Watertown Historical Society presents new digital archive

Watertown Historical Society Board Member Stephen Bartkus (left), Innovative Document Imaging President Marty Tannenbaum, Watertown Historical Society member R.J. Buckingham and Town Times Publisher Rudy Mazurosky stand in front of a screen displaying a digitized image of an issue of the Town Times. The Watertown Historical Society recently finished a four-year, $40,000 project to store over one century of Watertown newspapers, 93 years of Watertown High School yearbooks and 11 historic Watertown scrapbooks in a digital, keyword-searchable form. The archive includes issues of the Town Times from 1947 until 2000 and can be found at www.watertownhistoricalsociety.org or directly at http://www.idi-watertown.org/. (Times Photo, Taylor)

**Features over one century of newspapers,
including 1947-2000 Town Times**

By Jim Taylor

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Ever wondered when the Watertown Historical Society was founded? The answers to that question and more can be found within the Watertown Historical Society's new digital archive, available on the society's website, www.watertownhistoricalsociety.org or directly at www.idi-watertown.org. The answer, by the way, is May 23, 1945, as reported in the December 12, 1947, issue of the Town Times.

The historical society unveiled its new archive, which includes over one century of newspapers,

93 years of Watertown High School yearbooks and 11 historic Watertown scrapbooks, at an event on Monday, November 8, at the Watertown Public Library. The collection represents 3,150 newspaper issues, including the Watertown News, The Post, the Watertown Journal, the Post Boy, the Watertown Argus and of course, the Town Times, which represents the balance of the collection at 2,767 issues, from 1947 to 2000. The entire archive is keyword searchable using Optical Character Recognition software called "Digi-Find It."

"The preservation, understanding and acknowledgement of local history is important to Watertown," said Town Manager Chuck Frigon at the event. "There is not a day I do not look at the past for counsel when considering current policy. This is a wonderful undertaking by the Watertown Historical Society; kudos for bringing this resource to the people of Watertown."

Stephen Bartkus, a board member of the Watertown Historical Society, was a driving force behind implementing the digital archive, stated that the project, which cost $40,000 and was funded by grants from organizations including the Woodward Foundation, the Connecticut Foundation and the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation, was four years in the making.

"This wasn't possible without them," said Mr. Bartkus.

Mr. Bartkus stated the project was also not possible without the support and blessing of Rudy Mazurosky, current publisher of the Town Times.

"The Town Times has become the bible of Watertown for its local history," Mr. Mazurosky said.

According to Mr. Mazurosky, when Mr. Bartkus first approached him with the idea for the digitization project in 2006, he thought it was "quite the undertaking," but gave it his blessing.

"Now there is a way to have all the Town Times news on the web from its inception in December of 1947 until the present," said Mr. Mazurosky.

The Watertown Historical Society's digital archive currently hosts scans of issues from 1947 until 2000, while www.towntimesnews.com contains all Town Times news stories from 2001 until the present.

The idea for the digital archive was first formulated by Watertown Historical Society member R.J. Buckingham, who works for a company that maintains digital medical records, while he was attempting to research the history of his family for a book he was writing. As he was visiting libraries, looking at issues and scouring microfilm, he wondered why those resources couldn't be made available online.

The newspapers, yearbooks and scrapbooks were digitized by Innovative Document Imaging (IDI), of East Brunswick, N.J. IDI utilizes 34 state-of-the-art scanners to record pages at 2,400 pages per minute. The company has previously done projects for over 50 New Jersey Libraries, three historical societies, the University of Connecticut and the city of New York.