

Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

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VOLUME 17, ISSUE 4 * AUTUMN, 2005

NEWS BRIEFS

- **Granting Our Wish ...** Jim Wolff reports that the FCAHS has been awarded a grant of \$2,300 toward the Fly Creek Historic District initiative. This project is funded by Preserve New York, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts. The grant comes with several conditions, including the hiring of Jessie Ravage as a consultant to do the work involved in nominating the hamlet for historic district status. Jessie previously was hired to set up our accessioning system back in 1992, and gave us a presentation on "Fly Creek: How to Save What You Have" just this past January.
- **Due as I Say ...** FCAHS dues for 2006 are payable by January 1. Unlike gas prices, rates have not gone up since 1996. Please use the application on page 5 to renew your membership. A list of paid-up members will be printed in the next issue. Note: those listed as new members above are already covered through 2006, and a few others have already renewed for next year.
- **Pancake Breakfast ...** A pancake breakfast will be held at the FCAHS/Grange Hall on Sunday, October 30, from 8 AM until noon. Besides pancakes, there will be sausage and gravy, eggs, applesauce, and biscuits served family style. The cost is \$5.50 for adults, and \$3 for children aged 5-12. Proceeds benefit the FCAHS.
- **Last Dance ...** The 2005 schedule of square and round dances concludes with one on November 5, preceded by a covered-dish dinner. Dances are held at the FCAHS/Grange building on the first Saturday of each month, May through November, from 7-10 PM. Admission is free, and refreshments are available for purchase, with proceeds going to the FCAHS.
- **Made to be Broken ...** The final record-breaking FCAHS membership total was 231, with the additions of new members Nancy Buetow, Peter & Maria Deysenroth, Philip & Ann Fey, **Joseph Anthony Galati & Associates**, **Katherine T. Perkins**, Annette Reckeweg, **Roger & Dorothy Smith**, Mark Weir & family, and renewals from Elliot & Martha Helfand, **New York Susquehanna & Western Railway**, and Wilma Weigel. Contributing members are listed in **bold**. This is an astonishing 40% increase in membership from last year's 165, a testament to the tremendous efforts of membership committee chairperson Sherlee Rathbone.
- **From Fly Creek ...** North Country Books of Utica has published *From Fly Creek: Celebrating Life in Leatherstocking Country*, by our own Jim Atwell. The 208-page paperback features 49 of Jim's best *Freeman's Journal* and *CoopersTown Crier* columns of the past dozen years, and the fine artwork of his wife, Anne Geddes-Atwell. From beginning to end, it will have you thinking, chuckling in some places, misting up in others, and realizing what a treasure the community has in Jim Atwell and his writing. The book sells for \$17.95 and is available at the Fly Creek General Store, Fly Creek Cider Mill, and several places in what Jim calls "Fly Creek's largest suburb," Cooperstown.
- **Ethel Shaw, 1908-2005 ...** The Society has learned of the death of former member Ethel Shaw on October 10. Ethel was born January 3, 1908 and, at 97, was one of the longest-lived Fly Creek residents on record. She was a charter member of the Society, staying on until 1994.

