

# MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

January 2024

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

Warm Season Greetings and Happy New Year! I hope that each of you had a safe and happy holiday season.

To our current Medina Historical Society Members, THANK YOU for your past interest and support. We will continue to need you even more in 2024. You can do practical things to spread the word about this organization, let your friends and acquaintances know about our website ([historicmedina.org](http://historicmedina.org)) and how little it costs to join. Invite them to events and programs organized or just publicized by MHS. Consider what you could contribute to our success with a small investment of your time and unique skills. Over my past 12 years as President I continue to be amazed at the range of knowledge and experience that exists out there, waiting to be motivated.

Simply put Medina Historical Society could not operate without volunteer assistance and support. You are essential to our success and I thank you for the talents you bring and the time you give to the cause of preserving Medina's history.

Hope to see you at our monthly meetings and events and look forward to having a great year.

Respectfully,

*Reinhard Rogowski*

*President, Medina Historical Society*

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# ERIE CANAL BICENTENNIAL 1825-2025

## CLINTON'S DITCH

It was called "Clinton's Ditch" but it was really "Clinton's Dream." A dream that would benefit all of the United States of America. The first two sentences of his speech to promote the canal sums it up...

"As a bond of union between the Atlantic and Western states, it may prevent the dismemberment of the American Empire. As an organ of communication between the Hudson, the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence, the Great Lakes of the north and west and their tributary rivers, it will create the greatest inland trade ever witnessed."



George Washington a surveyor and engineer before becoming soldier and statesman made a journey through New York to view possibilities of inland navigation.

Settlement west of the Genesee Valley was slow not because of fertile land but due to the heavy expense of transporting products to and from the area. A canal was the answer but the magnitude of the project was a serious doubt. There was much opposition.

In 1817 New York State, with no help from the Federal Government, began the great project.

The Erie Canal would open the west to all. The construction of the canal would be difficult at best and often present seemingly impossible problems. But it would also create new ways of thinking, building, and overcoming obstacles. The need for engineers would be great, new schools to teach them would come. New machines would be invented. Innovation was the key word for building the canal.

On October 25, 1825, the "dream" was fact. Cannons along the canal and down the Hudson River to New York City boomed to say the canal was open, (note: some of the cannons and powder was leftovers from the War of 1817 and it only took two hours from Buffalo to New York City to learn of the opening – a communication miracle of the time) the Seneca Chief with Governor DeWitt Clinton and other dignitaries were on their way!

It only took nine days for Governor Clinton to reach New York City and the Atlantic Ocean where he poured two barrels of Lake Erie water into the ocean. The ceremony was known as the "Wedding of the Waters."

It was now possible to go west and west the settlers went! Villages and cities grew, westward expansion was real. An Empire was being made and New York States Erie Canal was the reason. That's how our state got its name the "Empire State."

Medina was one of those towns that the canal created. With its wide basin boats could tie up, and that meant the boaters would and could buy goods.

Medina had three noteworthy features of the canal. ① A dam to carry water over the Oak Orchard River (known as a creek then), making it one of the longest dams in the world. ② The only place where a road goes under the canal. And, what made us world famous, ③ Medina Sandstone (that superb building material) was discovered.

The Erie Canal started a canal building craze in New York. Six lateral canals in the first decade of the opening of the canal and four more connecting canals were built in the following four years.

The Erie Canal has gone through many changes over the years. It has been enlarged and its route changed. In 1882 the tolls were dropped as the canal had made \$42 million over its original cost. In 1903 it was enlarged again and its name was changed to Barge Canal. The canal is 363 miles long and while no longer used for industrial purposes it continues to give enjoyment to those who travel it. ♦

*We are in the Bicentennial of the Erie Barge Canal and events for 2025 are being planned its length, so keep your eyes out for an event that you can go to and celebrate this marvel of a dream!*

# **MEDINA BRIDGES SCENES OF FUN PROVOKING INCIDENTS**

**By Russell J. Waldo**

**Originally Published on January 22, 1941**

Medina today, has three bridges yet the bridge history of the past is a subject which is somewhat forgotten by many. Several bridge facts have been gathered that will surely prove interesting.

