

THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

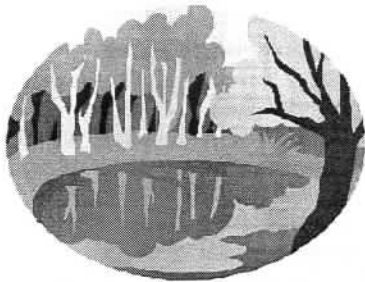
The Clinton Historical Society

Volume XVI Number 4

Craig Marshall, Editor 266-5494

May 2003

ALICE AND BOB MESSERICH, OLGA SMYTH WIN CONSERVATION AWARDS



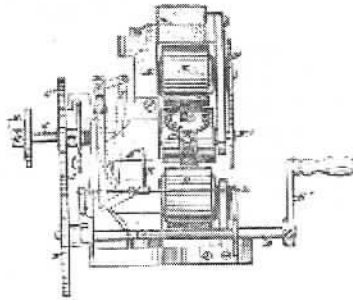
By Edna Lachmund

The Emil Schoch Conservation Award was granted to three long-time Clinton residents at the Society's annual dinner meeting on April 4. It was given to Olga Smyth for preserving over 200 acres in Clinton in their natural state, thereby protecting wetlands, streams, woodlands and wildlife habitat. The Smyth property is in the area of Schultzville Road and Sunset Trail. It includes the Smyth homestead, a beautiful old farm with a large swimming pond and a stable. Ms. Smyth has encouraged others to enjoy the historic dirt roads that wind through much of her lands by working with the Hudson Valley Greenway to establish the "Clinton Loop" of the Greenway Trail.

Alice and Bob Messerich received the award for "persevering as productive farmers in Clinton for over 30 years," according to Norene Collier, who presented the awards. The Messerichs operate a free range chicken farm on Old Bulls Head Road in Clinton as well as a chicken

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SCHULTZVILLE INVENTOR STAMPS OUT INEFFICIENCY AT THE POST OFFICE



This machine may look like a Rube Goldberg contraption, but if you have one like it in your attic, hang onto it!

By Bill McDermott

What is it? It's one of the first machines the U.S. Post Office used to cancel stamps on letters, and Timothy G. Palmer invented it in 1874 in our own Hamlet of Schultzville. Its patent was issued on March 16, 1875.

Search for the actual machine is active and extensive if the flow of correspondence between England, Maryland and New York is any indication. Why all the interest? Up to 1876, postage stamps were all cancelled by hand. Machines for such purposes were new, and the members of the U.S. Cancellation Club would like to get their hands on one of these early machines.

It appears that the machine illustrated above actually was the second machine to be accepted by the U.S. Post Office. On March 30, 1876, the Postmaster General authorized Timothy Palmer to construct ten of the machines for use in a group of cities: two each in New York, Boston and Philadelphia and one each in Albany, Washington, Hartford and Cleveland. Where or for how long it was used is not clear. In September 1876, Palmer and H. F. Clark, a Poughkeepsie dentist, received a patent for an improved machine, suggesting that the first might have had some mechanical inefficiency.

Timothy Palmer first appears in Clinton records sometime between 1860 and 1866.

Shortly thereafter, at age 31 or 32, he married Susan A. Schultz, daughter of Daniel H. Schultz, a well-known merchant in Schultzville. By 1867, he had acquired a 279-acre farm and was living on what is now Long Pond Road across from the firehouse now occupied by David Traver. Two years later he was the postmaster, a post he held from 1869 to 1887. In 1878, he served one year as Town Supervisor, the only office he ever held in town government.

