

THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

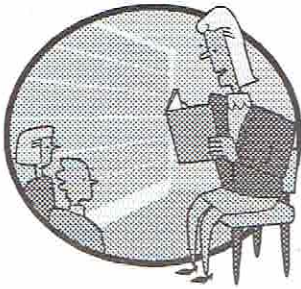
The Clinton Historical Society

Volume XVII Number 7

Craig Marshall, Editor 266-5494

October 2004

READING IS FUN



Since 'day one' in 1965 when the Clinton Community Library opened its doors, local children have been enjoying Story Hours and Summer Reading Programs. The first summer was an "unqualified success", highlighted by locals Alice and Martin Provensen, internationally recognized writers and illustrators of children's books. Other special activities that year were hands-on clay and plaster projects and a puppet show by our neighbors, Allelu and John Kurten. A picnic capped off the summer events. The library's 'home' was in the Town Hall and programs were held outdoors. More than 40 children participated.

Ambitious plans were laid for the summer programs as the years passed. Sometimes Allelu played her guitar and Alice taught silk-screening. There were always performers and storytellers, many of them local teachers who willingly shared some 'summer expertise'. Reading guidance was provided in the structure of topical programs: stories of children in European countries one summer...wildflower collections gathered, identified and pressed into scrapbooks another year. In the late 1970's, the children designed posters on the theme of local ecology and planted a flower garden of petunias, marigolds, nasturtium and zinnias.

Summer reading bookbags, bookmarks and personal reading charts became standard handouts in the late

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CLINTON'S LANDMARK HOMES



Photo 1949

Weiland Homestead - 250 Years

By Craig Marshall

Situated on a peaceful dead-end section of Hollow Road near the Taconic Parkway stands one of the oldest homes in town, the Weiland homestead built c. 1748. Originally containing over 100 acres, this was a working farm passing through many families, as researched by our late member Bill Benson in 1989, and before that by Clifford Buck and John Weiland. Records indicate that the home was built by Mordecai Lester, Jr., a man of means who added "features of class" to this English settler design farmhouse. These features included special moldings, chair rails, Palladium-style windows in the barns, and floorboards planed and joined with tongue-and-groove. On the east side, another home of saltbox construction was moved from a nearby site and added to the main house. In the back, a large summer kitchen was built over a huge cistern measuring 8' diameter by 8' deep. The cistern was built of dry-laid stone parged with cement, fed by gutters on the house, and still exists. Benson determined that this house stood on an early 1718 wagon

path from Dover to Rhinebeck that went through Clinton for tenant farmers to carry their rent (usually bags of wheat) to landowner Henry Beekman in Rhinebeck.

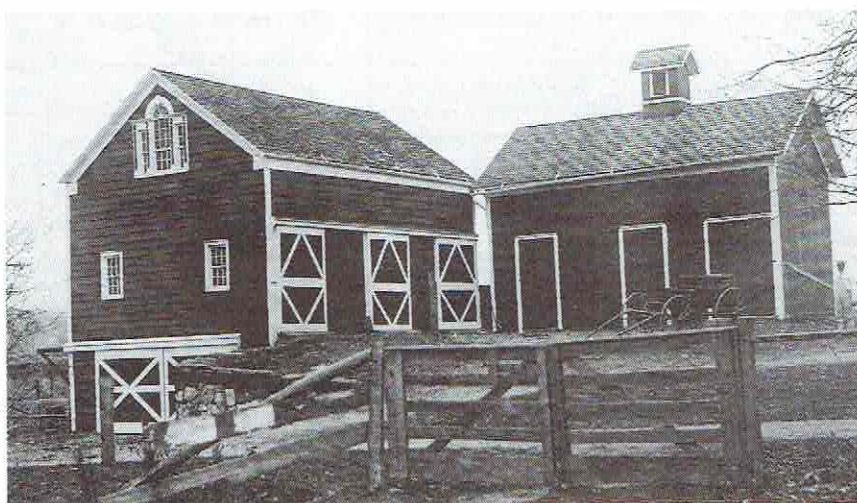
The 1850 farm census lists Alexander Wing and his wife, four children, one domestic, and one hired laborer occupying the 111 acre property. Animals included 25 sheep, 19 pigs, and 15 cows, horses, and oxen. Noting that \$185 worth of livestock was slaughtered, at about 6 cents/lb, along with 700# of butter, it appears that this was a busy farm. A small schoolhouse was on the property since about 1800.

The Webber family bought the farm in 1910, and Ivy Webber Brenner (mother of Clinton resident Gloria Brenner Chambers) was raised there. Ivy recently passed away in her 90s. John and Alice Weiland bought the 4.5 acre homestead in 1957 after the new Taconic State Parkway divided the property. They undertook major restoration work. Alice recounted that it was "quite a job", as there was no heat, one ceiling pull-chain light per room, and

(Continued on page 2)

Preserving Clinton's Heritage

Photo early 1900's



Library (Continued from page 1).

