

Oneida Community JOURNAL

VOL. 40 NO. 1

SPRING 2026

ONEIDA, NY



The ONEIDA COMMUNITY MANSION HOUSE

A National Historic Landmark

The ONEIDA COMMUNITY MANSION HOUSE (OCMH) was chartered by the New York State Board of Regents as a non-profit museum in 1987. It is the only site to preserve and interpret the history of the Oneida Community, one of the most radical and successful of the 19th century social experiments. OCMH publishes the *Oneida Community Journal* to inform the public of the cultural and educational activities at the Mansion House and to present articles about social and historical topics of interest within the context of its mission.

Send correspondence to: Oneida Community Mansion House
170 Kenwood Avenue
Oneida, New York 13421
Telephone: 315-363-0745
E-mail: ocmh@oneidacommunity.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Director of Museum Affairs	1
Phase 2: Out To Bid	3
KBS Matching Campaign.....	4
Coming Soon to OCMH.....	5
Bringing the Mansion House <i>STORY</i> to Life	6
New Acquisition: George Hatch's Violin Discovered	6
Old Library Volunteer Project	7
New Faces and New Spaces at the Inn	8
Hollywood Takes On CNY History	10
In Gratitude for Roseanne Carmody	12
Luella Eager Remembers	12
Volunteer Spotlight: Mary Jo Astrachan.....	13
New Gifts to Annual Fund and Other Support.....	14
New and Renewed Members and Donors	16

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Mike Colmey and Jamie Trevvett displaying a banner on Historic Preservation progress.

OCMH OFFICERS & TRUSTEES

Jonathan Pawlika, *Chair*
Wilber Allen, *Vice Chair*
James D. Trevvett, *Secretary*
Kim Allen
Anne Kelley Anderson
Sean Hart
Laura Wayland-Smith Hatch
Monica Mercado, PhD
Carolyn Strobel-Larsen
Marc Wayland-Smith
Tina Wayland-Smith

OCMH LEADERSHIP STAFF

Thomas A. Guiler, PhD, *Director of Museum Affairs*
Michael Colmey, *Director of Buildings & Grounds*
Emily Stegner, *Curator of Collections*
Jennifer Wayland-Smith, *Director of Hospitality*

EDITOR

Catherine Cornue

JOURNAL DESIGN & LAYOUT

Don Cornue

STRENGTHENED BY FIRE: THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Thomas A. Guiler, PhD

On March 16, 2026 at approximately 2:00 pm, a small but significant accidental fire broke out in an apartment in the South Wing. Trained for these kinds of events, OCMH staff quickly sprung into action. Director of Buildings and Grounds, Mike Colmey, immediately grabbed a fire extinguisher and rushed into the apartment to knock down the flames just as first responders arrived on the scene. Meanwhile, staff hustled to get residents safely evacuated, secured museum rooms and collections, and coordinated with fire, police, and EMS.

Thankfully, no one was injured, but there was damage to two apartments in the Mansion House. The damage was close to being a lot worse if not for the quick thinking, actions, and emergency preparedness of OCMH staff, especially Mike Colmey and Jim Anderson, and the amazing work of our first responders from Oneida, Sherrill, Munnsville and other communities who arrived on the scene and quickly put the fire out.

What happened next was the most important thing.

Our community came together, as it has since 1848, to help one another through this difficult moment. OCMH Board members were immediately on the scene, coordinating with staff and recovery professionals, taking copious notes and photos, contacting insurance companies, and assisting first responders—staying long into the night. Employees on their day off quickly arrived on the scene to pitch in where needed. Residents banded together to check in on one another, offering hugs, and kind



words to those affected. Volunteers offered their homes and guestrooms to residents who were displaced by fire, smoke, and water damage. Calls, text messages, and emails flooded in from all over the country with concern and sympathy.

It was a true testament to the power of the Mansion House's unique ability to bring people together, especially in a crisis, to comfort our community and preserve this National Historic Landmark.

That is the power of the Mansion House. That is the power of community.

This was not the first time a fire had touched the Mansion House. There were similar isolated blazes throughout the 19th century that, like this one, were put out by a well-trained, prepared, and dedicated team that was keenly attuned to the danger of fire and the importance of the Mansion House.

This event reminds us that the Mansion House is fragile and needs constant attention. It takes a whole community of board members, employees, residents, volunteers, and supporters to keep the Mansion House standing safe and sound. As the biggest and most important object in the collection, it is a living building that has stood for over 160 years as a monument to utopian visions, the power of community, and the product of a group of people who banded together to imagine and then create a new, better



Continued next page



world. As long as it stands it will be an inspiration to people who, just like the Oneida Community, want to make a difference in the world today.

Your support is what keeps the Mansion House that beacon of hope, and we need it more than ever. Your donations:

- Empower our amazing staff who work tirelessly to prepare for such emergencies and then work just as tirelessly to clean up and restore the Mansion House.
- Maintain critical infrastructure, including the fire suppression and alarm systems, that allow firefighters to quickly and effectively respond to emergencies.
- Fund the training and procedures that ensure residents and guests are prepared for such emergencies and stay safe.

Beyond repairs, your generosity helps us rebuild. It allows the OCMH to rise like a phoenix from these hardships, ensuring we can continue our mission.

I'm thrilled to share that this month, all donations made to OCMH will be matched by the Kenwood Benevolent Society, going directly toward critical building preservation work. In her piece in this *Journal*, OCMH board member and KBS board member Carolyn Strobel-Larsen shares more about this campaign and her perspective on its importance.



We cannot thank our Community enough for continuing to help OCMH recover from what could have been a far worse emergency. Every little bit helps us meet our mission to use the Mansion House and its collections to share the story of the Oneida Community and its legacy to inspire people to imagine and enact a better world.

Onward and Upward! 📸

PHASE 2: OUT TO BID!

Michael Colmey

After many months of negotiations with our architects, engineers, and our state and federal grant administrators, I am happy to announce that our Phase 2 Exterior Rehabilitation Preservation Project is now out to bid. Although some of the original work scopes anticipated in the early planning stages of this project were removed due to rising costs, we have indeed put forth a very strategic set of project work scopes and alternates which continue to align with our “From the top down” rehabilitation philosophy.

Work scopes included within this bid package are as follows:

- Roof replacements - North Tower, New House and Tontine including main upper flat roofs as well as the lower grade level roofs, Upper South Wing, and north Lounge portico roofs.
- Snow guards, gutters, and ice melt systems on the 1862 building and Library corridor junction.

- New interior roof access installations in the New House, Tontine, and South Wing.
- Masonry rehabilitation - Library corridor, South Wing chimneys, New House main boiler chimney, New House and Lounge junction South Elevation, Tontine chimneys.

