

Historical Society Newsletter

2025 SUMMER/FALL Volume 2, Issue 2

Fayette Historical Society PO Box 108 Fayette, NY 13065



OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Fayette Historical Society continues its yearlong celebration of Fayette's 225th anniversary. It is exciting that we have reached 83 members this year. This is the largest group of members in quite a long time! Thank you all for your support which makes preserving and presenting our local history possible!

We enjoyed a great event in May focusing on the history of Fayette's one room schoolhouses including a special program in the restored MacDougall schoolhouse led by Grace Freier. In the schoolhouse we were able to enjoy spending time as 1890's Fayette school students including lessons and games. A big thank you to Grace for the schoolhouse

program and to Lisa Freier, the caretaker of the schoolhouse at Romulus Central School for the hard work in making this program a success!

Our next stop was in Canoga in July where we gathered at the former Canoga Presbyterian Church building which is now the home of the Finger Lakes Christadelphians. Here we looked at the remarkable events that took place in Canoga in the early 1920s that brought national distinction to the small hamlet. In 1922 the Canoga Presbyterian Church was recognized as one of the 40 most successful town and country churches in America. This was an enjoyable time of unpacking the local history of Canoga and considering the implications of community renewal in smaller rural areas. A big thank you to the Christadelphian congregation for so warmly and generously hosting the event and providing the video recording of the program!

There is still more to celebrate this anniversary year! In November we will

meet in Fayette at the Old Stone Church for a program on the history of Bearytown, an original name for the hamlet of Fayette. Then, in December we will cap off the anniversary year together with our annual Holiday Happening & Historic Christmas Ball. It has been wonderful to enjoy this annual event over the last 3 years with the historic 1800s dancing and the many beautiful historic outfits. If you have not attended one of our annual "Holiday Happenings" consider joining us for this special year!

Finally, this is the last year of my term as President of the Fayette Historical Society. I truly enjoyed working together with so many talented individuals and having the opportunity to discover and present our local history. Thank you for your support and encouragement over the last three years. Our history in Fayette is a treasure for which we must continually work together to preserve!

Dale Freier Jr. MD

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Contact email: fayettenyhistory@gmail.com

Website: www.fayettehistory.com

Find us on Facebook @Town of Fayette Historical Society

Celebrate the Town of Fayette's 225th Anniversary with an Exploration!

An Adventure Lab® has been set up for you to explore five areas of historical interest in the town of Fayette.

Here's how you can participate:

1. Download the free "Adventure Lab®" App from the App store on your cell phone.
2. Search for our local area on the map. Click the locator in Canoga on map for "Fayette Turns 225!!!!" You will then see five locations that celebrate the history of the town of Fayette.
3. Visit the locations and answer a simple question that appears on your phone. (in order for the question to appear you must be within 50 feet of the location.)
4. After you have visited all five locations and answered the question at each, you can receive a 225th commemorative wooden coin by visiting the Fayette town office at 1438 Yellow Tavern Rd., Waterloo, NY 13165 during office hours: Mon. 8:00-1:00, Tues. - Thurs. 8:00-4:00. Happy hunting with family and friends!



A HUGE thank you to outgoing officers and trustees:
John Hubbard, Nancy Bromka, Josiah Freier,
Alyssa Bromka and Jonathan Monfiletto.

Gravestone Provides Answers – and More Questions

By Cindy Austin
Fayette Town Historian

In the winter/spring edition of the *Fayette Historical Society Newsletter*, I introduced you to the gravestone of Eliza Ann Wilkinson in the Fayette Rural Cemetery.

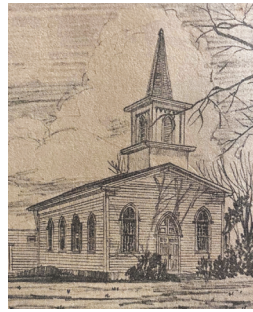
Although information gathered from the carvings on the stone provided some facts regarding Eliza A., it also left me with some puzzling questions. Foremost was in regard to who her husband was and why he was not listed on the gravestone or in her obituary from the *Waterloo Observer* and *Democrat* newspapers.

I have since obtained additional information. Eliza A. married Henry K. Wilkinson on October 25, 1846 in the town of Fayette.