Timothy Palmer was a farmer, postmaster and finally, inventor of the second postage cancellation machine. But success came to him primarily from his inventions of various railway patents. At the time of his sudden death in 1890 at age 56, (one week after he had come home to Clinton to vote) his automatic railway signal device was in use on several railways. In 1887 he went to New York City to live, probably leaving his invalid wife Susan on the farm in the big house still known as "the Schultz house" in the village of Schultzville. He had been to both New York and Washington on business with his postal machine, but these appear to have been brief business trips. However, in 1887 he established a business at 868 Broadway in New York and lived in a house on Continental Avenue. The following year he moved his office to 18 West 14th Street, where his category of business was listed as "signals." His uptown residence then, at 10th Avenue and West 156th Street suggests that he had achieved some success; however the content of his will suggests otherwise. Like so many inventors, his hard work and ingenuity needed healthy transfusions of money and the financial return on the inventions may have been small. If he had lived longer he might have harvested all of the benefits of his inventions.

Preserving Clinton's Heritage

Colonial do it yourself

Some Indian tribes drank mint tea for indigestion. A tea of peppermint would help to settle an uncomfortable stomach. The Indians also crushed stems and leaves of jewelweed (a variety of impatiens, also known as touch-me-not, to relieve the itch and rash caused by poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac.

Ben Franklin used a mixture of honey and ground charcoal, which is said to leave teeth shining white, as his toothpaste. Other colonists would use a twig of the sassafras. They would mash the end of the twig and rub it over their teeth.

Flowers and herbs have been used since time immemorial to sweeten the air and perfume the body. In the Victorian era housewives placed bowls of potpourri around the house, much as we use room deodorants today. The name potpourri, which means "rotten pot" in French, derived from the fact that old-time potpourris were prepared by the moist method, in which the ingredients were allowed to stew, or rot, for months to develop a powerful, lasting fragrance.

To remove rust from their iron pots and kettles, colonists would fill the kettle with



as much hay as it would hold, add water to the brim, and boil for several hours. If some rust remained, they would repeat the process until it was all gone.

To make their ink for writing with quill pens, our forefathers would add 1/2 cup of boiling water to 4 teaspoons of tea. They would steep it for 15 minutes and stir to extract as much tannic acid as possible. It would then be strained and allowed to cool before putting it into a container.



Water (Continued from page 2)

Today, the average American uses between 50 and 100 gallons a day. In 1900, the average person used five. On the Western Plains, as one person of the early 1900's put it, "you boiled sweet corn, and instead of throwing the water out, you washed the dishes in it. Then you strained it through a cloth into the radiator of your car, and if your car should break down, you didn't just leave the water to evaporate, but you drained it into a bucket to water the sweet peas."

1777 Creek Meeting House

At the April 4 Annual Dinner and Meeting, elections of officers and trustees were held. We thank the following people for volunteering their time and services:

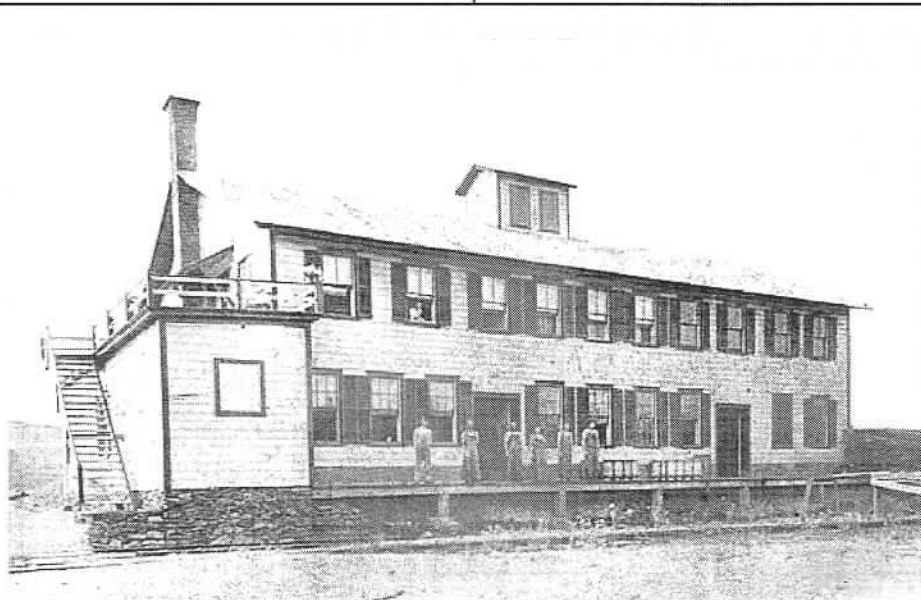
- President - Bill McDermott
- V. President - Craig Marshall
- Treasurer - Clinton Kershaw
- New Trustees - John Lacey
- Steve Hackbarth
- Frank Mazzella
- Eliot Werner

