

# *Fly Creeker*

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)  
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## NEWS BRIEFS

- The July 26 meeting of the FCAHS will feature a "box social." Each attendee is asked to bring a dessert or refreshment (enough to serve one person), and the resultant collection of goodies will be auctioned off by Rev. Horace King. Proceeds will benefit the FCAHS.
- Time to renew your membership! 1995-96 dues are payable by August 1, 1995, and a membership application appears on page 3 of this newsletter. While everything else goes up, our dues are still a modest \$5 per year for individuals, or \$8 for family memberships. Special thanks to those who have already paid their dues.
- The annual Community Sing will be held Sunday, August 20, beginning at 1 P.M., at the Fly Creek Fire House. Concessions proceeds benefit the FCAHS.
- Carolyn McLean submits the following summer weather item, from the July 22, 1926 entry of Elvira Bourne's diary: "At ½ past 2 o'clock the worst storm ... the vicinity ever knew. The strong west wind blew a hurricane and the dust rose so dense we could not see across the street, and fruit trees fell right and left. Loads of hay were turned bottom side up, and the hay blew so far away that it was never heard from since."
- Another summer item was found by Elaine Harvey in Samuel Shaw's *History of Cooperstown, 1839-1885*: "The Fly Creek 'Fantasticals' made a sudden descent upon Cooperstown on the 14th of August (1879) and caused much amusement by their ludicrous appearance and deportment while parading the streets."
- We have two additions to the Town of Otsego cemeteries listed in the Spring 1995 *Fly Creeker*. One stands among a group of lilac trees on the Ed Timm property on Bissell Road. The other is on the former Bob Jones property on the west side of Jones Road. The latter consists of just two stones leaning against a tree, marking the resting places of two young men who died in 1913. Pat Yourho recalls that there once were at least 25 gravestones at this location.
- This year's Nominating Committee consists of Jim Fish, Margaret Jensen, and Judy Thorne.
- This is a milestone edition of the *Fly Creeker*. There have now been 25 issues of the newsletter, totaling 100 pages.

Bernice B. Campbell died at her Cooperstown home on May 1, 1995. She was 87.

Mrs. Campbell was born on May 29, 1907 in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. She married Edward J. Campbell in 1933, and worked with Canadian Prime Ministers Bennett and King for eight years before moving to the U.S. Mrs. Campbell owned a farmhouse in Oaksville for more than 40 years, and worked with Richard Carr at Augur's Corner Book Store in Cooperstown during most of that time. Her husband died in 1954, but Mrs. Campbell is survived by two daughters, two grandsons, and a great-grandson.

## FLY CREEKERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

The following is from a handwritten essay, apparently the work of Emma McRorie (1849-1935), mother of Edna Ainslie and grandmother of James Ainslie, Harold Ainslie, and the late Leo McLean:

"Among those who, in response to our country's call for help, marched away from their native land with the stars and stripes waving over them and whose bodies are now resting in our little burial yard (the 12,000 Cemetery in upper Fly Creek Valley) was Elias Geer, a soldier of the Revolutionary War and, for many years after, a native of these hills; Alexander McDonald, Josiah Hinds and Parker Coats, soldiers of the Civil War.

"Soon after the Civil War started J. Hinds enlisted under Col. Ellsworth and served with the Fire Zouaves; after a time he came back to Otsego and helped to raise and organize the 152 Regiment of New York state volunteers and was appointed 1st Lieutenant of Company A. He served faithfully until the year 1864 when sickness came upon him and he was compelled to leave the service. Then the desire to be again at his boyhood home, and with his father and mother who would care for him, caused him to start for home.

"There being no railroad to Richfield Springs at this time, and being too sick to sit up, he was obliged to make the last of the journey on a cot in a covered wagon-- so anxious to get home to that haven of rest, but which he was not able to reach.

"His sickness and the journey so exhausted him that he was compelled to stop at a brother's, who lived between Richfield Springs and his father's. Here he was tenderly cared for until death claimed him only a few days after. (Note: Hinds died August 7, 1864, aged 30 years, 10 months, according to his tombstone.)

"Parker Coats, a worthy and respected young man, enlisted as a private in the same regiment, was taken sick about the same time, and was brought home to die, only a few days after." (Note: Coats, the son of Almira and Martin Coats, lived from 1840-64.)

Incidentally, a local legend tells of a Pickens (presumably Emma McRorie's brother, Washington Irving Pickens) who was shot in his butt during a Civil War battle. He decided that was no place for him to be, and headed north as rapidly as he could. This worked out just fine until years later, when he attempted to get a Veteran's pension. (Submitted by Carolyn McLean)

### A LEGACY OF PREJUDICE

Are area people prejudiced? Are you?

