book or am I going to spend my time scrolling through social media or watching videos on my phone? Over the years I have noticed how the relationship between books and my children have changed. Instead of reaching for books, many children are reaching for or are being given tablets and phones to help entertain themselves. Instead of reading to their children, many families are playing videos of books being read on their devices. As teachers and librarians and book lovers we know that there are no substitutes for reading a physical book. Yet, many families choose technology over reading books together.

The Barker Library is one of just a few organizations in Fredonia trying to get books into the hands of children. Not only do they provide a wide variety of books for children and their families to fall in love with, they also provide programming that introduce children to new authors, genres, and series. By fostering a love for books, Barker Library is making sure books are getting into the hands of some of our most important readers.

**Finally, can you share a personal story or anecdote that illustrates the profound impact the library has had on your life or the life of someone you know in the community?**

I can't think of any specific story, but one thing that really sticks with me is when my name was added to one of the books in the children's library. As a child I participated in several programs that allowed me to earn prizes as I read more and more books. One of the prizes that I received was having my name added to one of the books in the children's library. Every time I would visit I would hunt through the books to find the book with my name on it. Today, I think of all of the families and children that enjoyed reading my special book, the book with my name typed in the front cover.



Photo by Elizabeth Padgett of our Children's Room



# A Letter from Our Curator

Dear Community Members,

I am delighted to share with you the remarkable achievements and successes of the Barker Museum throughout the past year. As we reflect on the diverse range of programs, exhibitions, and initiatives, it is evident that the museum has made significant strides in fulfilling its mission of promoting history, culture, and education within our community.

Education remains at the heart of our mission, and this year has seen a substantial expansion of our outreach programs. Our commitment to fostering creativity and critical thinking has resulted in an increased number of events, workshops, and interactive sessions. The positive feedback from educators and students alike underscores the impact of our efforts in providing accessible and engaging learning experiences.

Building stronger connections with our community has been a key focus. The Barker has actively collaborated with local organizations, hosting events that celebrate diversity and inclusivity. The success of initiatives such as partnering with the Larson-Timko Funeral Home and the Fredonia Opera House demonstrates our commitment to being a cultural hub that reflects and represents the rich tapestry of our community.

In response to the evolving digital landscape, we have embraced innovative technologies to enhance the visitor experience. The launch of our digital archive program has allowed us to share our wonderful holdings on the Grape Belt with the world, and our first digital exhibit about prohibition in Chautauqua County is an important step in keeping our museum relevant and accessible to all.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous supporters, without whom these achievements would not have been possible. The contributions from donors like you have played a pivotal role in sustaining our programs and maintaining the museum's cultural impact. Your commitment to history is truly commendable, and we look forward to continued collaboration in the coming years.

Looking ahead, the Barker is committed to building upon these successes and further expanding our reach and impact. With exciting plans for upcoming exhibitions, educational initiatives, and community partnerships, we are confident that the next year will bring even more accomplishments and memorable moments for our museum.

Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in the power of history to inspire, educate, and unite our community.

Warm regards,

Maxwell Walters  
Museum Curator



Photo of Maxwell Walters by Katherine Szewczuk



# Future Plans



Photo of our Weaver Serenity Fountain by Elizabeth Padgett

**Elevate community involvement:** A key objective for public libraries and museums is to address the evolving needs of their communities. Over the next five years, we are committed to boosting community engagement through the facilitation of events and programs that resonate with our patrons. This initiative encompasses an expansion of classes, workshops, and lectures to cater to a broad spectrum of interests. Additionally, our focus will extend to heightened outreach efforts targeting underrepresented groups, including seniors, teenagers, and individuals with lower incomes.

**Enhance our physical environment:** This entails not only modernizing and renovating current areas but also introducing new spaces tailored for specific purposes, such as the incorporation of a makerspace and the integration of cutting-edge technologies like 3D printers. Concurrently, we are committed to creating more inviting and accessible spaces, ensuring inclusivity for all members of our community.

**Cultivate strategic alliances and cooperative ventures:** Recognizing the pivotal role of public libraries and museums as vital community resources, we are dedicated to fortifying our partnerships and collaborations with neighboring organizations. Our commitment extends to ongoing collaborations with local schools, community centers, literacy groups, historical societies, and various non-profit entities. Through these partnerships, we aim to provide synergistic programs and events that benefit the community. Moreover, we aspire to forge new connections with local businesses and other organizations, broadening the spectrum of resources and services we can collectively offer.

**Augment financial support and resources:** As a priority, we will endeavor to enhance the funding and resources available to the Association. This involves actively pursuing grants and donations, alongside collaborating with local government to secure additional financial backing. The expansion of our funding and resources will empower us to more effectively serve our community and realize our broader strategic objectives.



