

# Pratt House News

July 2019

Friends of History In Fulton, N.Y., Inc.



## 2018-2019

### Board of Directors

- LaVerne DeLand, President
- Paula Rohn, 1st Vice Pres.
- Jean Lewis, 2nd Vice Pres.
- Carol Dexter, Secretary
- Sarah Conley, Corr. Secretary
- Sue Brown, Treasurer
- Angela Bernat
- Cindy Bickford
- Gail Chesbro
- Sue Ebert
- Carole Farfaglia
- Ed Farfaglia
- John Finocchiaro
- Marjorie Julian
- Karen Obrien
- Fred Sumner
- Stephen Wise

### Staff

- Theresa Jones, Museum Coord.
- Alec Seymour, Displays
- Adam Babcock, Maintenance

### Handicap Accessible

A ramp off the driveway to the side door enables handicapped access to the Pratt House. (During the winter months, however, we are closed and there is no handicap access.)

### Pratt House Hours

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday:  
10a to 3p - Saturday: 12:30 to 2:30  
(Jul & Aug only, beginning Jul 13)

Or, call us at 315-598-4616 to make an appointment.

## Remembering When It All Began

By Elma Smith  
Former FOH President

I can still recall that frigid winter night in early 1979 when my husband, Willson P. Smith, and I answered Alan Drohan's request and appeared at the Johns Wells Pratt House at 177 South First Street, Fulton. The house had been owned and occupied by three generations of Pratt's, a feat that would be hard to beat in Fulton. The house was empty, the last of the Pratt family to occupy the home, John, having died and his wife, Helen, who was ill, having moved to the Hayes Farm on Route 48 North, to live with relatives.

The Pratt property, running from South First Street to South Second Street (Route 481), recently had been sold to a developer, who brought Burger King, another fast food restaurant, to Fulton. Many Fultonians were heartsick to think that this old, historic, Italianate style home on South First Street, built in 1863, would also be lost to "urban renewal."

In previous years, Fulton had lost many of the historic and memory-filled old South First Street homes of its wealthy early industrialists and business owners. Gone were the Gardner house, home of the Fulton Citizen's Club, and later the Knights of Columbus; the Hunter house, home of the owners of the Hunter Arms factory and the Hunter Fan factory; the home of Charles G. Case, who was an abolitionist and whose home at 133 South First Street probably sheltered escaped slaves, and was later the home of the Elks Club; and the Osborn House at 139 South First Street, which housed many doctors' offices and today houses the Municipal offices for the City of Fulton. Not only were the homes gone, but also the memories of the accomplishments of their owners were fading fast.

All of these thoughts must have been on the minds of the many people who gath-

*Continued on pg. 2.*

## It's Time to Party!

### 40th Anniversary Open House Celebration

Join the Friends of History's Board of Directors as we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Friends of History in Fulton and of the John Wells Pratt House Museum

We will be celebrating and enjoying our 40th Anniversary at all of our events throughout the year. In addition, we are planning to have a special event this summer just to celebrate this special occasion. We invite all of you to join us to reminisce about the 40 years of success that our members and the community have made possible. Without their dedication and support, the Friends of History and the Pratt House Museum would not have flourished and would not be the important part of the Fulton community that it is today.



**Remembering When it All Began—Cont.**

ered in the bone chilling cold inside the unheated Pratt House that evening.

The house was completely empty and the chill made it difficult to concentrate on the purpose of this viewing. There were few lights inside and the darkness and height of the ceilings made it difficult to picture how the rooms actually looked.

I remember walking into the kitchen and seeing the old Andes range, wishing it had a roaring fire going in its firebox so that I could hold my freezing hands over the grates and warm them. I think it was that thought of the warmth that could come from that Andes range that sold me on the idea of saving this house. No one stayed to chat; it was much too cold for that.

The Burger King Franchiser announced that it no longer needed all the Pratt property. The house facing Second Street would be left standing and the barn behind the house would be destroyed. Ideas began to circulate among the people in the community, many meetings held and phone calls made. A purchase price for the house was made known, but the problem remained as to how the money would be obtained. It was decided that a Historical Society for Fulton should be established and Alan Drohan and Marian Stanton consulted with my husband on forming a non-profit corporation to be known as the Fulton Historical Society. The Historical Society was to obtain dues paying members, the members would elect directors and officers of the corporation, who in turn could raise money, own property and sign mortgage indebtedness instruments, and conduct the business of a historical society. My husband turned the formation of a corporation over to a new, young lawyer employed at his office, Bruce Clark.

