



# The Chairman's Corner

by

**Matt B. Murell**

[Matt.Murell@ColumbiacountyNY.com](mailto:Matt.Murell@ColumbiacountyNY.com)

## COUNTY HISTORIAN

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Things are hopping in the office of Columbia County Historian William Better these days.

The two major items currently front and center are the newly developed historian website and planning for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, or semiquincentennial, celebration of the United States in 2026.

The website, Better pointed out, was the collaborative effort of all municipal historians in the county, led by Shari Franks, Don Meltz, and Tom Moreland. "The result was a thing of beauty," he said.

Among the individual pages on the new website are a full listing of and contact information for all village, town, and City of Hudson historians; a map of county historic sites and markers (a work in progress); and a listing and contact information for historical societies and organizations around the county. Each page is loaded with well-presented information.

For those inclined to get out and about and get their history up close, one page is known as "Drive Through History," much of which is self-guided and able to be viewed on a mobile device.

"Arts and Letters," for instance, takes the explorer to such notable spots as the Luykas Van Allen House, Steepletop (Edna St. Vincent Millay's home), John Ashbery's Hudson House, and Ellsworth Kelly's Art Studio. "Dutch and Mohican Heritage" encompasses the Stockport Creek & Staats House, the Pachaquack Preserve, and the Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer House and Mill Complex (Red Mills), among others.

"The website will be an invaluable tool for school children and for visitors to Columbia County. Now it will be matter of taking care of the constant upgrades and updates to the site. It's a tremendous commitment and the possibilities for it are endless," Better said. "My goal is to add site-specific updates that relate to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary."

Looking ahead to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Better said one thing he would like to see better explored is Columbia County's place in American Revolution-era history.

For example, the Dutch Reformed Church in Claverack "has a number of graves of soldiers who fought in the American Revolution. And there were a couple skirmishes during the Revolution in the area – I want to identify where those areas were."

In addition, Better said he has set about developing a curriculum revolving around the early days of the country "that could be given out to the county school districts. We're working diligently on creating an outline – I think this is going to take another year, which brings us to two years before the event. It would be an 'in-your-backyard'

kind of local history. My goal as county historian is that we have an outline for each school district of what took place as it relates to the American Revolution in what is now their school district.”

Stay tuned for future semiquincentennial developments. And be sure to take a look at the new county historian website. The Board of Supervisors and I thank everyone whose hard work went into its development.