

# *Fly Creeker*

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

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## **FLORENCE MICHAELS, 1911-1998**

The Fly Creek Area Historical Society lost its founder and its guiding light when Florence W. Michaels died at her Fly Creek home on December 9, 1998.

Florence Wilson was born April 2, 1911, at the Thanksgiving Hospital in Cooperstown, one of three children of Benjamin Franklin and Belle Ferris Wilson. She graduated from Cooperstown High School at age 16, and from State Normal School in Oneonta three years later. She then began a 30-year teaching career in area one-room schools.

Florence married Paul Michaels on June 22, 1933. The two of them established the Mohican Craftsmen Shop in their Fly Creek home in November, 1951. There, they repaired, upholstered, restored, and refinished furniture, and bought and sold antiques. Their two children, Wilson "Mac" Michaels and Paula Schaeffer, later joined them in the business. Following Paul's death in 1977, Paula and her husband, Bill, carried on the upholstering and refinishing business for a few years, while Florence dealt antiques until 1982, when she decided it was time to retire.

Florence was an active member of the Fly Creek Methodist Church for more than 80 years. She was also a member of Chapter 201 Order of the Eastern Star, and of the Otsego Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She volunteered for Meals on Wheels and, until a few months before her death, served as Historian for the Town of Otsego.

Florence long thought about establishing a historical association for the Fly Creek area. She and George Tillapaugh -- another wealth of knowledge about the area -- had many long discussions about this. After Mr. Tillapaugh's unexpected death in October, 1988, Florence resolved to wait no longer in realizing this idea. Following her annual winter trip to Texas, Florence moved swiftly to get the ball rolling. On May 2, 1989, she hosted an organizational meeting at her home. The first public meeting was held later that month. The group was named the Fly Creek Area Historical Society, with carefully-crafted Constitution and By-Laws written by Florence. On July 26, the Society was formally chartered, and Florence was elected its first President.

After serving two one-year terms (1989-91) as President, Florence asked to be relieved of that title. She felt that the President should be someone who lived in the area year-round. The Nominating Committee reluctantly granted her wish, but left her aboard as Vice-President, a title she also held for two terms (1991-93). In 1994, she volunteered for and was appointed to the vacant Secretary position, which she held for three years until resigning in 1997.

Florence was instrumental in our Society's only publication to date, *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear* (1990). She contributed many articles to this newsletter and supplied several programs to our monthly meetings; these contributions are summarized elsewhere in this issue. Many people have contributed to the organization and growth of this group, but it is no overstatement to say that, without Florence Michaels, there would be no Fly Creek Area Historical Society. We will miss her dearly.

## NEWS BRIEFS

- **1999 special ...** This is the last issue of the *Fly Creeker* being sent to those whose dues are not paid up (they were due January 1). On the top of page 5 are listed the 101 paid-up FCAHS members for 1999, including newcomers Wesley & Evette Ciampo, Virginia Myers, Mr. & Mrs. Carl Roemer, Barbara Smith, and Russ Smith. If you are not listed, please use the form on the bottom of page 5 to renew your membership. Incidentally, apologies to Paul Poulos and Rochelle Semel, FCAHS members whose names were garbled (creating a phantom member) in the last issue. Due to this correction, the actual membership total for 1998 was 148.
- **Tax-free ...** The FCAHS was recently approved for federal tax-exemption status, to go along with its earlier acceptance for state tax-exemption. President Jim Atwell and Treasurer Alice Lavrinovs worked hard to bring these things to fruition. Jim also credits Florence Michaels, whose carefully-written FCAHS Constitution and By-Laws facilitated the Feds' approval. Jim shared this news with Florence in a visit with her a few weeks before her death, and reports that she was very pleased.

## THE LEGACY OF FLORENCE MICHAELS

It would not be possible, in a couple of pages, to adequately describe all that Florence Michaels did for and meant to our community and our Historical Society. Nevertheless, here we will list some of her tangible contributions to the FCAHS.

Florence was a frequent contributor to *The Fly Creeker*. Feature articles she submitted, and the issues in which they appear, follow:

- "Origins of 'Fly Creek,' 'Cat Town,' and 'Bedbug Hill'" (Autumn 1989)
- "The Mohican Craftsmen Shop" (Spring 1992)
- "Nineteenth Century Orators" (Autumn 1992)
- "Otsego's Final Resting Places" (Spring 1995)
- "A Legacy of Prejudice" (Summer 1995)
- "Fly Creek's Winter Chautauqua" (Winter 1996)
- "Republicans of Fly Creek Enthusiastic" (Autumn 1996)
- "Memoirs of a Former Fly Creeker" (Winter 1997)
- "Century-Old Cider" (Autumn 1997)
- "Mills of Fly Creek" (Spring 1998)

