

Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)
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VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1 * WINTER, 2001

NEWS BRIEFS

- **I Dream of Genealogy ...** Carolyn McLean is particularly interested in genealogical research, and hopes some of the rest of us are, too. This is one area of research in which FCAHS founder Florence Michaels hoped the Society would be active. Is there interest in forming a committee on genealogical research? Would readers be willing to jot down details of their own family history – names of your parents, siblings, and children, for example? Carolyn is working on designing forms for such a project. Correspondence can be addressed to her in care of the *Fly Creeker*.
- **Banking on our Success ...** FCAHS Trustee Jim Wolff reports, “I have received a favorable response to my letter requesting a donation from Janice Eichler, Regional Business Development Officer and Branch Manager of the Cooperstown Branch of the Wilber National Bank. Ms. Eichler writes ‘Enclosed is our check for \$100.00 towards the restoration and preservation of your building... We wish you success with this project.’” Thanks, WNB!
- **Final Answer?** ... Local resident Emily Deringer recently qualified as a contestant for the television show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* Emily, daughter of FCAHS members Paul and Margaret Deringer, appeared in the episode aired November 29, 2000. Though Emily didn’t make it to the “hot seat,” she acquitted herself well, and got Fly Creek mentioned on the most popular show on TV.
- **Unsolved Mysteries ...** The FCAHS has acquired many historic photographs over the past 12 years. Unfortunately, some of them are not identified. One such photo is shown on the back page of this newsletter. Donated in 1993, it depicts a schoolhouse and children with a schoolmaster. Does anyone recognize the building or any of the people in the photo?
- **Coming Events ...** The second annual Fly Creek community yard sale will be held on August 25, 2001. The FCAHS also expects to resume a schedule of dances beginning in April. Previous dances have been well-received and attended, and it is hoped that they will be held monthly.
- **Members for MMI ...** Reminder: 2001 dues were payable by the first of the year. No further newsletters will be sent to those in arrears. Please see page 5 for a list of paid-up members and an application.
- **2 + 2 = 3?** ... The Autumn, 2000 *Fly Creeker* was labeled “Volume 12, Issue 3.” For those of you keeping score, it should have read “Issue 4.”
- **Happy News ...** Happy New Year, New Decade, New Century, and New Millennium!

FLY CREEK VALLEY'S MAPLE SHADE FARM

In December 1945 we moved to Fly Creek Valley to a farm we had bought from Mike Selan. The "Maple Shade Farm," as we named it, had about 110 acres and was located mostly on the left side of County Highway 26, just past the top of Buck Road. There was also a small field on the right side of the road, with a brook running through it and a good-sized pond, nestled in the angle of the road. Across from this was a marshy area which we built into another pond.

There was no water in the barn (the cows were watered at the ponds) and no electricity. The house had had a Delco generator, but just after the war, when electricity came to the valley, the house was partly wired. The heat was from a hand-fired coal furnace, but only in part of the house. There was a wood cook-stove in the kitchen, and a sink with hot water from a heater by the furnace.

Behind the kitchen and across from the back door was a bathroom with a toilet, wash basin and a bath tub not hooked to the water system. There was no telephone.

The land was used to harvest hay, with some of the flatter land used for corn in the early days. The farm had a dairy barn for about 30 cows and a calf pen. At one side were two horse stalls. There was a big haymow and a silo. The farm had two chicken houses -- a small one for raising young chickens and a longer one equipped for laying hens. There was also a small, two-story building which was made to raise pigs, and attached to that was a shed to house farm machinery. Behind this was an out-house. None of these buildings had electricity or water.

There were two shallow wells -- one by the back door of the house and one by the egg house. The one by the house had an electric, shallow well pump and supplied the house. The one by the chicken house had a hand pump atop.

We also owned about 150 acres on Buck Road. Fly Creek (the body of water) runs through this land, which was used for hay. Beavers on the creek were always a problem. Both farms had pastures, and the hay fields were also used as pastures after two harvests.

We had a lot of problems. My husband Bob Streett was an experienced farmer: he had grown up on a dairy farm and raised chickens. But he was unprepared for all the shortcomings on this property. No one had warned us, and Mr. Selan had represented the farm as a going business. But this era at the end of World War II was one of transition, and most neighborhood farms had far fewer refinements than ours.

To go into all our problems is really unnecessary. With the help of Felix Rode [one of the jurors in the Eva Coo murder trial -- ed.], John Hribar, Morrison Lamb, and other Fly Creek neighbors, the telephone and electric companies, the Dairymen's League, Cooperstown merchants and mechanics, and many others, we fixed up the old house and in the process made many good friends.

Ten years or so later we gave up the dairy and remodeled the big barn into a poultry house. We raised thousands of broilers for the Kosher Market in the Catskills. We built another big chicken house in the process. Eventually the broiler business petered out but by then we had switched to started pullets. I used to tell my city friends that the baby chicks, one day old, came in a small bread truck and left in three tractor-trailers. We used to hire high school boys to catch the chickens. Then we arranged with the hay-raising neighbors, including John Stucin, to clean out the houses in exchange for the manure. Bob also rented our hay fields to neighbors.

