

Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

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NEWS BRIEFS

- **We're Due ...** This is the last newsletter being mailed to those who haven't paid their annual dues, which were due by January 1. The 2002 Roll of Membership, in this issue, shows only 109 paid-up members. That's barely half of last year's total, so many of us are remiss. If you don't see your name on page 5, please use the application on the bottom of that page (a copy is fine) to renew your membership. Thanks.
- **New Blood ...** Welcome to our newest members, Louise Allen, Rita Boyd, Stephen & Christine Glazer, and Beth Okerson.
- **Voices of Fly Creek ...** Two more of Marion Brophy's recent *Freeman's Journal* "Bound Volumes" columns (passed on to us by Freida Snyder and Elaine Harvey) contained Fly Creek-related items from 50 years ago. From October 17, 1951, "Merrilyn Rogers and Carol Eaton of this village, who won a recent amateur contest sponsored by the Fly Creek IOOF [Odd Fellows], sang over station WRUN in Utica on Friday afternoon of last week." From November 19, 1951, "Grades three and four of the Fly Creek School will present a Thanksgiving program, open to the public, at 2 p.m. Tuesday. Participating will be the following: Elizabeth Ann Susman, Rosmond Bowen, Richard Wiegel, Joanne Winnie, Patricia Aufmuth, Carol Winnie, Emily Stucin, Joanne Adler, Barbara Green, Robert Huestis, Gerald Allison, Wilson Michaels, Marline Allison, Betty Semrov, Fay Osterhout and Eileen Lacyan."
- **Reporters Wanted ...** The annual meeting of the Publications Committee will be held at 6:30 PM, prior to the March 27, 2002 FCAHS meeting. Anyone interested in helping out with the newsletter and/or other publication projects is invited to attend.
- **Donations ...** The FCAHS is grateful for donations received from Jim & Margaret Wolff, in memory of Dorothy Boyd and Dave Baker, and from Dora Cooke, in memory of Dave Baker.
- **In Case of Emergency ...** Reminder: the FCAHS has a cell phone available in the building for calling in or out during emergencies. Write down the number in a handy place: 435-7850.

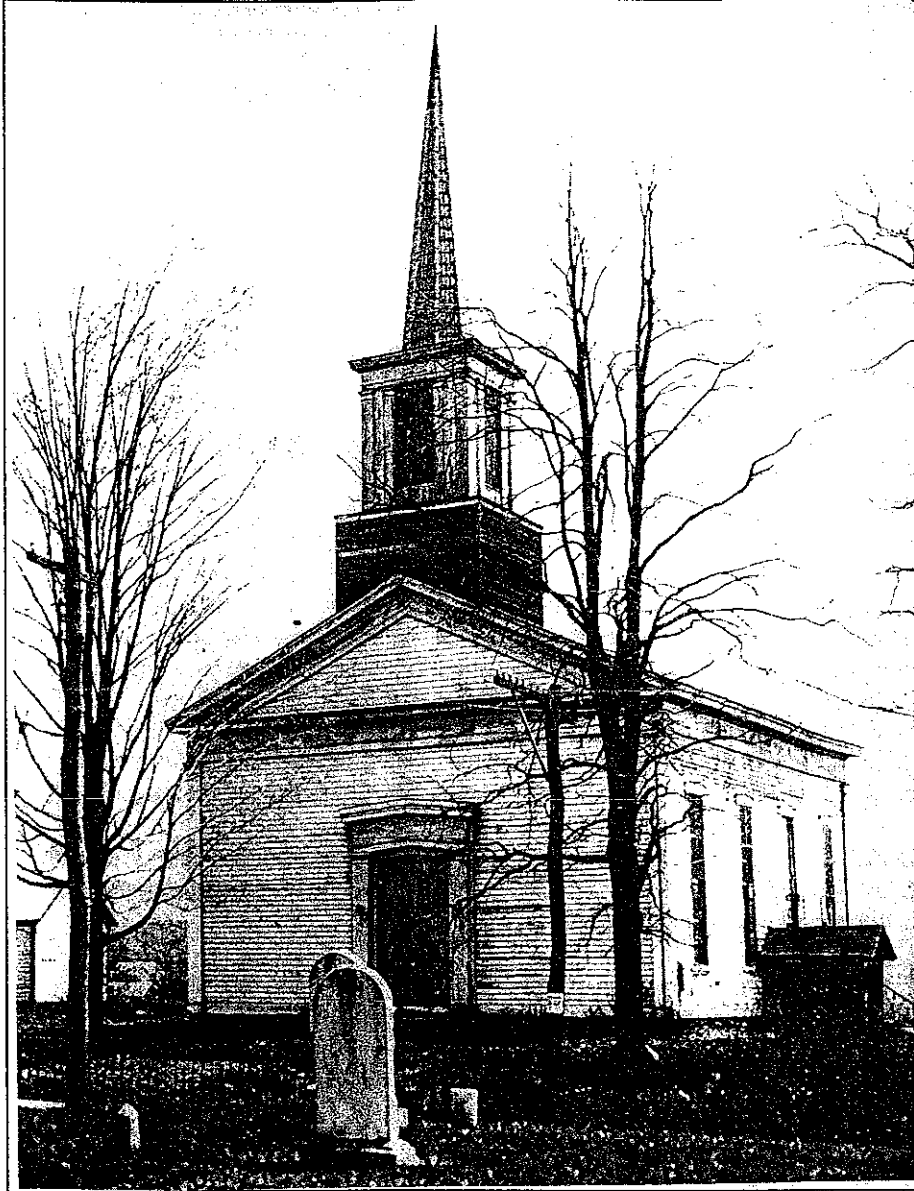
CHURCH EDIFICE 116 YEARS OLD TO BE REMOVED

