



# Town of Clinton Historical Society Est. 1975 **THE CLINTON HISTORIAN**

Volume XXXVI, Number 2 • Craig Marshall, Editor, 845-242-5879 • SPRING 2023

## THE BIRTH and EARLY YEARS of the CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### *Personal Memories of Bill McDermott*

*(Editors note: Bill McDermott founded the Clinton Historical Society in 1975, serving as president for 21 years. He is author of sixteen books within the Society and beyond and editor of the 321-page book Clinton: A History of a Town. Bill played a leading role in the Society until 2006, when he and his wife Louise moved to Connecticut to be near their children and grandchildren.)*

## -WANTED-

This year's annual summer exhibit "Clinton: Then & Now" will feature vintage images of Clinton homes (taken between 1900 and 1950) mounted alongside current photos. We are seeking additional vintage images to be scanned and copied for display.

**Please contact Craig Marshall at (845) 242-5879.**

*Exhibit dates to be determined.*



*The historic c.1730/1760 Lester house (later Weiland) in Clinton Corners*



*Bill McDermott in 1992*

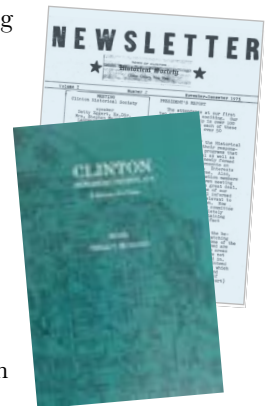
**WHAT!?!** I'm also supposed to know the history of the town? At the close of the Society's first public meeting in 1975, several attendees asked questions about the town's history. I knew no answers. Several months earlier at a meeting of a group interested in starting a historical society, I had reluctantly agreed to be president. Understanding the administrative work required and the goals to be achieved, I had simply agreed to be the *administrator*. But being unable to answer historical questions at that first meeting was an embarrassment. By the next meeting I still knew little, but I had compiled a list of sources that directed members where to look.

The turnout at the first meeting was way beyond expectations. It appeared we had tapped into a community of interested residents.

Wrong! Many who had attended were politicians running for office in an election year. Yet there was interest motivating us to continue. During the next 20 years, invited speakers at regular monthly meetings informed the members about various historical subjects. Membership varied from about 60 to 100. Dues were small, but enough to mail meeting notices. We initiated an informative newsletter and published a history of the town.

Bits and pieces were offered, primarily historical notes from members, genealogies, a few objects, and more wound up at our house as a temporary archival repository. My wife, Louise, who really did most of the Society's administrative work, had become an untrained archivist. Later she made dozens and dozens of phone calls for volunteers to sit at our summer exhibits. While it seemed to work, it also became clear that the Society needed a place to house a growing archive, a place to mount exhibits and to hold monthly meetings, then held at the town hall or library.

A grandiose idea for a headquarters, the Creek Meeting House, owned by the Upton Lake Grange, was undoubtedly beyond our reach. Well, what the heck – let's give it a try. In the mid-1980s we approached the Grange members. With their membership declining, might they consider donating the Meeting House to the Society? Meeting with them over the next several years, we pitched our request. Each time, the Grange members graciously declined our proposal. Behind those gracious refusals, one could see the thought – "Is this guy nuts or what?" However, in 1993 we revised our proposal.



*continued on page 2*

# 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](mailto:clo_craigmarshall266@aol.com).

**Our New Telephone Number**  
**845-675-1234**

## 2023 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

## Welcome New Members

- James & Lisa Metcalfe
- Mary Ellen Cowles
- Nicole Skalla
- Jonathan Popolow
- Lorna Schipp
- Camille Milea
- Dan Contelmo
- Nick Contelmo
- Mark Forziati
- Christina Ferri
- Charlotte & Eric Haims
- Deborah & Michael Mahoney

**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).

## THE BIRTH and EARLY YEARS ... continued from page 1

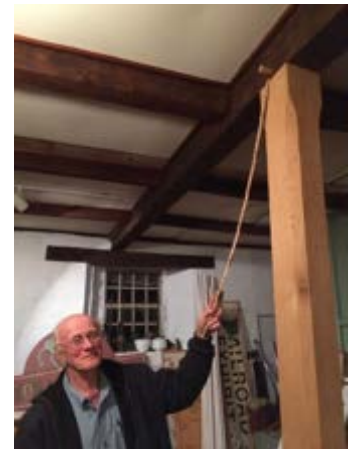
How about we become second floor tenants and share the expenses? That did it. Two years later, under the dedicated long-time leadership of Dorothy Burkowske, the Grange donated the building to the Society in December 1995. Now what? Our membership dues were not enough to cover even basic expenses, heat, light, etc. But we generated a plan. By law the town was required to offer office space and expenses to the Town Historian. Negotiating an agreement with the Town Supervisor (Ray Oberly), the Town Historian (me) was allowed \$750 annually (a bargain) in lieu of a space at the town hall. Great, but our newly acquired building needed basic upgrades, a new furnace, rewiring its 1930s antiquated electrical system, desks, shelving, and so forth. Also a new roof. Estimated upgrade costs? Who knows, but closer to \$100,000 than not. Did I mention the rotting exterior sill on the second floor and the split in the roof's principal timber support? Yes indeed, we were, as the Grange members may have thought, NUTS.

