

To: Mayor Orman, Village of Aurora Board of Trustees  
From: Aurora Ledyard Historical Society  
Re: Annual Report 2025  
Date: January 21, 2026

The Memorandum of Understanding governing the Historical Society's relationship to the Village of Aurora asks 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 2025 activities were highlighted by:

- Nearly completed Patrick Tavern Front Porch Restoration Project
- Installed climate modulation measures & shelving in the space housing Village Archives
- Saved from a landfill the remains of the 1795 Walter Wood Office & First Scipio Post Office
- Held schedule of museum displays and activities
- Hosted an active Patrick Tavern Tuesday Farmers Market
- Increased individual and philanthropic organization giving
- Received award of a \$363,000.00. DRI grant
- Launched the Society's new (and first) website;
- Continued advocacy for obtaining the Wells College Archives for the Village.

## **Finances:**

- The Society's General Fund balance on January 1, 2025 was \$12,823 and its closing balance on December 31, 2025 was \$15,159, a net increase of \$2,336 over the year for on-going expenses.
- The overall sum of funds on hand on December 31, 2025 is atypical and unprecedented at \$82,815 (\$57,210 in checking, \$25,605 in a certificate of deposit). However, this is due to high restricted balances. Of this sum, \$41,680 is primarily in the Society's restricted *Wells Archive Fund For Acquisition and Storage*. The sum of \$26,521 is budgeted for, and very soon-to-be spent for, completing the Patrick Tavern Front Porch Restoration Project.
- In January, 2025, the Society received a grant from the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation for \$65,500 for the restoration of the missing front porch of Patrick Tavern together with front facade window and door replacements and interpretive and other signage.
- On July 17, 2025, the Society received official written notice from the New York Department of State that it had been selected to receive funding through the \$10M Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) in the amount of \$363,000. The funds will only be made available once the improvements have been made and will be dollar-for-dollar for the approved expenditures so incurred.
- In November, 2025 we received an additional grant of \$4,700 from the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation toward the cost of dismantling and moving the remains of the 1795 Walter Wood Law Office and Scipio Post Office. They are presently stored in anticipation of future reconstruction.
- Notable milestone: As of the end of 2025, we have expended over \$135,000 for the restoration and rehabilitation of Patrick Tavern over the last nine (9) years. If we assume that the sum of *all*

past annual Village appropriations (totaling \$19,400 - *thank you!*) to the Society were applied toward restoration and rehabilitation of Patrick Tavern, then this is a very good return on the Village's "investment" in saving the Village's oldest existing historic building. Over 85% (\$115,600) of this \$135,000 was raised through the Society's fundraising efforts with individuals and philanthropies. The work of such fundraising should not be underestimated. For instance, of the last five (5) grants (each a time-consuming process) that the Society applied for, only two (2) were actually granted.

## Activities:

### Museum:

- May-July – **“Wings,”** an art show co-sponsored by the Art Club and ALHS, and open to all area artists including school children. It included a gala opening reception for the artists and their exhibited works, PLUS a "10th Birthday Day Party" with cake for the founding of the Village of Aurora Historical Society, now Aurora Ledyard Historical Society, at which all but one of the six (6) founding incorporators were present and honored with flowers and certificates honoring them.
- August-November – **“From Main to the Kicking Tree: Daily Walks in the Village c. 1905”** by Village Historian, Linda Schwab included vintage postcards, maps, drawings, letters & photos.
- The exposed 18th century Dutch framing of **Patrick Tavern** is an enduring exhibit, all by itself. Visitors are intrigued by the story that the visible construction tells, as much as by a current exhibit.

### Community Events:

- Hosted **Tuesday Mobile Farmers' 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.
- The Historical Society 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 of the Historical Society provided refreshments and 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.
- The **Printer's Apprentice** event held on July 4-5 was a collaboration between the Historical Society and the Press of Robert LoMascolo at which the public could print by hand their own copy of the Declaration of Independence for free, learn about the process of hand setting type and printing an 18th century document and try writing with a quill pen. The Historical Society provided recipes for making oak gall ink for quill pens, refreshments, and children's activities.
- Historical Society tables were set up at **Aurora Fest** and King Ferry **Wheat Harvest Festival**, showcasing the Society's activities, including architectural drawings of the (then-proposed)

*Patrick Tavern Front Porch Restoration Project* and the proposed *250th Aurora-Ledyard Time Capsule*.

- **New York State Path Through History/local 4-Museum Fall Crawl Weekend** (October 10-11) at Patrick Tavern with the Society's docent-led interactive conversations and display of 1905 period attire to complement the on-going exhibit, *"From Main to the Kicking Tree: Daily Walks in the Village c. 1905."*
- Venue for the farmers and artisans of the Patrick Tavern Market and others at **"Christmas in Aurora,"** offering shoppers unique food and gift products, a children's activity area, and café seating. One hundred twenty (120) visitors came.

### **Preservation Work and Facilities Stewardship:**

- Various repairs and upgrades to Patrick Tavern in addition to the Porch Restoration.
- 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.
- 1795 Walter Wood Law Office and Scipio Post Office saved from the landfill and put in storage to await plans for future reconstruction.

### **HOW DID WE DO IT? WITH PEOPLE!**

- over 350 Visitors to Patrick Tavern
- 84 Members
- 2,000 Volunteer person-hours:
  - over 500 person hours for docents, publicity, displays and events
  - over 200 person hours for facilities care
  - over 100 person hours for website and newsletter development and production
  - over 300 person hours for capital project realization and permit approval processes
  - over 800 hours for organizational steering, financial management, and documentation

### **LOOKING FORWARD IN 2026 – Action Items:**

- The Memorandum of Understanding between the Society and the Village of Aurora is one month short of reaching its 10-year lifespan. We and the Village Attorney are currently working on its review, so no reminder is necessary for our request that the Village Trustees sign a new MOU with the Society not later than its February 2026 Board of Trustees meeting.
- Safeguarding Patrick Tavern and the Village's Archives on the second floor is a very high priority and a shared one. The running cost of the equipment that is necessary to obtain consistent, appropriate temperature and humidity control for safe storage of the Village-owned Archives is considerable. The electric bills for 2025 totaled \$3,042.45 and are expected to rise somewhat more with the recent addition of humidity control equipment. Electric bills for the prior four (4) years averaged \$860.29 per year. The January 2026 bill - just received - is \$380.70 for one

month. Paying the electric bill is not a glamorous object of charitable giving, in fact raising money for any form of utility or operating expense is notoriously difficult for any organization such as ours. We understand the need for economies, however, to the best of our knowledge the other cultural institutions that lost Village support in the last budget cycle were not stewards of the Village's own real estate or its archives and we believe that puts support for what the Historical Society does into a different category. The loss in 2026 of the \$2,500 stipend formerly paid from the Village's annual budget to the Historical Society is why we have included a provision in the proposed MOU allowing us to request the Village to support the costs of electricity at Patrick Tavern.

- A similar rationale applies to the cost of the building fire alarm system, which the Historical Society installed out of its own pocket over a year ago. A remote annunciation alarm system for detection of smoke, rise in temperature and fire protects not only an irreplaceable historic building and the Village-owned archives inside, but also better protects another precious Village asset, the lives of its firefighters.
- The project planning, design, and ultimately implementation of the transformation of the East side of Patrick Tavern (rear entry area, rear facade, open space and greenparking) will begin in earnest as soon as the contract with New York State for the DRI grant has been signed. The grant even includes the roof that is about due for re-roofing. We look forward to being in close cooperation and communication with you, as the owners of Patrick Tavern.,

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