

# THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

The Clinton Historical Society

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## SCHOOLS AND THE MAKING OF AMERICANS



At the turn of the century, 70% of public school students in NYC were either immigrants or the children of immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe and Italy. Most native-born Americans, school professionals included, viewed the overwhelming presence of these children with alarm.

Thus, the first citywide curriculum, adopted in 1903, was indelibly influenced by the felt need to transform and assimilate these foreign-speaking children into proper English-speaking Americans.

William Maxwell, the first superintendent of schools after the 1898 consolidation of the City of New York, set down the following principles upon which to base a new curriculum:

...the predominance of the study of English, reading, writing, and proper speech

...the inculcation of a love of good literature

...the requirement of handwork

...history, as an introduction to our heritage and as a reservoir of moral worth

...the singing of high-class music, as an elevating and inspiring influence

...physical training and athletics to inculcate the virtues of self-reliance and unselfish cooperation

*(Continued on page 2)*

## THE RIKERT HOMESTEAD



*A Clinton Historical Landmark  
by Donna Townsend Miller*

Years ago we would drive along Shadblow Lane, in the hamlet of Bulls Head, and my father would point out a large clapboard farmhouse sitting on a small hill. That Rikert house, my father would say, used to overlook acres of open farmland. Now, that open space is limited to the gracious lawns of the present owner and other homeowners in the area, but primarily it has grown into woodlands.

The first Rikert to arrive in America was Joseph Reichart (Rikert); his name appears on a 1710 list of heads of Palatine families arriving in New York from Wurtemberg, Germany. Later the Reicharts and thirty-four other families emigrated to the Hudson Valley, settling near the town of Rhinebeck.

Reuben Rikert, born in 1815, farmed actively until 1881. He sold cattle, acted as an auctioneer, served as a trustee of estates and guardian for minors, organized and taught singing schools, and was Clinton Town Justice for eight years. He was also one of the leading men in the early church at Schultsville, where he and his

wife are buried, and a strong prohibitionist. In 1855 he purchased the 170-acre Bishop farm (previously owned by Frederick Schultz) a half-mile south of the Bulls Head post office, but George Bishop almost did not sell it to him because of strong disagreements on the liquor question. Reuben was a total abstainer and the neighbors told Bishop that they did not want any "damned cold water Christians" in the community. Apparently "hard cider Christians" were then in the ascendancy.

The present house was constructed in 1868 after the family of Reuben and Rachel (Pettit) Rikert moved into the barn and tore down their old house. They saved usable timbers and lumber from the old house and--along with timber hewed from the woodlots on the farm--used them in the "new" construction. John Ham worked as mason and Peter Deidrich handled the carpentry. The cost of this 12-room house, excluding the old lumber taken from the first farmhouse, was \$4000.

An 1886 addition added four rooms to northwest corner of the house at a cost

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Preserving Clinton's Heritage

**Rikert** *(Continued from page 1)*

of \$1000. Whoever was farming the land used the original area of the house; depending on the size of that farmer's family, Reuben and Rachel resided in different rooms until the 1886 addition provided them with a more permanent "corner." Various tenants worked the land in return for rent-free accommodations or shares. When Reuben died in April 1903, his daughter Rachel and her husband Theodore Lawless were operating the homestead farm. (They purchased a different farm approximately a year later.) Reuben's youngest son Irving (1862-1932) rented the farm in 1904 and purchased it in May 1905.

"Uncle Irv," as my father referred to him died after being horribly gored by a bull. His tragic death brought home a reality. I recall that we children were never permitted near the dairy bull, and my father was extremely careful. As soon as it was practical, and when the dairy industry began utilizing artificial insemination, my father rarely ever had a bull on his farm.

Beginning in the late 1880s, the Rikert family reunions were held on the Sunday closest to Reuben's birthday, at the homestead where Shadblow and Pumpkin lanes intersect. When I was a child, the Rikert reunions were held on the second Sunday in August, but the location had changed to the home of Farley and Lillie Rikert on Prospect Hill Road in Stanford near the Clinton line. After my great-grandfather Farley died in May 1954, these reunions ended.

