

# NEWSLETTER



TOWN OF CLINTON  
**Historical Society**  
Clinton Center, New York



Volume II

Number 1

November 1976

## MEETING

Clinton Historical Society

Charles Kahlstrom  
Speaker

TOWN HALL  
Schultzville

Friday, Nov. 19, 1976  
8:00 PM

## NOVEMBER MEETING

At the next meeting of the Historical Society on Friday, November 19, Charles Kahlstrom will speak on Colonial cooking in New York. Mr. Kahlstrom questions the widely held notion that early Americans inhabited a culinary wasteland, and he will use samples made from his own collection of Colonial recipes to support his position.

Mr. Kahlstrom, who lives in Hempstead, Long Island, has degrees in History from Wagner and Hofstra University and also attended Kings College, University of London. His master's essay dealt with Colonist-Indian relations in the Mohawk Valley. Kahlstrom's talk on the 19th will represent a marriage of his historical interests and his other avocation, gourmet cooking.

## DUES AND MEMBERSHIP

The Clinton Historical Society now has a total membership of 143 with 56 family and 31 individual members.

New members are welcome, encouraged to attend meetings and to join any of the committees. There are no membership requirements other than the desire to join.

1976-77 dues requests were mailed in August. If you have not mailed your check or if you wish to join, please do it today. Dues are \$3.00 for individual and \$5.00 for family membership.

## MAY HISTORICAL MEETING

Michael D. Innocenzo, Professor of American History at Hofstra University was the guest speaker at the May 27th meeting. Prof. D'Innocenzo spoke on the politics and social problems during and after the revolution focusing attention on New York State. He pointed to the political differences between the common man and land-owners and referred to tenant strikes.

Prof. D Innocenzo's presentation was excellent and thoroughly enjoyed by the membership.

ST. CROIX RUM

The subscriber has for sale, a few hogsheads of St. Croix Rum, at his house in Staatsborough, for one half cash, and the other half wheat and rye.

Christopher Hughes  
Feb. 12, 1788

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A BRICK-MAKER

One who can be recommended, and understands the business of making Brick, is wanted. Inquire at Staatsburgh, of

John D'Witt  
Mar. 11, 1788

(Note: This ad ran until April 15 but signatory changed to Peter D'Witt)

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The Subscriber hereby informs his customers and the public in general that he has on hand a general assortment of Nails, from 4d. to 24d. which will be disposed of on reasonable terms, for cash only. Dated Clinton Precinct, in Dutchess County, fifth month, 27th, 1788.

Edward Underhill

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The Social Society of Dutchess County will meet at the House of Joshus Oweh, in Clinton on Tuesday the 25th day of March inst. at 10 o'clock A. M.

By order of the President  
James W. Payne, Sec'y  
March 18, 1788

In my search for material about voting patterns in Clinton at the time ratification of the Federal Constitution was the political issue (1788) I came across the advertisements above placed in the Country

Journal (now the Poughkeepsie Journal) by residents of our community.

A few observations

1) The text of the ads retains all the punctuations, spellings etc. Note the number of commas used as compared to common usage. Also note the different spellings of Staatsburg.

2) Mr. Underhill must have thought this paper was circulated outside the county. He made certain to include the county name in his address. Few other ads did this. On the other hand he may also have recognized the likelihood the paper would reach Albany and New York City in the hands of a passenger on the sloops which regularly traveled between these two points on the Hudson. Or he might have been aware of the recently created Clinton County north of Albany.

Clinton Addresses

1) Christopher Hughes owned a 670 acre tract of land west of Crum Elbow Creek bounded on the north by the properties of Isaac (75 acres) and Bastion (100 acres) Traver. He had purchased this land from Dr. John Bard in 1776. While this particular tract is now in Hyde Park there is evidence to suggest his residence in 1788 was south of the mill at Clinton Hollow which he purchased three years later.

2) John D'Witt as many know owned the mill on Hollow Road near Creek Road now referred to as Frost Mills. He was an anti-Federalist representative to the New York State Constitutional Convention in 1788 at Poughkeepsie. He finally voted in favor of the Federal Constitution after he and a number of his colleagues were assured that the first 10 amendments would be written into the Constitution.

3) Joshua Owen, a wealthy resident as were the two above, lived on Salt Point Turnpike near Hollow Road. His son and probably he too owned a sloop



The DeGraff's Farmhouse - May, 1941

#### HOUSE HISTORY

Mr. and Mrs. John DeGraff's home on Schultzville Road was built in 1860 by George E. Wing. The colonial style farmhouse with Hudson River brackets was one of the first houses in the area to be built of milled lumber. People drove from miles around on Sundays to view it. George Wing farmed his 160 acres, as did most of the succeeding owners, until his death. Title passed to Martha T. Jackson in 1893.

