

2014

Weather

An “old-fashioned winter” indeed! We suffered through the coldest winter in years, day after day of frigid, below normal temperatures. We were introduced to “the polar vortex” a new term in winter suffering as bitter icy air enveloped us in sub-freezing temperatures. The Great Lakes had the greatest ice coverage in two decades, more that 77 % of the lake’s water was covered with ice by the end of February.

People were so happy to shed their jackets and open windows in mid April when temperatures improved and reached the 60’s to the delight of all. Summer was pleasant but cooler than usual. Temperatures in July were a little more than 2 degrees below average, the first time since 2009 that the mercury failed to hit the 90 degree mark. Fall was delightful and we were thankful to escape Buffalo’s spectacular “Snowvember” event. We had a “green’ Christmas.

Journal-Register

2014 will be remembered as The Year that the Journal-Register Ceased Publication. For 113 years, this fine local paper delivered news, advertised events and job listings, printed obituaries, and provided a forum for open discussion. The final issue which was printed on Friday, May 30 contained reflections from readers, current and former staff. In the ensuing months, dismay at the demise of the Journal was a constant refrain. Increasingly, the online Hub has become the source for local information. However, not all residents have online access, and many older residents are not technologically adept. The Batavia Daily News has seen local circulation increase, but that publication covers three counties. Local newspapers are invaluable, a unique treasure trove of information for residents and researchers alike.

Dissolution

The topic of Dissolution dominated political discussion locally throughout the year. Proponents point out the duplication of services and propose that the elimination of a layer of government can only be fiscally wise. A public

meeting was held on May 7 at Wise Middle School and a public vote on the issue was scheduled for Jan. 20, 2015 as a result of a citizen's petition signed by village residents. Originally proposed as a tax-saving opportunity for Village residents, Dissolution soon became quite a contentious issue indeed when the Boards of the Towns of Ridgeway and Shelby pointed out that taxes would rise for town residents and questioned the proposed savings. They also made it clear that they would not absorb the costs of providing village services. Many town residents are dismayed that they are not allowed to vote on the issue but could be impacted financially should the ballot pass.

Business

It was a busy year for Brunner International. In February, it announced a \$15 million expansion to its Bates Road manufacturing plant. The new building is to be located on the south end of the plant and is expected to provide 35-40 new jobs in the production of machined axe forgings which are used by heavy-duty trucks and trailers. The Canadian based company selected the Medina location for its expansion which began in April. Costs for the 48,000 square foot facility qualified for up to \$750,000 in Excelsior Jobs Program tax credits. The project was awarded a 2,400 kW low-cost hydropower allocation from the New York Power Authority Board. The Orleans County Legislature offered their backing to a 13m tax-exempt bond sought by Brunner. In recognition of its commitment to the area, Brunner was recognized as "Business of the Year" by the Orleans County Chamber of Commerce in September.

Worthington Industries (formerly Bernz-O-Matic) shut down their Medina plant on July 31 and shifted production to a site in Wisconsin. The plant manufactured torches and employed 152 people. Bernz-O-Matic which operated in Medina since 1969 was bought by Worthington in 2011.

Helena Chemical proposed a move from its Albion location to a larger site on Allis Road, south of Rt. 31. The company which distributes chemicals, seeds and other products for the agricultural industry plans to put in a railroad siding and construct six buildings totaling approx. 75,000 square feet.

Two new businesses opened on Rt. 104. The aptly named Rt. 104 Redemption Center is located on the southwest corner of Rt. 63 and Rt. 104. The facility which collects bottles and cans for recycling is owned by Shawn Callard.

A house, barn and silo located on the northeast corner of Routes 104 and 63 were demolished in the spring to make way for the new 9,100 square foot Dollar General store which opened in October. The site includes 30 parking spaces and one hitching post for buggies. Open seven days a week, it employs 7-9 people.

Entrepreneurial projects abounded:

In March, ellen j goods opened at 433 Main St. Owned by Lynne & JR Brundage, the store sells re-purposed items that the couple have and re-vitalized as treasures.

A unique undertaking, 810 Meadworks opened in December at 113 West Center St., the former barbershop in the Robert H. Newell building. Owned by Bryan and Larissa DeGraw and Morris Babcock, 810 Meadworks will produce and sell meads, which are alcoholic drinks made from fermenting honey with water, spices, grains, and fruit.

