

# Fulton County Historical Society

Fall 2019 | 518-725-2203 | fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org

## The First Spiritualist Church of Gloversville

If you opened an issue of a local paper anytime between 1916 and 1963, chances are you may have spotted a notice from the First Spiritualist Church of Gloversville. These 20th century spiritualists had their beginnings in the 1800s, when there was a widespread belief in communication with ghosts and seances were common occurrences.

Spiritualism took off in western NY in an area that became known as the "Burned Over District." The term, coined by minister Charles Grandison Finney, reflected the history of intense religious revivals and formations of new religions in the area, including the Mormons, Millerites, and the Oneida Society.

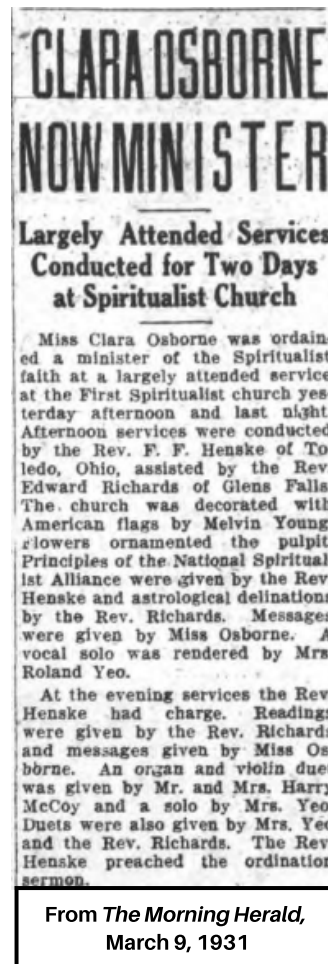
The official Spiritual Society of Gloversville was formed in February 1916 when George B. Howard, a spiritual minister and "trance speaker," decided to relocate here from Glens Falls. He visited the city in the past and gave talks on various topics, usually suggested by a member of the audience. After settling in Gloversville, Howard formed the First Spiritualist Church and was granted a certificate of incorporation by County Judge Frank Talbot. Howard, who was ordained under the National Medium Alliance (no longer in existence), became its minister.

Because the First Spiritualist Church didn't have a traditional church building at first, they met in various places around the city. Their meetings were always open to the public and usually consisted of a service or talk, followed by a séance.

Like any other church, the First Spiritualist hosted a number of community events, including frequent suppers, rummage sales, and the like. They created auxiliary groups, like the Ladies' Aid Society, and the Andrew Jackson Davis Club, a men's group.

By 1919, the group was making a serious attempt to raise funds to build their own church. The original plan was to purchase a lot and then construct a new building. It took nearly five years to raise enough money, and instead of building new, the group bought the lot at 17 Elm St., which contained two one-family homes.

The front house was to be renovated for use as the church. The first floor would be one large room for services, while the second floor would serve as an area for social events and other church activities. The house



at the back of the lot would be used as a parsonage. These buildings are gone now, demolished in the Urban Renewal plan of the 1960s.

Rev. Howard continued on as minister of the church. In 1931, Clara Osborne was ordained and they led services together. When Howard died, Osborne continued on her own. Osborne kept the church active, hosting talented mediums and speakers from all over the country, presiding over weddings, funerals, and weekly services. The church seems to have ceased to exist, at least formally, when Osborne was admitted to the Bleecker Street Nursing Home in 1963, because the church is listed in the 1962 city directory, but not in '63. She passed away on October 21,

1964, at the age of 95. There aren't many other mentions of the First Spiritualist Church in the paper after Osborne's death. Though there are still many who belong to the spiritualist church across the country, the fervor which once gripped the United States in the mid-1800s and early 1900s cooled as the 20th century progressed. The fact that Gloversville had an established spiritualist church demonstrates the diversity of religions that blossomed in Fulton County.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Marcia Gillis  
President

