



# The Grannytown Gazette

The Newsletter of the Alden Historical Society

716-937-3700

[www.alden.erie.gov](http://www.alden.erie.gov)

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**Archivist**

**Town and Village Historian**

Karen Muchow

**Curator**

Kris Rogers

## Happy Birthday, Village of Alden!

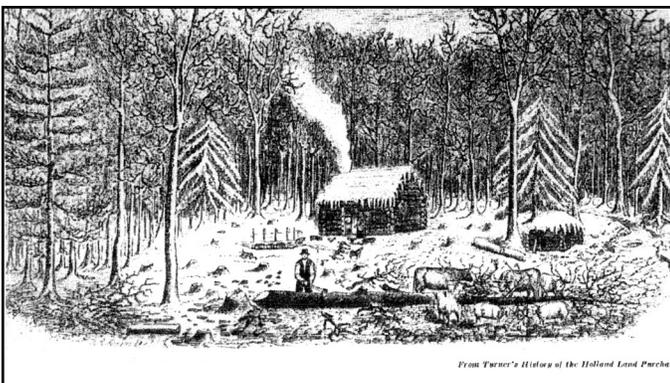
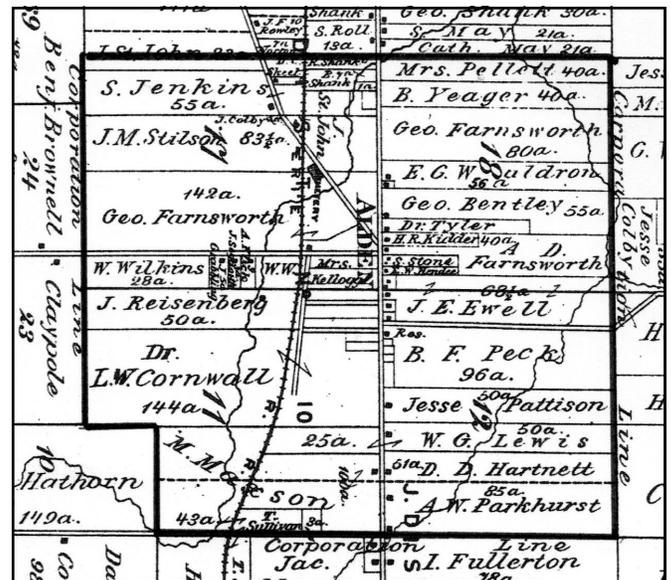
Yes, we are in a year-long celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the incorporated Village of Alden, with events scheduled for each month. The Village was incorporated by action of the New York State Legislature on May 7, 1869. Today's requirements for a village are a population of at least 500 and an area of not more than 5 square miles. According to the 2010 census, the population of the Village was 2,605 and the area was 2.718 square miles.

An interesting bit of folk lore surrounds the 1869 incorporation. It seems there were not quite enough citizens to sign the necessary petition. It is said that Dr. Levinus Cornwall went to the Village Cemetery and copied down names of "residents" there to make up the difference.

It could be said that the Village's birthday is really 1823 when Alden got a post office; before then, mail was picked up in Clarence, because Alden was then part of the large Town of Clarence. Or we could base our birthday on the year the first settler built a home and raised crops in what is now the Village. If so, we would be celebrating our 209<sup>th</sup> birthday!

It was in the fall of 1809 that Moses Fenno from Massachusetts purchased property in Lot 17 of Township 11, Range 5 of Joseph Ellicott's survey of the Holland Land Company purchase. The Corporation contains Lots 11, 12, 17 and 18 as seen on this 1880 map.

