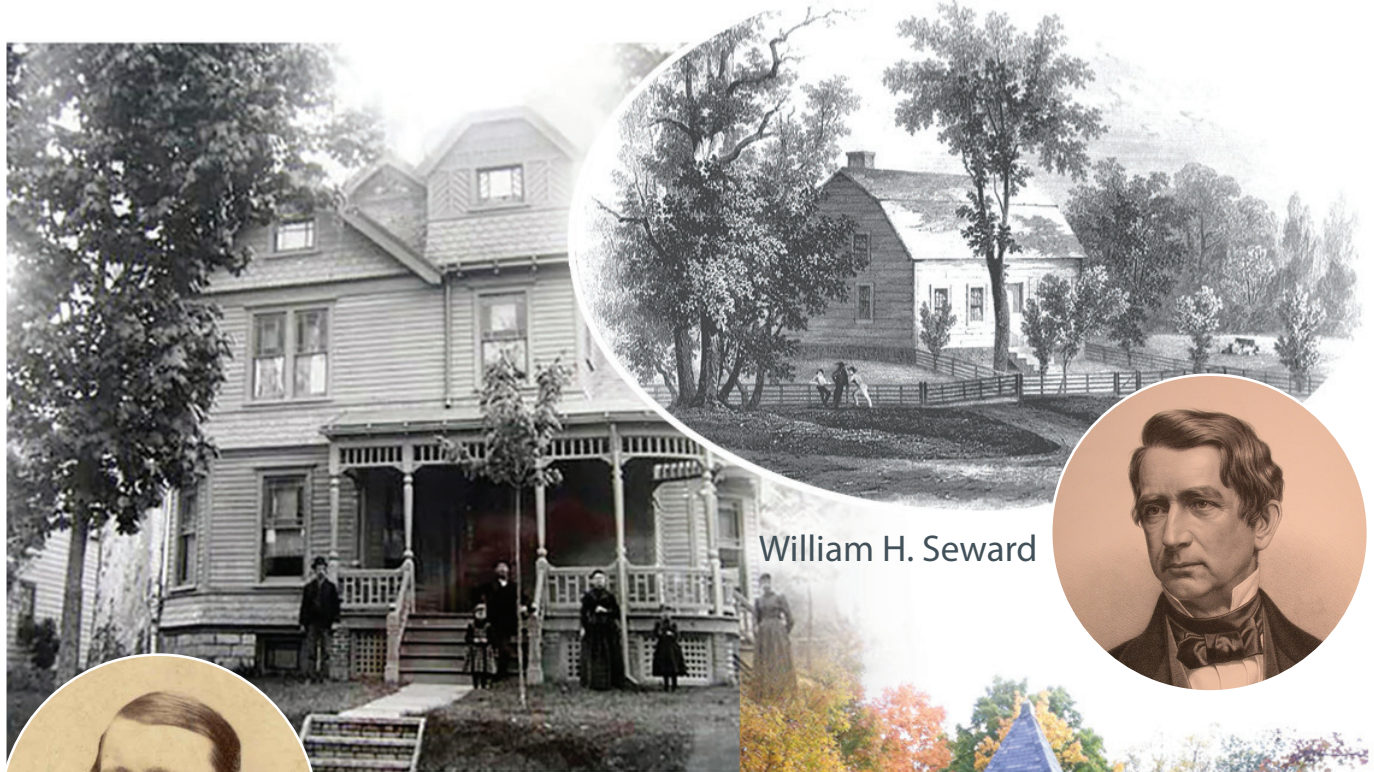


The Seward/Mapes Homestead

Orange County, New York



William H. Seward



William E. Mapes



North Main Street
Florida, New York

A National Treasure Worth Preserving



**The Seward/Mapes Homestead
Restoration Committee**

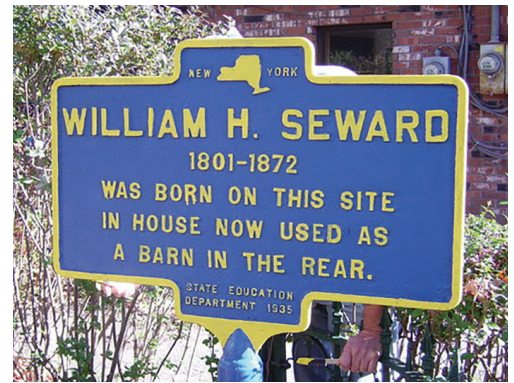
Seward Homestead, Inc.

2022

Introduction

In 2010, a two acre parcel of property in the center of the Village of Florida, Orange County, was entrusted to the Village by the Town of Warwick. The Village of Florida is a municipality within the Town of Warwick. The site had been largely neglected for nearly fifteen years, but was deemed to have significant historic value. It is what remains of the birthplace of **William Henry Seward**, former Governor and Senator of New York, Secretary of State in the Lincoln administration and driving force behind the purchase of Alaska in 1867. On the same land is another house, known as the Mapes House named after **Mortimer Mapes**, the man who had it built for his family in 1887. It is a Queen Anne style Victorian with many of its original features still intact, having served as a funeral parlor for a good part of the last century.

As a native son, William Henry Seward is a source of pride to Florida residents. **The Seward/Mapes Homestead**, as the property came to be called, is also adjacent to the **S. S. Seward Institute**, the high school that was founded in 1846 by Seward's father, **Samuel Sweezey Seward**. Together, the Institute, Seward's birthplace and the Mapes house constitute a complex of historic buildings within 50 yards of each other. It has great potential as a civic and learning center which can preserve and celebrate an important period of American History, while nurturing civic pride and education.

