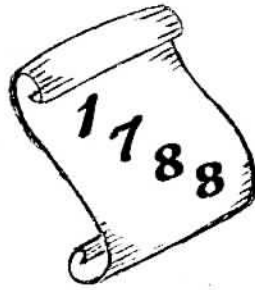


# The Clinton



# Historian

## TOWN OF CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume IV

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May 1978

### A GALA EVENING

The annual dinner of the Clinton Historical Society was held at the Country Tavern. A full house of historically interested members ushered in the 4th year of the Society. The cocktail hour was followed by a fine dinner at the end of which members celebrated Clinton's 190th anniversary as a town with a large birthday cake decorated with the Town Seal. An enthusiastic crowd sang HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Clinton.

The new officers were installed by Clifford Buck after a brief business meeting. Recognition awards were given to Mabel Burhans of Clinton Corners, Ruth Hoyt of Schultsville and Helena Van Vliet, Town Historian, for their many years of contributing to and preserving the history of the town.

The program for the evening was the presentation of two old films Poughkeepsie 1912 and Trolley Cars (1930's). The narration by Hubert "Bud" Spross in his own special style added a dimension to the film which is fresh and interesting and seems to contain something new each time he presents these films.

The evening ended all too soon in spite of its full program. Let's do it again next year.

cont'd on page 4

### 2 CORDS OF WOOD - \$5.00

Where can you buy 2 cords of wood for \$5.00? Be darned if I know. It was possible one time - not long ago. And by the way Jacob's 2 cords was cheaper than the \$6.00 J.P. charged the year before.

What's all this chatter about wood doing in the historical newsletter? This is our way of announcing the first copy of a historical document placed on the Clinton library shelf by the Historical society. The original is in a fire proof safe. There will be others many others in the future. Please allow us to copy or keep in safety your old documents related to Clinton's history.

Back to the wood. On page 5 of the Minute Book of the Oak Grove School (located near Allen Road when it was a one room school house) 1852-1950 is listed "2 cords of wood - \$5.00 Jacob Bedell". On the previous page is J.P.'s \$6.00 price. Visit the library and read these interesting minutes covering the entire period the school was open. Did you really think I was going to tell which year Jake was selling wood so cheaply when all that fun reading is at the library?

## SAD NEWS

Emma Link, Secretary of the Society since its beginning, retired from her position after 3 years of valuable service. Emma has been a resident of the Town for more than a half century residing in the house her father purchased.

The sad news is that Emma is moving from the fine old house and barn she has lovingly cared for and preserved for so many years. Repairs recently undertaken to preserve the barn, formerly a carriage maker's shop, remind us of her interest in preserving a piece of old Clinton.

Her house was built in the early 1770's by John D'Witt who was an officer in the Revolution. The mill he built and operated remained active for more than a century. John D'Witt served as the Town Supervisor 1800-1802 and also served a term as Dutchess County Sheriff in the 1790's. Prior to that he had served in the N.Y. State Assembly in the 1780's. However, his most significant service was in 1788 when he served as an Anti-Federalist delegate at the Constitutional Convention in Poughkeepsie. Although he was elected as a delegate against ratification of the Constitution he changed his vote in favor of ratification after he and other delegates received assurance that 10 amendments would be added to the Constitution. These amendments are called the Bill of Rights.

It is this important piece of Clinton history that Emma has been preserving through the care she has given her landmark house over the years.

Emma, we wish you could stay. Our best wishes in your new home in Vermont. May we visit you after you are settled?

## A SCRUPLE OF CONSCIENCE

In February 1686 the Quakers appealed to the Governor and Council of New York for relief from penalties for their refusal to train with the militia. Their appeal referred to a clause in the Chartre of Liberties enacted by the Assembly which protected the citizen from punishment for his religious beliefs provided the Civil Peace of the Province was not disturbed. On Feb. 24, 1686 the Council decided "no man can be exempted."\* As prescribed by law one item of personal property was removed from each Quaker in 1686. Some examples follow: one broad axe, one saddle, 2 sheep, one fat cow, one hat, 4 young cattle, one hide. In some instances money, or pewter plates or Holland linen was taken.

These penalties continued to be enforced 70 years later in 1756 at which time penalties were made more uniform. Also instead of personal property a fine paid in money was levied. It appears that a fine of 2 English pounds was common practice.