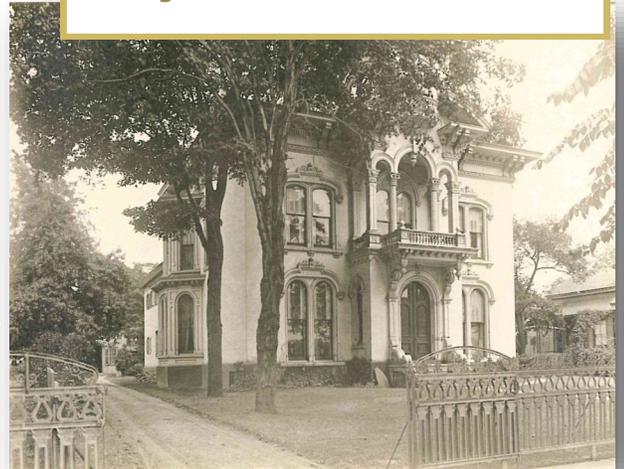
Bruce learned that the corporate name of “Fulton Historical Society” was not available for a corporate name, as it had been previously assigned to the Fulton County Historical Society. The next name suggested “*Friends Of History In Fulton, N. Y., Inc.*” was available for corporate use and thus the New York State Secretary of State incorporated that name and a historical society for the City of Fulton and surrounding area was born. Other names have been used to designate the historical society in Fulton through the years, but the correct name on the documents from the Secretary of State is as shown in quotations above.

Percy Patrick, the Mayor of Fulton in 1979, donated one year of his salary as Mayor to the Friends Of History as a down payment on the purchase of the Pratt home. He also arranged for the Urban Renewal Office of the City of Fulton to rent the first floor of the Pratt House for ten

**Many volunteers came forth to clean, paint, build, re-wire, and do many needed things to turn a home into a museum for local history.**

years. With income from a monthly rental, the Fulton Savings Bank was able to grant a mortgage to the Friends Of History In Fulton, N. Y., Inc. for the purchase of the Pratt House. Members of the community became charter members of the new historical society and their dues and

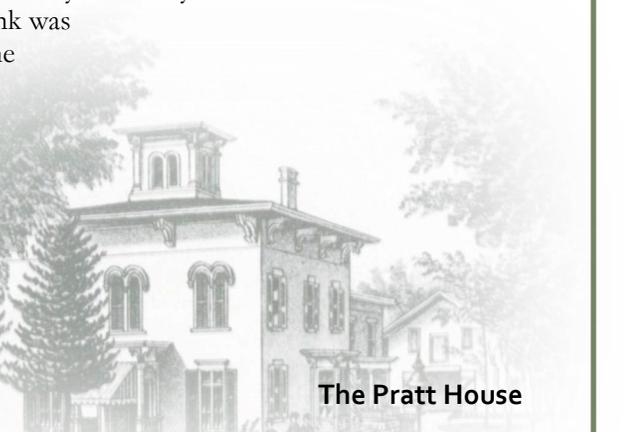
**The Gardner House, at 45 South First Street, became the Citizens Club and later the Knights of Columbus.**



donations used to operate the society and house.

Many volunteers came forth to clean, paint, build, re-wire and do many needed things to turn a home into a museum for local history. To show appreciation and display the Pratt House to the public, Peter Palmer and other volunteers donated furniture of the Victorian era and other furnishings for each room in the house. Ladies and young girls dressed in Victorian clothing and the Pratt House was on display for its first time as a museum house. The grand opening was a huge success. After the opening, the furniture and furnishings were returned to their owners. Urban Renewal employees used the downstairs and a museum was created upstairs. Many wonderful displays of Fulton

history and



**The Pratt House**

# \* Additional Thoughts \*

By Alan S. Drohan, Esq.  
Former FOH President

With Elma's knowledge and acquiesce, I offer the following two additional recollections as an addition to that part of her wonderful reflection about the "preview night at the Pratt House."