1980's. Children who were blind, learning disabled or who had physical limitations were invited to participate through the use of Braille and talking books that came through the Mid-Hudson Library System. Transportation chains were organized to help out working families.

When the 'children's corner' was established in 1985, it became the center of indoor activities on rainy days. Featuring a round table and just-the-right-size chairs for the children to use, it became a mainstay of program development. Attendance grew from 40 to as many as 85 children. Junior library assistants were deputized, and mothers were encouraged to volunteer their time during the summer schedule.

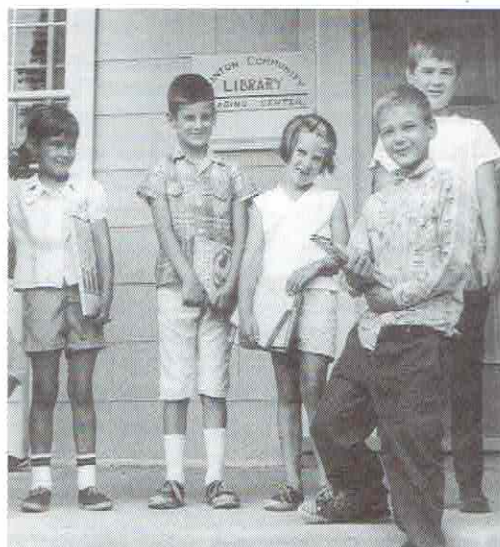
Little has changed over the past 40 years as the Library continues to focus on its young patrons. Summer Reading Programs have become so much a part of the Town's culture that planning and supervisory work is now carried out in the *funded* position of a part time Director of Youth Services. Katherine Mustello, daughter of Dacie Kershaw who founded the earliest programs in 1965, presently holds the post.

In 2004, Glenda Schwarze spoke on Barns and the Underground Railway; local story teller Karen Pillsworth held the children enrapt on another Wednesday; Don Estes appeared with his sidekick *Willy the Jeep*; and Charles Stewart led a kite-making session at Mark

Park in a program co-funded by Town Recreation Director Dan Harkenrider.

Children's programming is a staple of our offerings and the Town's response is so enthusiastic that we must now use Town Hall space to accommodate everyone. We're delighted the Library is included in the Town Hall renovation plan that will allow us to double our space in the next few years. Given our past history, we're certain to use it well.

Story by Nancy Melin Nelson, Director of Library Services.



Do you know who these children are? Contact the editor.

Weiland farm (Continued from page 1)

few electrical outlets. Interestingly, they uncovered an 1886 obituary for Franz Lizst and a 1787 marking behind an attic baseboard. In 1960, they moved in permanently with their three children. Arthur, who has many childhood memories of the house and outbuildings, and his wife Phillippa took ownership of the historic homestead after John passed away in 1997.

The main house is pegged beam with no ridge, and timbers are marked with Roman numerals to identify placement during construction. It has two floors of living quarters, an attic, and a full basement. The porch is an 1800's Victorian addition that fully complements the design of the home. Upon close inspection, the floorboards appear to be "pit sawn" (handsawn) due to their random thickness and width.

One chimney is original with a large shallow shale-backed fireplace. When renovating the saltbox, Art found c. 1800's liquor bottles in the walls that, according to Webber family stories, presumably came from Tom, the hired man "who liked his drink" and who lived in the attic at the time. He also found half a dozen corsets stuffed in the walls, probably as a form of insulation in the drafty siding.

Seven doors lead from the original kitchen in the main house, indicating that this was a major room in the structure. Some of the barns and sheds have long disappeared, including a very large chicken barn. Two big barns in excellent condition remain near the house and nicely complement the property.

Art and Phillippa have sizeable gardens of flowers and vegetables. Chickens still freely roam the picturesque farm under the watchful eyes of hovering chicken hawks, reminiscent of years gone by.

The Weiland Homestead was designated a Clinton Historical Society Landmark in 1989.

LUDWIG'S LEGACY

In 1810, Bavaria, Germany, was the site of a fabulous wedding party. On October 12, Crown Prince Ludwig (later King Ludwig I) married Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen. Bavaria's King Maximilian gave a reception to celebrate their marriage and all citizens of Munich were invited to the happy event. Held on a field in front of the city gates, it proved to be so much fun that the party lasted for sixteen days.



The wedding festival came at a time of year when spring's stockpiled beer had to be depleted to make room for the autumn production. March was the last month that beer could be made due to the unpleasant taste that plagued beer made in the warmer months of summer. This sweet, malty March beer contained almost no hops and was intentionally made with a higher alcohol content (alcohol being a natural preservative). And so this strong Marzen (March) beer led to much gaiety and frivolity and "Oktoberfest" has become Crown Prince Ludwig's legacy.



THE SCIENCE OF AUTUMN

In deciduous woodland, the first signs of approaching autumn is the changing of the leaf color. Shades of red, yellow and orange replace the ever-present green. Lower temperatures and shorter days trigger the breakdown of chlorophyll--the green molecule that captures energy from the sun in the process of photosynthesis. As chlorophyll is removed, it reveals other pigments that have been "swamped" by its bold color. These are called carotenoids. They aid the process of light absorption and, in chlorophyll's absence, give rise to pale and brilliant yellow, amber, golds and oranges. Different species of trees retain different amounts of carotenoids, which leads to much of the polychromatic beauty of a forest in autumn.