*Donna Miller is a CHS member. She lives on Pumpkin Lane, less than a mile from the Rikert homestead. Source: Rikert family records and genealogy compiled by Middlebury College Professor Carroll Rikert, grandson of Reuben, to honor his Uncle Farley's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.*

**Wish List**

We are seeking donations for:

- an 8 foot step ladder (aluminum or fiberglass)
- DVD burner

These are to support our archival and preservation/maintenance activity. Please call Bill McDermott at 266-3819. We would be pleased to provide tax deduction receipts.

**Schools** *(Continued from page 1)*

Via the "Course of Study in Ethics and English", students were to learn that "a mind filled with worthy interests, high ideals, and helpful activities, has no room for evil." Implied was the fear that children of the tenements lacked these noble ideals. The schools would supply them.

The content of immigrant education was an affirmation of the new country. It enthusiastically encouraged its students to embrace American culture, and instructed them in the linguistic, economic, political, and social skills they needed if they were to enjoy the benefits of being Americans.

Although children lost their ancestral culture, it effectively turned immigrant children into patriotic citizens and authentic New Yorkers.

*Source: Tenement Times, Summer 1991*

**Your Historical Legacy**



*by Bill McDermott*

Yes yours! We are all newcomers to Clinton. Some of our families are newer than others but we all have an historical legacy to leave. It could be as simple as a recent photo of your home with a few notes about what you know of its history. But it also could be material left to you by former owners, much of which tells a story about the history of Clinton. Perhaps these items now reside in your attic or in a corner cupboard. Proud of these reminders of the past, you unearth them from their safe storage only when guests arrive.

We are glad you continue to take care of them, but we at the Clinton Historical Society would be pleased to have copies of them in our archive. Sharing the town's history with future generations is our mission. In our newsletter, we share with you some of the items presently in our archives which have been generously donated by your neighbors.

New shelving installed at the Creek Meeting House, part of our restoration program, is ready to receive copies of your photographic and manuscript treasures. Our near state of the art computer copying facilities are capable of reproducing high grade long lasting copies of anything photographable. We encourage you to scour your attic and the old cupboard for those special items which can be copied. We will pick up anything you wish to share, and return it within 72 hours. Give us a call at 266-3819 or 266-5494.



*This is one of the timber framers working on the posts that are being reinstalled on the second floor of the Creek Meeting House.*

# THE UNINVITED TURKEY

by Mabel Burhans

This story appeared in the June 1961 issue of the Mid-County Mart magazine

Raising livestock is a business and should be kept so, but invariably the lives of the creatures of the barn, field and wood intermingle with your life and become a part of it.



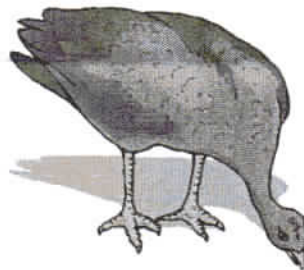
On a lovely June afternoon in 1921, when the rays of the westerly sun were thick and golden as Guernsey cream and the shadows were long on the grass, I was married on the lawn of the old farmhouse. My colors were the white, yellow and green of the daisy-starred fern-fringed meadows.

The wedding supper was being served on the terrace and five little nieces and cousins were happily assisting by carrying plates to the older guests, when the old hen turkey with her two young ones appeared on the scene. That year she had chosen to roost in the maple tree nearest the house. Quite unperturbed that she had received no formal invitation, and that she was facing ten times more people than she had ever seen before, she stalked majestically

across the grass and came face to face with our littlest hostess, who, with careful eyes on the plate she was carrying, had not noticed her approach.

Dorothy was plainly afraid of the big bird, but she stood her ground and when the turkey cast an appraising eye on the contents of the plate, she held it above her head. The plate tipped and the contents cascaded to the grass. Auntie Jane (there is an Auntie Jane in every family) flew to the rescue. She gathered the debris and started Dorothy kitchenward with it. She waved her hand at the turkey who flew up into the tree, calling for her young ones to follow.

Forty years have gone by, but there are those who still say, "Do you remember the turkey who came to your wedding?"



## Publication Grant



We are pleased to announce that Stewart's has awarded our Society with a \$250 grant to which a like amount is to be added by our membership to publish and distribute to schools and bookstores our most recent publication. It is entitled "Dressed in cloth of their own manufacture": From Homespun to Factory Made, Dutchess County, New York, 1735-1835", and was researched and written by our president Bill McDermott. This **60 page** well illustrated work traces the growth of cloth production from homes to local factories. To meet Stewart's generous grant, we need several members in our Society to help us get this significant publication in print by sending a donation identified for this pur-

pose to the Society. Please make your check payable to Clinton Historical Society, note on the check "**Publication Grant**", and send it to P.O. Box 122, Clinton Corners, N.Y. 12514. Publications are a principal educational activity of our Society, and your support is much appreciated. Thanks! (Donations are tax deductible.)



