

Bill/Louise McDermott
Salt Pt Turnpike
Clinton Corners, NY
12514

FRIDAY MAR 6

NEXT MEETING:

*** REMINDER ***

Clinton Historical Society
Clinton Corners, N.Y. 12514



The Clinton



Historian

TOWN OF CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Well, you have been patient with us. Thanks. Let's catch you up on what has been happening regarding our plan for a museum.

As you know we have been speaking to representatives from the Masonic Hall in Schultsville about a possible transfer of that building to this Society. We were pleased with the flow of these meetings and the opportunity to preserve a building which we could use for our museum.

A good deal of progress had been made when a brief conversation with members of the Upton Lake Grange in Clinton Corners revealed that their membership, like the Masons, had become increasingly concerned about the future of the building. Grange members had met in for the better part of this century. Members are fewer now and those who remain might become less able to manage the building in the way they have for so many years.

During the ensuing weeks, discussions between committees from the Grange and this Society progressed in an atmosphere of cordiality and careful planning. Three weeks ago an agreement between these two committees developed which would result in a transfer of the building after a period of sharing it. Essentially, the agreement permits the Clinton Historical Society to begin to use the building for exhibits and for its meetings as soon as Grange members indicate their approval of this plan. Letters have already been sent to Grange members and their approval is anticipated.

One additional step was required and that too was completed as smoothly as all other discussions. The New York State Grange has given approval of the joint use of the building with the understanding that this is a first step in the transfer of ownership of the building to the Historical Society. Needless, to say we are pleased at the opportunity to preserve one of the most historic buildings in the community. Beyond this we are also pleased to have a home for the Society and its growing research resources. Furthermore, the space will give us the opportunity to design and mount exhibits detailing the history of the town. Also, it will give us a space in which to permit members to complete research projects without having

(cont'd)

to leave town to do the work. Can you picture members pouring over an old ledger to lift from it all the information captured there so many years ago? I can.

As important as those reasons are there is yet another opportunity. Perhaps the building and the activities in it will reach out into this diverse community of ours to provide a sense of cohesiveness. Because Clinton has been segmented for so many years by its many school districts and the several post offices which deliver mail, a sense of community eludes us. It would be a special bonus if this building served as a glue to bring that sense of one community many of us have spoken of over the years.

And finally, the committee representing the Masonic Hall has been apprised of our plan. However, this did not mean that the Society had no interest in helping that group preserve its building. A plan has been presented which may at no cost to the Society help the Masons in their preservation efforts. Appropriately, they have deferred any decision on our proposal until the Society finalizes its agreement with Upton Lake Grange. We will keep you posted as things develop.

- Bill McD.



★ ★ A DOER: ★ ★
- DOROTHY BURKOWSKE -

* NEXT MEETING *
"DIARIES--WINDOWS
TO THE PAST"

Things don't get done without "doers." Dorothy has been a "doer" in this community for a great many years. She has been the spark behind the plan to transfer the Upton Lake Grange building to this Society. Ever cognizant of the future and concerned about the building which she, her parents, uncles and cousins have been associated with for many years, she initiated the conversations with the Society. Thanks, Dorothy. Boy, it sure helps to have a historical society member as Dorothy has been for a long time to be in the right place at the right time.

And such is the case with our former Town Historian and member of this Society, Bill Benson. Since his retirement from IBM, Bill has continued his activity in the New York State Grange. A member for too many years to count, Bill has risen through the ranks until he is now the "Chief." Recently elected to the office of Master of the New York State Grange, he has overall responsibility for all Grange activities in New York State. It was Bill who brought the Upton Lake Grange's proposal to the Executive Committee of the New York State Grange. With intimate knowledge of Clinton's historic buildings it was easy for him to explain to others in the State Grange the importance of the building and the appropriateness of the Society for its acquisition.

Finally, the current master of the Upton Lake Grange, Mark Tallarday helped pilot the discussions to a successful conclusion. Mark has been Master of the Upton Lake Grange for several years and he has focused attention on the need to preserve the building. Knowing that it was formerly a meeting house for the Creek Friends Meeting (Quakers) he has hoped the building would not be sold to an individual who would convert it into apartments. Perhaps sometime in the future the building will once again reflect the quiet respect given it by the Friends.



