

# In Memoriam: Wing's Hall

by Craig Marshall

After becoming a well known fixture in the Clinton Corners hamlet for 120 years, the barn known as "Wing's Hall" succumbed to the ravages of weather and decay and was demolished recently by the property's current owners John and Lisa Lacey. "The rear wall had pushed out, the sills supporting the walls were gone creating a wavy floor, and there was a great sag in the roof," noted John. "The structure was unsafe and not repairable, and to our regret, had to be torn down."

In the Jan/Feb 2005 issue of this newsletter, a detailed account of the history of the hall was featured in "Wing's Dance Hall – A Memoir" as written by Irma Wing Dykeman who's parents bought the house and barn in 1890. Irma was born in the house in 1894 and recounted how her father got the idea to start the dance hall in 1907 and how it lasted to 1950. The musicians were relatives encouraged by her father, and she herself took up the cornet while in high school so she could join the band. "The hall was enlarged several times," she noted, "until it measured 40' by 80'." She continued, "Young people – oldsters too – came from miles around. Before autos became popular, they drove in buggies and hay-riggin's, parking some in the old church shed across the way (1777 Creek Meeting House). Dances were held three times a week during the summer months in those early days, with often as many as six-hundred attending. Most of the farmers earned extra money by taking in summer boarders, and this accounted greatly for the huge crowds."



Refreshment bar – soda & ice cream 10 cents each



Young and old enjoy the dance

She also noted that good conduct was strictly enforced by her father, and that certain objectionable dances were taboo. These "no-no" dances were posted around the hall and included the tango, turkey trot, Boston, one-step, Texas Tommy, bunny hug, and grizzly bear. "Approved" music included "Cubanola Glide", "Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet", and "In the Good Old Summertime." Masquerades, moonlight dances, and square dances were part of the fun, with the latter featured in Harper's Bazaar in 1939. Another notable event occurred in 1920 when Franklin D. Roosevelt attended a Democratic rally at the hall, and shook hands with Irma and complemented her on her cornet playing. The Society recently came into possession of Irma's photo album with photos going back to 1907, and it includes a view of the refreshment bar which was still in place at the building's demise, as was the band platform (not shown). Another photo shows that the dancers were both young and old, enjoying the same music and mixing well for a good time. Gals came to meet guys, and guys came to meet gals. One particular couple met at Wing's Hall, married, and became the parents of our Town Supervisor Jeff Burns.

*Note: Irma's father started a store in Clinton Corners, and after her brothers Ed and Roy went into partnership with him in 1908, it became "Wing and Sons" store, see photo on the next page. It ran until Roy's death in 1962, and burned in 1966. It was located across the street from "Wild Hive Farms Store", on the south side of the recently restored residence of Terrence and Heather Hackett. The foundation is still there. Photos from Irma's album.*