Florence also supplied the programs for five of our monthly meetings, as follow:

- History of Area Churches (July 25, 1990)
- Fly Creek Teaching Memories (with Frances Butler, September 26, 1990)
- Fork Shops of Fly Creek (October 23, 1991)
- Gleanings from Clippings (September 23, 1992)
- Potts School District #16 (April 26, 1995)

Finally, please indulge the editor for a personal reminiscence which he was "too chicken" to volunteer at Florence's memorial service. In 1995 Florence phoned, asking me to accompany her to visit some of the Town of Otsego's obscure cemeteries. It wasn't spoken, but I understood that Florence was "passing the torch" -- making sure that the location of these hidden graveyards wasn't lost to history, by sharing them with one of the Society's youngest active members. Thinking along with Florence, I brought along my young daughter, Sarah. Over a couple of different days, this 84-year-old woman, 38-year-old man, and 11-year-old girl traipsed through fields and woods and backyards, documenting these burial grounds. That is my special memory of Florence Michaels, and I think it captures her essence.

### FCAHS MEETING PROGRAMS, 1989-98

Following is a list of programs presented at FCAHS meetings since the Society's inception. Elaine Harvey and Freida Snyder have comprised the FCAHS Programs Committee for this entire period, and are to be commended for their fine and tireless efforts in providing us with diverse and entertaining programs over the past decade. They remain open to suggestions for future programs.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker/Presenter</u>	<u>Topic</u>
5/31/1989	Harriet Rogers (Middlefield Hist. Soc.)	Formation & Growth of a Historical Society
8/23/1989	Irene Dusenbery	Life in Fly Creek During the 19th Century
9/27/1989	Wendell Tripp (NYSHA)	Research Techniques & Experiences
10/25/1989	Anita Harrison (Hartwick Hist. Soc.)	Fundraising Ideas & Insights
11/29/1989	Carl Strauss (NYSEG)	Oneonta & Herkimer Trolley System
1/24/1990	Elaine Harvey & Ron Bouton	History of Fly Creek Area Postal System
2/28/1990	"Schoolhouse John" Hall	One-Room Schools in Otsego County
3/28/1990	Tom Heitz (National Baseball Library)	Accessioning & Preservation of Documents
4/25/1990	Weir, Talbot & Schallert Families	Old-Time Country Music
5/23/1990	Ruth Yule (Erastus Bouton interview)	Life in Oaksville at the Turn-of-the-Century
6/27/1990	George Badgley	Genealogical Research
7/25/1990	Florence Michaels	History of Area Churches
9/26/1990	Frances Butler & Florence Michaels	Fly Creek Teaching Memories
10/24/1990	Philip W. Bresee (videotape)	Fly Creek Bicentennial Activities
11/28/1990	Sally Rezen, Pete & Dot Martin	Taped Interviews
1/23/1991	Willis Monie	Collecting & Evaluating Old Books
2/27/1991	Robert Banta	A Hop Crop
3/27/1991	Marjory Estigo	Preservation of Old Area Buildings
4/24/1991	Russell Oechsle	Area Clocks & Clockmakers of the 1800s
5/22/1991	Katherine Hanor & Edward Reilly	Southern New York Railway
6/26/1991	John Trinkaus & Joe Zigon	Slovene History & Music
7/24/1991	James Durkee	Buck Road Firehouse & Museum
9/25/1991	Dr. Edward Farmer	Early Aviation in the Fly Creek Area
10/23/1991	Florence Michaels	Fork Shops of Fly Creek
11/20/1991	Lady Ostapeck	Dating Old Photographs
1/22/1992	Neal McManus (Town of Otsego)	Historic Preservation & Codes Enforcement
2/26/1992	Sally Rezen	History of Fly Creek Valley Region
3/25/1992	Dave Baker	Early Wooden Canoes
4/22/1992	Nellie Balcom, Bill Powers & D. Weir	Fiddle Music & Anecdotes
5/27/1992	Betty Russ	Life in Colonial America
6/24/1992	Harriet Rogers/Marge Tillapaugh	Childs Homestead/Early Area Medicine
7/22/1992	George Badgley	Old Country Poetry
9/23/1992	Florence Michaels	Gleanings from Clippings
10/28/1992	Ruth All (Pomona Grange)	Pomona Grange Centennial
11/18/1992	Bruce & Sue Andrews	Cemetery Epitaphs
1/27/1993	James Cross (NYSEG)	Barns: A Vanishing Art Style
2/24/1993	George Badgley	The Blizzard of 1888
3/24/1993	Larry Gardner	History of Toddsville
5/26/1993	Nadine Phillips	Old Post Cards
6/23/1993	Gilbert Vincent	Farm Outbuildings & Agricultural Legacy
7/28/1993	Dolly Fikes	Hand-Painted Roofing Slates
8/25/1993	Craig Haney	Biking Across America
9/22/1993	Wayne Wright	NYSHA Library
10/27/1993	Joyce Mallery et al	Historical Tales of Otsego County
11/17/1993	Ann Vickary (Farmer's Museum)	Homespun: Then and Now

