



Est. 1975
Town of Clinton Historical Society
THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

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2022 SUMMER EXHIBIT

**Celebrating Clinton's
Farming Heritage**



Farm Life in Clinton: 1890-1920

The summer exhibit features a look at farming and farm family life in Clinton and Dutchess County before the advent of electricity and tractors. The strict nature-driven schedule of the farmer, the work of his wife and business partner, the education of the children, and the social life of the family are described in text and vintage images.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 120 vintage images with captions
- 40 early farm-related artifacts
- Horse-drawn antique farm implements

**Open Saturdays & Sundays in
July from 1 - 4 p.m. at the Creek
Meeting House. Admission is free
and donations are welcome!**

*For more information, please contact
Craig at (845) 242-5879 or
craigmarshall266@aol.com.*

WOMEN'S WORK ON THE FARM

by Craig Marshall and Cynthia Koch

Farming has never been an easy business and many articles on farming focus on the farmer and the varied tasks that occupied his time: plowing, haying, construction of outbuildings, repair of farm implements, harvesting, feeding animals, and more. What is not clear, however, was the role of the farm wife beyond the traditional duties of housewives at the time.

In reality, by the early 20th century the farm wife was a business partner in a market-based enterprise. Farms in the Hudson Valley provided dairy products and fruits and vegetables for New York City. The Poughkeepsie and Eastern Railroad established a depot in Clinton Corners in 1871 from which Clinton farm produce was shipped to the city.

In this business, farmer and wife were partners. She had to plan to feed and house extra help at the right time in the season. In smaller operations she and the children worked alongside her husband planting, cultivating, and harvesting the crops. On a small dairy farm, milking the cows fell to her if there were no children to take on a task that had to start before dawn; it also fell to her to wash the milk pans in order to be ready for the next milking in the late afternoon. Chickens not only provided food for the family, but they represented an important source of income—and women and children did virtually all the work related to keeping and caring for them. Women and children were also responsible for churning butter from cream skimmed off fluid milk, another income-producing task.



In addition to the farm work, farm wives had the usual chores that fell to most women at the turn of the 20th century—preparing meals, washing, ironing, baking, housekeeping, sewing and mending, and of course childcare and pregnancy, all without the aid of most modern conveniences. In the early 20th century, plumbing and electricity were not available on most Clinton farms. Elderly parents often lived with the family and helped with chores, but they too required special care.

What about Sundays? Although church and social visits might be welcome diversions, the cows had to be milked, livestock and chickens fed, eggs gathered, and meals prepared and cleared away. Only the heavy work, such as plowing and harrowing, stopped for the day's rest. The chores never did.

There were good times, of course—summer picnics, socials, and meetings at one of Clinton's four Grange halls (the Upton Lake Grange met in the Creek Meeting House) as well as sewing circles, church-related women's groups, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

It is doubtful that any woman today would want to trade places for this seven-day-a-week, 365-days-a-year regimen. But some farm women no doubt found moments of respite and a sense of accomplishment and pleasure in rural life. ☒

NEWS & NOTES

Members are encouraged to submit information of interest to the Society at large. Please send your emails to us clo_craigmarshall266@aol.com.

Clinton Community Day

CHS has joined the town committee that is planning to reestablish Community Day this Labor Day weekend. Rich Morse and Craig Marshall represent the Society and welcome your ideas.

Program Co-chair Needed

Enjoy CHS programs? Why not get to know the speakers behind the scenes? We have a volunteer who will co-chair. Can you help out?

Please email craigmarshall266@aol.com.

Thank you, Barbara!

CHS Trustee Barbara Sweet is stepping down as program coordinator after a successful tenure that has given us many great programs and solidified our presence in virtual programming. Barbara will continue as a trustee.

Thank you, Jim!

Jim Pellegrino has retired from the Board of Trustees after many years of service. He has helped to develop our summer exhibits, maintain our Creek Meeting House, and welcome new members, and will continue to do so in a nonvoting capacity.