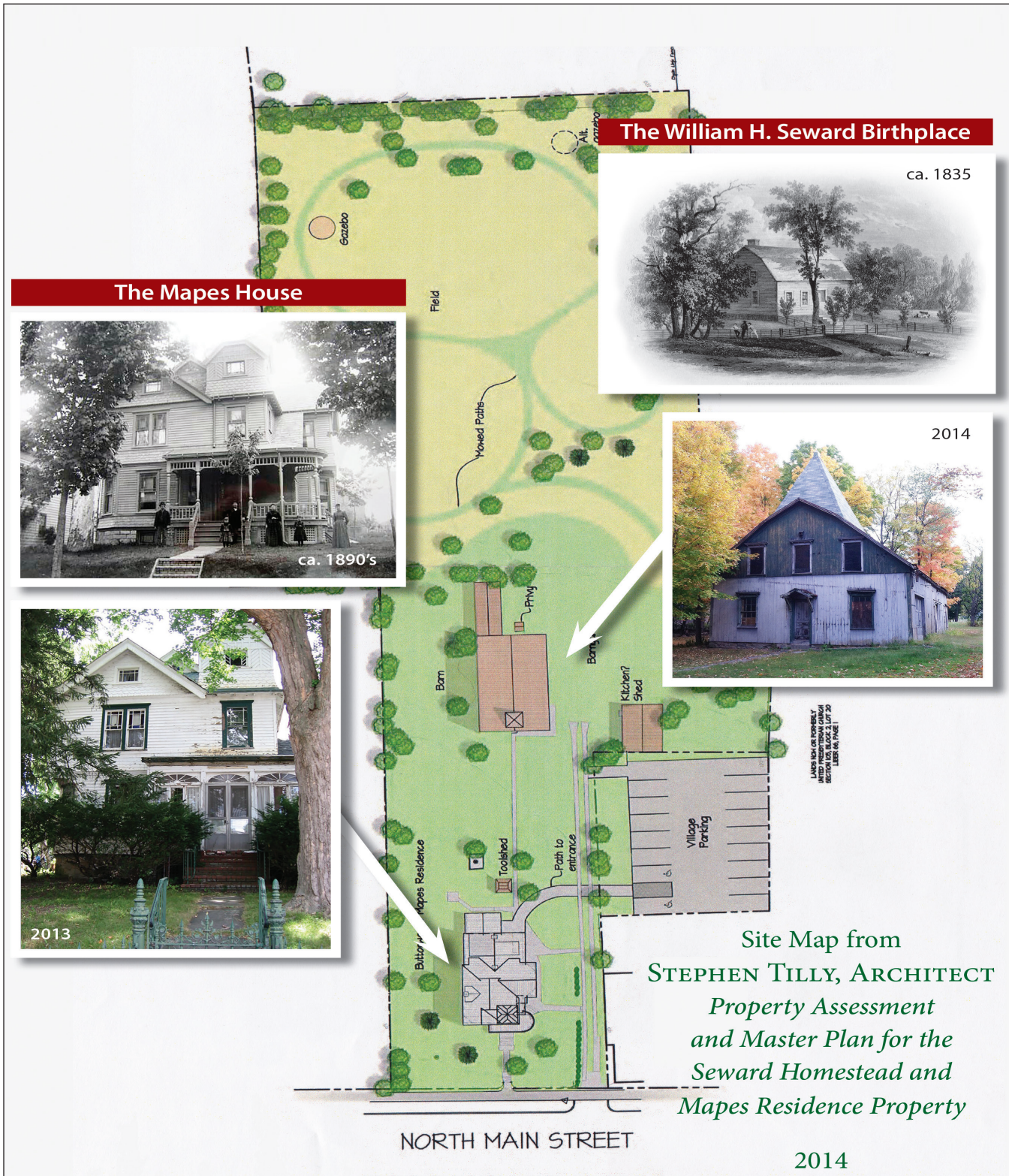


In 2010, a group of local citizens formed **The Seward/Mapes Homestead Committee** to function as a stewardship organization for the property, including the remnants of the Seward birthplace, and became incorporated as **Seward Homestead, Inc.** In 2012, the Village of Florida Board of Trustees hired renowned **Stephen