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker/Presenter</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1/26/1994	Pat Yourno	78 Years in the Fly Creek Area
2/23/1994	Dr. Robert Mackie	Medicine in the Late Nineteenth Century
3/23/1994	Craig Haney	History of Maple Sugaring in America
4/27/1994	Robert Murdock (REA)	Rural Electrification
5/25/1994	Ed & Inabelle Selan	Antique Toys & Collectibles
6/22/1994	Louis Grippe	Restoration of Fly Creek Village Cemetery
7/27/1994	Richard Ranieri (Gilbert Lake State Park)	CCC Camps in Otsego County
9/28/1994	Al Bullard	Hops Growing in Otsego
10/26/1994	Rev. Joseph Timlin	Archaeology of Native American Indians
11/16/1994	Pat Yourno	More Memories of Yesteryear
1/25/1995	FCAHS Members	Reminiscences of Times Past
2/22/1995	Peter Martin	Old Chapel Burying Ground
3/22/1995	MerriLynn Fish	History of Fly Creek Fire Department
4/26/1995	Florence Michaels	Potts School District #16
5/24/1995	Pat Donnelly	The Clara Welch Thanksgiving Home
6/28/1995	Doris Huxtable	Ice Harvesting at Millers Mills
7/26/1995	Charlie Michaels (Fly Creek Cider Mill)	Down by the Old Mill Stream
8/23/1995	Philip W. Bresee (videotape)	Fly Creek Bicentennial Activities
9/27/1995	Rev. Douglas Smith	Fly Creek and the U.S. Civil War
10/25/1995	Dr. Jim Atwell	Writing In & About Fly Creek
1/24/1996	Rod Johnson	Restoring Old Homes
2/28/1996	FCAHS Members	Reminiscences of Times Past
3/27/1996	Andree Conklin (Farmer's Museum)	Old-Tyme Food Preparation
4/24/1996	Howard Talbot	Behind the Scenes at the Hall of Fame
5/22/1996	Chris Ohrstrom (Historic Paints, Ltd.)	Historic Paints
6/26/1996	Jerry Ellsworth	Raisin' Cane
7/24/1996	Gwen Miner (Farmer's Museum)	Heirloom Gardening
9/25/1996	Betty Russ	Harold Warp, a Pioneer
10/23/1996	Jim & Shirley Parmentier	Parmentier Pottery Tour & Demonstration
11/20/1996	Jim Havener (Milford Historical Society)	Milford Bi-Centennial & Historical Tidbits
1/22/1997	Dr. James Atwell	Meneely Bell Works & F.C. Church Bell
2/26/1997	FCAHS Members	Reminiscences of Times Past
3/26/1997	John Phillips	Old Swords and Guns
4/23/1997	Elaine Harvey	The Old Steere Homestead
5/28/1997	Rev. Horace King, Director	Old-Fashioned Sing-Along
6/25/1997	Hugh MacDougall	How F.C. Band Helped Win the Civil War
7/23/1997	Greg O'Neil	Tour of Adirondack Leather Products, Inc.
9/24/1997	Linda Medwid (Classical Forms Bookstore)	The Etruscan Culture of Ancient Italy
10/22/1997	Niles Eggleston	Eva Coe, Murderess
11/19/1997	Bunny & Jim Wolff	Tour of Heartworks Quilt Shop
1/28/1998	Dorothy Martin	Early Fly Creek
3/25/1998	John Phillips	Sailing on Square Riggers
4/22/1998	FCAHS Members	Reminiscences of Times Past
5/27/1998	Don & Sharon Oberriter	Tour of Cooperstown Bat Company
6/24/1998	Vic Sinnott	"Mini-Men"
7/22/1998	Wolfgang Merk & Jim Atwell	The Old Stone Mill
9/23/1998	Dr. Edythe Ann Quinn (Hartwick College)	From Coal Fields to Dairy Land
10/28/1998	FCAHS Members	An Evening of Ghost Stories
11/18/1998	Arrie Hecox	Fly Creek Area Memories

**FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY: 1999 Roll of Membership**

ANDREWS, Arthur & Marge  
 \*ATWELL, Dr. James & Anne Geddes  
 \*BADGLEY, Mr. & Mrs. George  
 BOUTON, Ronald & Carol  
BOYD, Louie & Dorothy  
 BOYD, Spike & Joyce  
 \*BRESEE, Philip & Ruth  
 BURNS, John & Agnes  
 CARR, Richard D.  
CIAMPO, Wesley & Evette  
 CLARK, Francis & Margaret  
 CLAYTON, Robert E.  
 CLINTON, Wayne  
 CRESWELL, Marion S.  
DALY, Gail  
 \*DAY, Irving III & Kathleen  
 \*DEANE, Bill, Pam & Sarah  
 EKELAND, Cynthia  
 ELLSWORTH, Jerry & Cathe  
FAMULARE, Peg  
 FOUTCH, Maude  
 GOODSPEED, Charles & Ann  
 HANOR, Katherine  
 HELFAND, Elliot & Martha  
HOSKINS, Sam, Peg, Matt & Andy  
 \*JENSEN, Margaret  
 KELLOGG, Rev. Eileen  
 KNAPP, Jean  
 LANE, Timothy & Alison  
\*LAUT, Dorothy Potts  
 \*LAVRINOS, Nicholas & Alice  
 LEVINE, Harry & Ellen  
 LUDLAM, Henry & Toni  
 LYONS, Irving & Joan  
MacDOUGALL, Hugh & Eleanor

\*MARTIN, Peter & Dorothy  
 McLEAN, Carolyn  
 MICHAELS, Charles & Barbara  
 MIHALKO, Carole  
MOSHIER, Robin  
 MYERS, Virginia Platt  
 \*NORRIS, Robert & Patricia  
 PERNAT, Mary  
 \*POTTS, Maxine  
POULOS, Paul  
 REILLY, Edward  
 REILLY, James R.  
 REZEN, Paul & Sally  
 ROEMER, Mr. & Mrs. Carl  
SCARZAFAVA, John & Jean  
 SEMEL, Rochelle  
 SHARPE, Stuart & Bonnie  
 SITTLER, Lester & Karen  
 SMALE, Capt. Gordon F.  
SMITH, Barbara  
 SMITH, Russ & Betty  
 SMITH, Zoe Potts  
 \*SNYDER, Art & Freida  
 SNYDER, Ben & Juliana  
TILLAPAUGH, Marjorie  
 WEIGEL, Fred  
 WOLFF, James & Margaret  
\*WYCKOFF, George & June

\*Charter Member.

**Note: if your name is not listed here, please use the application below to renew your membership. Thank you all for your continued support!**

**1999 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 \$10.
- Please register us to a family FCAHS membership. Enclosed is a check for \$15.
- Please accept the enclosed donation, in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum \$20), and enroll me/us as a contributing/sustaining member(s).

## MEETINGS: MARK YOUR CALENDAR, AND BRING YOUR COLLECTIONS!

It's time to mark your new calendars with the dates of this year's FCAHS meetings. Gatherings are held in the Fellowship Hall (basement) of the Fly Creek United Methodist Church, unless otherwise specified, on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except November (on the third Wednesday) and December (when there is no meeting). The scheduled dates for 1999 are January 27, February 24, March 24, April 28, May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25 (Annual Meeting, preceded by a covered-dish dinner at 6 PM), September 22, October 27, and November 17. Meetings begin at 7 PM, and are open to the public.

At the January meeting, attendees are asked to bring along some of their collections, or parts thereof, for a "Collectors' Show-and-Tell" session. Coins, stamps, baseball cards, butterflies -- whatever you have, we'd like to see it! In February, Dr. Edythe Ann Quinn of Hartwick College will present her second program to the FCAHS, with topic yet to be announced. And in March, Elaine Harvey will present "Old Mills on Oaks & Fly Creeks."

The final two FCAHS meetings of 1998 were held on October 28 and November 18. Attendees provided the October program: "An Evening of Ghost Stories." With Halloween approaching, chairs were arranged in a circle, and lights were dimmed in favor of kerosene lamps and a lantern. Special invitee Jerry Ellsworth led things off with some of Cooperstown's spectral legends, and many others followed with anecdotes and personal experiences. Nobody was scared off before having a chance to enjoy the bounty of seasonal refreshments.

In November, Arrie Hecox shared some of the earliest of his voluminous "Fly Creek Area Memories," dating back to the 'teens. Included were encounters with gypsies, a three-legged man, and a young lady he knew only as Amelia. Only years later did Arrie learn that his boyhood friend had become a celebrity: aviatrix Amelia Earhart. [Submitted by George Badgley]

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**FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**P.O. Box 87**

**Fly Creek, NY 13337**

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

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