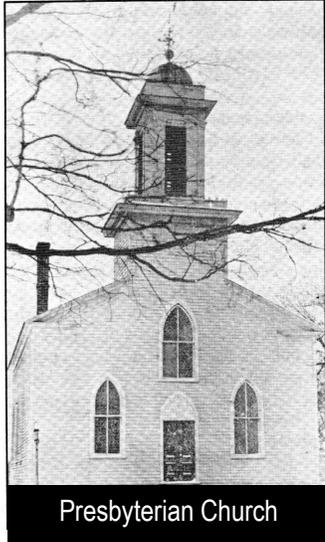
It is believed that Fenno's property was near the site of the Erie Railroad Depot and today's Whistle Stop Inn. Whether Fenno built a rough shelter that September or waited until the following spring we do not know. We do know that in the spring of 1810 he planted crops and started an orchard. He and his wife Sarah had four children: Rebecca, Joseph, Margaret and Susan. The oldest three were born in Vermont.



continued

That summer, 1810, more settlers arrived, many from Lebanon, New Hampshire: Joseph Freeman and his father-in-law Nehemiah Estabrook and his two brothers-in-law John and Nehemiah, Jr., Silas Tiffany, James Crocker, Jr. and their families. In 1811 came Aaron Bunce, William Dayton, Arunah Hibbard, and Jonas Stickney.

The Hibbards had the honor of having the first child born in the village, Emily in 1812. The first death was that of Polly Kranske, half-sister of Moses Fenno, in the summer of 1813. Later that year Polly's father became very ill and asked Joseph Freeman to purchase property for a public cemetery. That was done and John Kranske was the first to be buried in what is now the Alden Evergreen Cemetery.



The first church, Congregational (later Presbyterian), was organized in the home of Joseph Freeman on July 13, 1813. Nehemiah Estabrook was the first clerk. The first school in the village, a log cabin, was started in 1815 with Mehitable Estabrook, daughter of Nehemiah, as teacher.

The War of 1812 raged in nearby Buffalo and across Lake Erie in Ontario. Most of the men of the Village were called to fight. Family lore has it that old Nehemiah Estabrook, an American Revolution veteran, got out his sword, ground off the dust, and was determined to enlist again in defense of his country; he was finally dissuaded. Nehemiah, Jr. did fight and narrowly escaped being killed when the British were bombarding from Fort Erie. Arunah Hibbard was wounded in the Battle of Lundy's Lane in Canada. and Moses Fenno was killed in the Battle of Black Rock on December 30, 1813. That battle, along with the burning of Buffalo, alarmed the Alden settlers and many of them fled east, putting the Genesee River between themselves and the feared British soldiers. Most returned the following spring.

The small hamlet continued to grow. Amos Bliss opened the first tavern in 1815 at the eastern end of the village. In 1816, Seth Estabrook, nephew of Nehemiah, brought a load of goods and opened a store on Mercer Road—now Sullivan Road. It is Seth who suggested the name "Alden" for the hamlet.. When asked about the name he said it was short and sweet, just like his mother-in-law,

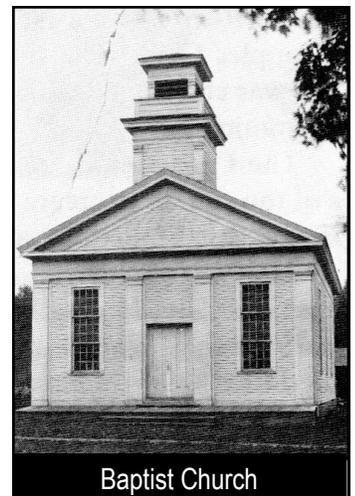
Hannah Alden Hebard. Hence, Alden got the nickname "Grannytown" for being named after an old lady.

In 1821, Thomas Farnsworth purchased land from Aaron Bunce, land that encompassed most of what is now the Village, and built the first frame house. He also began the first industry in Alden by building a tannery on Crittenden Road, along Spring Creek. The tannery was later built spanning Tannery Creek on Broadway where Rite Aid now stands.

The Town of Alden was created from the Town of Clarence by an act of the State Legislature on April 1, 1823. A post office was established in the village and Joseph Freeman was appointed the first postmaster, a position he held for eighteen years. Freeman was also a magistrate and Judge of Probate for Erie County for ten years.

John Harrington, the first doctor for the village, arrived in 1825. Calvin Bishop opened the first store in the village in 1830. The Presbyterian Church erected its first building in 1833 on Church Street, the same year the Baptists organized a congregation. They dedicated their building (now the American Legion Hall) on December 22, 1852.

A boon to the village happened in 1843 when the Buffalo & Attica Railroad (later the Erie Railroad) was constructed in the southern part of the village. Now farmers could get their produce and milk to Buffalo more quickly and freight could come to the village.



