



*Organized By*

Judith Flagg, Historian

William "Al" Cormier, Deputy Historian

Town of Salem

An Anniversary Celebration

## *Ghost Bus Tour*

*Saturday, Sept. 7, 2019*

Historic Salem Courthouse

Community Center

*Built 1869*

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Revolutionary War Cemetery

Old Burying Ground

*Opened 1769*

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Evergreen Cemetery

*Opened 1869*

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Sponsored by

Dr. Asa Fitch Historical Society

Salem, New York

### **Historic Salem Courthouse –**

The Courthouse was built on property donated by John M. Williams, grandson of Gen. John Williams in 1869. Architect Marcus F. Cummings of Troy designed the impressive brick structure featuring arches and circular stained-glass windows. The original cupola was removed in the 1930's. The second story courtroom retains the original gas chandelier (now electrified), yellow pine floors and chestnut benches making it "one of the best preserved nineteenth century courtrooms in the entire state." (Restoration Feasibility Study – J.G. Waite Associates)

### **Old Burying Ground/Revolutionary War Cemetery –**

The 2.6 acre site is surrounded by a double-faced stone wall over 800 feet in length. Nearly all the headstones face east, with the inscriptions on the west-facing side. The rows of stones run north and south. Two unmarked graves were the first recorded burials, one an unidentified (Stockbridge) Native American who wandered into the settlement and died of disease, the other was that of Solomon Barr whose grave was dug by fellow pioneer, Hamilton McCollister, in 1767. The earliest marked grave is that of Abram Savage, age 18, who died in 1769. The total number of recorded graves here is 1040. We have documented 105 soldiers of the Revolutionary War buried here probably more than any other cemetery in New York State if not the entire nation. Although not documented, tradition persists that 100 soldiers who were killed at Bemis Heights on the first day of the Battle of Saratoga are buried here in an unmarked mass grave.

**Family Vaults** – There are a total of 10 sod-covered, laid-stone family vaults in the Old Burying Ground. Following the traditions of their forefathers from Ireland and Scotland, early settlers erected these final resting places for their dead. A large stone set into the mound was removed when a burial occurred which was then set back in place to seal the vault.



### **Your Bus Driver – Ed Napiwocki**

Ed is a retired school teacher and has been a part-time bus driver for over 50 years starting with Greyhound out of NYC.

Your bus is a 1973 GMC "Vistaliner" which ran for AC Transit in the Oakland, CA area until around 1990 with San Francisco – Berkeley as one of its stops. The bus is a registered Historic Vehicle and was featured in a NY Lottery commercial for its Bingo scratch-off game. With its restored persimmon and mint green paint it is one smooth and groovy ride! Thanks, Ed.

### **Videography/Photography - Tom McMorris and Cliff Oliver**

#### **Sources:**

The Salem Book – Harriet M. Williams

The Village of Salem 1761 – 1994 – Katherine Tomasi

History of Washington County 1878 – Everts & Ensign

## Evergreen Cemetery

In 1869 Cemetery Trustees chose J. C. Sidney, a noted landscape architect of Philadelphia, to design the layout of the a new 44-acre site located just outside the village on an elevated plateau with abundant natural beauty and spectacular views to the east. Undulating pathways with romantic names, Myrtle Avenue and Riverside, wove through the hillocks. Lush plantings and ponds were developed to create the park-like setting, where families came to picnic and take boat rides to the island in Turner's Pond. Areas were set aside for the Poor, Strangers and Sojourners, and Africans. Several prominent families had their ancestors' remains disinterred from the Old Burying Ground and reburied here with grand monuments marking their location. A special area was chosen at the start of the Civil War to receive the remains of the fallen soldiers and veterans of the conflict.

### Notables:

**Gen. John Williams** (William "Al" Cormier) – Officer of the Revolutionary War, lawyer, doctor, and philanthropist.

**Audubon Family** (Edie Meikle) – descendants of John James Audubon

**Dr. Asa Fitch Jr.** (Judy Flagg) – Physician, Naturalist and Historian

**T/Sgt. Francis J. Clark** (John Clark, son) - Cong. Medal of Honor recipient WW II.

**"African Grounds"** – L. Lloyd Stewart, descendant

**Dr. Abram "Old Head" Allen** (Peter Carrolan) – legendary surgeon, one early patient was Isaac Grey.



**Stone Carvers** – Thirty-six carved marble headstones at this site are attributed to Zerubable Collins (1733-1797) of West Sandgate, VT. His distinctive style shows winged effigies representing the soul in flight. It is thought that the white marble he used was mined at the Shaftsbury quarry near his home. His later carvings showed the addition of floral motifs, rosettes, vines and scrolls. His inscriptions were precise and remain legible nearly 250 years later. Other carvers represented here are: Henry Rule, Wm. McAuley, and T & W Brow.

### Notables:

**James Carrolan** of the Salem Rotary – On-going restoration of the Old Burying Ground.

**L. Lloyd Stewart** – author of The Mysterious Black Migration 1800-1820 - descendant of the VanVranken family.

### Early Notables in Order of Their "Appearances":

**Hamilton McCollister** (John Hubbard) – an early founder of the settlement, soldier of the Revolutionary War.

**Dinah Dick Conkey** (Mary Skelly) – wife of Joshua Conkey a founder of the settlement and soldier of the Revolutionary War, who baked bread for the soldiers.

**Margaret Telford** (Joan Campbell) – An accused witch.

**Isaac Grey** (more information at Evergreen Cemetery)