



The Grannytown Gazette

The Newsletter of the Alden Historical Society

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aldenhistsoc@gmail.com

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Shoot Out On Main Street

It is with many thanks to Dawn Sitzman for sharing with us the postcards she had purchased that tell this story, written in the hero's own hand. The hero? Fred Swift, photographer and telephone company entrepreneur with his own phone company, the Frontier Telephone Company. The photographs printed on the faces of the three postcards were ones taken by Swift himself.

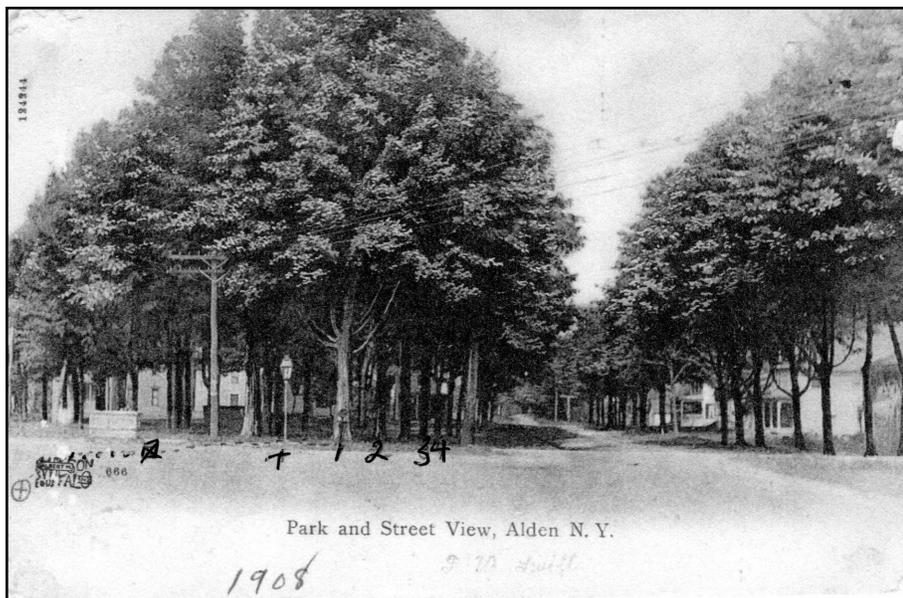
It was very early in the morning of May 11, 1907 when William Wahl awoke to the sound of someone trying to break into the rear of his general store on Main Street (Broadway) in the village. Mr. Wahl, who lived over the store, stuck his head out a window and ordered the men to leave. One of the men told him to pull his head back or have it shot off. Mr. Wahl pulled his head back and telephoned Mr. Swift, night operator for his Frontier Telephone Company, advising him of the situation and asking him to send assistance.



Fred Swift grabbed his revolver, left his home and office on the corner of Emerson and Irving Streets, and hurried up the street to the scene. For several years Mr. Swift had lived in the far West where he was a cowboy. It was there he became adept in the use of firearms and learned to shoot so accurately that he could split a playing card with his revolver at the distance of fifteen paces.

continued

As Fred neared the store (now Alden Medical Supply) he heard some people in the park (Firemen's Park) and started toward them. As he got nearer, three shots rang out from behind the horse watering trough. In Swift's own words: "...but I kept on so to get the light from the street light over my head or behind me so I could see them—this kept me in good light for them to see me but I could not see them back in the dark grove—they kept shooting at me. One man emptied one revolver and began with another. I went behind tree #1. The man who shot so much was behind tree #2 which was about 30 ft. away—I could have killed him—but thought I could hit him in the legs and you can see on tree #2 where my ball cut up the bark. He ran back into the grove where it was too dark to see well and to go after him. I took big chances hunting those 3 men in that grove."



Newspaper reports of the day said that the men made their way to the northern end of the village and Swift followed, keeping out of range of the bullets by hiding behind trees. Finally, the men made a sprint for the Lackawanna Railroad tracks (at the corner of Crittenden and North Roads) and hid among some railroad cars sitting on a siding there. Swift then gave up the chase.

