

# NEWSLETTER OF THE ATTICA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April 2015

130 MAIN STREET

ATTICA, New York 14011

585-591-2161

[staff@atticamuseum.org](mailto:staff@atticamuseum.org)

Box 24

## Spring???

Hopefully Spring has finally arrived (?). At this writing most of the snow has melted, birds are arriving back, and Maple Weekends are behind us.

## Book

Your committee researching the *Attica: Then and Now* book has been working very hard during the recent months. We know that many of you have been very patiently waiting for it to be published. We have found that it unexpectedly has taken a much greater chunk of time than was originally thought. Now the light at the end of the tunnel seems to be approaching. Below is a sample of what one will find in the book from the churches section.

### St. Paul's United Church of Christ

11 Washington Street



In October of 1863, 60 German families organized a United Evangelical Protestant Congregation. They dedicated their building on Washington Street the next year. The church continued to grow as more German families came to Attica. The home next to the Church



### Board of Trustees:

Dean V. June – Pres.

Arnie Sprague – V.P.

Camilla VanderLinden - Sec.

Stuart Hempel – Tres.

John King – Trustee

Janis Hempel – Trustee

Bill Meisner - Trustee

Pinky Burey – Trustee

Bob Burey – Trustee

Eadie Krauss – Trustee

Della Bryant – Trustee

Nancy Burns – Trustee

Brian Fugle – Trustee

Mike Manusia – Trustee

David VanderLinden- Trustee

continued to grow as more German families came to Attica. The home next to the church was purchased as a parsonage in 1903. The services were in German. In 1928, the services were switched to English because many of the children were speaking English in school. St. Paul's Church went through mergers in 1934 and 1957, finally becoming part of the United Church of Christ. The picture of course is of the modern edifice after additions. The book has an earlier picture as the "Then" part. (See below for 2 other houses).

### **Displays**

A special thank you goes out to Eadie Krauss for doing such a fine job with recent displays. Stop in and see the displays of the Prospect street fire, the Girl Scouts memorabilia, and "Downton" Attica, a fine display of '20's dresses.

### **Shake-on-the-Lake**

Kathryn Hollinger from Wyoming County Arts Council came to talk about "Shake on the Lake", a small professional Shakespeare theater company. For the last three years they have received Community Arts Grant money to perform one Shakespeare play each year. Kathryn was wondering if we would want to have them perform on our property this year. They have their own insurance and we can have concessions. It will be August 1 or 2. (Camilla) Watch for more publicity as the summer goes on.

### **Yearbooks**

Brian Fugle has made arrangements for us to get back issues of the High School yearbook, "The Torch". He also has ordered the yearbook for this year. Now we have the missing 2009 – 2015 issues. Stop in and look up old classmates and reminisce with us for a while.

### **Webpage**

We are trying to get our webpage up to date to make information more accessible. In that context, we are still encouraging members to contact us with their emails so we can send newsletter and other events of interest to save postage.

### **Veterans**

We are still looking for veterans to sit for interviews regarding their military service. This interview will preserve their story of military service for the museum as well as their families.

### **Ice**

Just like many others across New York State and the Northeast we had a huge amount of snow and ice on the museum roof. We hired Jared Almeter to clean it; two days and \$800.00 later it had it all chipped down to the roof. Also we recently had a serious plumbing problem in the bathroom. Thanks to Bill Meisner for talking charge, and bringing in the Kaminski plumbers. Bill also has completed a "redisplay" of some swords from our collections

### **Junior Members**

Janice Hempel and Beth Russell have been working very hard with our Junior Members, They recently completed designs for placemats using old pictures or stories from Attica past. They also are working on scrapbooks. Thirteen young people are involved. They usually meet at the museum on Wednesdays after school.

### **Members Day**

We are working on a special "Members Day" for May 16<sup>th</sup> members are invited to stop in and look around particularly if they haven't been in the museum in quite a while. Light refreshments will be available so bring a friend and come on in between 1-4.

## Update of 3 year goals

Jan Carey has taken over the role of membership chairman from Carol Wellman. Recall, we thanked Carol in our last newsletter for you many years as this chairman. Currently we have approximately 145 Single memberships, 66 family memberships (with 2 members minimum per family). Two of our memberships goals are: 1. To encourage membership growth to make the public aware of the Attica Historical Society, and to help create programming and activities of interest to the community. 2. To computerize our files.

We are still looking for more member volunteers to enable us to be open more than two days a week. We have been very fortunate that GCC and Derek Maxfield continue to send us students. Ben Wright has been a wonderful help to us lately. He continues to come to the museum even though he has satisfied his required hours for Professor Maxfield. Also recently Steve Rogacki has been stopping in on Saturdays. He has just brought in some maple syrup spiles for the Maple display created by Mrs. Krauss.

Revision of the ByLaws has been put on the back burner for the time being as we are devoting most of our time on the book. As previously reported, the Constitution has been revised and updated copies are available at the museum.

Dave VanderLinden has been leading the process of changing our accessions to the computer. Jan Carey and Fran Meisner have been wonderful helpers with this.

We have actively been seeking out grant writers, and as of this writing it is planned to meet with one of them later in April.