Another 70 years later in 1828 the following is appended to the annual tax roll in Clinton:

"A list of the names of Quakers liable to do Military duty and for the scruple of conscience do refuse, in the beats of Capt. Israel Buckbee, John Lawrence and Frederick Filkens."

Under this is a list of 20 Quaker men each of whom paid a \$4.00 fine for his scruple of conscience. The Guilderslieve family with 4 members paid \$16.00. The 4 members of the Halstead family also paid \$16.

How much of a fine was \$4.00 in 1828? It was equivalent to the full year's tax on an 80 acre farm a size common to the period.

\* O'Callaghan, E.B. Documentary History of New York 1850. Vol III, pg. 1004.

## FIELD DAY FUN

When daylight savings time arrived this spring, everyone went forward one hour. For just a few hours though, some people in town went backwards 100 years or more. This feat was accomplished by their attendance at a 'farm fun and education' program sponsored by the Clinton Historical Society and Clinton Farm Associates on Ap.30.

Books tell us that animal power was used to clear forested land and "let daylight into the swamp" so that man and his beasts could plow and harvest - but if you actually see this work done, the past becomes so much more understandable. "Seeing is believing" - and people saw horse and oxen skid logs, plow and harrow a field, move earth and transport people and supplies. When Hal Fountain and Rip Van Auken debate the merits of horse and oxen power they know from whence they speak. Hal showed how oxen respond to voice command, 'geddup' (starting) turning 'gee' (right), 'haw' (left) and 'whoa' (stop). Rip and Hal have worked with horses since boyhood and have experience on just about every type of horse drawn farm equipment there is.

A hand operated corn sheller and grain cradle were also demonstrated. Children were fascinated by the sheller and were taught to be careful because it grinds fingers as well as ear corn. There was no grain to cut but we did swing the gracefully built implement and marvel at our forefathers who could cut four acres of grain from 'sun to sun'. In 1845 N.Y. state grew 65.8 million bushels of grain and even though a reaper had been patented it is estimated that 90% of this was cut with a cradle, bound by hand and threshed with a flail or animal feet.

Consulting foresters Richard Schoch and Mark Walker showed a series of slides depicting draft horses being used in a modern logging operation. In some instances they offer advantages to mechanized equipment because the animals can work in tight spaces and cause less damage to smaller trees.

The need for good land management and conservation practices is understood today but up to the 1850's trees were an enemy to be destroyed so that crops had enough sunlight to grow. The major part of these trees were burned to supply charcoal to fuel iron furnaces and potash which was indispensable in the processing of wool. The large scale destruction of trees to support these industries led to the first realization that forests were not infinite - but it took about 250 years for that premise to attract widespread acceptance. Rich explained that 480A Forest Tax Law is one way government is encouraging land owners to manage their wooded land by giving them a tax break.



The participants in this field day enjoyed the goings on as much as the audience. Clinton Farm Associates hopes to sponsor more programs in the future. At present a small group of people are working to establish a small farm which will function as a community resource and be the pivot point for hands-on programs in animal science, small scale agriculture, conservation and living history. April 30 was a trial balloon, and the balloon seemed to get off the ground in an encouraging manner.

OFFICERS 1978 - 1979

The officers elected and installed at the annual meeting are as follows:

- Trustees: William Benson, Putnam Davis, Kelsey Wirehouse
- Pres. Bill Mc Dermott
- Vice Pres. Julie Buglion
- Treas. Susan Aldrich
- Rec. Sec'y. Mary Jo Nickerson
- Corr. Sec'y. Barbara Oberly

Just when this practice was discontinued is not clear. Records for that early period are scarce. The information that is available indicates tha practice was probably discontinued in the 1830's.

*From:*  
*The* DUTCHESS HISTORIAN

Our recognition award this month is presented to Helena Van Vliet, one of the historians for the Town of Clinton. An extraordinary person, Miss Van Vliet is an accomplished carpenter, a nurse, and she speaks Chinese as a result of her missionary years in Nanking. She is perhaps best known around Dutchess, however, as an avid local historian. For the last several years one of her projects has been to search out all the buildings in the Town of Clinton built prior to 1900. Lucky Dutchess County!

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