

Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

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ATWELL STEPS DOWN AS PRESIDENT

After nearly four years as FCAHS President, Dr. James S. Atwell stepped down effective March 22, 2000. Atwell turned the reins over to Vice-President Richie Carr, whom he calls "a fine man and experienced administrator."

You'll recall that Jim had planned to surrender his post last summer, to devote full attention to his manuscript about life in Leatherstocking Country. He reluctantly rescinded his retirement upon the pleas of his constituency and nominating committee. Eight months later, he reports that he has "fallen well behind in (his) writing work and so must follow through with (his) original plan." This time, the "decision is firm and final."

It is no coincidence that Jim Atwell presided over the FCAHS during its years of greatest accomplishment and growth. Jim has a way of getting things done. He was instrumental in the acquisition of the Society's new home from Pomona Grange, and in getting the ball rolling on necessary permits and renovations to restore the building's status as a community center. Jim, working with Treasurer Alice Lavrinos, also secured for the FCAHS recognition, by the federal and state governments, as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. He ran orderly, well-paced, and good-humored monthly meetings, and served as an ideal spokesman for the Society. His leadership will be missed, but his legacy will outlive us all.

MEETINGS

The next three FCAHS meetings are slated for April 26, May 24, and June 28, 2000. In April, Sandy Bullard will speak from her self-published book, *Hop Time!*, which explores hop-growing in Otsego County during the nineteenth century. The May meeting will feature Warren Ainslie, showing us the art of "Making Colonial Corn & Besom Brooms." And, in June, Bucky White will discuss "Indian Folklore." Gatherings begin at 7 PM at the building formerly known as the Grange Hall on Cemetery Road, and are open to the public.

The most recent meetings were held on February 23 and March 22, with the January 26 meeting canceled due to inclement weather. At the Fly Creek Church in February, Bill Deane shared some "Historic Home Videos," chronicling three unusual 1990s events captured by his camcorder: the Blizzard of 1993; the emu visit of 1997; and the Past Times Antiques fire of 1999. This meeting was preceded by a covered-dish supper. The guest speaker in March was George Rutler, President of the Springfield Historical Society, discussing "Old & New Soap-Making." George gave a history of the manufacture of soap, and also did a show-and-tell of his own homemade soap-making process, giving free samples to the attendees.

NEWS BRIEFS

- **Coming Attractions ...** Among the special events scheduled by the FCAHS for 2000 are the following: Friday & Saturday, April 28-29: rummage & bake sale (12-5 PM Friday, 9 AM-1 PM Saturday); Sunday, May 21: "Significant Other Museums Day," with appraisals by Ruth Reich, and refreshments, 1-4 PM; Sunday, July 9: Community Music Day & barbecue dinner; Saturday, August 26: Community Day; Saturday & Sunday, September 23-24: quilt show/workshop & luncheon at Heartworks; Sunday, October 8: harvest brunch buffet; and Sunday, October 29: community Halloween celebration. Watch the area newspapers for further details. If you have something for the rummage sale, please bring it to the April 26 FCAHS meeting, or call MerriLynn Fish at 547-9335.
- **Benefactors ...** Additions to the "FCAHS Building Project Benefactors" list published in the last issue include Andy Bergfjord (Blake equipment), Mark Fleischmann (photos), Dennis Hascup (plumbing services), Ed Kukenberger (digging of trench), Oneida Flatware (flatware), and Syracuse China (place-settings).
- **Centennial ...** Otsego Chapter #201, Order of the Eastern Star, was chartered in Fly Creek with more than 100 members on May 14, 1900.
- **Three-fourths of a Centennial ...** Seventy-five years ago, on New Year's Day, 1925, a community hike to Fly Creek was held. According to the December 24, 1924 *Freeman's Journal*, the Winter Sports committee of the Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce sponsored the hike, which was to begin at 10 AM at "the Fenimore corner." Hikers were allowed "Any means of conveyance" (even automobiles!), with prizes awarded to the first arrivals at the Grange Hall, "where the ladies of the village will serve one of their celebrated dinners (for 75¢) at 12:30." To complete the festivities that evening, "a great community dance will be held at the Village Club." This article (as well as the one below, from March 11, 1875) was reprinted in the "Bound Volumes" column of the Cooperstown *Freeman's Journal*. This column is compiled by Marion Brophy, Town of Otsego Historian and FCAHS member. Keep those Fly Creek articles coming, Marion!
- **Centennial-and-a-fourth ...** "The M. E. Church of Fly Creek, which has been in the process of remodeling since August last, was reopened with appropriate services on Thursday, Feb. 25, 1875 ... It has been enlarged, making a very convenient lecture or Sunday school room, a convenient parlor, a large vestibule and an orchestra behind the pulpit ... It has been beautifully frescoed, painted, carpeted and cushioned, and the whole is heated by a furnace from beneath. A beautiful organ, well suited to the size and style of the audience room, is the generous gift of Mr. John Hooker."
- **New & Improved ...** On page 5 is a revised list of the 183 paid-up members (just three behind last year's record) of the FCAHS. Due to circumstances beyond our control, there were many omissions and misspellings in the list published last issue. We regret the errors, and offer a warm welcome to our newest members: Vera Ainslie, Kathy Bleuer, Narda Bush, Dora Cooke, Dorothy L. Gasse, Gary Kuch, Marvin & Donna Mulford, and Harry J. Nevil, Jr., and Joan Smith. And, a special "welcome back" to Robert L. Jones, a charter member now living in Texas, who has returned to the fold after nine years. Mr. Jones also donated to the Society metal-working tools used by his father, Leonard, in Jonesie's Fly Creek Hardware Store.
- **Donating to the cause ...** In addition to the above, dozens of other people have donated items to the Society, especially since we got our own building (and tax-exempt status). Among the recent donations are a pair of brooms made at the Farmers' Museum (donated by Hubert Andrews); 1863 New York state school maps (Irv Lyons); a picture of the Fly Creek Grange building (Springfield Historical Association); and two traveling doctors' kits (Art Andrews)

