

Town Historian

The following recommendations are taken from the web site of Public Historians of New York State and the Town of Greene, New York. The job description is concentrated in four areas:

Research and Writing – The first, and primary, responsibility of the Local Government Historian is interpretation of the past. It may include scholarly treatises as well as writing for the general public.

Teaching and Public Presentations – The Historian may serve as a resource to teachers, speak to community groups and work with individuals who are interesting in the community's past.

Historic Preservation – This includes preservation of the historic buildings in the area but also preservation of manuscripts and records that document a community's past and the artifacts that make up a community's culture. It is the Historian's job to recommend where historical materials should be housed, such as the library and local government archives. Attendance at Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission meetings is highly recommended.

Organization and Advocacy – Town Historians are often asked to participate in civic or patriotic observations. They may be asked to use their knowledge of local government to lobby for legislative initiatives to promote community history. A yearly report before the New Paltz Town Council is also required.

It is also appropriate to mention what Local Government Historians are not.

Historians are not archivists. – They are supporters, researchers and users of archival records kept by the Village and Town Clerks.

Historians are not genealogists. – They may give out information that has been collected about early residents of the town but it is not their job to conduct genealogical research on demand.

Historians are not partisan political functionaries. – They must produce objective and unbiased history.