Our project timeline for Phase 2:

During the month of April contractors reviewed work scopes, scheduled site visits, and attended a pre-bid walkthrough meeting. At 2pm on April 29th we conducted the bid opening and awarded the contract. This contract will then go before our state and federal grant administrators for final approval. We anticipate work to commence in June and last approximately six months. Although aggressive, our team feels this timeline is realistic and achievable.

A huge thank you to all of our members and donors who helped to fund this project alongside the National Park Service and NYSOPRHP. 🙏



KENWOOD BENEVOLENT SOCIETY ISSUES \$100,000 PRESERVATION CHALLENGE CAMPAIGN IN HONOR OF AMERICA 250!

Carolyn Strobel-Larsen

A little over five years ago, I sat at a meeting of the Kenwood Benevolent Society (KBS), being briefed on the deteriorating building structure and critical needs of the Mansion House. Some of this was clear to the visible eye, through crumbling brickwork, leaking roofs, and rotting wood, but the full extent had been truly revealed by a preservation study by architectural firm Crawford and Sterns. The Mansion House, we were told, was at a tipping point.

The needs were significant—\$10 million over five phases, at the minimum. The capacity for OCMH to fund that work was far from guaranteed. What was promising, though, was that the Mansion House had already secured sizable state and federal grant funding to support this work, in recognition of its historical and architectural importance in American history.

We were struck by the urgency of the repairs and inspired to do something. The members of KBS committed \$75,000—the group's largest ever donation to OCMH—toward the first phase of preservation work, to be used as a challenge match to incentivize contributions from members and supporters.

I worked closely with OCMH staff on that campaign as we highlighted the needs of the building and revealed the seriousness of the situation. The response from our community was beyond what we could have ever imagined—supporters not just met the match but exceeded it, helping us surpass the \$150,000 goal.

The impact of the preservation work that was made possible by that campaign has been a game-changer for the Mansion House: much of the Mansion House is weather tight with her roofs, dormers, and brand new gutters; deteriorating masonry has been shored up and thousands of bricks replaced or repaired; and once again the Quadrangle Doors are open for people to take in the Tulip Tree.

The work completed so far is a significant step—but just one step in addressing the true scope of needs. The next set of urgent needs include repairing roofs on the Tontine, New House, and 1862 House, more brick repair and replacement throughout the Mansion House, installing an ice melt



Mansion House, c. 1925

system to help with snow, and rehabilitating a number of iconic porches. Addressing these will fix current deteriorated areas and protect the building from further damage.

Recognizing this, we in KBS have again committed to supporting this work, issuing a matching challenge to all of OCMH supporters: \$100,000 to support preservation work. **We believe that our supporters can help us not just meet but exceed this combined goal of \$200,000.**

We are not just focused on the reality of the building's preservation needs, but on what the building itself means and the stories that it tells. The Mansion House is a unique setting, where visitors can experience first-hand what life was like in the Oneida Community: the rooms where community members slept, and the meeting spaces where they gathered, and the places where they learned. Since the days of the Community, the spaces in the building have continued doing those same things, serving as a home, a gathering space, and a place of education. As we celebrate 250 years since the founding of the United States, it's fitting for us to prioritize the preservation of its history and the continuation of its impact through these physical spaces.

I hope that you will join us in supporting this work. **All gifts made to OCMH during the month of May will be matched toward this ongoing, critical preservation work.** Whether you are able to visit the Mansion House regularly or rarely, know that your gift will continue to preserve its legacy while protecting its future. 🍀

COMING SOON TO OCMH

Visit oneidacommunity.org/event for more information.

5th Annual OCMH Car Show

• On May 30th over 100 classic cars and hundreds of spectators will descend on the Mansion House for our yearly car show! Enjoy live music, tasty food trucks, craft vendors, and an amazing collection of classic cars on the beautiful grounds of the Mansion House.



Eden Cultivated

• This summer OCMH will begin offering tours of the acres of gardens and grounds surrounding the Mansion House. Entitled, "Eden Cultivated," guests will discover how the grounds evolved from a rugged communal farm to an elegant pleasure garden to exclusive private club. Visitors will admire the seasonal blooms and champion trees that serve as a living, natural complement to the grand architecture of the Mansion House.



Eden Cultivated:
The Historic Gardens & Grounds of the Oneida Community

Kenwood Uncovered

• When the Oneida Community dissolved in 1881, many former members transitioned from shared lives in the Mansion House to building private homes in the new "Kenwood" neighborhood. This tour reveals the personal stories of the company executives and the talented builders who shaped the landscape of Kenwood. Discover the faces, the facades, and the enduring legacy of the people who transformed a radical community into a global industry—and the elegant homes they left behind.



Kenwood Uncovered:
The Architecture & Artisans Beyond the Mansion House

Marker Challenge

• To celebrate America 250 this summer, OCMH is joining together with our partners across Madison County to offer the Madison250 Marker Challenge. People of all ages are invited to use clues to visit and take selfies with historical markers throughout the county. Running from April to Labor Day, finishers will be entered into a drawing for an amazing prize pack courtesy of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation.

Music Series Returns

• On May 17th, the Adam Ezra Group will take the Big Hall Stage. Emerging from the underground Americana scene, this Northeast powerhouse has built a reputation not just on their music, but on the profound, soul-deep connection they forge with every audience. Their performances are legendary for their "genre-blending" versatility—evoking the grit of Springsteen, the infectious energy of Dave Matthews, and the social consciousness of Jackson Browne. Get tickets today.



Adam Ezra Group

May is Preservation Month!

• Every May the Oneida Community Mansion House takes part in National Historic Preservation Month! This year we have an exciting matching campaign for Phase 2 of the Historic Preservation Project courtesy of Kenwood Benevolent Society, a new preservation and architecture tour, a lecture, and a webinar that digs deep into what we have in store for historic preservation in 2026. 🏠

BRINGING THE MANSION HOUSE *STORY* TO LIFE

Emily Stegner

The Oneida Community Mansion House has a new way to explore the museum: *virtually*. In late 2025, our museum team launched a new app powered by *STORY*, a storytelling platform that helps visitors explore further and engage more deeply.

The content of this app includes and builds upon our current self-guided tour. OCMH's *STORY* app is accessible from any device connected to the internet and provides additional context and information for our visitors. Some of our favorite additions include rarely seen photos and audio clips of primary source texts that illuminate what life was like in Community days, such as examples of Mutual Criticism sessions, a description of evening meetings, and different members talking about their faith.