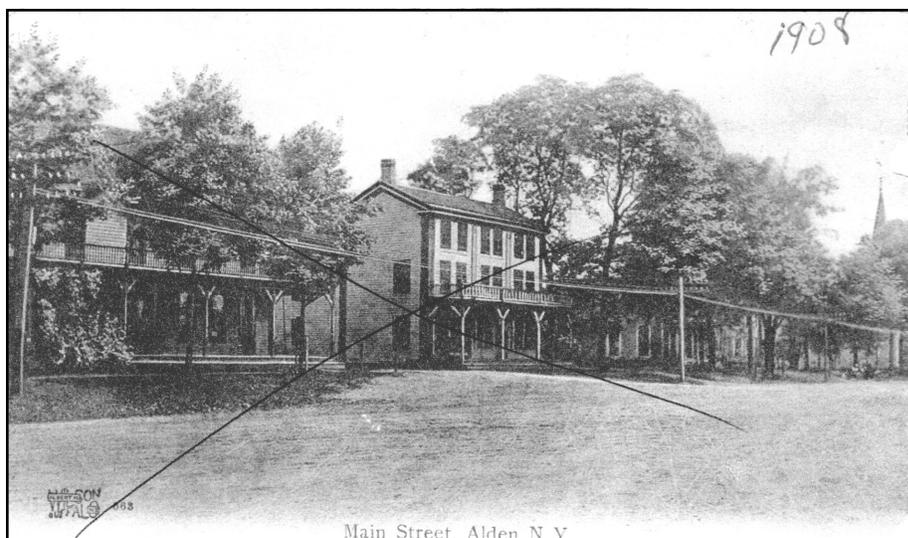
Swift was uninjured, although one bullet came dangerously near his head. He was of the opinion that he had hit one of men, wounding him slightly, as he saw one limping as he ran and disappeared under the cover of darkness.

It was later learned that the men had first broken into the railroad station, but found nothing of value except two suits of clothes belonging to the station agent, which were taken. They then visited Pancoast's general store on the corner of Exchange and Broadway, and with a crowbar, apparently stolen from the station, pried open the front doors and stole between \$250 and \$300 worth of jewelry, some money, three suits of clothes, three pairs of shoes and some other men's furnishings. They then moved on to Wahl Bros. store. The man left to guard the outside of the store apparently saw Mr. Swift coming, warned his comrades and they fled to the park. The men made off with all they had stolen except for the crowbar. That was found in Wahl's store.

The post cards were addressed to Prof. N.R. Luce in Union City, PA. An Ancestry.com search found a Nelson R. Luce, a United Brethren minister, living in Union City in 1900. His wife, Ellen, was Fred's aunt, sister of his mother, Lucy. Why Mr. Swift waited until January 1908 to inform his aunt and uncle of the details of the event, we do not know.

Were the burglars ever caught? A May 12, 1907 news article says the gang was traced a mile west of the village. A brief search of Buffalo newspapers of the time did not reveal any arrest or trial. It was believed that it was the same gang that had been pulling off jobs at Newfane, Lockport, Hamburg and other suburban towns.

And Fred Swift? He was elected constable. He died May 12, 1915 and is buried in Clarence Fillmore Cemetery along with his wife and parents.



Message from the President

Your Alden Historical Society hopes that all of our members had an enjoyable summer. After taking the months of July and August off, our monthly programs at the Community Center resumed in September with a look at Buffalo's Old First Ward. Conrad and Carol Borucki have an interesting schedule of programs planned for the coming Months, and we hope that you will have the opportunity to attend some of them.



In spite of the summer break pausing our monthly programs, the Society was involved with several special events in conjunction with the Village's year-long Sesquicentennial celebration, participating in the parade in July and holding historic walking tours in August, as well as our annual participation in the themed display contest during the Erie County Fair. This year's theme was quite interesting, "A Date That Changed Our Town's History." A committee consisting of Historian Karen Muchow, Curator Kris Rogers, trustees and volunteers worked diligently to produce a display that focused on the opening of the first black water bath house and its subsequent impact on the growing Village's economy. Committee Chairman Larry Kocher built a stunning 10- foot rendition of a black water well derrick and I was pleased to be able to contribute by painting the backdrop of the first bath house building. While always striving for first place, we were happy to receive an Honorable Mention ribbon award.

We also noted the beginning of the new school year by opening the Henskee Road one-room schoolhouse during the Alden-Lancaster Art Show, and welcomed several curious visitors.

We continue to put a call out for anyone interested in the Society and our collection at the Historical Building to volunteer as docents while the building is open on the first and third Sunday of the month and for special events. If you would like to help, please contact one of our trustees or leave a message at 716-937-3700 and someone will return your call. We thank Doreen and Rick Yates for recently volunteering as docents during one of our Sunday openings.