Dale Brown  
Vice-President

Greg Young  
Treasurer

Laurie Kozakiewicz  
Secretary

Mark Pollak  
Immediate Past President

Peter Betz

Marie Born

Mike Hauser

Scott Jeffers

Ryan Lorey

Sharon Ottalagano

Cathy Stearns

George Streeter

Marion Viglione

Dave Reffue, *Emeritus*

## STAFF

Samantha Hall-Saladino  
Executive Director

## VISIT

237 Kingsboro Ave.  
Gloversville, NY

Th-Sun, 12-4pm through Labor Day

Sat & Sun, 12-4pm Labor Day

through Columbus Day

Closed Columbus Day to Memorial  
Day

## CONTACT

fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org  
518-725-2203

## From the Executive Director

When I was in Mrs. Niles' 4th grade history class at Boulevard Elementary School, we were assigned a project exploring local history. Already obsessed with the American Girl books (especially Samantha, because of reasons I'm sure are obvious), and with the help of my dad, I became fascinated by Fulton County's own past. Like several of my peers, I went away for college - first to Troy, then to New Hampshire for graduate school. I was lucky enough to get my first museum job upon graduation and moved back to Gloversville to commute to Albany. I wished I could work closer to home with the history that had sparked my enthusiasm all those years ago. In 2013, I accepted a part-time position as the Fulton County Historian. And now, after eight years, miles of Thruway, and so many tanks of gas, I am so pleased to say that I am home.

The FCHS has done some pretty amazing things since its inception in 1891(!) - all through the dedication of volunteers and a hard-working Board of Directors. Having recently completed a new three-year strategic plan through the support of the Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services for New York (DHPSNY), the Board felt it was time to have their first full-time paid staff person to help lead the organization in this exciting new chapter. I am truly honored to be that person.

I'm looking forward to implementing some new programs, beefing up the FCHS membership program (see page 4), and planning our first gala fundraiser for 2020. Although we're now in our "closed" winter months (though visits to the museum are available by appointment all year round), we have some exciting events planned for the rest of this year so please check out page 7 for some information on what's happening at the museum through the end of this year and a sneak peek of our programming for next year. You can find the most up-to-date information on our new website, [fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org), where you can also sign up for our e-newsletter and have all of the latest information delivered right to your email inbox every month.

I hope you'll join us as we move ahead and that you'll be a part of our mission to acquire, preserve, and promote the history of Fulton County. As the late, great Stan Lee would say (as well as our own New York State motto): Excelsior!

Samantha Hall-Saladino  
ssaladino@fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org

# Year of the Glove Recap

The Year of the Glove - the commemoration and celebration of Fulton County's glove and leather industry heritage - has been a wonderful county-wide effort. Local libraries, businesses, and other historical and community organizations jumped in with both feet in creating their own related events and programs throughout the year.

The FCHS hosted Dr. Gerald Zahavi (University at Albany) in July for a multi-media presentation about the industry. Dr. Zahavi, along with Susan McCormick, collected audio and video interviews with some of the business owners and employees in the 1990s. Dr. Zahavi returned in October for a presentation on the labor unions. Many thanks to FMCC, who have graciously allowed us to use their wonderful space for both presentations.

July also saw the History Happy Hour event at Stump City Brewing in Gloversville. They brewed High Hop Ale, a beer not made for more than a century, in celebration of the event. Everyone had a great time enjoying their beverages and the trivia contest. We're so grateful to be able to work with Stump City and look forward to more collaborations!

Local author and historian Don Williams presented a fascinating talk called "Growing Up in Leather Land" in August at the Gloversville Senior Center. The trolley tour on September 22nd was sold out! Participants enjoyed a great tour at Townsend Leather as part of the afternoon.



FCHS would also like to acknowledge the following organizations, who hosted Year of the Glove events throughout the year: the Johnstown Historical Society, Townsend Leather, Johnstown Cemetery, Gloversville Public Library, Northville Public Library, the Paul Nigra Center for the Arts, the Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Gloversville Senior Center, the Johnstown Senior Center, Stump City Brewing, the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Women's Consortium, and the Sacandaga Valley Arts Network.

## Seeking Volunteers

Do you love history? Volunteer at the Fulton County Historical Society! No experience is needed and on the job training is provided. Some volunteer opportunities include: event volunteers, seasonal docents, assisting with school programs, office and clerical work, and more. We're happy to find something that fits your interests and availability.

The FCHS Board of Directors is also seeking volunteers to serve on various Board-driven committees: Fundraising and Marketing, Programs, Collections and Facilities, Personnel, and Finance. Volunteers do not need to be members of the Board to participate (though we encourage you to consider a Board seat if you are interested).