NEWS BRIEFS, Continued

- **Community Chest ...** Two recent community events raised considerable money for their causes. FCAHS activities during the Community Yard Sale Day on August 27 showed a net profit of \$2,863.63 for the Society. Four weeks later (September 24), the proceeds of a pig roast added \$847.02 to the Historic District Fund.
- **Grange Donations ...** Otsego County Pomona Grange has given the Society (on “permanent loan”) many artifacts relating to Fly Creek Grange #844, former owners of our building. Among them are decorative flags, staffs, and sashes, on display in the building, and documents dating back to the 1890s, including minutes books, account books, photographs, and Juvenile Grange membership applications, one of them completed by seven-year-old Arthur Andrews in 1935.
- **Old News ...** On July 27, Publications Committee Chairman Bill Deane donated most of his stash of back issues of the *Fly Creeker* to the Society. There was a total of 327 issues submitted, covering all but nine of the 64 editions of the newsletter, and including 25 copies of the very first issue, printed in the summer of 1989. Our Trustees will discuss making back issues available for purchase.
- **Teaching Community Spirit ...** Jim Fish reports that Cooperstown Central School teacher Amy Parr made her annual pilgrimage to our building on October 5. Ms. Parr brought along 17 of her seventh graders for 5½ hours to do beautification work on our grounds (including the planting of daffodils) and on the cemetery across the road.
- **Programs & Refreshments ...** Margaret “Bunny” Wolff is busy filling out a slate of programs for 2006. Anyone interested in helping Bunny with ideas for programs, should contact her at 547-2501. Meanwhile, Anna Montesano has taken over as chairman of the refreshments committee. To help keep us refreshed, please contact Anna, or use the sign-up sheet available during our meetings.
- **With a Capital “T” ...** Sally Rezen points out an error in the Summer, 2005 issue. In the second line of “Random Memories of the Fly Creek Area” on page 4, “Taylor Hill” should be “Tanner Hill.”

MEETINGS

The final Society meetings for 2005 are scheduled for October 26 and November 16. FCAHS meetings are generally held on the fourth Wednesday of each month beginning at 7 PM, and are open to the public. They are normally staged at the FCAHS Building/Grange Hall on Cemetery Road, Fly Creek, one-tenth of a mile from the blinker light.

In October, Jerry Selan will talk about “Farms and Hunting in Fly Creek.” Jerry is retired from Remington Arms and is an expert skeet shooter. And in November, Mary Lou and Richard Votypka will speak on “Preserving our Little Corner of Fly Creek.” They will be talking about the work they have done to preserve the old antique shop on the corner of State Highway 28 and County Highway 26 which, with a café added, will be called Harmony House.

The three most recent meetings of the FCAHS were held on July 27, August 24, and September 28, 2005. In July, Sherlee Rathbone presented “Where the Bones Are Buried.” The program, with visuals, was very informative about the history and condition of area graveyards, and the ways we have dealt with our dead over the centuries. August saw the Society’s Annual Meeting, featuring committee reports and officer elections. President Wes Ciampo, Vice-President Pete Martin, Secretary Claire Kepner, Treasurer Cynthia Ekeland, and Trustee Jim Atwell were all re-elected to new terms, the latter two for three years each. And, in September, Dick and Sandy deRosa presented “The Best of All Perennials: Daylilies.” In 2001, as the deRosas prepared for retirement, he from teaching and she from nursing, they founded Hawthorne Hill Farm, which now features more than 600 varieties of daylilies. Dick, with input from Sandy, gave an entertaining talk about the process of turning a hobby into an obsession.

75 YEARS AGO: PAVING FLY CREEK'S HIGHWAY

[Editor's note: the following, submitted by Tom Heitz, is from a 1930 Richfield Springs *Mercury* article.]

Under the auspices of the Cooperstown chamber of Commerce a motor caravan which ultimately numbered 200 cars left Cooperstown at 5:30 Wednesday afternoon, Oct. 15th, destination Schuyler Lake, with a stop at Fly Creek, to fittingly celebrate the opening of the completed highway between Schuyler Lake and Cooperstown. The caravan was accompanied by the Cooperstown band. At Fly Creek, where at the four corners an immense American Flag measuring 65 by 42 feet was displayed, an address was made by Mr. Frank C. Carpenter in which greetings from Cooperstown were conveyed and the convenience of the new road stressed.

At Schuyler Lake approximately 400 people gathered in Washburn Hall, where supper was served by the women of the federated churches and speeches and music enjoyed. The principal address was made by O. L. Van Horne, Esq., of Cooperstown, who reviewed the advantages to the neighboring communities which would result from the improved highway.

Other speakers at Schuyler Lake were Rev. Clyde A. Schaff, pastor of the Schuyler Lake Federated Church, and Alexander M. Clark, one of Fly Creek's best and most revered residents.

