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Remembering Bill Vierhile for his 100th Birthday ~

We're having a
party on June 13th,
sharing cake
& stories! See page 4



SPRING NEWSLETTER | MAY 2026 | P.O. Box 489, Naples, NY 14512 | NHSNYinfo@gmail.com | www.NaplesNYHistoricalSociety.org

NAPLES HISTORY

Nathan Watkins and the early settlement of Watkinstown

by Cindy Scoda

Nathan Watkins was born in March 1739 in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. He was the third of ten children. His great grandfather, Andrew (1645-1711), emigrated from Wales in the mid-1600s to Massachusetts. In June of 1761, Nathan married Sarah Whitney in Hopkinton, MA. They had nine children.

Nathan served as a soldier in the French and Indian Wars of 1760-1763. He was commissioned as a Captain in the "Army of the United Colonies, raised in Defense of American Liberty" by Order of the Congress on July 1, 1775, signed by John Hancock. He was assigned to Company D, the 26th Regiment Commanded by General Gates. He had captained a "company of Minutemen" at Bunker Hill in April 1775 and served in regiments of several Lieutenants and Colonels between May 1775 and 1780. In 1776, he joined in an expedition from New York to Quebec. After assisting in fortifying Ticonderoga, they marched through Albany to join General Washington in Pennsylvania.

In July 1777, he was taken prisoner by British Lieut. General Burgoyne's army, to be exchanged for a Captain of the Royal Artillery, captured by Major General Gates near Albany, NY. Several accounts mentioned that Nathan's son, fourteen year old drummer boy Mark, was with him as a prisoner. Burgoyne asked him what he was there for, he said, "I came to see my father." Burgoyne replied, "Very well, I will send you home as a present for your mother." Later, Nathan, under General Washington, took part in the battles of Trenton and Princeton. He returned home to Massachusetts in 1777.

In April 1788, Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham negotiated with the Governor of Massachusetts for the purchase of lands in New York State west of the Hudson River. In July 1788, a large part of the western area

was deeded to them from the Seneca Indians.

Captain Nathan Watkins, Edward Kibbe and William Cady were selected by the people of Partridgefield and Windsor, MA to buy a township in the Phelps-Gorham Purchase for sixty settlers, many of whom were Revolutionary War veterans. They purchased Township No. 7 (21,120 acres) for about twelve cents per acre. It was located at the inlet of Canandaigua Lake, the former Seneca village of Nundawao.

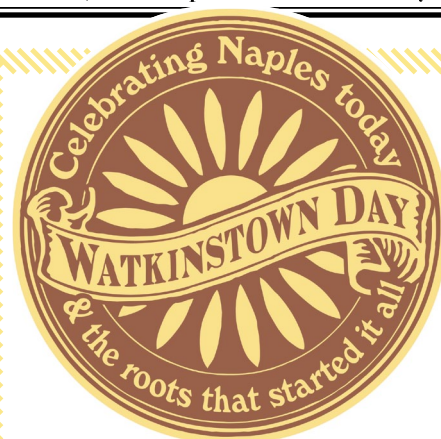
The first settlers, the Parrish family, arrived in February 1789. Captain Nathan, his brother Captain William, and several others arrived in April, some with their families. The new town was named Watkinstown in honor of the military service of the brothers.

By 1792, Nathan had built the third home in town, a log house covered in hickory bark. It was comparatively large at 24 by 24 feet and located where the Ephraim Cleveland barn is now on State Route 245. Nathan's home temporarily housed many of the first settlers. It became a public meeting place until a town hall was built. It also served as the only tavern for several years. The first town meeting was held there in 1796. Nathan was selected as a commissioner of highways. All landowners were required to give hours of labor to road maintenance according to the value of their property. The first frame building in town was a barn built by Nathan.

In 1797, the town was renamed Middletown as it was midway between Canandaigua and Bath. In 1808, its name changed again - this time to Naples after a visit from the exiled "Citizen King of France", Louis Philippe, who remarked that the area resembled that of Naples, Italy.

Nathan Watkins died in 1814 at the age of 75 and is buried with his wife Sarah in Fairview Cemetery, the pioneer cemetery located on one border of what was once the original town square of Watkinstown.

