



Gilboa Historical Society

Learning about, sharing, and preserving our history

WINTER 2011, VOLUME 13.4

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Membership in the Gilboa Historical Society is based on the calendar year—as of January 1, 2012, our entire membership will only be the lifetime members. Therefore, please join us for 2012 by filling out and sending us the membership application on page 39 of this newsletter. Also check your address on the back of this newsletter and let us know of corrections or temporary addresses.

Hobart Book Village Winter Respite Series

3:00 PM, Adams Bookstore, 602 Main Street, Hobart, NY 13788. 607 538-9080

December 11, 2011: Gerry Stoner on the 1907–1927 *Annual Reports of the Board of Water Supply*, with emphasis on the Gilboa Dam, Schoharie Reservoir, and the Shandaken Tunnel.

February 19, 2012: Jim Meagley on either the 1940 census (if released) or old families who settled Hobart. This talk will be at the Hobart Community Center, Cornell Road, Hobart, NY 13788.

March 18, 2012: Barbara Balliet—Art, Commerce, Independence: Women Artists in 19th Century New York.

April 29, 2012: Robert & Johanna Titus on the Glaciers of the Hudson Valley.

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**The Gilboa Historical Society meets at 7:00 PM at the Gilboa Town Hall
on the third Wednesday of the month, March–December.**

The **Gilboa Museum**, 122 Stryker Road, is open noon–4:30
Saturdays and Sundays, from July through Labor Day, on Columbus Day weekend,
and by appointment (607 588-9413). <http://www.gilboafossils.org>

The **Tourism Map, Newsletters**, and other items of general interest
are available online at <http://www.gilboahome.com>.

Send feedback or suggestions on the Newsletter to
gerrys@gilboahome.com

Gerry Stoner, 152 Starheim Road, Stamford, NY 12167

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A 2011 TOUR OF MACKEY

in the 1930s and '40s

Franklin Clapper

The hamlet of Mackey is at the crossing of Guinea Road and Harrington/Mace Roads. Our family's store was in the southeast quadrant of this crossroad and there is some construction going on to restore it now. There had been a post office in the store, but it was taken out of the Mackey area.

I'd like to tell you of the folks that regularly shopped at the store: most of them were farmers or small businessmen from the immediate neighborhood, but we regularly had customers from further out and on a semiregular basis would have customers coming in from several miles away.

This is a stroll not only through Mackey, but also through other area hamlets. There were stores in neighboring Breakabeen, Broome Center, and Gilboa, and our customers definitely overlapped—the small stores of the 1930s and '40s did not provide one-stop shopping for all one's needs.

Taking Guinea Road north, there was my uncle's garage, then the house on the corner that was sold so many times that I can't remember all the people who lived there. Then there was a large house owned by John Goodfellow who lived in one end and rented out the rest of the house (now this is in the Clark family). Mrs. Ziller lived in the Lee farm home that was set well back from the road. She was a most outspoken lady from the city and would get raving mad, stand out in the middle of the square, and scream and shout about the person. She put on quite a show.

To your right is Safford Hill and you then come to Guinea Corners—a crossroads with Campbell Road to the east and Kniskern and Bremer Roads to the west. Let's go to the right on Campbell Road. While this area has the traditional lands for the Saffords and the Beckers, the road itself is a good example of the migration of transplants from New York City. Along Campbell to the Keyser Kill you will find the Swedish Petersons, Hungarian Strellas, Russian Jurieds who had bought the farm of Jay and Jennie Smith, and a few German families. The Strellas sold to Dave and Joan Goldstein—in all, the area was a mix of new and old, and all were good farmers and good neighbors.

Just to the north of Campbell Road is Becker Road. That was the home of one of the traditional families in the area with large holdings. North of the Beckers were the farms of Andrew Moore and his son Birdsley. Virginia Peterson and Thelma Serrie were Moores, and Virginia still lives in the schoolhouse where her mother and grandmother taught.

The Mattice farms were large operations, with Richard (Dickie) Mattice on the left and Ford Mattice on the right. Ford's son Jay was a longtime supervisor of the town before Stewart Mace. Gideon VanWormer was the last farm in Gilboa—back then he owned what is now David Hallock's farm.

Going west from Guinea Corners: Kniskern, Bremer, and Allen Hill Roads weren't developed too much when I was a kid, but a lot of Andrew Moore's farmland was down there and we bought a lot of firewood for the store from that area.

Back at Mackey, my parents lived in the house across the street (now Shirley Kutzscher's), and my grandparents lived just to the west (Thompson's). Next, on the south of Mace Road, there was a black man, Cliff Dunkle. He was a real nice guy who would come into the store and talk on end. He was blind but was a really fine talker and storyteller. Then came Bill and Etta Reed and their son Harrison, who worked sometimes as a clerk for my father.