Mr. Schaff welcomed all the guests from the neighboring villages and spoke of his personal appreciation of the new highway, which he travels daily in the pursuit of his studies at Hartwick College in Oneonta.

FCAHS PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 2005 Annual Report

[Editor's note: following is the text of our Publications Committee's annual report, as delivered by President Wes Ciampo on behalf of Bill Deane during the Society's Annual Meeting on August 24, 2005.]

The Publications Committee consists of Jim Atwell, Elaine Harvey, Tom Heitz, Carolyn McLean, Sherlee Rathbone, Freida Snyder, and me, so our committee isn't lacking for size. We held our annual meeting here at the FCAHS building on April 27, 2005. 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. In addition to the committee members, FCAHS constituents who have been particularly helpful to us over the past year include, alphabetically, Catherine Christiansen, Cynthia Ekeland, Jim Wolff, and Margaret Wolff.

Since 1989, our committee has now produced 65 issues of the *Fly Creeker*, totaling 326 pages. The Autumn, 2005 issue is expected out in October. We continue to have a backlog of material for the newsletter, but are always on the lookout for more.

Last year I reported that our committee has been deficient in one of its responsibilities, namely "finding ways and means for establishing joint or individual research studies." We remain sorely in need of help in this area, including research for the planned reissue of the post card booklet, *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear*. A specific list of needs was published in the Autumn, 2004 newsletter, but has produced absolutely no response. In the Summer, 2005 issue, I re-introduced the idea of our Society producing a history of the Fly Creek area, but that, too, has failed to generate any feedback.

I'll state it as simply as I can: I spend an awful lot of time on the newsletter, and that is all the time I have to spend. If the Society wants our committee to do more than the newsletter, as it should, then people will have to step up to help me.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Deane, Chairman, Publications Committee

THE FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Fly Creek Area Historical Society (FCAHS) was founded on July 26, 1989, with 55 charter members. A Constitution and By-Laws were approved and a slate of officers was elected on that date. Monthly meetings with programs were scheduled, and a quarterly newsletter, the *Fly Creeker*, was begun. The group met in the basement of the Fly Creek United Methodist Church.

The objectives of the Society are to research, document, preserve, and present historical artifacts and documents pertinent to the village of Fly Creek, New York (population c. 350) and its neighboring hamlets. A year after its formation, the FCAHS published a booklet of historic post cards entitled *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear*, and held a community celebration – including a commemorative cancellation by the U.S. Post Office – marking the bicentennial of the Fly Creek area.

The Society continued to grow and keep busy through the 1990s and into the new millennium. Membership reached 100 in 1990 and 200 in 2001. In 1998 the Society was officially recognized by New York State and by the federal government as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Through 2004, the Society had held more than 150 meetings with a diverse slate of programs, and had published 62 issues of the *Fly Creeker*. In 1999, the FCAHS acquired its own building, the former Fly Creek Grange Hall. In 2002, the Society received a grant from the New York State Senate toward renovation expenses, and in 2004 the building earned listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Under the Society's stewardship, the building has regained its status as a community center.