In addition to providing more for visitors to explore while they're on site, the app can also be used before and after a visit for people to digest the information at their own pace.

Since the platform is so easily adaptable, we hope to have more virtual tours available in the future. In the meantime, if there's something you would like to see on the app that we've yet to include, get in touch with us! 

ONEIDA COMMUNITY MANSION HOUSE

Scan QR or visit oneidacomunity.org/virtualexhibittours

Discover the legacy of the Oneida Community at their historic Mansion House, where bold ideas once helped redefine American society.



Oneida Community Mansion House Introductory Tour

12 Stops • Historic House • 1h 15m



A Welcome from Tam Gales, Director of Museum Affairs

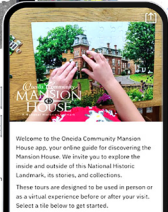
Welcome to the Oneida Community Mansion House!

The Mansion House was built as the home of the utopian Oneida Community. The Community was formed in 1848 and lasted until 1881. At its height, it included almost 300 people living in Oneida, with smaller branches in Sherrill (then Willow Place), Washington, Connecticut, and Niagara Falls.

The 19th Century Context

Welcome to the Oneida Community Mansion House app, your online guide for discovering the Mansion House. Use this app to explore the inside and outside of this National Historic Landmark, its stories, and collections.

These tours are designed to be used in person or as a virtual experience before or after your visit. Select a file below to get started.



NEW ACQUISITION: GEORGE HATCH'S VIOLIN DISCOVERED!

Emily Stegner

In January 2026, we received an exciting email about a potential donation. Along with a box of photos, someone wanted to donate a violin they believed had ties to the Oneida Community. Thanks to a handwritten note and envelope left with the instrument, we can surmise the violin was made in the 19th century by George Hatch, who was a young man at the time.

Born in Dayton, Ohio, George entered the Oneida Community in 1848 with his father, Eleazer Hatch, stepmother Hannah, and a few siblings. Eleazer was best known in the Community as a cabinet maker. Along with John Leonard, Eleazer made the first basswood violins in the Community. George would've joined the Community just shy of fourteen years old, and ultimately seceded at the age of 21.

A black and white portrait of Eleazer Hatch, an older man with a mustache, wearing a suit and bow tie. The portrait is oval-shaped and positioned on the right side of the page.

According to the note accompanying the piece, the George Hatch violin was made in the Community carpentry shop. George was said to have played the finished piece in the first Community orchestra as well as along the new railroad being built near Oneida.

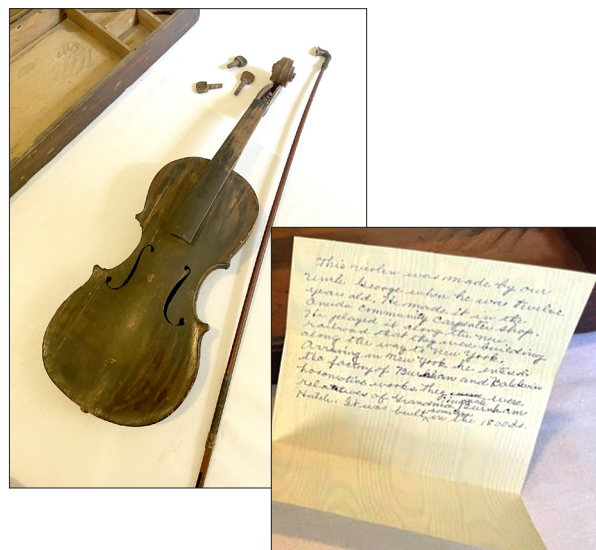
Although we do not have much more information yet about this new acquisition, there are a few things we can observe from the piece itself.

The violin and bow do not have strings, but based on the wear around the neck, the instrument was almost certainly well-used. The leather handle on the wooden case has also detached, though is preserved inside with the violin, as well as three of its tuning pegs.

Thanks to the generosity of a descendant of Irene Muriel Hatch, we are pleased to be able to dig deeper into this musical portion of the Community's history. 



George Hatch



OLD LIBRARY VOLUNTEER PROJECT

Emily Stegner



L to R: Polly Held, Cathy Cornue, and Mary Gilkes work on processing books

Roughly 3,000 volumes sit on the shelves of the Old Library, behind glass, and in the three iconic alcoves. At the beginning of 2026, a cohort of volunteers undertook the daunting task of numbering each of these books.

The first recorded complete inventory of the books in the Old Library was done by Kathy Garner over fifteen years ago (see *OCJ* September 2014). Another more detailed inventory was completed by a Hamilton College student in 2014, Leigh Gialanella ('15), who spent two years inventorying and creating an online catalog that many now use to explore the impressive collection the Oneida Community once used.

Although these inventories were an enormous step forward in understanding the kind of literature the Oneida Community was reading, modern reference numbers were not given to the substantial number of volumes contained in the Old Library. Without identifying object numbers on each of the books in the Old Library, it is not very efficient to locate particular volumes on the many shelves.

These numbers have also become necessary because the OCMH museum team plans to put the collection online in the next few years. In order to provide a useful and comprehensive catalog, object numbers are essential to identify and locate particular materials.

Several volunteers from the local community stepped up to assist with the daunting task of numbering 3,000 books (and, as of this publication, we have yet to complete the project). These volunteers are doing several tasks: writing the number in pencil on the back inside cover of the book, matching the title up to the already completed inventory, and preserving the physical books by cleaning off dust and tying up loose bindings where necessary to make sure these volumes are stable. Although the cloth ties do introduce interruptions to the visually pleasing look of so many books on the shelves, they stabilize deteriorating volumes and hopefully offer a talking point to curious visitors who may wonder what the string is.

Perhaps the best part of the project thus far has been overhearing the humor and joy volunteers have experienced while processing the books the Oneida Community would've had at their disposal. There were definitely some weird titles.

Though this project is still in progress, it has brought some energy back into the Mansion House during our winter season. OCMH is enthusiastic about having volunteers help with our library and collection. If you're interested in volunteering, contact Tom Guiler at tguiler@oneidacommunity.org 

NEW FACES AND NEW SPACES AT THE INN!

Jennifer Wayland-Smith, Director of Hospitality

It has been a busy three months since I arrived at the end of January. What I thought would be a temporary position with OCMH, has delightfully become a permanent opportunity for me...a full circle moment and return home! After a short stay in one of the guest rooms, previously my great Aunt Emily's (Herrick Schmidt) apartment, I am now a full-time apartment resident of the Mansion House. In Ultima Thule to be specific, which has seen a few Wayland-Smith residents previously! In fact, Francis & Cornelia Wayland-Smith, along with their two oldest sons Richard & Gerard, of whom I am a direct descendant, were the first traditional family unit to live there. Later, my father Dard lived there as a child with his parents, Gerard and Leonora.