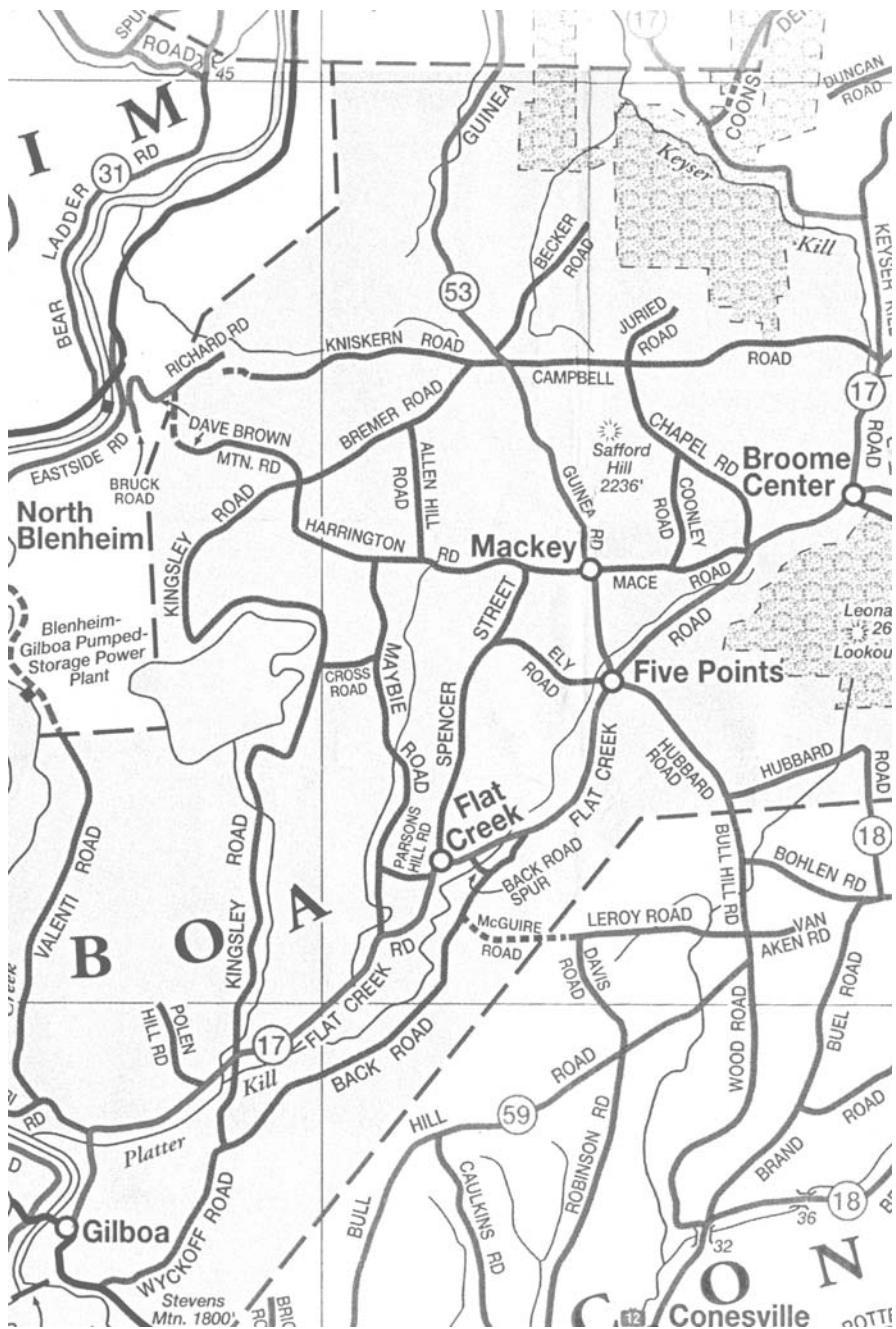
East of that there was a cluster of houses for three generations of Mace family farms that had been started earlier by Hobart Mace. The second Mace generation was Sellick and Stanley. Sellick married Inez Reed and had two girls, Vera (Brooks) and Irene (Rivenburg), whose children still live in the Mackey area. Sellick died early, however, and the Ivan Reed family farmed it for a while. Inez then sold to George and Evelyn Scutt Bailey (George was the brother of Maude Haskin and Clyda Mace).

Stanley and Gladys Mace had several children, and the oldest, Stewart, carried on the farm on Mace Road. Stewart was a town supervisor for a number of years, and his wife, Clyda Belle Mace, was a wonderful writer of rural life.

