

# This Week in Saratoga County History

## Library Seeks to Preserve ‘Stunning’ Collection of WWII Veterans Photos

Submitted by Chris Carola April 22, 2026

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*U.S. Army Pfc. Henry A. “Rocky” Marcelle of Mechanicville.  
Siciliano Photo Collection. Mechanicville Public Library.*

The National WW II Museum in New Orleans is home to about 250,000 artifacts, including more than 100,000 photographs ranging from battlefield pictures captured by military and press photographers to individual albums full of wartime snapshots donated by veterans and their families.

The New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center located at the former National Guard armory on Lake Avenue in Saratoga Springs is the repository of more than 16,000 photographs and photographic collections from multiple wars.

However, nowhere in those vast collection of images is there anything comparable to what currently resides in the local history room at the Mechanicville District Public Library: 600-plus photos of individual local World War II veterans in uniform, all of them taken by the same photographer in the same spot inside the same location -- Siciliano’s Restaurant.

“The photographs are beautiful. This is a stunning collection,” Kimberly Guise, senior curator and director for curatorial affairs at The National WWII Museum, said in a recent phone interview.

"The faces of the men and women of Mechanicville and nearby towns and cities who went to war is a touching reminder of the service and sacrifice of all our New York communities," said Richard Goldenberg, Director of Military History for the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs, which operates the Saratoga Springs museum. "As the Second World War and Korean War pass into written history with fewer and fewer living voices, these images give us context and perspective of the many young faces of service."

The approximately 700 original black-and-white photographs that make up the Charles Siciliano Sr. WWII and Korean War Veterans Photo Collection are currently housed in eight large, handmade frames fashioned more than 40 years ago out of paneling and a backing material not conducive to preservation. Each 3-inch-by-3-inch photo and the accompanying name, typewritten by Siciliano on slips of paper, were glued to the matting.

After 60-plus years of being displayed at several local restaurants and more than 20 years in the library's Col. Elmer E. Elsworth history room, the Siciliano collection is in need of attention. Some of the photos have taken on a sepia tone, others have become brittle. A couple of the frames are falling apart, and the glass on one is broken.

The library is planning to launch a campaign to raise the funds needed to properly remount the photos in museum-quality frames with glass that will protect the images from further light damage. While the final cost hasn't been estimated, the campaign is a vital first step toward preserving a collection the National WWII Museum's Guide referred to as "completely unique" in a story I wrote about the Siciliano photographs for The Associated Press in August 2015.

The collection started out as a hobby for Charles Siciliano Sr., a photography buff known to everyone as Charlie, soon after the U.S. entered WWII following Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. As more local residents went into military service, Siciliano would ask the ones in uniform who came into his restaurant at 30 Warsaw Ave. to sit in the well-lit corner of the bar to have their photo taken.

Siciliano developed and printed his own photos, typically giving a copy to the servicemember or their family, then framing the pictures in groups of 25 that he hung inside the restaurant.

The majority of the approximately 700 photos in the collection were taken during WWII, which formally ended with Japan's surrender on Sept. 2, 1945. Some were taken in 1946 as veterans continued to return from overseas.

All the U.S. military branches during WWII are represented in the collection: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Air Force (then part of the Army). Some of the men fought in the biggest and bloodiest battles of the war, from D-Day in Normandy to Iwo Jima in the Pacific.

Most of the men in the photographs hailed from Mechanicville, and about half of those identified have Italian American last names, a reflection of the influx of Italian immigrants to the city starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and continuing into the early 1900s, including Siciliano's parents. Men from nearby communities in Saratoga County – Stillwater, Waterford, Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa – also were photographed, as were several from Schaghticoke and Troy in neighboring Rensselaer County.

The collection includes the photos of four women WWII veterans from Mechanicville: Lucille Ennello Marcelle, Doris Lazott Noonan, Mary DiBello West and Anna Cefalo. West and Cefalo were in the Women's Army Corps (WACs), while Marcelle (Pacific Theater) and Noonan (Pacific and European Theaters) served in the Army Nurses Corps.

At least three men whose photos are in the collection are known to have died during WWII, including Army Pfc. Henry A. "Rocky" Marcelle, of Mechanicville, who died of wounds suffered in combat in Europe in March 1945.

Charlie Sr., who died in 1982, kept the framed photos on the walls of his tavern until he sold the business in the late 1970s to Frank Costanzo, who had the snapshots rearranged alphabetically in eight large frames. The collection went with Costanzo when he relocated his business to the town of Waterford. The photographs and negatives were eventually donated to the Mechanicville library.

Siciliano's Restaurant was torn down years ago to make way for new apartments.

Starting in 2001, through an effort led by the late Michael Sullvian of Mechanicville, names were attached to more than 500 of the photographs when the collection was digitized on the library's website (<https://meclib.sals.edu/>).

It's not known if any of the WWII veterans in the Siciliano collection are still living. Anthony "Tony" Fortune, an Air Force veteran who died in December 2024, two weeks shy of his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday, may have been the last.

As part of the fundraising effort, at 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 7, at the Arts Center on the Hudson in Mechanicville, I'll be doing the first in a series of free presentations on the Siciliano photo collection. Others are planned for 7 p.m. Thursday, June 18, at the Saratoga County History Center at Brookside Museum in Ballston Spa, and at the Saratoga Springs Public Library at 12 p.m. Sept. 10.

The talks are free. Registration is recommended to reserve a seat. For the Mechanicville talk, register here: <https://forms.gle/8BAPY3J5dgo3Nwzx9>. For the Saratoga County History Center talk, register at [Charlie's Heroes - Saratoga County History Center](#). Registration information for the Saratoga Springs library talk will be posted on its website.