

## Dates in YCGHS History

- 1779 Sullivan-Clinton expedition into the Finger Lakes
- 1788 Area Settled by followers of Jemima Wilkinson and former Revolutionary War soldiers
- 1823 Yates County established from Ontario County
- 1826 Yates County boundaries altered by adding Barrington and Starkey
- 1835 First steamboat "The Keuka" launched
- 1840 Starkey Seminary organized
- 1852 Oliver House built by Dr. Andrew F. Oliver
- 1860 Yates County Historical Society formed
- 1887 Pioneer Historical Society of Yates County formed
- 1907 Soldier's Monument dedicated in Court House Park
- 1924 Soldiers and Sailors Hospital started
- 1927 Yates County Historical Society reactivated
- 1929 New charter issued to the Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society
- 1930 YCGHS opens museum in a basement room at Penn Yan Public Library. People were encouraged to donate or loan "articles of historic value for safekeeping"
- 1942 The Oliver House is left to the Village of Penn Yan by Carrie Oliver's will
- 1946 The Historical Society collection moved from the Penn Yan Library to the Oliver House
- 1948 Yates County Historical Society opens the Oliver House to the public as a museum
- 1962 Village of Penn Yan grants permission for YCGHS to use wall space and to place cabinets along walls in the halls and both front parlors of Oliver House
- 1967 The Penn Yan Fire House erected in 1887-88 burned completely with loss of all equipment
- 1974 First Mennonite farm established in Yates County
- 1988 First paid, full time YCGHS director hired
- 1989 Arnold James Brown Potter Award created
- 2004 Grand opening of the L. Caroline Underwood Museum and Research Center
- 2004 Jemima Wilkinson's Coachee returned to YCGHS
- 2010 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Historical Society

# YATES COUNTY GENEALOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION 1860 — 2010



### The Jemima Wilkinson Coachee

The Coachee in 2008 as it was returned to YCGHS following structural repairs and stabilization by a Philadelphia firm specializing in this type of antique restoration



Yates County Genealogical & Historical Society

107 Chapel St., Penn Yan, NY 14527

315-536-7318 [www.yatespast.org](http://www.yatespast.org)

Open Tues.—Fri. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday by Appointment

## 2010 Officers of the Society

Martha Harris	President
Bruce Warfield	Vice President
Donna Copson	Treasurer
Ellen Chirco	Secretary

## Board of Directors

Philip Bailey	Donald Clarke	James Hilton
Stephen C. Knapp	Rich MacAlpine	Sidney Mann
Sandra Miller	James Rice	Anne Salisbury
Ellen Stork	Annette Toaspern	

## Staff

John H. Potter	Executive Director
Charles Mitchell	Curator
Greta Mickey	Administrative Assistant
Jan Hafner	Bookkeeper

## Volunteers

Donna Alexander	Bill Bailey	Larry Brown
Pam Brown	Kathy Bulman	Mary Collins
Betty Donahoe	Susan Franks	Barb Gefell
Judy Hale	Laurie Hey	Carolyn Hopkins
Melissa Mitchell	Susan Oliver	Devie Russell
Katie Tomlinson	Virginia Wagner	Betsy Warfield
Kathy Waye	Judith Wilbert	

Elder Russell and Sister Joan Gray guided the digitization project of the Swann Collection for eighteen months as missionaries from Utah for the Church of Latter Day Saints in 2008-2009

## Arnold James Brown Potter Award

The Arnold James Brown Potter Award was established in 1989. It is given annually in recognition of a person or organization who has performed exemplary work in advancing the understanding of Yates County History and fostering pride in the Yates County community. A committee is named by the YCGHS board of directors to make this determination. The award is presented at the YCGHS annual meeting. Arnold James Brown Potter, son of Edson and Elizabeth F. (Brown) Potter, was the oldest of three children. He attended schools in Penn Yan and graduated from Cornell Law College in 1904 when he was admitted to the Bar. He served the Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society as Curator until his death in 1951. James Brown Potter, Arnold J.B. Potter's Grandfather, first came to this area as a follower of Jemima Wilkinson, the Publick Universal Friend. James B. Potter was a trusted member of the Friend's community and served as Steward to Jemima Wilkinson for fifty years.