## A Letter from our Board President

Dear Supporters and Barker Community Members,

The Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association continues' to strive to develop offerings that connect within their local Community. In fact it appears that has been the case throughout the evolution of the library and museum functions. "When the Fredonia Library Association had formed in the early 1870's, it had established a reading room and a Lecture Committee. The lecture series was a success, but the reading room was not. Darwin R. Barker pushed the Village to have a "real" public library. His efforts led to the incorporation of the Fredonia Library Association in 1874. In March 1882, Darwin R. Barker purchased the Barker Home at 20 East Main St. and presented it to the Fredonia Library Association as their new permanent home. It took until early 1883 for a bill to pass which provided for the incorporation of the Darwin R. Barker Library Association of Fredonia, NY. It was during this time, that articles of local historical importance were beginning to be donated to the library. In the By-Laws of the Library, dated July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1888, it is stated that a Historical Department shall be in charge of a committee that is responsible to solicit and preserve articles related to local history." The detailed history of the Library & Museum can be found in the Barker's newly released book, *The Fair Chambered Corridor: Explorations of the History of Fredonia* as paraphrased above, by the late historian Douglas Shepard. This is the birth of our Historical Museum. And so, here we are today, a library and museum together and continuing to evolve in order to survive, under one roof, with a commitment to engage in collaborative efforts with the intent to provide services, solely for the benefit of the local Community.

The year 2023 has been a busy one for us. We saw an increase in the number of program offerings for both the library and the museum, including artist showcases, author talks, school tours, and training classes on a wide array of subjects. In fact the museum has expanded its reach to collaborate with the 1891 Fredonia Opera House in presenting three lectures on local history. Technology improvements included Wi-Fi upgrades and utilization of a new 3-D printer.



Photo of our author talk with Wendy Corsi Staub by Graham Tedesco-Blair



Since 1883, our Association has provided the means for the local community to receive free, lifelong learning educational experiences. We continue to seek ways to perform our operations in an efficient and cost effective manner. The Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that the library and museum's legacy is maintained for generations to come. It was in 1984 that we last saw a large expansion project which created the "new" library as we now know it. Forty years later, in 2024, it is our intention to further commit to this legacy by undergoing a significant expansion project which will further ensure that the library and museum have the necessary additional space to grow into and provide excellence for the next 40 years and beyond.

Through continued financial support from our endowments, municipal contributions, and from donations by our many supporters, we have been able to continue our operations in a highly successful manner. However, we have reached the point in our growth where in order to move forward and to continue to provide the high level of service and engagement our community expects, we must seek additional sources of financial security. Inflation and the increased costs associated with our current and future operations continue to challenge our ability to balance the extent of our overall community offerings. We would love to increase the number of scheduled programs and training classes, as well as the number of hours that we are open for the community. We would like to ask that you support us by joining in our campaign to raise additional funding necessary.

All of us from the Darwin R. Barker Library and Museum Association thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Adams  
 Darwin R. Barker Library & Museum Association Board  
 President



Photo of our Association exterior by Elizabeth Padgett



# Sponsor a Project



## **Acquisition Fund**

“Mark Twain” Watch, made in Fredonia by the Independent Watch Company, 1882 - \$4,000

Dr. Pettit’s American Eye Salve Co. Collection, 1850s-1880s - \$4,500

## **Archival Supplies**

25 Blue-Grey Barrier Board Textile Boxes - \$1455.75

Microfilm Machine Repair (labor & parts) - \$1000

4 Acrylic Lipped Open Book Cradles - \$300

Scanner: Epson DS-50000 WorkForce - \$2,000

## **Exhibit Supplies**

2 Acrylic Lipped Book Cover Displays - \$64.30

3 Flex Snake Weight Packs - \$61.50

2 Exhibit Banners - \$700

Enhanced Image Prints for Exhibit Use - \$480

## **Gift Shop**

100 Giclee Fine Art Prints of Paintings in the Museum’s Collection - \$800

20 Custom T-Shirts - \$220

100 of each: Pendants, Pins, and Keychains, representing 5 historical events in Fredonia, designed and produced by a Local Studio - \$6,000

50 Mugs, Coasters, and Tiles produced by a Local Studio from Clay Sourced from the Site of the Village’s First Brickyard c. 1819. - \$5,000

## **Publications**

30 copies of *The Fair Chambered Corridor: Explorations of the History of Fredonia NY* (2023, D. Shepard, A. Bailey, M. Walters) - \$2,500

100 Copies of *Mark Twain’s Legacy in Fredonia* (Walking Tour Program) - \$500

## **Environmental Control**

Air Conditioner replacement - \$6,212

Furnace replacement - \$3,362

## Ways To Give:

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