Board of Trustees

Cynthia Koch, *president*
Craig Marshall, *vice president*
Cathy McMahan, *secretary*
Frank McMahan, *treasurer*
Rise Cross, Marge Fountain,
William Holman, Richard Morse
Lisa Noval, Robert Schoch
Glenda Schwarze, Barbara Seelbach,
and Barbara Sweet

Newsletter Team: Craig Marshall, Judith Grabowski, Trip Sinnott, and Eliot Werner.

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.



Friend us on Facebook at Clinton Historical Society [clinton_historical_society](https://www.facebook.com/clinton_historical_society).



Photo by Ray Oberly

CHS President Cynthia Koch and Vice President Craig Marshall at the marker unveiling.

FIDDLER'S GHOST MARKER UNVEILING

by Craig Marshall

On May 22 Primrose Hill Farm on Fiddlers Bridge Road was the scene for an unveiling of a new historic road marker by our Clinton Historical Society. Thirty-six CHS members and town residents gathered for the festivities under clear skies and shady trees to celebrate this marker, which commemorates the legend of the Fiddler's Bridge Ghost.

This legend began in 1808 when a local fiddler was robbed and murdered after returning home from a dance and left under a bridge (long gone). The road became Fiddlers Bridge Road as a result, and the story includes his ongoing appearance on moonlit nights.

Craig Marshall, CHS vice president and Town of Clinton historian, recited the legend while dressed in the costume of the fiddler, complete with fiddle. Guitarist Vito Petrocitto played his song "The Legend of Fiddlers Bridge Road," which was followed by a brief reenactment of the murder when farm owner and CHS Trustee Bob Schoch "shot" fiddler Craig with an antique flintlock pistol.

The unveiling then took place with Craig and CHS President Cynthia Koch removing a cover to reveal the marker on a temporary stand. Refreshments were served and Bob gave wagon tours of his family's beautiful 108-acre Christmas tree farm, noting the history of and future plans for the property.

Through my application to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, CHS received a grant to fully fund the marker, which is located on the north side of Fiddlers Bridge Road about five hundred feet west of Schultz Hill Road. The Society thanks Linda and Bob Schoch for the use of their farm, the town Highway Department for the installation of the permanent signpost, Ed and Judie Marsden for the use of their property for the marker, Vito for his songs, and Trustee Marge Fountain for the tasty treats and beverages. ☺



Photo by Trip Sinnott

The celebration included music by Vito Petrocitto and wagon tours of Primrose Hill Farm by Bob Schoch.



Photo by Ray Oberly

CLINTON IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

By Cynthia Koch

The final decades of the 19th century brought many changes to Clinton: telegraph and telephone lines, mass-produced items sold at the country store and mail order catalog, and technological improvements in planting and harvesting equipment. A consumer-oriented economy had arrived. Some of the labor-intensive farm work was relieved by new inventions, but animal and human muscles continued to power the farm. Early automobiles made their appearance, but electricity and other advances long available in urban areas did not reach Clinton until the 1930s.

The transition into the new century was neither dramatic nor abrupt. For example, during the early decades refrigeration was still provided by ice harvested from local ponds or the Hudson River. Vegetables, mostly homegrown, were still kept in a root cellar. And many homes were still heated from wood felled on the family “wood lot.”



Railroad Depot, Clinton Corners

The arrival of the Poughkeepsie and Eastern Railroad depot in Clinton Corners in 1871 transformed the community. Farm produce was shipped by rail to Poughkeepsie and on to New York City markets and residents traveled to Poughkeepsie for shopping, schooling, and work. City residents flocked to Clinton in the summer months and boarded with local residents, giving rise to a summer theater, a dance hall, and amusement park.

Yet Clinton, despite all these changes, retained its parochial character. When Herman Lane shot a wildcat near Clinton Corners, it made the Poughkeepsie newspapers; so did the public admonishment of Christmas Eve partygoers.

