

# *Fly Creeker*

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)  
Editor: Bill Deane, P.O. Box 47, Fly Creek, NY 13337; Telephone (607) 547-5786.  
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## NEWS BRIEFS

- **Labeling people ...** With this issue we implement a new computerized labeling system, courtesy of Pam Deane. Up to now, Alice Lavrinos had voluntarily and tirelessly hand-typed each label, for which we are immensely grateful. Please check the new label and report any corrections to the editor (address & phone number above).
- **Brochure arrives ...** The eagerly-awaited Fly Creek brochure has become a reality. The Brochure Committee, consisting of Peter Martin, Elaine Harvey, and Florence Michaels, can be proud of the fruits of their labor. The attractive pamphlet features a brief history of Fly Creek, a partial directory of its local businesses, and the artwork of Anne Geddes Atwell. Speaking of whom...
- **Wedding bells and whistles ...** The FCAHS congratulates President Jim Atwell and his wife, Anne, on their recent (September 14) wedding. Several members and friends treated the newlyweds to an old-fashioned "horning" on September 21.
- **Big bird ...** An emu -- a large flightless bird native to Australia -- was seen in Fly Creek on August 16. The editor caught the bird on videotape as it strutted in his back yard. The emu -- which stood at least four feet high and weighed about 80 pounds -- was spotted in various places in Otsego County before its death on September 5, and no one seems to know where it came from. Can anyone recall ever seeing any other unusual beasts in the Fly Creek area?
- **Correction ...** In the last issue, in paragraph three under "Meetings," Frederick Stockdale was misidentified as Frederick Dodge.
- **Today's weather ...** FCAHS member Jayne Aufmuth appeared on the *Today* TV show on September 10. She and some friends introduced themselves to weatherman Al Roker at Times Square.
- **Florida bound ...** Carolyn McLean, the *Fly Creeker's* most faithful contributor, is in Florida and will probably be there for several months. Her address is Fairlane Harbor, 100 N. Harbor Dr., Vero Beach, FL 32960. "I know everyone is very busy, but I'd love a note now and then," Carolyn says.
- **Dues due ...** Annual dues for the 1998 membership year are due by January 1, and the Roll of Membership will be published in the next newsletter. Please use the application on page 5 to renew your membership. Incidentally, our final 1996-97 membership total was 132 -- the highest since 1993-94 -- with the additions of Gail Daly, Dorothy Famulare, Marion King, Timothy & Alison Lane, Gregory & Phyllis Lippitt, Robin Moshier, Mary Pernat, James R. Reilly, John & Jean Scarzafava, and Ben & Juliana Snyder. Welcome, newcomers!



## MEETINGS

The final two 1997 meetings of the FCAHS are scheduled for October 22 and November 19 (no meeting in December). Meetings are held in the Fellowship Hall (basement) of the Fly Creek United Methodist Church beginning at 7 P.M., and are open to the public.

At the October meeting, Niles Eggleston will speak about "Eva Coe, Murderess." Mr. Eggleston has just published a book on Eva Coe and Cooperstown's "trial of the century." Don't miss this witty and informative speaker!

In November we will visit Heartworks, the quilting store just west of the blinker light on Route 28, and be toured through the new facility by the Wolffs. Bunny and Jim are kindly offering us refreshments, and so we'll hold our entire program, business meeting included, right at Heartworks. *Plan to come directly to Heartworks at 7 P.M.*

The most recent meetings were held on July 23, August 27, and September 24, 1997. For the July meeting, members traveled to Cemetery Road to visit the old creamery building, now home of Adirondack Leather Products, Inc. Greg O'Neil, the owner, gave an excellent explanation of the factory's organization and demonstrated each of the machines used in making contract-orders of holsters and other specialized leather products. Greg gave each attendee a fine memento: a key ring with a handsome leather fob. During the business meeting afterward, Sally Rezen presented the Society with several artifacts and documents relevant to area history.

August brought a delicious covered-dish meal followed by our Annual Meeting. The Secretary, Treasurer, and committee chairs presented yearly reports, and Nominating Committee chairman Henry Ludlum presented a slate of officers: President, Jim Atwell; Vice-President, Jim Fish; Secretary, MerriLynn Fish; and Treasurer, Alice Lavrinis. Craig Haney was nominated for a three-year term as Trustee. The nominations were accepted unanimously.

At the September meeting, Linda Medwid, owner of Fly Creek's Classical Forms Book Store, gave an interesting and scholarly lecture and slide show on "The Etruscan Culture of Ancient Italy: Their Art & Architecture." [Submitted by Jim Atwell]

The FCAHS has lost another charter member with the death of Katherine Burnham. Mrs. Burnham died at her Fly Creek home on September 24.

Katherine M. Miller was born in Amsterdam, NY, September 19, 1909. She married Garfield P. Burnham on July 26, 1942. The two lived in Fly Creek from 1982 until Mr. Burnham's death on November 24, 1996. Mrs. Burnham is survived by two children and five grandchildren.