While I have yet to correctly recall or establish the exact date, I remember that I had asked some fifty invitees to come to the Pratt house at 5:00 PM so that they could tour the edifice and - hopefully - see fit to preserve this fine Victorian Italianate structure and to consider establishing an historical society for the City of Fulton. Helen Pratt had moved to the Hayes Farm several months prior thereto, and - what with the house being vacant along with winter coming - the heat and the water in the building had been turned off in addition to all of the furnishings having been disbursed to the family or sold. However, the electricity still was in service with a couple of wall fixtures and "bare light bulbs hanging from the ceiling," providing faint illumination. As Elma has stated, the evening was cold and damp with my memory being that most of the ladies were wearing their mink coats that then were so much in fashion.

Knowing the "frosty" conditions in the house, I had asked several best friends - Barbara Clark, Eleanor Vayner, Marian Stanton, and the late Jean Ingamells - to round up and drop off earlier that day their coffee pots so that at least something hot could be served. I set up a folding table in the south drawing room earlier that day, connected the pots to extension cords, and secured water from the house directly across the street that I owned

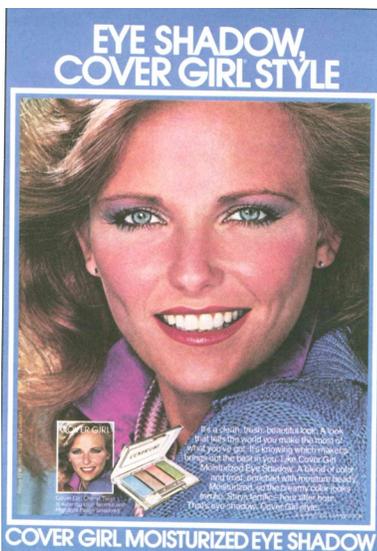
where my now late parents had resided at the time. After Mayor Patrick and then City Attorney Fred Sumner had arrived, I stood on the staircase leading to the second floor to give some remarks to everyone gathered in the hallway. Thereafter, and as everyone began walking through the house again, I signaled for the coffee pots to be turned on. Yup, I assume you surmise what happened - a rather big "bang" rang out with the house being plunged into total darkness since the electrical surge from plugging in the coffee pots had blown all of the circuit breakers in the basement. So much for hot coffee to drink!

As would be expected, everyone who was left in attendance then began leaving. My four friends and I subsequently assessed what to do with the unmade pots of coffee when one of them said "something just brushed against my shoulder." Several more "swooshes" into the south drawing room ensued with it becoming readily apparent that numerous bats were upset about their habitat being invaded or perhaps about not having been properly invited to the preview. But not to worry ... the five of us promptly left; there was no need to turn off the lights since none were functioning, I locked the front door, all of us went out for a drink, and the coffee pot disaster got cleaned up the next day in the daylight without another visit from the bats.

As an aside and probably unknown to Elma, I remember that Willson - her late husband - on the way out the door that evening said to me something like the fol-

*Continued on pg. 7.*

As most of you may know, the Friends of History in Fulton was incorporated in 1979. Pictured here are some memories of things that were happening that year.



## News Headlines

**The United States and the People's Republic of China establish full diplomatic relations.**

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**In response to the hostage situation in Tehran, President Jimmy Carter orders a halt to all oil imports into the United States from Iran.**

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**The eradication of the smallpox virus is certified, making smallpox the first and only human disease driven to extinction to date.**

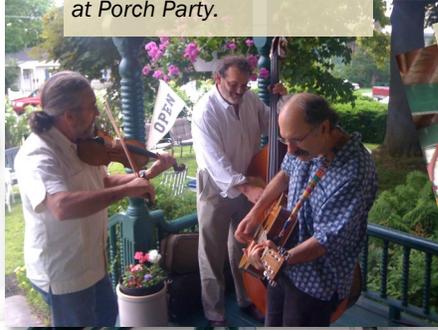
More memories on page 7.

# 40 Years of



FOH President Marion Stanton  
1979-1980, 1992, 1996,  
1997; 1993-1995 Co-  
President

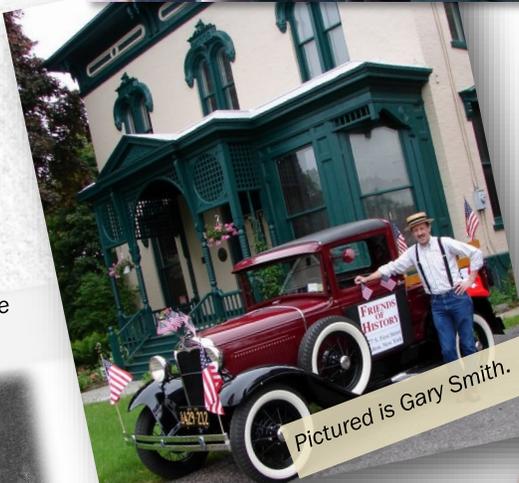
"Salt Potato" entertainment  
at Porch Party.