Bert and Rita Proper lived just past Coonley Road on the left (where Jakey Loucks lives now). They had two daughters, Frida and Eva, and a son, Freeman. Bert was a great fisherman, loved fishing in the reservoir, and took me along a few times.

The Chapel Church had a sporadically active history, and just to the north of the church lived a man named Pickett (no relation to Vern and Dottie Pickett), who would walk over to the store with a sack and pick up his groceries, and trudge back home. There was also a creamery just past Chapel Road on the left of Flat Creek. Levere Fox was the manager of the creamery, and he and his wife Laura lived across the street. They moved out to a similar position in Mallory, New York, where we visited them once.

Past the creamery but still before Broome Center was a farm on the left run by Amilda Spencer and Amos Flint. They sold the farm to the family of Mrs. Clarence Loucks. Amilda came back to Mackey many times to see people, and Amos went into insurance.



Map excerpted from the Tourism Map of the Town of Gilboa and Surrounding Areas.
Courtesy of the Gilboa Historical Society.

Just past them was Ed and Leland Cook (where Herman and Nina Forsell later lived). The Cook farm was very active, and they impressed me with the amount of milk they were producing from a small farm—they made 9 or 10 cans from only a few cows, and they also sold gravel for all the town and county roads in the area.

That brings us to Broome Center, and most of the people there used Clive and Edith Bailey's store for their immediate supplies. Clive and my father had a mutually helping attitude. I remember gypsies visiting our store—they were a group of transients who would come in a car and enter the store. They were good shoplifters, and you couldn't keep them all in sight at the same time. My father would simply see them coming, go to the front, lock the door, and then call Clive if they left going up Mace Road toward Broome Center. And I remember calls from Clive telling my dad to lock the doors.

Clive's store wasn't as big as my father's—almost a convenience store—so we had customers who lived beyond Broome Center. For instance, Harry Foland's farm was on the right, and beyond them on the left some German folks would come to our store to not only get supplies but also to pick the brains of my father and others about crops to plant and how to handle farm problems—our store was a great place to get advice about common problems, like a good hardware store nowadays.

Further out on Broome Center Road, just into the town of Broome, was an area called Blueberry Hill. A man named Bell carried in most of his construction supplies and built a restaurant there that was supposedly great, with customers from Middleburgh and beyond. After Bell's, there was one more family just beyond the Long Woods, where Ben Luhuta lived. Benny was a cheerleader for the Gilboa-Conesville School—maybe the first boy cheerleader they had there. He was very lively on the field and evidently on the road—he had to walk to Broome Center to get the bus and would walk all the way back home from school when there was a game, but he did it regularly.

Returning to Mackey and looking west: the first significant area was not a house or farm, but rather was the grove for the Mackey picnic. When I was a kid in the last half of the 1930s, the picnic was a real big event and even people who had moved away would come back in August to visit. It was sponsored by Burton Scutt, and my father had a real big banner that he would string across the street, and the band would start at the store and would play the crowd in. One time, I led them in on my pony, and I was a real big shot then! The only event like the Mackey picnic was Farmer's picnic on Doc Leonard Mountain in the 1920s and early 1930s, and I heard that about 1000 people came from all over for that as well. But to me, the Mackey picnic was the only thing that existed.

We were unable to obtain a picture of the Mackey Picnic. If any of you have one, please contact Gerry Stoner or Franklin Clapper, and we will publish it in the next newsletter. Please.

We had only a couple of people on Spencer Street who were customers—Spencer was very sparsely populated at that time. One family was that of Morris Hager who had two boys, George and Julian. I remember a screen door up there, and the cat and dog could just walk right through it both ways. Later, Julian went down to Delaware County and set the world on fire—he created a huge dairy farm, his two boys both went to Cornell, and then they carried on the Hager farm operation. The Hagers were the first people I heard of that used computers in conjunction with dairy farming.

A Mr. Barlow also lived on Spencer, and just off Spencer on Ely Road was Buster Riggs—another person who did his shopping on foot with a sack.

Back up on Harrington Road going west was Anton and Katherine Harrington. They were both surveyors, but they loved Jersey cows and so they also had a small, brushy farm with a few animals. For years Katherine wrote for the *Mirror Recorder*, and published *Ballads of the Hard Hills and Other Poems*.

Back then, Allen Hill Road was the site of the Clapper homestead, but there was hardly anyone else living there. The Fastert brothers (we'll meet them in a minute) built three camps there, and I bought some land there and now my kids are building homes on it. All the other homes there were built more recently.

