

To: Mayor Orman, Village of Aurora Board of Trustees
From: Village of Aurora Historical Society
Re: Annual Report 2024
Date: February 14, 2025

The Memorandum of Understanding governing the Historical Society's relationship to the Village of Aurora requires the Society's President to present a detailed report of the previous year's "finances and activities" to the Board of Trustees of the Village

Executive Summary: The Society's 2024 accomplishments were marked by increased membership; upgrades to fire detection and preservation facilities at Patrick Tavern; a full schedule of museum displays and activities; an active Patrick Tavern Tuesday Farmers Market; increased giving; the preparation and presentation of *Patrick Tavern's Third Century*; increased grant writing, notably the DRI application for \$363,000 for improvements to restore and improve the entrances to Patrick Tavern; and advocacy for transferring the Wells College Archives to the Village of Aurora Archives.

Finances:

- The Society's opening General Fund balance on January 1, 2024 was \$10,828.00 and its closing balance on December 31, 2024 was \$12,823.00, a net increase of \$2,005.00.
- In 2024 we received income (a) to the General Fund of \$23,939 in unrestricted funds or restricted funds that were immediately applied to their designated purpose and (b) to the Restricted Fund of \$25,300, held in our *Wells Archive Fund For Acquisition and Storage* and currently untapped.
- We expended \$21,944.00 in 2024, nearly all of it on care and improvement of Patrick Tavern.
- Notable milestone: In 2024 we surpassed the \$100,000 mark in monies invested in the restoration and rehabilitation of Patrick Tavern - \$102,250 to be exact – over the last 8 years. Of this, 19% was funded by annual Village appropriations (*thank you!*) and 81% by Society dues, donations, grants.

Activities :

Museum:

- January-April - **"Meet Benjamin Ledyard,"** remained on view as a companion to two original research projects: "Shaped by the Revolution: Benjamin Ledyard and the Early Settlement Era," conducted by Linda Schwab, Aurora Village Historian; and **"Despite Remonstrance: Power, Politics & Personality Establishing a Town 1823,"** conducted by Shirley Egan, Ledyard Town Historian, about the founding and naming of the Town of Ledyard.
- May-July – **"Unfinished Work: A Class Meets Closure,"** Rob LoMascolo and Linda Schwab. Students' final projects were underway when Wells College announced its closure. This show recorded the poignant, final critique of a Book Arts class.

- August-November – “**St. Patrick at 150: A History in Pictures,**” Linda Schwab and Patricia Bianconi. This visual history of St. Patrick’s Church in Aurora included rare maps, drawings, & photos along with genealogical resources & family stories.
- The exposed 18th century Dutch framing of **Patrick Tavern** is always an exhibit itself. Visitors are intrigued by the story that its visible construction tells, as much as by a current exhibit.

Community Events:

- Hosted Tuesday Mobile Market at Patrick Tavern which offers fresh local food and an outlet for local small businesses for 34 Tuesdays per year stretching from February through December.
- Co-sponsored with Aurora Free Library, *Historic Preservation in Small Communities: Aurora and Patrick Tavern* on April 25, 2024 at Morgan Opera House.
- AHS collaborated with the Town of Ledyard to place some 300 flags on veterans’ graves in Ledyard cemeteries (in both Village and Town) for Memorial Day.
- Members participated in a reading of the Declaration of Independence at Ledyard Town Hall on July 4th, attended by 120 people, 80 of them children, plus the horse and rider who “galloped from Philadelphia” with news that the colonies had just declared independence.
- Path Through History/Fall Crawl Weekend at Patrick Tavern with interactive activities, hostess in period attire, and exhibit, “Beautiful, Useful, Sustainable – Domestic Purpose & Pleasure.”
- Hosted the farmers and artisans of the Patrick Tavern Market at “Christmas in Aurora” who offered shoppers unique food and gift products, a children’s activity area, and café seating. One hundred ten (110) visitors came.

Planning and Grants:

- Hosted lunch meeting for Society members with the Preservation League of New York followed by tour of notable Aurora and Ledyard sites.
- Completed a 6-month planning exercise culminating in the document *Patrick Tavern’s Third Century*, and presented it to the Village Board on May 15, 2024.
- Prepared a DRI/NY Forward Grant application titled “Restore and Rehabilitate Entries to the 1793 Patrick Tavern & Tavern Green to Improve the Visitor Experience” for \$363,000 toward an estimated \$392,000 worth of improvements to Patrick Tavern.

Preservation Work and Facilities Stewardship:

- Village of Aurora Historical Archives: Teamed with Village workers to carry out the emergency move to Patrick Tavern of Village-owned archives (then stored in the Wells Library) following the closure announcement.
- Patrick Tavern: Added remote annunciation system for fire, smoke, temperature rise & intrusion.

- Exhibit and Archive Storage: Built out an insulated exhibits/archive storage room on Patrick Tavern's second floor to house the Village of Aurora's Historical Archives.
- Wells College Archives: working to have the Wells College Archives remain local and supporting the Village's bid to incorporate the Wells materials into Village Archives.
- Seven to Save: supported the nomination of the Wells College campus (in Village of Aurora/Wells College National Historic District) to the *Seven to Save* program of the Preservation League of NYS.

HOW DID WE DO IT? 2024 *By the Numbers:*

- over 300 Visitors
- 76 Members
- \$23,939 income to General Fund
- \$21,944 expended from General Fund
- \$12,823 General Fund balance at year end.
- over 900 Volunteer person hours:
 - 240 person hours for docents, displays and events
 - 144 person hours for facilities care
 - 554 person hours for planning, writing, grant applications, meetings, communications

LOOKING FORWARD IN 2025 – Action Items:

- Breaking News: We just received a grant of \$65,500 from the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation. It serves as 3rd party matching funds for our DRI application, thereby reducing our DRI request from \$362,000 to \$297,000 and making it more competitive in the upcoming final award round. More significantly, it assures us that we should be able to restore the front porch of Patrick Tavern in 2025 – regardless of whether we are awarded a DRI grant. The Society unanimously approved undertaking the Patrick Tavern Front Porch Restoration Project at its meeting on February 12, 2025. As the Village is the owner of Patrick Tavern, we request that the Village Trustees **endorse our Patrick Tavern Front Porch Restoration Project** at its earliest opportunity.
- The Memorandum of Understanding between the Society and the Village of Aurora just reached the 9th year of its 10-year lifespan. Some of the grants we apply for require that we have a lease or other stewardship agreement (such as this MOU) with at least 6 years left to run, in order to receive a grant. Therefore, we request that the Village Trustees **sign a new MOU with the Society** at its earliest convenience.

Respectfully submitted,
Shirley Egan, President, Village of Aurora Historical Society