We raised two daughters on the farm. Lois Cassandra "Sandy" Streett was nearly two when we moved there. Dorothy Gene "Daffy" Streett was born seven years later. They went to Cooperstown to school on the Valley school bus.

Returning from a Christmas concert in Utica on the late afternoon of December 2, 1979 – 34 years and one day after we bought the farm – we saw huge flames and smoke in the distance. We knew right away it was our house. Fire trucks came from Fly Creek and Cooperstown. Though there was plenty of water, the men had trouble getting the pump to work in the cold weather. The central and rear parts of the house were destroyed. The insurance inspector was unable to determine the cause of the fire.

We sold the property to John Stucin and moved away. Only once since then have I been back to the Valley. I came with Daffy. We stayed at a bed & breakfast (which I hear is no longer in business) in Fly Creek. We visited some old friends and drove past our farm property. I probably will never come back. [Submitted by Lois S. Streett, Boothbay Harbor, Maine. In a future issue, Mrs. Streett will recall Fly Creek Valley social life after World War II.]



Mark Your
Calendar!

MEETINGS

Following are the dates for the FCAHS monthly meetings for 2001: January 24, February 28, March 28, April 25, May 23, June 27, July 25, August 22, September 26, October 24, and November 28 (the fourth Wednesday of each month, except December). Gatherings are normally held at the FCAHS Building/Grange Hall on Cemetery Road beginning at 7 PM, and everyone is welcome.

In deference to winter conditions, the January and February meetings will be held in the Fellowship Hall (basement) the Fly Creek United Methodist Church. We hope to return to our permanent home in time for the March meeting, but it will depend on the weather.

The January meeting will feature Katherine Hanor's slide show on "Pierstown in Years Past," presented by Sue Drake and Ed Reilly. The February gathering will be preceded by a covered-dish dinner at 6 PM. Its program will be "Travels of the Trolley," by Bob Banta. And, in March, Gary Bush will present "Model Railroading."

The final two meetings of 2000 were held on October 25 and November 15. In October, we heard from FCAHS member Ed Thorne, who was Scoutmaster in Fly Creek for ten years, District Camping Chairman for 22 years, and involved with Scouting for 40 years all together. He introduced a program on Scouting with Scott L. Bradley, Senior District Executive of the Otschodela Council of the Boy Scouts of America. The program included a slide show and display of scout badges and kerchiefs.

In November, we feasted on a marvelous pot-luck dinner prior to the meeting. During the meeting, President Richie Carr reviewed proposed policies and procedures for the use of our building. The program was presented by Merri Lynn Fish and Dorothy Martin, who reviewed the processes involved in accession and storage of historical documents and artifacts donated to the FCAHS. They also showed some of the many photos which have been donated without a notation of the people or places depicted (see example of page 6). Attendees with good memories were able to help identify some of the mystery people and buildings. Merri Lynn and Dorothy noted that items are not to be removed from the FCAHS building, but that anyone wishing to view/research something in our collection should make arrangements with one of them. [Submitted by George Badgley]

THE PIER TRAGEDIES

Abner Pier was only 17 years old when he was captured by Tories and Indians in a battle near Stone Arabia, NY, while he was with the Regiment of Massachusetts in the Continental Army. He was scalped – at that time the British were paying Indians \$8 for any “rebel Yankee scalp.” Pier survived this, so he was shot, with the musket ball passing through part of his head, an arm and a leg. Amazingly, he even survived this. Pier was finally killed by the tiny germs causing typhus, on December 24, 1810. This also killed four of his children in a tragic eight-week period in 1810-11.

The germs causing typhus are carried by body lice, or lice on rats. Typhoid epidemics usually occur when “large crowds are brought together and personal hygiene is at low ebb.”

Abner left Egremont Town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, for the Town of Otsego before the 1800 U.S. census. Four other Piers had come to Otsego earlier and are listed in that Town’s 1790 census.

After Abner’s oldest son John died November 24, 1810, his obituary in the *Otsego Herald* expressed sympathy for Abner, whose “fond expectations have been blighted.” It continued with a warning about “the uncertainty of life – an impressive call to his former youthful companions to be also ready.”

Abner was the next Pier to meet death. His obituary was quite lengthy, telling of his war record and describing his funeral procession: his friends, family, and “Masonic brethren” making it the “largest witnessed in this county on a like occasion.”

In contrast, the daughters’ obituaries were quite brief, with those of Polly and Betsy being combined into one item. For Polly, it merely gives the date of her death (December 31), and the fact that she was Abner’s daughter. For Betsy (January 10) it gives the same information, also mentioning that she was married to William Aplin of the Town of Hartwick. It doesn’t mention Betsy’s children, Horace and Catherine, but does note that she was the fourth member of the Pier family to die in the short period of seven weeks.

