

FLY CREEKER



NEWSLETTER OF THE

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 124, Fly Creek, NY 13337

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4 * AUTUMN, 1991

Editor: Bill Deane. Associates: Carol Mezger, Paula Schaeffer.

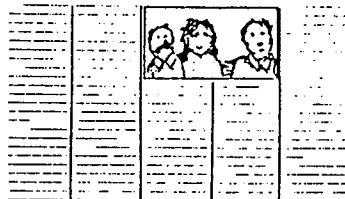
PETER MARTIN ELECTED PRESIDENT

Elections for officers of the Fly Creek Area Historical Society (FCAHS) were held during the Annual Meeting on August 28, 1991. Peter Martin was elected President, succeeding Florence Michaels, who preferred to serve in Peter's former role as Vice-President. Florence gave a stirring speech in formally passing the baton to her successor. Other new appointments were Carol Mezger (Secretary) and Elaine Harvey (Trustee), replacing Irwin Curlis and Ruth Bresee, respectively, neither of whom sought reelection. Following is the current slate of officers, including the year each term expires:

President:	Peter Martin	(1992)
Vice-President:	Florence Michaels	(1992)
Secretary:	Carol Mezger	(1992)
Treasurer:	Maxine Potts	(1992)
Trustees:	Margaret Jensen	(1992)
	Alice Lavrinos	(1993)
	Elaine Harvey	(1994)

The FCAHS accords its sincere appreciation to the outgoing officers, and its best wishes to the new ones.

NEWS BRIEFS



* SECOND REMINDER: 1991-92 dues were payable August 1. An application appears on page 3 of this newsletter. If you are not sure if you are paid up, please check with our Treasurer, Maxine Potts (547-9616).

* The FCAHS welcomes 15 new members; including one former member who has rejoined. The additions are: Violet Decker, Martha J. Dodge, Suzanne Drumm, Mr. & Mrs. Clarence Gilchrist, Musa Gumone, Mr. & Mrs. Irving Lyons, Mrs. Richard E. Neff, Ed & Judy Thorne, Mr. & Mrs. Fred Weigel, Robert F. Weigel, and Lawrence Zyskowski.

* For many years, Peter Martin and Art Snyder have worked voluntarily (and without publicity) to keep up the Old Chapel Burial Ground at the corner of Hoke Road and County Road 26. They do a fine job, and provide an important service in preserving a part of our area's history.

* The FCAHS does not limit its membership just to "Fly Creekers". In fact, our 1990-91 membership roster included 19 out-of-state members, representing nine states other than New York! Virginia boasted four FCAHS members; there were three each in Florida and Massachusetts; two each in California, New Jersey, and Texas; and one each in Colorado, Maryland, and Michigan. We appreciate the long-distance interest in our Society! Some of these people have written explaining their ties to Fly Creek, and sharing memories of the area. We'd love to hear from the rest of you!

OBITUARIES

Condolences are extended to the families and friends of two more FCAHS members lost in recent months.

Elizabeth Hull (Aufmuth) Smale died July 29, 1991 at Arlington, VA. The daughter of Howard J. and Beulah Aufmuth, Betty was born at Cooperstown, NY on June 27, 1915. She was a registered nurse and an accomplished musician, and was active in the Fairfax County Humane Society in Virginia. Mrs. Smale is survived by her husband of 51 years, Captain Gordon F. Smale; her brother A. J. "Jack" Aufmuth; two sons and two grandchildren.

*

Hazel Irene (Beckwith) Talbot of Vernon Center, NY, died unexpectedly on October 3, 1991. Born at Ilion, NY on January 28, 1905, Mrs. Talbot was a charter member of the FCAHS. Among her many other memberships were the Fly Creek Methodist Church, Fly Creek Grange, and Fly Creek Home Bureau. She was predeceased by two husbands: Eugene D. Clements in 1928, and Hess W. Talbot in 1966. Mrs. Talbot is survived by four children, 12 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

MEETINGS, PAST AND FUTURE

"Fork Shops of Fly Creek" will be the program presented by Florence Michaels at the Wednesday, October 23 meeting of the FCAHS. Included will be information on who started these shops, what was manufactured there, and one manufacturer still in operation in another area.

On November 20 (the third, rather than fourth Wednesday of the month), Lady Ostapeck will present a program on her work as a photographer. There will be no meeting in December. Meetings begin at 7 P.M. and are held in the basement of the Fly Creek Church.

The three most recent meetings of the FCAHS were held on July 24, August 28, and September 25, 1991. The July gathering featured guest speaker Jim Durkee, who told about the Buck Road Firehouse and Museum operated by his wife, Meryle, and him. He brought a collection of "antique firematic items" used over the past 200 years, including various types of fire alarms (rattles, bells, fire-guns, etc.), heat shields, helmets, and buckets. Potential museum visitors can contact Mr. and Mrs. Durkee at Box 578, Buck Road, Fly Creek, NY 13337; telephone (607) 547-2382.

