

# THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

The Clinton Historical Society

Volume XVI Number 6

Craig Marshall, Editor 266-5494 August/September 2003

You are invited to the  
Clinton Historical Society's  
6<sup>th</sup> Annual

## Progressive Dinner

Date: Saturday, October 18

Time: Cocktails: 6 PM

Dinner: 7:15 PM

Dessert: 9 PM

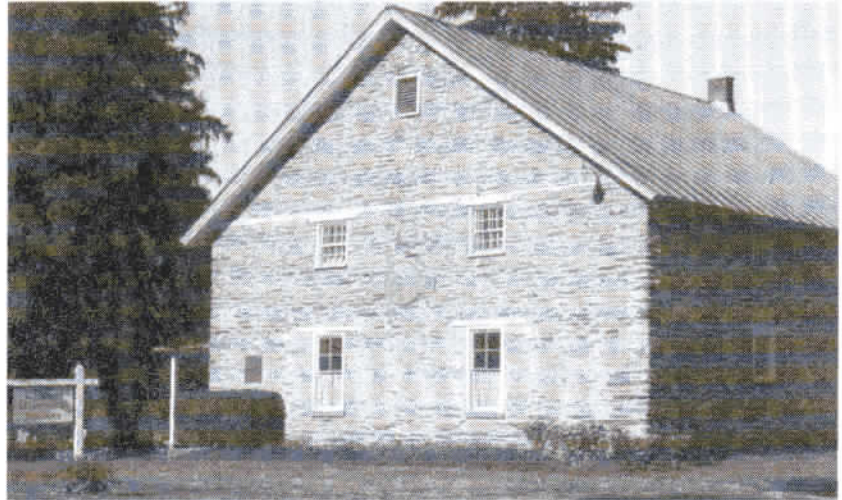
Location: All over town

This October, dozens of Clinton hosts and hostesses will be opening their homes for what has become an eagerly awaited Fall tradition: the Society's annual Progressive Dinner. Each guest receives a schedule of three locations for the evening's festivities.

The first stop will be a home on your side of town for a glass of wine and appetizers. You'll spend an hour or so chatting with old friends and meeting new ones. Then you'll drive to another nearby home to enjoy a delicious main course with a smaller group of friends and neighbors. Your final stop will be The Creek Meeting House in Clinton Corners, where all guests meet for a selection of mouth-watering desserts and coffee.

The cost is \$25 and all proceeds benefit the Society. Seating is limited so please reserve your place today: call Glenda Schwarze at 266-5203.

## Creek Meeting House Features Photos By Bill Boxer



*This photo of the Creek Meeting House, recently taken by Bill Boxer, shows the building's glimmering, new copper roof.*

By Edna Lachmund

Seventy color photographs by Bill Boxer are being exhibited at The Creek Meeting House in Clinton Corners on weekends from 1 to 4 PM. The exhibit, titled "Serendipity," started on August 3 and will continue through September 14. Many of the photographs capture scenes of Dutchess County, but others were taken on travels to Alaska, Switzerland, Germany, Paris and Thailand. Subjects include cattle at Upland Farms, architectural studies in foreign cities, landscapes featuring the effects of color and light on clouds, water, trees and algae, and a line of Thailand wedding dancers, caught in a choreographed hand gesture. All of the photographs were taken with digital equipment. "Work that used to take hours and sometimes days in the dark room can now be accomplished with more precision with digital photography," Mr. Boxer said. Most of the photographs are unaltered, but a few "before and after examples" of photos that have been altered with computer software are included in the exhibit.

