

THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

The Clinton Historical Society Volume XX Number 2

Craig Marshall, Editor 266-8261

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Special Issue

This issue is being mailed to all Clinton residents in a collaborative effort by the Clinton Business Association, the Nine Partners Lions Club, and the Clinton Historical Society. It is our collective goal to inform you of our organizations' purpose and activities, and **invite you to join us**. Contact information for membership in each group is included in this newsletter and the enclosed brochures. Our volunteers provide services to make for a richer Clinton community experience. Please take a moment to peruse our publications. Thank you.

Snow Removal in Clinton

By Viola Schoch and Norene Collier



When it snows today, what happens? A town truck drives down the road pushing snow to the side with its plow, and then reverses direction and pushes snow to the other side of the road. We take this for granted, right?

Following is a photograph of the snow clearing team in the winter of 1936 and 1937 which cleared the road by hand from the Pleasant Plains Presbyterian Church along Fiddler's Bridge Road to the intersection of Deer Ridge Drive and Seelbach Lane. (A distance of 1.6 miles.) Each section of town road was cleared by an assigned team of town residents.

(Continued on page 2)



Clinton Schooling in the 1950's

by Jeff Burns



Clinton Corners one-room schoolhouse, ca. 1930, now the Clinton Corners Post Office

Fifty years ago, a dramatic change in the schooling of children occurred as consolidated central schools replaced the one-room multi-grade schoolhouses that were the model in rural areas like Clinton. Town resident Mary Jo (Schulhoff) Nickerson and I had similar and unique schooling here, and she has let me describe her experiences as well as mine for this article. What is unique about our experiences is that we both attended schools in three of the four districts that now serve the Town as well as attend the one room schoolhouse in Clinton Corners, and our families only moved once.

MaryJo attended first and second grade at the Staatsburgh school (she skipped kindergarten because she could count and knew her alphabet). Staatsburgh school was at that time or would soon become part of the Hyde Park School system.

My family lived on Meadowbrook Lane when I began school. The one room school in Clinton Hollow had closed a few years before I started school and the students from that area were attending

Hyde Park schools as they do today. When I began kindergarten, the schools were not large enough to accommodate the new influx of students resulting from the State's forced consolidation and therefore I attended kindergarten in St. James Chapel in Hyde Park. I would catch the bus in the morning at what we called the upper store in Clinton Hollow. Since kindergarten was only a half day and I was the only kindergarten student from the Clinton Hollow area, the District would not transport me to my home or to the store. I was dropped off at the corner of Hollow Road and Fiddlers bridge Road where my parents had to pick me up. My grandmother lived in what is now the small abandoned house just east of the Fiddlers bridge intersection on the north side of Hollow. I used to walk there and wait for my father. While I was waiting my grandmother introduced me to very strong Irish tea, which I still love today, and homemade peanut butter cookies that are still my favorite. When I started first grade I attended the large Violet Avenue School. At the end of the first grade my family moved to Clinton Corners.

(Continued on page 2)

Preserving Clinton's Heritage

Snow removal *(Continued from page 1)*

The men in the photograph are Jim and Pete Burns, Harmie Shook (Harlow's hired man), Roy Ellis, Albert Schoppe (friend of Harlow's) and Harlow Cookingham, foreman. Harlow Cookingham was Viola Cookingham Schoch's father who owned the farm known today as Primrose Hill Farm at the top of the hill on this stretch of Fiddler's Bridge Road. Note that the drifts were over Pete's head (Pete was the father of Jeff Burns, our Town Supervisor). This scene is between Primrose Hill Farm and the intersection to the north.

So, stop complaining about the snow! Seventy years ago you would have been on the road-clearing crew, or you would have been feeding and caring for the crew.



JOIN CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We welcome your membership and your support for our educational programs and social events that benefit our Town of Clinton and its neighbors with its mission "Preserving Clinton's Heritage." Our activities include historical exhibits, preservation of two landmark National Register buildings (1777 & 1865), repository of an extensive archive, music presentations, and our popular Progressive Dinner, Valentines Dinner, and covered dish annual events. Membership and donations (tax deductible) are a great way to support your Society, which receives no funding through taxes. Annual dues are \$15 Individual and \$25 Family. Please send your check payable to: Clinton Historical Society, Box 122, Clinton Corners, N.Y. 12514. For information, call President Jeff Burns at 266-8416. Thank you and **WELCOME!**

Clinton Schools *(Continued from page 1)*

MaryJo's family had moved from Staatsburg to Clinton Corners a few years earlier where she attended the one room schoolhouse. The Clinton Corners School had grades 1-4. MaryJo only attended for one year because she was the only student in her grade and her parents asked if she could go to Pine Plains in the fourth grade so she could be with children her own age. At that time once a student finished the fourth grade the local district paid tuition for students to attend Pine Plains. She attended Pine Plains until the end of the eighth grade.

