Thelma Rogers Genealogical and Historical Society/ Nathaniel Dike Museum

June 7 - at 7 PM in the Nancy Howe Auditorium - Craig Braack will speak on “Women In The Civil War.” Vital home life during the war is explored as well as the important roles played by women on the battlefields.

June 24 - The Museum will open from 10 to 2 for Alumni Weekend.

Aug - Picnic at Island Park 6 PM to ? - bring a dish to pass. Day to be determined

And we are OPENED on Wednesday afternoons again. May 3rd, our first Wednesday open was a snoozer, but on May 10th BAM! It was a busy day. And it was good to be busy! On that day, Linda Gridley came to volunteer, it was so busy, I hope we did not scare her away! Seriously, she dove in and helped big time! I hope some more volunteers will step up to help one or two Wednesdays a month.

At our last meeting on April 5, Jim Ball spoke about surveying and how the equipment he uses has changed over the years. An interesting talk, and we thank you Jim.

Our next meeting will be at the Nancy Howe Auditorium where Craig Braack will speak on Women in the Civil War. Craig considers this a prelude to our Allegany County History Awareness Week in September, which will focus on Allegany County and the Civil War. Craig has been very involved in the planning of this event.

In April, we received ten boxes of files from the David A Howe Library to blend into our collection. While much of the information has already been filed away, we still have about three boxes to sort through and decide where it best belongs.

Researcher Susan Coyle Mayne visited on Saturday April 29, to explore our files for her Coyle and Byrnes connections. She was in the village visiting her parents.

Carrie Bergquist from Washington State was also a Saturday visitor, researching her Cartwright family across New York state.

Verna Willis, with her daughter Lisa and grand daughter Jasmine visited on May 10th, checking our files for family information they might not have. They have deep roots in Allegany County.

The Cronin/Crittenden family also visited on May 10th and had fun in our files.

Several months ago, maybe even longer than a year ago, Bill Howden asked me if I could look for a photo of his wife and children that was in the Wellsville Daily Reporter in 1963. I looked, but could not find it. Then, as is often the case, the photo Bill was looking for just popped into our hands. Jane handed me some filing for the surname files and POW - it was right on top. The photo actually appeared in the Wellsville Pennysaver. Fortunately, my brain was functioning that day, so I sent a copy off to Bill and he tells me that the photo
The Fassett Fireproof Block, or the Burrous Building has generated a lot of interest in the last few years. New York has granted money to rehabilitate the building, which we are told would cost taxpayers $750,000 to remove from our streets, and way over $1,500,000 to develop. I don’t have the answer to the question “should it stay or should it go”, and I am glad I don’t have to make that decision. What I do have is some information on why the building looks so very different from the way Isaac W Fassett and his partner Charles Simmons built it in the early 1870’s.

Back in 1871, the building looked like the sketch above - one large unified building. The 17 windows across the front of the building make it easy to use them as reference, and I have attempted to draw a diagram on the back page. My “artwork” is a guestimate of the exact locations of the storefronts, but it will work for explanation purposes.

The Fassett Fireproof Block had five or six store-
fronts or bays on the first floor, and room for business offices on the second floor and apartments on the third floor. The Fassett family sold off portions of the building over the years, and by the turn into the 20th century, their interest in the Fireproof Block was negligible. Different storefronts of the building had been purchased by business owners or investors, much like a condominium of today. The location made it an excellent place for business.

The Otis and Day hardware store occupied two entire bays of the building in 1901, from basement to roof. Their address in the 1900 Directory was 33 North Main Street, but I believe the actual address would have been 31 AND 33 North Main Street.

On June 5, 1901, a fire and explosion ripped the store apart. The following is from the June 6, 1901 Wellsville Daily Reporter:

“The scene of yesterday’s fire in the Otis & Day store presents a sorry looking wreck today. The roof and three floors having gone down with their mass of goods into the cellar, where it is piled up in a blackened mass, nothing but the side walls and the front remains standing.