## Recipients of the Arnold J.B. Potter Award

1989 - Middlesex Heritage Group	2000 - Wilfred Knapp
1990 - Virginia H. Gibbs	2001 - Ruth Bay Clark
1991 - Grace Campbell Johnson	2002 - Friends of the Outlet
1992 - Frances Dumas	2003 - Richard & Denise Christensen
1993 - Catherine Spencer	2004 - Martha Harris
1994 - John Creamer	2005 - Robert Evans
1995 - Virginia Gibbs	2006 - Phillip Bailey
1996 - Rena Florence	2007 - Pam Miller
1997 - Jane Davis	2008 - Rushville History Group
1998 - Betty Smalley	2009 - Richard MacAlpine
1999 - Clarence Sebring	

## YCGHS Business Members:

with appreciation for your support

Allison & Daniels, Inc.  
Barrington Cellars  
Birkett Mills  
Black Oak Wool Co.  
Carey's Lumber & Building  
Coach & Equipment  
Douglas B. Miles Agency  
Dudley Poultry Co. Inc.  
Five Star Bank  
The Fox Inn Bed & Breakfast

Goodrich Smith VFW Post 8649  
Keuka College  
Knapp & Schlappi Lumber Co.  
Longs' Cards & Books  
Lyons National Bank  
Main Street Family Health  
Marble's Glass & Automotive  
Penn Yan Diner  
Stork Insurance Agency  
Trimmer House Bed & Breakfast

## Jemima Wilkinson's Coachee

In 1790 Jemima Wilkinson and about 300 of her followers came to the wilderness that would become Yates County. Her belongings were transported in a wagon built in or around Philadelphia, PA in 1790. The carriage got little use in this area due to the lack of roads and because Jemima, an accomplished horsewoman, preferred to ride horseback. As Jemima grew older she needed a carriage for travel. In 1810 her wagon was sent to Canandaigua to be fitted with a proper carriage body for the Friend's travels.

After the Friend's death in 1819, the coachee passed through the hands of several of her followers until it was purchased at auction by Sheriff William T. Reemer. The coachee was displayed for many years at the Granger Homestead Carriage Museum in Canandaigua until, in 2004 it was donated back to Yates County. The coachee that belonged to Jemima Wilkinson is one of only five such carriages known to exist today.



*Jemima Wilkinson's Coachee*

Professional stabilization, the beginning of the conservation process, was completed in 2008. Plans are underway to convert the Underwood Museum garage to a new exhibition carriage house for the coachee and other large items in our collections that are not now on public display. Contributions to this project are gratefully accepted!

## Yates County Genealogical & Historical Society Sesquicentennial Events

### May 19th History Luncheon

Dick Eisenhart presents "Yates County Through the Eyes of a Photojournalist" at the Lakeside Country Club.

### May 29th Chicken Barbeque—Lyons Bank

Delicious barbequed chicken with a full complement of sides and brownies

### June 19th Underground Railroad presentation

Join us for an exciting and informative talk on the Underground Railroad by Seneca County Historian Walter Gable, M Ed, M.S., with glimpses of Penn Yan's history on this exciting topic from Penn Yan resident Rose II Freedom. Walter Gable is an expert on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionism. The event will take place at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Penn Yan featuring live music of the civil war era and followed by a reception.

### July 2nd Yard Sale

The YCGHS family invites you to our annual Yard Sale! Come peruse and purchase from our eclectic collection of new and used goods priced to sell. Donations welcome with pick-up available for large items.

### July 10th 148th NY Volunteer Infantry encampment

In the reenactment community, the 148th New York Volunteers are considered veterans. Established in 1962, the 148th is the oldest Civil War reenactment organization in New York State. Even though the organization is built on a military impression, families participate in the recreation of a time in American history when everyone was touched by the events, not just the soldiers. Our day will include a touch of levity with a chance to play the games of the day. Try your hand at horseshoes or sack races. Period refreshments will be served.

### July 24th Steamboat Era Cruise on Keuka Lake

Two plus delightful hours on the lake. Expert narrative of the lore of the lake and local sights. Light refreshments will be served on board.