When Nancy died on January 15, 1811, the editor took more notice of the Pier family tragedies. Her obituary mentions that that she was 23 and had been married to Henry Stevens “but a few weeks.” It adds that “This is the fifth member of that unfortunate family who have, within eight weeks died from the same disease, and it is understood there is yet another who is thought to be in a very dangerous situation. An instance of so many deaths happening in one family, in so short a time, was never before known to have taken place in this county.”

No further deaths from typhus are mentioned in the *Herald* until 1813. There is also no mention of Abner’s wife, Lucy Stevens Pier. The last of the couple’s nine children, Abner, Jr., was born a couple of months after Abner’s death. Apparently the rest of the children survived, some living to an old age.

Difficulties continued for Lucy. A fire destroyed papers verifying Abner’s military service, so she was unable to receive his \$3.33 per month veterans’ pension. Despite all the tragedy and hardship she endured, Lucy Pier lived to be 82 years old.

[Submitted by Carolyn McLean. Sources: *Death Notices from the Otsego Herald, etc.: Otsego County, NY Newspapers*, Vol. 1, compiled and copied by Gertrude A. Barber, 1932; *Otsego Herald* microfilm; Census Indexes for 1790, NY and MA, and 1800, NY; *Descendants of Thomas Pier*, by Joseph Pierce, Heritage Books, 1995.]

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY: 2001 Roll of Membership

*ATWELL, Dr. James & Anne Geddes-Atwell
 *BAKER, David & Scottie
 *BERTINO, Dr. Joseph & Dr. Anne Nafziger
 BOYD, Dorothy
 BOYD, Spike & Joyce
 *BRESEE, Philip & Ruth
 CARR, Richard D.
 CARR, Richard H. & Ann M.
 CHENEY, Harold & Waltraut
 CHRISTIANSEN, Harvey & Catherine
 CIAMPO, Wesley & Evette
 CLAYTON, Robert E.
 DAVIS, R. Helen
 *DAY, Irving III & Kathleen
 *DEANE, Bill, Pam & Sarah
 EKELAND, Cynthia G.
 FLY CREEK CIDER MILL & ORCHARD
 FLY CREEK GENERAL STORE
 GRAHAM, Anita A.
 HAMDY, Elizabeth S.
 HANOR, Katharine & Edward Reilly
 HARRINGTON, Angela E.
 *HARVEY, Merritt & Elaine
 JANET LeROY INTERIORS, Inc.
 *JENSEN, Margaret
 KEATING, William & Evelyn
 KESSLER, Larry & Carol
 LaGASSE, Dorothy
 LANGAN, Joseph W. & Vivian Y.
 *LAVRINOS, Nicholas & Alice

LEVINE, Harry & Ellen
 LICCI, Anthony & Genevieve
 MacDOUGALL, Hugh & Eleanor
 *MARTIN, Peter L. & Dorothy J.
 McLEAN, Carolyn S.
 McRORIE, Nancy J.
 MEYERS, Virginia Platt
 *NORRIS, Robert & Patricia
 O'NEILL, Bernard & Jeannette
 ORILIO, Nancy
 PERNAT, Mary
 PIERRO, Robert & Kay
 *POTTS, Maxine M.
 REZEN, Paul & Sally
 ROBERTS, Susan
 ROEMER, Mr. & Mrs. Carl
 *SCHAEFFER, William & Paula
 SMALE, Capt. Gordon F.
 SMITH, Joan S.
 SMITH, Zoe & Sue-Ellen Spence
 *SNYDER, Art & Freida
 SNYDER, Ben & Juliana
 THORNE, Ed & Judy
 TOAD HALL
 WEIGEL, Fred & Wilma
 WOLFF, James & Margaret
 *WYCKOFF, George & Jean
 YOURNO, Albert, Ann & James
 * = Charter Member.
Bold = Contributing/Sustaining Member.

Above is a list of paid-up members of the FCAHS for 2001, according to our Treasurer, as of the first day of winter (dues were payable by the first of the year). It shows 95 members, as compared to last year's record of 195, so many of us are stuck in the past century! New members include Larry & Carol Kessler, Joseph & Vivian Langan, Anthony & Genevieve Licci, Nancy Orilio, and Susan Roberts. If your name isn't listed, please continue your support for our Society by using the application below. A tip of the hat to qualifiers for the new classifications of memberships, contributing and sustaining. These include the Fly Creek Cider Mill & Orchard, Fly Creek General Store, Janet LeRoy Interiors, and Toad Hall.

**2001 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 tax-deductible donation, in the amount of \$ _____ (minimum \$20), and enroll me/us as a contributing/sustaining member(s).



(For details on this "mystery photo," see page 1 of this newsletter)

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 87
Fly Creek, NY 13337