As always, we appreciate everyone who is a member of the Alden Historical Society and we welcome those who have joined us recently with a new membership. If you are reading this issue of the Gazette and are not a current member, please consider joining the Society. We also always appreciate current lifetime members who make donations in lieu of dues.

We thank you for your interest and support.

Photo and article submitted by President Christopher Gust

Village Sesquicentennial Parade

The Historical Society participated in the big Alden Village Sesquicentennial Parade on Friday, July 12th with several Trustees and Society members riding in the back of Leo Wagner's vintage truck, tossing hard candy to children and the young-at-heart along the parade route. Many thanks to Leo for the use of his truck!



Photo courtesy Rick Penny

Historic Village Tours



The Society hosted Tuesday Evening Village of Alden Historical Tours during the month of August as part of the Village's Sesquicentennial year-long celebration. The tours included "Businesses along Broadway" from Elm Street to the Spring Creek Cheese Factory; "Rolling Down Railroad Street" from the New York Glass Works to the Erie Depot; "Iconic Village Buildings"; and a self-guided look at the village's "Century Homes." Docents were stationed at each stop for the first three tours. We want to thank Conrad Borucki, Mark Casell, Sue Galbraith, Christopher Gust, Jennifer Gust, Mayor Manicki, Karen Muchow, Renee Nelson, Kris Rogers, Margaret Rose and Roberta Vincent for serving as docents. A special thank you to Lynda Tucker for serving as our head tour guide every week.

Society Trustee Jennifer Strong presents the history of the Alden Pharmacy

Curator's Corner

Since we acquired the architect's blue print cabinet, I have been carefully unrolling and flattening maps, baptism/marriage certificates, and diplomas. We had these stored in the Townline desk because there was no place to put them out flat. Using heavy books and pieces of glass to weigh them down, after several weeks, these documents are much flatter and are able to be stored in the cabinet. Once all the pieces stored in the desk are unrolled, the cabinet drawers will be labelled with their contents by category. The pieces will be easily accessed for display or research.

We also were given an older red and yellow Alden Hook and Ladder turnout coat and helmet from former firefighter/EMT, Paul McGoldrick. It is displayed in the Organization Room.

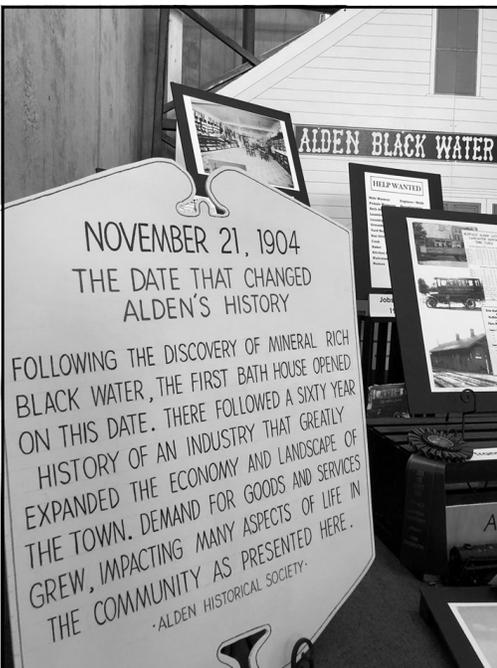
Please come and visit the collection. We are open the first and third Sundays of the month from 1 to 3 PM.

Article by Kris Rogers

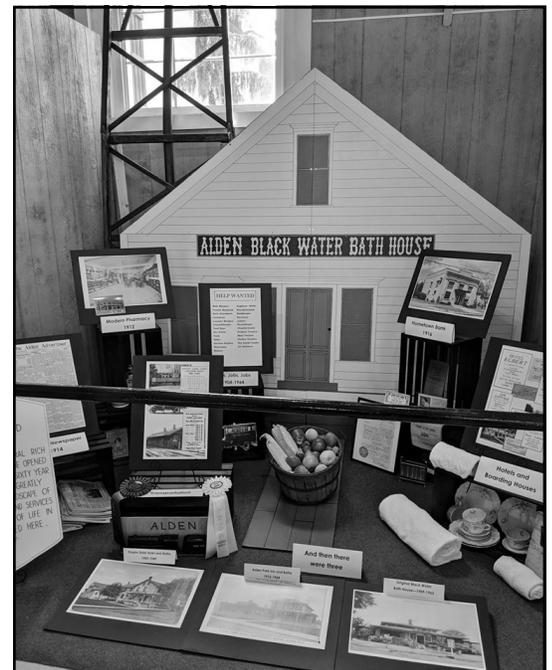
2019 Erie County Fair Display

The theme chosen by the Erie County Historical Federation for this year's displays was "A Day That Changed Your Town History". In line with that theme we chose to present the major change to the town of Alden as a result of the Black Water enterprises. Our title was "November 21, 1904", the official day of the opening of the first bath house. The intention of our display was to highlight the immense impact noted in our town as a result of this business.