Cindy Scoda, our NHS Secretary, has a special connection to this story, which is what led her to research further... Her mother's best friend's family in Michigan was descended from the same Watkins family!



**SATURDAY,
June 6th 11AM-4PM**
Old Town Square/Kiandaga Park

11AM Opening Remarks Naples
Historian Kenton Poole: "Significance of
Watkinstown & Naples's first 100 years"

11:30AM & 2PM
Fairview Cemetery Tours w/ Kenton Poole:
Revolutionary War Soldiers, Watkinstown
Settlers, Headstone Restoration

12:30PM Historic Naples
Walking Tour w/ Tracy Erwin

Throughout the day

Bring your own chairs & blankets, enjoy

Live Music & Buskers, { RESTAURANTS
Picnic Fare at local —> BREWERIES
WINERIES

- Visit Watkinstown district businesses*
Learn their history & enjoy special offerings
- Meet local organizations with big impact in
our community: Hospeace House, Daughters of
the American Revolution, BVT, Naples Rotary

3:30PM Raffle Drawing Under the Tent
Prize Basket of goodies & gift certificates from
Watkinstown businesses

* Each visit to a Watkinstown district business this day
gets you a ticket to enter - Must be present to win.

Scan for full
**SCHEDULE
OF EVENTS**
(with updates
as the date nears)



THIS YEAR SO FAR



February 7, 2026 • 5th annual Naples Chocolate Cake Contest & Sale - Another successful fundraiser with bakers helping us to raise over \$550 for the NHS! Photo at left, L to R: Winning cakes made by Denetta St. George (Best Overall), Shanna Williams (Best Use of Local Products), Robert Johnson & Myra Vining (Best Appearance), Kara Citzifelner (Honorable Mention), Sabine Steinbreschner & Natalie Pennefeather (Honorable Mention). Prize baskets were filled with delicious local offerings donated by Inspire Moore Winery, Hollerhorn Distilling, Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards, Woodstead Sauces, Engine 14 Brewery, and Arbor Hill. Thank you to our judges (John McAvoy-Bard, Karin Bowersock, Hannah Erhardt, John Heinis, and Pam Jensen) for their dedication to a hard job; and to all of the volunteer cake cutters, servers, and clean-up crew and cake buyers! (Photos by Jun Liu and Blanche Warner)



February 24, 2026 • NCS & NHS COLLABORATION in the spirit of AMERICA-250: Naples Architecture and Construction Trades class visits the Cleveland House Museum — Thank you to Naples Jr/Sr High School Assistant Principal Heather Clark, NCS Teacher Chad Ayers, and their students for visiting Captain Ephraim Cleveland's house - in preparation for a school project to build a 3-D scale model of this historic structure! NHS President Trish Lambiase gave an informative tour and Past President Wayne Buchar assisted with structural questions while students took measurements. The idea started as a brainstorm from NHS Board Member Jeff Wells, administrator of our Cleveland House Facebook page, inspired by a model in our collection of the Naples Red Mill done by RIT students years ago. He contacted the NCS, who embraced the idea with enthusiasm. Wayne Buchar then put together comprehensive CAD drawings of the entire structure for the students to use, and will continue as a Technical Advisor for the project. The project will benefit both the historical society and the school, as it turns out that it also aligns with New York State Education Department mandates for school collaboration with community-based organizations. Join our Facebook group "Cleveland House Museum - Naples NY History" for updates about this exciting initiative! (Photos by Heather Clark and Jeff Wells)

Strategic Planning Survey Update

Thank you to everyone who participated in our survey this past winter/early spring! With over 100 responses, we received lots of useful information about how the Naples Historical Society can better serve our community, and great inspiration for the topics, programs, facilities and collaborations that you would enjoy seeing the NHS pursue. This feedback will be an important part of our discussions as we begin developing our next 5-year strategic plan. This January, we were awarded a grant from the **Documentary Heritage & Preservation Services of New York** (DHPSNY), providing a facilitator from their organization to help guide us through a structured planning process - beginning with a board member retreat coming up this June! We are excited to define a plan that brings our goals in reach with efficient use of our resources, both financial and human, while also expanding community engagement.