The small log-cabin school had been replaced with a larger frame school when, in 1852, the Union Free School District was created. The taxes to support the school were paid by the parents of the pupils until 1867 when the property-based school tax was instituted. William Learned and other men interested in education built the Alden Seminary in 1854. It was a private high school supported by tuition. The building is still standing at 13104 Broadway.

Disaster struck in 1866 when all the businesses along the south side of Main Street (Broadway), from Exchange Street west, were destroyed by fire. There was no loss of life and the owners quickly rebuilt.

Then on May 7, 1869...(To be continued)

File photos and article submitted by Archivist Karen Muchow

## Message from the President



As Winter finally has loosened its grip, the coming of Spring coincides with the re-opening of our Historical Society building at 13213 Broadway in the Village after our Winter hiatus. During the past two months, we have been hard at work giving our collection and displays the most comprehensive refresh in several years. Curator Kris Rogers, Archivist Karen Muchow, Collection Committee Chair Jane Burke, Doris Brade, and Sandy Dussault spent several days organizing the large collection of vintage clothes we have amassed over the years. Next, Karen and Kris, along with Trustees Larry Kocher, Conrad Borowski and others, began rearranging the location of several display cases in an effort to create office space for Karen and Kris, so they can more efficiently perform tasks that require desk work.

The contents of our Organizations Room were moved to our

kitchen area, giving the building a better flow of displays to view as visitors move from the main Davis Room to our Hamlet Room. We have also added internet access for research and wi-fi access for our visitors. I thank everyone who helped get everything accomplished and the building ready for re-opening on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. I'm excited by the changes and I hope you will stop by to have a look!

We are also trying to increase community involvement by inviting interested members of our community to assist our Trustees by volunteering as additional docents when the building is open on Sundays and special events. If you have an interest in Alden's history and would like to help, contact one of our trustees, call us at 937-3700, or email us at [AldenHistSoc@gmail.com](mailto:AldenHistSoc@gmail.com).

Also, as we are one-quarter through the Village of Alden's Sesquicentennial celebration year, look for special events involving the Historical Society to increase in the coming months, including an Easter Promenade, the dedication of the Moses Fenno "First Settler" historical marker, and a host of activities in conjunction with an "Old Tyme" carnival weekend in July. Please watch our Facebook page and the Alden Advertiser for the latest updates.

We sincerely thank you for your membership and interest as we strive to continue our mission to protect, present and promote the history of Alden and its people. Best regards and Happy Spring!

Photo and article submitted by President Christopher Gust

## Easter Promenade and Book Signing April 20



The dictionary defines a promenade as "a leisurely public walk, ride or drive so as to meet or be seen by others." The Village of Alden held a promenade fifty years ago as an opening event to the Centennial Year. Let's do it again in this our Sesquicentennial Year!

We will meet at 2 pm on Saturday, April 20, at the Historical Society at 13213 Broadway (parking is available in the bank parking lot), and proceed down to the Legion Hall, cross Broadway at Church Street, continue down Church Street to Main Street and back to Emerson Street, cross Broadway and back to the Historical Society, where light refreshments will be served.

What to wear? Period dress from the late 1880s, or from the Roaring 20s, or the Hippie years. Old cars and buggies are invited to drive along the route of the promenade.

An extra special event is being held along with the Promenade and that is the unveiling of the new book on the history of the Village, [150 Objects and Photos That Tell the History of the Village of Alden, NY](#). The books will be available for sale (\$10) and the authors will be present to sign your book. The book signing will begin at 2:30 pm.

**150 Objects and Photos**  
That Tell the History  
of the  
The Village of Alden, NY



2019

## Annual dues are payable by April 1

We value your membership in our Historical Society and we would like to thank you for your continued support. Your dues help to continue our mission of preserving Alden's rich history. Please remit your dues promptly.

If you have a new address or phone number, please notify us so we may keep our membership roster current. Thank you.



## Curator's Corner



During the months of January and February, the collection committee emptied the storage closet behind the military room and inventoried the clothing there. Much of the clothing was mildewed so we did the inventory and set aside the damaged clothes. The empty closet was sprayed twice with Lysol to hopefully kill mildew spores and then vacuumed. The remaining clothes were returned to the closet with more space between them. A large bookcase was moved to the organization room and seven boxes of

Alden Village history booklets were moved into the military room under the civil war case.

