



### An Exhibit of Antique Christmas Artifacts

The Black Rock Historical Society would like to wish all of you reading this a very Happy Holiday and we extend these well-wishes to your friends and family. You are invited to our holiday ornament exhibit on display from now until January 9th, 2016. We would love to see what our neighbors have, so if you have any older holiday ornaments or decorations and would like to bring them in to be featured in our exhibit, we would greatly appreciate it.



*Our Holiday display in our museum has a collection of antique and recent decorations that come together to create a very festive display.*

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Holiday Ornament Exhibit **Page 1**

Fall 2015 Speaker Series **Pages 1, 3 & 4**

US Army "Ike Jacket" **Page 2**



*Ruth Hawthorne reading about the rich history of Riverside High School. Ruth complimented her vast knowledge of Riverside HS by using photos, old yearbooks and other school related documents in her lecture.*

### Fall 2015 Speaker Series

Have you ever heard anything about the thriving snake oil trade in Buffalo in the late 19th early 20th century? What about the evolution of brewing beer in our city? At the Black Rock Historical Society we have been offering an exploration of topics such as these at our bi-weekly speaker series that kicked off on October 1st and finished on November 19th. The purpose of these events was to inform people of the rich history of the region and to create awareness of our efforts to

preserve local history. The diverse roster of

speakers that we have offered thus far have helped create a patchwork history of the Black Rock-Riverside area. Our first speaker of 2015 was Ruth Hawthorne, the Alumni President of Riverside High School. A local resident of the area for much of her life, Ruth lectured about the origins of Riverside High school as well as its history through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The presentation was complemented by a series of historic photos and documents surrounding Riverside HS and the community that created it. *Continued on Page 3.*

## United States Army “Ike Jacket”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower is remembered today for his time served as the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, and his great efforts as Supreme Allied Commander of Europe during World War Two. Although these are some of the more famous bullet points on his resume, he also helped design and engineer an army field jacket for troops which was used for nearly two decades. Although this may seem like a trivial accomplishment, when one understands that this jacket would travel everywhere with the soldier and also help carry their gear, its importance becomes much more pronounced. In our Black Rock Historical Society Museum, at 1902 Niagara Street, we had an “Ike Jacket” on display during our veterans day tribute during the month of November. This particular jacket was worn by Stanley Joseph Wrzesien of Germain Street. A veteran of the US Army, Wrzesien served during World War Two. Today his jacket remains in wonderful condition, and when looked at, its functionality can be easily seen. Tailored out of wool with a short body design and large breast pockets, the jacket not only was comfortable and warm, but was also extremely functional for the wearer. Seeing its debut in the European Theater in November of 1944, the jacket was a part of the Army inventory until 1960. Worn during World War Two and the Korean Conflict, tens if not hundreds of thousands of these “Ike Jackets” have been worn by our American Army Veterans. As



*The short torso design gave the soldier wearing the jacket a great amount of flexibility when moving and the large breast pockets provided a convenient storage space for materials of military and civilian nature alike.*

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*The photo above was some of the artifacts and documents we had on display during the month of November as a tribute to our veterans*

great as the jacket may have been, it is not the jacket that we today hold with reverence, it is the servicemen who wore it and defended our nation across the World. Continuing our tribute to the veterans of the armed service, a variety of artifacts from multiple different conflicts were on display in our museum for the entire month of November. After a call for military artifacts to the surrounding community we received a great amount of support and had a number of people bring us a variety of different things. We would like to say thank you for anyone who supported us and brought in artifacts.