Mr. Wilkinson had been born April 4, 1818 in the town of Varick to Orrin “Orange” Wilkinson and Lucinda Teed. Orrin was born September 10, 1774 in New Milford, Litchfield County, Connecticut and died December 23, 1847 in Varick. Lucinda was born April 21, 1795 in Walkill, Orange County, New York and died February 15, 1859 in Varick.

Mr. Wilkinson died in 1895 in Fayette. In his obituary, he was described as “an aged inmate of the Seneca Co. Almshouse, age 74” and that he had “died at that institution on Saturday last, who was once very respectably connected and had experienced many vicissitudes of life.” Not really understanding the meaning of vicissitudes, I of course looked up the meaning to find it meant “a change of circumstances or fortune,

(continued on page 4)



Canoga 1922: Big Things in a Little Place!

By Dale Freier Jr. MD

In 1922 the little hamlet of Canoga achieved national recognition when the Canoga Presbyterian Church was awarded the distinction of being one of the 40 most successful town and country churches in the United States. This distinction is even more remarkable when the circumstances of the community in the years immediately preceding this award are considered. This historic award and the surrounding circumstances were the basis of a program presented by the Fayette Historical Society on July 18, 2025.

In the early and mid-1800s Canoga was a bustling community with multiple stores, a prosperous hotel, carriage and blacksmith shops, and a good number of mills powered by the water from Canoga Spring. Canoga even maintained its own ferry service to Union Springs directly across Cayuga Lake and supported two churches.

Overtime, with railroad and canal shipping available in nearby Seneca Falls, the significance of the mills and manufacturing in Canoga waned in favor of the latter. In 1883 a devastating flood destroyed the dam above the Canoga Creek mills and it was never rebuilt. Several fires in the hamlet further destroyed infrastructure including one of the churches and left the community hurting as population and businesses declined.

When Canoga was seemingly at its lowest a young minister recently graduated from the Auburn Theological Seminary moved to the hamlet in 1918 to serve at the Canoga Presbyterian Church. The church had been without a permanent pastor for more than 18 years and was struggling to survive. The pastor, G Howard Mickelsen and his wife were enthusiastic and committed to seeing the church and agricultural community in Canoga not only survive but thrive. The Mickelsen's combined efforts with the important work of the newly reorganized church's Lady's Aid Society, and they purchased an abandoned former local store which was turned into a widely used community center. This led to the church tripling its membership from 1918 to 1922 and the Canoga hamlet rediscovering itself through its commitment to service within the local community. For creating this reciprocal bond between the church and community, Canoga was awarded the 1922 distinction.

If you would like to know more about the history of Canoga and the remarkable church led community renewal that took place in the 1920s you can access the full video recording of the program at <https://youtu.be/Byw8l3FeRnM> or through our web page at www.fayettehistory.com. ■



Early Education in Fayette

By Dale Freier Jr. MD



MacDougall School District #14

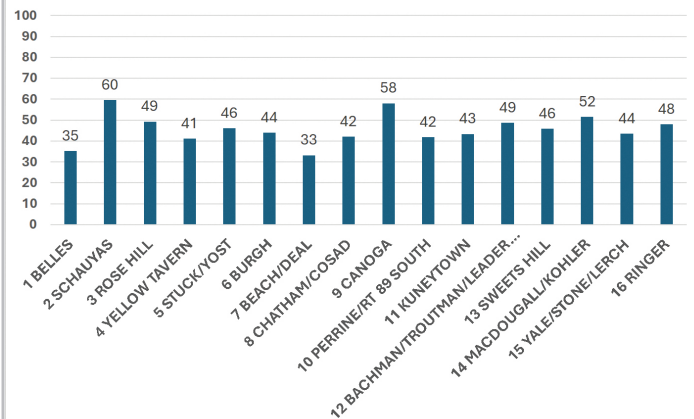
The history of schooling in the Town of Fayette is a story that reflects the high value placed on education by the early inhabitants of our town. Their intentional actions along with those of local and state leaders made certain that a solid foundation for education was established.

The first arrivals in Fayette during the post-Revolutionary War pioneer movement had to make do with schooling at home or in groups with other nearby families. Occasionally, an itinerant teacher would pass through the area and was hired to teach for a set time. Barns, homes, or a local store would be used to hold classes. By 1796, families and local elected officials were establishing public support for schooling children and the funding mechanisms to pay for it. This encouraged the early building of log structures for education and church meetings, which was welcomed by the community. The pioneer families from New England and well settled areas of Pennsylvania that moved to Fayette enjoyed organized schooling in their towns of origin. They knew its value and wanted it for their children. It has been estimated that at the time of the American Revolution as much as 95% of the population of New England was literate.