Tilly Architects** to develop a site plan and oversee restoration efforts on the Mapes House. The organization became a tax exempt 501(c3) organization and is registered with the New York State Attorneys Office.



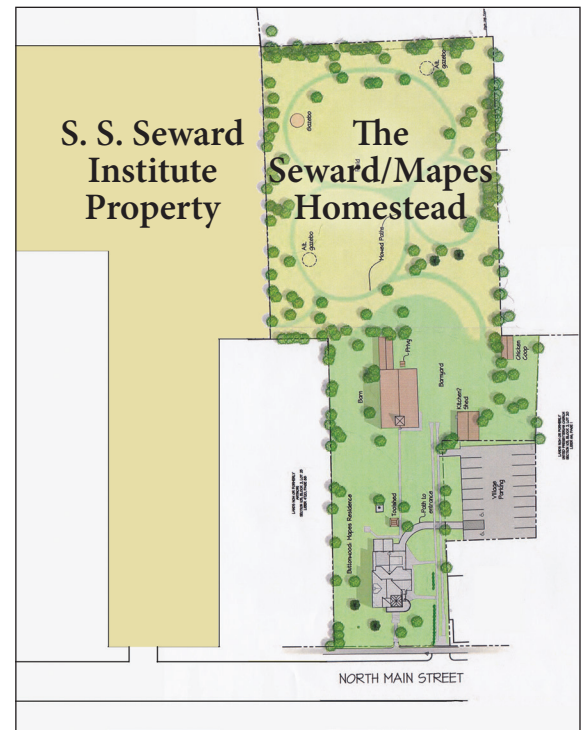
2014. A few members of the Seward/Mapes Homestead Committee take a break on the porch of the Mapes House.