Next, you come to Pete and Lettie Mattice's farm. Lettie was Pete's sister and they were old-timers in the area—more, people just *liked* them. Pete was a great trout fisherman, but he got along in age, had little equipment, and turned his horses in for a 1929 Chevy. He loved his local history—so much that he got involved in talking and kinda forgot about farming or bringing in the hay. He had the hayfields that were just sitting there, but no way to get the hay in. Area farmers—Maude Haskin's husband Almon, my father, and Harry Wyckoff (grandfather of the current Wyckoffs)—held a bee to cut and store his white horse hay in his barn on a really nice day. That was the last hay bee I can remember and was more fun—and much easier—than trying to bring in your own hay. The farm later was taken over by the Sullivans for years, and Ed Mower and family now use it as part of their operation.

Continue on Harrington Road past Maybie Road and you come to the house on the right where I was born. My dad sold city-born John Shaffer the house and probably about 50 acres.

Beyond Shaffer's land were the Ushers on the left, and they sold the farm to Otto Bremer. Otto's brother Ernest (and his wife, Emma Fastert Bremer) had the next farm on John Brown Mountain, followed by Emma's brothers. The

Fasterts arrived very early in the Depression, poor as can be and knowing nothing about cows. They asked my uncle Phillip in the garage and my father in the store how to get started in farming and believe it or not, they turned out to be very successful farmers—as good as any on the hill—before they got through. This area populated by the Bremers and Fasterts was typical of life around Mackey at that time—a family would buy property near each other, expand outward to form a community of brothers, and through marriage expand the support group even more.

On the left, you can turn onto Kingsley Road—these roads all connect, don't you know—and so do the people! Well, bear to the left to get to the Roy Mower and Burton Scutt farms up where the upper reservoir now is. Roy's grandchild, Ed Junior, is the only farmer still farming that area.

Past these farms and the reservoir, Kingsley Road continues due south to Flat Creek—and we still had regular customers from this area. Phil and Louis Kingsley had two farms along there, and Louis was also a long-term superintendent of roads in the town and was nigh unbeatable. Louis's son, Alton, took over the farm, and later sold a portion of the land to the campgrounds on the upper reservoir of the Power Authority.



The Haying Bee at the Pete and Lettie Mattice farm. Back, from left: Andrew Moore, Peter Mattice, [can't recall the two standing to the rear], Almon Haskin, Barney [from Harry Wyckoff's farm], Birdsley Moore, Franklin Clapper, Sr. Front, from left: Gordon Newton [Peter Mattice's nephew], Raymond Whitehead, Joey Smith, Franklin Clapper Jr., "Dutch" Brainerd, Hamlin Whithead [Raymond's father], Harry Briggs [from Harry Wyckoff's farm], George Hager, Julian Hager. Photo courtesy of Maude Haskin.

South from Mackey are Maybie and Flat Creek Roads. As we were already out on Harrington, let's take Maybie south to Flat Creek, and then Flat Creek Road north to Mackey.

Raymond Whitbeck's father lived on the Richtmeyer farm just below the Cross Road. I don't remember Mr. Richtmeyer, but Ray moved up with his father and worked for my father on the farm. I've known Ray nearly all my life. He just passed away.

Louis Zack from Middleburgh moved into the Richtmeyer farm with his wife Esther. He wasn't much of a farmer, but then black-and-white televisions started to be the rage and he did real well selling them and then setting the home up with antenna and wires. Louis had no store, but everyone was anxious for TV and he did very well, relying on word of mouth in an area that had no electronics outlets. His business carried over into the color TV world as well, and he then moved to Florida.

There were three small farms: John Fraser, Sid Keyser, and Sid's son and his wife Beatrice. Then you go down Maybie to the Raymond Maybie farm. Charlie Easley was a hired hand there and also was a good dairyman. Both Raymond and Charlie were single for a long time. Raymond married Bertha Brown who soon passed, and then married Helen Krieger who was raised on the Becker farm on what is now Crescent Road. Further down on the right there is a long lane with maple trees on each side: the Ed Richtmeyer farm that for many years was my father's best customer for feed.

Ralph Brainard lived down on the left, and then came Ward Mackey's farm at Parson's Hill Road where Heidi Hallock now lives. Mackey's wife, Carrie, and Ed Richtmeyer's wife, Allie, were sisters and best friends with my mother.

At the bottom of Maybie Road was Mr. Wagner and his son. The son could preach like it was going out of style, and often stood in for the Flat Creek preacher if that person was on vacation. The father made very stiff home brew and loved to share it with my father who faithfully noted, "Oh boy, that's strong!"