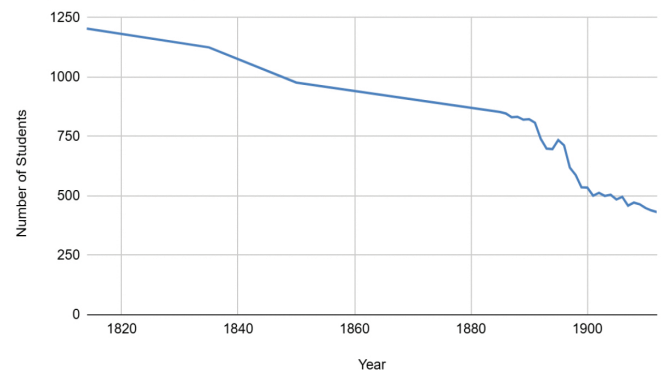
Fortunately, New York State had intentionally made plans to support schooling in the expanding settlements of New York. This was a remarkable decision for the time! At the close of the revolution, specific tracts of land (groups of 100 lots of 600 acres each) were surveyed in central New York and set aside to create 28 townships referred to as Military Townships. This would provide the structure for organized settlement of the area and was based on the commitment of the state government to compensate soldiers who served during the Revolutionary War with land. The military tract land was obtained through treaty from tribes of the Six Nations Confederacy after the close of the war. Within these Military Townships, further specific land lots were set aside by law to be sold to fund the spread of the Gospel and support schools. These would be known as the Gospel or School lots.

Fayette, as an organized town, was taken from the original Romulus Military Township in 1800. The land lot designated for Gospel and School purpose was lot number 50. This lot is in today's town of Varick along the eastern edge of Seneca Lake. Originally, the land on the Gospel/School lot was rented out to early pioneers, but in 1817 the town commissioners elected to manage this lot arranged for the sale of the land. The money from the sale was divided between Romulus and Fayette (Varick having not been set off from Romulus until 1830). The money allotted to Fayette amounted to over \$7000 and the interest from

**Fayette School District Average %
Daily Attendance 1885-1912**



Fayette School Age Children 1814-1912



this principal was used to support each of the local school districts within the town. Money was distributed based on the number of students that attended each district. This principal money from the Gospel/School lot sale was still intact in the late 1800s and eventually was turned over to the state as consolidation of the districts occurred in the mid 20th century.

Early on in Fayette's development, school districts were set up and managed at the town level. Fayette appointed a superintendent of schools who oversaw the many school districts in the town and certified each teacher to teach. In addition, each individual school district held annual

(continued on page 7)

Thank you to our NEW MEMBERS & RENEWALS as of March 2025:

Individual Members

Laura Barnum
Judy Brignall
Ginnie Burgess
Colleen Coutu
Donna Dorney
Kim Edwards
Faith Foulkrod
Debra Gates
Gina Kreutter
Barbara Landis
Amy Trout

Charlie Trout
Steve Trout
Suzanne Trout

Family Members

Susan & John Keller
Bea & Rich Morrin
Christine & John Saeli
Rita & James Thibert

Supporters

Jane & Bill Ebert

Joe Marino
Martha & Emanuele
Mignosa
Maureen & Wayne
Nicholson
Nora & Richard Ricci

Sustainers

Martha & Jerry Bond
Bill Nagel
Sue & Damon Nicholson
Emilie Sisson

Gravestone Provides Answers – and More Questions

(continued from page 2)

typically one that is unwelcome or unpleasant.

So the information lead to even more questions. Why did Henry, who was apparently once a respected man, end up dying in the poorhouse?

In those days the poor house was a repository for the destitute for many different reasons. Perhaps you were physically or mentally ill, were elderly or an orphan, had troubles with alcohol, etc. When there was no family willing or able to care for you, you ended up being cared for in the poor house.

We have to assume there was some form of estrangement between Eliza and Henry and perhaps between Henry and his family. Was this related to whatever the reason was that he was living in the poorhouse? Since he is reported to have died there, was he then buried in an unmarked grave at that location as many such inmates were?

Getting back to Eliza, I have found she was born to John Hoster and Elizabeth Mauger on June 29, 1826 in Fayette. John was born May 22, 1788 in Northumberland, Pennsylvania and died November 18, 1836 in Fayette. Elizabeth was born July 7, 1792 in Pennsylvania and died November 17, 1873 in Fayette. They were married in 1813 in Fayette.