Hunter Arms Weekend. Guests  
attended chicken BBQ.



FOH President Mark Fruce  
1981



Pictured is Gary Smith.

Les Weldin trying on  
Victorian clothes?



Karen &  
dressed a  
Pratt for



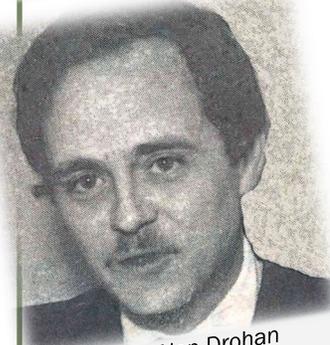
FOH President Jane Kurtz  
1982-1984



Marion Stanton receiving the "Elma  
Smith Award" from Alan Drohan.



Mary Ellen Ross, Merry & Dennis Gantley



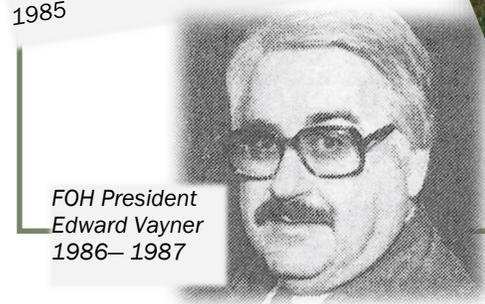
FOH President Alan Drohan  
1985



Fulton Community Band  
with Carol Fox directing.

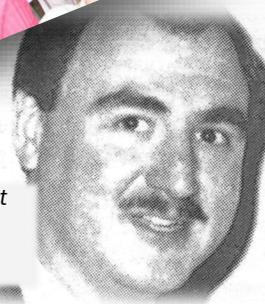


Alec Seymour (left) installing the EPA Fund sign that still  
stands in the front corner of the Pratt House.



FOH President  
Edward Vayner  
1986-1987

FOH President  
Paul Foster  
1988-1989



FOH President  
Alec Seymour  
1990-1991



# Memories

Bea LaClair (right), War of 1812 Program.

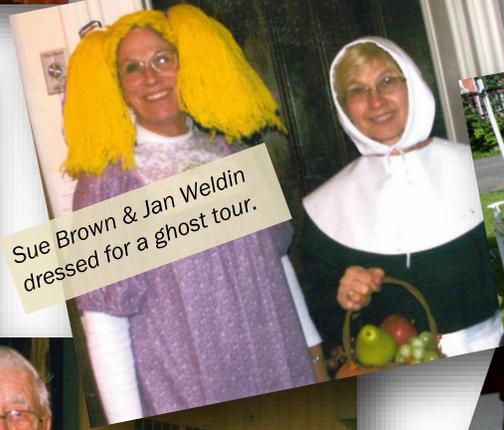


Jean Lewis, Gail Chesbro & Paula Rohn.



FOH President LaVerne DeLand 2017–Present

...en & Jim O'Brien dressed as Mr. & Mrs. ...tt for ghost tour.



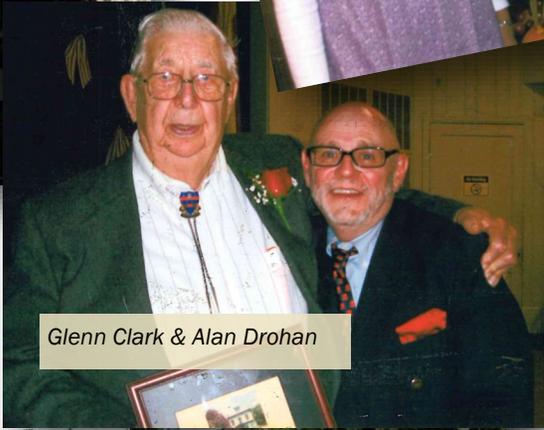
Sue Brown & Jan Weldin dressed for a ghost tour.



Sharon Santoro, Sarah Conley & Jim Leo, Porch Party 2011.