When photographer Bill Boxer was ten years old and lived around the corner from

the Bronx Zoo, he often got up early in the morning and set off to see the world. His mother thought he was playing in the neighborhood, but actually he was seeing what there was to see many miles away. "I would get on the subway," he said, "and take it to the last stop. Then I'd get on a city bus and take it as far as it would go. Once I was in new territory, I'd just wander around and explore." He took his Kodak Brownie with him "not so much because I wanted to take pictures, but because I wanted to remember exactly what I had seen." But once the photos were developed, Mr. Boxer said, he was often disappointed. "I noticed that they were not really what I saw. In some elementary way I began to realize that something was happening in my head that was not happening in the camera. I started to take greater care to frame scenes the way I was seeing them, to wait for the right light, and so forth."

In his twenties, Mr. Boxer studied with a professional photographer, "validating what I had learned on my own and adding some new skills." For years, he worked only in black and white and did his own

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Preserving Clinton's Heritage



By Mike Appolonia

My Dad was an amateur lightweight during his teens and twenties in Philadelphia. He fought under the name "Mickey Reno," and he did pretty well. Mother didn't care much for boxing, so Dad must have conveyed his enthusiasm to me surreptitiously. There is a picture of me at age two, "slugging it out" with a neighborhood friend, closely matched for age and size. By junior high I was a middleweight, boxing in police athletic leagues and in various gyms around Philadelphia. Now, in his spare time, my son David operates the Apollo Gym in Egg Harbor, New Jersey, where professionals such as Darryl Wilson and Sugar Ray Leonard have trained. Will the tradition continue? Well, my eight-year-old granddaughter has taken a little training at the gym, and our family has just welcomed David's newborn son, David Jr. So we'll see.

Recently I had a chance to merge my love of boxing with an interest in the early farms in our area. I researched and visited the farm in Clinton Corners where Jack Dempsey just might have trained in 1927 before his hoped-for comeback championship fight with Gene Tunney.

I was looking into the background of what is now the Robert Bird property, located just west of the Taconic Parkway on the north side of Salt Point Turnpike. The large, white house was once part of a 220-acre farm that included a sizeable barn (now destroyed by fire.) In the County archives I found a May 18, 1927 contract between State Senator John Griswold Webb, who owned the farm, and William and Helen Grupp. The agreement covered rental of the farm for five years at an an-

## A BOXING BUFF DISCOVERS THAT JACK DEMPSEY MAY HAVE TRAINED IN CLINTON CORNERS

nual rent of \$6000, an option to purchase it at a price of \$96,000, and the "privilege of remodeling the large hay barn building." At the time of the contract, William (Billy) Grupp ran one of the most popular boxing gyms in New York and was planning to convert the Clinton Corners barn into a country training facility. One of the boxers who trained at Grupp's Harlem gym was Jack Dempsey.

On the day Billy Grupp signed his farm contract, Jack Dempsey had already lost the Heavyweight Title to Gene Tunney. He had fought over a hundred bouts between 1914 and his September, 1926 fight with Tunney, and planned two more bouts in 1927. He won his July 21 encounter with Jack Sharkey with a knockout in the 7<sup>th</sup> round, but lost the second bout with Tunney on September 22 and then announced his retirement. Dempsey's second loss to Tunney was controversial because the count was delayed while Tunney was knocked down for fourteen seconds. There was a brand new rule in place that when a fighter was knocked down, his opponent had to go to the farthest neutral corner to wait for the count. Dempsey apparently wasn't used to the rule because he knocked Tunney down and then stood over him. The referee had to guide Dempsey to the corner before starting the count, thereby giving Tunney an extra four or five seconds to recover. By the time the referee approached ten, Tunney was back on his feet.

Did Dempsey actually work out in Clinton Corners? I've found evidence that Billy Grupp rented the farm specifically in order to entice him to train there, maybe for the fight with Sharkey, since that fight was scheduled in New York. If Dempsey did spend some time in our town, he would have made a congenial neighbor. The town historian in his hometown of Manassa, Colorado (where he was called "The Manassa Mauler") said that when anyone talked to Dempsey, "he was the most gentle, loving person in the world. But," she added, "Once he got into the ring, he was vicious."