Saturday, March 28 • Creating a House History Presentation at Morgan Hose Building - Thank you to Wilma Townsend from the Ontario County Historical Society and Valerie Klindt from the Ontario County Records Dept. for this very well received and informative session.

April 2026 • NHS members refurbish historic markers around Naples — The

William G. Pomeroy Foundation is encouraging people to come out and clean/refurbish local historic markers in their community, and throughout the month of April, NHS board members and volunteers did just that - in preparation for National Historic Marker Day on April 24th & the official launch of the Finger Lakes Virtual Museum on April 25th. Efforts began with Board Member Jeff Wells and Treasurer Kevin Johnson wire-brushing and painting the blue backgrounds and poles. Volunteer Tim Williams joined to paint the yellow lettering with his steady hands. Many thanks to Jeff Wells for coordinating the cleaning and repainting; the Green Heart of the Finger Lakes for donating paint and materials; and to Kevin Johnson and Tim Williams for all their help! See the three refurbished markers at Old Town Square / Kiandaga Park on Main Street (signs for Founding of Naples & the First Church) and at Grime's Glen. Photo above, L to R: Jeff, Tim, Kevin (photo by Denise Johnson, as part of the Pomeroy Foundation's Photo Challenge to highlight the 225,000+ historic markers across the U.S.)



Naples Red Mill Restoration Updates

2023 The NHS reached out to the community to help us realize "Bill's Dream" to create a Naples History Museum through a capital campaign. The campaign raised enough funds to start on the project, and we must keep the momentum going. Here is what we have accomplished so far:

- ✓ waterwheel pit professionally cleaned out
- ✓ bulging stone wall in the pit has been stabilized by rebuilding
- ✓ parts of stone foundation repointed
- ✓ stairs to basement properly re-attached for safety
- ✓ small addition that we call the "Railway Signal Office" has been stabilized

2026 Plans for this year & beyond include: + restoring windows & doors
+ replacing interior beams for stability + re-siding the Railway Signal Office
+ extending the porch to what it was like 100 years ago

Donations to **BILL'S DREAM** continue. Thank you to recent contributor Lindsely Dunn, for a donation in memory of Albert & Florence Kidder.

The Historic Cleveland House

The house that Captain Ephraim Cleveland built in 1794 remains one of Naples' most enduring landmarks. Nearly unchanged in form since George Washington was president, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a rare example of a Federal-style pioneer home. Its walls also hold artwork of historical significance: stenciled bedchamber designs believed to have been created by Stephen Watkins Clark, a young scholar and son of another prominent Naples family. Clark, who would go on to author the widely used *Clark's Grammar*, decorated local homes to help fund his studies at Amherst College. The intricate stenciling in the Cleveland House is considered to be a superior and well-preserved example of New England-inspired patterns of the era.

The house passed through many owners. In 1919, it was purchased from Fred and Rose Reisinger by Howard Tellier, whose family published the *Naples Record* for over 50 years; later, Howard Tellier married the last Cleveland de-

scendant to occupy the home, Mary Clarissa Cleveland. In the 1970s, the Briglin family transformed the carriage house into the Tellier Gift House. The Pfeffers restored the structure in the 1980s, securing its place on the National Register in 1994. By the early 2000s, the Tilbergs owned the home. It was purchased with generous donations from the Naples Historical Society, Jim and Caroline Tilburg and an anonymous donor in 2018 to be preserved as a museum. This site provides unique connections to the colonial history of Naples and represents a cross-section of local cultures, built during a time when the Seneca People (the Haudenosaunee) lived and hunted alongside the early settlers.

The 232 year-old house stands today because of the high-quality, long-lasting materials that were used, and is a testament to the craftsmanship of a bygone era. The house is now in need of much restoration work. In 2024 the original barn/carriage house was sold with proceeds earmarked for restoration projects.

