

# *Fly Creeker*

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)  
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## A PLEA FROM THE EDITOR

According to our Society's By-Laws, the Publications Committee is "responsible for finding ways and means for establishing joint or individual research studies, for providing newsletters to members, and for publicity." Over the 15 years of the Society's existence, we have performed admirably in the second of those responsibilities, passably on the third, and miserably on the first. We need help!

During the first year of the Fly Creek Area Historical Society, we published the post card booklet *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear*. Working to meet the terms of a grant, and to be ready in time for the Fly Creek Area Bicentennial celebration of 1990, we rushed it together in about six weeks. All things considered, it turned out very well. There were some 54 post cards in the book, each needing a caption. Florence Michaels provided most of the information from her vast knowledge and memory of area history, but unfortunately, we didn't have time to pin down exact dates and facts in many cases. As a result, we wound up with sentences like "Around 1900, it was purchased ..." or "the garage was demolished around the 1940s." As I remarked here in the Autumn 1990 issue, this was "regrettable for a historical society publication." Correcting these dates has been on the Publications Committee's agenda ever since, but it has never gotten done; as committee Chairman, I must take the blame for this.

In January, the Society's Board of Directors announced plans to reissue *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear* in 2004. This was decided without consulting the Publications Committee, and in my opinion it is a bad decision. In 1990, we had an excuse for being a bit sloppy with facts; fourteen years later, there is no excuse. The booklet should not be reissued until research is done to make it as accurate as possible. And we need help in getting that and other research done.

It would also be nice if we could produce a research journal or history of the area, as other local historical societies have done. But our little committee is simply not up to the task.

Even with our pride and joy, the *Fly Creeker*, we are facing a crisis. Not since the last millennium has the newsletter had fewer than six pages. We have enjoyed the steady article contributions of a few people over the past six years, but our articles bank is now practically depleted. Unless this changes, we will have to revert to four- or even two-page newsletters. That would make my job a lot easier, but wouldn't serve the Society well. Articles need not be polished journalistic efforts; just gather the facts and put your editor to work. Some suggested topics: profile of an area business, such as Fly Creek General Store or Cooperstown Bat Company; profile of an area home or building, such as the School House or the trolley station; article on an area cemetery or other place of historical interest; report on an activity that characterized the area such as ballooning or music; list of Fly Creek area items in the Farmers' Museum. Use your imagination!

Besides help with research and articles, we can always use assistance in gathering news items, and folding, sealing, labeling, and stamping the newsletters. Fresh ideas are always welcome, too.

The Publications Committee will be holding its annual get-together just prior to the next FCAHS meeting, at the FCAHS/Grange building at 6:15 on April 28. Anyone who is interested in helping us is invited - even pleaded - to attend. Thanks.

*Bill Deane*

## MEETINGS

The next three meetings of the FCAHS will be held on April 28, May 26, and June 23, 2004. In April, Dr. Sherilynne Lacy, assistant professor of history at Hartwick College, will present "Do as I say, not as your mother told you: Women, Doctors, and Medicine in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century." In May, we will be entertained by Springfield Historical Association president George Rutler and two others, who form a trio called the Parlor Players. They specialize in music of the 'twenties and 'thirties, and will bring sing-along sheets to encourage audience participation. And in June, Pete Martin will report on Fly Creek Cheese Factories. FCAHS meetings are normally held at the FCAHS Building/Grange Hall on Cemetery Road, Fly Creek (one-tenth of a mile from the blinker light) at 7 PM on the fourth Wednesday of each month, and are open to the public.

The three most recent FCAHS meetings were held on January 28, February 25, and March 24, 2004. In January, Dominick Reisen – President of the Otsego County Historical Association – spoke about the group and how it will interact and cooperate with local historical societies like ours. Founded in 2003, the OCHA is designed as an umbrella organization for local historical groups – "not to overshadow them, but to shine their light." There was a similar organization in the last century, but in the 1940s it evolved into the New York State Historical Association, with a different focus. Formation of the new group was spearheaded by Dave Petri and Al Bullard.

In February, following a covered-dish dinner, Peter Martin and Richie Carr talked about Fly Creek's oldest cemetery, the Old Chapel Burying Ground at the corner of Hoke Road and County Highway 26. They have put together a card file and photo collection documenting each of the 255 gravestones in the cemetery. Pete gave a history of the cemetery, most of it from a booklet he prepared, and Richie followed with a slide show of notable stones, some dating back to the 1790s. Also during this meeting, new Town Supervisor Tom Breiten announced a series of neighborhood meetings whose purpose is the discussion of the present and future of the various Town of Otsego hamlets, including such issues as historic preservation.