The origin of the fire will probably never be known, but is believed to have been caused by spontaneous combustion in the cellar. Parties in Leo’s tailor shop adjoining detected smoke in the morning about ten o’clock, but thought it came from burning papers in the rear of the store and paid no more attention to it. Ed. Tremaine, who was in the cellar pouring some oil into a barrel in the oil room was the first to discover the fire and attempted to put it out, badly burning his left hand and arm. He was so excited that he cannot tell just where he first saw the fire, but being unable to put it out and as it was rapidly creeping toward the inflammable oil, he ran out of the cellar and gave the alarm and then went to the shed in the rear of the store where the dynamite was stored and carried out the only box there was. The explosions, of which there were two, might have been the two cans of powder which was kept in the cellarway or perhaps came from some of the oils and varnishes of which there were ten or more barrels in stock...

In spite of the 12 inch fire wall which separated the Otis & Day store from Crane’s liquor store, the fire crept through and burned the floor joist and roof in several places and it was only by the energetic work of the fireman that the flames were confined to the one building. D. B. Crane’s liquor store and the rooms above which he had just finished making extensive improvements were flooded with water and the dense black smoke ruined what the water didn’t. Crane’s loss will be $1,000 to $1,200 on which he carried $2,000 on stock and $500 on fixtures. The building is owned by Wm. E. Smith and is damaged considerably. He has $2,000 insurance on the building and $500 on fixtures.

Dr. Ellsworth’s building, which was formerly used as a bank building by Baldwin Bros, was protected by a fire wall on the side next to Otis & Day’s and also in the rear and the damage was principally from smoke and water with the exception of some damage from the fire that started up last night. The outside wall next to the lane, however, is bulged out an inch or more, probably caused by the falling floors, and the building will, no doubt have to be taken down and rebuilt. His insurance on the building was $1,000.”

The Otis & Day store was rebuilt by John Gallman, who purchased (or rented) the bays of 31-33 North Main for his wholesale grocery business. Repairs were made on the adjoining structures by various property owners/renters. The face of the structure was changed considerably by the construction of the Gallman Store.

Flash forward 22 years to January 31, 1923, and there is another collapse, this time in the store just south of Gallman, but damaging the Gallman store too.

From the Belfast Blaze of February 8, 1923 - Brick Stores Collapse

“The three story brick stores on North Main street Wellsville occupied by the Bishop & White shoe store (29 North Main) and the Wellsville Wholesale Grocery (31-33 North Main) store and flat dwellers above caved in Wednesday morning Jan 31, about 9 o’clock. The buildings and contents are a complete wreck. The dividing wall has shown signs of weakening and the occupants were apprehensive. About 9 o’clock fully thirty feet of wall on the ground floor from floor to ceiling fell, taking shelving filled with goods with it. Half an hour later the balance of the wall, the upper floors and roof of the Bishop & White building fell in with a loud crash that alarmed the entire neighborhood. An alarm brought out the entire fire department who closed the street to traffic and roped off the crowd of excited people and made ready to fight any flames that might result from so many stoves, broken gas pipes and electric light wires. Fortunately, nothing of this nature occurred and no one was injured. The property loss will run up into the thousands. The front and rear walls are still standing but could not be trusted in a new building.

The Wholesale Grocery building was owned by Otto Engelder, a member of the company, and the shoe store building was the property of Patrick Connors, who resides on the second floor. There was no insurance available for a loss of this nature, where fire and water damage are not resultant, so the loss falls heavi-
ly on the property owners. The loss is estimated to be $20,000 to $25,000.

The flats over the Gallman store were occupied by the Down sisters, George and Chester Graves, and Otis Gowdy. Over the Bishop & White store, besides the owner, Patrick Connor resided John Robinson and his son.

The cause of the disaster was poor brick used in its construction years ago. The grocery store was rebuilt by the Gallmans after the Otis & Day fire in 1901, and came out of it the best of the two.”