[Editor's note: the following article is reprinted from the May 7, 1937 edition of the *Otsego Farmer*, and was submitted by Elaine Harvey. The Universalist Church was located adjacent to the south side of the FCAHS/Grange building. The photo is from *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear*.]

After serving as the house of worship for the past 116 years, the old Universalist church in Fly Creek was sold at auction on Saturday afternoon (May 1) to H. J. Aufmuth of that community for eighty-five dollars. The church, said to be the oldest of the Universalist society in New York state west of the Hudson river, had not been in use for the past three years, the last sermon having been preached there by the Rev. Charles Kramer, pastor of the Cooperstown Universalist church. The auctioneer was Ceylon L.

Peaslee of Laurens. Three months have been allowed the purchaser to demolish the building. The plot of ground on which it stands was purchased for ninety dollars by the Fly Creek Grange [for use as parking space]. William Smith of Fly Creek purchased the church pews, constructed of sturdy pine lumber.

This society, declared to be the first society of the Universalist faith in the state, outside of New



York city, was organized in 1805 about two miles southwest of Fly Creek in what was known as the Eddy school district in the town of Hartwick. Fourteen names were enrolled at that time by the promoter of the project, the Rev. Nathaniel Stacy, who settled in Otsego county in 1805. Up until 1820, when a meeting was held to take action in regard to the building of the Fly Creek church, worship was held in churches of other denominations or in schools or halls.

Records of the society indicate that on January 15th, 1820, the following resolution in regard to building a church was adopted: "That it is expedient to erect a house to be devoted to the worship of God in that part of

the town of Otsego, commonly called Fly Creek, and that the doors of said house should be opened to all regular religious societies at all times when not occupied by the society called Universalists."

William Sprague was chosen chairman, and Dwight Jarvis secretary of the building committee. The church was erected in 1821 on land owned by Mr. Sprague. In 1862, extensive repairs were made. An endowment fund provided by early supporters of the church, principally by the Taylor family, provided the means for the maintenance of the property and the continuation of services until the last three years, when the congregation became practically depleted.

A feature of recent years had been an annual pilgrimage to the church by the Otsego County Universalist association.

MMII MEETINGS

FCAHS meetings for 2002 will be held, as usual, on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except November (third Wednesday) and December (no meeting). This year's gatherings are thus scheduled for January 23, February 27, March 27, April 24, May 22, June 26, July 24, August 28, September 25, October 23, and November 20, 2002. They are normally held at the FCAHS Building/Grange Hall on Cemetery Road beginning at 7 PM, and everyone is welcome. Due to anticipated winter weather, the meetings for January and February (and probably March) will be held at the Fly Creek church.

The January meeting will be a "show-and-tell" session, led by Elaine Harvey. Members are asked to bring in things (preferably related to the Fly Creek area) such as old news articles, scrapbooks, and antique items which might need identification. For the February meeting (preceded at 6 PM by a covered-dish dinner), Jim Atwell encourages us to bring poems that were memorized in grade school days, for recitation or reading. And in March, Jim Havener will present "18th Century Reenactments."

The final two FCAHS meetings of 2001 were held on October 24 and November 28. In October, members were treated to a visit with Fly Creek sculptor Frederic Blatt. During a history of about 30 years in sculpture, he has had commissions to sculpt everyone from ballplayers to authors and poets, including Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, and diarist Samuel Pepys. Mr. Blatt talked about different types of casting, and shared examples of his own work, which was admired by all.