In the late 1930s, Dump Road paralleled Flat Creek Road from Wyckoff Road north of the Gilboa-Conesville School to northeast of the hamlet of Flat Creek. It didn't have a lot of people on it, and was just a dirt road that was a favorite ride of mine and Walt Wyckoff's because it was unpaved—it was easier on our horses' hooves. It probably got paved as early as it did to better carry the truck traffic to the dump which was on the northern end of the road.

There were a cluster of Browns: Orpha, Stanley, and Raymond; later, after the War, Stanley's family was increased in size by Donna [Carpinelli] and Janette [Reynolds]. Right across the road from Janette was a sawmill.

Going north, Joe and Sophie McGuire had a long lane on the right, and there was a good honey man on the corner of Flat Creek and Back Road: Ray Schermerhorn—a big operation run by a little guy. The bees and their hives have completely disappeared from the area now.

Let's go back to the lower junction of Flat Creek and Back Road.

Coming up Flat Creek from Maybie, you had the parsonage, and then there was Mr. Bailey on the left. He lived on the farm, and sold it to Gene Hallock (now where Bill and Alicia Terry live). Gene's father, Ivan, came next. Ivan had four boys: Gene, Harold, Carlton, and Glen (Chip).

Vernon Pickett Senior ran a sawmill in Conesville, and Bessie Cleveland had a large farm on Flat Creek. Bessie got Vern to come up to build and operate a mill for Bessie, so Vern Pickett Junior therefore was always around that area when he was growing up. Bessie also had a hired hand, Ernie Briggs.

Next on the road was John Hubbard who only had a house there, and was a brother of Elmer, followed by Merle Hubbard and his wife—Merle had handled rural delivery and then became the postmaster in Gilboa—and Edsel Fancher lived where Tom Molle is.

Edsel was my schoolbus driver, and his daughters were Phyllis and an older daughter, Marjory, who I think was down in Sidney, going to school. She was sick and came back home to recover, and then took post-graduate work at Gilboa-Conesville School. High school post-graduate work was common at that time—a graduate might not be able to go to college or relocate for family reasons, and would often take elective courses they had not had a chance to take in their normal high school schedule.

Well, tuberculosis had been eradicated in our area, but it turned out that Marjory had contracted TB in Sidney, and that spread virulently when she went back to school in Gilboa. About 25 of us reacted on the arm test; we lost one girl; her boyfriend was okay, but his best buddy also came down with it. We thought we had cleared TB out of the neighborhood, but it came back with a vengeance. We finally got it out, but had to have annual screenings.

Past Fancher were the Stannards who sold to Maude and Almon Haskin. Bessie Cleveland had invited people in as tenants in the summer, and Maude and Almon also pushed this boarding business for their farm—they had up to 40 people there, and then expanded the barn and the dairy business. There were no home freezers then, so Almon would drive up to the freezer locker in Middleburgh, pick up the makings for the day's main dish, and back home Maude would be baking away. You'd think she'd be worn out by now, but she still makes her jams and jellies. Ruth Hallock and others—many of the people on

Flat Creek—were into the boarding business and built small stores, ice cream parlors, and other attractions for this summer trade.

That brings us to Five Points: Hubbard Hill Road to the right, Flat Creek continuing slightly to the right, Guinea Road straight ahead, and Ely Road to the left.

Going onto Hubbard Hill, the corner farm was owned by the parents of Rudolph and Charles Blakesley, who I went to school with, and next to them just below the soft turn to the right was Lyle Blakesley. Lyle was in the Flat Creek Church, its Sunday School superintendent, and played the violin. Ambrozino lived past Lyle, and then the Bollands who had two daughters. Doc Best thought these girls were especially worthy and so he helped them go to college. I have heard they were quite successful.

The first Hubbard farm was Elmer's. He was one of the few Democratic town supervisors (I had been told that my grandfather also was a Democratic town supervisor). Elmer and Aggie were just above the sharp right-hand turn, and on the corner was Oscar Hall. Oscar was a widower, and Myrtle and Otis were sibs, and all were Flat Creek Church people. I used to call on Myrtle. Later, when she couldn't handle the farm, she retired to a seniors home. At that time, poor soul, she had no one.

The next place after you make the sharp right-hand turn was the Swartz family. The son pitched for the school's baseball team, and there were two very nice girls who were around my sister's age. Came up from the city, were very poor, but they survived and were a nice family.

Back at Five Points: We have already covered Ely Road, coming in from Spencer Street. The Cyrus Place farm was on the stub of Guinea Road that extended below the store to Five Points, and it had 50–60 cows—a good sized operation for the time. He worked hard all his life, but he never got ahead much. I remember prices for milk being below the cost of producing the milk and dairy-men were really hurting. There was a milk strike because of these prices, and his wife, Grace, had a Maytag washer. Well, they had all this milk, and so she skimmed off all the cream they could, put it in the Maytag washer, and made butter for everyone! They had three children: Ada married Archie Brainerd, Josephine married Vernon Lord in Flat Creek, and Charlie worked for the town.