Many thanks to Cathy A. Davis, who provided the pedigree charts for Eliza Ann Hoster and Henry K. Wilkinson. ■



JOIN US! Become a member!

Your membership makes possible the preservation of our unique history, supports the rehabilitation of our building, and enables us to provide special programs of community interest and heritage. You do not have to live in Fayette to be a member!

Fayette Historical Society Membership Registration:
(Membership runs from October 1- September 30)

- ☐ Student (up to age 18) ----- \$5
- ☐ Individual member ----- \$10
- ☐ Family (all immediate members in the home) ----- \$25
- ☐ Individual or Family Supporter ----- \$50
- ☐ Individual or Family Sustainer ----- \$100
- ☐ Business or Institution ----- \$200
- ☐ Contributions or donations ----- any amount _____
- ☐ Memorial gift in honor of: _____ any amount _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ email: _____

Email: fayettenyhistory@gmail.com with any questions.

Scan the QR code to pay online or make checks payable to the "Fayette Historical Society" & mail to:

Fayette Historical Society

P.O. Box 108, Fayette, NY 13065



Teaching in a One-Room Schoolhouse: Highlighting the MacDougall Schoolhouse

By Grace Freier MD



For more than 150 years, the one-room schoolhouse was the backbone of education in rural New York. The one-room schoolhouse developed out of necessity as pioneer families pursued independence and a better livelihood but also highly valued education. Families often pooled their resources, time, and money to build a school. A single courageous young teacher prepared and delivered lessons across multiple grade levels, for every subject, every day, in a room without running water or electricity.

The MacDougall Schoolhouse (Fayette Schoolhouse #14) is a wonderful historic resource and example of our local history and heritage. Built circa 1830, located just north of the Fayette–Varick Townline in MacDougall, it initially served around 60 students. It remained functioning as a school until 1946. In 1997, an immense community effort was made to relocate and preserve the school on the grounds of the Romulus Central School District. The school has been restored to its 1898 appearance and now serves as a living classroom for students and visitors.

As you can imagine, teaching in a one-room schoolhouse would be a daunting job. Yet, for young, ambitious, smart men and women, this was a respectable career and a calling. The teacher arrived early to sweep the floor, light the stove, wash chalkboards, and fetch water. The teacher

would also assign responsibilities to the students to perform in the classroom. They also served as the intellectual and moral role models for the young citizens of that community.

Teaching eight grades in one classroom demanded extraordinary organizational skills. The teacher needed to be creative, prepared, and orderly as well as fun and engaging. A great resource would be the McGuffey Eclectic Reader. These readers were widely used in one-room schoolhouses and were a key resource for teaching reading, poetry, philosophy, science, manners, and moral values.

Former Romulus Superintendent Christopher Manaseri conducted interviews during relocation of the MacDougall one-room schoolhouse and on October 6, 1997, gathered firsthand recollections by former students who attended the school. Many alumni recalled the “quality of instruction” and noted that the one-room country school students were “way ahead” of the other students in town. Dr. Willis Allen, born in Geneva and a retired physician who practiced medicine in Ovid, remembered each teacher by name decades later, calling them “marvelous teachers.”

Though generally their education was top-notch, the former MacDougall students recall one memorable teacher,

not for his exemplary teaching skills but for his unusual discipline methods. Five male students were caught throwing ink at their peers. In response, the schoolteacher, Mr. Covert, made the boys who threw the ink crawl around on the floor for 3 hours as punishment for their “babyish” behavior. And when they passed him, the teacher slapped them with a ruler. They returned home with holes in the knees of their pants and splinters in their hands. The former students stated, “Mr. Covert didn’t remain at MacDougall long,” according to Manaseri.

Other teachers of the MacDougall Schoolhouse were not strangers to mischief. Students remember throwing frozen snowballs dipped in water, launching spit wads with their rulers, and dropping flies (relieved of their wings) down the backs of classmates’ shirts or dresses. Halloween brought another prank. Someone filled the school bell with manure, showering the next person to ring it! Others dismantled a buggy and then reassembled it on top of the pitched roof of the schoolhouse. Common punishments of the era included writing the same line on the board 100 times, balancing by putting their finger in the crack of the floor without bending their knees, standing with their face against the blackboard, sitting in a dunce chair, or wearing a dunce cap. In the boy’s cloakroom, boys who seemed

(continued on page 6)

Family Day at Rose Hill Mansion

August 9, 2025:
Members of the Fayette Historical Society enjoyed a fun day at Rose Hill Mansion's Family Day, churning butter and playing marbles with visitors. Over 150 guests joined in the hands-on history.