As the Director of Hospitality and the newest department leader on the OCMH team, I am tasked with the oversight of the fourteen Inn guest rooms, the management of the 25 apartments, and the selling and coordination of the event/venue spaces within the Mansion House. Our small, but mighty team has done a great job with all of this



in the past, and now I am striving to continue to move the needle in a positive direction with quality results!

A few of the accomplishments since I arrived include:

- **Refreshing the Bar Area** as a comfortable and cozy space for our overnight guests to enjoy their grab-n-go breakfast. Surrounded by dark green walls, an amazing tin ceiling and a mix of new and refreshed furniture, it will certainly be a spot to enjoy a cup of coffee in the morning, read a book during the day, or indulge in a BYOB glass of wine in the evening.

- **Updating and Refreshing some of the Overnight Guest Rooms.** Creating a comfortable, relaxing and welcoming environment for our overnight guests is imperative to long-term success. Over the winter, we completed a number of improvements: repainting trim to better match the aesthetic of the Mansion House, changing the bedding in a few of the guest rooms, adding functional furniture, and installing shower product dispensers in accordance with NYS Lodging laws. The Inn at the Mansion House now has the following bedding configurations: four king rooms, seven queen rooms, two full rooms, and one twin room, for a total of sixteen beds within the fourteen guest rooms. Two of the rooms also include a sofa sleeper and several rooms can accommodate a roll-in cot. As you can see, there is a bed for everybody!





- Mike Colmey and I attended a **Wedding Expo** in Utica in March. This was a first-time event for OCMH and an opportunity to spread the word about the spaces available for bridal or other events. The expo was well attended, and many future brides were excited to learn more about the Mansion House. As a result of the expo, we are expecting additional bookings for events.
- I have also been busy with many **"Behind-the-Scenes" Projects**. A few of these include: reviewing and updating the technology used to book and reserve the guest rooms; updating materials to market the Mansion House for events (meetings, weddings, and gatherings of all types); and researching several additional improvements



for the guest rooms that will enhance the guest experience and increase efficiency for our team. Even simple processes are being evaluated. I am always questioning if a task is the most efficient use of our time, energy, and money. If not, what can we do to make the process, task, or space become more efficient? From saving on monthly expenses to saving on staff time, nothing should be overlooked!

Overall, my professional skills and knowledge acquired over 35 years of work within the hospitality and spa world are easily transferred to the world of OCMH. I have many other ideas and thoughts to re-energize the building and grounds that I hope to put into play in

the future. It has been a joy and a pleasure to be back in Kenwood and immerse myself into the work that is an important part of who I am today. My goal is always to leave an organization better than I found it. I'm not planning on leaving anytime soon, but I know that I have already made a positive impact on the future of the Mansion House!

If you have a thought about hospitality at the Mansion House, you can email me at jwaylandsmith@oneidacommunity.org.



HOLLYWOOD TAKES ON CNY HISTORY: A REBUTTAL TO NETFLIX'S *DEATH BY LIGHTNING*

Thomas A. Guiler, PhD and Alecia Pendasulo

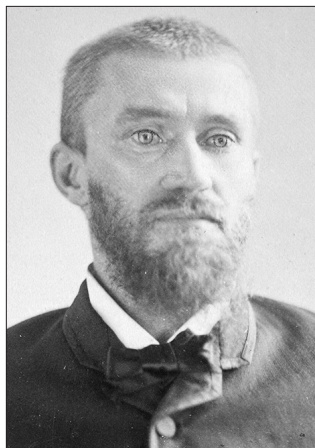
Netflix's *Death by Lightning* introduces millions of viewers to one of the most dramatic moments in American political history: the assassination of President James A. Garfield in 1881. The series is visually compelling, the performances are strong, and the atmosphere convincingly captures the look of the late nineteenth century.

Yet historical drama carries a unique responsibility. When real people and events form the foundation of a story, audiences often assume what they see is true. Dramatic license can help tell a story, but when it fundamentally reshapes historical figures, it risks leaving viewers with a misleading impression of the past.

This series put a spotlight on a number of people and places in Central New York history, including the Oneida Community Mansion House, Roscoe Conkling, and CNY politics, to varying degrees of success. For help, we have reached out to Alecia Pendasulo, a Board Member at the Oneida County History Center to mount a rebuttal to the series: what it got right, where it went wrong, and its missed opportunities.

Charles Guiteau and the Oneida Community

Charles Guiteau was a member of the Oneida Community from 1860–1866. The series does an



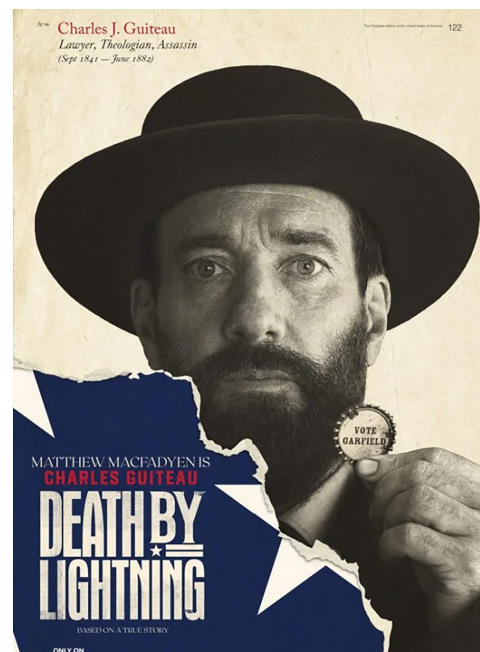
Charles Guiteau

admirable job of depicting who Charles Guiteau was: someone who evidently suffered from mental health issues, was socially awkward, and surely annoyed and angered members of the OC, who often referred to him as “Charles Get Out”—a moniker that makes an appearance in the show. In many ways, Matthew MacFady-

dyen gets Guiteau right; he comes across much as he is described by contemporaries: well meaning at times, but a gadfly who often clashed with members of the OC, especially John Humphrey Noyes. The series depicts a “Mutual Criticism” wherein Community members advise Guiteau on his shortcomings. Though we do not know if such a session took place that focused on Guiteau, the show does somewhat accurately portray these sessions.