NEWS BRIEFS, Continued

- **Up in Smoke ...** For the second time in three months, A Fly Creek business was destroyed by fire. Parmentier Pottery was the victim on February 2, 2000. FCAHS members had enjoyed a tour of Parmentier Pottery as part of our monthly meeting on October 23, 1996.
- **Large Area ...** A reminder: this is the Fly Creek *Area* Historical Society. Most of our articles and activities center around Fly Creek and Fly Creek Valley, but it doesn't have to be that way. As reported in the very first issue of this newsletter, "The objectives of the Society are to research, document, preserve and present historical information and artifacts pertinent to Fly Creek, as well as the neighboring hamlets of Oaksville, Pierstown, Fly Creek Valley, Forkshop, Toddsville, Index, Christian Hill, Phoenix Mills, and rural Otsego." This was our founder's diplomatic way of saying "anywhere in the Town of Otsego, other than Cooperstown, which is well-enough documented." We welcome articles and programs pertinent to any of these places.

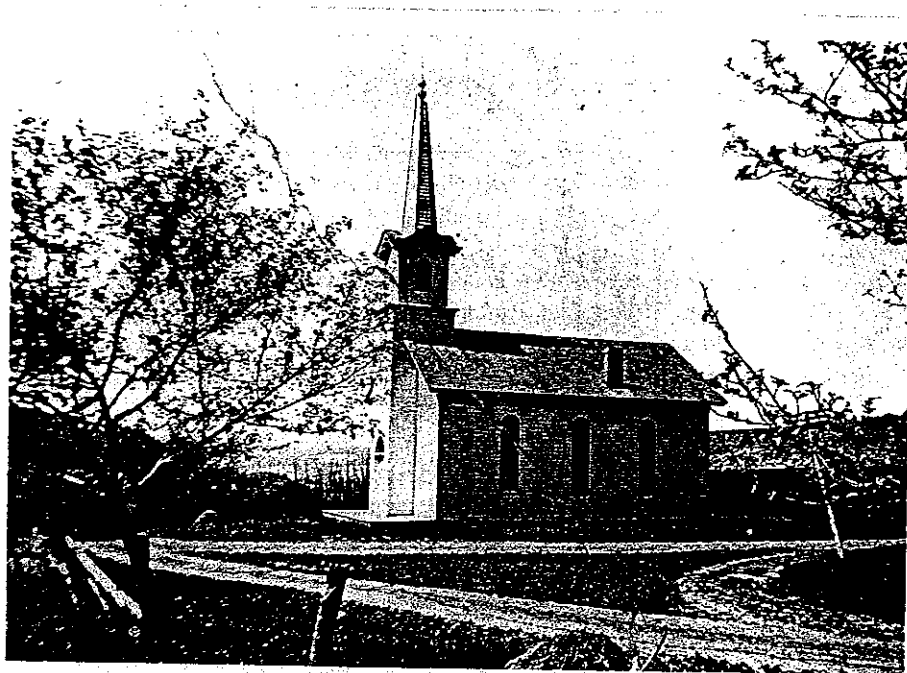
THE FLY CREEK VALLEY METHODIST CHURCH

The Fly Creek Valley Methodist Church, pictured below, was situated on the corner of County Route 26 and Donlon Road. It was built in 1882.

An article in *The Pastoral Visitor* that year said that "The building is very finely proportioned, having one of the neatest steeples we ever saw." A year later, the same publication noted that "It should be borne in mind that the Valley Church is out in the country, five miles removed from any village, but in the midst of a community of intelligent and well to do farmers."