Cleveland House Restoration Updates

2025 The museum was closed last summer for removal of soil accumulation compromising the foundation, installation of a curtain drain, and several other now-completed projects:

- ✓ repointing areas of the stone foundation
- ✓ adding cellar doors
- ✓ repairing and painting the stairway leading to the parking area
- ✓ demolition of crumbling stone wall on the east side of the house, to be rebuilt by volunteers over the next few summers
- ✓ tree removal

2026 Coming soon, you will see: + freshly painted new colors on the house!
+ restoration of the two porches will begin

Future Needs: An updated furnace, restored windows, chimney repair
Here's how you can help:

- ★ Do you have stones, especially flat ones to contribute to the stone wall restoration?
- ★ Sponsor a window rebuild – each window is estimated to cost \$250
- ★ Find and write a grant for restoration projects
- ★ Donate to our Cleveland House Restoration Fund through our website (Click on the "DONATE" button) or send a check with "Cleveland House" in the memo line.
- ★ Visit the Cleveland House this summer where "Quilts Through the Ages" will be on display! (See Page 4 for more details & open hours)

Good-bye to Bill Trude

With much sadness, we share the news of the passing of **Bill Trude** this past January 2026 at age 95. Beloved in Naples, Bill was also a great friend to the Naples Historical Society. He lived just across from the Naples Red Mill on one side, where he "kept an eye on things" for us; and on the other side he was across from our headquarters on Mill St., which allowed many happy greetings and conversations with our members through the years. An enthusiastic supporter of our projects, sharing both his



Above, August 2020: Bill Trude as honorary foreman for the sewer project, moving along quickly on Mill Street! (Photo & caption, Blanche Warner)

handy skills and monetary support, Bill was named an Honorary NHS Board Member. He is remembered fondly by all.

Left, May 31, 2021 - Shown here at the Naples Memorial Day Parade, Bill often found opportunities to honor our public servants and celebrate Naples. (Photo by Blanche Warner)



WELCOMING NEW FACES ON BOARD



Kevin Johnson, new NHS Treasurer

After moving from Chino Valley, AZ to Naples in November 2024, **Kevin** and his wife **Denise** have quickly become familiar faces around town. You may already have met them as members of Naples Rotary; Kevin is also on the Naples Village Shade Tree Commission. Denise volunteers

regularly in our archives and at our events, which Kevin often joins as well. As our new Treasurer, Kevin becomes a voting NHS Board Member, and brings excellent experience, as he describes: *Denise and I owned an independent insurance agency that Denise ran. I did the books and payroll, and got licensed as well. I [also] worked for Rain Bird Corporation, the largest irrigation manufacturer in the world, as group marketing manager for their commercial controls systems. I was responsible for 26 million dollars of their business including product development, existing product improvement, overall department budgets as well as individual project budgets and had ten direct reports.*



Paul Lambiase, new Assistant Treasurer

With the Naples Historical Society's progress on important goals, our bookkeeping has expanded enough to utilize an Assistant Treasurer. **Paul Lambiase** has stepped into the role beautifully, bringing multiple skills and insights.

A Naples resident for over 15 years now, Paul is another familiar face - currently serving on the Village/Town of Naples, NY Joint Planning Board as Co-Chair; the Naples Historic District Committee; Ontario County Planning Board; Town of Naples Renewable Energy Code Development Workgroup, Co-Chair; and previous service on the Naples Library Board (July 2021 - June 2024). Paul's professional career was at the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry, in Continuing Professional Education; and he continues to serve on the New York State Department of Health, Board for Professional Medical Conduct. Paul is married to our President, Trish Lambiase. He will not be a voting NHS Board Member.



U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

<https://www.naplesnyhistoricalsociety.org/events>

Watkinstown Day (More info on page 1)

Sat., June 6th — 11am - 4pm @ Old Town Square/Kiandaga Park

Did you know that as you walk through the park and several local businesses today in this part of town that you are following the footsteps of Naples founders, sometimes even into original structures? Step into the stories of Naples history in the original location of Watkinstown, the first white settlement that eventually became Naples. The Naples Historical Society will be Information Central under the tent in the Old Town Square. The Cleveland House Museum will also be open for this special day.



Bill Vierhile's 100th Birthday Celebration - YOU'RE INVITED!

Saturday, June 13th — 3 - 5pm @ Morgan Hose Building, 22 Mill St., Naples

Bill's 100th birthday would have been on June 9th, 2026 and we're remembering him with a party and the unveiling of a "laurels board" (courtesy of the Ontario County Historical Society's summer exhibit, "Changemakers in Ontario County"), along with a short tribute to Bill from the Naples Historical Society and Naples Rotary, to honor his contributions to both organizations. Join us to share stories, old photos, cake & refreshments.

