

My name is Peter Pfohl and I was appointed in January 2025 as Historian for the Village of Youngstown. A public Historian is an officer of the municipality, appointed each year by the mayor, and is required to serve all constituents of the municipality without regards to partisan politics. New York is the only state that requires a public historian in every municipality. This law, adopted by the New York State Legislature in 1919 also defines my responsibilities:

There are 4 State defined responsibilities:

1. Research and Writing – The first and primary is interpretation of the past. This involves research and writing on aspects of your municipality for publishing.
2. Teaching and Public Presentations – In a variety of ways, the Historian serves as a resource, connecting people to my local community's history.
3. Historic Preservation – Historians are advocates for Historic Preservation and a resource to my appointing authority on questions related to the same.
4. Organization, Advocacy and Tourism Promotion – Historians *may be asked* to organize and direct commemoration of historical anniversaries, participate in other civic or patriotic observations, act as a fund raiser or grant writer for historical programs and support local tourism.

There are also clearly defined “as a Historian you are not” –

1. An antiquarian – simply a collector of facts
2. An Archivist or Records Management Officer
3. A Genealogist for hire
4. A part of a Historical Agency Staff

In addition to the state law's mandates, I have familiarized myself with the expectations of the Village Board, with the Village Office and Historical Museum Staffs and how each may assist me, with the Town of Porter Historical Society, and with “Veteran Historians” Pete Ames (Town of Niagara) and Kate Emerson (Niagara County Historian).

The Village of Youngstown and the Town of Porter have been home to a variety of historically documented events, highlighting the issues and people involved and their impact on the settlement and growth of our communities.

I am looking forward to fulfilling my responsibilities and expectations. I can be contacted at villagehistorian@youngstownnewyork.us, and welcome interaction with the community.

Sources

New York State's Historians Literature (**LAW 57.07**)