

## 2019-K625

Assembly Resolution No. 625

BY: M. of A. Woerner

COMMEMORATING the 150th Anniversary of the  
Historic Salem Courthouse to be celebrated on July  
27, 2019

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities across New York State are reflective of the concerned and dedicated efforts of those historic courts of law that would devote themselves to the welfare of the community and its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Historic Salem Courthouse to be celebrated at its Annual Al Fresco Dinner on Saturday, July 27, 2019, with entertainment provided by Hot Club of Saratoga; and

WHEREAS, In 1867, the Washington County Board of Supervisors decided to consolidate the county seat into one central courthouse; the location for the new courthouse was under heavy debate, with various Washington County towns petitioning to have the privilege of being the county seat; in December of 1868, the Board chose Salem and the new town supervisor was James Gibson; and

WHEREAS, The old courthouse and jail in Salem, circa 1789, were in

need of serious repair by this time, and the town decided both buildings should be remade; in mid-January, the Board chose Marcus F. Cummings of Troy, New York, to be the project's architect; he chose to move the building site to its current location to allot enough space for the courthouse and jail complex; and

WHEREAS, The current structure was completed in 1869; by January 1, 1872, the surrogate's office and all of its records were moved to the courthouse and on February 15, 1875, a 713 pound bell from the Meneely foundry in Troy was installed in the cupola of the courthouse; and

WHEREAS, The courthouse continued to be used until 1993, when the county seat was officially moved to Fort Edward, and all county offices were consolidated there in one new complex; and

WHEREAS, The jail was used until May of 2003, when the new \$16.8 million facility opened in Fort Edward; and

WHEREAS, In 2001, Washington County was going to vacate the Old Washington County Courthouse in Salem; William "Bill" Eberle, a retired attorney, spearheaded a group of citizens to take action and make the courthouse a community center; and

WHEREAS, Concerned citizens met with John G. Waite, a renowned preservation architect, who made a presentation about other restoration projects and arranged for the group to visit recently restored buildings; and

WHEREAS, The group held meetings on a regular basis and Bill Eberle put in motion the chartering of a not-for-profit with the Education Department of New York State; in January of 2002, the Historic Salem Courthouse Preservation Association, Inc. (HSCPA) officially became a

corporation and elected its first Board of Directors as well as Bill to be the first President of HSCPA; currently, Robert Akland serves as President of HSCPA; and

WHEREAS, One of the corporation's missions, to facilitate the transfer of the courthouse to a Salem entity, was carried out while HSCPA negotiated with county official; by the end of 2003, the Town, Village, and HSCPA finalized a partnership by signing a Memorandum of Agreement; and

WHEREAS, On January 1, 2004, the Town became the owner of the property; HSCPA took charge of management with the Village in a supportive role; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals and associations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be recognized and applauded by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Historic Salem Courthouse to be celebrated on July 27, 2019; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Robert Akland, President, HSCPA.