

THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

The Clinton Historical Society

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Craig Marshall, Editor 266-5494

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Everything's OK



Professor Allan Metcalf's favorite word of all time is simply this: OK. "It deserves a book by itself," he contends, calling it "the most famous expression ever invented in America or perhaps the whole world." Its origin dates back to 1839, when a craze for humorous abbreviations hit the newspapers of Boston (for instance, S.P. for "small potatoes"). Apparently, OK was a purposeful misspelling of the first letter of "all correct." The fad faded, but this one abbreviation thrived, in large part because of President Martin Van Buren, who was called "Old Kinderhook" (after his New York birthplace). Van Buren was up for re-election in 1840, and "O.K." became a campaign rallying cry. Eventually, it evolved in the mainstream lexicon.

OK is an expression that defies classification. Is it an abbreviation? A word? A noun? A verb? An adjective? An interjection? One thing is for certain: it is ubiquitous. Says Metcalf, "George Washington did not say, 'OK troops, time to attack the Hessians.' But nowadays, it's hard to imagine anyone who speaks any language getting by without saying it many times during the day."

From the Cornell Alumni Magazine, Jan/Feb 2004

CLINTON'S LANDMARK BUILDINGS



Former Clinton Corners Schoolhouse c.1848.

CLINTON CORNERS' ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE LIVES ON

By Craig Marshall

From 1922 to 1930, Maud Talleur Bartles attended grade school in a small wood frame school in Clinton Corners. Used as the hamlet's post office since 1963, the building looks much the same as it did when newly built as a schoolhouse in 1848 and as a result, it has Landmark status granted by the Clinton Historical Society. Its simple design echoes that of all eleven one-room schools that once flourished in Clinton. If you squint your eyes when driving by, you can imagine the single room inside where kids of all sizes, from first graders to eighth graders, were taught by one courageous teacher. Students came to this "District 8" school from Washington and Stanford as well as from Clinton, since districts did not follow town boundaries. Maud's first teacher in 1922 was a Miss Bennett, who boarded at a nearby farm. When Maud was in the 7th

grade, a new teacher, Ruth Woodin, took her place. Other teachers over the years included Julia Nucci and Evelyn Tompkins.

Maud remembers that she and the other students brought their own books, paper, crayons and other supplies. The gold stars pasted on the bulletin board to reward high grades were furnished by the teacher. A high point each year was the posting of school papers in the upstairs of the Grange Hall during Community Day, where ribbons were awarded to those judged "best." For many, the low point was studying for the New York Regents exams; it was as anxiety provoking then as it is today.

But student's duties included more than just studying: they were assigned to

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Preserving Clinton's Heritage

Schoolhouse (Continued from page 1)

bring wood in from the woodpile for the pot bellied stove and to haul pails of water from the neighbor's well next door. Winters were harsher then, but school was rarely cancelled and the wood stove kept everyone reasonably warm. Maud and the other girls wore dresses even in cold weather, but wore warm cotton stockings underneath. The boys wore galoshes with felt liners; they removed the galoshes at the door but wore the felt liners all day. In winter, jackets were needed for a bathroom break. There were two separate out-houses, one for boys and one for girls.

Students were expected to do their work, but there was plenty of time for fun too. Maud and other children hooked up their sleds to the wagons of farmers who brought milk to a creamery that stood across from what is Friends Park today. There were visits to the schools at Prospect Hill and Pleasant Plains by hay wagon, where games like baseball, "May I?", and "Prisoners Space" were played and races were held. Maud recalls one recess game in which boys lined up on one side of the schoolhouse, the girls on the other, and a ball was tossed over the roof. The catcher would run to the other side and tag someone. Every Christmas, the students made decorations for the school tree and parents came to admire the handi-work.