Another sweet spot opened in September. Maggie Moos is an old fashioned ice cream parlor located at 114 East Center St., in the former 31 Club. Owned by Kathy Blackburn, this charming location features servers wearing poodle skirts, and 50's music in the background.

All Yoga Medina opened a studio at 105 Pearl Street in October. Three yoga instructors: Deb Roberts, Julie Tette and Katie Hartway offer a variety of different classes to suit different needs.

A feasibility study proposed that the area could support a hotel. The Medina Business Park was first mentioned as an optimal location. Joe Cardone proposed that the Fuller Block and Medina Theater area in downtown Medina could be redeveloped to accommodate a hotel and conference center.

Water Districts

In February, the Town of Ridgeway officially created Water District 13 to serve 30 homes on Bates Road north of Portage Road and a portion of East Scott Road. The total cost is estimated at \$800,000. The town will pay \$390,000 and the remainder will come from a US Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development grant.

Federal funding for District 12 which covers portions of Angling, Ramshaw and Bates Roads was approved in April. District 12 received a \$445,000 grant and a low-interest loan for \$405,000 from a USDA Rural Development grant. It serves 31 residences and one commercial property.

Hospital

Orleans Community Health announced an affiliation agreement with Catholic Health in the spring in order to provide patients at Medina Memorial Hospital with better access to medical resources. In October plans were announced to convert the hospital from a general purpose hospital to a Critical Access Hospital thereby making it eligible for additional state funding as well as cost-based reimbursement from Medicare. As part of the re-structuring, the pediatric department was decertified and the number of beds was reduced to 25.

Improvements

A YMCA renovation project reconfigured the interior of the building. The two main courts were shifted to the north to accommodate a more accessible entrance lobby and the floors were refinished. In the spring a ramp entrance was added to the new atrium.

In March, the Medina Façade Grant Program announced that 25 projects covering residences and downtown businesses would split \$200,000 for exterior building repair improvements such as siding and painting, façade repairs and historic restoration. Started in 2013 in an effort to improve the appearance of buildings, boost local pride and impress prospective buyers,

this privately funded program awards up to \$20,000 in 50/50 matching funds. 20 projects were funded in 2013.

Stabilization work continued on Bent's Opera House where the southeast corner was the immediate concern.

Environmental liabilities which have delayed the sale of 331 and 333 North Main St. may soon be addressed. A new study estimated costs at \$177,000. The Village will pursue grant funding. The buildings have been vacant for many years.

As part of a corporate branding strategy, the façade of the Hartway Motors building at 320 North Main St. was redesigned to reflect its Chevrolet affiliation. A classic example of the Streamline Moderne style, the building is listed on the state and national registries of historic places

Historic Sites

In October, the significance of the New York State Barge Canal as an historic transportation icon was recognized when the National Park Service announced that the Barge Canal was now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Several of the contributing structures and buildings are located in the Town of Ridgeway: Knowlesville Lift Bridge, Knowlesville Terminal, Culvert Road, Beals Road Bridge, Bates Road Bridge, Guard Gate, Pleasant St. /Horan Road Bridge, Oak Orchard Creek Aqueduct, Medina Terminal, Glenwood Ave. Bridge, Route 63 Lift Bridge, Marshall Road Bridge and Guard gate near Middleport.

The Medina Village Board approved landmark status for St. John's Episcopal Church in December. Built with Medina sandstone, the church which opened in 1832 is Orleans County's oldest remaining church.

Also in December, the State Parks Dept. nominated Boxwood Cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places. Dating to 1849, this impressive 20 acre cemetery is the final resting place for 5,000 people, many of whom were prominent locally.

Official recognition as Historic Sites will provide these local treasures with improved access to grants and preservation funding.

People

Town Clerk, Barbara Klatt reports 1 birth, 7 deaths and 36 marriages for 2014.

On January 17, Flora Posson celebrated her 100th birthday at her home on West Center St.

Marcia Tuohey died on August 7 at the age of 84. She was the first female Mayor of the Village of Medina in 1982. In 1990, she became Orleans County's first female legislator; she served as Chairman of the Legislature from 1996 to 2006.

Local attorney and real-estate owner Vincent D. Cardone died on August 23, 2014 at the age of 93.

Town of Ridgeway Justice Lawrence Sanderson retired after 23 years of service in November. Former Medina police lieutenant Joseph Kujawa was sworn in as his replacement on December 4.

Good Health and Good Fortune to all in 2015

Catherine Cooper
Historian