The Fly Creek Valley Grange, No. 790 (established 1894), met in the church until their own building was erected on Donlon Road, above Adrian Kuzminski's current residence.

The Fly Creek Valley Methodist Church was active until about 1926. It was finally torn down, and the lumber was used by a neighbor. [Submitted by Sally Rezen]



TROLLEY TRAVAILS

The Winter 1991 edition of the *Fly Creeker* contains an article about the trolley passenger system that ran through Fly Creek between 1901-33. Fly Creek's claims to notoriety in the history of this system are the Mud and Chalk Lakes, on the south side of Route 28/80. The tracks were originally routed around these bodies of water, creating dangerous curves. Workers then spent years trying to fill the lakes so the tracks could be laid across them. The following scrapbook articles, apparently from the *Otsego Republican*, give us details about the first efforts in this direction. [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

THE TROLLEY IMPROVEMENTS (Thursday, November 29, 1906) -- The filling that has been going on at Mud Lake for some time will be completed in about a week. It is stated that about 30 carloads of dirt a day have been dumped into the "lake." When the filling in process is complete the road bed will be securely piled before the tracks are permanently laid. When this work is finished the construction gang will then strike Chalk Lake which is also to be filled. These fillings will be a decided advantage in operating the road.

MUD LAKE A HOODOO (Tuesday, December 4, 1906) -- The officials of the Oneonta and Mohawk Valley railroad are shaking their heads over the project of successfully filling Mud and Chalk lakes located near Fly Creek for the purpose of running their tracks directly over them. Last week after dumping hundreds of carloads of dirt into the former, the work was pronounced complete, the track laid and everything was in readiness to begin running the cars over the straightened roadbed.

It was planned to do this first on Saturday but the intention was never carried out for on Friday the newly laid track commenced to settle and by evening the tracks were eight to ten feet below the surface of the water. It is safe to say that the purpose of the company to fill Chalk lake in the same manner will be abandoned for the time at least.

On Friday afternoon the locomotive in use by the construction gang was working over the new grade when the center of the pond was seen to be rapidly sinking. The motorman put on full power and drew the heavy locomotive out of the sag which was increasing in depth with alarming speed. Two cars were afterward drawn out by the use of a cable, but it was a close call for all the rolling stock. Had the motorman not been very prompt the locomotive's weight would have taken it out of sight in the bottomless pit. All the work done there for several weeks past has gone down and there is no indication of a foundation yet.

HOP HARVESTS and the HARRIED HOUSEWIFE

Can you imagine feeding more than 50 people three meals a day for two or three weeks, and furnishing places for them to sleep, all with no electricity and no running water? Notes, probably written by Edna McRorie Ainslie in the early 1900s, tell how she helped a friend do exactly that.

By that time, although most farms in this area still had hop-yards, the 12-acre yard at this particular farm was considered large. During the September harvest, some 50 workers were employed, including four pickers at each of ten boxes; a "box-tender" whose job was to pull the hop poles and get the vines to the tables between the workers; and two or three men to draw the hops to be dried in the kiln.

Long before the harvest, the "lady of the house" was busy planning how and where to set up beds, filling ticks with straw for mattresses, and making sheets and pillow-cases. A week before the harvest she began some serious baking. Old sheets were put on the parlor floor, and "crock after crock" set on them, full of sugar and molasses cookies, doughnuts, and "pork cake which was considered a good keeper." Flour and sugar were brought in by the barrel, along with beef by the quarter or half and whole codfish. [Continued on page 6]