Characteristically, diaries reflect the interests of their writers. As you might suspect men's diaries often go into great detail about such items as the weather, farm activities, and trips to market. As documents of social history they have limited value in developing a picture of everyday life in a community.

But women's diaries reflect, often in great detail, activities between people. Who came to visit, whose baby was recently born, the nature of the pregnancy, relationships between people, and other matters related to the family are discussed. As records of social history they are recognized as significant sources of information and valuable research tools. With ever increasing recognition of their value to social historians they have in recent years been collected, transcribed and studied with increasing frequency.

Our speaker for the next meeting is Jane Begos, curator of the Dutchess County Historical Society. She has studied and compiled women's diaries for several years. She will discuss the special place women's diaries have in historical research.

* FOR SALE - 1 SLAVE *

Even as late as 1792 when slavery was about to be abolished in New York State, there was money to be made in that human commodity. Margaret Livingston, daughter of Henry Beekman, Clinton's Rhinebeck neighbor, sold an 8 year old "wench" for 28 pounds British money.

She justified the price as follows:
"Capable of performing all the Services of one of 12 or 14 years; Amongst the Rest of her Qualifications she is Said to be very quick of apprehension, a Quality not generally annexed to the Character of a Negro."

Of course, the buyer if not satisfied had the right to return her after a few months trial.

To put the value of this transaction in perspective, Margaret paid her miller 40 pounds that year plus his room and board. The sale of the slave almost covered the cost of her commercial milling operation!!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

*** REMINDER ***

NEXT MEETING:

FRIDAY MAR 6

7:30 PM

TOWN LIBRARY

SCHULTZVILLE

-FEATURING-

"DIARIES -
WINDOWS TO
THE PAST"

by

JANE BEGOS

I suppose our knowledge of Black history is limited at best. Most of us are familiar with the historical changes which have taken place in the past 30 years. And no doubt we are all familiar with the status of Blacks as slaves during the early period of our history. The period between has made only a dim impression in our minds and the history books.

Even more clear is that our notion of the slave issue seems to reside in our memories as primarily a southern issue. But this was not the case. In our own backyard during the period before the American Revolution and for the fifty year period which followed, slaves as a source of labor was a very important matter in the economics of Dutchess County. Before 1750 there were approximately 500 slaves in this county whose settlement was largely along the river communities.

For example, in 1755 our neighbor to the north, Rhinebeck, had 106 slaves in a population which had about 300 families. At that rate there was 1 slave for every 3 or 4 families. Of course, slaves were not owned by every family. Some of the wealthy had as many as eight while other families had only 1 or 2.

One might ask if Clinton had a slave population. The answer is a resounding, yes. But how large this group was before 1790, when the first census was taken, is not known. We do know that Clinton had 43 slaves in that year. While that is a small number for its roughly 200 families compared to the Dutchess County as a whole, it is still notable. This is especially true when we remember that the Quaker population in Clinton was higher than in most towns in Dutchess.

Who were the large slaveholders in Clinton? John De Witt had 10 slaves to help him run his mill at Pleasant Plains. Slavery was part of the fabric to the De Witt family. Peter De Witt, John's father, was one of those Rhinebeck families in 1755 who had slaves. He had 2 men and 2 women slaves. And John Teller of Bullshead was not far behind John De Witt. Teller had 7 slaves in that little hamlet of Bullshead. Of course, his neighbor Zopher Frost had none. Frost was a Quaker.

Boy, that's a hamlet worth studying. Whose going to sign up? We will give you some work you can do in your own home. And its the early history of the hamlet we can start with.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The new membership year for our Clinton Historical Society has begun, starting April 1. Dues for the new year should be mailed to treasurer Florence Smith now if you did not send payment with Annual Meeting/Dinner reservations. Please make your check payable to "Clinton Historical Society" and mail it to:

Florence Smith
RR2 Box 63
Clinton Corners, N.Y. 12514

Family \$8.00 Individual \$5.00