### Nov. 18th Annual Meeting & Dinner



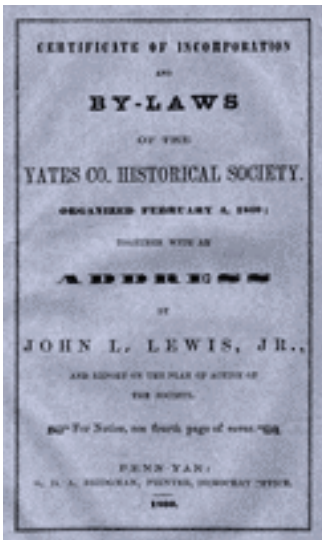
## A History of YCGHS

The Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society is the fourth oldest county historical society in the state of New York and 2010 marks our 150th Anniversary. The fact that we are still here 150 years later and as strong and influential an organization as we are today, is surely a testament to the foresight of the handful of Yates County men who met in Penn Yan on the eve of the Civil War with the goal of preserving our county's history.

In January 10, 1860, an announcement appeared in the local newspaper which read as follows: "*A meeting of those who were settlers of the territory embraced in Yates County prior to its establishment, February 5, 1823, and their descendants, will be held at the office of John L. Lewis, Jr., in Penn Yan, on Saturday, January 21, 1860, at one o'clock in the afternoon, for the purpose of adopting measures to form a County Historical Society, for the collection of the memorials of the early settlement of the towns in the county and of the early settlers, and other kindred facts connected with the history of the county.*"

The meeting was held and Russell A. Hunt was chosen chairman and John L. Lewis, Jr., secretary. A resolution was offered by William M. Oliver and unanimously adopted, as follows:

*"Resolved, That it is expedient to organize and form a County Historical Society for the purpose of collecting and preserving the memorials of the early settlement of the county and of the early settlers and all other facts connected with the history of the county, including Indian antiquity and history, and that the necessary measures be taken for that purpose."* On motion of John L. Lewis, Jr. a committee was chosen to report articles of association for the purpose of incorporating the society under the general corporation law. The committee consisted of John L. Lewis, Jr., William S. Briggs, and M. H. Lawrence.



*Original Historical Society Charter*

On March 1, 1860 Stafford C. Cleveland published on the front page of the *Yates County Chronicle* the contents of the certificate of incorporation of the Yates County Historical Society. A group of thirty-two men had appeared before the Honorable John L. Lewis, Jr. and signed the certificate on the

## Jemima Wilkinson

Jemima Wilkinson, better known as the "Publick Universal Friend", is historically renowned in both Yates County and nationally.



*Jemima Wilkinson*

Locally, Jemima and her group of followers, the *Society of Universal Friends*, formed the first white settlement in what is presently Yates County. Consisting of almost 300 members in 1790, this community was the largest of its kind this far west in New York State. Nationally, Jemima was the first American born woman to form a religious society.

The eighth of twelve children, Jemima was born to Jeremiah Wilkinson and Amey Elizabeth Whipple Wilkinson on November 29, 1752. At the age of twenty-four Jemima fell mortally ill and experienced a period of unconsciousness. As she recovered she spoke of a vision experienced during her illness which directed her to "preach to a dying and sinful world". She announced that, during her illness she had died and that her body now housed the spirit of the "Publick Universal Friend." Jemima began preaching in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. She attracted members to her society with her strong, charismatic speaking ability. Jemima's preaching was strongly influenced by her 4th generation Quaker roots as well as her association with the New Light Baptists and the English Evangelist, George Whitfield.

In 1790 she and the bulk of her followers traveled from Rhode Island to the knoll overlooking Keuka Lake outlet and established a colony known as City Hill. Later the Friend and her followers moved to what is now known as the Town of Jerusalem where her followers built a large house in 1814 that still exists today as a private residence. The Friend lived there until 1819 when she "left time." Many of the descendants of the Friend's Society remain in this area today.

YCGHS is the main repository for the objects and documents which belonged to Jemima Wilkinson and her society.

## The L. Caroline Underwood Museum

L. Caroline Underwood was a dedicated teacher for 50 years, 47 of which were spent teaching in the Penn Yan school district.



Caroline Underwood

left the majority of her estate to establish the L. Caroline Underwood Museum to provide for the preservation of her favorite collection pieces for posterity. The building shown above was purchased with funds from Caroline's generous bequest. It is now operated as a museum in partnership with the Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society and the L. Caroline Underwood Trust.