But there are angels in the universe. Clint Kershaw, a town resident business owner, recognizing our need for a new furnace, called a fellow businessman. Five minutes later we had a commitment for a new furnace and its installation, FREE. And in short order, Toby Ricciardelli and Bill Dickett upgraded the entire electrical system with supplies provided by Paul Zitzelsberger at far below wholesale price. Clint provided new handicapped facilities in the men's bathroom at no cost. Dick Coller provided all the desks, file cabinets, and shelving needed. And John Lacey helped (he did most of the work) dismantle the wainscoting in the soon to be torn down Pleasant Valley Quaker Meeting House so we could install it on the back wall at the Creek Meeting House. With the purchase of two old microfilm readers (\$20) from SUNY New Paltz we could put our new microfilm archive to work. From a 125-year-old dead elm in the Creek graveyard, Dick Coller had it milled into six posts by Bob Hedges and John Coppell who installed them on the second floor where the original posts had been removed. Boy Scouts and parents built the exhibit panels. Painting and many other chores by Jack Cleary and Craig Marshall brightened the building. With a very substantial donation of \$25,000 from residents Stephen and Mary Beth Daniels, plus another \$21,000 raised from the community, a new copper roof was installed.

As a result of help from so many volunteers and a dedicated membership, the building became a functioning headquarters at little cost to the membership. Then when two crack researchers Eleanor Rogers and George Greenwood joined us, we could answer questions asked and others not yet asked. No longer were we embarrassed as we had been at our first meeting. ☺



Dick Coller holds a rotted exterior sill board.



John Coppell points to one of the new posts he installed.



The roofer shown installing our new copper roof.

## ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

At the April Business Meeting, founding president **Bill McDermott** was designated as *President Emeritus* for his exemplary service and leadership. Also, former trustee **Jim Pellegrino** was designated as *Trustee Emeritus* for his dedicated service to our society.

### ELECTION RESULTS

#### Board of Trustees

\*Cynthia Koch, *president*

\*Craig Marshall, *vice president*

\*Cathy McMahan, *secretary*

\*Frank McMahan, *treasurer*

‡Hon. Jim Brands

\*Rise Cross

‡Gail Denning

Marge Fountain

\*William Holman

‡Jim Metcalfe

Richard Morse

\*Lisa Noval

Robert Schoch

\*Glenda Schwarze

Barbara Seelbach

Barbara Sweet

\**Re-elected for three years*

## President's Report

We have begun working on the Historic Structure Report (HSR), which is being funded in part by a grant from the Preservation League of New York State, as part of our planning for the Creek Meeting House restoration. I am writing the historical narrative and the architects are preparing architectural studies of the building as part of its restoration.

As part of the HSR, I spent a week at the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College. Most of the week was spent reading microfilm of the minutes of the Nine Partners Monthly Meeting (which stands in today's Millbrook) between 1769 and 1782. In 1770 Friends living "over the creek" began petitioning the Nine Partners Meeting to hold their own meetings in what is today Clinton Corners. For five years they held meetings, most often at the home of Jonathan Hoag, located on today's Meadowland Farm at the intersection of Schultsville Road and Salt Point Turnpike.

Finally in 1775 a committee was formed to "Pitch upon a Place" to build a meeting house. In October of that year they purchased two acres from Abel Peters for £10. Peters lived in the house that stands directly north of the meeting house site. A committee to oversee construction was appointed and a "subscription" was established to pay for the building. The committee struggled to raise the money and as late as 1781 was still soliciting payments from those who had made pledges (subscribers).

In May 1780 the building was sufficiently completed that it began to be used by the Nine Partners Monthly Meeting while a new meeting house (the present brick structure) was being built in Millbrook to replace the previous wooden meeting house that had burned in 1778. The fact that the Creek Meeting House was being used as early as 1780 is new information; we previously thought it was under construction until 1782. Early minutes from the Creek Meeting are lost so we do not know when the local Friends began meeting in their new building.

Cynthia Koch



NINE PARTNERS MEETING HOUSE Photo by Daniel Case

The Creek Meeting was founded with the permission of the Nine Partners Monthly Meeting and remained a constituent (preparative or local) meeting of Nine Partners, which in turn was part of Purchase Quarterly Meeting and New York Yearly Meeting. The present brick meeting house in Millbrook dates from 1780 and is the third meeting house on the site.



‡ *Newly elected trustees (l-r) serving for three years Jim Metcalfe and Gail Denning and serving for a one-year term Hon. Jim Brands.*



Bakers please drop off donations the day of the sale.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### 2023 FIRST FRIDAY PROGRAM MEETINGS

**MAY 5, 7:30 PM**  
**Have You Ever  
Wondered How To  
Clean a Gravestone?**

*Presented by Patrick O'Hara*  
A descendant of the Rymph family, Patrick O'Hara spent the summer of 2022 visiting local cemeteries while researching his family tree. Mr. O'Hara cleaned over eighty cemetery markers, writing narratives about the deceased and posting them to social media—and in the process stimulating interest and discussion on the upkeep of local cemeteries. He will discuss how to safely clean a gravestone, the best cleaning solutions to use, and basic tools and techniques.



**JUNE 2, 7:30 PM**  
**Historic Murders in Dutchess  
County**

*Presented by Shannon Butler, Historian,  
Poughkeepsie Public Library District*  
Using court records, early newspaper articles, and pamphlets, Shannon Butler discusses Dutchess County's most gruesome murders from the 18th through the early 20th centuries—including one of the first female serial killers and the gruesome murder of a Poughkeepsie businessman. Ms. Butler, the author of two books and numerous articles, has worked in local history for sixteen years and is the creator and co-host of a historical podcast entitled "All My Favorite People Are Dead."



### Clinton Community Library

**Annual  
Book Sale  
May 18 - 21**

For details visit  
CCL website.

CHS has been invited to sell books and maps related to Clinton history as a fundraiser for our restoration.



SAVE THE DATE

### LABOR DAY WEEKEND

### CLINTON COMMUNITY DAY

Saturday, September 2, 10am - 4pm

Clinton Corners

"Keeping Our Community Connected"

food | games | vendors | parade