The Seward/Mapes Homestead



A diagram of the Seward/Mapes Homestead. The primary buildings of interest are inset to show their locations on the property. There are also two outbuildings on the grounds: the "kitchen" shed and a structure (not shown) that served as a chicken coop in the 20th Century.

Beginning in the fall of 2011, under the direction of Village of Florida building inspector Adrian Mateosian, volunteers began the difficult task of cleaning up the long neglected property. Besides cleaning out the Mapes House, members of the **Seward/Mapes Homestead Restoration Committee** also cleaned out “The Barn” (the Seward birthplace) and two outbuildings associated with the homestead. One of them served as a chicken coop and was surrounded by a wire fence enclosure which included rabbit hutches and small animal pens. Another structure, referred to as “the kitchen”, remained untouched until the Fall of 2015. There was a wooded area behind the barn and a waist-high field that also needed to be cleared. The past four years have largely been devoted to an extensive cleanup of the buildings and grounds accompanied by a stabilization of the structures to prevent further deterioration. The Mapes house currently has electricity and is dehumidified, as well as fully heated.



The remains of the Seward birthplace (left) as it appeared at the time of the property's acquisition from the Town of Warwick in 2010. The birthplace was originally situated at the front of the property at 23 North Main Street where the Mapes house now stands. Around 1886, Mortimer Mapes had the Seward house de-constructed to make room for his family's new home and then partially reconstructed further back on the property to serve as a barn.



Volunteers at a weekend work day in the summer of 2011

Photos by Adrian Mateosian.

The Mapes House

"Buttonwood Terrace"

The Queen Anne Style Victorian was a funeral home until the 1980's when it was turned into a family residence. After the last tenant departed, it remained unoccupied and fell into disrepair. In 2011, it was eventually proposed for landmark status by the State Historic Preservation Office because of its distinctive architecture and its importance in relation to the history of William Henry Seward's birthplace.



The Mapes House in 2011, (above) and ca. 1890 (left) within a few years of being built. The original Seward home was dismantled to make room for the new house. Parts of it were moved to the back of the Mapes property and re-purposed as a barn.



Restoration of the Victorian (below left and right) began in the late summer of 2015, with the replacement of the old roof and the reconstruction of the front porch.





Photos by Adrian Mateosian

The Mapes House has many elegant details. Among them are stained glass windows which have a modern abstract quality. One of our findings suggest that they may have been created by renowned American mosaic and stained glass artisans J. and R. Lamb Studios in the late nineteenth century.

The Seward Birthplace





The barn as seen from the southeast



Behind the barn



Inside the barn



The outbuilding known as "the kitchen".



In the late summer of 2015, volunteers began the exploration of the ground beneath the kitchen, seen in the photo directly above.

Why the Seward/Mapes Homestead Matters

The **Seward/Mapes Homestead** presents a rare opportunity in historic preservation to focus on the lives and accomplishments of two men deeply engaged in the American Civil War on different levels – one as Secretary of State in the Lincoln Administration and the other as a Union soldier in the illustrious 124th New York State volunteer regiment that fought in many horrific battles from Manassas Gap to Appomattox.

William Henry Seward (1801 – 1872)

New York State Senator (1831 -1834)

- The youngest of seven Anti-Masonic members.

New York Governor (1839 -1842)

- Favored public funding for all schools, regardless of religious or ethnic affiliations
- Supported Whig principals which promoted universal education, as well as a protective tariff. Opposed the extension of slavery and involvement in foreign wars

U. S. Senator (1849 -1861)

- Opposed the Compromise of 1850 which, among other things, enforced strict penalties for harboring runaway slaves
- Opened his house in Auburn as a safe house for runaway slaves, including Harriet Tubman
- Provided financial support to Frederick Douglass and his paper "The North Star"
- Opposed the Kansas Nebraska Act which espoused "popular sovereignty" and the possibility of the extension of slavery into new territories
- Championed internal improvements and negotiated territorial expansion with a vision of a prosperous American Empire
- Legislative parent for guano islands bill* and the funding of Cyrus Field's telegraph

