

Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

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NEWS BRIEFS

- **Turning Fifty ...** This is the 50th edition of the *Fly Creeker*. The first, published in July 1989, was a two-page, typewritten edition, hurriedly assembled by acting editor Bill Deane when Publications Director Musa Gumone was hospitalized due to a heart attack. Now, we have a six-page edition, done on a word-processor, and hurriedly assembled by Bill Deane every three months. The 50 editions contain 236 letter-sized pages of information and history, forming a book-sized body of work of which we are proud. We hope you've appreciated it, too.
- **There are Hundreds of Us ...** For the first time in the Society's history, membership has reached two hundred – 203, to be exact! Welcome aboard to our newest enrollees, Michael Ainslie, and contributing member Teriann Sammis. There were also renewals from the Ainslie-Hamblin family, Kathy Bleuer, Narda Bush, Irwin Curlis, Craig Haney, Rev. Eileen Kellogg, Gary Kuch, Harry & Lola Lyons, Marvin & Donna Mulford, Paul Poulos & Rochelle Semel (inadvertently omitted from the last newsletter), Sherlee Rathbone, Susan Rodd, Edwin Tipple, Margaret Winnie, and Fred & Jean Wyckoff. There is a rumor that Jim Wolff had something to do with the membership surge.
- **The Power of Fly Creek ...** Marion Brophy's "Bound Volumes" column (passed on to us by Elaine Harvey) in the August 24, 2001 *Freeman's Journal* contained a Fly Creek-related item from 150 years ago: "Mr. E. W. Badger, of Fly Creek, is the manufacturer of one of the best horse-powers in the State. It was patented in 1840, and has since been introduced into very general use, both in this and other States of the Union. It has an 'endless floor,' and combines many advantages over other machines of the kind. No farmer in Otsego or the adjoining counties need go further than Fly Creek to find an article in every way adapted to his wants." – August 23, 1851.
- **A Square Deal ...** The final monthly Square & Round Dance of 2001 will be held at the FCAHS Building/Grange Hall on November 3, from 7 to 10 PM. Admission is free, and refreshments are available for purchase. Volunteers for help with refreshments are sought.
- **Brochure to Become a Collector's Item ...** We still have approximately 1,000 of the Fly Creek brochures produced by the Society in 1997. They are becoming somewhat dated, but at the least will have historical value for future generations. If you want some, let us know!
- **Stick-to-it-niveness ...** Once again, we have begun a new mailing label system, but this time we're "sticking" with it. Cynthia Ekeland did most of the work, and Anne Geddes-Atwell and Jim Wolff were also instrumental in the process. Please check your mailing label for spelling and accuracy, and report any corrections to the editor. Also, notify us if anyone you know didn't get a newsletter.
- **We're Due ...** Annual dues for 2002 are payable by the first of the year. Paid up members will be listed in the Winter, 2002 issue, due out in January. Please use the application on page 5 (copies are fine) to renew your membership. And how about a gift membership for someone special?

**TRUSTEES' NEWS:
VOTE on BY-LAWS CHANGES at NOVEMBER MEETING**

During a meeting on September 19, the FCAHS Trustees adopted resolutions to amend two articles of our By-Laws. These will be voted on by members during our November meeting. Following are the proposed amendments, with revisions and additions in **bold**:

Article One, section 5: "**Annual Dues shall be payable in advance and no later January 1st** each year."

Article Seven, section 1: "At the discretion of the President or Vice President, up to **\$100.00** [formerly \$50.00] of the Society's funds may be used to purchase a document or artifact that has a special value to the Society's permanent collection of materials related to the Fly Creek area.

Article Seven, section 2: "**The President, Vice President and Secretary are authorized to expend up to \$100.00, with prior notice to the Treasurer, for items required for the day-to-day operation of the Society (i.e. propane, postage, supplies, etc.), and a bill or receipt must be presented to the Treasurer before reimbursement or payment will be made.**"

The trustees also met with John Schallert, Jr., and unanimously authorized him to proceed with renovation of the woodshed: jacking it up, putting in a foundation, raising the floor level to match the existing kitchen, lengthening the shed by approximately six feet so that two bathrooms and a utility room can be installed, installation of radiant floor heat, and installation of a septic system. All labor expenses are to be "donated" by Mr. Schallert, with the Society paying only for materials. Mr. Schallert will also be donating lumber for us to use to frame out the extension on the building, while local contractor Steve Smith has agreed to install the flashing and the new roof on the shed, also donating his labor. [Submitted by Jim Wolff, FCAHS Trustee]

The FCAHS mourns the recent deaths of two members who joined the Society in 1989, its very first year of existence. Our sympathy is extended to the family and friends of these people.