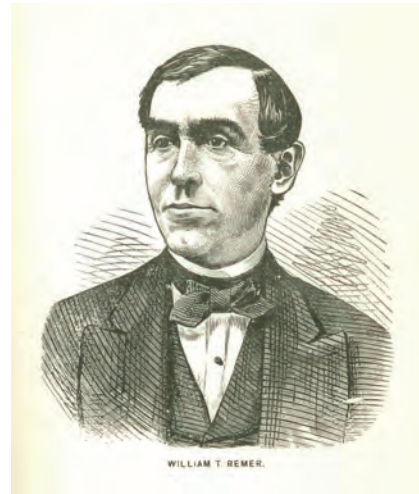
The museum is open year-round with both a permanent exhibit of items from Miss Underwood's bequest and changing exhibits showcasing the Society's collections. It is the home of the Catherine A. Spencer Research Center which contains genealogical information, publications and collected information on topics in Yates County's history. Among the research center's holdings are period maps, area census indexes, cemetery records, Penn Yan Directories and much more. The Frank Swann Archives contain the museum's documentary artifacts.

Effective January 1, 2010, research conducted by museum staff may be provided at a cost of \$20.00 per hour with a two hour minimum. Inquiries are accepted by either e-mail or mail. Non-members pay a small fee for in-house research. This fee helps support the preservation and maintenance of the research facilities. Researchers are welcome during our normal business hours, Tuesday—Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

fourth day of February 1860. These men were from the Towns of Milo, Benton, Jerusalem, Middlesex and Potter. A copy is on file in our archives.

Soon the purpose of the Society was refined. At the Annual Meeting of the Yates County Historical Society held on February 27, 1869 at the office of John L. Lewis, Corresponding and Recording Secretary, David Buel was elected President. William T. Remer was elected treasurer and the following Special and Standing Committees were appointed: To Report names of first settlers of the County, History of Land Titles, Indian History and Antiquities, History of Friends Society, On Civil History, On History of Churches, History of Benevolent Societies, History of Schools, etc., History of

Public Works, History of Manners and Customs, Natural History and Topography, History of Military and Public Defense, and History of Newspaper Press.



*William T. Reemer  
Early Historical Society Officer*

In April of 1869, David H. Buel exhibited a number of interesting relics. Among them was a Hessian soup dish and meat fork, picked up on the grounds of Burgoyne's Camp at Saratoga. There was also a ruler that Mr. Buel had used from his youth made from a piece of an Indian bark canoe found among the spoils of Burgoyne's Camp. Mr. Buel's father was a soldier of the Revolution and came by

these things by being one of the actors in the struggle.

Evidence of activity of the Society becomes scant until the twentieth century. In December of 1915, the *Yates County Chronicle* ran an editorial titled "Why Not A Historical Society?" In it the Editor wrote "*Yates County is full of historic relics which should be preserved. There are articles innumerable scattered throughout the community which are associated with the early history of the county and which would make an invaluable collection if they were brought together. With no one to look after them and with no central place to keep them, they will be lost in a few years and never can be regained. If we had a Historical Society in the county it would be an easy matter to take some steps in regard to this matter.*"

*Certainly a community which is as rich in historical setting and has such an intensely interesting past has need of some organization which will perpetuate the memory of those who have wrought here from our earliest settlements as well as those who have kept the fire of local enthusiasm burning. We are inclined to think there was a local Historical Society to the county and that the late John L. Lewis was the custodian of some of the records. He was always interested in the subject and gave much time and attention to it. But if there ever was a society of that kind, and we have no doubt there are many who can inform us on this subject, it has fallen into innocuous desuetude and gone out of existence. Let us have a Yates County Historical Society. By honoring the past, we show ourselves worthy of the future.”*

Apparently the interest and leadership weren't there yet. The First World War and the economic hard times that followed put the idea of a historical society back on the shelf. In August of 1926 the Editor of the **Penn Yan Democrat** picked up the question “What Do You Think of Organizing a Historical Society in Yates County?”. In an article on the front page of his paper he wrote “*More history of importance has been made in “Little Yates” than in many counties of much larger expanse and population, yet this county has not had a historical society in several years. The Ontario County Historical Society and other museums throughout the state are seeking and have already secured some of the valuable relics and records of Yates County. For example, Mrs. G. H. Remer of Penn Yan owns the carriage used by Jemima Wilkinson. It is now stored in a barn and might easily be destroyed by fire. Mrs. Remer has offered this to Keuka College, but this institution has not proper facilities for storing it. The Ontario County Society at Canandaigua has asked for it. This is but an illustration since there are many Indian relics and valuable old records which would immediately be placed at the disposal of a Yates County Historical Society should such an organization be formed. Some such articles are already housed in the Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hospital waiting for a more suitable place in which they will be accessible to the public.”*