## 1777 Creek Meeting House Community Day

Our Society will be very active again with the Promise Tree, Food Booth, CHS Information and publication sales, and the 50/50 Raffle. Volunteers are needed for the Food Booth to serve 3 hours either from 10AM to 1PM, or 1-4 PM. We especially encourage our many new members to participate in this Clinton community event, and help support our fundraiser. **Please call Craig Marshall at 266-8261 to sign-up.** Many hands and cheerful smiles are needed to set-up, wait on customers, cashier, or cook on the grill.

For the **Promise Tree**, Louise McDermott has received some promises, but many more are needed. Promises received so far include the use of a boat on Upton Lake for 2 hours, home-baked goods, and a Pampered Chef pizza cutter. Also, one lucky buyer will learn how to use a spinning wheel! **Please call Louise at 266-3819 with your promises** or for information on what has been promised so far. Thanks!

### E-Mail Notification Encouraged

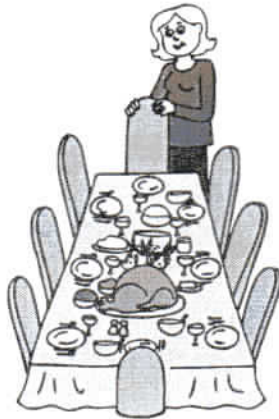
All Historic Society Members that are interested in receiving e-mail notification of the Clinton Historical Society events please send an email to **Frank Mazzella** at [Fmazzella@aol.com](mailto:Fmazzella@aol.com) with the subject line "Clinton Historical Society e-Group". Frank will set you up on the mailing list and you will be notified by e-mail 10 days before the event, as to what the event is and where it will be held. We thank Frank for setting up this e-group which will help publicize our events.



## THE TRUE STORY OF HOW I UNDERCOOKED THE ROAST FOR A PROGRESSIVE DINNER AND SURVIVED

By Edna Lachmund

The first time Gary and I hosted a Historical Society Progressive Dinner, we just invited a bunch of friends and we ended up having a dinner like many others. The difference was that we started with cocktails someplace else and ended with dessert at the Creek Meeting House. Our second time as hosts was more eventful. We decided it would be fun to have new faces around the table, so we asked Glenda Schwarze, who has been chairing the event for years, to "assign" some dinner guests. (As it turned out, we were acquainted with some of our guests but met others for the first time at our front door.)



Clinton Corners. And we brought along the fangs.

Glenda tells me that she serves the same meal every time, a pork and chicken casserole in a mushroom sauce, spiced up with her homemade biscuits and applesauce.

"Doing the Progressive Dinner is easy," she said, "because you don't have cocktails, coffee or dessert. You have just the sit down dinner and that's it." Glenda said she has put effort into managing the dinner for years because it's a major fundraiser for the Society and helps to support the restoration of the Creek Meeting House. "I've always said I'd do whatever I could for that building," she said. "It's a lovely building and part of our history. I feel kind of reverent about it, maybe because it started as a spiritual meetinghouse."

That year, we returned a bit early from the cocktail portion of the Progressive Dinner and I peeked in at the standing rib roast. It didn't look medium rare to me. I made a little incision. It was blood red raw. My typically reliable butcher had vastly underestimated the roasting time. Total panic! We cranked up the oven to 400 degrees. Five minutes later the door bell rang. They were here.

People get a certain silly smile on their faces when you explain that dinner is "mostly" ready except that the meat is totally raw. But despite the main course crisis, we had a delightfully relaxed, congenial time. For some reason, we all felt like laughing. It was close to Halloween and I had a bunch of wax Dracula's fangs near the table. We tried them out with various deep-voiced imitations of Bela Lugosi ("I vant my meat served very raw."). Then we had our meal in the "European fashion." First a salad course, then a vegetable course, then a perfectly roasted potato, and finally, the *piece de resistance*, a standing rib roast, served medium rare. We were only a little late for dessert in

This year, the Society hopes to increase attendance at the Progressive Dinner from 125 to close to 200. In order to do that, they will need more hosts and hostesses than ever before, so Gary and I are going to serve as hosts again. This time, Gary has asked me to serve something "tried and true" — something guaranteed to be ready to eat at exactly 7:15. But, I don't know. It might be fun to try that standing rib roast one more time.