The August meeting was preceded by a covered-dish supper. Elections (details on page 1) were held, and annual reports were read by officers and committee chairpersons. Florence Michaels led an informal exchange of memories and facts, including the Fly Creek Chautauqua (1915-16), and the 21 cemeteries existing in the Town of Otsego. Coincidentally, the Society approved a \$50 donation to support Louis Grippe's fine work on the restoration of the Fly Creek Cemetery.

Some 50 people attended the September meeting, highlighted by Dr. Edward Farmer's fascinating slide show on "Early Aviation in the Fly Creek Area." Featured was the life of aeronaut A. Leo Stevens (1877-1944), who lived in Fly Creek for the last 17 years of his life. Mr. Stevens, who held U.S. pilot license #2, was the first man to use a parachute, and also invented the ripcord. (Submitted by Paula Schaeffer)

THE ELDRIDGE HOME



This photo shows the Federal style home of Margaret Eldridge, sitting on 21 acres on the south side of Route 28, across from the Sportsman's Tavern. The history of this property can be traced back to 1788, when Stephen and Susannah Savage North of Farmington, CT bought the land where the home now stands.

The Norths gave birth to a son, Albert, in 1789. The family founded the Presbyterian Church in Cooperstown in 1800, and the

one in Fly Creek in 1828. The Norths manufactured "Japanned Tinware" (tin boxes hand-painted by the family women-folk) and sold it or traded for rags, sheepskins, or wool. Their shop was located directly behind the house, and still stands, complete with the pegs and nails which held the merchandise. The store was the site of Fly Creek's first Post Office building between 1851-53.

Albert North inherited the estate from his parents, and in 1843 he purchased a parcel of land across the road, to the east of Charles Metcalf's foundry. In 1870 Albert willed the property to his daughter, Susan North Harp, who then sold it to James and Arametta Fern. In 1895 James deeded the estate to his wife and, upon her death in 1911, the ownership transferred to their son, Ceylon Fern.

In 1930 Ceylon's widow, Cora Fern, sold the property to John C. and Edith M. Smith, who called it "By Brook". They in turn sold it to William and Margaret Eldridge in 1947. The home still has the original carriage house attached.

The history of this home was provided by William and Margaret Eldridge, and written up by graduate students Larry Schoonover and Dana Wegner on May 10, 1974. Their work is preserved on microfilm at the NYSHA Library in Cooperstown. Deeds at the Otsego County Clerk's Office were also consulted for this article. (Submitted by Dorothy and Peter Martin)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION****1991-92

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 124, Fly Creek, NY 13337

Name: _____ Renewal New Membership

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

Check applicable box(es):

- Please register me as a member of the FCAHS. Enclosed is a check for \$5.00.
- Please register my spouse and me to a family membership. Enclosed is a check for \$8.00.
- Please accept my enclosed donation, in the amount of \$ _____ (minimum \$10), and enrol (me/us) as a contributing/sustaining member(s).

GO WEST, YOUNG MEN

Starting in the February 19, 1890 issue and continuing until May, a column by Fred T. Jarvis appeared in the Otsego Republican. Entitled "Leaves From My Diary", the column was subtitled "Reminiscences, Etc., to California and Gold Digging and Return, 1850-51."

"The discovery of gold in California in 1848 was the cause of intense excitement," wrote Jarvis. "Gold hunters flocked in from all parts of the world... Eight young men from the vicinity of Fly Creek, Otsego county, N.Y., decided to try their chances in the new Eldorado." Those participating were lawyer Lyman O. Hart, merchant H. Monroe Hooker, manufacturer Gideon Russell, and farmers Chester Babbitt, Eleazer Bliss, Delos Eldred, Fred T. Jarvis, and Henry K. Jarvis.

The journey began from the Christian Hill residence of M. K. Jarvis on February 18, 1850, in a four-horse lumber wagon labelled "Bound for California". Messrs. Hooker and Russell turned back two days later, but the other six boarded the steamer "Crescent City", bound from New York to Chagres, on February 21. The group reached Cuba six days later ("the harbor of Havana is considered one of the safest in the world," wrote F. T. Jarvis) and continued westward. Travelling got rough past the Gulf of Mexico, rendering the Otsego sextet and most of the other passengers (one of whom died) seasick.

The account of the 88-day trek, the mining experiences, and the return trip, makes for fascinating reading. The six men returned to Otsego County in 1851, apparently none the richer. Fred Jarvis recalled "I never had a well day all of the time I remained in the mines," and perhaps this helps explain their lack of success. (Submitted by Carol Mezger)

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