

# Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

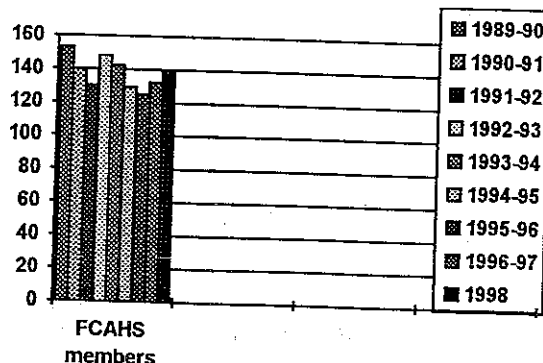
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## NEWS BRIEFS

- **July 12 is Community Music Day...** The Fly Creek Area Community Music Day -- our Society's chief annual fund-raiser -- will be held Sunday, July 12, beginning at 1:00 PM at the Fly Creek United Methodist Church. The event will feature a bake sale, door prizes, refreshments, and the music of The Weir Family, the Pathfinder Village Bell Ringers, Dana "Short Order" Cooke, Senior Renditions, Leatherstocking Bluegrass, and Butch Welsh, Jeff Phillips & Brian Hall. Admission is free, and attendees are urged to bring lawn chairs.
- **Centennial ...** This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Fly Creek Grange, No. 844. Organized with 18 members in February 1898, its first Master and Secretary were J. B. McManus and Peter McDonough, respectively. The Grangers first met at what is now known as the Fly Creek Hotel at the corner of Route 28 and Schoolhouse Road. The Cemetery Road building was constructed in 1924. The Fly Creek Grange's 50th anniversary celebration was held there on July 31, 1948, and the Otsego County Pomona Grange's centennial was marked there on October 10-11, 1992. The Fly Creek Grange eventually surrendered its charter, with the Otsego County Pomona Grange taking over the building. Thanks to Ruth All and George Badgley for providing these details.
- **Fly Creeker index ...** The editor has updated the index to the *Fly Creeker*. It now runs six pages and is complete through 1997, covering our first 34 issues. Anyone interested in receiving a copy may do so by sending a long self-addressed, stamped envelope to the editor.
- **An event near and Deere to us ...** On September 12-13, Fly Creek will host its first annual Antique Tractor Festival. A pancake breakfast, benefiting the Society, will be held at the church that Saturday. Keep your eye on area newspapers for further details on this FCAHS fund-raiser.
- **Charting our growth ...** Welcome to new members Art & Marge Andrews, and Robert Mulligan, Helen Winne's groom. Those, along with renewals from charter member Rev. Kenneth Baldwin and Janice Pope, bring our 1998 membership total to 138. See the chart below to compare with previous years' membership totals:



## FLY CREEK'S TIN-MAN

Fly Creek was the site of some of New York state's earliest tinware. Stephen North was a pioneer in this field, operating a shop in Fly Creek for many years.

As reported in the Autumn, 1997 *Fly Creeker*, North -- who came from a family of metal workers -- moved from Connecticut to Fly Creek in 1788. He was a merchant, tinsmith, farmer, and father of nine children (not necessarily in that order). His store building still stands behind the house most recently occupied by Bill and Margaret Eldridge on Route 28, just east of the four-corners. It was painted white, with red trim, and served as the site of Fly Creek's first post office in 1822. Above the front entrance was a small door through which grain was raised and lowered. A small loft held rags, sheepskins, etc., which were taken in trade for tinware. The building's beams are still lined with nails and pegs which held merchandise.

While Stephen produced the tinware, female members of his family (including Mercy and Lucy North) painted the products -- either stenciling them with brown powders, or painting them freehand in oils. One of the shop's specialties was "japanned" tinware, a style using an Oriental-style lacquer to add beauty and prevent rust to the products.

An article by Margaret Coffin, "Tinmen & Tinware in New York State," appeared in the April 1979 issue of *Early American Life*. Stephen North and Fly Creek are prominently mentioned, and the article is accompanied by three different photos of trunks attributed to North's shop. The book, *The Art of the Tinsmith* by Shirley Spaulding DeVoe, also mentions North's family, and includes a photo of another of their trunks.

As a footnote, according to Gloversville lore, the tin industry was responsible for the emergence of the glove business. Tinware traders often received deer skins in exchange for their wares, and saw the need for hand protection in the rough work done by them and other settlers. Buck-skin mittens soon became an item manufactured for trade. [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

## PAUL ALLEN

Paul R. Allen and his wife, Ann Derrickson Allen, came to the Fly Creek area in 1939. The two had lived for nearly 40 years in New York City, where he was a successful architect and she a well-known decorator.

Paul was born to "an old New England family" in Boston in December, 1874, the son of Charles and Sarah (Lyon) Allen. Another Allen child, Viola, became a "much beloved Shakespearean actress (who played opposite John Barrymore) early in this century." Paul was educated at Atelier, Nasquaray, Columbia and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He became a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and of the Architectural Leagas, and an early member of the Beaux Arts Society.