Cleanup Day at the Masonic Lodge

April 12, 2025:
FHS members volunteered their time this spring for a work day at our 1846 building in the hamlet of Fayette. Here they are cataloging material in our archive room. Our society is completely volunteer supported and run. Consider joining us as we preserve our local history.



Canoga 1922

July 18, 2025:
FHS members dressed the part as we listened to the story of "Big Things in a Little Place" at the former Canoga Presbyterian Church building, which is now the home of the Finger Lakes Christadelphians.

Teaching in a One-Room Schoolhouse

(continued from page 5)

to frequent the dunce chair left carved initials on the wall.

Teaching in a one-room schoolhouse demanded resourcefulness, ability to multitask, imagination, and a deep sense of service. Both as educators and pillars of the community, these teachers shaped society's next generation. Today, historical sites like the MacDougall Schoolhouse honor that heritage. It is a source of a living history that provides a glimpse into a way of living now in our past. We invite you to visit the MacDougall Schoolhouse in Romulus.

The Fayette Historical Society will be happy to give you a taste of being a student in the 1890s with an interactive demonstration, using the McGuffey Readers, and putting you through the daily adventure of being a student of history. You can contact Lisa Freier at lffreier@romuluscsd.org to schedule a tour or demonstration. ■



Fayette Resident Wanda Gaul (pictured here with Dale Freier Jr.) attended Fayette #14 MacDougall Schoolhouse as a child. We were honored to have her there with us in May for the schoolhouse program.

Early Education in Fayette

(continued from page 3)

meetings electing trustees, a clerk, and a tax collector. They kept detailed notes on the proceedings of these meetings and of school expenses. Later, a librarian would be added to this list of elected positions. Our one room schoolhouses were full of loanable library books. Some schools had several hundred volumes! At their annual meeting the families and elected officials in the district would determine who they would hire to teach for the term, how long school would be in session, and set the tax each family would pay to support the local district based on their property assessment. This money was collected by the individual districts. This was very locally run and governed!

In 1850, the Town of Fayette had 16 school districts. In general, the school building within each of the districts was no farther than 5-6 miles from the next closest district. This meant no student had to walk more than 2-3 miles to reach school. Sometimes, the closest school building to a family would be in another town such as Varick to the south or Seneca Falls to the northeast. In these cases, joint districts that crossed the town lines were formed. There was a need to be sensible about school building locations in an era where students travelled on foot.

The number of students requiring schooling in Fayette was staggering in the early 1800s. In 1820 there were 1,200 school age children (under age 18) in Fayette out of a population of 2,869. That is 40% of the population! Schools were packed, regularly having attendees exceeded the number of students reported on school district censuses. Later in the 1800s, daily student attendance rates would drop to less than 50% across most of Fayette. For example, between 1885-1912 at the Yellow Tavern Schoolhouse # 4, on average only 41% of the students enrolled were present on any given day. This poor attendance and the value state and local leaders saw in education lead to statewide compulsory school attendance laws. Funds for education, both local and state, were based on the total number of days a student attended, so strict attendance records were kept. It is interesting to ponder the ultra-high school attendance rates in the very early years of Fayette. This further indicates the remarkable commitment to education of that generation!

Over time, the number of school age children in Fayette decreased and New York State developed stricter rules for districts to obtain state funds for schooling. The town school superintendent was replaced by a countywide administrator in 1856 with more authority from the state. These pressures, along with developments in ease of local transportation and the expanded educational opportunities of high schools, lead to the consolidation of our local town school districts in the 1940's and 1950's into the few large districts that we see today.

If you would like to know more about the development of schooling in Fayette, you can access a recording of the FHS talk given on this subject in May 2025 on our website at www.fayettehistory.com. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Fayette Historical Society has one more presentation in celebration of Fayette's 225th anniversary. Please follow the Town of Fayette Historical Society Facebook page or email fayettenyhistory@gmail.com for up-to-date details on all of our events and happenings.