Special thanks go to Mike Appolonia for serving as President for the past year. He will continue on the Board as Past President. Thanks also to Amy Sheehy for serving as Secretary last year.

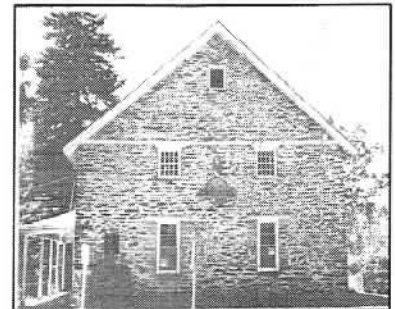
Special awards were given to Dick Collier for being "General Contractor" for major construction projects at both buildings, to Craig Marshall, editor of the newsletter, and to the newsletter staff, Charlotte and Joe Apuzzo, Edna Lachmund, Claudia Cooley, and Joann and David Schmidt.

Community Service awards were presented to very active local residents who have given our town 20 years or more of dedicated volunteer service. Awarded this year were Glenda Schwarze, Louise McDermott, Don Estes, Chick Wyant, and Ray Oberly.

The next issue of the newsletter will provide details on the Preservation and Landmark Awards bestowed on local residents at the annual meeting.



Beake's Dairy, Clinton Corners



Water, a
Precious Commodity



After trying out her new shower in 1799, a Philadelphia woman named Elizabeth Drinker noted in her diary that she had tolerated the new experience "better than expected, not having been wet all-over, all at once, for 28 years." Indeed, bathing was once considered by many to be unhealthy. Men and women took baths only twice a year - in May and October. Most people got married in June because they still smelled pretty good from their bath in May. In 1845, the city of Boston outlawed bathing unless it was done under a doctor's orders. Not until 1919 did plumbers and soap makers start a Bath-A-Day marketing campaign that became wildly successful

Getting wet all over was once a luxury few people could afford. Until the early 20th century, using water, for most people, meant first locating and then hauling it. There were no taps, let alone water heaters, and since there were also no drains, what was brought into the house had to be taken out. The Saturday night ritual of taking a bath usually started with the man of the house scrubbing down in a tub of clean, warm water, followed in that same tub and same water, by the sons, the women of the house, and then the children - one at a time - from the eldest to the baby. Being that the water was so dirty, you could actually "overlook" someone in it, hence the saying, "don't throw the baby out with the bath water". Along with heat and food, water was a commodity most early Americans never took for granted.

Water could be bought by the bucket or barrel from water peddlers, but so-called tea water (pure enough to drink without boiling) was prohibitively expensive. On farms, wells were dug by hand, excavating through rock until the water flowing in overtook the digger's ability to bail it out. The well might be several hundred feet from the house. In the 19th century, it was calculated that a typical housewife walked 148 miles a year carrying more than 36 tons of water. Washing and rinsing one load of laundry used about 50 gallons of water - a bucket held less than three gallons.

