

MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



June 2026



MCHS invites you to meet our staff

Meet our dedicated staff. Office Assistant Sammi Narehood, who joined in August 2025, brings strong administrative experience and a warm community presence, managing daily operations, coordinating programs like the popular Ukrainian Pysanka workshop, and supporting research and collections with her enthusiasm for history. Director Jennifer Nellis, formerly Assistant to the Museum Director at Munson and previously with the Oneida City School District, is a highly organized administrative professional known for her community involvement and expertise in executive support, communications, and complex operations. Together, Sammi and Jenn form an energetic team committed to serving Madison County's history—come meet our staff.

Upcoming Events

- NYS Path Through History Picnic on the Cottage Lawn
June 20 and 21, 12 pm -3 pm
- Open Farm Day July 25
10 am - 3 pm
- Painting On the Lawn Aug 11
10 am- 1pm
- Thread Through Time
Aug 11- Sept 7
- Craft Festival Sept 12 and 13
10 am - 5/4 pm
- NYS Path Through History Ghost Walk 5 pm
- Pumpkin Carving 10 am -1 pm



MCHS Gets New Look

Madison County Historical Society is embracing a fresh new look with its rebrand, blending modern design with the symbols that define our story. The updated identity features hops to honor Madison County's agricultural heritage and flowing water elements representing the historic canal system, all paired with imagery that reflects our rich past. The result is a clean, cohesive visual style that feels both rooted in history and ready for the future.



Stoneware crocks were essential tools of springtime work in early Madison County. Far more than decorative kitchenware, they supported the season's most important routines—holding brines for the first pickles of the year, keeping butter and dairy cool in cellar storage, nurturing sourdough starters, and protecting early herbs and root vegetables for months of use.

Visitors can see beautiful examples of these hardworking vessels on display at MCHS today. They offer a glimpse into how simple, everyday objects once shaped the rhythm of spring. Additional examples of springtime preparation can also be found in the barn mini-exhibit created for our June 20–21 Path Through History Weekend and the July 25 Open Farm Day.

We'll continue refreshing our mini-exhibits throughout the year to bring new life to tours for both members and visitors.

Consider a donation
today!

<https://givebutter.com/donation-wdaubh>



A Proud Moment for MCHS and a Beloved Piece From Our Collection

Our cherished Edmonia Lewis sculpture, *Clasped Hands of Gerrit and Ann Smith*, continues its travels and continues to touch hearts far beyond Madison County. We were thrilled to see it featured in a beautiful review in *The New Yorker*,

where the author reflected deeply on Lewis’s artistry and legacy. One line from the review captures the emotional power of this work: “At Peabody Essex, I kept returning to ‘Clasped Hands of Gerrit and Ann Smith’ ... You can tell the hands have been close for years.”

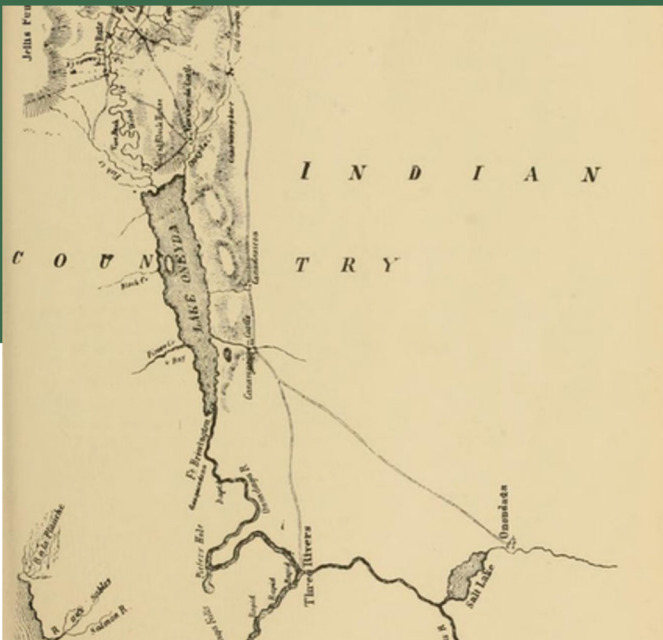
To have one of our pieces admired in such a respected publication is an extraordinary privilege. This sculpture has long been a favorite in our collection, and seeing it bring joy, reflection, and inspiration to so many, including the author of this review, reminds us why preserving and sharing history matters.