On President's Day, Larry, Chris, and Conrad met with Karen and me. We moved displays and furniture to new locations. The old kitchen has become the organization room with matching cases on either side of the doorway. The Native American display cases are side by side in the Davis room and the round table from the kitchen is now in that room. One portable table now supports the computers and phone. Conrad hung paintings and signs in the Davis room which gives some much needed color to the room.

The former organization room is now the office for the historian and myself. The large bookcase holds all the binders that were in the barrister case previously. Very old and fragile ledgers from some Alden businesses are now on the top of that bookcase, safely away from excess moisture and light. I hung curtains on the two closet doors to allow for more airflow and the office "door" is another set of curtains. I made and hung curtains in the military room to hide the seven boxes of Village booklets.

In the parlor, the lady mannequin and her "daughter" are now dressed in summer clothes along with a baby doll. The hamlet display has been refreshed.

In summary, our building has been transformed and we hope that new visitors will come to enjoy our collection. Thank you to all who helped to achieve this change.

Submitted by Curator Kris Rogers



So our docents may spend Easter with their families, the Historical Building will be closed Sunday, April 21

We will re-open Sunday, May 5, from 1—3 pm for tours.

We apologize for any inconvenience.

**GREAT JOB!**

A big thank you to Lee Weisbeck at the Alden Advertiser for printing our articles and photos so prominently. Also a thank you to Vicki Weisbeck for accessing the photos from the 1969 Village Centennial and printing them to publicize the 150th Village Sesquicentennial.

## From the Village Sesquicentennial Committee



Please join us as we celebrate the Village of Alden’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. May 9, join us as we bury a time capsule in front of Village Hall, followed by dedication of the Historical Society’s Moses Fenno historical marker. Then return to village hall for birthday cake and ice cream! June 13 – Historical Society program Historic Route 20. June 15 – Black Water Day— join us on a bus tour of the historic sites of the black water baths. Alden is noted for its black water baths. Mineral rich "black water" was discovered while drilling for natural gas in 1891. During the drilling process, one of the few unsuccessful operations had struck a vein of mineral rich black water. Although it was a disappointment to the gas company, it became a boon to the community. In 1936 the New York State Joint Legislative Committee investigated mineral water state-wide. The committee concluded that "Alden Black Mineral Water is especially beneficial in the treatment of rheumatism, arthritis, sciatica, neuritis, salt rheum, high and low blood pressure and skin diseases." July 10, listen to Barbershop quartets in Bandstand Park. July 11 is Taste of Alden and 5K race. July 12 -13— join us for a carnival with rides, old fashioned carnival games, contests, bands, giant parade and fireworks. July 28 is the annual car show to benefit Mercy Flight. Visit the Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/aldenvillagesesquicentennial](http://www.facebook.com/aldenvillagesesquicentennial) and Village website at [www2.erie.gov/village\\_alden](http://www2.erie.gov/village_alden) for more information.

Submitted by Sue Galbraith

### “First Settler” Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony Planned

Plans are underway by the Alden Historical Society and the Village of Alden Sesquicentennial Committee to hold a dedication ceremony for the placement of the Society’s third historical marker this decade. The “First Settler” marker is planned to be dedicated on the Village’s anniversary date, May 9<sup>th</sup>, at a location on Exchange Street believed to be in the vicinity of the first non-native settlement in what is now the Village of Alden. Moses Fenno of Massachusetts built a homestead and raised crops in the spring of 1810 at the site. Fenno, a member of the New York Militia, was later killed in action during the Battle of Black Rock in 1813. A reception at Village Hall is planned after the dedication ceremony. The marker joins the Town Line Secession & Reunion and Alden Presbyterian Church as markers placed by the Historical Society since 2013.

Submitted by President Christopher Gust

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**April 11, 2019 Lt. Colonel Matt Urban**



Earning 29 medals during his service in WW II made Matt Urban the most decorated combat soldier in US Army history. We welcome the members of VFW Post #7275 for a look at the extraordinary life and career of WNY native (Buffalo born) Matt Urban—a truly amazing military hero.