U.S. Secretary of State (1861 -1869)

- Contended with the secession of seven states, commonly referred to as the Confederacy
- With President Lincoln, ordered the blockade of Confederate ports and defined Union foreign policy
- Resolved the "Trent Affair", avoiding war with Great Britain over international shipping neutrality issues
- Started the custom of publishing unclassified diplomatic correspondence for the public record
- Bolstered close diplomatic ties with Russia and steered France and England away from recognizing Confederacy
- Was a target of an assassination attempt on April 15, 1865, on the night of President Lincoln's assassination
- Under President Andrew Johnson, negotiated the purchase of Alaska and started the process of acquiring Hawaii, the Virgin Islands and the Panama Canal Zone in the interest of establishing naval bases

* The Midway Atoll, focal point of the strategically important Battle of Midway in WWII, was one of those "guano islands" territorial acquisitions



William E. Mapes (1841 – 1893)

At the age of 21, William E. Mapes enrolled in the 124th New York State Volunteers, an illustrious regiment that came to be called "The Orange Blossoms". He volunteered to serve three years and mustered in as a second lieutenant, Company B, on August 14, 1862. He was promoted to first lieutenant on February 9, 1863 and was wounded in action on May 12, 1864, at Spotsylvania Courthouse, Virginia. Mapes was mustered in as captain, Company H, on May 31, 1864. He was severely wounded, losing a leg, at Strawberry Plains, Virginia

On December 15, 1864, Captain Mapes was discharged for his wounds

After the Civil War, he married Ruth Rumsey and had 9 children. He was elected Clerk of Orange County for six years and subsequently served another six years as County Treasurer



Working With Our Community

Early on, The Seward/Mapes Homestead Committee decided to be more than a building restoration effort. We are interested in American history and want to share our enthusiasm for the subject. Since 2013 we have sponsored educational programs, often in partnership with **The Florida Union Free School District**.

Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man

October 24, 2013

Walter Stahr, author of an acclaimed new biography of William Henry Seward, presented a lecture and book signing event on Seward that drew an audience of over 130 people. Mr. Stahr had visited the area two years earlier to do research for his book and was pleased to have had the chance to visit the birthplace for the first time.

A Far Cry From Freedom: Gradual Abolition in New York (1799 to 1826)

July 7, 2014

In an event co-sponsored by the Wisner Library in Warwick, New York, author **L. Lloyd Stewart** lectured about his genealogical research as an African American descended from pre-colonial slaves as well as his book about Gradual Abolition in New York entitled "A Far Cry From Freedom". In doing so, he shed light on the world William and Frances Seward were born into, when slavery existed in New York, and heightened our appreciation of their early activism on behalf of Emancipation.

Yours For Humanity: Abby Kelley Foster

September 18, 2014

Actress **Lynn Lydick** portrayed courageous early feminist and civil rights activist Abby Kelley Foster in a one-woman play. The following day she performed at

an assembly attended by 200 Warwick High School students.

Civil War Medicine: Two Parts Guts. One Part Glory

March 19, 2015

Renown expert on civil War Medicine **Carloyn Ivanoff**, gave a graphic lecture on Civil War medicine emphasizing the fact that the war's doctors were quite accomplished for their time, saving the lives of many soldiers, including our own Capt. William E. Mapes.

Captain William Mapes and the 124th New York State Volunteers

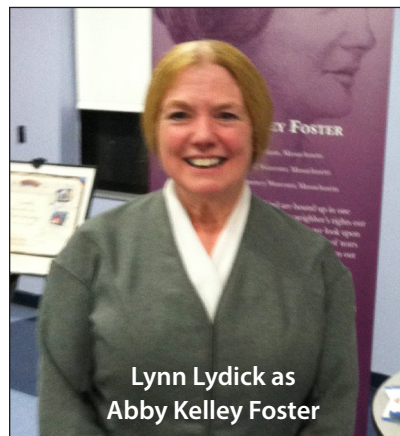
May 27, 2015

As the second in our series on the Civil War to commemorate Captain Mapes and dedicate a memorial plaque in his honor, noted "Orange Blossoms" historian and author, **Charles J. LaRocca**, delivered a lecture on Mapes' Regiment, service and feisty personality.