We look forward to welcoming this treasured piece home, carrying with it the stories and connections it has sparked along the way.

MCHS Farmers Market

Even though the season started off a bit quietly, Tuesday afternoon was absolutely gorgeous on the Cottage Lawn – sunshine, good conversations, live music drifting across the lawn, the food truck serving up delicious bites and that unmistakable Farmers Market buzz beginning to build. We’re here every Tuesday from 2–6 PM through August, and each week brings something and more neighbors stopping by. Your support and smiling faces are what make this market come alive.

250 years ago, at the time of the founding of our country, what did the “idea” of the United States mean here in Madison County?



Long before it was officially sanctioned, the land that would make up Madison County sat at the edge of a new and uncertain nation, bordering an unsettled frontier. Land was cleared, farms were established, and small communities began to take shape in a place where national identity was still distant and largely theoretical.

For the people living here in the late eighteenth century, the United States was not yet a clearly defined reality. It was an idea still being tested—less about constitutions and declarations, and more about whether daily life could be made stable and secure in a region shaped by isolation, competing claims, and shifting authority. This area lay near important inland corridors and was influenced by events unfolding throughout central New York, yet it remained far from the centers of political power.

The Revolutionary War did not arrive in this region as a single dramatic event. There were no decisive battles fought on what would become Madison County soil. Instead, the war was experienced through uncertainty: disrupted settlement, divided loyalties, militia service, and the constant awareness that control of the land itself was at stake. Some residents supported the Patriot cause directly, while others were cautious, conflicted, or simply focused on survival in a volatile frontier environment.

In this setting, the “idea” of independence was inseparable from land and opportunity. The promise of a new nation offered the possibility of ownership, self-determination, and local control—concepts that held immediate meaning for those carving farms out of the wilderness. Independence suggested that authority might someday be closer to home, that governance would be shaped by communities rather than imposed from afar. These were not abstract ideals; they were practical hopes tied to fields, roads, and families.

After the war, those hopes began to take physical form. The end of British rule opened central New York to expanded settlement, particularly by veterans and migrants seeking land. Roads were laid out, mills were built, and town governments began to formalize.

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The region grew steadily, shaped by agriculture and by the belief that local institutions mattered. When Madison County was officially established in the early nineteenth century, it was a direct outcome of the independence won decades earlier. The county existed because the Revolution had reshaped who could settle the land and how it would be governed.

Over time, the idea of the United States became less distant and more tangible here. Civic life developed through town meetings, churches, schools, and local courts. What had once been a frontier defined by uncertainty became a network of communities bound together by shared infrastructure and local decision-making. The nation was no longer something happening elsewhere—it was present in everyday life.

Today, as the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Madison County stands as a reminder that the Revolution's legacy extends far beyond famous battlefields. The founding of the country mattered not only in moments of conflict, but in the quieter work of settlement, governance, and community-building that followed. The "idea" of the United States took root here slowly, shaped by ordinary people responding to extraordinary change. In that sense, Madison County is part of the Revolution's enduring story—not as a place where the nation was fought for, but as a place where it was built, sustained, and lived in. Two and a half centuries later, that legacy remains visible in the landscape, the towns, and the civic life that continue to define the county today.

Author is Brendan Boyd



For more information visit us
at www.mchs1900.org

Message from the Director

I'm absolutely thrilled to be part of the Madison County Historical Society, this first month has been energizing, inspiring, and full of momentum. I'm excited for the upcoming events and genuinely look forward to meeting more of our members and volunteers as we continue building something special together.

If you're looking to get involved, whether by volunteering at an event, helping with property upkeep, assisting with research, giving tours, or even exploring the possibility of joining our Board, I would love to hear from you.

Please reach out to me at director@mchs1900.org.