However, those are about the ONLY things that Netflix gets right about the OC. Though there are only three scenes in the series that depict the Community, they are comically fanciful. The writers and producers of the show were obviously reading and channeling some of the prevailing negative press of the late nineteenth century that portrays the Community as a radical sex cult led by a megalomaniacal leader in the hinterlands of Upstate New York. The scenes depict Community members’ wild orgy-like sex scenes in fields and in communal bunkrooms. Anyone familiar with the social and sexual practices knows this was not the case. Sexual intercourse, or as they called it “Interviews,” were highly regulated affairs brokered by a third party and took place in member’s individual sleeping rooms. Moreover, one scene depicts what can only be assumed to be the Mansion House. But instead of the iconic building we know today, it is a run-of-the-mill nineteenth century piece of vernacular architecture—hardly a Mansion House. A simple Google search would have revealed that the OC did not live in any ordinary building but a 93,000 square foot National Historic Landmark that was communally designed by the Community to reflect and reinforce its beliefs and practices.

Unfortunately, the filmmakers never reached out to anyone at OCMH, much less came for a visit, and therefore missed a huge opportunity to hear the real story of Guiteau and the OC and see the Mansion House for themselves.



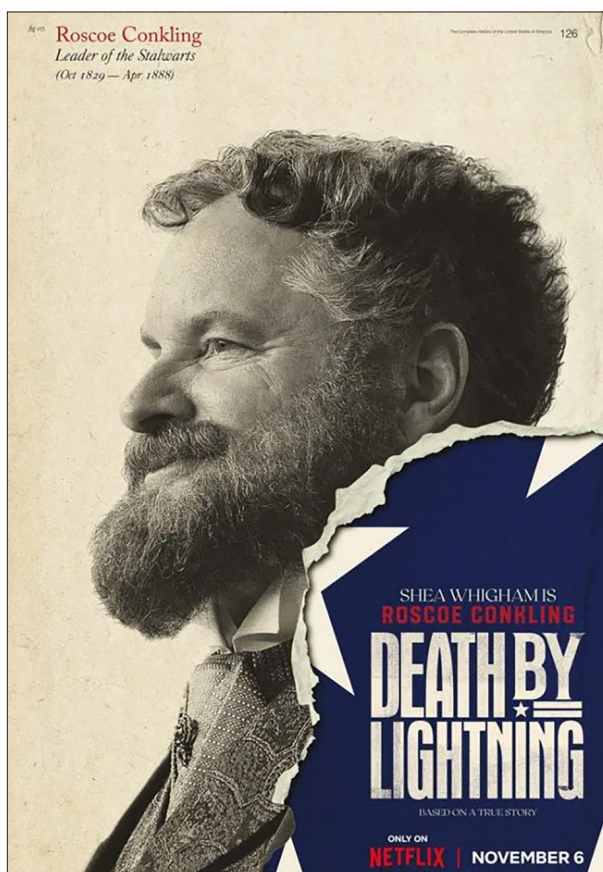
Matthew Macfadyen as Charles Guiteau

Roscoe Conkling and Utica

Another example of artistic license in *Death by Lightning* is the portrayal of Roscoe Conkling.

At first glance, the series gets some details right. The makeup and styling reproduce Conkling's famous hair and beard with impressive accuracy. Anyone familiar with photographs of the New York senator can recognize him immediately. The resemblance largely ends there.

In the series, Conkling and his ally Chester A. Arthur appear almost like nineteenth century gangsters. Arthur is shown carrying brass knuckles and directing violent intimidation, while Conkling is portrayed as the calculating boss behind it all. There is no historical evidence that anything like this occurred. Roscoe Conkling was



Shea Whigham as Roscoe Conkling

a proud, combative, and fiercely partisan political leader who dominated the Stalwart faction of the Republican Party in New York during the patronage-driven politics of the late nineteenth century. He wielded enormous influence over federal appointments and believed political loyalty should be rewarded with government positions. Conkling battled his rivals relentlessly and cultivated a reputation for power within the party.

Despite his hard-edged style, neither Conkling nor Arthur operated anything resembling a criminal syndicate. Conkling was instead a complex figure known for his enormous ego, theatrical speaking style, and striking physical presence.

The series also misrepresents

elements of his personal life—especially where he lived—*Utica not Albany*. Although born in Albany, Conkling spent most of his adult life in Utica. His home at 3 Rutger Park, a Greek Revival mansion that still stands today, served as his residence from about 1863 until his death in 1888. Conkling lived there with his wife, Julia Seymour Conkling, the sister of former New York governor Horatio Seymour. At the height of his career the home became an important political and social center where conversations shaping national politics often began.

His career was deeply tied to the city. Conkling served as mayor of Utica in 1858, as a U.S. congressman from 1859 to 1863, and as a U.S. senator from 1867 to 1881. He was also a close friend and confidant of Ulysses S. Grant, which is how the series introduces him. Grant was one of the leading candidates at the 1880 Republican National Convention, where factions of the party attempted to nominate him for an unprecedented third presidential term. Conkling's Stalwarts backed Grant, while reform-minded Republicans opposed them. The deadlock ultimately produced a compromise candidate: James A. Garfield. Garfield's unexpected nomination set in motion the chain of events that eventually led to the actions of Charles J. Guiteau, the assassin whose story forms the central narrative of the series.

The real history surrounding Roscoe Conkling, James Garfield, Charles Guiteau, and the political world of the 1880s is dramatic enough on its own. It deserves to be understood in its full complexity rather than reduced to fiction. Despite these inaccuracies, it has garnered some excitement and spurred tourists from far and wide to visit our region to hear the real story—a story that is truly stranger than Netflix's fiction. 🎬



Roscoe Conkling, courtesy of the Oneida County History Center

IN GRATITUDE FOR ROSEANNE CARMODY

Michael Colmery

OCMH would like to thank Roseanne Carmody for her twenty five years of dedicated service. In 2001, while still employed full-time with the State of New York, Roseanne joined the OCMH team as a part-time evening receptionist. Her duties at that time included guest check-ins, fielding phone calls, setting up museum tours, record keeping, assisting with events, and serving as a liaison for Mansion House staff, tenants, vendors, and outside parties.

She was especially fond of the fact that at the time residents and staff could still order dinner from the Mansion House kitchen.

In 2003 Roseanne retired from her job with the State, and in 2004 she joined the OCMH Lawns & Gardens Department under the direction of the late Jim Dixon. Roseanne recalls two very distinctive memories during that early period. One, spending a lot of time clearing barberry bushes and overgrown shrubbery from around the Mansion House and two, overcoming her anxiety with learning how to drive the John Deere gator.