**May 9, 2019 150 Years Celebration (Our originally scheduled program on Alden Center has been postponed)**



A birthday cake and ice cream reception will be held at the Village Hall following the Moses Fenno Historic Marker dedication and the Time Capsule burial ceremony. All are welcome to attend and celebrate the Village of Alden’s 150th Sesquicentennial anniversary.

**June 10, 2019 “Historic Route 20”**



America’s longest highway, US Route 20 is a 3,365 mile journey through the nation’s history and most breathtaking wonders. Author Bryan Farr will share anecdotes and stories relating to this great American highway, Alden’s Broadway, as it passes through 12 states stretching from coast to coast.

**NOTE:** Programs are cancelled when Alden Central School has closed for weather conditions.

## *Schoolhouse Opened for Winterfest*

On Saturday February 2nd, as part of Alden's 15th Annual Winterfest, the Historical Society opened the Hen-skee Road Schoolhouse for public viewing. The circa 1834 schoolhouse, located at Alden Town Park, was opened from 11 am until 2 pm. We thank everyone who stopped by on a cold day for a look inside. We also thank Curator Kris Rogers and Trustees Larry Kocher & Christopher Gust for volunteering to brave the cold so the schoolhouse could be opened to visitors.

Photo and article submitted by President C Gust



### *New Members*

Hugh & Eleanor White (Couple)  
Michael Manicki (Individual)  
Bill Green (Individual)

### *Couple Renewals*

Brian & June Dussault  
Antionette & Matthew Shriver

### *Family Renewals*

Kerry & Vincent O'Hara  
Erin & Scott Redmond

### *Business Renewals*

Alden Chamber of Commerce  
Alden Pharmacy  
Alden State Bank  
Elwood-Jordans Agency  
Neill & Strong Attorneys

### *Donations*

Helen Creighton

### *Donations in Lieu of Dues*

Clarke & Jane Burke  
Kris Rogers

### *Individual Renewals*

Doris Brade  
Carolyn Burger  
Helen Creighton  
Kristen Dussault  
Michelle Dussault  
Kyle Kavanagh  
Sheila Metzger  
MaryAnn Sardella  
Donna Schall  
Audrey Senecal  
Rhonda Wieder  
Antoinette Wiltberger

## *Winter Programs*

Photos courtesy Christopher Gust



Larry Mruk, retired teacher and Explore Buffalo docent, shared his extensive knowledge of Buffalo's role in aviation history at the January 10 program. The "Buffalo Production Soldier," was Mruk's term for the Buffalo workers employed in the aviation industry during WW II. Out of a population of 576,000, Buffalo had over 300,000 people employed in the aviation industry or in support of it. Buffalo was the major supplier of WW II aircraft, producing over 29,000 planes for the war effort.



At the February 14 program, Historical Society archivist and Alden Town and Village Historian, Karen Muchow, put to use her former teaching experience by quizzing those in attendance with 25 questions she had compiled about the village of Alden's history. If participating in this summer's trivia contest is on your agenda, we encourage you to begin assembling and studying what resources you can find.



Members and guests reveled in recalling the thrilling rides, tasty treats, side show events, and outings with families and friends enjoyed at Crystal Beach Amusement Park as they were led on a journey through their memories at the March 14 program with guest speaker, Mark Janik. Mr. Janik went on to describe the fate of many of the park's attractions and offered suckers to those willing to share memories.



Articles submitted by Elli DeFilippo

## *Condolences*



KOSTECKY, Doris Elizabeth (née Weisbeck), age 98 of Alden, New York died on January 7, 2019. Beloved wife of the late Michael Kostecky; mother of Karen (Richard) Penfold, Joanne (A. James) Dearlove, and Michael Kostecky; cherished grandmother of six, great-grandmother of 12.

## Historical Society Building

The Alden Historical Society's many exhibits are located in the village at the Alden Historical Society Building, 13213 Broadway, across from Alden State Bank. The mission of the historical society is to preserve, promote and present the history of Alden and its people.

### HOURS:

The Alden Historical Society Building is open to the public from 1 PM to 3 PM the first and third Sunday of each month, **EXCEPT during January and February**. Tours for individuals and groups may be arranged by calling 937-3700 or 937-6400.