The last portion of Flat Creek Road—from Five Points to Broome Center: Lyle Spencer with children Kay and Cecil. Lyle played in the dance orchestra, but wasn't too much of a farmer. We had several good extra jobs back then. I think

that farm is all grown up now. Funny about the Spencer name: I have known several Spencers, but none of them lived on Spencer Street.



Franklin Clapper was born on a Gilboa farm in 1928. His father took over the Mackey General Store in 1930 and they moved into the hamlet. The author graduated from Gilboa-Conesville in 1945 and became a farmer. He married Phyllis Dewell of North Blenheim in 1948 and had 3 sons and a daughter. He has been a farmer in Breakabeen, a merchant in Preston Hollow, and an insurance agent retiring in 1995. Phyllis died in 1966, and he and his second wife, Isabel, live in Middleburgh.

Flood Relief Organizations

- Blenheim:** { Rural Area Revitalization Effort, Inc., a non-profit at 125 Creamery Road, North Blenheim, NY 12131, (518 827-3166, rarely.org) and/or North Blenheim Presbyterian Church, Clauverwie Road, Middleburgh, NY 12122
- Breakabeen:** {
- Middleburgh:** Village of Middleburgh Flood Relief, P.O. Box 789, Middleburgh, NY 12122
- Prattsville:** Prattsville Relief Fund, c/o NBT Bank, P.O. Box 380, Grand Gorge, NY 12434
- Schoharie:** Schoharie Recovery Fund, P.O. Box 111, Schoharie, NY 12157

Free Winter/Spring Film Series to Begin

The Delaware County Historical Association and the Cannon Free Library in Delhi will show films that focus on our region's local history on the second Thursday evening of each month.

December 8, 6 PM: Bob and Alice Jacobson's *The Destruction of Shavertown*, a personal look at mid-1950s communities as the valley of the East Branch was readied to be inundated by the rising waters of the Pepacton Reservoir.

January 12, 6 PM: *Dairy Farms of Andes*, a film created entirely by staff and students at Andes Central School.

**Cannon Library, 40 Elm Street,
Delhi, NY 13753 607 746-2662**

**DCHA: 607 746-3849, email dcha@delhi.net, www.dcha-ny.org
Free Admission—donations are gratefully accepted!**

THEY LIVED IN THESE HILLS

These articles were submitted by folks who are familiar with the families and personalities described. These short essays are not meant to be an inclusive history of a person or time; instead, they remind us of some of the personalities and events that occurred in Gilboa and Conesville over the past 200 years.

You can help on this: please suggest people and events that should be included, and you might also want to send your written experiences to be published anonymously in this series.

As you can see below, we also are interested in reproducing photographs of interest showing the lifestyles of earlier times. Let us borrow your photos to scan, and we will return them promptly with digital files that you can then have “developed” at local stores like RiteAid or Walmart.

Please give us (email, write, or phone) your comments and contributions: gerrys@gilboahome.com; GHS Newsletter, 152 Starheim Road, Stamford, NY 12167; fax 815 346-5272; or phone 607 652-2665/866 652-2665.

Clifton Hubbard

As a schoolboy, I worked part-time on the Hubbard Road farm. We would be using pitchforks loading hay onto a wagon, and I would admire how Clifton would lift such huge loads. The handle of his fork would bend way over, a testament to the strength of the man and the tool. I would try to imitate his actions, and this certainly helped me build up my own body.

I later drove dump trucks for him on jobs such as rebuilding the Keyserkill Road. One day, the rear end went out of a big International and we had to struggle to fix it alongside the road. Lifting that heavy unit in place was a challenge, but Clifton never lost his cool. And Frances Hubbard was a wonderful lady—so were the wholesome meals she served.

Franklin Hess

We would sometimes sell livestock to Franklin, who had a natural ability to herd and load unruly animals on his truck. When I needed emergency capital, he would always help me get a loan from the bank—a kindness not forgotten.

Vernon Pickett

As World War II started, I was in love with trucks and wanted to get into a transportation unit despite having no driver's license at the time. I learned to “double clutch” my old 1935 truck to impress the recruiters, but I knew I needed more hands-on experience driving bigger trucks. Vernon Pickett Sr. was the Conesville Road Superintendent at that time and was kind enough to hire me

to drive a dump truck. This experience helped me pass my Army driver's test on big trucks with a high score—at age 18 I had accomplished a goal thanks to Vernon Pickett, and I was really happy! He was a good, hard-working, down-to-earth man, and his wife Elma was a good cook!

