

# Town/Village of Cuba

## HISTORIAN'S REPORT FOR 2011

The start of the New Year brought us continued blasts of a long cold, snowy winter. Almost daily snowfalls occurred in January and February. As soon as the weather broke in the spring, work was begun on a new foot bridge on Prospect Street over the Western New York and



Pennsylvania Railroad. Massive abutments were constructed at either end of the bridge to accommodate required ramping for handicapped accessibility. On June 2, 2011 the steel structure was lifted into place. The official opening of was held on October 28, 2011 attended by NY State Senator Catherine Young, a representative from Congressman Tom Reed's office, Mayor Taylor and several village board members and crew from the Department of Public works. Construction of the bridge was a long time in planning from the day the old wooden bridge over the rails was closed in January of 2007 to the official opening in 2011. The beautiful

new bridge is a monument to the perseverance and dedication of many individuals. Another new bridge along the Genesee Valley Greenway to the West, off Bull Street, was also erected and opened during the summer. The bridges were funded in part by a federal program, The Transportation Enhancement Program, that provides a small percentage of the total highway budget to non-motorized projects with particular interest in projects related to transportation history.

In April the Cubana Apartments on Hill Street were destroyed by fire forcing the relocation of 12 tenants. The top floor of the structure was nearly totally burned and was removed. The owner is still (as of January 2012) rebuilding the bottom two floors of the building in anticipation of renting apartments again in the future.



On May 14, 2011 the oldest building in Cuba, the St. James Hotel, was destroyed by fire in the very early morning hours. Several fire companies from surrounding towns fought the blaze for hours, and protected adjacent structures from catching fire. The original structure had been built in 1835 by General Calvin T. Chamberlain. It was believed to be the oldest public house in Allegany County. It was a sad day for Cuba.

Many new trees were planted along village streets to replace the many old trees, mostly Maple, that had been removed over the past few years due to disease.

United State Marine Sergeant Mark Bradley, a CRCS Graduate died of injuries sustained in the war in Afghanistan on June 16, 2011. Memorial stones honoring Sgt. Mark Bradley and all those who lost their lives on 9/11 were placed at the foot of the Liberty Pole on West Main Street.



The service also marked the observance of Patriot's Day, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 when terrorists attacked the United States and thousands of lives were lost.

A huge wall mural that local artist Carol Schaffer dreamed of, was begun on June 5. The mural, painted on the rear wall of the Roadrunner Auto Parts Store at the corner of West Main and Genesee Streets. The mural is based on a drawing by renowned local artist Chet Swier and depicts the "four corners" of the past

(1950's). The mural was completed in July 2011. Mrs. Shaffer did a great deal of research for the project in terms of subject matter and the best kind of paint to use. She was assisted in the project by retired teachers Connie Doyle and Sally Miller. The Cuba Chamber of Commerce purchased the very expensive paint and the use of a lift and scaffolding was generously by Kel-Kur Electric, Inc. of Cuba.

A representative for the U. S. Department of Education, Linda W. Hall visited Cuba Rushford Middle/High School on the opening day of classes in September. She visited the Social Studies and Wildlife and Fisheries programs at Cuba-Rushford Central School on Sept. 6 while on a fact finding tour of secondary schools and colleges to gather ideas on how to make education work better for students. "These are the kind of programs I would like to see replicated all across the country" she said during her visit.

John Elmer Lawton believed to be Cuba's oldest resident passed away on September at a nursing home at Houghton, N.Y.. Mr. Lawton, well known as an area handyman and inventor, was 104 years old.

A record number of voters turned out for both the Republican and Democratic Party caucuses. The location of the July 11 Republican Caucus had to be changed from the Cuba Library Community Room the Cuba Elementary School Auditorium in order to accommodate the anticipated large crowd. A faction of taxpayers, unhappy with the operations of the town government, made an attempt to unseat the incumbent town supervisor, town board and assessors and thus change the face of the town government. In the November elections incumbent Supervisor Barbara Deming was victorious over challenger Larry Herbst. In the race for the two town council seats, newcomers Jeffrey DaHill and Joseph Miller defeated challengers Cale Ungermann and Mary Raymond. In the race for Assessor, incumbent Merlin Briggs was re-elected and newcomer Thomas Cucchiaro was elected over John Cappellini Jr. to the position previously occupied for many years by Richard Truax. Steven Nease was re-elected, unopposed, for the Town Highway Superintendent.

Cuba Memorial Hospital and Catholic Health finalized a collaborative services agreement to improve healthcare in the greater Cuba community and gain operational efficiencies at Cuba Memorial. Through the utilization of shared resources, the agreement will provide residents in Allegany and Cattaraugus counties with greater access to community-based health and wellness programs and a comprehensive array of affordable healthcare services.

Fr. Dennis J. J. Mancuso was named by the Bishop Edward Kmiec of the Diocese of Buffalo to be the administrator of Our Lady of the Angels Roman Catholic Church effective September 1, 2011. The former pastor, Fr. Jerome Dissek, had resigned in June.

The Cuba Friends of Architecture are continuing their work to preserve part of our local history with work is continuing on restoration of the old Keller Opera House on West Main Street.

The Historian's office continued to be busy for the year answering many inquiries for items relating to genealogy, historic background etc. continues to grow. Thanks to the cooperation of the Cuba Historical Society, the Cuba Circulating Library and the Cuba Cemetery Association I am able to supply answers to most of the inquiries. The use of email has become even more prevalent in the past year with many inquiries coming to the historian's office via the internet.

I continue to monitor area newspapers and periodicals for items of historic interest to our community and remain grateful to the Town and Village for providing modest budgets for maintaining subscriptions and my memberships in several area historical groups and agencies in lieu of a salary.

While most of the nation continued to suffer the effects of a deep financial recession, the economy in Cuba does not seem to totally reflect the economic stress which is facing our state and nation. It is an age of fiscal austerity. The state of New York leaders capped both local and state resources with a 2% limit on tax increases. Many entities like county, town, village, school district governing boards are making drastic cuts in budgets and reducing spending. Local leaders are making every effort to cut the “fluff” from their budgets and hope that services can still be provided as in the past. Financial projections indicate the recession could last as long as 10 years.

2011 Town Officials:

Supervisor, Barbara Deming, Deputy Supervisor, Jerry Scott

Clerk/Tax Collector/Registrar of Vital Statistics, Nancy Orcutt,  
Deputy Town Clerk, Jeff Orcutt

Justices, James Keough, Paul Conklin

Councilmen: Jerry Scott, Gary Gluck, Lynnford Sweet, Robert Carney,

Assessors: Merlin Briggs, David Crowley, Richard Truax, Jr.,  
Superintendent: Steven Nease

Highway

Village Officials

Mayor, Thomas Taylor;

Deputy Mayor, Judith Zayac,

Trustees, Judith Zayac, Patricia Petroni, Michael Doyle, Andrew Swift

Village Attorney, John Cappellini

Clerk/

Treasurer, Diane Wilson

Public Works Superintendent, Richard Hall,

Respectfully Submitted

David H. Crowley, Historian