**VOLUNTEER TO SERVE  
AS A HOST FOR  
THE PROGRESSIVE DINNER.  
IT'S EASY, IT'S FUN,  
AND IT'S IMPORTANT**

**You decide on the number of  
guests and whether you'd like  
to invite old friends or  
welcome Clinton neighbors  
you don't yet know.**

**To volunteer, call  
Glenda Schwarze at 266-5203 or  
Edna Lachmund at 889-8399.**

## 1865 Masonic Hall



We've received many favorable compliments on our new entrance ramp, and we thank again our volunteer "construction battalion". The notable "find" during excavation was a very old hand-engraved stone with the words "Warren Lodge #32 F&AM". The stone is displayed on the top ledge of the wall for all to see.

The preservation committee is considering alternative uses for the building such as educational activities related to arts and crafts, as well as exhibits. These activities would complement the very successful monthly "Open Mic" music sessions. The most recent session included a local high school student performing "All That Jazz" and other vocals, and three grammar school students performing as a violin trio with their fathers on guitar. Ron Gluck and his friends on violin and guitar delighted the audience with lively renditions of classic jazz, bluegrass, and "oldies". The next session is Saturday August 23 at 8PM. Donation is \$5.00 to help support the building restoration.

The next session will feature Jean McAvoy and Jaime Rickert. Jean is a singer/songwriter locally famous for her accappella performances. Jaime has performed professionally for many years to large audiences and is well liked for his humor and creativity. Both together and apart, they have been frequent and popular performers at our Open Mic sessions from the start.

**OPEN MIC  
LIVE  
MUSIC**

Coffee House at the  
1865 Masonic Hall,  
Schultsville, NY



JOIN US FOR OUR 5<sup>TH</sup> SEASON

**Features for 2003**

- August 23 Jean McAvoy & Jaime Rickert
- 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

**Boxer photos** (Continued from page 1)

developing and printing. Then he put his cameras away to concentrate on a career in the New York City public school system, developing the city's first specialized music program for talented students. (Mr. Boxer is also an accomplished pianist.) In the late 90s, as head of a small international company, he frequently traveled around the world. His lifelong interest in capturing exactly what he was seeing nudged its way to the surface. This exhibit is the result.

If you haven't been to the Creek Meeting House lately, the building is in itself worth a trip to Clinton Corners. Listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, the meetinghouse was built by Quakers during the Revolutionary War and is a rare example of early fieldstone construction. The first phase of restoration has been completed and the building now sports a glimmering copper roof. To find the Creek Meeting House, exit the Taconic Parkway at Salt Point Turnpike and drive east into Clinton Corners.

**September Meeting**

Friday, September 5, 7:30 pm,  
Creek Meeting House,  
Salt Point Turnpike

**"Clinton Oral History"  
by Kathleen Smith**

Kathleen Smith is a life-long resident of Clinton and the granddaughter of an early blacksmith who's shop was on Sodom Road. She will relate 80 years of her life experiences including her Robbins family who farmed in Clinton for many years. One of Kathleen's passions is building fine stone walls, and she is still very active along with her husband who is a local carpenter. This is a rare opportunity to hear first-hand about early Clinton farming, schooling, and social life. Join us, and bring your friends. Open to all!

**DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**

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

(serendipity)  
30 photographs  
by Bill Boxer  
Weekends  
1 to 4 PM  
Aug. 3 - Sept. 14  
Show and Sale  
The Creek Meeting  
House  
Salt Point Turnpike  
Clinton Corners  
A portion of proceeds will  
benefit  
the Society