The Case and Griffin Families

Calvin Case was born in Simsbury, Connecticut April 10, 1765. William E. Roscoe's 1882 *History of Schoharie County* tells that Case and Elisha Griffin were among the first settlers of the Broome Center area in what is now north-east Gilboa. Case settled the former Merel Hubbard farm and Griffin settled next door on the former Almon Haskin farm. Old deeds call this the Allen Griffin place.

Case was married to Jerusha Griffin, the daughter of Elisha Allen Griffin, in Connecticut on August 2, 1793. Their first two children were born in Connecticut—Luther (1796) and Erastus (1798). The third child, Calvin Jr., was born in Gilboa (at that time the Town of Broome) on November 29, 1799, and eleven more children followed. By Calvin Jr.'s date of birth, 1799, we know when the Case family arrived in Gilboa.

The Griffins also had a large family. Roscoe's *History* tells of one experience of one of the many Elisha Griffins: "At the Town meeting of February 20, 1849, no choice of supervisor was made owing to the candidates, Luman Reed and Henry Tibbitts, ending in a tie. Elisha Griffin was appointed to fill the vacancy."

There is a lovely little walled cemetery a short distance from the Hubbard barn. At least 25 of the Case family are buried there. Jerusha and Calvin were hardy New England stock who lived to be 88 and 71. Many Griffins are also buried here.

Calvin Case and his wife Jerusha Griffin's fourteen children have many, many descendants in this area.

Sources: Local historian's records, Case genealogy at the Albany State Library, and William E. Roscoe's *History of Schoharie County 1882*.

The Best House Museum VICTORIAN TEA Saturday, December 10th, 2011, 1–4 PM

1568 Clauverwie, Middleburgh, NY 12122
(Just to the east of the Middleburgh School)

518 827-4239 518 827-5142

Open Winter by Appointment

THE IRISH COME TO GILBOA

Beatrice Mattice

During the mid-to-late 1800s, 600,000 Irish people left their homeland to come to the United States. Most of these immigrants were Irish Catholics from the southern and western regions of Ireland. They were poor, unskilled workers who owned no land of their own.

They came to America in search of a better life. In 1845, the Potato Famine struck Ireland. Almost overnight, a fungus attacked potato crops in the Irish fields and few healthy potatoes were left to use for planting the next year's crop. For five years in a row, the potato crops in Ireland failed. The worst year of the blight came in 1847, which sometimes is called Black '47. The potato famine left Irish peasants without means to survive or value to pay the rent on their land.

Many of the Irish moved to the South Gilboa section of the Blenheim Patent, with a just a few in other sections of the town. (The South Gilboa area and all lands on the north side of Schoharie Creek were in the Town of Blenheim until the Town of Gilboa was established in 1848.) The Catholic Cemetery was their burial place on Blenheim Ridge (now the hamlet of South Gilboa). The first Catholic Church in Schoharie County was established in the Town of Blenheim. Possibly this church was near the Catholic Cemetery.

In 1815 William and John Maham arrived from Ireland. 1825 Alexander Watson. 1829 John Dunn. 1831 William and Mary Lafferty who were from Kellybegs in Donegal and Doherty and Frances Johnson. 1835 Thomas and Bridget McKabe, and John Gray.

1837 brought Patrick and Catharine Canan, and Anne Welch. 1838 Robert Ross also Isabel, Samuel and James KcKie. 1839 Thomas Mersey. 1840 Michael Foland, Jane (Mrs. John) Gray, Patrick and Mary McGinnis. 1841 Barney Donahue, Thomas and Jane Lane, Thomas Conboy, Bridget Creighton.

1842 William and Mary (Boyer) Patrick, and Jane Giblen from County Roscomon, 1844 Thomas York. 1846 Michael and Mary Green, John Wright. 1848 Lawrence Sculy, Patrick and Julia Hone, Bridget and Margaret Daley, also John Cammell, Robert and Mary Farley.

1849 Charles Moore, Thomas, Thomas 2 and Sarah Cellars, John and Ann Burns, James Galvin. 1850 Jeremiah and James Delaney, Peter Jennings, Michael Dun, Patrick Kelly. 1851 Patrick and John Moore, Margaret Cosgriff, Thomas, Dolly, Mary Patrick, Bridget, Hellen, Amanda and Ann Cating, George and Catharine Lacy, James and Sally Henny, and Ann Sculy.

1852 Michael and Johanna Delaney, Ellen Moore and children Mary, James,

Ellen Jr., Alice and Catharine. Patrick Govern, Mary Cellars, Thomas and Mary Murry, Catharine Burns.