Prejudice is part of our history, whether we admit it or not. It dates back to the area's earliest days of settlement, when Native Americans and white immigrants lived in fear and prejudgment of each other.

I remember when there were three different Protestant churches in Fly Creek, and other Protestant churches and societies in the Town of Otsego. The few Catholics in the area had to go to Cooperstown, many walking there each Sunday, a few others walking to mass there every day. Many Protestants were prejudiced, warning their children to stay away from the Catholics. After World War I, children of both faiths (myself included) were brought together in the Fly Creek School. We got to know each other gradually, through study, work, play, and social situations such as birthday parties. Little by little, prejudice eroded away.

(Continued on Page 4)

## MEETINGS

The next three meetings of the FCAHS will be held on July 26, August 23, and September 27, 1995. The July gathering will feature a "box social" (see the first "news brief" on page 1), and Charlie Michaels will give a talk and video presentation entitled "Down by the Old Mill Stream." The Annual Meeting, with society elections and annual reports, will be held in August, and preceded by a covered-dish dinner at 6 PM. Philip Bresee's 1990 videotape, covering the Fly Creek Area Bicentennial celebration, will also be shown on this date. In September, Rev. Doug Smith of the Christ Episcopal Church of Cooperstown will speak about the American Civil War. Meetings begin at 7 PM in the basement of the Fly Creek Church.

The most recent meetings were held on April 26, May 24, and June 28, 1995. Florence Michaels spoke at the April gathering with history and happenings of School District #16, known as the Potts District. Her informative talk, researched from an 1887-1915 minutes book of the district, listed the school's personnel and expenses (e.g., teachers' salaries, building costs). Some attendees personally remembered people involved with the Potts District (which eventually consolidated with the Fly Creek School), serving to connect present Fly Creek knowledge with that of the past.

Pat Donnelly, Administrator of the Clara Welch Thanksgiving Home, spoke about her place of employment during the May meeting. The institution was opened as a hospital on Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1867, thus was named the Thanksgiving Hospital. The cornerstone for the current building was laid on May 16, 1894, with much of the \$26,000 cost donated by Alfred C. Clark. The hospital operated on and off for six decades, before reopening as the Walling Home for the Aged. The name was changed in 1928, honoring Clara Welch, whose husband had willed a considerable sum of money toward the institution. Several members said that they or their parents had been born at the old Thanksgiving Hospital.

In June, Doris Huxtable gave an interesting talk on ice harvesting at Millers Mills. In earlier times every area farm had an ice house, many filled with ice cut at the Millers Mills pond. Farmers would load their sleighs with the ice, priced at 2¢ a cake, and the ice was also used for the annual summer ice cream social. Although the introduction of electric refrigerators and freezers rendered ice harvesting obsolete, the community constructed a central ice house using part of an old church horse-shed, and continued harvesting ice each winter for their ice cream social. The harvest and the social were filmed by CBS at various times, and shown on Charles Kuralt's "On the Road" television program. Mrs. Huxtable showed videotapes of the ice harvest and the ice cream social. (Submitted by George Badgley)

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**1995-96 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**  
**FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
P.O. Box 87, Fly Creek, NY 13337

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_ New Membership \_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Check applicable box(es):

- Please register me as a member of the FCAHS. Enclosed is a check for \$5.
- Please register us to a family FCAHS membership. Enclosed is a check for \$8.
- Please accept the enclosed donation, in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum \$10), and enroll me/us as a contributing/sustaining member(s).

In Cooperstown, Italians and Irishmen came to work on the railroad. They were looked down upon because of their language and social differences, and lived on "the other side of the tracks" at Irish Hill (Hannah's Hill). There, the first area Catholic cemetery was established.

The Slovenes arrived during the Depression, buying farms from owners who did not or could not succeed in farming. They, too, were Catholic, and were happy in their own tightly-knit group, speaking the language and keeping the culture brought from their "Old Country" in Europe. They had a Benevolent Society with a constitution and by-laws, rallying to help one another with economic and personal problems. On the other hand, Slovenes like "Honey Joe" (a notorious bootlegger) gave the group a reputation for drinking and carousing, which did not set well with area Methodists and Baptists.

Over the years, offspring of different cultural groups began inter-marrying. Protestants, Catholics, Italians, Irishmen, and Slovenes all mixed into something of a local melting pot, and prejudice was no longer an accepted way of life.

Are you prejudiced? If you think not, look up the definition of the word, then think about the problems of the gay community and other minority groups.  
(Submitted by Florence Michaels)

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