The Political Gymnasium: 19th Century Political Cartoons.

November 20, 2015

Professor **Andrea J. Foroughi** gave a presentation about the gender roles and social norms of 19th Century America as expressed through the art and political cartoons of the period. William H. Seward, as well as president Lincoln, were often caricatured and derided.



Lynn Lydick as
Abby Kelley Foster

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Orange County Executive Steve Neuhaus, Florida Mayor James Pawliczek, historian Carolyn Ivanoff, Orange County Clerk Annie Rabbitt, and author/historian Charles LaRocca with a mock-up of the William E. Mapes memorial.

Steve Neuhaus welcomed the event as an opportunity to speak briefly about his office's initiatives to encourage partnerships between historic sites and businesses in Orange County.

Photo courtesy of Ginny Privitar, The Chronicle



Photos by Nancy Scott



In honor of Captain William Mapes' service and sacrifices to the Union, a contingent of Civil War re-enactors representing the 124th New York State "Orange Blossoms" fire a salute as members of the American Legion Post 1250 stand guard.



Liam Mapes, descendant of Captain Mapes, stands proudly at ease in front of a temporary display of the bronze plaque honoring his illustrious ancestor.

Nurses, Soldiers, Spies and More... Meet the Women of the Civil War

June 22, 2017

Lecturer and re-enactor Yvonne Bigney proved to us that Civil War women were more than the demure, delicate belles depicted in "Gone with the Wind" and a lot of popular fiction. They were, in fact, soldiers, nurses, spies and a LOT more! The event was very well attended.

Ghosts of Gettysburg Battlefield

October 27, 2018

Historian Carolyn Ivanoff presented "Ghosts of Gettysburg Battlefield", an overview and description of the horrific three day battle. Members of the audience were left to form their own conclusions about ghostly images caught on film. In March of 2015, Carolyn presented a program on Civil War medicine.

The Seward Women



**Frances Adele
Miller Seward**
(1805 - 1865)

Frances “Fanny” Seward
(1844 - 1866)



Early this year we decided that the Seward women, **Frances and Fannie Seward**, deserve more recognition than they have received. Our programs focused on the great social issues of their day and the roles those two remarkable ladies played in them. Although she disliked politics, **Frances Seward** served in an important role as William Henry’s advisor. A free-thinker in a network of other progressive women, she supported the Women’s

Rights movement and hid runaway slaves in her basement. From 1850 to 1860, the Seward’s Auburn home was a station in the Underground Railroad.

An aspiring writer and passionate reader, **Fanny Seward’s** detailed diaries about encounters with President Lincoln, foreign diplomats, and artists bring the era to life. She shared her parent’s devotion to civil rights.

The Suffragettes

March 14, 2019

In 1848, the first women’s rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. But it wasn’t until 1920 that the 19th Amendment was ratified, giving American women the right to vote. Our guest speaker, **Carolyn Ivanoff**, presented her program in period clothing to commemorate the titanic struggle for suffrage. Told through period photos, political cartoons and editorials, Carolyn’s presentation was as engaging as her previous presentations entitled *Civil War Medicine* and *The Ghosts of Gettysburg*.

We also had displays to celebrate the remarkable lives of William Henry Seward’s wife, **Frances**, and their daughter **Fanny**. Both of these exceptional women were activists and friends of the era’s most progressive women.