FOH President Paula Rohn 2006–2016



Glenn Clark & Alan Drohan



Marion Stanton making a phone call on a telephone donated to the Pratt House.



FOH President Elma Smith 2001–2005



Stephen Wise & Fred Sumner Porch Party 2011.

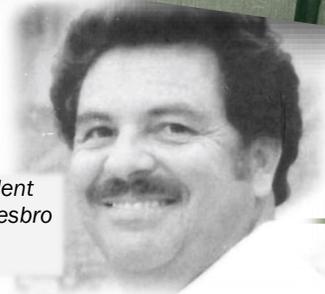


FOH President Mary O'Brien 2000

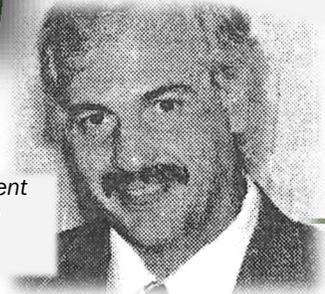
Rosemary Cook 1993–1995 Co-President



FOH President Gordon Chesbro 1998



FOH President John Paeno 1999



*Remembering When it All Began—Cont.*

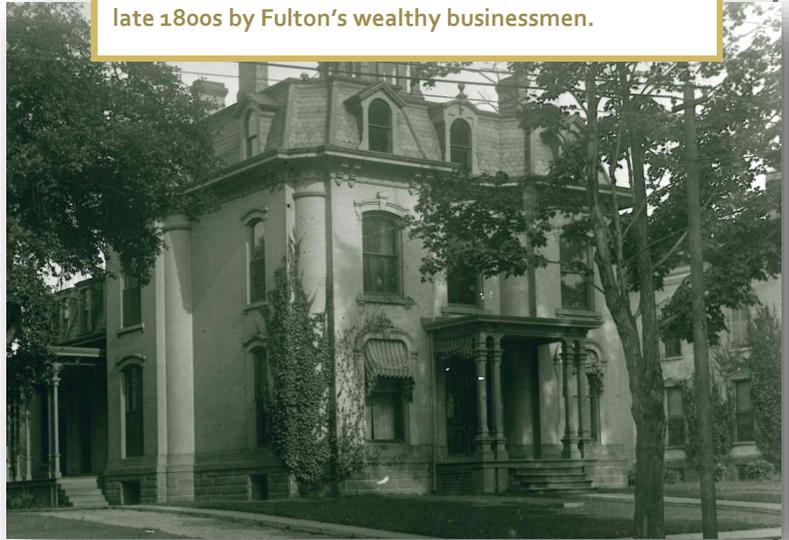
memorabilia were created, some permanent and many changing. Most important, many educational meetings were, and continue to be, held to educate the public about our local history. Many fundraising activities have been held through the years to help pay operating expenses.

For many years, the Directors of the Friends of History held an annual “Winter Warming Cocktail Party” in remembrance of the cold winter night in 1979 when the idea for a museum at the John Wells Pratt House was born.

As the Friends Of History In Fulton, N. Y., Inc. begins its 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, I look back with gratefulness in my heart for all that has been accomplished by so many volunteers and paid employees, year after year, and through good times and bad, to make this organization an integral part of the Fulton Community. Every dollar donated by every member and friend was wisely used and the organization is stronger for your benevolence. Today, the community thinks of the Friends of History as the place to donate their Fulton memorabilia, knowing that it will be cared for and shared with future generations of proud Fultonians. The Society has received the recognition from the community that it so richly deserves.

On this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, please remember all those who have gone before us who worked to make this Historical Society a success, and be thankful for all those who will come after us to continue the work. The Fulton Community has truly proven that they are *Friends of History*.

The Hunter House, at 173 South First Street, and where the owners of the Hunter Arms Company lived, was typical of the affluent homes built in the mid-to late 1800s by Fulton’s wealthy businessmen.



The Osborn House, located at 139 South First Street, was used by several physicians as an office and later torn down for the new municipal building.



The Case House, at 133 South First Street, was owned by abolitionist Charles G. Case. Escaped slaves were likely sheltered in this house. Later the house was purchased by the Elks Club.