Population decline, which began after 1830, continued into the 20th century. By World War II, Clinton hit its modern low of 1,100 residents. Curiously, although the number of residents was half what it had been a century earlier, by the 1930s there were twice as many families in the town. The number of children in the average family declined sharply—even before the Depression limited the size of families—but the number of families who lived on small lots almost doubled between 1850 and 1915, as increasing numbers of residents supported themselves in non-farm occupations.

New occupations such as barber, insurance agent, and railroad station keeper appeared. Craftsmen all but disappeared. Only three blacksmiths served the town in 1925, compared with fifteen in 1900. The last physician to practice in town, Dr. Edwin Hoyt, passed away in 1930.

With an average 100-acre farm, agriculture remained the town’s economic base, but farmers gradually changed from diversified animal husbandry to focus on producing fluid milk for the New York City market. The tractor (which appeared in the 1930s), together with refrigeration on the farm and in transport on trucks and railroads, made it possible to increase the amount of milk produced. By the 1940s and 1950s, milk was almost the sole source of farm income, but the number of farms had begun to decline.

Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, New York City residents began to purchase farms for weekend retreats—a trend that continues today.

(Editor’s note: This article is adapted from the Town of Clinton Comprehensive Plan.)



Electric Power Plant, Clinton Corners c. 1930

APRIL TAG SALE A SUCCESS!



Thanks to the Tag Sale team.

L-r: Craig Marshall, Cathy McMahon, Mary Jo Nickerson, Glenda Schwarze, and Lisa Noval.



New Trustee

The Society welcomes longtime Clinton resident Barbara Seelbach as a new trustee. Barbara has served as Town Justice since 2006. She has also served on the Town Board and as liaison

to the Planning and Zoning boards. In 2015 she was elected as a director of the New York State Magistrates Association.

2022 DUES

Your CHS membership is important!
The address label on this newsletter shows the most recent year of paid dues.

Student.....	\$10
Individual.....	\$20
Family	\$35
Friend.....	\$75
Donor	\$150
Patron	\$250
Benefactor.....	\$500
Visionary.....	\$1,000
Life.....	\$5,000

Please make checks payable to:

Clinton Historical Society

and mail to:

PO Box 122

Clinton Corners, NY 12514

2022 SUMMER EXHIBIT

CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

presents

Farm Life in Clinton: 1890-1920



Weekends in July, 1-4 p.m.
1777 CREEK MEETING HOUSE

2433 Salt Point Turnpike, Clinton Corners

• Over 120 vintage images • 40 early farm-related artifacts
• Horse-drawn antique farm implements

Admission is free and donations are welcome!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FIRST FRIDAY PROGRAM MEETINGS

➤ No programs in July & August ➤

Friday, September 9, 7:30 PM In Person & Via Zoom

The Paintings of Olin Dows presented by Chip Holman

Olin Dows (1904 – 1981) was raised at Glenburn in Rhinebeck and studied painting at Harvard and the Art Students League. A lifetime painter of Dutchess County scenery, he was a leader of Roosevelt's Depression-era art programs in public buildings and post offices. Chip will speak on Dows' local work in the early 1930s and the period up to World War II.



Watercolor by Olin Dows
Dutchess County,
Hudson Valley, NY,
Early 1930s

Fall Fundraisers

Saturday, September 24

10 AM - 4 PM

Driving Tour of Clinton Historical Society Landmarks

Friday & Saturday, October 7 & 8

9 AM - 4 PM

Fall Tag Sale

Please remember us for your unwanted items of value to help support CHS. Donations are accepted beginning September 26.

Saturday, October 22

Progressive Dinner

This popular evening returns with Trustee Lisa Noval as chair. Lisa is seeking dinner hosts. Please contact her at ljnoval@optonline.net.

Details in the Fall newsletter.