In November, we enjoyed a good, old-fashioned, covered-dish meal. We then heard John Mott of Hartwick present "The Sequence of the Barn, New England-Otsego," illustrated with photos, slides, and hand-crafted models. The history of the New England barn was traced with many examples, including some in the Otsego County area. Mr. Mott's experience includes working at Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts in building "The Living History Barn, 1790-1830." At the business meetings we heard progress reports on the building renovation work. The septic system and leech field are almost complete (during excavation, parts of an old church foundation were found), the shed has been framed, and the new plumbing is in place. Also, the proposed changes to the society's By-Laws were approved. [Submitted by George Badgley]



DECEASED FCAHS MEMBERS

*BAKER, David E. (9/12/01)	MECKLENBURG, Frederich H. von (6/13/91)
BLANCHARD, Sally (1/12/93)	*MICHAELS, Florence W. (12/9/98)
BLOCK, Waldemar (10/27/91)	*MICHAELS, Howard (1/13/91)
BOYD, Dorothy H. (9/16/01)	MUMFORD, Ruth M. (5/19/96)
BOYD, Louie C., Sr. (9/23/00)	OLIN, Beatrice (8/28/90)
BURNHAM, Garfield P. (11/24/96)	*PRESTON, Mrs. Robert (5/18/91)
*BURNHAM, Katherine M. (9/24/97)	SMALE, Elizabeth (7/29/91)
CAMPBELL, Bernice (5/1/95)	SUSMAN, C. Paul (4/22/92)
*CURLIS, Virginia W. (11/30/96)	SUSMAN, Elizabeth (11/1/90)
ELKAN, Margaret (8/17/98)	*TALBOT, Hazel I. (10/3/91)
ELLSWORTH, Gerald B. (7/20/99)	TRINKAUS, John (4/13/93)
FARMER, Dr. Edward T. (6/25/97)	VanWOERT, Esther (2/11/92)
HECOX, Eugene W. (10/26/95)	VAUGHN, Bernice E. (12/25/93)
KNAPP, Ernest (10/19/93)	
LAUT, Kenneth (3/22/95)	*Charter Member.

FLY CREEK'S AVIATION PIONEER

Fly Creek can boast to having been, for 17 years, the home of a celebrity: A. Leo Stevens, one of America's aviation pioneers, and holder of U.S. pilot's license #2.

A. Leo Stevens was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on September 27, 1877, the son of Frank and Anna Stevens. Leo's life as an aeronaut began at the tender age of twelve. His father was part-owner of a Cleveland-area amusement park, which planned to stage a tethered-balloon ascension. Leo befriended the Englishman who was engaged to make the ascension, helping him for three days in preparation for it. In exchange, the aeronaut promised to take the lad with him. When the day came, the aeronaut said that Leo couldn't go, since he was under age. Feeling betrayed, Stevens took matters into his own hands. A few hours before the scheduled liftoff, Leo enlisted a friend to cut the rope holding the balloon down, leaped aboard the wicker basket, and took to the skies. As the horrified balloon-owner and thousands of spectators looked on, Stevens -- who had done some reading about balloon flight -- soared to 3,000 feet before making a precipitous landing some 50 miles away in Canton. Within a few months, Stevens -- billed as "Prince Leo, the Death-Defying Boy Aeronaut" -- had left home to join a traveling show.

Over the next decade, Stevens made more than 1,000 ascensions, usually ending with an exciting parachute jump. In Montreal in 1895, one of his jumps ended with him hanging from the slender spire of Notre Dame Cathedral. Another time, he narrowly missed plunging over Niagara Falls after his balloon exploded 1,000 feet above the gorge. At New York harbor on September 30, 1902, Stevens engaged in a spectacular exhibition of dirigible flight, outperforming the operator of a European craft.

Stevens was much more than a daredevil, however. He continually experimented with improvements on aircraft and parachutes, resulting in several patents. Stevens constructed the first motor-powered airship in the U.S., and developed the ripcord, which opens a parachute after the jumper has cleared the plane. Prior to that, parachutes had been opened by a cord attached to the aircraft. In later years, the Aeronautical Society of America presented Stevens with a huge cup in recognition of his contributions to aeronautics. Stevens eventually donated this cup, and many of his other trophies, to the Institute of Aeronautical Science in New York City.