*Fall Speaker Series Continued from Page 1*

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, Daniel Burns, a lifelong resident of Black Rock and the care-taker of St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, charted the history of the Black Rock Riverside neighborhood and the rich German heritage that is woven through it. The following presenter was Dr. Timothy Madigan, associate professor of philosophy at St. John Fisher College, and great-grandson of John McMahon, “The RattleSnake King” of Buffalo. Dr. Madigan entertained a crowd of over thirty people on his great-grandfather’s exploits as he traveled around the Western New York area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century selling snake oil. John ‘Mack’ Mahon, who wore a coat made of rattlesnake skins, was brought back to life by the seasoned lecturing ability and great knowledge of Dr. Madigan. At



*Daniel Burns speaking to a crowd on the German heritage of the Black Rock area.*



*Dr. Timothy Madigan speaking at the Black Rock Historical Society. A lecture that contained information on genealogy, snake oil and the 19th century pharmaceutical world of Upstate New York was heard by a crowd of local visitors.*

the Veterans Day Celebration that we hosted, veteran and local artist Ralph Sirianni lectured about working as an art therapist at the Veterans Hospital of Buffalo, and his work in creating multiple different veterans monuments around the country. A veteran of the war in Vietnam as a member of the

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Marines, Sirianni uses his experiences there as well as his work in the VA to create expressive art designed to convey the experiences and emotions that veterans may feel. Mr. Sirianni has created multiple different pieces of art dedicated to veterans that can be seen around the city of Buffalo. The final speaker was Ethan Cox, the president of Community Beer Works and the co-author of *Buffalo Beer: The History of Brewing in the Nickle City*. Ethan lectured about the history of brewing in the city of Buffalo. The enthusiasm which he displayed for his craft was truly entertaining and he provided our attendees with a thorough and interesting lecture.



*Ralph Sirianni with his art work lecturing to a group of people in our museum on the positive effects that art therapy can produce.*



*Ethan Cox speaking on the history of brewing in Buffalo with a Power Point accompanying his lecture which was filled with photos of old breweries and brew masters from around Buffalo.*



## Black Rock Historical Society

1902 Niagara Street Buffalo, New York, 14207

Winter Museum Hours

Friday 10:00am-4:00pm

Saturday 10:00am-2:00pm

Or by appointment

For any inquiries please contact us at

[info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com)

### Find us online!

[www.blackrockhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.blackrockhistoricalsociety.com)



[Facebook.com/Blackrockhistorical](https://www.facebook.com/Blackrockhistorical)



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We at the Black Rock Historical Society would like to formally thank all those people who came out to attend our Fall 2015 Lecture Series. As a non for profit organization we survive off of the support of the community. We hope you will continue to show support by attending of Spring Lecture Series which we are in the process of organizing. If you have any ideas of what would make for an interesting topic for our lectures we would be glad to take any suggestions. Contact us via our email link to the left with any ideas, suggestions or concerns.



*Most easily identified as the current neighborhoods of Black Rock and Grant Amherst the heritage and culture of these communities has been tied together from the beginning, before the City of Buffalo when it was the Village of Black Rock. Telling this story is the culmination of many years of work to define and recognize these long forgotten neighborhoods.*



Everything that we have in our collection comes from the surrounding community in one way or another and we would like to thank all those people who have donated or loaned us items for our museum. Although we do not have room in one news article to thank everyone who has donated items, we would like to begin to show our gratitude to some of you who have.

John Glabien  
Judith Ayer  
Mary Ann & Joe Kedron  
Timothy & Tammy Lyman  
Marilyn McKenzie  
Benton J. Hiltz II  
Doris Watson  
Richard & Doreen DeBoth  
Patricia Tobin  
Michele Graves

This is but a partial list of those who have been kind enough to donate their own personal possession to us. We hope that the support we have enjoyed from the community since our establishment will continue so we can remain operational and continue reviving the history of the Black Rock, Riverside and Grant Amherst, and West Hertel areas of Buffalo.

Origin of information featured in newsletter articles

#### Web Sites:

<https://www.facebook.com/RiversideHighSchoolBuffaloAlumniAssociation>

<https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/cool-things-ike-jacket/10216>

<http://www.communitybeerworks.com/>

<http://sirianniart.com/wp/>

#### Lectures:

Dr. Timothy Madigan, Ruth Hawthorne, Daniel Burns, Ethan Cox and Ralph Sirianni