At the end of his article, the Editor listed twenty-eight men and women in the community who expressed an interest in local history and could very well form the core of leadership to get an organization started. Among them were several prominent business leaders, a few lawyers, and Carrie and Jennie Oliver. A movement did not begin immediately. In November of 1927 a meeting was held in the Village Building on Maiden Lane for those that were interested in forming a society, but seven months later there was a letter to the editor of the **Penn Yan Democrat** written by “Inquisitive” that asked “*What has become of the historical society? A few months ago I read in your paper that the society had reorganized and was trying to secure a home. For the past several months I have heard nothing more of it. Has it died again?*”

## The Oliver House Museum



Located at the corner of Main and Chapel Streets in Penn Yan the Oliver house was given to the Village of Penn Yan by Miss Carrie Oliver in 1942 to be used as a community house, a public library and reading room and a museum for preserving

and exhibiting objects of historical interest and for such other purposes of education, diffusion of knowledge and recreation as the Trustees of the village shall deem proper. The house was built in 1852 on the site of the old Hoyt Tavern. Three generations of the family practiced medicine from a small building adjacent to the house.

In 1948 the house was opened to the public as a museum and over the years has had several different organizations use it's space to meet the requirements of Miss Oliver. It is currently operated as a museum by the Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society. It is one of the finest examples of an 1850's home in the Finger Lakes.

Today, the Oliver House Museum boasts a collection of many thousands of objects and provides changing exhibits of Yates County history with personal and self-guided tours. This Victorian era home boasts fifteen rooms, three fireplaces, several portraits of early occupants and period furniture. Two of the rooms on the first floor house a fascinating exhibit about Jemima Wilkinson, the “Publick Universal Friend”. Our Native American room, filled with many one of a kind artifacts, is housed on the second floor.



## Presidents of the YCGHS Board of Directors

1860 - Samuel G. Gage	1975-80 - Virginia Gibbs
1866 - Israel Comstock	1984 - Sally Mauerman
1869 - David H. Buell	1988-99 - Thomas Waye
1884 - Stafford C. Cleveland	1990 - Anne Schwarting
1887 - Hon. Hanford Struble	1991 - Anne Schwarting
1927 - Edwin J. Walker, Jr.	1992 - Bruce Westerdahl
1929-31 - Herbert D. Winters	1993 - Sue Walker
1937-39 - Herbert D. Winters	1994 -95 Lynne Montgomery
1939 - Rev. John H. Perkins	1996 -97 Virginia Gibbs
1948-50 - Mrs. Ralph Norris	1998 - Vera Van Atta
1951 - Rutherford B. Otis	1999 - Keith Champlin
1951-52 - Mrs. Stephen Whitaker	2000 - Linda Jackson
1954 - Mrs. Fred Guyle	2001-03 - Martha Harris
1955-57 - Lyman H. Smith	2004-05 Steve Knapp
1959-62 - Jay Barnes	2006 - Bruce Henry
1963-64 - Frank L. Swann	2007-09 Bruce A. Warfield
1972 - Frank L. Swann	2010 - Martha Harris

## Executive Directors of YCGHS

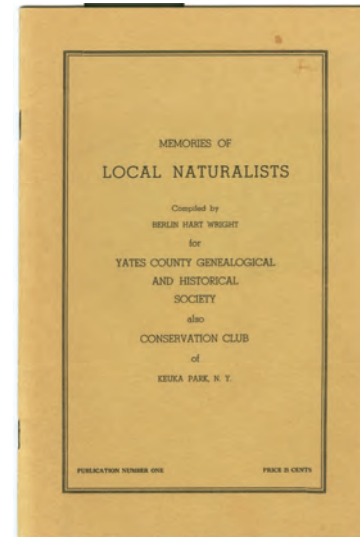
1976-77 - Margaret Kennedy  
 1977 - Virginia Gibbs  
 1988-90 - Patricia Robak \*  
 1991-93 - Marion Balyszak  
 1994 - Marsha Devine  
 1995-96 - John Mahaffy  
 1997-2006 - Idelle Dillon  
 2007-present - John H. Potter

\* First director paid by YCGHS

In 1928 an organization finally started to materialize under the leadership of Arthur L. Bailey, the chairman of a group that wrote up by-laws and applied for a charter from the State of New York. The charter was granted early in 1929 as the Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc. Officers were elected and memberships were accepted. Of the fifty or so original members, the only one who was also a member of the older 1860 organization was Walter Wolcott. An article in the *Chronicle Express* that reported on one of the early meetings stated "It was reported that there are a number of articles of historical value in the Penn Yan Public Library. The table that was in the possession of the Franklin family, now upwards of 200 years old, is understood to be available. The clock that was in the old Jemima Wilkinson home, "The Friend Place", has been purchased by interested parties and will be available when a satisfactory place to exhibit it has been secured. A fireproof room in Keuka College has been offered for the housing of such relics until such time as a more permanent place is secured."