I began the second grade in the Clinton Corners School. Having spent one year in Violet Avenue, adjusting to having four grades in one room was a little daunting. There was only one other student in my grade and therefore I was often placed in a grade that was above me for my work. This is what we in education today would call "looping" and placing students according to their ability level. The teachers that we had in the one room schoolhouse were extraordinary and were probably the reason that we both enjoyed going to school. Some of the activities they we were involved with other than the three "R's" were building a float for Community Day, planting flowers in the square abandoned water tub in the middle of the hamlet, and helping our senior citizens with their household chores. I spent three years at the one room schoolhouse then went to Pine Plains for the fifth grade where I had another wonderful teacher who encouraged my love of reading. I was looking forward to completing my school years at Pine Plains when the State with its great knowledge said we have to close these one room schools and combine all of the local districts so those rural students will get a better education. Instead of consolidating Clinton Corners with Pine Plains, where the students had been attending for years, it was decided that the students from the Clinton Corners area would attend Millbrook. It was closer!! Therefore at the end of fifth grade I was switched to Millbrook where I finished out my school career.

MaryJo tells me that she had an easy transition and quickly developed friends and was accepted. I must tell you that

that was not my experience. I was teased, first because I was further ahead academically than the other students and they thought I was, what today would be called, a geek. Secondly I was teased because I was a "farmer". Having been cursed with that dreaded Irish temper I spent most of the sixth and seventh grade fighting with anyone who dared to say anything about me or Clinton Corners. By the time I reached eighth grade I had silenced my critics and had developed into a decent athlete and was accepted (reluctantly by some) into the "Millbrook" fold.

As you can see, MaryJo and I attended schools in three of the four districts that now serve the Town. However we both believe that the experience we had at the one room school house was probably the highlight of our formal learning. The educational experience of one room school house is a concept that modern educators have been trying to replicate for years.

As an aside: when the State was closing the small community districts and the one and two room school houses, my father went to the Town Board and asked them to go to the State and ask if they would allow the Town to have one district in the Town for at least grades K-8. His belief was that one district in the Town would keep the Town together and four districts would divide the Town. He even had someone to give or sell property at a reduced price to the Town for this purpose. The property was located at the southeast corner of Centre Road and Maple Lane. Obviously the Town Board did not pursue this proposal and we do have four districts. As a mental exercise just think about how our town would be different if we had our own school district. I believe it would be a much different (for the better) place to live if we did.

My next article will deal with employment in the Town for a young person in the 1950's. Until that time I hope to see you down the road.

(Editors Note: This article is part of a continuing series by CHS President and Town Supervisor Jeff Burns on "growing up in Clinton in years past".)

Clinton in World War II

By Viola Schoch and Norene Collier

Clinton had an active role in defending the country during the conflict of World War II. First, the US Government located a beacon light on Cookingham Hill, now Primrose Hill Farm, on Fiddler's Bridge Road. The hill was chosen because it is one of the highest spots in Dutchess County. The beacon was used in pre-radar days to guide planes at night since it was on the direct route between Montreal and New York City. The government paid an annual rental fee of \$10 for the use of the land. The beacon was serviced at frequent intervals to replace the light bulbs. This beacon tower was erected about 1939 and was in place until it was blown over in a violent storm in 1954.

Clinton volunteers played an active role as US Army Air Force observers during the war. Both men and women served at the Clinton Hollow Observation Post from the Pearl Harbor attack until November, 1942. At that time they received their discharge and their work was taken over by a nearby Army observation post. Fifty-one ground observers manned the aircraft warning service post on the farm of Samuel Matthews in Clinton Hollow. At a meeting in Town Hall in Schultsville Captain Phillip Stevenson lauded the work of the observers. Homer Teal, director of the service, also praised the volunteers for their loyalty in keeping the post manned on a 24-hour basis since the Pearl Harbor attack. The men had watched from 7 PM to 6 AM one night a week or every other week. The women observed during daylight hours. Each volunteer observer received a letter of commendation from Major Charles A. Blackwell of the New York Air Defense Wing.