Mrs. Burnham taught in the public schools of Amsterdam and Liberty for 30 years. She also performed theatrical productions on stage and radio. In addition to our Society and many other organizations, Mrs. Burnham was a member of the New York State Historical Association and the New York State Retired Teachers Association

## 175 YEARS OLD, AND STILL GOING STRONG

A special postal cancellation on July 20, 1997 marked the 175th anniversary of the Fly Creek Post Office. According to the June 17, 1822 edition of Cooperstown's *Freeman's Journal*, "a new post office has been established in the Town of Otsego, about four miles west of Cooperstown, to be called the Fly Creek Post Office." The original office was located at Stephen North's former store building.

North moved from Connecticut to Fly Creek in 1788. He was a merchant, tinsmith, farmer, and father of nine children (not necessarily in that order). His store building still stands behind the house most recently occupied by Bill and Margaret Eldridge on Route 28, just east of the four-corners. It was painted white, with red trim. Above the front entrance was a small door through which grain was raised and lowered. A small loft held rags, sheepskins, etc., which were taken in trade for tinware. The building's beams are still lined with nails and pegs which held merchandise.

Mail was first brought to Fly Creek by stagecoach traveling from Albany along the old Cherry Valley Turnpike. Later, it arrived by trolley, and then, the Highway Post Office, a bus service which ran from Utica to Binghamton and back each day. Today, mail arrives daily by truck from Utica.

At first, people picked up all their mail at the Post Office. Rural Free Delivery was introduced in the early 1900s, with Fly Creek's first rural route served by horse & buggy. According to the late Erastus Bouton, if the snow was too deep on the road, the carrier would go "cross-lots" right to customers' homes.

Since 1822, the Fly Creek Post Office has been located in at least ten different places. These, not necessarily in order, are:

1. Stephen North's store building, as described above.
2. On the site of Gordon Robinson's home, directly south of the Fly Creek Church.
3. A store owned and operated by Arthur Cheney, now the site of the Up the Creek Antiques.
4. The building which most recently housed the Crossroads Inn and Biaggio's Restaurant.
5. The old Badger house, now a multi-family home, located at the "Y" of Cemetery Road and County Route 26.
6. A small building once used as Frank Allison's meat market. Located one building up from the Badger house on Cemetery Road, it now belongs to Ed and Vera Young.
7. Sam Hunter's store, located at the site of Donald Davis's present business. The old store was moved in a clandestine operation some years back, and it is now a barn behind Sandy Bowman's home on County Route 26.
8. At the site of the current Fly Creek General Store (formerly Aufmuth's). It was housed on the ground level, when the building was used by an undertaker, and before it was moved back to make room for the paved highway. At another time, the P.O. was on the upper floor of this same building.
9. In the third house north of the store, now an apartment building belonging to Richard Bird.
10. In its present location, the first building north of the Fly Creek General Store.

There were also Post Offices in Fly Creek Valley (1900-04), and in Oaksville at various times between 1814-1932.

Following is a list of Fly Creek Postmasters and their dates of appointment:

William Sprague	6/17/1822	Dewitt Badger	8/25/1885	Samuel H. Hunter	6/ 1/1915
Chester Jarvis		Theodore M. Doubleday	4/14/1890	Eugenia D. Barber	8/ 1/1943
Ceylon North	2/11/1851	Dewitt Badger	5/ 5/1893	Marie Gardner	2/ 9/1944
Ezra Badger	6/16/1853	S. Wilson Cheney	5/20/1897	Ronald Bouton	1/30/1973
Silas Alger	5/10/1861	Arthur W. Cheney	6/ 4/1907	Elaine Harvey	1/ 4/1986

[Editor's note: the following is a revised version of an article which first appeared in the Summer 1990 *Fly Creeker*. It was prepared by Elaine Harvey from material presented by Ron Bouton and her at the January 24, 1990 FCAHS meeting. Helen Ellwood, Margaret Jensen, Sally Rezen, and Freida Snyder also provided valuable research and information. Most of this version also appeared as an insert to the limited-edition cachet envelope which was sold during and after the July 20 event.]

## CENTURY-OLD CIDER

The following was copied from a newsclipping from the Fall of 1897, entitled "A Model Cider Mill". It, of course, describes what we now know as the Fly Creek Cider Mill.

"Many of our readers are well acquainted with the subject of this article, the tidy little cider mill owned by Hosea Williams of Fly Creek, for its reputation extends over many miles of country, which sends apples there to be turned into cider. It is well worth a visit to see its compactness, neatness and ability to turn out a large product with a small amount of labor.