Early History of Bearytown

Looking back on the 225 years of history in Fayette, Dr. Dale Freier Jr. will focus on the early history of Bearytown (the former name of the Hamlet of Fayette). This program will take place on Thursday, November 6th at 6:30 p.m. in the Stone Church.

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The 4th Annual

Holiday Happening



& Historic Christmas Ball

Join us at Ventosa Vineyards for a special evening on December 28th, 2025 from 4:30 to 8pm as we celebrate Fayette's 225th Anniversary. The evening will include dinner and historic dancing with a live caller. Spend time with friends & neighbors and learn/participate in group dances from the 1800's. Be sure to wear your historic outfits as this will especially add to the charm of the celebration!

Tickets will go on sale November 1st and can be purchased online through our website at www.fayettehistory.com/membership or through a member of the board of trustees. More details will be announced as we get closer to the date. Email us at fayettenyhistory@gmail.com for more information. Come celebrate with us!



**FOR TICKETS
after Nov. 1st**

We Want to Hear From You!

We want to hear your story. Did you grow up in Fayette or spend time here visiting friends or relatives? If you would like to share your stories, photos, and more, please email fayettenyhistory@gmail.com or call Fayette Town Historian Cindy Austin at (315) 283-2698. We are particularly looking for information and photos of the Stone Church and of the schoolhouses as well as any artifacts related to the history of Fayette and Seneca County.

TOWN OF FAYETTE

Historical Society Newsletter

*A special thank you to the
Nelson B. Delavan Foundation for
generously supporting this newsletter.*

*And thank you to the Town of Fayette for
continued support -check out the Town's
new logo with a nod to our history!*



The Town of Fayette Historical Society

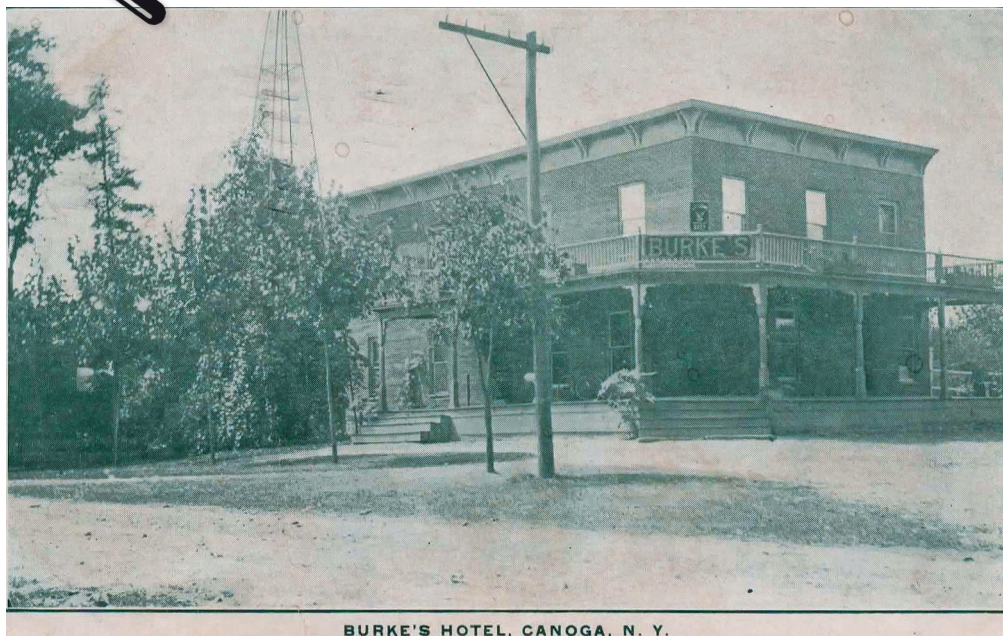
was organized in 2003 as an outgrowth and continuation of efforts related to the celebration of the town's bicentennial in 2000. It is a federally registered nonprofit (501c3) organization.

Mission Statement: The Town of Fayette Historical Society seeks to recover, preserve, and present our local history to connect our community to its past. This is in order that present and future generations in Fayette may benefit from the fullness of the lived experiences of all those who came before us.

Fayette Historical Society
PO Box 108
Fayette, NY 13065



Do you recognize this building?



BURKE'S HOTEL, CANOGA, N. Y.

The original Canoga Hotel burned in 1897 and was rebuilt in 1899. Burton Burke ran the newly built hotel beginning in 1903. This postcard photograph is from 1908. The building looks substantially the same today!