Maud's classmates included three Germond families (Helen & Emily, Homer and Beatrice, and John), Robert and James Hancock, Ford Harper, Emily Travis, the Fitzharris's, the Burdicks', and the two Barnhart sisters. Maud's father was a photography buff and came to the school every year to take a class picture. Today, they are among Maud's treasures.

Two decades later, in 1950, Mary Jo Nickerson had just moved to Clinton with her family from Staatsburg, where she attended first and second grades in a modern brick school building with multiple classrooms and indoor bathrooms. She recalls having "culture shock" when she started attending the Clinton Corners Schoolhouse, which at that time offered only grades one through six (grades seven and eight had been moved to Pine Plains). "It was like a major step back in time! One

room, six grades, and one teacher." Not to mention the bathrooms. There had been improvements since Maud attended the school. Now separate bathrooms were attached to the rear of the school. But there still was no plumbing. Mary Jo explained: "There were china bowls with seats with a hole in the bottom. They were mounted on a concrete cylindrical platform and tank. The tanks had to be pumped out from time to time. During hot days, few children chose to 'sit a spell'!"

When Mary Jo arrived, she found her teacher to be Ruth Woodin White! "She was the most wonderful woman," Mary Jo said. "She played the piano as the children sang after reciting the Pledge of Allegiance." Each fall and spring, she took the classes on outings, hiking along the railroad tracks and adjoining stream, pointing out crayfish under rocks, identifying all of the wildflowers by name, along with any and all wildlife that was encountered. "She was the writer, producer and director of the annual play that was conducted outside, with parents as the audience and with each child having a part. She also coordinated school lunches."

Mary Jo remembers that her teacher
(Continued on page 3)

Students at Clinton Corners School c. 1957

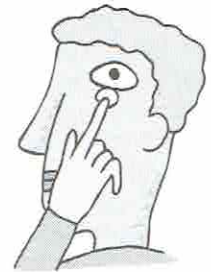


Back row - l-r; Perry Webster, Toby Riciardelli, Jane Schulhoff

Front row - l-r; Zip Guernsey, Bill Mc Morran, Patty Kenney

Did you know.....

Although he did not live in our town, we can credit Leonardo da Vinci with dreaming up contact lenses. In 1508, he placed his head in a bowl of water and said (or words to that effect) "My how this improves my vision". He then sat down and drew the designs for lens grinding machines. However, no one actually made any such lenses for another three and a half centuries.



CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL

The mailing label on this newsletter shows the year of dues last paid. Please check it and the address for accuracy. If changes are needed, call Louise at 266-3819.

DUES

We depend on dues to help defray our newsletter and other operational expenses. Dues run from January through December. If you have not yet paid for this year, please send \$10 for an individual membership or \$15 for the whole family to The Clinton Historical Society, P.O. Box 122, Clinton Corners, NY. 12514. Thanks for your support.

VINTAGE PHOTOS WANTED

This issue features photos taken in Clinton in the early 1900's from the Society's archives. Do you have an interesting vintage photo you'd like to share with the community? We can scan your original, return it with copies, and display your jewel in our newsletter. We'd like to make this a regular feature. Call Craig Marshall at 266-8261.

1777 Creek Meeting House



From the president. . .

We welcome H.W. Guernsey Realtors, Inc. as a corporate sponsor. Residents of Dutchess County for over two centuries, the Guernsey's have been actively interested in county history for the past century. Beginning with their own genealogy, the family broadened its interest through service on the boards of historical societies and other civic and cultural organizations. Living in Clinton for the past 52 years, the family's children attended the one room schoolhouse in Clinton Corners.

Homer W. Guernsey, "Zip", a graduate of that school and the present CEO of the company has generously offered to sponsor this summer's eleven week railroad exhibit honoring Austin McEntee, the donor of an extensive collection of Dutchess County railroad memorabilia.

