

# The Post-Journal



## Yorker Museum Maintains Sherman History



SHERMAN — It takes a village to make one.

For over eight decades, the Yorker Museum of the Sherman Historical Society has been maintaining artifacts of all shapes and sizes. However, while the collection is quite expansive, organizing and adding to the property has been even more extensive. Each of the buildings date back to the 1750s. The buildings on the complex include a general store, chapel,

gazebo, schoolhouse, frame home originally in the village, log cabin, buggy shed and a meeting house.

Located at the corner of Park and Church streets in Sherman, the complex itself is also just as historical as the artifacts it contains. It was started as a museum by a Sherman Central School teacher and five of her female students in the 1946-47 school season. The teacher who oversaw the project was Miss Genevive Matteson. The group would go on to form a club called the French Creek Yorkers. While the Yorkers ceased to exist in 1998, the complex was donated to the village by Matteson (now Genevive Larson). To this end, the village owns the property and lets volunteers maintain the buildings.

In 2000, a group of students and another teacher, Janet Heslink from Sherman Central School, took interest in the property and maintained it. In 2011, the Sherman Historical Society took control of the buildings on the property and continues to maintain it.

At the time of the Yorkers organization, it was part of the New York State Historical Association. As such, the organization retained its headquarters in Cooperstown, N.Y. At its peak, the organization had 276 students. Counting the adults who oversaw the group, there were more than 1,000 members involved during the same time. The original focus of the organization was colonial memorabilia.



The Yorker Museum in Sherman contains six buildings with artifacts from the 1800s.

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The collection has since grown to include vintage farm equipment, tools, dishes, pianos, furniture and other items from the late 19th century.

*“This was all one teacher and her students,”* Yorker volunteer Pam Warner said. *“It started with five kids. Into the ’80s there were kids in this club.”*

To this end, the members began acquiring collections from local families and friends and storing the items in an empty room in the school.

Today, the organization oversees most of the collection that originally was displayed.

*“It has everything a person from the 1800s could want,”* Warner said.

During this time, Matteson also married local farmer Ray Larson. Both would donate their time and energy to the oversight of the museum.

In 1949, the Yorkers were given permission to use the Sherman Village Common. In addition to being a former location of the Underground

Railroad and the organization's home for the next seven decades, the property had originally been the home of the Sherman Presbyterian Church and later Memorial Hall.

In 1950, the first building was added to the complex. It was a home that was moved two city blocks away from its original location and placed onto the Common property. It had previously stood on the property that is the current location for St. Issac Jougues Catholic Church on Miller Street.

In 1971, Larson donated a small building to the organization. This building was originally used by Larson as storage to a chicken house on his farm at 192 Park St. It was repurposed as a display area and now houses a variety of antique items to give the appearance of a general store from the 1900s. By irony, the building was later used by Larson to store antiques. It is now called the "*Ray Larson General Store*" in Larson's honor.

Because of the number of buildings on the complex, volunteers select buildings for maintenance.

*"We pick a building and clean from top to bottom,"* Warner said.  
*"Maintenance is an issue we have faced constantly."*

One problem that also needs to be overseen every year is treating the buildings for protection from Powderpost beetles. The insects can burrow into wood and leave behind sawdust that is the consistency of flour, according to Penn State University. At the museum, the insects have been known to frequent the Log Cabin in particular.

The group is currently looking replace the foundation of the chapel and replace some of the logs in the cabin.

To learn more about the Yorker Museum, contact Warner at 761-4692 or Roberta Tenpas at 761-6659. The Sherman Historical Society can also be found on Facebook.

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