A later story also attributed the collapse to the owner/renter of 29 North Main lowering the floor in the building without properly supporting the walls. All of the stores had been built with a step up to gain access inside. There were no Building Inspectors during this period, owners could do as they wanted with the buildings. This floor remodel may have occurred in 1902, when Hugh Sutfin purchased the majority of the building and promised to modernize AND lower the floors.

A note in Mr. Gallman’s 1931 obituary also adds another factor for the collapse: the tons of snow which may have accumulated on the roof during the winter.

It seems evident in looking at the building today, that the front wall of the Gallman/Engelder Building was not removed as the story implies. The 1901 plate still resides on this part of the building up near the roofline.

But WAIT, its not over, two months later the cave ins continue. This is from the Andover news of April 13, 1923:

“Second Wellsville Building Goes In Heap - Ellsworth Building On Main Street Collapses

About noon Tuesday, the Ellsworth Building, which joined the Engelder (Gallman) building that collapsed a few weeks ago, went crashing into the street with practically no warning.

The property had recently been purchased by Martin Moogan Jr and a gang of from twelve to fifteen men were at work making repairs caused by the collapsing of the other building. All but three of the men, however, had left the building to go to dinner and the escape of the remainder without serious injury seems miraculous.

Albert Stadlich, who was working on a scaffold in front of the building, was carried to the ground and partially buried with the wreckage, but was quickly removed and taken to the hospital where his injuries were found to be mostly bruises and nothing serious. John Brundage was at work in the cellar, but as the biding didn’t go thru the ground floor, he was able to crawl out thru a window, and Homer Brundage, who was hanging paper in the 3rd floor, fled toward the rear of the building to safety.

The weakening of the wall from the collapse of the other building was the cause of the accident, and the event of three, three-story buildings going in a heap without a casualty list is little short of a miracle.”

Contractor/owner Martin Moogan removed the entire Ellsworth building and erected a new four story building at 35 North Main Street. This building now stands separate (we hope) from the rest of the Burrous building. (Pizza King)

A relatively new addition to the Burrous building is one half of the Pioneer Block, a two story brick building that is said to be one of the oldest commercial brick buildings in Wellsville (#23 N Main). I cannot quite pinpoint the date this was acquired, but it was occupied by businesses other than Burrous in the 1980’s.

The most current collapse came in May, 2012 in the rear of the Burrous Building, when it appears that a section of the Pioneer Block (#23) fell along with part of the elevator shaft and back wall of #25 North Main. Stabilization of this collapse and remediation on other parts of the building was carried out just a short time ago.

Well, now you have just a little history of the old Fassett Fireproof Block/Burrous Building. Will it have life after being abandoned for so long? Is it worth the investment of grant money? I don’t know those answers, and will not make a recommendation on its future. My interest lies in the history of this place, and it seems that the Fassett Fireproof Block/Burrous Building has an overwhelming amount of that!
I would like to support the preservation of our local history by becoming a member

NAME (s)   __________________________________________________________________________
ADDRESS __________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
PHONE   __________________________EMAIL ___________________________________________
Would you prefer your newsletter emailed to you?    _____ (Make sure you fill in E Mail Above)

Family membership is $15.00 per year. Individual membership is $10.00 per year.  (circle one)

I would like to add $ ______ for ongoing maintenance and restoration projects at the museum.

The society is a 501C3 organization – all donations are tax deductible.
Not being a surveyor, I can only show you the store sections as I understand them to be. It may not be exact, but it will help visualize the collapses.

The stores would have numbered left to right #25, #27, #29, #31-33 and #35.

Part of the old Pioneer Block (next south) was added in the 1980’s by Burrous Furniture. That addition added 23 North Main to the building. Part of that building is shown on the very left edge of this sketch.

#35 is now the Moogan Building. Built in 1923, it is no longer part of the Burrous Structure.