In 1929 an additional charter was issued under the name of the Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc. This is the charter under which we operate today. In October, 1929 officers and board members were elected. They were:

President:	Professor Herbert D. Winters
Executive Vice President:	Rev. John Howard Perkins
Vice Presidents:	Verdi Burtch, Mrs. Leon Razey, Howard L. Woodruff
	Secretary: Parmele Johnson
	Treasurer: Oliver E. Ketcham
	Members of the Board of Directors: Herbert D. Winters, E. J. Walker, Mrs. Jessie Bordwell, Arnold J. Potter, Arthur Bailey



*A first edition copy of The Naturalist published in 1930*

An attempt was made to have representation from each of the towns within the county. It was reported that there were approximately fifty members of the society at that time.

A year later the society produced its first publication for sale entitled *Memories of Local Naturalists* compiled by Berlin Hart Wright in conjunction with the Conservation Club of Keuka Park, NY.



*Carrie Oliver*

In 1942 Carrie Oliver, an early member of the Society and last in a long line of Penn Yan Olivers died leaving the Oliver family's Main Street home along with its contents to the Village of Penn Yan. In 1946 the Village of Penn Yan turned over four rooms in the Oliver House to YCGHS for use as a museum. The Society officially opened the doors of their museum in July of 1948. In 1975 the Oliver House Museum underwent a program of restoration and re-opened its doors to the public on May 3<sup>rd</sup> of that year. Since that time the museum has remained open to the public with ever

expanding collections and exhibits.

L. Caroline Underwood was a lifelong resident of Yates County and a dedicated teacher, traveler, avid collector and a passionate supporter of local history. Upon her death in 1998 Caroline willed her family home on Liberty Street in the Village of Penn Yan to the Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc. to be maintained as a museum. When that home fell victim to the expansion of the county's offices, her estate purchased 107 Chapel Street to house her museum. In 2004 the property at 107 Chapel Street, adjacent to the Oliver House Museum, was dedicated as the L. Caroline Underwood Museum. The estate, under the name of the L. Caroline Underwood Trust entered into an agreement with the Historical Society to oversee the collection. The Society maintains forty-four items that Caroline especially wanted to share with the public on permanent display. Many of her vast collections, including travel souvenirs, match boxes, swizzle sticks, ceramic pigs, to name a few are displayed as well.



*L. Caroline Underwood*

The offices of our Curator are located in the Oliver House. The administrative offices, the Catharine A. Spencer Research Center and the Frank L. Swann Archives are located in the Underwood Museum. Both the Spencer Research Center and the Swann Archives were dedicated on February 4, 1990. The Research

Center contains genealogical information, publications, and collected information on topics regarding Yates County's History. The Archives contain the museum's documentary artifacts.

## Our Vision

The Yates County Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc. inspires community memory on both personal and scholarly levels by preserving and sharing the story of Yates County through interactive and engaging programs and services.

## Our Mission

To increase knowledge and understanding of the history of Yates County in order to promote better understanding of our county for present and future generations.

## Today's Society

Today YCGHS is a vibrant network of members, staff, and volunteers. Together we work to create a welcoming atmosphere within our museums and research facility where Yates County history and genealogies can be explored. Our annual Steam Boat Era Cruise and Grape History Train Ride provide experiential and fun historical insights. The History Luncheon Series bring to light often overlooked subjects of interest. We work with our school districts to provide educational experiences for our children in a museum setting, educating future generations of museum goers and supporters. Our newsletter has a broad national reach and covers not only the news of the Society but many interesting and thought provoking historical topics. Our annual yard sale is always a great way of inviting our community in as we raise funds to maintain our history for posterity. We hope that you, too, will consider becoming an active participant and member of YCGHS! Your Society is moving forward as it preserves the past!