Many businesses were expanded and new ones founded to support the activity of many visitors to the community. Work opportunities in all areas grew and property values increased. Alden was promoted as a resort, a get away from the bustle and noise of the city. Many therapeutic benefits attributed to the minerals contained in the black water were advertised.



Our display started with a backdrop consisting of an 8' by 6 1/2' rendering of the first bath house painted by Christopher Gust and a 10' high rendition of an early well rigging constructed by Larry Kocher. The floor consisted of green carpet simulating grass and a walkway as noted in our archive photo. A large sign, prepared by Conrad Borucki, was placed at the front of the display area to clarify the intent of the display. The aspects of a bank, pharmacy, newspaper, hotels & boarding houses, and transportation were each presented. Photos, documents and artifacts prepared by curator Kris Rogers and archivist Karen Muchow were displayed on black crates to note these elements. Rounding out the display at the lower front were large photos of the three bath houses that once operated in Alden.



Besides those noted above, the following also contributed to this project developing ideas, transporting materials and setting up the display: Sandy Dussault, Michelle Dussault, Kyle Kavanagh, Clarke Burke, Ron & Judy Bowman, Carl Matthies and Lynda Tucker.

As a result of judging at the fair, our display was deemed competitive and received "Honorable Mention" and recognition for following the theme. We are proud of our presentation of a major factor in development of the town of Alden.

Our September Program

Timothy Bohan shared the findings of his research on the history of Buffalo's First Ward, which led him to write Against the Grain. The area of the First Ward changed over time but generally came to be recognized as bordered by Michigan Ave, Hamburg Street, Exchange Street, and the Buffalo River. Proximity to the Buffalo River and Buffalo's location as the terminus of the Erie Canal led to the industrialization of the area which was inhabited by mostly Irish immigrants. The 1842 development of the Joseph Dart grain elevator expedited Buffalo's rise to prominence. By 1900, Buffalo was the eighth largest city in the United States and the sixth largest port in the world. With the opening of the St Lawrence Seaway in 1959, the area suffered a gradual decline in commerce. The decline in waterfront industries impacted all areas of commerce and life throughout the region. The area of the First Ward is currently enjoying a resurgence in interest. Its influence on the future may not be industrial, but its impact continues to unfold.

Article by Elli DeFilippo

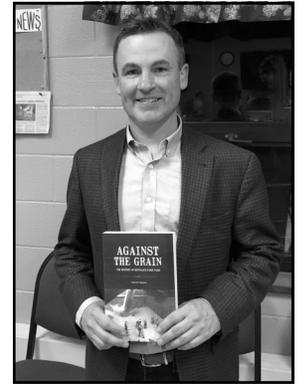


Photo courtesy Christopher Gust

F **October 10, 2019** **An Adventure of a Lifetime with Jay Blanchard** **7 pm**



Darien resident, Jay Blanchard, has the distinction of having ridden his bicycle 4,200 miles across the country coast to coast! Jay will share the story of his 40 day adventure with its many physical, emotional, and mental trials and challenges.

November 14, 2019 **Annual Potluck Dinner and Membership Meeting** **6 pm**



Please bring a dish to pass and your own place setting. Beverages will be provided. In keeping with our traditional Veterans Day theme, there will be a brief program entitled "Did You Know" highlighting little known facts about our country's iconic patriot symbols. eg. Did you know that each curl on the head of the Statue of Liberty is 7 feet long? (As long as a living room couch) Or did you know there really was an Uncle Sam? Sam Wilson was a meat packer in Troy, NY, who fed hungry soldiers during the War of 1812 and stamped his meat US inspected.