Those interested should please contact Samantha at [ssaladino@fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:ssaladino@fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org) for more information.

## Year of the Glove Commemorative Booklet

The FCHS is excited to announce that a Year of the Glove Commemorative Booklet will soon be available at the museum! Featuring pieces by the winners of the student art and essay contest, photos from related events around the county, historic images and advertisements, a brief history of the industry, and more, this book is the perfect addition to a history buff's collection and makes a great gift any time of year. It was designed by Katherine Ehle from Cake and Ale Studio in Johnstown and printed by Ricmar Design and Print in Amsterdam.

Books will be \$10 each and will be available at the FCHS and elsewhere. Please call 518-725-2203 for more information.

# Fall Membership Drive

We love our members! Why should you become a member of the FCHS? Members help support the museum's mission to preserve and promote the history of Fulton County through membership dues, attending programs, and sharing information about the organization with their friends and families. Museums like ours are community anchors, providing space for people to come together, learn from the past, and use that knowledge to create a better future for everyone. Museums are also economic engines - did you know that museums contribute \$50 BILLION to the US economy every year? In order to help the FCHS move into the future, we've revamped our membership program and are looking for new and returning history champions to join, or re-join, as a FCHS member!

What does membership mean for you? We're excited to offer some great new perks for our members, including: invitations to biannual members-only receptions at the museum, a welcome tour, reduced and free admission on select events, invitation to the members-only preview at the annual Festival of Trees, this newsletter delivered right to your mail box, and more!

Our goal is to reach 180 FCHS members by December 31, 2019. We need your help! Do you know someone who loves history? Tell them about FCHS! We offer a wide variety of membership levels and benefits. A museum membership also makes a great gift for birthdays, holidays, and other special occasions.

Check out page 5 for new membership levels and benefits, and find a membership form on the back of this newsletter. We hope to hear from you soon!

---

## Find Us Online

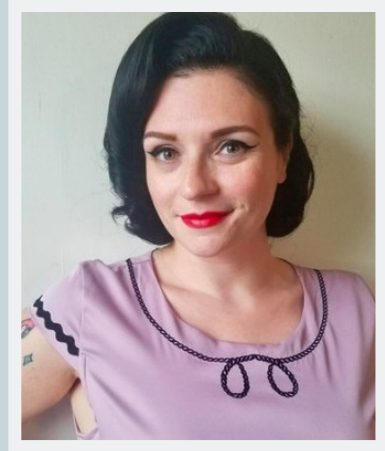
The FCHS is on Facebook and Instagram! Give us a follow to keep up to date with all of the goings-on, behind-the-scenes looks at the museum, and exciting things around the county.

 [facebook.com/fultoncountymuseum](https://facebook.com/fultoncountymuseum)

 [instagram.com/fultonhistorical](https://instagram.com/fultonhistorical)

# FCHS Welcomes First Executive Director

Meet the Fulton County Historical Society's new Executive Director, Samantha Hall-Saladino!



## Where are you from?

I spent my childhood equally split between Gloversville, where my mom's family lived, and Johnstown, where my dad lived. I went to Gloversville schools until halfway through 8th grade, when we moved to Johnstown. I graduated from JHS.

## What first started your interest in history?

The 4th grade social studies curriculum focuses on NYS history. I was in Mrs. Niles' class at Boulevard, and she assigned us this really fun project of researching local historic sites. My dad and I drove around and took photos with his Poloroid of sites like Union Hall, the Battle of Johnstown marker, and the Drumm House. Then, we made a map, I wrote note cards with info about each site, and we attached everything to the map. I still have it, framed. I also loved the Market Faire at Johnson Hall and really wanted to be a re-enactor!

## What are you most excited about in your new role at FCHS?

I love that I'm able to contribute to the community that fostered my excitement about history. Fulton County has so much to offer already, and I'm really looking forward to bringing even more to the table and encouraging others to be excited about our history and our future.

## What's your favorite historical era?

My studies focused on Early America, particularly the role of women and gender. I love social history and sharing the stories of the every day people of the past.