Medina had a suspension bridge several years before the suspension bridge was built at Niagara Falls. The main portion of the Medina structure was built by a tinsmith by the name of Daniel Ford. This bridge spanned the canal from the Chase and Turner's warehouse on the dock to a barn upon the north side of the canal. It was three feet wide and there was a light railing upon either side which was lightly stayed with wires. Although the bridge was pronounced perfectly safe by the builders, and the others who knew bridges, it had a most uncomfortable way of vibrating up and down when one walked across it. It could sway sideways in a most trying matter when one would endeavor to cross it and seemed most hazardous if the wind was blowing and few were willing to try it.

If one, even though mildly timid, attempted to cross the bridge there was certain to be a culprit nearby waiting to add to his trip across the canal. There were so many things he could do to tantalize the man above the water. The most common was to start the bridge in swaying motion that would require the man on the bridge to throw himself flat and seize the bridge frantically. This often proved better than a show to all except the victim. The bridge too, was at the proper height from the water to allow even passengers from packets to add to his misery.

Business on the canal rapidly increased. Chase and Turner needed more room in their warehouses. The only means of doing this was to extend the upper floor out to the edge of the canal and the bridge would have to be shortened to fit the new addition. A Mr. Parsons took the job of taking the bridge down and shortening it and again setting it in place when the warehouse was enlarged. After the braces and stays were removed from the building, he went out on the bridge and started removing the floor boards. He was near the middle when a brawny Scotchman approached the end of the bridge and asked if he could cross. He was told that it would be unwise and Mr. Parson returned to loosening the boards of the floor without straightening up to know if the Scotchman had taken his advice or not.

No man ever knew a Scotchman to turn back once he had started. This one didn't either. He went along rapidly until he reached to the middle of the canal when the weight of the two men on a bridge without stays and braces was too much. The floor gave way. Parsons took a header into the canal. Nichols, the Scotchman, seized the light railing upon one side frantically as he called for help in a voice that could be heard around the business section. For a few minutes he did nothing but then he realized that he should take some action to get back to the dock and he worked his way back cautiously with his heart in his mouth most of the way.

At that early date, before much was known locally concerning Scotchmen, this one gave a light wire performance which exceeded anything since according to witnesses. By that time a goodly gathering, or audience, had assembled on the dock and were enjoying the event much more than the Scotchman. To him it was anything but fun and the breaking of the side wires near the railing left many stubs of short wire to aggravate him still further.

He declared that he never repeated any of his famous Scotch expressions but these were often repeated to him afterwards by those who had not known him before this.

Some years later a "float" bridge was built across the feeder to the foot of Church Street. This peculiar bridge was the scene of more than one amusing incident. More than one intoxicated person missed his footing on this unsteady bridge and took a free bath.

At one time there was a high bridge over the race on Center Street. Canal boats passed underneath this going to and from Gwinn's mill. This bridge needed considerable repairs and the builders decided to build a swing bridge in its place that would be at the level of the street. The bridge was to be evenly balanced and would be operated by a man on each end with a sweep or lever and thus turned so as to allow the boats to pass on their way. It was heralded by those living east of the bridge as marvelous and a decided improvement for those passing that way daily.

The plans were good but when the first boat approached the two men took their places on either end and lo and behold the bridge didn't budge. After exerting themselves to their limit others were sought to assist in the bridge swinging – yet no move. At last a team of oxen was secured and hitched to one end; then the whip and lung power applied before the obstinate thing moved and the boat proceeded on its way. ♦

## WINTER STUDY CLUB



*Members of the Winter Study Club enjoy a jolly outing.  
(Photo courtesy of the Orleans County Dept. of History)*

Several names are listed on the reverse of this photo. Only one name is linked to a person: John Snell “on cab steps”, presumably the driver.

The passengers’ names listed are: Leona Merrill, Jeanette T. Hendricks, Kate Holmes, Clarence Holmes, Bob Merrill, Burt Tucker, Margaret Tucker.

But when was this photo taken? Where were they going? Solving these mysteries was an interesting process.

In his book “Medina, Here’s to our Heritage”, Ed. Grinned noted that Wm. J. Gallagher was the first to introduce motorized trucking in Medina, in 1913.