David E. Baker, 60, died suddenly on September 12, 2001. He was born in Rochester, and married Mary Jean Scott in 1965. Dave and Scottie moved to Fly Creek in 1968, opening the Schoolhouse Furniture Gallery. The Bakers later graciously offered space in this building for our Society's documents and artifacts.

Dave had many talents and hobbies, one of which was the restoration of antique canoes. He was president of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association, and on March 25, 1992, he presented a program on "Early Wooden Canoes" for the FCAHS. He is survived by his wife, his mother, a brother, two children, and a granddaughter.

Dot Boyd, 87, died September 16, 2001. Dorothy Harrison was born in Fly Creek on July 15, 1914, and married Louie C. Boyd in 1941. After raising a family, she served the Farmers' Museum for many years as a guide, spinner and weaver. Dot was a member of the Native Daughters of Cooperstown and the Fly Creek United Methodist Church.

Louie predeceased her by almost exactly a year, but Dot is survived by four children (including FCAHS members Louie "Spike" Boyd, Jr., and Bonnie Sharpe), six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. And many generous friends, too: we are grateful for the donations to the FCAHS, in the memory of Dorothy Boyd, received from Ed & Judy Thorne, and Bill & Karen Ubner.

MEETINGS

The three most recent monthly meetings were held on July 25, August 22, and September 26, 2001. The July meeting started at the Old Chapel Burying Ground, where Pete Martin gave a brief history of the cemetery – the oldest in Fly Creek, containing more than 250 graves dated between 1792-1915. Later, at the regular meeting in our building, President Carr showed a poster advertising the 1904 U.S. Presidential campaign of Alton B. Parker, a central New York resident. It took two men to hold up the nearly-six-foot poster, which was found in the building.

In August, Lady Ostapeck brought samples of her vintage clothing. She was both amusing and knowledgeable as she displayed articles ranging from ladies' undergarments to silk kimonos, a combing jacket, and lace and crocheted pieces. The Annual Meeting also saw the elections of new officers MerriLynn Fish (President) and Joan Smith (Secretary), while Wes Ciampo (Vice-President) and Elaine Harvey (Trustee, defeating Carl Roemer) were re-elected. Congratulations to the new administration!

Our guest presenter in September was Elaine Harvey and she shared with us excerpts from two recorded interviews with former longtime residents. In 1989, Elaine sat with Hattie Devenpeck (1901-98) and learned a bit about life in Toddsville and surrounding areas during the 20th century. Erastus "Rat" Bouton (1898-1983) was the subject of the second interview, done in 1973 by Ruth Yule. He told about the many people and sights in the Fly Creek area during his lifetime. After the program, time was taken to recognize the September 11 terrorist attack on our country. The *Pledge of Allegiance*, a moment of silence, and a verse of *God Bless America* opened the regular meeting.

The final two FCAHS meetings of 2001 are scheduled for October 24 and November 28 (as usual, the fourth Wednesday of each month). Gatherings are held at the FCAHS Building/Grange Hall on Cemetery Road at beginning at 7 PM, and everyone is welcome. In October, sculptor Fred Blatt will present "The Business of Sculpture"; and in November, John Mott will do a program entitled "The Sequence of the Barn, New England-Otsego." A covered-dish supper, at 6 PM, will precede the November gathering. There is no meeting in December.

Elaine Harvey also asks us to start thinking about the January 23, 2002 meeting, which will be a "show-and-tell" session. Elaine asks members to bring in such things as old news articles, scrapbooks, and antique items which might need identification. [Submitted by Robin Moshier]

FCAHS PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 2001 Annual Report

[Editor's note: Following is the text of the Publications Committee's annual report, as delivered by Bill Deane at the August 22, 2001 FCAHS meeting.]

The Publications Committee consists of Jim Atwell and Anne Geddes-Atwell, George Badgley and Deborah Dickinson, Carolyn McLean, Robin Moshier, and me. We held our annual meeting in the Fellowship Hall of the Fly Creek Church on March 28, 2001. Besides publishing our quarterly newsletter, the Committee handles publicity work for the Society, including posters and news articles about our monthly meetings and special events.

Besides members of the committee, FCAHS members who have been particularly helpful to us over the past year include, alphabetically, Pam Deane, Cynthia Ekeland, Elaine Harvey, Dot Martin, Pete Martin, Sally Rezen, and Lois Streett.

The Committee again published four newsletters over the past year, making a grand total of 49 issues and 230 pages since 1989. The Autumn, 2001 issue – our 50th – is expected out in October.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Deane, Chairman, Publications Committee

THE OAKSNEE

In Oaksville on State Highway 28 is a small sign saying "OAKS CREEK." Most people seldom even notice it. What if the sign said "THE OAKSNEE"? That is what Richard Smith called the creek when he wrote about his 1769 tour of the area.