In 1911, Sherman H. & Ethel Jackson bought the property, planted fruit trees and named it "Plesant View". Sherman died in 1927 and his widow sold to Edward and Rose Becker. In 1929, the Clinton postmaster, Frank L. Brancato, purchased the property.

The present owners, Mr. and Mrs. John DeGraff, purchased the property in 1941. Mr. DeGraff, a publisher, used the home as a summer home until the 1970's when he moved from Westchester and made Clinton Corners his permanent residence. The acreage is presently under a reforestation project. The DeGraff's added a room to the south end of the house and rebuilt the carriage shed in 1974.

#### CLINTON ADDRESSES (continued)

which traveled as a commercial trading ship on the Hudson. He also owned and sold thoroughbred horses. The town meetings were held at his house 1787-1790 and later at his son Jonathan's house 1793-1800 except for 1797. By the way the Secretary James W. Payne is probably the same Payne who was a wealthy resident of Poughkeepsie and a member of the Christ Church still on Carroll Street. This would suggest that the Society was truly county wide as the name implies.

4) Edward Underhill probably lived on Pumpkin Lane near Schultzville. One might assume that Mr. Underhill was a blacksmith. His tax rate was a bit higher than average suggesting taxation on a business or maybe just on a large tract of land. Nails were an expensive commodity and used prudently because of their expense. Perhaps someone might have additional information on Mr. Underhill.

- Bill McDermott

At one time there were one room schools at Clinton Corners, Prospect Hill, Schultzville, Bulls Head, Clinton Hollow, Oak Grove, Pleasant Plains, Ruskey, Frost Mills and Mountain View. Many of the original schoolhouses still stand and are today being used for residences. The last school district in the Town was Prospect Hill and the last school used was in Clinton Corners, the present Post Office.

"Education" - Clinton,  
a Bicentennial Review, 1975

The local school covered grades 1 through 8. My first memory of a teacher in the district school is Rowland C. Cookingham. His aim was to teach the business of living as well as the traditional knowledge outlined in the syllabus.

I know many teachers from that era who felt they were slaves in a hostile environment, but no Mr. Cookingham. He poured on the enthusiasm and everyone loved it. In addition to his other accomplishments I recently learned that he did not spare the rod.

High School, grades 9-12, posed a real question - where to go. The families made their own decision, and factors of convenience, boarding near the school for the winter, and road conditions were considered. There were no school buses and each family paid tuition to the school their child attended. May from East Clinton went to Poughkeepsie and those from West Clinton went to Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, Rhinebeck, or Staatsburg.

As a glimpse of personal experience, we (VanVliets) went to Rhinebeck, driving the one-horse buggy, parking the horse at my Grandfather Tremper's on Route 308 and walking the last mile. This added two hours on each end of the day. Alice Foster, more recently Mrs. Donal Norton of Red Hook, drove in from the Town of Milan, in a Ford, pre 1915 vintage, which her brother coaxed into action in

the early morning. She parked in a vacant lot on South Street and at school closing time, her classmates turned out to make the vehicle mobile; unscrew the spark plugs, squirt raw gas into the cylinders, replace the plugs, crank the handle -- and pray. My sister and I rode Alice's running boards out to the Tremper stable where the old horse showed more road interest than the Ford.

In the High School auditorium a large blackboard was reserved for checking late arrivals with their excuses. Our late arrival was a chronic condition and the town slickers began to have a giggling interest in the reasons that they felt were the fiments of our imagination.

Father neglected to call us before he went to the barn....Grandfather forgot to put down hay for the horse and we had to do it ourselves.... A sudden, unexpected cold snap - the bit on the head stall had frozen and we had to bring it to the house to thaw.... An early, heavy snow storm, roads in poor condition.

Life became quite dull during the winter when we stayed in town with Grandfather Tremper.

As to Gym and basketball, the yokels were subject to segregation and could not aspire to playing on the regular team. However, we must show up for practice and in some cases when the team was experiencing tough going an extra good yokel might replace a dull town guy. I remember a winter game in Pine Plains - the local livery stable tossed a hay rigging on top of a bob sleigh, a padding of hay covered with blankets and some 20 kids were on the road. It was deemed best to rest the horses overnight so the boys bedded down on the gym floor and the girls spread out into homes in the town.

I remember awakening to see the sun shining against the snow on Stissing Mountain.