*Fulton's Friends of History were honored on their 40th anniversary at Fulton's Common Council meeting. Pictured are: from left, back row, David Ritchie, Alan Drohan, Larry Macner, Sue Brown, Samuel Vono, LaVerne DeLand (president), Ed Farfaglia, Carole Farfaglia, and Sarah Conley. Front row, left to right, Donald Patrick, Jr., Paula Rohn, Mayor Ron Woodward, Elma Smith, and Carol Dexter. Two others are unidentified. Photo courtesy of Randy Pellis.*



Source: Oswego County Today

The Fulton Common Council and Mayor Ron Woodward honored Fulton's Friends of History on the 40th anniversary of their formation for having "endeavored to preserve and protect historical artifacts, publications, and other archival material of local interest to the city of Fulton and adjacent towns of Granby and Volney," and for their dedication to "keeping the history of Fulton alive and fresh on our minds."

Woodward proclaimed the month of May Historical Observation Month "in commemoration of the spirit of the community that has kept the history of Fulton and the adjacent towns of Granby and Volney alive for the past 40 years and will continue to do so for years to come."



**\* Additional Thoughts \*—Cont.**

lowing: "Alan, good luck with these ideas ... you and everyone else are going to need it ... but, I bet these two things eventually will come to fruition." And to actual fruition they indeed have come, with these being the preservation of the Pratt House along with the establishment and conducting therein of an Historical Society for the City of Fulton and our surrounding areas.

Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to each and everyone – and in lasting remembrance to those having passed – who have helped in making both of these two goals a reality through their efforts and financial support. A job "well done!" Yes, even with the cold and an electrical disaster and bats! On that fateful evening, a journey was begun that reached its initial destination. But that journey goes on for the perpetuation of those attained goals through the efforts of our Board of Directors, our staff, our volunteers, and our membership. Those efforts were evident in the past - and are evident at the present - and will be evident for the future as to the continuation of our goals.

My last comment on this auspicious occasion:

***I cannot wait to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup>!!!***

More memories. It's funny what was thought to be a "small" computer then... and now.



**"Keeping our prices current was a problem until we got this small IBM computer."**

"Frequent changes in steel prices make updating our price lists a vital part of our business," says Don Silpe, president of Money's Control Back, a Bloomfield, Connecticut specialty steel processor. "The task was so time-consuming, we could update our lists only once a week. Now we just current pricing information in our IBM 5110 computer and generate a new list in minutes.

"The 5110 gives me the information to make faster more effective decisions," continues Mr. Silpe. "It helps me stay on top of inventory and gives me the sales analysis I need to manage my company."

The IBM 5110 Computing System is designed to meet the needs of a growing business, with a price that starts under \$10,000. It's so simple to operate, your own people can learn to use it in just a few short days.

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A small computer can make a big difference. **IBM**



## Pratt House Museum

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**Special Anniversary Edition 2019**

**2019 marks the 40th anniversary of the Friends of History in Fulton**

## 2019 Dates to Remember

July 13—40th Anniversary Party

August 23 & 24—Hunter Arms Homecoming

September 6 & 7—Trash-2-Treasure Yard Sale

October 6—Chicken BBQ, Bullhead Point

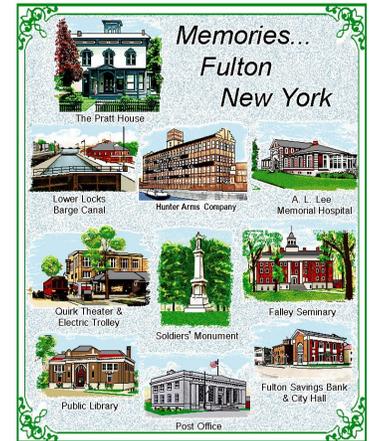
December 8—Punch Party Open House

December 2 -13—Parade of Trees



The John Wells Pratt House Museum

**S**top by the Pratt House Museum. We have books about Fulton's history and nice Fulton tapestry throw blankets, as depicted in photo. Also, we have Fulton High School yearbooks for most years. Some of these items also can be purchased at the Village Shops in Fulton.



### Our Mission Statement

The organization, established in 1979, is dedicated to the preservation of the history of Fulton and the adjacent towns of Granby and Volney. This mission will be approached in the following ways:

1. Acquire and preserve significant artifacts, publications, and other archival material of local interest.
2. Maintain as much of the historical integrity of the Pratt House as possible, while leaving space for historical exhibits.
3. Provide historical and genealogical resources for researchers and interested members of the general public.
4. Develop and provide community outreach programs.