Elsewhere, Mr. Grinnell mentioned that a new insurance office was opened at 447 Main St. in 1913, under the name of Kearney & Slack.

A Medina Daily Journal article from May 15, 1915, noted that Mr. R.H. Merrill (one of the trolley passengers), who had been stationed in Medina for the duration of the Barge Canal project, had been transferred to Albany. Mr. & Mrs. Merrill had made many friends while they lived here.

Finally, the Medina Tribune of July 2, 1914, contains a Club report which indicates that Shadigee had been chosen as the venue for the Club’s August picnic.

Study clubs flourished in the U.S. at the turn of the last century, as citizens sought to learn about and discuss social issues. The Winter Study Club was unusual in that it included both men and women. Generally, study clubs were single gender and most were for women only.

The topic for discussion in January 1912 was “Domestic Science in our Public Schools.”

The club continued to thrive through the 1920’s. In January 1924, forty members were served dinner at 6:30 pm at the home of Mrs. A. B. Poler on Park Avenue. Mr. Fred Moone gave a very instructive talk on “Tree Insects”. Miss Bertha Wilson gave a fine paper on the topic “Shall we have religion in schools?”. A discussion followed and cards were played after the program.

It appears that the Winter Study Club declined in the 1930’s.  
Remarkably, the Medina Tuesday Club is currently celebrating its 126th year!



## RIDGEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The following was transcribed from a very faint typewritten document filed in the Orleans County Dept. of History collection. Submitted by Catherine Cooper

The town of Ridgeway was divided into school districts in the year 1814 by William White, Micah Harrington, Gideon Freeman, Commissioners of Schools as follows:

- School District No. 1 includes all that part of the town of Ridgeway south of the old Salt Works in the third and fourth range of townships.
- School District No. 2 begins at the western line of the county of Genesee, thence easterly on the Ridge to Oak Orchard, including all the inhabitants whose farms join the Ridge Rd.
- School District No. 3 begins at Oak Orchard Creek, thence east to the west line of lands in possession of Daniel Gates, and south to the south line of Lot No. 45.
- School District No. 4 begins at the west line of lands in possession of Daniel Gates, thence east to the line of Elijah Doner's land.
- School District No. 5 begins at Elijah Loner's [sic] east line thence east to the town line
- School District No. 6 begins on a road leading from the Ridge Road near the house of James Mathews at the north line of Walt Fairfield's lands, thence south to the south line of the town of Ridgeway.
- School District No. 7 includes all the inhabitants in the town of Ridgeway west of Oak Orchard Creek, and one mile north of the Ridge Road.
- School District No. 3rd is divided into two districts. District No. 3rd extends south from the Ridge Road no farther than the south line of land in possession of Wm. Sibley Zelotes Sheldon, otherwise continue the same as heretofore.
- School District No. 8 includes all the inhabitants which are or may be south of District No. 3rd in the town of Ridgeway---the above division made December 20th 1814, by Wm. White and Gideon Freeman.

School Districts Nos. 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th are altered as follows:

- School District No. 2nd begins at the western line of the town of Ridgeway, thence eastward on the Ridge Road to the forty-four mile stake including all the inhabitants whose farms join the Ridge Road in said district.
- School District No. 3rd begins at the forty-four mile stake on the Ridge Road, thence running easterly to the forty-one mile stake on said road including all the inhabitants whose farms join the road in said district.
- School District No. 4th begins at the forty-one mile stake on the Ridge Road, thence running easterly to the thirty-eight mile stake on said road including all the inhabitants whose farms join the Ridge Road in said district.
- School District No. 5th begins at the thirty-eight mile stake on the Ridge Road, thence running easterly to the thirty-five mile stake on said road including all the inhabitants whose farms join the Ridge Road in said district.
- School District No. 9th begins at the thirty-five mile stake on the Ridge Road, thence running easterly to the thirty-two mile stake on said road including all the inhabitants whose farms join the Ridge Road in said district.
- School District No. 10th begins at the thirty-two mile stake on the Ridge Road, thence running easterly to the east line of the town of Ridgeway including all the inhabitants whose farms join the Ridge Road.

