

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

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NEWS

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EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS WOMEN IN CAPITAL REGION THROUGH NEWLY ACQUIRED OBJECTS TO MUSEUM COLLECTION

Telling Her Story: New Acquisitions presented by Bank of America is open through June 7, 2020

ALBANY, NEW YORK —Every year, the Albany Institute of History & Art acquires hundreds of objects that relate to the arts, culture, and history of New York’s upper Hudson Valley and Capital Region. To commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of women’s suffrage in America in 2020, the museum is showcasing *Telling Her Story: New Acquisitions* presented by Bank of America, an exhibition of objects collected over the past four years that highlight women’s lives. The exhibition is open through June 7, 2020.

Objects on view include materials related to artists and entrepreneurs, as well as students, employees, and women connected to local and national political figures. The exhibition highlights women and their connections to the region’s medical and scientific fields, explores historic clothing, and even shares examples of how paper receipts and personal letters can help us learn about women’s lives in the past.



Sterling-Winthrop Research Institute, c. 1950,
photograph, gift of Marilyn Fancher

“The Albany Institute is constantly collecting materials for our permanent collection and every few years we do an exhibition that showcases some of those ‘new to us’ items,” says curator Diane Shewchuk. “I knew I wanted this recent acquisitions exhibition to stand out. With talk about 2020 being the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage in the United States, I decided to focus on objects that told stories about women in the Capital Region. I really wanted to be sure to include objects

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related to people our audiences might still remember- like Albany's first lady Betty Corning and African-American seamstress Anabel Heath Puels. There are some amazing artifacts on view in this show."

"Bank of America is committed to empowering women and one way we are bringing this commitment to life is through our support of this exhibit," says Jennifer MacPhee, Albany/Hudson Valley President of Bank of America. "*Telling Her Story* highlights women who have contributed to the entertainment, scientific, industrial, and artistic success of our region. We hope sharing these important stories from the past will inspire visitors to consider their own potential and be emboldened to create new opportunities for our community."

From historic figures to contemporary artists, the exhibition explores women from different generations. For instance, visitors can see a small volume of writings by Ann Eliza Bleecker (1752-1783), one of the few contemporaneous narratives of the American Revolution by an American woman. Her collection of poetry and prose were published after her death and memorialize her wartime experiences in what is now the Capital Region, including *Written in the Retreat from Burgoyne* and *The Death of Montgomery*. In addition, the exhibition features the story of another writer Athena Vavuras Lord (b. 1932), whose Smith Corona typewriter is now part of the Albany Institute's collection. The award-winning author and community activist wrote books for her four children about growing up in a Greek immigrant family in Albany and Cohoes. Copies of those books are also on display and part of the museum's collection. There is also a section that looks at recent works of art by contemporary artists such as Susan Hoffer, Dana Matthews, Victoria Palermo, and Estelle Yarinsky. Internationally known dress designer Ursula Garreau, owner of Ursula of Switzerland®, is featured with two dresses which are now in the museum's collection.

In 2019, the Albany Institute acquired a collection of photograph albums, scrapbooks, diaries, and other materials related to Albany-born Clara Harris Rathbone (1834-1883). The collection, which remained with her descendants until coming to the Albany Institute of History & Art, is an intimate look at the life of a woman made famous because of one fateful night. In the 1860s, when her father Ira Harris was a United States Senator, Clara enjoyed an active social life in Washington, D.C. Her scrapbooks include invitations, calling cards, tickets, theater programs, and correspondence. Clara and her fiancé, Henry Rathbone, were guests of President Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln and were seated in their box at Ford's Theatre the night the President was shot. Museum visitors can now see Clara's 1865 scrapbook, which is open to the page



that includes annotated calling cards of the physicians attending Lincoln, as well as the President's own signature from an earlier occasion. Visitors will learn more about Clara and her life after that horrifying night as they explore other

Clara Harris Rathbone (1834-1883) by John Goldin, Washington, D.C., c. 1865, AIHA Purchase and Partial Gift of the Estate of the great-granddaughter of Clara Harris Rathbone, Bettina Rathbone Hartley Tierney and her children, by Philip Tierney

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items in the collection. Perhaps the most poignant memento is her unfinished diary of 1883. Clara and her family were living in Germany when her husband Henry Rathbone murdered her on December 23rd of that year.



Elaine Drooz's scrapbooks on display in *Telling Her Story: New Acquisitions* presented by Bank of America

Another highlight among the museum's recent collections is the archive of Elaine Drooz (1925-1994). Known for her sparkling personality, sense of humor, and style, Elaine collected in scrapbooks the articles, photographs, telegrams, and letters related to her work as Women's Program Director at radio station WABY ("The Voice of Albany"). Her career exemplified the improvisational character of early local radio and television programming. Beginning in 1948, Elaine was on the air with a variety of programs: *For Ladies Only*, *Swap Shop*, *The Psychologist's Notebook*, *Your Theater and Mine*, *The Bookmark*, *Mask and Wig*, and *Top o'the Morning*. She interviewed World War II heroes, authors, businessmen, and drama critics in the radio station on North Pearl Street and on location. She and her guests discussed topics as diverse as assisting European Displaced Persons after the war and the "Frigidinner," "a new single unit frozen dinner" in compartmentalized aluminum trays. In 1950, she moved to station WROW. In 1951, Elaine married Robert Friedman but continued to use her maiden name professionally. She was a leader of the Albany chapters of Hadassah and B'nai B'rith Women.

Telling Her Story: New Acquisitions presented by Bank of America is open through June 7, 2020. Leading support is provided by Bank of America. Season exhibition and program support is provided by Phoebe Powell Bender, Mr. and Mrs. George R. Hearst III, Charles M. Liddle III, Lois and David Swawite, and the Charles L. Touhey Foundation, Inc. Programmatic and exhibition support is made possible in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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The Albany Institute of History & Art is located at 125 Washington Avenue in Albany, New York. Free parking is available in the museum's lot at the corner of Elk and Dove Streets.

The exhibition galleries and the Museum Shop are open Wednesday 10am-5pm, Thursday 10am-8pm, Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sunday noon-5pm. The Research Library is open on Thursdays from 1pm-4:30pm and by appointment. The Museum Café is open Wednesday through Saturday 10am-3pm and Sunday noon-5pm.

Admission rates are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors (62+) and students with ID, \$6 for children aged 6-12, and free for children under 6. Albany Institute members are admitted for free. There is no charge to visit the Museum Café or Museum Shop. The museum offers \$5 per person admission to the galleries on Thursdays from 5pm-8pm and free

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admission on the First Fridays of the month from 5pm-8pm. To learn about discounts and free admission days, please refer to the Visit section of www.albanyinstitute.org.

For more information, visit www.albanyinstitute.org or call (518) 463-4478.

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Founded in 1791, the Albany Institute of History & Art is New York's oldest museum. Its collections document the Hudson Valley as a crossroads of culture, influencing the art and history of the region, the state, and the nation. With more than 35,000 objects and one million documents in the library, it is an important resource for the region, giving our community a sense of the part the Hudson Valley played in the American story, and our own place in history. Permanent and temporary exhibitions are open year-round and create a sense of place, allowing visitors to meet the people who helped shape this region. Among the museum's best-known and most-loved collections are the 19th century Hudson River School landscape paintings by artists like Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, the 19th century sculpture collections, and, of course, the famous Albany Mummies that came to the museum in 1909 and have been on view ever since. For more information, please visit www.albanyinstitute.org and be sure to follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/albanyinstitute), Twitter (@AlbanyInstitute), and Instagram (albanyinstitute).

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