"A farmer with a load of apples drives to the north side of the mill, where the fruit is measured, and as fast as this is done, turned into the elevator, which carries and dumps the apples into a large receiving bin on the upper floor. A check is here given for the number of bushels delivered and the farmer may drive to the entrance on the south side and receive cider for his casks and barrels at the rate of 32 gallons for every 9 bushels of fruit delivered, for which he pays one cent a gallon for the making. Mr. Williams makes a rule that once the mill has started up, the process of delivering apples at the receiving door and taking cider to return with shall be followed if desired. It is interesting to watch the process of cider making and see with how little expenditure of muscle the tons upon tons of apples are converted rapidly into cider.

"Received into the bin upstairs, as we have described, the apples feed from it to the hopper, supplying the grinder which is just below the floor. As the ground apple pomace comes from the grinder it drops into large tubs, which stand on a round revolving platform. This platform contains eight tubs, enough for a 'cheese', as the pomace when placed in the press is called. It is turned by an assistant, as each tub is filled to bring an empty one under the grinder.

"From these tubs the pomace is put into cloths with racks above and below them, each cloth holding the contents of a tub. A crane, with a lever attachment, raises and swings the tubs to be emptied with but little labor. Thus the eight layers of cheese are laid up on a movable platform, which is moved on a track into the hydraulic press where the juice is squeezed from it. Duplicate platforms make it possible to prepare another batch for the press while the last is under pressure. It takes about twelve minutes to press a 'cheese' dry. The press used is the Boomer & Boschert make, and is a powerful one, putting 140 tons pressure on the cheese.

"As the juice is pressed out it runs into a vat below the floor, from which it is raised by rotary pump into a tank on the main floor. From this it is drawn off in casks and barrels and delivered to patrons.

"The power to do all this work is furnished by water. The full capacity of the mill when apples are plenty is from 150 to 200 barrels of cider a day-- and but three persons are employed to do the work. Last year was a big season, extending from September 14 to December 4. This year the old mill did not start up until October 5.

"At present, owing to low water, an engine is used as a helper.

"Great care is taken to have the cider of the very best and purest kind. None but clean and good apples are accepted, and frequently it is required that a load of apples be sorted before they will be accepted, and sometimes they are required to wash them, as was the case the day before our visit. Everything about the mill indicates an observation of this same rule of cleanliness, for everything is as neat as wax. The cloths used in pressing are washed every day, a hot water heater and washing machine being used for this purpose.

(Continued on page 6)

**FCAHS PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1996-97 Annual Report**

[Editor's note: following is the text of the annual report delivered during the Society's Annual Meeting on August 27, 1997.]

The Publications Committee consists of Jim Atwell, George Badgley, Carolyn McLean, and myself. We held our annual meeting at the Fly Creek Church's Fellowship Hall on March 26, 1997.

The Committee published another four newsletters over the past year, making a grand total of 33 issues and 140 pages since 1989. The Autumn, 1997 *Fly Creeker* is expected out in October. The Committee also handles publicity work for the Society, including posters and news articles about our monthly meetings and special events, and mass-mailing letters on various subjects.

Besides the committee members, FCAHS members who have been especially helpful to us over the past year include Elaine Harvey, Alice Lavrinos, Florence Michaels, and Freida Snyder.

We are very grateful to the few people that consistently help out with articles and ideas. There is another group of us, people who have ideas or research or memories which would lend themselves to articles, but who never get around to doing anything about them. There was one member who had done some research on a fascinating part of area history. For six years, I gently prodded this person to write something up about it for the newsletter, or just to jot down the important facts and dates so that I could write it up. "I really ought to do that," the member said time after time. Sadly, this person died during the past year. We have now lost more than 20 members to death in our eight-year existence. And, with each death, we lose another piece of our area history.

Each of us has something to share about local history, be it the history of the building we live in, or the memory of what it was like to ride the trolley, or even to shop at Aufmuth's store. I think, as a Historical Society -- and as community citizens -- we owe it to our current and future generations to preserve as much of this knowledge as possible. The Publications Committee is willing to do whatever we can to facilitate this process. We urge you to get out the pad and pen, or the tape recorder, and start preserving *your* piece of area history.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Deane, Chairman, Publications Committee

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**1998 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION  
FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 87, Fly Creek, NY 13337**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_ New Membership \_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Check applicable box(es):

- Please register me as a member of the FCAHS. Enclosed is a check for \$10.
- Please register us to a family FCAHS membership. Enclosed is a check for \$15.
- Please accept the enclosed donation, in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum \$20), and enroll me/us as a contributing/sustaining member(s).

(Continued from page 4)

"A side glance reveals a good use of time during the dull winter season, for Mr. Williams has at hand a large supply of plugs and bungs for all sizes of casks and barrels which he sawed out on a jig-saw last winter.

"We have given a poor description, yet any visitor can see that all we have said is true and that it is indeed a model cider mill and thoroughly up to date in machinery and method. This mill draws business from the country within a radius of ten miles. It has been operated by Mr. Williams for 22 years and has continually been improved and brought to its present up-to-date condition." (Submitted by Florence Michaels)



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**P.O. Box 87**  
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