December 12, 2019 **Beerffalo: The Ales & Tales of Buffalo with Rob Gabriel from Explore Buffalo** **7 pm**



Buffalonians have been enjoying the taste of locally made beer since before the War of 1812. With a brewing resurgence in the city, it is a perfect time to reflect on Buffalo's rich brewing past, as well as the amazing renaissance in effect today. Alden may have lacked a brewery, yet it has never lacked for colorful and interesting drinking establishments. Do you recall any 'favorite' watering spots? What of Alden's Ales & Tales?

Submitted by Conrad and Carol Borucki

Local Government Historians Law Celebrates 100 Years

In 1919, Gov. Al Smith signed Bill 160 into law by creating the office of Local Historian for each city, town or village as part of the Education Law. New York became the first state to enact this law. As defined in the law as duties and responsibilities of the Historian, the collection of the city/town/village's history and the preservation of historical records are required. The Historian also conducts research, creates public programs, leads historic tours, and sets up displays or exhibits. The Historian promotes local history working with students and teachers. Alden is honored to have Karen Muchow as the currently appointed Town and Village Historian. Karen assists with the Schoolhouse events, and has presented many programs for the Alden Historical Society. She has recently given six tours recounting the glory days of the Blackwater Baths and their importance in the growth of Alden during the Village's Sesquicentennial celebration. Karen will also research genealogy for families.



Ralph Stowell and Lenny Weisbeck were also appointed Town Historians for many years.

New Members

Richard & Connie DeVita (Couple)
Marion Schmidt (Individual)
Florence (Renny) Staples (Individual)

Individual Renewals

Marge Pohl

Family Renewals

Herbert & Shannon Schmidt



Donations in Lieu of Dues

Richard & Sue Davis

Donations

Ron Burkhardt
CIP Retail
Mark & Debbie Weaver
Rita Zimmer

November 12

6 PM

Please bring a dish to pass, place settings and your appetite!

POTLUCK DINNER

please
Join Us!



Welcome Back to School



With local children getting ready to begin a new year of classes the first week of September, the Alden Historical Society hosted a "Welcome Back to School" at the Henske Road one-room schoolhouse on Sunday, September 8th. Several visitors stopped by to see what it was like to go to school in the late 1800s - early 1900s.

Photo and article by Christopher Gust

Black Water Bus Tours 2



After four "sold-out" tours of Alden's Black Water sites in June, we planned two more for September 14th, in cooperation with St. Aidan's Episcopal Church. Seventeen more people took advantage of the opportunity to learn more about this important 60-year period of Alden's history. As portrayed in our Erie County Fair display, this industry had a huge economic impact on Alden. We again want to thank Margaret Rose and Judy Hotchkin of St. Aidan's for opening the church so that the group could see the interior of the only remaining bath house building.

Article by Karen Muchow

Annual Membership Meeting

The annual membership meeting on November 12 will begin at 7 pm. President Gust will discuss the highlights of the past year and committee chairs will have reports outlining their committee activities. Membership is growing, and the Society values the interest shown with renewing memberships. We also encourage our members to take an active role in the Society by attending programs, volunteering as docents at the building and by supporting our activities and events. Nominations for three trustee positions will be voted upon. Nominations for trustee positions will also be taken from the floor. We wish to thank our outgoing Trustees—Gil Dussault, Jane Burke and Doris Brade.



Alden Class of 1959 Visits Historical Society



Photo courtesy Kyle Kavanagh

Of special note was our Black Water display featuring workers and information about the unique Alden experience. Jim Nugent, whose mother was Loretta Nugent, Librarian at Ewell Free Library, and whose father was Harold Nugent, Supt. Of Public Works in the Village of Alden, enjoyed seeing a photo of his maternal grandmother who worked at the baths many years ago.

Attendees from the class were : Seated L to R (classmates in italics) Sandy Dussault, *Gil Dussault*, *Judy Pitts Daucher*. Standing First Row L to R: Carol Ann Henry Sawyer, Shirley Kumpf Wedgwood, Bill Wedgwood, Mary Anne Edwards, Ruth Nugent. Back Row L to R: Don Sawyer, *Ed Reich*, *Don Kramp*, Norm Edwards, Jim Nugent and Howard (Buddy) Kumpf.

As part of their 60th Anniversary Class Reunion, the Alden Fifty Niners visited the Society Museum on Saturday, August 10, 2019.

After hearing a historical presentation by President Christopher Gust, and Trustee Gil Dussault, the group was split into smaller groups to enjoy a special guided tour of the facility. Some had been in the building before but many had never visited and it turned out to be an interesting and enjoyable experience for those in attendance.