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL TIDBITS

- The hero of James Fenimore Cooper's novels lived in the Fly Creek area. David Shipman (1730-1813), fictionalized as "Natty Bumppo," "Deerslayer," and "Leatherstocking," lived in a log cabin on the east bank of Oaks Creek, about half-way between Fly Creek and Toddsville. He is said to be buried in an unmarked grave in Fly Creek's Adams Cemetery.
- Erastus Beadle, "Father of the Dime Novel," was born in Pierstown in 1821. Beadle's Dime Books were wildly successful publications in the second half of the nineteenth century.
- Isaac Singer, co-founder of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, spent time in the Fly Creek area. In 1833, Singer was employed at the shop of George W. Potter on Oaks Creek, one mile south of the Fly Creek village.
- A trolley line ran through the area from 1902-33, with a station in Fly Creek. Among the passengers on this line was former President Theodore Roosevelt, who used it to visit his sister in nearby Jordanville.
- Famed aviatrix Amelia Earhart spent part of a summer in Fly Creek. While giving flying lessons in nearby Frankfort in August, 1924, Earhart boarded in a house which still stands on State Highway 28, just east of the four-corners.
- Another pioneer aviator, A. Leo Stevens – holder of U.S. pilot's license #2 – lived in Fly Creek from 1927-44. The invention of the ripcord was among Stevens's 55 aviation "firsts."
- Two Fly Creek residents were jurors in the trial of Eva Coe, in a 1934 murder case that gained national attention. Coe was ultimately executed for the murder of Harry Wright in nearby Milford.
- The "Abner Doubleday Baseball," the Baseball Hall of Fame's first artifact, was found in the attic of a Fly Creek farmhouse. The building belonged to a descendant of Abner Graves, the man who claimed that he was present when Doubleday invented baseball in Cooperstown, c. 1839. Graves's testimony was accepted by the Mills Commission in 1907. The finding of this tattered, home-made ball in 1935 lent credibility to Graves's story, and inspired the Clark family to establish a baseball museum in time for the centennial of the game's birth. The Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum was formally opened in 1939, and the Doubleday Baseball is still proudly displayed there.
- Government official Joseph Campbell lived in Pierstown. Campbell was Dwight D. Eisenhower's Comptroller General in the 1950s.

A HALF-CENTURY-OLD CLIPPING

The picture above was printed in the Oneonta *Star* on November 4, 1955. Rosemary was my best friend in school, the daughter of Percy and Mae (Cross) Williams. Mae lived in the house Ron Bouton now lives in, and was a cousin of Betty Cross Woods.

The Williams family lived at the Fly Creek four-corners, where Portabello's restaurant now stands, then bought the house across from the Post Office. I was the maid of honor when Rosemary was married. Both she and her husband taught physical education at Cherry Valley.

Rosemary died at age 33 of a brain hemorrhage about a year after this picture was taken. Her mother died a few years later. [Submitted by Margaret Jensen]

2006 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).

DECEASED FCAHS MEMBERS

ANDREWS, Margaret (9/13/03)
*BAKER, David E. (9/12/01)
BLANCHARD, Sally (1/12/93)
BLOCK, Waldemar (10/27/91)
BOYD, Dorothy H. (9/16/01)
BOYD, Louie C., Sr. (9/23/00)
BROPHY, Marion (5/22/03)
BURNHAM, Garfield P. (11/24/96)
*BURNHAM, Katherine M. (9/24/97)
CAMPBELL, Bernice (5/1/95)
CHRISTIANSEN, Hartwick V. (11/15/04)
*CLARK, Francis A. (12/13/02)
*CURLIS, Virginia W. (11/30/96)
ELKAN, Margaret (8/17/98)
ELLSWORTH, Gerald B. (7/20/99)
FARMER, Dr. Edward T. (6/25/97)
GOODSPEED, Anna (7/31/03)
HECOX, Eugene W. (10/26/95)
KNAPP, Ernest (10/19/93)
KNAPP, Jean T. (4/27/05)
LAUT, Kenneth (3/22/95)
MECKLENBURG, Frederich H. von (6/13/91)

*MICHAELS, Florence W. (12/9/98)
*MICHAELS, Howard (1/13/91)
MUMFORD, Ruth M. (5/19/96)
OLIN, Beatrice (8/28/90)
PERNAT, Mary (5/21/02)
*POTTS, Maxine M. (9/28/04)
*PRESTON, Mrs. Robert (5/18/91)
REILLY, T. Edward (6/18/02)
SMALE, Elizabeth (7/29/91)
SMITH, Zoe P. (1/6/03)
SUSMAN, C. Paul (4/22/92)
SUSMAN, Elizabeth (11/1/90)
*TALBOT, Hazel I. (10/3/91)
TRINKAUS, John (4/13/93)
VanWOERT, Esther (2/11/92)
VAUGHN, Bernice E. (12/25/93)
*WYCKOFF, E. June (6/25/02)
YOURNO, Albert P. (7/21/03)
YOURNO, Anne (8/27/03)

*Charter Member.