And in March, Amy Donnelly spoke about "What's Under Fly Creek." With visual aids at the ready, Amy lectured for more than an hour on theories and principles of geology, and how glaciers shaped upstate New York topography.

## NEWS BRIEFS

- **Just Desserts ...** Reminder: those in charge of refreshments for the April meeting are Wes & Evette Ciampo and Barbara Lyon. Sherlee Rathbone has offered to take over the refreshment committee, and will need volunteers to supply treats for meetings starting in May. Please call Sherlee (547-9334), or put your name on the sign-up sheet at the next meeting. And thanks to Ann Carr for coordinating this committee for the past few years.
- **OCHA ...** The Otsego County Historical Association (OCHA) was formed in 2003. See the article on "Meetings" for information about the group's purpose. OCHA meets periodically at the Kinney Memorial Library in Hartwick (607-293-6600), and its mailing address is PO Box 25, Hartwick, NY 13348. Annual memberships are available to individuals (\$5), students (\$3), families (\$7), non-profit organizations (\$10), and companies (\$15).
- **Members ...** Welcome to our newest members, Wendy Ann Alley, Tom Breiten, Ernest & Elaine Davis, Chuck & Lisa Lohmann, and Sandi Hovey. The paid-up members for 2004 are listed on page 5. With 121 this year, we are lagging well behind the membership totals of 2001 (203), 2002 (174), and 2003 (165).
- **Board to Tears ...** The FCAHS Board of Trustees meets on the first Wednesday of February, April, June, August, October, and December.

- **Building for Rent ...** The FCAHS has set a fee schedule for rental of its building. For full-day use, the rate is \$200 for profit-making organizations, \$100 for 501 C (3) non-profit organizations, and \$50 for FCAHS members; the respective rates for half-day use are \$100, \$50, and \$25. There is no fee for FCAHS-sponsored events. A security deposit equal to the user fee, and proof of \$250,000 liability insurance, are required. There are also fees for a custodian (\$10/hour, minimum \$40), and for heat, if required (\$50). Contact FCAHS President Wes Ciampo for further information.

**NINE BUCKS A WEEK AND SUMMERS OFF**

Below is a copy of a 1914-15 teacher's contract from the "Flycreek Preparatory School." It shows that Clara Carpenter was the lucky recipient of \$9 per week for her teaching services, while another contract in my possession indicates that Principal J. Taylor House (see the Winter, 2002 *Fly Creeker*, page 6) received \$14 per week for his. A monthly report for January, 1914 showed that the school had a total of 21 students from grades one through seven, with an aggregate grade point average of 75.7%. [Submitted by Wes Ciampo]

**TEACHER'S CONTRACT**  
SECTIONS 561 TO 566 INCLUSIVE OF THE EDUCATION LAW OF 1910

I, Clara Carpenter of Flycreek county of Oregon, a duly qualified teacher, hereby contract with the board of trustees of district no. 2 town of Oregon county of Oregon to teach the public school of said district for the term of 40 consecutive weeks, except as hereafter provided, commencing Sept 7 1914 at a weekly compensation of 9 dollars and — cents payable at the end of each thirty days during the term of such employment. One per cent of the amount of each order or warrant issued in payment of the compensation required to be paid hereunder shall be deducted as provided by article 43 B of the Education Law relative to the State Teachers Retirement Fund.

And the board of trustees of said district hereby contract to employ said teacher for said period at the said rate of compensation, payable at the times herein stated.

Said board of trustees reserve the right to provide for a vacation or vacations of not more than 2 weeks in the aggregate, during said term, which vacation shall not count as a part of the term of service above referred to.

Dated May 20 1914

Clara M. Carpenter  
Teacher.

} Trustees  
A. Clark  
H. E. Jones  
J. Taylor

This contract shall be executed in duplicate and one copy thereof given to the teacher and one retained by the board.

## A BLISSFUL EXISTENCE

In an old scrapbook full of local news items one seemed out of place -- "Arthur Bliss Lane named US Minister to Yugoslavia" -- until it explained that Lane was the "grandson of Eliphalet Bliss who was born in the building known as the 'Old Stone Mill' at Fly Creek, now the Slavonian club." This building is now the home of Jim Atwell and Anne Geddes-Atwell on 134 Allison Road, across from Cemetery Road.

Eliphalet Bliss grew up to become an extremely wealthy manufacturer. It is said that he was influenced by another child of Fly Creek, Ann Elizabeth Metcalf. Ann's father, Charles H. Metcalf, was proprietor of a Fly Creek iron works factory, and mentor of Eliphalet. Bliss's heritage also could have been a factor. His grandfather, Eliphalet Williams, was important in the early development of the Fly Creek area.