## 1777 Creek Meeting House

### Promise Tree

Our Promise Tree still has some very valuable and interesting items available. There are gift certificates from Williams Lumber, Adams Fairacre Farms, Holy Cow, Omega Institute, Schultsville General Store, and Primrose Hill Farm. Since these are places where most of us shop, why not "get a deal" and help our Society as well? Here is a sample of donated promises:

- a magnum of French wine from Arlington Liquors
- hanging house plants from Carvalho Nursery
- a painted birdhouse for inside or outside from Art's Barn
- chimney cap, wall plaque, pyrex portables, and a magazine rack (all on display at the Creek Meeting House)
- promises for art lessons, horseback rides, and knitting lessons

For information on these and other promises available, please call Louise McDermott at 266-3819. And, **we thank the donors and purchasers** of all our promises for helping us with this important annual fund-raiser.

### Progressive Dinner October 18

There's still time to be a guest or volunteer as host for what promises to be our largest turnout for our Annual Progressive Dinner. You can host a cocktail hour at 6PM or a dinner at 7:15 PM. This is a great way to meet neighbors or have a fun get-together with friends and family while helping the Historical Society. For information, call Glenda Schwarze at 266-5203 or Edna Lachmund at 889-8399.

### Community Day – Thank You Volunteers

Our Society was again a key participant in this annual Clinton event, and we were successful in our fund-raisers with the Promise Tree, Food Booth, publications sales, and 50/50 raffle. This success would not have been possible without our volunteers, and we appreciate everyone's time and effort. Thank you so much.

**OPEN MIC  
LIVE  
MUSIC**

Coffee House at the  
1865 Masonic Hall,  
Schultzville, NY



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

**Features for 2003**

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.

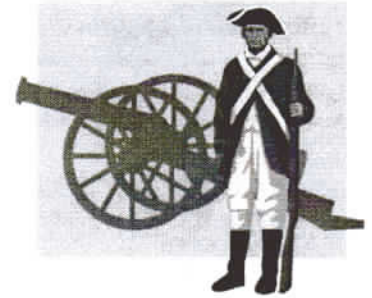
Donation: \$ 5.00      Info: 845-266-3899

**CONESTOGA WAGON &  
PRAIRIE SCHOONER**

The Conestoga Wagon, also called Covered Wagon, was a large four-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle, widely used in the US during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Conestoga was used to transport heavy loads of freight over long distances. It originated during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in Lancaster County, a region of Pennsylvania occupied by Native Americans of the Conestoga tribe, and was apparently developed by Pennsylvania-German settlers. The usual wagon had broad wheels, a white fabric hood and a convex wagon box. It was generally drawn by six horses and had a capacity of about 7 metric tons of freight. Before the extension of railroads into the frontier regions, the Conestoga Wagon was the principal vehicle for inland commerce. Westward-bound immigrants used a smaller wagon version, the Prairie Schooner, later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**October Meeting**  
Friday, October 3, 7:30 pm,  
Creek Meeting House,  
Salt Point Turnpike



**HESSIANS & THE  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR**

Cynthia Koch, Director of the FDR Library and Museum, will discuss the role of mercenary soldiers in the Revolutionary War. These were Hessians, German mercenaries, who fought with the British. Ms. Koch, a CHS member, was Director of *The Old Barracks National Historic Site* in Trenton NJ, which once was Hessian headquarters.

**DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**

Nonprofit  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Clinton Corners, NY  
Permit #122

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

**OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES**  
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Vice President: Craig Marshall  
Treasurer: Clint Kershaw  
Secretary: Vacancy  
Michael Appolonia, Past President  
Richard Collier  
George Greenwood  
John Lacey  
Edna Lachmund  
Frank Mazzella  
Mike Spitzer  
Ellot Werner  
TOWN HISTORIAN: Bill McDermott  
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.

**CHS Meeting Reminder**  
**Friday, October 3**  
**Hessians and the**  
**Revolutionary War**