



Gouverneur Historical Association

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TO: Members and Hopefully New Members
FROM: Joe Laurenza
DATE: 2016

We had another good year at the Gouverneur Museum with over 1100 visitors between the Museum and the Gouverneur Museum Annex at the fairgrounds. The walkway and the new sign installed at the annex helped bring in more people there as our building was more noticeable.

This is the 40th anniversary year of the Gouverneur Museum. The Presbyterian Manse was purchased by the Gouverneur Historical Association in 1974 and on July 4, 1976 the museum officially open its doors. It took almost two year to turn the building from a private residence into a museum. Gouverneur now had a home for its history collection.

We had two successful art shows in the past year, Fran Chevier's in December and Nancy Holdstock's in April. Both were well attended. These events help get more visitors to visit the museum and highlight local talent. A win-win for all of us.

The WPBS piece we did last year has also helped bring in visitors from outside the Gouverneur area, including several visitors from Canada. It is about 3½ minutes and is seen frequently between programs when WPBS needs a filler before starting the next hour program. We are also an underwriter for the station with a 15 second spot from the original piece. This shorter version will be televised about 1000 times for the six months we contracted for. We have such a treasure in the Gouverneur Museum, we are trying to generate more visitors.

The museum was also used last December for my 75th birthday party. Friends used the party as fundraiser for the St. James School Roof Fund. I asked that in lieu of presents that donations be made to St. James School Roof Fund. It was very successful, as over \$24,000 was donated. I have some very generous friends.

This October the museum will be used twice to host two "spook nights". Kids and adults will sleep over and be read ghost/spirit stories. I have had two people tell me that there are spirits in our building. One has felt the presence of one and the other had seen one. I disbelieve nothing even though I have not experienced either in the thousands of time I have been in the museum.

This year the Gouverneur Museum along with the Presbyterian Church have been placed on the National Register of Historical Places. We are quite proud of this designation.

In June there was a fundraiser at a private residence for Elise Stefanik, our Congresswoman. Her office contacted me and ask if she could tour the museum before going to the fundraiser. Of course I was pleased that she thought of us and asked Sandy Wyman to be here so we could both get some press. She was impressed that a small town like Gouverneur had such a quality museum.

In June Laurie Kozakiewicz from the History Department at the University of Albany, SUNY, visited and researched the records of Rhoda Fox Graves for a book on outstanding women politicians in NY. Rhoda Fox Graves was from Gouverneur and was an outstanding politician in her day. Those senior citizens who knew her will attest to that. Our museum houses all of Rhoda Fox Graves's papers from her many years as an assemblywoman and state senator. Albany asked for her information and we sent a van load down which will all be digitalized and on line when completed for the world to know her many accomplishments.

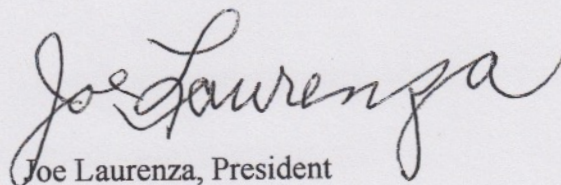
In June I got a call from Gouverneur Morris's great, great, great grandson who was in the area and asked for a tour of the museum. I happened to be in town, and of course I dropped what I was doing and told him I would be there in 5 minutes. He and his wife were very interesting to speak with and he knew a great deal about his great, great, great, grandfather and was impressed with the museum and what photos and information we had on Morris.

In July a group of 18 from the Madrid Historical Association, and in August another group of 36 from the Pitcarin Museum in Harrisville visited the museum. Someone from each group had seen our video on public TV and contacted us.

We had three new volunteers that were interested in joining us. We appreciate all our volunteers as it takes many hands to run a museum. Our board of 11 and another 30 volunteers keep the museum going.

Our membership is the backbone of our museum and we are always seeing new members at \$10 each and donations of any amount to "pay the bills". We have no paid staff and memberships and donations pay our annual expenses: heat, lights, water & sewerage, insurance, and incidentals that arise on occasion.

A "Big Thank You" to our board, volunteers, members and donors. You are the reason we exist.



Joe Laurenza, President