Seward Day* • May 18, 2019



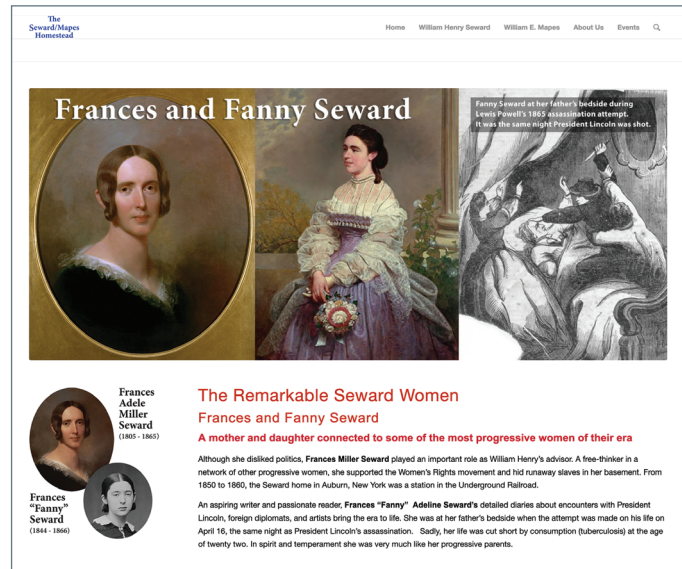
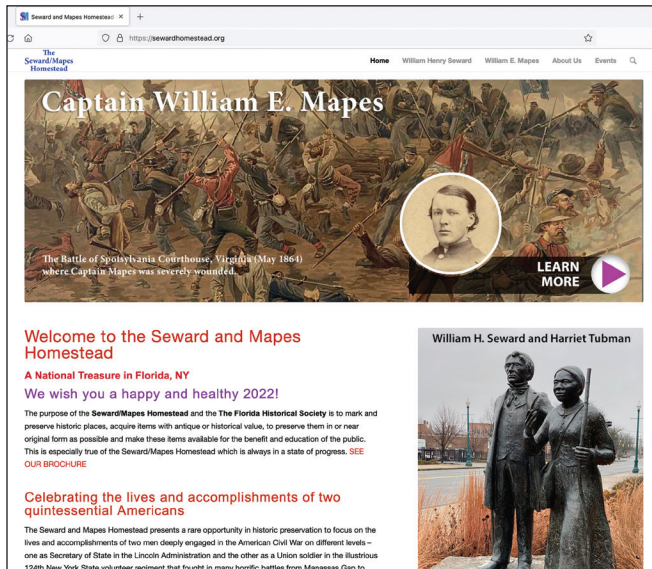
Our 29th Annual Seward Day was blessed with beautiful weather and two time-travelers; William Henry and Frances Seward, portrayed by reenactors **Steve and Irene Curcio**. The event began with a wreath laying ceremony at the Seward Memorial, which stands at the entrance of the **S. S. Seward Institute** in the Village of Florida. Afterward, attendees and students from the Institute and **Golden Hill Elementary School** retired to S. S. Seward for an engaging series of educational slide shows, songs and art displays by the students along with a talk by the Seward family and informative displays by the Florida Historical Society and the Seward/Mapes Homestead Restoration Committee. As always, we are grateful to S. S. Seward for hosting the event. We also tip our high hats and bonnets to Florida Mayor Daniel Harter for his cameo performance as Abraham Lincoln! Members of both organizations were also in period attire, adding to the celebratory atmosphere.

**Seward Day is celebrated every year on or around William Henry Seward's birthday on May 16, 1801.*

Please Join Us. You'll Be In Good Company!

As you can see, a lot has been accomplished in the past six years, thanks to the support of the Village of Florida government and a small group of dedicated volunteers from our community. However, we still have a very long way to go to meet our goal. We believe in preserving our American heritage. Otherwise, it will be gone and lost to future generations. In the day-to-day scheme of things, historic preservation isn't a large priority to most people. That is why we are reaching out to people like you, who understand the value of our efforts and support our goal of keeping history alive and engaging.

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