Many thanks to our docents – President Christopher Gust, Trustee Conrad Borucki, and Society Member Kyle Kavanagh, who gave up part of their day and provided an excellent tour for the participants.

Article by Gil Dussault

Alden

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The Alden Historical Society expresses our sincere appreciation to the **Alden Advertiser**, Alden's hometown newspaper since 1914, for their willingness to print our monthly program announcements and summaries, their ongoing cooperation in assisting us with mailing our quarterly newsletter, **The Grannytown Gazette**, and allowing access to photos and articles in ongoing research.



Don't Forget

150 Objects and Photos

That Tell the History of the Village of Alden, NY

2019

Copies of 150 Objects and Photos that tell the Story of the Village of Alden, NY are available at the Alden Historical Society, the Alden Pharmacy and the Village of Alden Clerk's Office during regular business hours. This informative and visual look at the beginnings of the Village of Alden was published to commemorate the Sesquicentennial Anniversary (150 years) being celebrated during 2019. At the low cover price of \$10.00, you will have a keepsake and an understanding of the Alden Village's rich history.



Alden Historical Society's 10th Annual Bake Sale

Celebrating "Christmas in the Park"

Saturday, December 7, 2019

11 am—4 pm

13213 Broadway, Alden, NY (across from Alden State Bank)



Baked goods may be dropped off at the Historical Society building at 10 am the day of the sale. Please support our bake sale offering goodies donated by our members and friends of the Society. Cash donations in lieu of purchases and donations are also greatly appreciated. The museum will be open for public visitation during the sale, with docents available for guided tours. Call Chairwoman Sandy Dussault, at 716-937-6246 for more information.



Condolences



REED - Leita M. (nee Weil) Of Elma, NY, May 18, 2019. Beloved wife of Timothy J. Reed; dearest mother of Timothy Jr. (Kari) Reed, Calvin Jackson, Thomas Jackson, Kimberly (Daniel) Wiesmore, Scott Reed and the late Roane Jackson; loving grandmother of Joshua, Justin, Victoria, Alexandra, Jacqueline, Elisha, Olivia and Zachary; great-grandmother of Hazel; sister of the late Thomas (Kathy) Weil and late Henry (Barbara) Weil



REED - Timothy J., Sr. Of Elma, NY, July 2, 2019. Beloved husband of the late Leita M. (nee Weil) Reed; dearest father of Timothy Jr. (Kari) Reed, Calvin Jackson, Thomas Jackson, Kimberly (Daniel) Wiesmore, Scott Reed, and the late Roane Jackson; loving grandfather of Joshua, Justin, Victoria, Alexandra, Jacqueline, Elisha, Olivia, and Zachary; great grandfather of Hazel; dear brother of William (Janet) and Suzanne Tuttle



BURGER—Carolyn J. February 10, 1941 - August 22, 2019 Passed away Thursday Aug 22, 2019 at her home in Orlando, FL. She is survived by her two sons Jeff (Katie) and Keith; her three grandchildren Jewel, Jake and Kaelan; her brothers Carl (Ann) Matthies and Gerald (Margaret) Matthies. She is preceded in death by her husband of 50 years Charles A. Burger, her parents and four siblings.

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 392-4295.

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.....

Address.....

.....

Phone.....Email.....

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

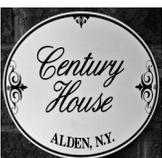
Nominating—Jane Burke, Elouise DeFilippo

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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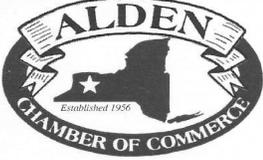
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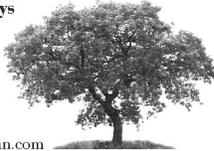
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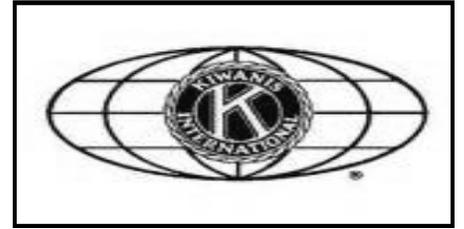


Thomas A. Steffan
 Attorney at Law

Cooke & Steffan, Attorneys

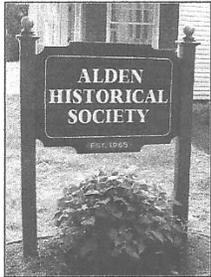


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MISSION STATEMENT

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.*