### MEETINGS:

**Program meetings** are generally held at the Alden Community Center on the second Thursday of the month at 7 PM. Notices will be published in the Alden Advertiser in advance of the program. Open to the public, these programs are both informative and interesting, often featuring a guest speaker. You are very welcome to come and share your memories and experiences about the evening's program, followed by an informal social complete with homemade refreshments. In the event of inclement weather, we will postpone when Alden school activities are closed.

**Trustee meetings** are held at the Alden Historical Society Building at 7 PM. Meetings are held the first Thursday of the month in February, April, June, August, October and December. Trustee meetings are open to the membership.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New members are always welcome. Your support will assure that the Alden Historical Society will continue to grow and prosper for years to come.

**Please note:** The membership year is April 1 through March 31, with the annual renewal due by April 1.

### WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

#### ANNUAL DUES

Single \$12.00

Couple \$20.00

Family \$25.00

Business \$50.00

Please include your Business card

Name.....

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Please make checks payable to Alden Historical Society

Mail to:

Lynda Tucker, Membership Secretary

Alden Historical Society

13213 Broadway

Alden, NY 14004

DONATIONS AND MEMORIALS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED

**NOTE: Donations are not tax deductible**

**Membership**—Lynda Tucker, Clarke Burke, Susanne Galbraith, Jennifer Strong

**Collections**—Jane Burke, Sandy Dussault, Kyle Kavanagh, Larry Kocher, Karen Muchow, Kris Rogers

**Publicity/Newsletter**—Lynda Tucker - Editor, Clarke Burke, Elli De-Filippo, Gilbert Dussault, Susanne Galbraith, Christopher Gust, Carl Matthies,

**Program/Refreshments**— Conrad and Carol Borucki, Sandy Dussault

**Building and Grounds**—Larry Kocher, Conrad Borucki, Doris Brade, Christopher Gust

**Fundraising**—Gilbert Dussault, Jane and Clarke Burke

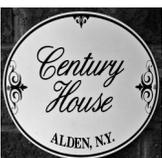
**Nominating**—Jane Burke, Elouise DeFilippo

**Audit**—Lynda Tucker, Clarke Burke

**Budget**—Clarke Burke, Christopher Gust, Larry Kocher,

**Historical Marker/Signs**—Christopher Gust, Clarke Burke, Gilbert Dussault, Larry Kocher, Karen Muchow, Jennifer Strong

## Century Homes



Although we accept information on any century house, we are now focusing on the 100+ yr old houses located in the town. If you are interested, please email us at: AldenHistSoc@gmail.com. We have Century House signs for sale for \$45. Sue Galbraith



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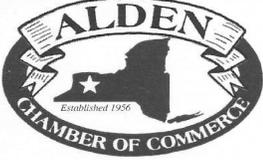
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**Born, raised, lives and practices in our community, Attorney JENNIFER STRONG is your neighbor and is here to help.**

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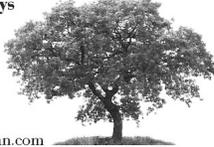
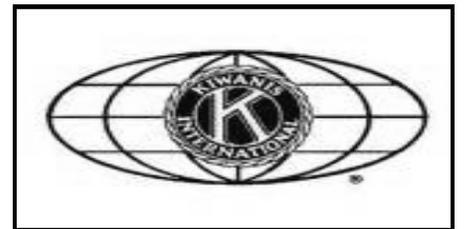
**Alden PHARMACY**



**Thomas A. Steffan**  
 Attorney at Law

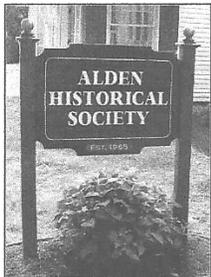
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**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Alden Historical Society, founded in 1965, is a volunteer supported organization whose mission is to preserve, promote, and present the history of the Town of Alden and its people.



*Alden Historical Society*  
 13213 Broadway  
 Alden, NY 14004

*Find us on Facebook.com/AldenHistoricalSociety*

*Chartered by the Board of Regents  
 New York State Education Department*

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*We appreciate the support we receive from the Town of Alden.*

*Thank you.*