Wayne Buchar will also give a quick update on the Naples Red Mill/Bill's Dream Project.



Freedom Festival 2026: Canandaigua & the Bristol Hills Celebrate Our Nation's 250th

Sat., June 13th & Sunday, June 14th — 10am - 4pm @ Levi Corser Memorial Park, Bristol, NY

Join us during this weekend-long celebration, with entertainment and activities centered on life in the Finger Lakes during our nation's earliest days, including Revolutionary and Civil War reanactor encampment, Native American history, live folk music, food vendors, crafts-people and pioneer life demonstrations. **SATURDAY:** NHS Board Member **Kim Torpey** will lead a cornhusk doll-making workshop beginning at 10am in the Harmony Circle Pavilion. (Stick around afterwards for a presentation by Haudenosaunee storyteller **Perry Ground!**) **SUNDAY:** Bristol Fun Day, the traditional town celebration with local vendors, vintage car show and Flag Day dedication ceremony. See us at the parade and stop by the NHS table to meet us in person! **FREE ADMISSION BOTH DAYS.** More details: bristolhillshistory.org/freedomfestival2026

Cleveland House Museum - Summer 2026 Open Hours:

Saturdays & Sundays, 11am - 3pm from July 11 - August 29

This year we are presenting "Naples History Through the Eye of the Quilter", a show of 12 historic quilts from our archives, ranging from a late 1880s coverlet to a 1930s quilt possibly used as mortgage payment; a quilt presented to the Village of Naples in honor of its bicentennial in 1989, depicting local landmarks and stitched by many familiar names; and several more pieces with stories to tell, including a Mystery Quilt. In researching names written in this quilt's squares, we found some are buried in local cemeteries, from 1846 onward — leading us to believe the quilt may even be pre-Civil War! In coordination with this show, we are excited to welcome acclaimed quilt artist **Pat Pauly** to present two special talks at the Cleveland House. Learn more about Pat at patpauly.com.

- Saturday, July 11th @1pm - "Naples Quilts in the Quilting Universe" with Pat Pauly
- Saturday, August 29th @1pm - "Naples Quilts in the Quilting Universe" with Pat Pauly

V.I.P. Reception

Tuesday, July 21st — 5:30 - 8:00pm @ Hometown Wine Company

A special reception to thank our "Very Important Preservationists" with food and wine, and tours of the Cleveland House Museum. Thank you to Board Members **Jun Liu** and **Mike Terry** for sponsoring this year's event. V.I.P. dues (\$250 annually) are deposited in the Capital Reserve Fund for preservation of our historic buildings (See page 3 for updates on our restoration/preservation activities.) Visit our website to learn more about VIP Membership and to sign up. *Thank You to all of our current VIP Members!*



Beth Flory
(1927 - 2018)

The printing of our Spring 2026 newsletter is sponsored by the Odell family, in memory of Naples Historical Society

Past President,
Beth Flory.



Our newsletters become an important part of our written records, and are also useful reference for grant proposals, collaborations with others and more. According to our recent public survey, the **2 top ways that people learn about what we're up to are Facebook and our printed newsletters.**



Would you like to sponsor the printing of one of our newsletters? Please contact us at NHSNYinfo@gmail.com. We have 2 more planned for 2026 (August & December), with printing estimated to be \$225 for each.

Visit our website

NaplesNYHistoricalSociety.org

- To make your tax-deductible gift, click on the DONATE button
- Click on HISTORICAL ARTICLES to check out our fun & fascinating reads
- Bookmark EVENTS & check back often!



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[naples_ny_historical_society](https://www.instagram.com/naples_ny_historical_society)



on YouTube:
"Naples Historical Society Naples, NY"



on Facebook: @naplesnyhistory
"Naples NY Historical Society"



Join our Facebook Group!
"Cleveland House Museum - Naples NY History"

Our Mission: The mission of the Naples NY Historical Society is to promote a deeper interest in the history of Naples by preserving our historic buildings, curating historical materials, doing historical research, and offering educational presentations and programs.

Our Vision: The vision of the Naples Historical Society is to spread a love of the Naples community by preserving our local history, discovering new knowledge together, and sharing our resources with all.

