

**Oneida County History Center  
2024 Richard W. Couper Living Legends Inductees**

**Michael J. Bosak**

Michael J. Bosak, historic preservationist, advocate, and architect, has been instrumental in the preservation of buildings in Oneida County. He is vice-president and educational director for the Landmarks Society of Greater Utica, long-time editor of *The Preservationist Landmarks News Bulletin*, and chairs its nominating committee. Mike developed the Old Main Redevelopment Advisory Committee that helped save and repurpose Old Main. He was also instrumental in the Landmarks Society purchase of the Rutger #1 and #3 mansions. Mike is a Notre Dame High School, Mohawk Valley Community College, and SUNY Geneseo alumnus, and obtained his master's degree in architecture from the University of Buffalo. He worked for the City of Utica engineering department and was the lead architect for the 416th Civil Engineering Squadron at Griffiss Air Force Base from 1989 until 1995.

**Lucretia DeSantis Hunt**

Lucretia Hunt has made helping others her life's work. From her days as an English as a second language teacher to her work as Chief Examiner for the New York State Department of Education's GED Program, Lucretia's work in education impacted thousands of people of all ages. She taught at Mohawk Valley Community College and Madison-Oneida BOCES. Lucretia has served countless civic and community organizations including the City of Utica Parks Commission, the Utica Municipal Housing Authority/People First Board of Commissioners, the Oneida County Office of the Aging/Continuing Care Advisory Council, Home Ownership Center, 50 Forward Mohawk Valley, and the League of Women Voters. She spends weekends supervising and volunteering at Mother Marianne's West Side Kitchen and has spent decades serving on local, county, and state Democratic committees.

**Dr. Michael Kelberman**

Dr. Michael Kelberman is a cardiologist and autism advocate who makes a difference in people's lives. He is a senior partner at Central New York Cardiology, medical director of Cardiology at Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS), and the founder and board president of the Kelberman Center. He was raised in South Utica, attended Utica Free Academy and Hamilton College, and received his medical degree from Upstate Medical University. In 2005, Dr. Kelberman and his wife, Jennifer, founded the Kelberman Center, a leading autism service center for children, adults, and families in the Mohawk Valley and central New York. He is actively involved in community leadership roles, serving on various committees and supporting organizations such as the Masonic Medical Research Institute, United Way of Greater Utica, Upstate Caring Partners, and the Cerebral Palsy Association of the Mohawk Valley.

**Bonny Niles**

Bonny Niles is the backbone of the Town of Paris Historical Society and a community leader. She has been a member of the historical society since 1995, became president in 1998, and historian since 2003. Her goal is to collect and preserve the history of the Town of Paris and make it available for all to enjoy. She has been successful in overseeing the operations of the historical society and set up two satellite museums, the Lincoln-Davies and the Doolittle Schoolhouse, a

restored one-room school building. Bonny has played an active role in community organizations including the Mohawk Valley Christian Women's Club, Boys Scouts, and the American Cancer Society. She was named Historian of the Year in 2007 and 2019 by the Oneida County Historians Association.

### **Professor Michael Woods**

Professor "Doctuh" Michael Woods is a composer, musician, and educator with an impressive record. His work has been performed across the state and country and he has written more than 700 compositions in styles that include choral, orchestral, and chamber works, and jazz combo and big-band charts. Doc was a professor at Hamilton College for thirty-one years. Hired as the jazz program director at Hamilton in 1993, he was promoted in 1998 and was the first African American male to receive tenure at the college. He was later promoted to full professor and named professor emeritus upon retirement in 2024. Woods was actively involved in the local community, serving as a mentor, music coordinator, and organizer for various events leaving a lasting impact on thousands of students. His light, love, and joy of music and life are shared with everyone he has ever met.

## **Oneida County History Center 2023 Dr. David and Carolyn Ellis Historical Hall of Fame Inductees**

### **Dr. John Cochran (1730 -1807)**

Dr. John Cochran was a prominent figure who served as a surgeon in the French and Indian War and as Surgeon General of the Army of the Middle Department during the Revolutionary War. He was known for his innovative use of inoculations to combat smallpox among soldiers. His friendship with George Washington and his assistance to the Marquis de Lafayette further solidified his legacy. After the war, he settled in New York City before serving as Commissioner of Loans for the State of New York. He later relocated to Palatine, NY, where he passed away in 1807. His son, James, reinterred his remains in Forest Hill Cemetery in 1817.

### **Charles A. Gaetano (1923-2022)**

Charles A. Gaetano was an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and founder of the Charles A. Gaetano Construction Company. Born in Utica to Italian immigrants, he grew up during the Great Depression, learning perseverance, family values, and faith. He served in the US Navy during World War II and stateside during the Korean Conflict. He taught himself masonry and plastering, eventually founding his own company in 1959. Charles and his wife Connie built the business together and the Charles A. Gaetano Construction Corporation grew into one of central New York's most successful firms. He was also dedicated to community service and supported various organizations including the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, St. Elizabeth Medical Center Elizabethan Society, and Central New York Veterans Outreach Center, among others. He was posthumously awarded the Mohawk Valley Edge Christopher Destito Award for his lasting community impact. His legacy lives on through his family, his company, and the countless projects and acts of kindness he left behind.

### **Chauncey Goodrich (1801-1864)**

Chauncey Goodrich was an experimental botanist who saved the modern potato and fed the world. Born in Troy, New York, in 1801, he earned a degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and then taught at the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro. He moved to Utica in 1843, where he started a market garden and was a chaplain for the New York State Lunatic Asylum. The potato blight struck in the 1840s and caused widespread famine. Goodrich worked for sixteen years, growing and testing over fifteen thousand potato plants to find a disease-resistant variety. He named it the Garnet Chili. Further experimentation with the Garnet Chili by other scientists yielded the now ubiquitous Burbank Russet. Commonly used for french fries, it is the most widely grown potato in North America. Goodrich's potato is the genetic ancestor of no fewer than 94 percent of potatoes grown in the 21st century in America and Europe.

**Carolyn K. Tyler (1922-1960)**

Carolyn Kelly Tyler was a trailblazing educator and dedicated community leader. Born in Georgia, she majored in music at Talladega College and attended Howard University. Her career in Utica was marked by historic achievements. In 1949, she became the first Black playground worker for the city's Recreation Department and was first Black teacher in the Utica Public School System, teaching sixth grade at Potter Street School. Tyler recognized the need for adult education and created Utica's first elementary-level adult education classes at Potter Street School. She was also involved in numerous civic organizations including the Cosmopolitan Center and the Utica Branch NAACP, and was the organist at Hope Chapel AME Zion Church. Tyler's contributions were honored with the Carolyn K. Tyler Memorial Award for Good Citizenship at Potter Street School and a scholarship in her name by Lambda Kappa Mu Sorority, Inc., Xi Chapter, to support women returning to education. Though she passed away at 37, Carolyn Tyler's legacy continues to inspire.