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Town of Clinton Historical Society
THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

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HISTORY OF THE BROOKFIELD MOTEL

By Craig Marshall

Clinton has long been known for its rural environment, and indeed travelers along the Taconic State Parkway see very little in the way of commercial enterprises. This was even more so in the late 1950s when Manuel Mastri, father of local resident Roger Mastri, built a motel next to the Parkway as a repose for weary travelers finding few to no establishments on their journey to New York City or Albany.

Manuel immigrated to the United States in 1920 from Italy, speaking no English. He entered the building trades and constructed homes in Yorktown Heights where his family lived. His business expanded and in 1954 he looked north for other construction projects. He found a sixty-acre parcel in Clinton that included the historic Lester farm, which he later sold to John Weiland—father of CHS member Arthur Weiland—in 1957.

Sensing a good business opportunity with the growing traffic on the Taconic State Parkway, Manuel built a ten-room motel with a red brick façade on a parcel on Hollow Road (adjacent to the parkway) in 1958. The structure included an office, a coffee shop, and an in-ground pool. Pool water was pumped from the nearby Wappingers Creek brook across a field—hence the name Brookfield Motel. He also built the family home two lots away from the motel. It was here that Roger lived after he served in the Army for three years, learning the surveying profession and marrying Pat Magennis in 1964. They now reside on Allen Road.

Since they had no staff, Roger’s mother Carmella ran the coffee shop as cook, did the cleaning, and prepared the rooms. Manuel operated the office, which contained a bed where he slept each night to receive after-hours customers. Roger recalls, “My father told me how one night at about 2:00 a.m. a woman with her children was driving on the dark parkway (there were no road lights) in an exceptionally bad blizzard, becoming frantic to find

a safe place to stop. She saw the lighted motel sign, pulled in, and was greatly relieved to find my father ready to give her a room.” Shortly after the motel was built with its eye-catching sign,

New York State—wanting no commercial advertising along the parkway—planted fast-growing larch trees to help shield the sign from travelers.

In 1965 Manuel and Carmella sold the motel, the first of a series of sales to subsequent motel owner/operators. David Wray, the current pastor of the Cornerstone Bible Fellowship Church, recalls that from about 1989 to 1992 the Dutchess County Social Services Department used the motel for residents under its care. The Cornerstone group of about 40–45 members, operating out of the Pleasant Valley Grange Hall, would drop off donations of food, diapers, and paper goods to the grateful residents. Little did they know at the time that they would become owners of that same motel in 2001.

Wayne Chadwell, a trustee of the Cornerstone Church since 1988, recalls that the repurposing of the structure into a church took two years of volunteer members doing all the work. He noted, “Windows were sealed over, doors became windows, siding covered the brick façade, and much work inside was required to complete the project to include a sanctuary, five classrooms, a kitchenette, and the pastor’s office.” In 2004 the congregation moved in and the group is now active with 10–20 members in its mission of faith and community support. ☼



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.

Our New Telephone Number

845-675-1234

Welcome New Members

Natalie DeStrange
Sarah Easterly

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

Hon. Barbara Seelbach

Barbara Sweet

New and current Board members attended an Orientation in person on May 15 to go over Society by-laws, committees, and the strategic plan.

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.

President's Report

This fall will be a busy time at the Creek Meeting House because construction is starting! Ganem Contracting, a firm skilled in the restoration of masonry buildings, will begin repointing the gable ends of the building in August. We are grateful to our private donors whose generosity is funding work on the gable end facing the cemetery, while \$30,000 from the Dutchess County Historic Infrastructure grant program is repointing the gable end facing the road.

While this limited masonry repair should solve the immediate problem of bat infestation in the attic, the entire building needs to be repointed at an additional cost of more than \$200,000. In late September Duncan and Cahill will begin work on the ADA accessibility project, funded by a county Community Development Block Grant. Two new accessible parking spaces, a ramp to the front porch, a new accessible restroom, and new emergency egress alarms will be installed. We are grateful to the Town of Clinton, and the Highway Department in particular, for installing on a reimbursement basis the crushed stone base for the new parking spaces and ramp.

At the end of July, we submitted an application to the State of New York for a \$250,000 Historic Preservation grant to begin restoring the interior of the Creek Meeting House. If funded, this phase will relocate the present kitchen to an enlarged addition along the cemetery side of the building. Most dramatically it will also involve opening the first-floor ceiling to restore the original appearance of the interior, when second-floor galleries were visible from the ground floor. The CHS Board of Trustees deliberated at length about this decision but ultimately concluded that restoring the original interior will not only allow us to better tell the story of the building's history, but will significantly advance our plans to use the Creek Meeting House as a cultural and community center. Fully restored, the Creek Meeting House will be architecturally stunning—a venue that will attract new attendees to our programs as well as rental income that will help sustain the Society.

Continued fundraising is essential to accomplish these goals and I hope you will consider making a gift to the Creek Meeting House Restoration Fund. We must raise over \$75,000 to match the pending state grant.

Cynthia Koch



We thank the Clinton Town Highway Department for starting work on our ADA grant on a reimbursement basis by installing the gravel base for our handicap parking area and the walkway which eliminated difficult steps at the porch entrance.



Town resident Bill Smith points to the Clinton Hollow school he attended in the early 1950s.