This has been a challenging winter for our Society. The furnace at the Creek Meeting House shut down resulting in broken water

1865 Masonic Hall



Schoolhouse (Continued from page 2)

(Ruth) assigned all children to bring in a certain food on certain days, so a group lunch could be prepared. "Perhaps Wednesday was tomato soup day, Thursday was baked potato day, and we all contributed to the hot lunch cooked on the pot belly stove."

Local schools were consolidated in the 1940s and '50s and the last class to attend the Clinton Corners School graduated about 1960. First as a school and then as a post office, the landmark building has served the community for over 150 years. Current owner Don Bowman says "the existence of the building today is due to the thoughtful and considerate planning and operation of dedicated people in the

school district." They included District 8 trustees such as Anna Germond, Oscar Burkowske, Charles Talleur, Robert Chalker and Claude Burdick. With continued planning and preservation, the building will continue to serve many future generations in Clinton.

Editor's note: Maud Talleur Bartles is donating many vintage photos to the Society's archives. They include valued images from the 1920's on of Community Day floats and events, school buildings and classes, and local scenes and families. The Society is grateful to receive these in its newly upgraded repository, and encourages other residents to consider such donations or permission to copy. Call Bill McDermott at 266-3819.



Clinton Corners Post Office

pipes. We discovered the cause to be that our above-ground fuel tank, now 50 years old, had sludge and frozen water from condensation over the years. Many thanks to newly-retired Chick Wyant for repairing our water system. On the brighter side, we have divided the second floor at Creek into 2 rooms, one for the Society's archive and the other for a multipurpose space for exhibits, small meetings, etc. Thanks also go to George Kurten who taped the wallboard dividing the two spaces. George was one of the artists at our recent art show who created the computer-generated paintings that were on display. Finally, we anticipate completion of all phases of renovation and restoration in our two buildings to be complete by late spring. We thank our membership for their generous support during the past year. If you missed the delightful and well attended Cabin Fever music event at the Masonic hall, put it on your January 2005 calendar.



We wish the Kershaw's all the best in their new home in Rhinebeck. After 51 years in Clinton, 26 years of which as supporting members of the Society, Warren and Dacie are leaving their National Landmark farm for more easily manageable digs.

Letters from Readers:

We are always pleased to hear from our readers. This note is from Maud Bartles, whose husband Bill wrote articles for the local papers about life in years past, and which we have re-published in our Historian. Maud also contributed to the "Schoolhouse" article in this issue.

Maud writes:

"I'm glad that people enjoy Bill's articles. I find myself reading them, since I grew up in the hamlet of Clinton Corners, and I too experienced the same memories. There was a blacksmith shop two houses south of "Wings Dance Hall" (behind home of Lisa and John Lacey across from Creek Meeting House) in a long driveway. At age 10 and 11, we would stop on the way home and watch Mr. Schwab shoe a horse. He would make rings for us from the horseshoe nails."

Did you know.....

YELLOWSTONE PARK
Yellowstone Park is the oldest and largest of our National Parks. It was established by an act of Congress on March 1, 1872 and occupies an area of over two million acres.



SANDWICH

The Fourth Earl of Sandwich, John Montagu, born in 1718, was the originator of the name "sandwich." He loved to eat beef between slices of toast. When eating his sandwich, the Earl had one hand free for playing cards!



March Meeting
Friday, March 5, 7:30 pm,
Creek Meeting House,
Salt Point Turnpike

**"Scenes of Old Millbrook"
by John Kading**

John Kading owned the Corners News store in nearby Millbrook for 54 years, during which time he took many photos of the changes taking place in that historic village. He has organized his collection and developed a photo history presentation that is enhanced by his personal recollections and "all the stories" that were heard and discussed in his store. His images will include buildings that are now gone, fire apparatus, events like fires, and other scenes of high interest. This is a rare chance to hear from the photographer who was also observer and participant during the changes of the last half-century in Millbrook.

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March Program
Friday,
March 5th
7:30 PM
"Scenes of Old
"Millbrook"
by John Kading
Creek Meeting House
Salt Point Turnpike