**The above alterations made April the 10th, 1815**

**By Samuel Clark, Artemas Houghton, Israel Dunlap - Commissioners of Schools, I. Dunlap - T. Clerk**



**ELI AND URI MOORE**  
**By Russell J. Waldo**  
**Originally Published On April 10, 1941**

No history of Ridgeway or Medina could get a fair start without taking into consideration Eli and Uri Moore. Eli Moore located in Ridgeway Corners around 1809 or 1810. He came from Paris Hill, Oneida County, N.Y. The rest of the family coming into the woods consisted of Uri, the oldest son, Calasta, Ardelia and Thomas Jefferson. After becoming a resident; there were added to the family eight more children, four of which lived to ripe old age.

The first settlers at Ridgeway came along the Lewiston Trail and traveled east on the Ridge to what is now Ridgeway Corners. It was several years before settlers came in from the East.

Uri was seven years old when his parents arrived at Ridgeway and in his later years he could recite with accuracy details of the building of Moore's Tavern at Ridgeway which was constructed by his father. This structure soon became a landmark in the capacity of tavern and stage station for incoming settlers. It did not take young Uri long to learn where the best fish could be caught in Oak Orchard Creek and he did a man's share despite his youth.

Uri was very active and was always seeking some way to help about the tavern. He could make up the primitive beds as well as his mother and he could skin potatoes without cutting his fingers.

One of his first vocations which brought him money, earned himself, was the carrying of mail from Rochester along the Ridge Road to Ridgeway Corners. Bridges were few and many creeks were forded. The few bridges did not stay put during the spring freshets, which in the early 1800's were on a rampage for weeks instead of days. However, Uri always reached his destination with the mail intact.

From Ridgeway Uri went farther with the mail. He followed the Old Salt Works trail south of Ridgeway passing the salt works (south of Elm Park Farm) continuing to a point considerably beyond Medina before he bore to the left toward Batavia. Here his mail journey ended. He always found mail at Batavia for Ridgeway and with this he returned to his home in the woods. On these mail trips he had other purchases to make and these were secured to his saddle.

He remained in Batavia all night leaving early in the morning for his return arriving there near supper time. The thrill of these trips was the finding of newcomers at the tavern when he reached home.

His trail south of Ridgeway did not change until upon one Batavia bound trip he heard the swing of an axe near Medina and decided to learn what was going on. It proved to be the advance gang building cabins for the workers who were to dig Clinton's Big Ditch.

Uri, over twenty, found unusual interest in this new settlement. He realized the importance of the canal as a means of bringing settlers into the area. He was not long in deciding to build a tavern near the southwest corner of the present turning basin. He made a deal for the needed land on the mail trip to Batavia immediately. His tavern was near Sylvanus Coons' store on the "Dock". Back of these cabins were cabins built to house the men who had dug the canal. Moore's Tavern was in use by the time the canal was opened and remained in use until a more commodious structure was built near the site of the Schultz Bros. store today.

Eli Moore is conceded to be the builder of the first hewn log structure in the Town of Ridgeway. Moore's Tavern later became a part of the Ridgeway Hotel. This was built in 1811. Later as more settlers arrived he built more room for use as a store. These two became the nucleus of the later hotel and stood until 1878 when they were razed for a larger hostelry. This gave Eli Moore the distinction of being the first merchant in the Town of Ridgeway selling dry goods and groceries and the town's first landlord. Eli Moore sold to Joseph Pratt in 1825.

*Continued on the next page*

In 1813 the freeholders and inhabitants convened at the home of John G. Brown on Oak Orchard Creek and at that meeting Eli was named pound keeper. Henry Lovell died soon afterwards and a special meeting was called at the home of William Sibley and Eli Moore was named assessor succeeding the late Mr. Lovell

Uri Moore married Maria M. Collins in 1825 about the time he was completing his Medina tavern.