Upon my arrival in 2006, Roseanne was still a part-time receptionist and a seasonal employee in Lawns & Gardens. It stayed that way until 2016, when she decided to give up her evening post. Fortunately, she stayed on in Lawns & Gardens until 2025. Her passion and dedication to the Mansion House gardens were tried and true. She thoroughly enjoyed discussing horticulture with guests as well as working side by

side with garden volunteers and staff. Her uncanny relationship with colleague Kathy Garner developed through the years into something Roseanne states that she will cherish forever. I, for one, will definitely miss their comradery.

Today, Roseanne concentrates more on her love for travel. She has visited South Africa, China, Brazil, Peru, Holland, Norway, and the Caribbean. This summer she intends on staying a little closer to home with trips planned to Maine, New Brunswick, and kayaking the rivers of northern Florida.

Thank you again for your service and we wish you all the best in your OCMH retirement! 🍷

LUELLA EAGER REMEMBERS: AN OL ORAL HISTORY GIFT

Catherine Cornue

An unexpected phone call from North Carolina this winter led to a new interview for the Oneida Ltd. Oral History project. Thanks to the

wonders of technology, I was soon connected with Carol Vervaert, the daughter of Luella Eager, who had recently turned 101! While on a subsequent FaceTime call, Carol gently encouraged her mother as she responded to the questions suggested.

Luella's father, Peter Berger, worked as a night janitor in Oneida Ltd.'s factory offices before retiring. Both Carol and Luella remember him walking to work with a black metal lunch pail. The Eagers lived in Sherrill for about 65 years and Luella worked for Oneida Ltd. at two separate times—and two very different jobs.

She worked in the factory for a short time when her children were young, walking to work from Pexton Street for an eight hour shift, 4:00pm to midnight. There, she would put spoons and forks by pattern in racks to be buffed by a machine handled by a man. Apparently, if you were a new person, the men working there didn't like it if you couldn't keep up. Luella couldn't keep up



and then quit when her son, "kicked Mrs. Dygert, the neighbor across the street who was watching him." She remembers, "I had to quit work. Mr. Dygert was furious!"

When the children were older, her friend, Jean Austin, was working at the Factory Store and mentioned Luella to her boss. This led to a very enjoyable eighteen years. "It was a good job. I liked helping people select flatware, holloware,

Christmas ornaments, engraved silver cups—everything." In addition to customer service, each employee had a section of the store that they were responsible for keeping clean.

Asked what was unique about Oneida Ltd. that made it special for her, Luella replied, "The people were good, the bosses were good. I met a lot of nice people who would come back." And, to the question, "What did Oneida Ltd. mean to you and your family?" she responded, "It was an income and an opportunity to meet all those wonderful people. It was a very good place to work."

If you, or someone you know, would like to participate in the Oneida Ltd. Oral History Project, find more information at

<https://www.oneidacommunity.org/ol> 🍷

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MARY JO ASTRACHAN

We are once again spotlighting one of our incredible volunteers. They are the backbone of OCMH, helping with everything from guiding tours to maintaining gardens to assisting with events and more! This issue highlights the amazing Mary Jo Astrachan.

Oneida Community Mansion House: How did you get involved at OCMH?

Mary Jo Astrachan: I first learned that the Mansion House was recruiting docents from a friend, who convinced me to attend an information session in 2006. We sat outside on the front lawn on a summer afternoon, role-playing an evening meeting during Community days.

My interest piqued by that experience, I signed up to be trained under Kate Mockler. She provided me with lengthy tour notes, and I spent the next few months reading every book I could find. She required us to shadow four different docents in preparation for conducting our own tours. My first was with Walt Lang, whose standard two+ hour tour was certainly impressive! How could I ever do that?

Fast forward nineteen years. Since 2007, I have led over 400 tours, many of which have run three+ hours if the guests were interested and had questions. (I actually find it harder to do a short tour because I have a difficult time deciding which fascinating info to leave out.)

OCMH: Can you tell me about some of the most memorable tours you have led?

MJA: My favorite guests are teenagers; having taught high school English for over thirty years, I am very comfortable with their energy and candor. I especially enjoy sharing the OC story with women because I can tell them about the advantages that females had here: They had a voice! They did “manly” work! They voted! They were not overburdened with chores or childbearing! They got rid of corsets and wore “pantsuits”!

Of course, my family hasn’t been able to escape my enthusiasm for everything OC. I have been lucky enough to have given tours to my mother, brother and sister-in-law, husband and all three of our kids. And we all survived the complex marriage discussion! Not only that, I have turned them into OC fans themselves.

Want to volunteer at OCMH?
Contact Tom Guiler
tgulier@oneidacommunity.org



OCMH: Have you ever given a tour to any “celebrities”?

MJA: One of the most significant tours I did was for the author Christopher Jennings, whose book *Paradise Now: The Story of American Utopianism* came out a year later. I was very intimidated when we began once I realized how much he already knew about the Oneida Perfectionists, but he put me at ease with his observations about the subject we had in common. And, as is true with a lot of our MH visitors, he just wanted to see and experience the place he had heard so much about.

OCMH: What does being a guide at the Mansion House mean to you?

MJA: I have always felt appreciated at the Mansion House—we are frequently reminded of this by staff and even visitors. Being a docent here has given me a wonderful challenge I never expected and has allowed me to interact with people whose commitment I admire. 

NEW GIFTS TO ANNUAL FUND AND OTHER SUPPORT

October 1, 2025 – April 1, 2026

\$10,000 to \$24,999

Anonymous
Peter Austin
Community Foundation of
Herkimer & Oneida Counties
Katherine A. Garner
Edward and Betty Noyes

\$1,000 to \$9,999

Cheri Ackley Anderson Goodson
*In memory of Julia Jane Ackley and
George Anderson*
Anne Anderson
Susan Belasco and Linck Johnson
Hugh and Kim Bradford
Ernest and Lynne Giraud
Wauneta Kerr
Sally Allen Mandel and Barry
Mandel
Annette Noyes and John Fifer
*In memory of David, Richard, Dick,
and Eula Noyes*
Eric R. Noyes and Mimi
Gendreau
Pamela Parker
Robert and Nancy Pickels
Neal and Kelly Rose
Patrick and Marie Sanderson
*In memory of Margrethe Hartwig
Sanderson*
Peter Siersma
Paul and Karen Solenick
Betty Ann Stewart
Jamie Trevvett
Alessandra and Baxter Urist
Ed Vanderwall *In memory of
Nick Vanderwall*
Thomas and Laura Way-
land-Smith Hatch *In memory of
Gerard & Carol Wayland-Smith*
Bob and Linda Wayland-Smith