As part of the requirements of a course at Keuka College, Viola Cookingham Schoch interviewed observers about their reaction to their volunteer time. Comments reflected their pride in providing



Beacon Tower on Cookingham Hill which is now Primrose Hill Farm

an important and worthwhile service to the country. Some remarked that it was hard on the farmers having to stay up all night, but that it was worthwhile. Others noted that the volunteers could provide the service as well as the army and at less cost. One woman observed that in the year while civilians provided watch services, only three planes were missed. Most stated that they would be willing to repeat the volunteer service to defend the country.

Viola also notes in her paper that the war affected the community in many other ways since all driving for pleasure was suddenly curtailed because of gasoline rationing. Many families were turning to their neighbors for "friendly chats, playing cards" or sharing rides to town for supplies. In many ways the war affected the community as all were asked to do their bit for Victory.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Spring Yard Sale: Sat. May 31 10-4 p.m. Creek Meeting House, Clinton Corners. Still seeking saleable items, pickup service available. Call Mary Jo at 266-3066.

Heritage Day: Saturday, August 30 at 1777 Creek Meeting House. Old tyme craft demos, contests, pony & hay wagon rides, music & more. Family event—**free**. Mark your calendar!

Progressive Dinner: Saturday, October 18. Great event with gracious hosts. To be a host, call Norene Collier at 889-4016 for more info.

Dues are due: This is a reminder to our members that dues are due for 2008 if you have not already paid.

Secretary wanted: We are seeking a volunteer Secretary to attend 8 Board meetings a year to record meeting minutes, send out notices and letters. Please call Jeff Burns at 266-8416 for more info. We've got a great team...join us!

Benefit Concert: The bluegrass benefit concert April 26 was sold out! Our thanks to the "Uncommon Ground" band for a great performance and their support to our preservation programs!

Annual Summer Exhibit Early Dutchess County Railroads

Sat/Sun July 5 – Aug 31
Noon – 4 p.m.

Free
1777 Creek Meeting House,
Clinton Corners





June Program Meeting

Mt. Beacon Incline Railway
 Friday, June 6 at 7:30 p.m.
 Creek Meeting House

The Mt. Beacon Incline Railway once climbed 1,500 feet sharply up historic Mt. Beacon, and thrilled its passengers to spectacular views for over 75 years until it was tragically destroyed by fire in 1983. In 1922, over 110,000 fares were sold to those who ventured up the 65% incline, the steepest for a trolley railway. Now, with the acquisition of the mountain by Scenic Hudson Land Trust and the formation of the Incline Society, there is renewed excitement to restore this once great landmark for public use.

The Incline Society, now in its fifth year of operation, is comprised of volunteers working to restore the railway. Property Manager Jim Bopp will give us the history of this landmark and will speak to the future plans of the Society (see www.inclinerailway.org).

Open to members and non-members. Bring a friend...refreshments served.

TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS

In East Dalhousie, Nova Scotia
Here lies
Ezekial Aikle
Age 102
The Good Die Young

In a Ribbesford, England cemetery
Anna Wallace
The children of Israel wanted bread
And the Lord sent them manna,
Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife,
And the Devil sent him Anna.

In Albany, New York
Harry Edsel Smith
Born 1903 - - Died 1942
Looked up the elevator shaft to see if
the car was on the way down.
It was.

In a Vermont cemetery
Sacred to the memory of my husband
John Barnes who died January 3, 1803.
His comely young widow, aged 23, has
many qualifications of a good wife, and
years to be
comforted.



- President Jeff Burns
- V. Pres. Craig Marshall
- Secretary open
- Treasurer Eliot Werner
- Past Pres. Clint Kershaw
- Trustees Dick Collier
- Judy Grabowski
- John Lacey
- MaryJo Nickerson
- Jim Pelligrino
- Lisa Thomas
- Advisors Barbara Cleary
- Jack Cleary
- Norene Collier
- Glenda Schwarze
- Newsletter Charlotte Apuzzo

Clinton Historical Society

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The Town of Clinton Historical Society
 PO Box 122
 Clinton Corners, NY 12514
 (845) 266-5494

NEXT MEETING
Friday June 6, 7:30 p.m.
Beacon Incline Railway