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY: 2000 Roll of Membership

AINSLIE-HAMBLIN family	KEATING, William & Evelyn
AINSLIE, Vera	<u>KNAPP, Jean T.</u>
ANDREWS, Arthur & Marge	KUCH, Gary
*ATWELL, Dr. James & Anne Geddes	LANE, Timothy & Alison
<u>AUFMUTH, H. James</u>	*LAUT, Dorothy, Thomas, Jennifer & Aaron
AUFMUTH, Jane	*LAVRINOS, Nicholas & Alice
*BADGLEY, George & Deborah Dickinson	<u>LEVINE, Harry & Ellen</u>
*BAKER, David & Scottie	LUDLAM, Henry & Toni
*BALDWIN, Rev. Kenneth	LYONS, Harry "Skip" & Lola
<u>BARTHOLD, Dr. Joseph & Mrs. Joyce</u>	LYONS, Irving & Joan
*BERTINO, Dr. Joseph & Dr. Anne Nafziger	MacDOUGALL, Hugh & Eleanor
BLEUER, Kathy	<u>MACKIE, Dr. Robert</u>
BOUTON, Ronald & Carol	MARTIN, Homer & Leila
BOUTON, Thomas	*MARTIN, Peter & Dorothy
<u>BOYD, Louie & Dorothy</u>	McLEAN, Carolyn
BOYD, Spike & Joyce	McRORIE, Nancy
*BRESEE, Philip & Ruth	<u>MEYERS, Virginia Platt</u>
BROPHY, Marion	MICHAELS, Charles & Barbara
BUSH, Narda	MIHALKO, Carole
<u>CARR, Richard D.</u>	MOSHIER, Robin
CARR, Richard H. & Ann	MULFORD, Marvin & Donna
CHAMBERLAIN, Ellen	<u>MUMFORD, Rolan & Trula</u>
CHENEY, Mr. & Mrs. Harold, Jr.	NEFF, Joan
CHRISTIANSEN, Harvey & Catherine	NEVIL, Harry J., Jr.
<u>CIAMPO, Wesley & Evette</u>	*NORRIS, Robert & Patricia
CLARK, Francis & Margaret	O'NEILL, Bernard & Jeannette
CLAYTON, Robert E.	<u>OPDERBECK, Carl & Cynthia</u>
COE, Linda, Jason & Eric	OSTAPECK, Lady
COOKE, Dora	PERNAT, Mary
*CURLIS, Irwin	PIERRO, Robert & Kay
DAVIS, R. Helen	*POTTS, Maxine
*DAY, Irving III & Kathleen	<u>POULOS, Paul</u>
*DEANE, Bill, Pam & Sarah	REILLY, Edward
DERINGER, Dr. Paul & Mrs. Margaret	REILLY, James R.
<u>DODGE, Martha</u>	REZEN, Paul & Sally
EKELAND, Cynthia G.	RODD, Susan
ELLSWORTH, Catherine Lake	<u>ROEMER, Mr. & Mrs. Carl</u>
FAMULARE, Dorothy	SCARZAFAVA, John & Jean
FARMER, Mary	SEMEL, Rochelle
<u>FAUROT, Craig & Pat</u>	*SCHAEFFER, William & Paula
*FINCH, John & Jean	SHARPE, Stuart & Bonnie
FISH, Jim & MerriLynn	<u>SMALE, Capt. Gordon F.</u>
FOUTCH, Maud	SMITH, Joan
GASSE, Dorothy	SMITH, Zoe Potts
<u>GOODSPEED, Charles & Annie</u>	*SNYDER, Art & Freida
GRAHAM, Anita A.	SNYDER, Ben & Juliana
HAMDY, Elizabeth	<u>SPENCE, Sue-Ellen</u>
HANEY, Craig	STACK, Edward & Christina
HANOR, Katherine B.	THORNE, Edwin & Joyce
<u>HARRINGTON, Angela</u>	TILLAPAUGH, Marjorie
*HARVEY, Merritt & Elaine	TIPPLE, Edwin S.
HELFAND, Elliot & Martha	<u>WEIGEL, Fred & Wilma</u>
HICKEY, Jim	*WINNIE, Ernest & Gerda
HOSKINS, Sam, Peg, Matt & Andy	WINNIE, Margaret
<u>HULSE, Rick & Christine</u>	WOLFF, James & Margaret
JENKINS, Arthur & Ruby	*WYCKOFF, George & June
*JENSEN, Margaret	<u>YOURNO, Albert, Ann & James</u>
JONES, Robert L.	*Charter Member.

HOP HARVESTS [Continued from page 4]

Cooking and baking were done on a wood-burning stove. Water for cooking and drinking was brought in from a well 200 feet from the house. In the kitchen, a pump furnished water from the cistern for hand- and dish-washing. The water was heated in a reservoir on the stove.

A few days before the harvest, the "man to the house would drive a team of horses hitched to a 3-seated democrat wagon" to a town along the Erie Canal -- usually Little Falls or Fort Plain -- to hire workers. These workers were not "hand-picked, the only requirement being the ability to pick hops." Many were crude, tough characters with colorful language. Worried mothers kept their young daughters under very close supervision or out of sight entirely, sometimes even sending them to stay with relatives during the harvest. While it's questionable how threatening these outsiders actually were, their lifestyles were certainly different. One of them shocked the ladies of the house when he came to dinner, looked over the long meal-table, grabbed the vinegar cruet, and gulped down its entire contents.

The harvest day started before sunrise, since breakfast had to be out of the way before the field work began at 7 AM. This meal included boiled potatoes, codfish gravy, home-made bread and butter, molasses cookies or doughnuts, and coffee. Lunch, served at noon, consisted of potatoes, gravy, beef in some form, home-made bread, vegetable, pie, and coffee. Supper, at 6 PM, had warmed-up potatoes or hash, bread, applesauce or other fruit, cake, and tea.

Mornings were all rush-rush, with stacks of dishes to wash, garden vegetables to clean and peel, meat to cook, bread to "set," and pies and cakes to bake before lunch. There was a brief lull in the afternoon before it was time to start supper. This would go on for two to three weeks, depending on the size of the crop and the weather. [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

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