\$500 to \$999

Wilber and Judy Allen
Anne Anderson *In memory of
Francis Edwin Kelley*
S. John and Susan Campanie
Eric Conklin and Trine
Vanderwall *In honor of Pody Van-
derwall and Susan & John Kuterka*
Barbara Downs
Linda Evans
Dominic Finelli
Ken and Mary Gilkes
Andy Ingalls and Jane Noyes
Cleve and Mary MacKenzie
James E. Mackin

Duane and Colleen Munger
Geoff and Kristi Noyes
Jeannette Noyes
Donna Reed
Nora Leonard Roy *In honor of Ms.
Pody Vanderwall*
Rick and Deborah Stickels *In
honor of Ms. Karen Coles*
John Swift and Ann Raynsford
Steve and Mary Thompson
Ed Vanderwall *In honor of Ms.
Tina Vanderwall*
Robin Vanderwall and Dan
Strobel
Pody Vanderwall
Claudia Wiley

\$250 to \$499

Carol Bandlow
Nigel and Ellie Bolland
Campbell-Dean Funeral Home,
Inc.
Don and Cathy Cornue
Jim and Sarah Dam
Carol Davenport
Vincent Dick
Lois Ezell
Sue Fischbeck and Pat Hurley
Dave and Billie Hill
Hillary Hohman
John Froass & Son, Inc.
Meredith Leonard and
Edward I. Pitts
Kenneth and Donna Moulton
*In honor of Ms. Cynthia Hartwig
Gyorgy*
Gary and Becky Onyan
Jeffrey and Eileen Stone
In memory of Imogen Noyes Stone
Carolyn Strobel-Larsen and
Robert Larsen Jr.
Marie Tilson
Don and Bonnie Unsworth
Ed Vanderwall *In honor of Ms.
Pody Vanderwall*
Pody Vanderwall *In memory of
friends, neighbors, and families at
Christmas*
Paul and Judy Wayland-Smith
Priscilla Wood *In memory of
Richard Wood*
James and Barbara Yonai

\$100 to \$249

Suzanne Adams-Lalonde
Suzanne Adams-Lalonde *In honor
of Tim Cumings and Jon Rosbrook*

Anonymous
Howard and Mary Jo Astrachan
Debbie Austin
Jeffrey and Elizabeth Barnard
Tanya Beshgetoor Weiss
Megan Brankley Abbas
Robert W. and Mary E. Burdick
Pauline Caputi and Anthony
Wonderley
Linda Cochran *In memory of
Mrs. Jane Rich*
Eric Conklin and Trine
Vanderwall
Crawford & Stearns Architects
and Preservation Planners
Timothy Cumings
Mary Ellen DeBarr *In memory of
Harold J. DeBarr*
Anne Herrick Dienel and Nick
Dienel *In memory of Emily
Wayland-Smith Herrick Schmidt*
Susan Drummond *In memory of
Olive, Bob & Greg Drummond and
Jane Drummond Hanlon*
Wilber Noyes Earl and Christine
Earl
RaeAnn Engler
Lynne Everhart-Holm
Richard Fenner
Sally Fischbeck
Russell Fox
Jeffrey Garner
Emilie Gould
Robert Hanlon *In memory of Ms.
Jane Hanlon*
Jeffrey A. Hatcher
Susan Haynes
Patricia Hoffman
James and Cheryl Jacobson
Connelly and Elizabeth Jones
John and Elizabeth Kelly
Barbara Kinsella
Dawn Krupiarz and Rick
Kinsella *In memory of Mr. Vince
Mellon*
Dawn Krupiarz and Rick
Kinsella
Nairn Kucharik *In memory of Mr.
and Mrs. Beal Marks*
John and Sue Kuterka
John and Jacquelyn LaRaia
*In memory of Allan Campbell and
Nellie Josephine Jones*
Janet Little
Daryk and Sarah Macrina
George Maihafer
Dale Major

Mick McGrogan
 Helen McPherson
 Monica Mercado
 James and Beverly
 Messenger-Harris
 Kenneth and Donna Moulton
 John & Susan Omohundro *In honor of Mr. and Mrs. David White*
 Oneida Indian Nation
 Sara Thompson Orton *In memory of Eliot Orton (Cot)*
 Catherine Sanderson
 Robert and Sharie Sblendorio
 Karen Stonebraker Miga
In memory of Doris, Walter and Wesley Miga
 Gerold W. Noyes *In memory of Mr. David H. Noyes*
 Paul and Judy Noyes
 Jeff and Nancy Prowda
 Questers Inc., #872 James Dean Chapter
 Tomlinson Rauscher
 Tomlinson Rauscher *In memory of Mr. Christopher Rauscher*
 John and Kim Raynsford
 Raymond and Lynda Skaddan
 Ralph and Joann Stevens
 Marcelle Tyburski
 Giovanna Urist and Thomas Guiler
 Maryann Vanderpool and Ralph Imundo
 Dirk Vanderwall and Allison Willoughby *In honor of Ms. Pody Vanderwall*
 Kate Wayland-Smith
 Tina Wayland-Smith
 Karen Wellman
 Martha Wendel
 Herb Wilkinson

Up to \$99

Wilber and Judy Allen *In honor of Sister Mary Prudence Allen*
 Tanya Beshgetoor Weiss *In honor of Rev. Marla Spyker*
 Patricia Bielicki
 Cornelia Brewster *In memory of Giles Wayland-Smith*
 Christa Carrington *In honor of William Loftus*
 Brian and Nancy Carroll
 Linda Chamberlain
 Linda Cochran
 Jacqueline Collins *In memory of Tianne Collins*
 Christine Dascher
 Elisha Davies
 Susan Dean

Heather and Nicolas de la Riva *In honor of Ms. Pody Vanderwall*
 Ryan Eastman
 Wayne and Robin Edkin
 Jo English
 Linda Evans *In honor of the Tulip Tree*
 Carol Faulkner
 Linda Gamache
 Julian Garside
 Scott and Betsy Gayner
 Cynthia and Allen Glover
 Joscelyn Godwin
 Christian Goodwillie *In memory of Mary Cragin*
 N. Gordon Gray
 Carl Guarneri
 Annabel Haley
 Geraldine Haskell
 Anne Herrick Dienel and Nick Dienel
 Emily Herrick *In memory of Emily Wayland-Smith Herrick Schmidt*
 Wanda Herrick
 Amy Hirschel *In memory of John and Joan Marcellus*
 Carolyn Hoard
 Gregory and Paula Iannello
 Ms. Suzanne A. Irland *In honor of Gale E. Irland*
 Mark Kicher
 Patricia Kimball
 Christopher and Loreen Klish
 Patricia Krueger
 Nairn Kucharik *In memory of Mr. and Mrs. Beal Marks*
 Jennifer Lloyd
 Cyndie Long
 Roberta Mayer *In honor of Jessie Mayer*
 Charlotte Mayer-Florian *In memory of Jessie L. Mayer*
 Wester and Lorraine Miga
 Robert and Kathy Moher
 Bruce Murray
 Kevin R. and Laura Noyes Engel
 Thomas and Bonnie Panara
 Alan Parkhurst
 Marguerite Pearson
 Patricia Ratcliffe
 Joe Raynsford
 John and Kim Raynsford *In honor of Mr. Zachary Raynsford*
 John and Kim Raynsford *In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Tallman*
 Michael and Betsey Ready
 Jillian Rogers
 Neal and Kelly Rose *In honor of Ms. Jennifer Rose*