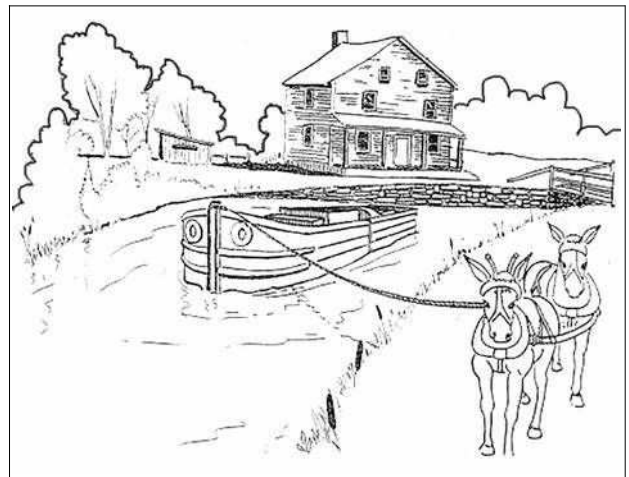
After marriage and the completion of the tavern the associated couple became the first adventurers to hew the first stone and ship the first block for the embryo Village of Medina as his father had done at Ridgeway Corners. Later he kept the first dry goods store, grocery and livery stable.

His early mail carrying experience gave him another idea and he soon established a line of stages between Medina and Batavia. By this time more suitable roads had been built between the two settlements. It was Uri Moore who worked with Joseph Ellicott in laying out the first road between the two places.

He voted in 1824 for General Jackson and established a record of never missing a vote thereafter until his death.

About the time the Erie Canal was being completed Uri Moore engaged with several neighbors in the building of a crudely constructed canal boat. It was hoped that this would be among the first fleet to arrive at the locks at Lockport when the canal was opened. His recital proved an interesting episode in the annals of navigation on the Erie Canal.

Joseph Perry was duly installed as captain of the new boat. His crew consisted of men not sailors, as perhaps one had ever seen a boat before the one they had built. Uri usually recited his nervousness as the time for the boat's departure approached. The eventful proceeding night came and everyone prepared for an early start.



Before daylight on the day the canal was opened the boat was freighted to its capacity with animated living beings, male and female. Each was ambitious to drift on the raging Erie Canal. The main drawback was inexperience. However, they did drift on the waters of the Erie Canal on opening day. One thing in favor of their living was the nervousness of the canal. The width would not allow for a wild career in their boat. It was first on one bank and then on the other and was drifted off by the muscular strength of the passengers.

The shade of night had darkened the scene of the celebration before it was reached by the daring party.

This was not Uri Moore's only venture in transportation. His team and himself served the experimental Darien, Medina Railroad from Medina to Akron and Richville in Erie county in 1836.

Following this railroad venture he entered the mercantile business at Johnson's Creek until 1846 when he established a grocery business in Lockport. Later he opened a family furnishing store in Buffalo at the corner of Niagara and Morgan Streets. He retired from active business in 1864.

Uri Moore died April 9, 1885, age 83 years. He was followed in death by his wife May 29th, age seventy-nine years. ♦

## THE TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE OF JANUARY 1925

A total solar eclipse, when the Moon is positioned perfectly between the Earth and Sun, is an event that happens several times a year somewhere on the surface of the Earth. But the narrow band of shadow racing over the Earth's surface at 2,000 mph makes the chance of being at the right time and place to observe the eclipse happen extremely rarely. Such an event happened locally on January 24, 1925.

**Here's a look back at that earlier time.**

On Saturday January 24, 1925, a day when temperatures hovered around zero, the Medina Daily Journal reported *'this phenomena of the skies had gained such publicity on account of its unusualness that nearly everyone was armed with a piece of smoked glass or other material with which to get a good look at the sun's corona, which is only visible during a period of eclipse, and had stationed themselves at a place of viewing advantage.'*



*Path of the 1925 eclipse*

The same was true all along the predicted narrow path of totality through central Canada down to New York City. Preparations had been made months in advance for scientific measurements as well as to simply observe the phenomenon. Many technologies were still in their infancy and the eclipse was seen as a way to learn more about radio-wave transmission and the utilization of photography and “moving pictures”, as well as airplanes and airships.

### IN NEW YORK CITY

The Sun newspaper in New York reported *“This WAS ‘the biggest show on earth.’ New York’s millions saw the eclipse and broke suddenly into a storm of approving applause. They stood on roofs and cheered. They gathered on street corners and clapped their hands. They sat in their automobiles and heartily honked their horns to cheer onward the sun and the moon in their dual act on the cosmic once a century.*

### SPECTACLE OF ECLIPSE SEEN BY AWED THROGS

Entire City Out to Gaze at Wonder of a  
Lifetime—Scientists Work Under  
Ideal Conditions.