Smith was part of a group sent to survey the Otego patent, a 60,000-acre grant (of which he was one of the many proprietors) on the upper Susquehanna River. They started down the Susquehanna on May 17, 1769, according to *A Tour of the Hudson, the Mohawk, the Susquehanna and the Delaware in 1769* (edited by Francis W. Halsey; Purple Mountain Press edition, 1989):

"We departed at 9 o'clock with 2 pack horses carrying provisions and baggage, and 1 riding horse with 5 men as chain carriers and servants and 2 Mohawk Indians as guides. In about 4 miles we came to the Oaksnee which is the branch that leads into the Susquehanna from Lake Canadarago [Canadarago]. It is here about 8 or 10 yards wide and very rapid. We cut a large tree to cross upon and observed a rich low bottom on each side of the Oaksnee but not wide. On the way we passed several deep morasses and found a great variety of timber mixt with the White Pine. The waters of the Oaksnee are not green like those of the Otsego Duct. At half after two o'clock after passing along Hartwick's line we arrived at the Otego before it enters our track."

William Bailey wrote in 1874 (*Richfield Springs and Vicinity*) that John Tunnicliff had a large house and sawmill built in 1764 on land he had bought on David Schuyler's patent, about two miles from Lake Canadarago. Bailey stated that this was called "The Oaks" as a "large portion of the lands in his purchase were thickly covered with gigantic oak-trees. This name was subsequently given to the stream that forms the outlet of Canadarago Lake which it still retains." In a 1998 article ("Diary of Mary Bishop Cushman") for *New York History*, Jamie O. Shafer mentions that in the 19th century the Tunnicliff property and Oaks Creek were sometimes called "Oaksnee."

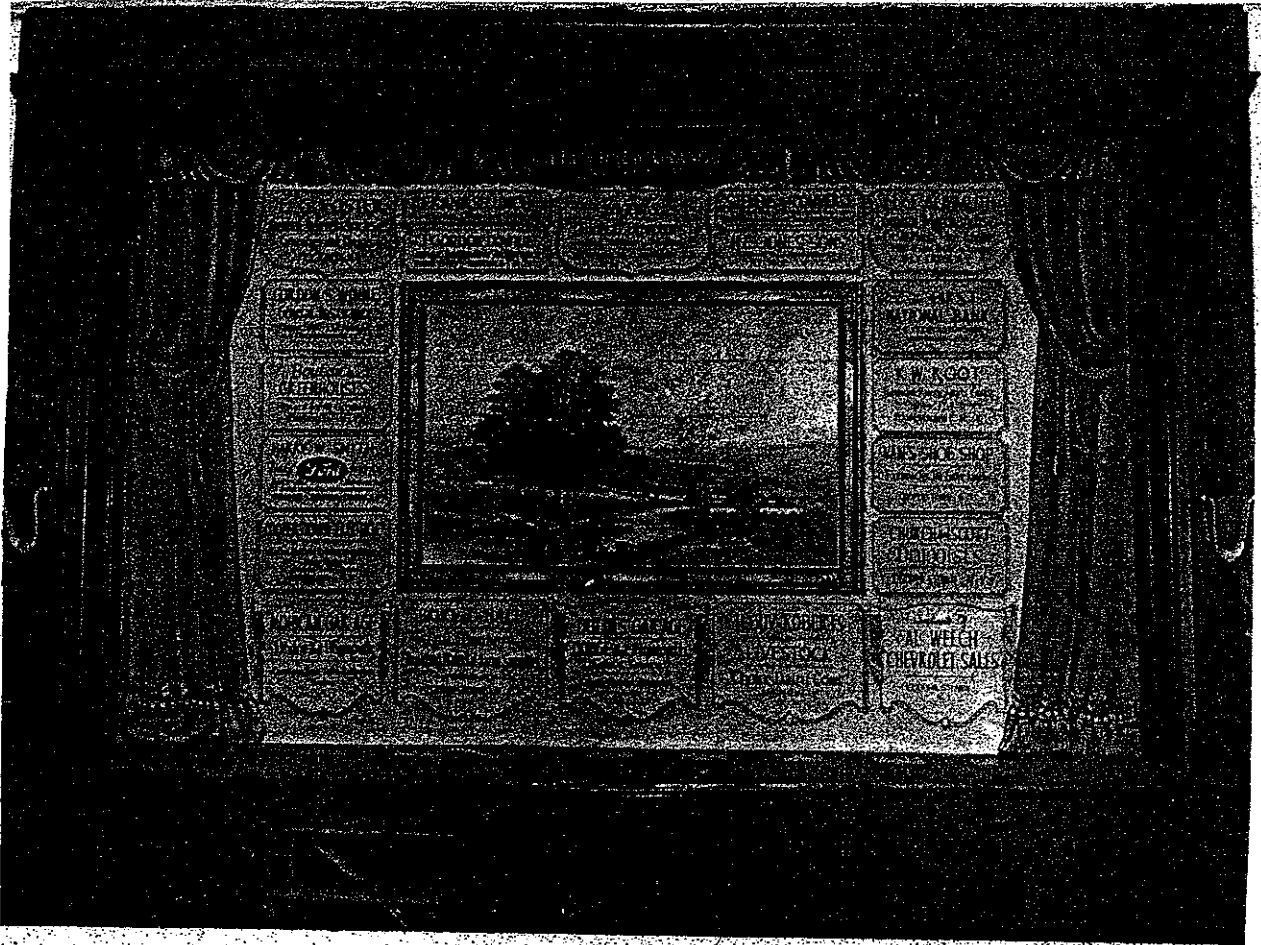
The word "oak" is from ancient European languages, but I've not found anyone who knows where the "nee" or "snee" came from. Although it is tempting to assume this comes from a Native American language, the proof remains to be found (anyone out there knowledgeable in Indian languages?). Henry A. Ward, in his 1898 book *Annals of Richfield*, expressed regret for the fact that so many Indian names of local water bodies have been lost, and noted that "Diligent search has not brought to light the original word by which Oaks creek was known."