SUMMER EXHIBIT SHOWS CLINTON: THEN & NOW

By Craig Marshall

This year's summer exhibit, titled *Clinton: Then & Now*, took visitors back a hundred years to view Clinton's historic structures, and then showed the same scenes in 2007 and 2023. The views were of private homes, one-room schools, churches, and street scenes. Five of the sites are on the National Register of Historic Places. A highlight of the display was the collection of lenticular images by artist Michael Asbill, who displayed them for our summer exhibit in 2007. Michael's lenticular images show two views of the same subject—then and now—in a single frame, each of which appears depending on how the visitor views the frame. One favorite of many guests showed CHS member Viola Schoch (deceased) at age 8 standing in front of her Pleasant Plains one-room schoolhouse, and with a slight turn of the head Viola appears seventy years later in 2007 standing in the same spot. The exhibit was developed and presented by CHS Vice President and Exhibit Director Craig Marshall, who took the 2023 images of sites.

Comments from visitors ranged from being intrigued by the photos, to childhood memories of Clinton, to appreciation for having these images preserved. Theo Drago-Regan, age 8, thought the "moving pictures" (lenticulars) were "really neat!" Lorelei Schaefer, age 14, noted, "Really interesting to see the houses, the church, and the school house that I pass by frequently have almost no change after a hundred years!" Bill and Judy Smith reminisced about attending the one-room schools pictured on display. In the early 1950s, Bill was a student in grades 1 through 4 at Clinton Hollow, and Judy attended grades 1 through 5 at Clinton Corners. Joan Traver recalled, "I was 6 years old when I lived in Clinton Hollow, and I was so proud of myself at being able to walk the long distance to school by myself! Wonderful display!" Nancy Estes Chadwell, who went to the Clinton Corners school for grades 1 through 4, noted, "I see the 1900 photo of the Kelsey Wirehouse home exhibited. I still remember clearly Mrs. Wirehouse (Kelsey's mother) reading bible stories to me as a youngster on that very same porch! So many photos, so many memories."

Several Clinton homeowners loaned vintage photos of their homes to be scanned for this exhibit to help make it more complete, and we are indebted to them for their interest and support. And we had one surprise couple stop by: Jennifer McLain and Andrew Coutts, who were married in our Creek Meeting House in 2016 by his father, a Presbyterian minister!

Don Pedersen observed, "This exhibit gives evidence of how well local homeowners are maintaining their historic homes, showing pride in ownership!" Perhaps Clinton resident Rick McGlaufflin captured the sentiments of many visitors when he remarked, "Preserve these photos and their stories! The Clinton Historical Society does a great service to the community by recording local history for current and future generations, and providing really interesting exhibits like today's." ☺

PROGRESSIVE DINNER

The **Progressive Dinner** fundraiser is on **Saturday, October 21**. This popular fall event brings members, friends, and neighbors together for an enjoyable evening. The first stop is for wine and cheese, then on to another home for dinner, and ending together at one location for dessert and coffee. If you wish to participate in this important fundraiser, as a host or a guest, please contact Lisa Noval at 845-266-4903 or ljnoval@optonline.net.



Board member Marge Fountain and her husband Hal hosted a dinner in 2022 in their Clinton Corners home.

"Wonderful display!"

—Joan Traver



Theo Drago-Regan points out Jeanie Bean's Café to his grandparents Nancy and Joe Drago.

TOWN OF CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 122
CLINTON CORNERS, NY 12514



1953 COMMUNITY DAY PARADE

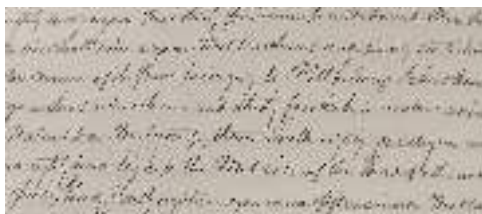
MARK YOUR CALENDAR

2023 FIRST FRIDAY PROGRAM MEETINGS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8*, 7:30 PM
(*Second Friday due to Labor Day holiday.)

**The Hidden History in Land Records:
Clinton's Gazely Farm**
*Presented by William P. Tatum III,
Dutchess County Historian*

Dr. Tatum provides an inside perspective on the challenges and rewards of using land records as historical resources through the example of the Gazely Farm, located on West Meadowbrook Lane. The deed records associated with this property link it back to the Great Nine Partners Patent, providing a historical chain that connects the earliest eras of European settlement in Dutchess County to the present day.



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6, 7:30 PM

Architectural Preservation
Presented by Joseph Vance

Joe Vance is an award-winning architect in New York City who has recently moved to the Town of Clinton. His firm specializes in residential design projects using 3D software that allows clients to visualize their project in "virtual reality" from inception through completion. Mr. Vance will speak on architectural issues common in rural properties, including renovation of a 1790s home and barns in the Town of Clinton.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 7:30 PM

**Perspectives on the History of
Landscape Design in the Hudson Valley**
*Presented by Harvey K. Flad, Professor
Emeritus of Geography, Vassar College*

In the nineteenth century, Hudson River School artists such as Thomas Cole and Frederic Church and landscape designers such as Andrew Jackson Downing, Calvert Vaux, and Frederick Law Olmsted planted the seeds of a national identity through their works in the Hudson River Valley. Professor Flad introduces this historic cultural landscape and presents some personal perspectives on local and regional efforts to preserve this heritage.