The Allens bought the property now owned by Clyde Yakas at the foot of Tanner Hill Road in Fly Creek Valley. They did much to beautify the property. Paul studied mink farming (at the time still "politically correct") and established a farm behind his house, along the valley road. He set up a gravity-fed water system for the mink, which were kept in large cages, and fed special food obtained from Cherry Valley. Paul gave a talk on mink farming to the Cooperstown Rotary in 1942, impressing the audience with his extensive knowledge of the subject.

Paul remained active throughout his life. When Ann died at age 70 in 1967, Paul donated their library to NYSHA in her memory. Paul died two years later at age 94, survived by a son, Paul Leslie Allen. [Submitted by Carolyn McLean, with details gleaned from scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, personal observations, and conversations with friends]

## MEETINGS

The most recent FCAHS meetings were held on April 22, May 27, and June 24, 1998. In April, attendees provided their own program with the fourth annual "Remembrances of Times Past. Arrie Hecox told of childhood visits to Badger's Seed Store (on the "Y" in Fly Creek), while Pat Yourno recalled Pop Weir's Store (at the site of Ray Bennett's business in Oakville). Humorous stories about some of Fly Creek's colorful characters were also shared.

In May, attendees met at Cooperstown Bat Company's Fly Creek factory/store. Don and Sharon Oberriter gave a delightful and detailed description of the various procedures involved in creating their company's bats, from acquiring the wood (mostly ash from Pennsylvania), to obtaining permission from baseball players and leagues for the use of their images or logos. Computers assist in record-keeping and in reproducing designs. Many of these designs are then "carved" into the bats using a laser, a process demonstrated during our tour. Cooperstown Bat Company also works with the New York State Historical Association to provide historically-accurate bats and balls for the "town ball" games played at the Farmer's Museum.

And, in June, Fly Creek craftsman Vic Sinnott fascinated us with the creation of his "Mini Men." He demonstrated the process, which includes melting a tin and lead mixture at temperatures over 600° F., and pouring the mixture into silicon rubber molds. After the figurines set, Mr. Sinnott begins the painstaking, intricate process of painting them with an extremely tiny brush, with details as minute as plaids on the Scottish highlander's kilts! Other figures he creates include Civil War soldiers and cowboys, sometimes on horseback.

The next three meetings of the FCAHS are slated for July 22, August 26, and September 23, 1998. Meetings are held in the Fellowship Hall (basement) of the Fly Creek United Methodist Church beginning at 7 P.M., and are open to the public. The July gathering will feature Wolfgang Merk and Jim Atwell, discussing "The Old Stone Mill." The Society's Annual Meeting, preceded by a covered-dish supper at 6:00, and including annual elections and committee reports, will be held in August. In September, Edythe Ann Quinn, an assistant professor at Hartwick College, will present "From Coal Fields to Dairy Land: The Influence of Eastern European Immigrants on the 1930s Milk Strike." [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

## PASTORAL VISITOR REVISITED

The Fly Creek *Pastoral Visitor* was published monthly by Rev. Benjamin P. Ripley from April 1882 to April 1884 (see the Summer, 1997 *Fly Creeker*). It mostly covered the activities of members of the Fly Creek charge churches. Following, submitted by Carolyn McLean, are random excerpts from this newspaper:

**April 1882** -- Miss Addie L. Taylor, one of Fly Creek's brightest young ladies is paying a relative in Little Falls a visit.

What would our ladies do without Mrs. Coats? She is a first class dressmaker, so the ladies say.

**July 1882** -- Mrs. Emma Banker, and her daughter Libbie, are prolonging their visit to Herkimer County. The 'corners' are wanting the usual music and good cheer which proceed from Mrs. B.'s rooms. Miss Minnie Taylor, one of the first young ladies of Fly Creek, has been spending a month at Westford.

Mrs. Jas. Shepherd, and her daughter Addie, have returned from their visit to Newport, R.I. We assure them that they have been very much missed. [Continued on back page]

**PASTORAL VISITOR REVISITED (Continued from Previous Page)**

**July 1882, cont.** -- The jolliest 'rusticators' of the area are Misses Carrie Pickens, Nina Bailey and Eva Preston. The first two young ladies have recently returned from a week's visit to Cooperstown, and the latter one, through rain and mud, from a trip to Richfield Springs.

Our friend (Howard E.) Jones is just as genial as ever in his new quarters. No better hardware can be found than that which he keeps in his store.

Mr. E. M. Burpee is in his new store (a dry goods and grocery store in Fly Creek). His goods are arranged tastefully, and all his appointments and prices are attractive. Such well-kept stores as those of which we can boast, can seldom be found in villages the size of this.

**December 1882** -- Fly Creek is certainly a fortunate place for a minister... One day, without giving us the slightest intimation, (Charles Babbitt) stopped before the gate of the Parsonage, and drew from his sleigh a splendid, dressed turkey. When the parson's "better half" made ready the fowl for the frying pan, she found in the gizzard three bright silver dollars. Mr. Babbitt cautioned us not to say anything about it.

Sometime we intend to let our readers know where Fly Creek is, and all about it. We wish now that our village had a better name, and we propose also a future agitation of that matter. But for this time let us say that we are in communication with the world. The Mohawk Valley Telephone Line passes through our place, and is more than a convenience to our citizens.



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**FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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