Eliphalet Bliss attended the Fort Plain Seminary until age 16, then spent five years as an apprentice to Metcalf and Livingston, and one year as a journeyman machinist at New York Central and Hudson Railroad in Syracuse. He then got a job at Snow, Brooks and Co. for \$1.62 per day, and soon took charge of their Fowler Press building. He later worked for Alexander Campbell as head of the Campbell Press Works.

At the onset of the Civil War in 1861 Bliss became one of the Union Army's first 75,000 volunteers. His older brother, Lucien Wood Williams Bliss, was a Major in the rebel army. Eliphalet was a corporal by the time he was discharged at the end of the war. He married Ann Metcalf in 1865, and went back to work for Campbell. Ann soon encouraged Eliphalet to start his own company, even though Campbell offered him 2½ times his previous salary.

Bliss went out on his own, starting in a small Brooklyn loft with six mechanics on the payroll, making simple, well-built metal presses. By 1870 the company had 20 employees, and it was on its way to becoming one of the world's foremost manufacturers of sheet metal-working machinery. Frank M. Leavitt (or Leavin) joined Bliss in 1876, and they developed the Bliss-Leavitt Torpedo. Bliss also built the first Whitehead-type torpedo in America for the Spanish-American War.

Ann's father, Charles Hackley Metcalf, died in 1871. He and a partner had operated an iron works enterprise; documentation is lacking, but the 1872-3 *Otsego County Gazetteer* has an ad for "Otsego Iron Works, Wm. Shepherd, Proprietor, Successor to Metcalf & Shepherd." Metcalf was buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery, across the road from the FCAHS's current home. At some point Ann had a large monument placed there (John Hooker, Sr.'s 1895 will directs that a similar one be placed on his grave). The front of the monument reads "CHARLES HACKLEY METCALF, 1806-1871; HULDAH FIELD, 1809-1899." Presumably, Huldah was Ann's mother.

Eliphalet and Ann had been married 25 years when their daughter, Eva Metcalf Bliss, married James Warren Lane in a Bay Ridge, New York Episcopal church. It was reported as a "magnificent wedding." Distributed were 3,000 invitations to the reception, a special train run attended by "trainmen wearing bright new uniforms with snow white caps and neckties." There were also special floral arrangements in honor of the parents' Silver Anniversary.

Ann and Eliphalet maintained a summer home in Fly Creek, next to her father's foundry (see the photos on the cover and second page of illustrations in *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear*). Eliphalet died on July 21, 1903, and Ann followed three years later. Her obituary in the October 23, 1906 *Freeman's Journal* states that she had four grandsons, and was living with her daughter at the time of her death. Her will named Eva M. B. Lane as her only legal heir. Eva sold the property to Perlin A. Murdock on November 21, 1907 (recorded six days later in Liber 268, p. 245).

Much more research is needed to learn such things who built the house and the ponds, and when. Much of what we do know is due to the tireless research of the late Marion Brophy. We appreciate and miss her. [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

**FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY: 2004 Roll of Membership**

AINSLIE, Michael	KEATING, William & Evelyn
AINSLIE, Vera	KNAPP, Jean
ALLEY, Wendy Ann	<b>LARSEN, Doris M.</b>
ANDREWS, Arthur	LAUT, Thomas J. & Dorothy P.
* <u>ATWELL, Dr. James &amp; Anne Geddes-Atwell</u>	* <u>LAVRINOS, Nicholas &amp; Alice</u>
AUFMUTH, H. James	LEVINE, Harry & Ellen
AUFMUTH, Jayne	LOHMANN, Chuck & Lisa
*BALDWIN, Rev. Kenneth R.	LYONS, Irving V. & Joan
*BERTINO, Dr. Joseph & Dr. Anne Nafziger	MacDOUGALL, Hugh & Eleanor
<u>BOUTON, Ron &amp; Carol</u>	<u>MARTIN, Homer &amp; Leila</u>
<b>BOYD, William V. &amp; Rita</b>	* <u>MARTIN, Peter L. &amp; Dorothy J.</u>
BREITEN, Tom	<b>McLEAN, Carolyn S.</b>
*BRESEE, Philip & Ruth	NEFF, Jean
CAMPBELL, Grant T.	OKERSON, Elizabeth
<u>CARR, Richard D.</u>	<u>ORILIO, Nancy</u>
CARR, Richard H. & Ann	PALMER, Peter
<b>CHENEY, Harold W. &amp; Waltraut</b>	<b>PIERRO, Robert &amp; Kay</b>
<b>CHRISTIANSEN, Hartwick &amp; Catherine</b>	*POTTS, Maxine M.
<b>CIAMPO, Wesley &amp; Evette</b>	RANDALL, Charlotte
<b>CLARK, Margaret H.</b>	<u>RATHBONE, Sherlee</u>
<u>CLAYTON, Robert E.</u>	REZEN, Paul & Sally
COOKE, Richard & Dora	RICHARDSON, Richard, Diane, Robbic & Eric
DAVIS, Ernest & Elaine	ROBERTS, Susan
DAVIS, R. Helen	<b>SHARPE, Stuart &amp; Bonnie</b>
* <u>DEANE, Bill, Pam &amp; Sarah</u>	<u>SMITH, Joan S.</u>
EDINGER, Lyn	SMITH, Russ
<b>EKELAND, Cynthia G. &amp; Anita Graham</b>	*SNYDER, Arthur J. & Freida
<b>ELLSWORTH, Catherine L.</b>	<b>SNYDER, Ben &amp; Julie</b>
FAUROT, Craig & Pat	SPENCE, Sue-Ellen
* <u>FINCH, John &amp; Jean</u>	<b><u>STACK, Edward W. &amp; Christina</u></b>
GLAZER, Steven & Christine	SUSMAN, Elizabeth & Robert Grodd
GOODSPEED, Charles H.	<b>STAFFIN, Mike &amp; Betty</b>
HANOR, Katharine B.	THORNE, Edward & Judy
HARRINGTON, Angela E.	VAN HORN, James R.
<u>HARTMANN, Maryann</u>	<u>VIBBARD, Ronald &amp; Eleanor</u>
*HARVEY, Merritt & Elaine	WOLFF, James & Margaret
HELFAND, Elliot & Martha	*WYCKOFF, George W.
HOVEY, Sandi	<u>YOURNO, James</u>
*JENSEN, Margaret K.	* = Charter Member.
<u>JOHNSON, Edwin &amp; Adele</u>	<b><u> = Contributing/Sustaining Member.</u></b>

**LEANING TOWARD FLY CREEK**

One of the best-known names in Fly Creek during the second half of the nineteenth century belonged to one John Leaning, M.D. Dr. Leaning practiced in this village for some four decades, before being succeeded in Fly Creek by Elmer Ellsworth Dye, M.D.

John Kensington Leaning was born November 10, 1823, in Canajoharie, New York. He graduated from Castleton Medical College in 1849, and was a founder of the New York State Medical Association. Leaning served as principal of the Cherry Valley Lancaster School and president of the Board of Physicians and Surgeons of the Thanksgiving Hospital. A staunch Democrat, he was a member of the Otsego County American Medical Association and the Universalist Church. Dr. Leaning practiced in Fly Creek until moving to Cooperstown in 1890, where he died in April, 1904.

Leaning married Jane Gross of Cherry Valley in 1848, and they had two daughters and one son, Will E. Leaning. Will grew up in Fly Creek and married Florence M. Hooker, daughter of H. M. Hooker, and sister of John Hooker, who lived across the street. Will later moved to Gloversville, and died May 15, 1890, aged 34. [Submitted by Carolyn McLean]

**SPRAGUE LETTERS**

[The following is the text of two letters and a receipt in the possession of Sally Rezen. They were addressed to Hezekiah B. Sprague. They are copied with their original grammar and spelling.]

Cooperstown July 28<sup>th</sup> 1828

Capt Sprague

Sir an election will be held at the house of Isaac Lewis in the village of Cooperstown on Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of August next at 1 O'Clk P.M. for the purpos of filling vacancies in the line of Field Officers in the 12<sup>th</sup> Regt of Artillery – you will notify your Sub at \_\_\_\_\_ The Col. wishes if possible you would attend with your Officers – By order &c

I Lewis Adjt.

Exeter March 21<sup>st</sup> 1832

Dear Brother

I have the pleasure of informing you that Prudence, at half an hour before One O'Clock this morning presented me a fine boy, weighing Six and a half pounds – All apparently doing well and very comfortable – Angela is as well as usual – We have procured the assistance of Mrs. Whalen [?] for a few days, to lighten the burthens of nursing. She will probably stay with us as long as we wish –

Yours in \_\_\_\_\_ –

J. S. Sprague

Schuylers Lake Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 1882

Recd of J. S. Sprague Forty Five Dollars in full for Casket and attendance at funeral of Mr. H. B. Sprague Deceased

Judson Durfy

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

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