## Attica Prison

By Andrea Halsey

A Junior Member

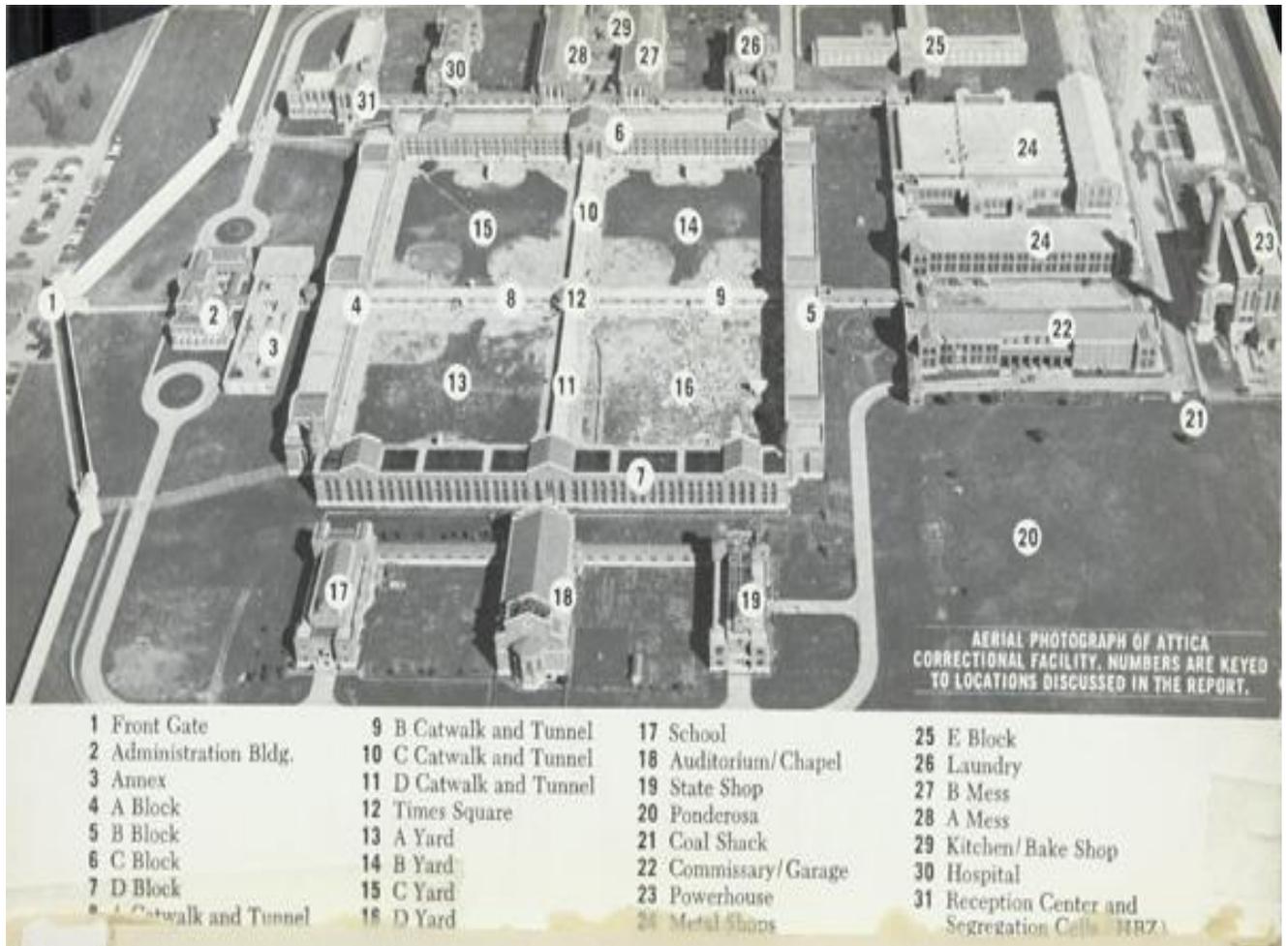
The present Attica Correctional Facility was formerly known as Attica Prison. In 1926, it was realized by the State that the overcrowding of the existing four prisons was intolerable. In 1927, the New York State Legislature authorized a fifth prison to be located in Attica. Ground was broken in October of 1929 on the 697 acre piece of land.

The architect of the new prison was William J. Beardsley. He designed three main structures within the inner quadrangle consisting of 7 1/2 acres. Here adjoining cellblocks are encircled by support buildings. Each cellblock is three stories high with four recreation yards and observation towers. Exactly in the center where the connecting halls intersect is "Times Square". The outside wall is a mile and one fifth long, 30 feet high (also 30 feet deep), and rounded on the top so no grappling hook can catch it.

The prison remains today pretty much the way it was originally designed with the exception of a shop behind D block. This structure housed the carpenter, tailor, and shoe shops. It was destroyed in the riot of 1971. Overcrowding was the main reason for the riot. Since then new offices, visiting, and packaging rooms have been added. A modern infirmary was added in 1995. (See picture below)

## 19<sup>th</sup> Century Domestic Arts Day

"Have you ever wondered how Atticans lived 100 – 150 years ago? No electricity no furnace to heat the house, how did they manage daily living? What tools did they use..." This day was a huge success for our first attempt of utilizing our collections and bringing in local people for demonstrators. Camilla, Janice, Eadie, and all our domestic arts presenters worked very hard to make this day memorable. Hopefully we can do this again in the future.



**Arnie's Trivia:** Which business' slogan was: "Just around the corner whichever way you go"? **Answer:**....Clark's Electric Appliance 7 Main Street. Also nearby on Market they had an ice cream store and a newspaper and stationary store.

**The Thomas House** Mr. Thomas was a RR agent. The house was sold to the Nesbitt family. Then sold to Dr. Donald Potter, a dentist then sold to the Attica Central School system. Torn down to make room for a parking lot for the Methodist Church in the late 1980s.

**147 Main Street- The Evans-Backus House** Built prior to 1866 and was the resident of Mr. Thomas Cogswell. Eventually owned by James Backus, a railroad man. Backus was injured several times on the railroad through his life. He died of a stroke in 1892 presumably caused by burns from his last accident.

More detail for all the houses will be found in the book: "Attica: Then and Now"

*Thomas House*



*147 Main Street*