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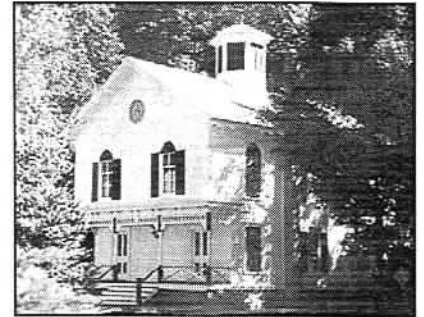
Awards (Continued from page 1)

egg farm in Pleasant Valley. "Their farm planning and operational techniques are environmentally sound" and they have been commended for their practices by the Dutchess County Soil and Water Conservation District, Ms. Collier said. The Messerichs market their meat and eggs weekly at the Green Market in New York City, serving hundreds of regular customers who wait patiently in very long lines.



The conservation award is granted annually by Clinton's Historical Society and Conservation Advisory Council. CAC chair Norene Collier said that the award recognizes individuals and families in who show "dedication to conservation of the natural world as exemplified by Emil Schoch." (Emil Schoch was a staunch preservationist who, for many years, ran a well known Christmas tree farm in Clinton.) The award hopes to encourage preservation of natural areas such as wetlands, ponds, streams and wooded areas that protect wild plants and animals, and farm planning and management that is in keeping with best environmental practices.

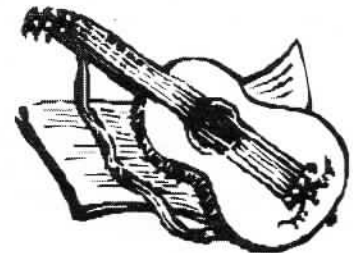
1865 Masonic Hall



April 26 Coffee House

We are pleased to feature Mitch Katz, a contemporary songwriter who delivers blues, ballads, humor, and political observations in a fun format. His strong guitar playing accompanies his fine voice, and his warm and engaging stage presence makes his audience feel at home.

Sign-ups for Open Mic are 7:30PM at the door. \$5.00 admission supports our restoration activity.



Clinton Corners Girl's Softball Team—1917

**OPEN MIC
LIVE
MUSIC**



Coffee House at the
1865 Masonic Hall,
Schultzville, NY

JOIN US FOR OUR 5TH SEASON

Features for 2003

April 26	Mitch Katz
May 24	Todd Giudice
June 28	Maggie Row
July 26	to be announced
August 23	to be announced
Sept. 27	Helen Avakian
Oct. 25	Barebones & Wild Flowers

Show starts at **8:00pm**

Open mic performers sign-up at door 7:30.

Shuttle parking at the Town Garage.

Proceeds to restore the
Masonic Hall landmark.

Home baked treats and beverages
available.

Donation: \$ 5.00 Info: 845-266-3899

**WANTED:
CLINTON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY BOARD
SECRETARY**

The Society's officers, trustees and advisors meet at 7:30 PM on the first Monday of every month at the Creek Meeting House in Clinton Corners. A vacancy in the office of secretary offers an opportunity to become a voting member of the board and provide an important service to the Society. The primary duty is to record the minutes of Advisory Council meetings, but a volunteer with additional interests can write his or her own "job description." If you're interested or would like more information, please call Bill McDermott at 266-3819.



May Meeting
Friday, May 2, 7:30 pm,
Creek Meeting House,
Salt Point Turnpike

"100+ Years of Clinton Insurance Service" presented by Lily Shohan

The Farmers Town Mutual Insurance Co. was formed in the town of Clinton in 1884 as a cooperative company. That is, the company was owned then, as now, by the policy holders as a true cooperative. It has been providing insurance services continuously for over 100 years through the conscientious efforts of local Clinton residents, like Kelsey Wirehouse, of recent memory. Today, Don Bowman serves as President. Lily Shohan, Secretary-Treasurer, will present the history of the organization, showing original records which contain names of many early Clinton families and written in the beautiful handwriting of the period. She will also highlight notable claims incidents and interesting Clinton residents and stories of years gone by.

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Clinton Corners, NY
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The Town of Clinton Historical Society
2433 Salt Point Tnpk
PO Box 122
Clinton Corners, NY 12514
(845) 266-5494

CHS Meeting Reminders:
May 2
100 Years of Clinton
Insurance Services
June 6
Archeologist's Dig at
1800's Site