*Four thousand years ago desert tribes may have looked on fearfully and prayed to strange gods that the sun which so many of them worshiped be not blotted out. But New York thought it was a rattling good show. Hawkers stood on every corner and cried that you couldn't see the eclipse without one—one being anything that would, more or less, shield eyes from the rays of the sun. The desperation increased as they realized that the next eclipse might be a couple of centuries off.*

*Aside from the cold the weather was perfect—clear, bright and bracing. At the darkest moment the sky was silvery gray with green and violet shadows. When complete totality occurred the corona blazed like a gigantic black opal magnified a million times beyond human conception of any earthly Jewel, against a luminous violet gray background.”*

*Continued on the next page*

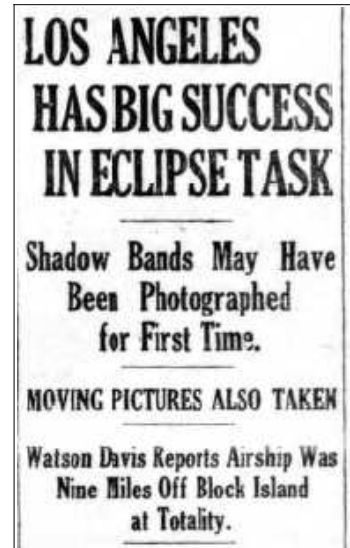
## IN THE SKY

*"The eclipse presented a 'magnificent spectacle' to the Government scientists aboard the naval dirigible Los Angeles a mile high in air, according to the message wirelessly by one of the observers as the airship sailed for her hangar at the Lakehurst naval air station today. The message expressed the hope that observations taken on land were as successful as those that were taken on board the Los Angeles, and adds, referring to photographs taken from the dirigible during the eclipse: "It may be, that when the plates are developed, it will be discovered that the shadow bands were photographed for the first time in the history of astronomy."*



MITCHELL FIELD, - January 23.

*"Issuing instructions this afternoon to the pilots of twenty airplanes that will take off at 7 o'clock to make various observations of the eclipse, Commander Wm. A. Henslee, Jr., urged precautions to avoid accidents during the few moments the earth is in total darkness. All pilots' were ordered to carry flashlights to be used during the period of totality of eclipse. If the day is clear the photographers to be passengers on the planes were instructed to record the passage of the shadow of the moon, which advances in regular bands across the earth."*



**BACK IN MEDINA** - *'A cloud laden sky at nine o'clock this morning prevented Western New York from getting a glimpse of the much heralded eclipse of the sun which took place at that hour. Heavy skies prevented even an indication as to where the sun might be and in a few minutes all hope of a possible look at this wonderful sight was over.'*

**We can hope that Mother Nature will be more cooperative this year on April 8!!**

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS! APRIL 8, 2024



### Approximate Times in New York

Begin partial eclipse 2:02 pm EDT  
Begin Totality 3:16 pm EDT  
End Totality 3:29 pm EDT  
End partial eclipse 4:38 pm EDT

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY (\$20.00/YR)

INDIVIDUAL (\$15.00/YR)

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL DONATION: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION AND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ATTN: MEMBERSHIP CHAIR  
406 WEST AVENUE  
MEDINA, NY 14103



### **MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

#### **Officers 2024**

President: Reinhard Rogowski  
Vice President/Treasurer: Craig Lacy  
Secretary: Shane Sia  
Membership: Gail Miller  
Newsletter: Georgia Thomas

#### **Other Board Members**

Catherine Cooper  
Barb Filipiak  
Cindy Robinson  
Kay VanNostrand

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Held at the Lee-Whedon Library (620 West Ave.)

All programs begin at 7:00 pm

**January 29**      **"SHOW and TELL"**  
Bring your unusual treasures  
to share with the attendees

**February 26**      **"LETTERS ALIVE"**  
Bring your cherished letters  
to read and share with the  
attendees

*Historical Society website*  
**[www.HistoricMedina.org](http://www.HistoricMedina.org)**

Thanks to Catherine Cooper, Craig Lacy, David Miller and  
Georgia Thomas for the articles in this issue!