During World War I, Stevens was an instructor at the U.S. Army Balloon School in Fort Omaha, Nebraska. Afterward, he worked with the Army in a civilian capacity as instructor and parachute engineer in Belleville, Illinois. During World War II, Stevens was called out of retirement to help develop a revolutionary type of parachute for the war effort. In all, Stevens was credited with 55 aviation "firsts," and made 3,456 flights, carrying thousands of passengers with never a loss of life.

Stevens married Laura Carter of Akron, Ohio on July 6, 1925, and the couple moved from New York City to Fly Creek in 1927. At Cooperstown in 1939, Stevens piloted a balloon as part of the Baseball Centennial celebration.

Stevens died May 7, 1944, at a stop on his way to Washington, DC, where he planned to offer the War Department his latest parachute invention. He was survived by his wife; a brother, Frank, in Bardonia; a niece, Anna Stevens; and three nephews, Lawrence, Leo, and Vincent Stevens. A few days later, A. Leo Stevens made his final landing at the Fly Creek Valley Cemetery. The image of a parachute is etched into his gravestone.



FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY: 2002 Roll of Membership

ALLEN, Louise
 ANDREWS, Arthur & Margaret
 AUFMUTH, H. James
 AUFMUTH, Jayne
*BADGLEY, George & Deborah Dickinson
 *BAKER, Scottie
 *BALDWIN, Rev. Kenneth R.
 *BERTINO, Dr. Joseph & Dr. Anne Nafziger
 BOUTON, Ron & Carol
 BOYD, Spike & Joyce
BOYD, William V. & Rita B.
 *BRESEE, Philip & Ruth
 BROPHY, Marion
 CARR, Richard D.
 CARR, Richard H. & Ann M.
 CLARK, Francis & Margaret
 CLAYTON, Robert E.
 COOKE, Richard & Dora
 DAVIS, R. Helen
*DAY, Irving III & Kathleen
 *DEANE, Bill, Pam & Sarah
 EKELAND, Cynthia G. & Anita Graham
 ELLSWORTH, Catherine Lake
 FAMULARE, Dorothy B.
 FARMER, Mary E.
 FAUROT, Craig & Patricia
 *FINCH, John & Jean
 FISH, Jim & Merri Lynn
 FOUTCH, Dick & Alene
GATES, Bill & Roberta Reed
 GLAZER, Steven & Christine
 HAMDY, Elizabeth S.
 HANOR, Katharine & Edward Reilly
 HARRINGTON, Angela E.
 *HARVEY, Merritt & Elaine
 HELFAND, Elliot & Martha

JANET LeROY INTERIORS, Inc.
 JENKINS, Ruby
 *JENSEN, Margaret K.
 KEATING, William & Evelyn
LaGASSE, Dorothy
 *LAVRINOS, Nicholas & Alice
 LICCI, Anthony & Genevieve
 MARTIN, Homer & Leila
 *MARTIN, Peter L. & Dorothy J.
McLEAN, Carolyn S.
 McRORIE, Nancy J.
 MOSHIER, Robin
 OKERSON, Beth
 ORILIO, Nancy
 OSTAPECK, Lady
 PALMER, Peter
 PERNAT, Mary
 RANDALL, Charlotte
 REZEN, Paul & Sally
 ROBERTS, Susan
ROGERS, Gail
 SAMMIS, Terriann
 *SCHAEFFER, William & Paula
 SHARPE, Stuart & Bonnie
SMITH, Joan S.
 SMITH, Zoe & Sue-Ellen Spence
 *SNYDER, Art & Freida
 STREETT, Lois S.
 THORNE, Edward & Joyce
TILLAPAUGH, Mariorie
 WEIGEL, Fred & Wilma
 WILCOX, Mark & Sarah
 WOLFF, James & Margaret
YOURNO, Albert, Ann & James
 * = Charter Member.
Bold = Contributing/Sustaining Member.



2002 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 P.O. Box 87, Fly Creek, NY 13337

Name(s): _____ Renewal ___ New ___

Address: _____

Telephone: () _____ - _____ E-mail address: _____ @ _____

- Please register me as a member of the FCAHS. Enclosed is a check for \$10.
- Please register us to a family membership (note: this extends to all family members living in one domicile). 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).



The picture above, left, taken by Walter McLean, depicts the Twelve Thousand School on Arbor Day, 1907. J. Taylor House is the teacher, standing in the back; the students, left to right, are Homer Van Valkenburg, Alida M. Phillips, Susan B. Van Horne, Lynn Van Horne, Juliet Hancock, and Anastasia Cramer. House, shown at the right in what looks to be a later photo, dropped dead in 1916 at age 34, while explaining a math problem to his class (see the Spring, 1996 *Fly Creeker*). [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 87

Fly Creek, NY 13337