We see the technicolor woodland for that brief time before the leaves dry completely, burn brown and fall to the forest floor. Now, we have an idea as to how Jack Frost "paints" that wonderful pallet of color.

HELP WANTED!

The Society is in need of an individual with some word processing skills to copy a typewritten manuscript of a local diary. We intend to prepare this diary for publication. The keyboard entry can be done at home at your own schedule, or on our office computer Wednesday mornings. Your help would be very appreciated. Please call Bill or Louise at 266-3819. Thanks!

1777 Creek Meeting House



September Program Meeting Report

by Louise McDermott

Our Society had its first program meeting of this fall season on Friday September 10th. Unfortunately, our featured speaker Ned Leadbitter was unable to come, and he will be rescheduled to speak about his PT boat experiences in WWII. Bill McDermott presented "Clinton: 1830s-1930s", using census data and other information, Bill compared the two eras describing changes over the 100 year period. Assisting Bill were three of our senior members and long term residents of Clinton, Eleanor Rogers, Viola Schoch, and Lily Shohan. They shared their memories of the 1930's as children in town, and revealed interesting information such as listening to a radio for news, commuters to the "big city", entertainment when there was no electricity and how Percy Barnes taught music in town (Viola was one of his students). Percy, author of *Crum Elbow Folks*, lived in Pleasant Plains and was a very learned man.

Commuters were a factor even in 1930 leaving their Clinton family either Sunday night or Monday morning and returning Friday night. I knew my grandfather had been a commuter in 1918, but he lived in Poughkeepsie and could walk to the station. But commuting from Clinton, that was a surprise.

In the 1930s some roads had no official names. Viola said that Fiddlers Bridge Road had no name at all, and Eleanor told that Woodlea Road was called Arnold Road and Bowman Road became Horseshoe Trail. It was a very interesting evening, learning about our town of Clinton in the years gone by.

PROGRESSIVE DINNER OCT. 23 YOU'RE INVITED !

All townsfolk and friends are invited to our Annual Progressive Dinner to be held Saturday October 23 at 6:30PM. The first stop will be at a home for wine and cheese, the second stop for a delicious home-cooked dinner, and the third at the 1777 Creek Meeting House for dessert and coffee. This is a great chance to meet neighbors and make new friends in a relaxing atmosphere. Those interested in being hosts or guests are asked to call Glenda Schwarze at 266-5203. The price is \$30.00 per person (hosts excluded). This is our primary fundraiser and is always a fun event for all. DO COME!

BATTY?



Everybody knows what is meant when a person says that some is "batty," but not many people know how that term came to mean "crazy" in English. It was once common for bats to roost in church steeples, but the tolling of the church bell would disturb their daytime rest. Being so suddenly awakened, the bats would leave the steeple in a panic and fly around in a frenzied fashion. This chaotic flight was thought to resemble the disturbed and disorganized thought of the insane. In the early 1900s, Americans began saying that someone who is crazy has "bats in the belfry," and that was eventually shortened to "batty."

.....
Tom Sawyer was the first novel ever written on a typewriter.

.....
 The first recorded parachute experiments were in 1785, and they were performed on dogs

Did you know.....

...The Mississippi River, for its first 60 miles, heads straight for Hudson Bay, but gives up, turns East, wanders around and finally settles for South.

...People milked horses before they rode them.

... "I am" is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.

.....
 Here are some 1904 U.S. Statistics from one hundred years ago:

...Only 144 miles of roads in the country were paved

...Speed limit in most cities was 10 mph

...Average wage in the U.S. was 22 cents per hour

...95% of all births took place at home

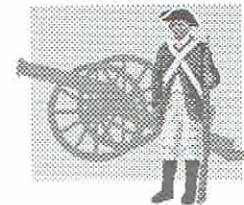
...Most women washed their hair only once a month, and used borax or egg yolks for shampoo

...Only 6% of all Americans had graduated high school

October Meeting

Friday, October 1, 7:30 pm,
 Creek Meeting House,
 Salt Point Turnpike

"The Hessians are Coming !"



We are pleased to have CHS member Robert Webb present to us in full-dress Hessian uniform about the role of these soldiers in the Revolutionary War. Robert participates in re-enactments of war battles and gatherings, and is an entertaining speaker who loves his avocation. He will also bring a uniform of the regular Revolutionary soldier, and will end his presentation with a bang. That is, he will demonstrate the loading and firing of his Revolutionary War musket, outside. Bring a friend!

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The Town of Clinton Historical Society is a not-for-profit organization established to preserve, maintain, promote and educate on matters of historical significance and interest in the Town of Clinton and Dutchess County.

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CHS Meeting Reminder
The Hessians are Coming
October 1
Creek Meeting House