We do know that Chief Joseph Brant (Thayendanega) was one of Richard Smith's guides. It is reported that Brant visited "The Oaks," and that he pledged to protect Tunnicliff, who "remained faithful to the crown." The house was not burned during the war, but slowly rotted away over the years. A New York State Historic Site marker on County Route 16 indicates where the Tunnicliff house was.

The huge oaks are also long gone. It's easy for us to feel sad that so many beautiful trees were cut down. But back when a forested wilderness was being cleared for farmland, it was a necessity, requiring a great deal of hard work.

We still have Oaks Creek, however. It is such a common name that there are possibly hundreds of other creeks with the same one. The one that flows through Otsego has an especially rich and colorful history. It was important to the Indians and very early settlers. Later it provided water power for the many mills that supported hundreds of people. It is a special stream, and should have a special name. I propose it be given back its old name: "The Oaksnee." [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

The article below is from an unidentified 1973 news-clipping, and was submitted by Carolyn McLean.



The curtain will again rise at the Old Fly Creek Grange Hall, as it did so many years ago, on September 8th of this year, as the Leatherstocking Players present two one-act plays opening night: 'The Babies', featuring the husband-wife team of Carter and Mary Jo Morris, followed by 'You, The Jury', featuring Bob Michaud and Ned Cruikshank. The Leatherstocking playhouse, as the theater is called, is located about 100 yards south of Route 28 & 80 in Fly Creek, at the Grange Hall. Curtain time is 8 p.m.

**2002 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 tax-deductible donation, in the amount of \$ _____ (minimum \$20), and enroll me/us as a contributing/sustaining member(s).

VETERANS' MEMORIAL DEDICATED 35 YEARS AGO

The Veterans' Memorial in front of the Fly Creek Fire House was dedicated 35 years ago this fall. On November 12, 1966, Congressman Samuel S. Stratton gave a stirring speech in front of some 700 people gathered for the dedication. An article (passed on to us by Bill Gates) in the November 16 edition of the *Freeman's Journal* covered the event.

"One very important lesson we have learned in the years since the end of World War II is that the struggle for peace is one that must go on day after day, and year after year," said Stratton, with words that still ring true today. "Victory doesn't come suddenly and completely, as we once thought back in 1918 at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month."

Preceding Stratton's speech was a parade led by the Congressman and Fly Creek Fire Chief Glenn "Hi" Weir. William N. Bliss was master of ceremonies for the program. Rev. Albert Almstedt gave the invocation, and Rev. John Weyand the benediction. Attorney O. L. Van Horne, speaker at the dedication of the original Fly Creek honor roll (replaced by the Veterans' Memorial), was present. After the ceremony, a hot buffet luncheon was served at the Fly Creek Grange Hall.

The memorial (inscribed "Let We Forget. To Those of the Fly Creek Area Who Gallantly Served Their Country") was created by the Cherry Valley Memorial Company, and Erastus Bouton landscaped the plot. The Memorial Committee included Donald Davis, Walter Morrison, Chief Weir, Norman Bachanas, William Bice, Edwin Tipple, and George Jordan.

As the *Journal* noted, "This was one of the biggest days the small hamlet of Fly Creek has ever known and according to reports the parade was one of the first in many years. The Fly Creek Fire Department, its Auxiliary and all those who helped in any way to make this dedication such a fine success are to be congratulated."

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