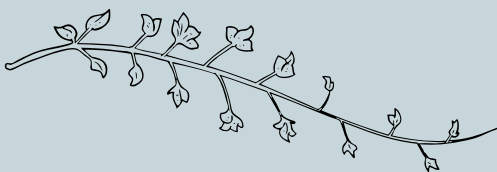
## What is one thing you wish people knew about the FCHS?

These are everyone's stories. So many people come through here and see photos of their family members in an exhibit - and it's so great to see how excited they get. The FCHS belongs to all of us, and family stories are an important part of community stories.



# Thanks to our New & Renewed Members!

Richard Aulisi  
Suzanne and Robert Best  
Nancy Betz  
Lucille Blunck  
Anthony Bryan  
Vincent and Sue Chadwick  
Mary Anne Chiaretto  
Patrick and Jo-Ann Clear  
Charles and Sue DeLilli  
Suzanne Ferguson  
Jennifer Gardella  
Tanya Lynnette Grimes  
Samantha Hall-Saladino  
Jessica Henry McClements  
Barbara Hill  
Elaine Hoye  
John and Raquel Huckans  
James Kilmer  
Kim and Gerry LaVallee  
Paula Lerner  
Geraldine Liggero  
Carol Maider  
Cynthia Morey  
Candis Murray  
Barbara Pagerie  
Charles Pannaci  
Mary Paris  
Barbara Rosmarino  
Maureen Sasscer  
Christine and Peter Schoonmaker  
Stephen and Susan Sparks  
Cathy and Pete Stearns  
Eileen Studders  
Christine W. Sutton  
Barbara Viskup  
David Waite  
Jake Wesley  
Gregory Young  
Sylvia Zierak



## Historian Spotlight

### Abby Cretser

#### Deputy Historian, Town of Ephratah

Did you know that every municipality in the state is required, by law, to have an appointed historian? We're excited to feature the historians around Fulton County who are working diligently to preserve, protect, and educate about our community's fascinating history.

#### **How long have you been in your historian position?**

I have been the Deputy Historian of the Town of Ephratah for 8 years now.

#### **Where are you from originally?**

I was born and raised in Ephratah!

#### **What sparked your interest in history?**

I remember always being interested in history, but family has also played a part, especially my Aunt June and Aunt Dawn. They would tell me stories about our own family history and stories about growing up in Ephratah and it made me realize the great history in our area.

#### **What's your favorite thing about being a historian?**

I always get to learn new things. There is a lot that I do not know. I am always asking town residents about what they know and to tell me stories.

#### **What projects are you working on right now?**

I have been working on a town-wide cemetery stone reading. Our town has 17 abandoned cemeteries that the town maintains, and a number of cemeteries on private property. Slowly I am photographing the stones, and writing down the inscriptions and then cross matching them with previously done readings. I am also making recommendations to the town to maintain the cemetery by cutting problem trees, and cleaning stones with a non-corrosive solution.

#### **If you could meet any historical figure, who would you choose and why?**

I would want to meet George Washington, he is such a larger than life figure. This spring I went to the George Washington Symposium, held by the Fort Plain Museum, and I learned so much! I would love to know what his true feelings are about a number of subjects.

# Save the Dates!

## First Annual Festival of Trees

### December 5-8 & 12-15

Celebrate the season as the museum is transformed into a wonderland of magical holiday trees! The exhibit galleries will be filled with uniquely decorated trees sponsored by local organizations and businesses.

Special events will be held throughout the two weekends, including a Make and Take Craft for Kids, Story Time with Santa, and more! If you are interested in sponsoring a tree or program ad, please visit our website at [fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://fultoncountyhistoricalsociety.org) for more information.

ANNOUNCING FULTON COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S 2020  
PROGRAM SERIES

## THE DECADE THAT ROARED

FULTON COUNTY IN THE 1920S

STAY IN THE KNOW!

FULTONCOUNTYHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG  
TO SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTER



# Fulton County Historical Society Membership Form

- Individual - \$20
- FCHS Partner (volunteer) - \$10
- Student - \$10
- Family - \$30
- Supporting - \$50
- Patron - \$100
- Benefactor - \$150
- Lifetime - \$250

Please make checks

payable to the Fulton

County Historical

Society and send to:

FCHS

PO Box 711

Gloversville, NY 12078

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in

volunteering?

Yes.  Not at this time.

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_