Neal and Kelly Rose *In honor of Jessica Rose-Malm*
 Carol and Eugene Salerno
 Margo and Russell Sampson *In memory of Leslie and Edith Smith*
 Samantha Saunders
 Ellen Simpson
 Mark and Andrea Slaven *In honor of Don and Cathy Cornue*
 Deirdre Stam
 Allison and Kevin Stilwell
 Mark Strong
 Edward and Anne Thoma
 George Tofte *In memory of Peg Tofte*
 James and Judith Toner
 William Vartorella
 Pody Vanderwall *In honor of Mike Colmey*
 Pody Vanderwall *In honor of Cathy and Don Cornue*
 Pody Vanderwall *In honor of Tom Guiler*
 Pody Vanderwall *In honor of Emily Stegner*
 Suzanne Sanderson Wade
 Emily Stegner *In honor of Don and Carol Airey*
 Laurie Woolever

In Kind Donations

Linda Cochran Oneida Ltd.
Christmas trimmers and surgical instrument bags
 Don Cornue *Various carpentry, painting, and exhibit projects*
 Dean Gyorgy and Family
Collection of Community Quadrangle newsletters
 Thomas and Laura Wayland-Smith Hatch *Various pieces of furniture for Sun Porch*
 Laura Wayland-Smith Hatch
Two pieces of engraved Oneida Ltd. silverware
 Sean and Amy Hart *Linens of Judy Wayland-Smith*
 Mark Kroneck George Hatch
violin and box of photos
 Crystal Snyder *Signed Colway print*
 Emily Stegner *Preservation supplies, Oneida Ltd. vanity set, tie clip, and teaspoon strainer*
 Estate of Jack Wallace *Illustration for Community Plate baby set*
 Claudia Wiley *Fall decorations*

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS AND DONORS

October 1, 2025 – April 1, 2026

Benefactor

Anne Anderson

Donor

Linda Evans

Cleve and Mary MacKenzie

James E. Mackin

Duane and Colleen Munger

Donna Reed

Rick and Deborah Stickels

Carolyn Strobel-Larsen and

Robert Larsen Jr.

Ed Vanderwall

Contributor

Susan Belasco and Linck Johnson

Nigel and Ellie Bolland

Vincent Dick

Sue Fischbeck and Pat Hurley

Dave and Billie Hill

Hillary Hohman

John Swift and Ann Raynsford

Marie Tilson

Don and Bonnie Unsworth

Pody Vanderwall

Paul and Judy Wayland-Smith

Claudia Wiley

Associate

Wilber and Judy Allen

Howard and Mary Jo Astrachan

Peter Austin

Tanya Beshgetoor Weiss

Robert W. and Mary E. Burdick

Crawford & Stearns, Architects
and Preservation Planner

Carol Davenport

Wilber Noyes Earl and

Christine Earl

Richard Fenner

Annabel Haley

Patricia Hoffman

James and Cheryl Jacobson

Barbara Kinsella

Dawn Krupiarz and Rick Kinsella

John and Jacquelyn LaRaia

Janet Little

Kenneth and Donna Moulton

Jeff and Nancy Prowda

Tomlinson Rauscher

John and Kim Raynsford

Robert and Sharie Sblendorio

Raymond and Lynda Skaddan

Marcelle Tyburski

Martha Wendel

Herb Wilkinson

James and Barbara Yonai

Family/Household

Pauline Caputi and Anthony

Wonderley

Brian and Nancy Carroll

Karen Coles & Family

Anne Herrick Dienel and Nick

Dienel

Sally Fischbeck

Russell Fox

Jeffrey A. Hatcher

Emily Herrick

John and Elizabeth Kelly

John and Sue Kuterka

Wester and Lorraine Miga

Robert and Kathy Moher

Thomas and Bonnie Panara

Neal and Kelly Rose

Carol and Eugene Salerno

Paul and Karen Solenick

Deirdre Stam

Joe and Heather Tallman

Edward and Anne Thoma

Maryann Vanderpool and Ralph

Immundo

Tina Vanderwall

Individual

Suzanne Adams-Lalonde

Sister Mary Prudence Allen

Linda Cochran

Jo English

Scott and Betsy Gayner

Joscelyn Godwin

Carl Guarneri

Geraldine Haskell

Wanda Herrick

Carolyn Hoard

Patricia Krueger

Dale Major

Charlotte Mayer-Florian

Joe Raynsford

Jessica Rose-Malm

Rev. Marla Spyker

William Vartorella

Suzanne Sanderson Wade

Karen Wellman



Descendant Debbie Austin Inducted into the New York State Golf Association Hall of Fame

Champion golfer and OC descendant Debbie Austin was inducted into the New York State Golf Association Hall of Fame class of 2025. Austin grew up in Kenwood and learned to golf at the Oneida Community Golf Course. She quickly became a force to be reckoned with, winning the NYS Girls Junior Amateur Championship in 1965 and the Florida State High School Championship in 1965 after moving to Florida to finish high school. Austin turned pro in 1968, winning numerous tournaments, including the Australian Ladies Open. She earned multiple honors including *Golf Magazine's* Player of the Year and Best Driver on the LPGA Tour in 1977. Her final win on tour came in the 1981 Mayflower Classic, in which she initiated the tradition of jumping in the pool after her victory. To this day, she still credits the small greens at the Oneida Community Golf Course for her excellent short game and precision putting.

Congratulations Debbie on a fabulous honor!



Kenwood Suffrage Club, 1917

Seeking Information on Female Descendants of the OC

The Oneida Community Mansion House is embarking on a new research project that centers the stories of women who have descended from the Oneida Community family tree. We are aiming to create an archive of stories, photos, and objects that chronicle female descendants. If you have any information, objects, or photos that might be of interest to this project please contact Director of Museum Affairs Tom Guiler (tguiler@oneidacommunity.org).



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 2
Sherrill, NY
13461

Forwarding Service Requested