In later years before 1900, Charlotte (Mrs. John) Mackey, William Hayes, Thomas York, Maude (Mrs. Alvin) Richtmyer, Michael McGary, Patric Roger, M. and Louie McMahon, Peter and Ellen Waughan, John and mother Anna Digman, and Michael and Bridget Govern, moved to Gilboa from Ireland.

This list is not complete. Many could not write their names and signed the naturalization papers with an X, so the spelling of their names is sometimes questionable. The list of naturalized citizens shows that often just the “man of the house” became naturalized.

The above information was taken from the 1855–1900 censuses of Gilboa. It is interesting that the Town of Gilboa had 100 Irish people in 1855 and Blenheim 56, as compared to Conesville 13 and Broome 10.



Beatrice Mattice is the prolific historian for the Town of Conesville who has contributed to the New York Roots Web site, is the author of They Walked These Hills Before Me: An Early History of the Town of Conesville, and has written a number of articles and treatises. She loves music and plays the organ at Gilboa's Methodist Church.

Around The Neighborhood in the Winter Months

Gilboa Museum: Open by appointment, 607 588-9413

Best House Museum: Open by appointment, 518-827-5142

Stone Fort: The bookstore-on-the-web is open 24/7. Otherwise (please confirm with Laura at 518 295-7192), the physical store, group tours for students, and genealogical work (generally on a Wednesday) can also be arranged. Old Stone Fort Museum, 145 Fort Road, Schoharie, NY 12157.
www.TheOldStoneFort.org

Zadock Pratt Museum: Open by appointment, 518-299-3395

All Gilboa Historical Society Newsletters are available free at
<http://www.gilboahome.com/>.
Email this address to friends & family.

THE RIFLE OF TIMOTHY MURPHY

A Material Contributor to the Victory at Saratoga

Carle J. Kopecky

Amidst all the losses incurred in the recent flooding, one of the region's most iconic historical artifacts has returned to the public domain.

The Old Stone Fort Museum announces the exhibition of one of the most famous firearms of the American Revolution. Timothy Murphy's double-barreled rifle is nearly as well-known as its legendary owner, the sniper who is credited with shooting British General Simon Fraser in the Battle of Saratoga. Long held in private collections, the rifle is among a number of objects acquired by the museum just before Hurricane Irene, on annually renewable loan from George P. Wilber III of Howes Cave, NY. The Fort museum, situated on high ground, was not affected by the flood waters.

The Murphy rifle's two .40-caliber barrels are mounted one above the other, with two wooden ramrods carried alongside. The stock has a single flintlock stamped with the name of J. Golcher and a brass patch box. After firing the top barrel, a small lever in front of the trigger guard releases a catch allowing the barrels to be rotated to fire the other one. The name J. Worly is stamped on one barrel.

The rifle is accompanied by a page of accounts attributed to Easton, Pennsylvania gunsmith Isaac Worly. The entry dated February 19, 1776, lists "a Rifle Made for Timothy Murphy a two barrel Rifle—with both barrels Rifled only

one made." The price was 20 pounds, about \$3,000 to \$5,000 in today's money. He also lists some piece work done for John Golcher, the well known lock-maker, also of Easton.

The weapon is rather short for an American rifle of the time, but this compensates somewhat for the additional weight of the second barrel. The length may have been further reduced when the gun was converted to percussion ignition in the 1800s. This was



The two-barrelled rifle of Timothy Murphy on long-term loan from George P. Wilber III of Howes Cave, NY. Photo courtesy of Carle J. Kopecky, Director, Old Stone Fort Museum and the Schoharie County Historical Society.

apparently done by sawing off the breech ends of the barrels with their attached pan and frizzen mechanisms, replacing the breech plugs and mounting a cap nipple on each. A makeshift cap hammer, brazed between the jaws of the cock, replaced the flint.

The museum also obtained a flintlock rifle attributed to Murphy's comrade, David Ellerson, and a powder horn. If we can verify its authenticity, this rifle would also be significant. The story is that although Murphy was the better marksman, he often borrowed Ellerson's rifle which was more accurate than his own. The museum has long had other objects associated with the two heroes, who both survived long after the Revolution. Some of these objects may be from later in their lives, but they are important historical objects nevertheless!

The acquisition of these guns was facilitated by collector Thom Boynton, who has lent the museum militiaman Nicholas Veeder's Brown Bess musket and other objects and documents from the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.



The Old Stone Fort Museum Complex celebrates and preserves the rich, historic legacy of New York's beautiful Schoharie Valley. Buildings include an early 1700s home, a 1780s Dutch barn, an 1830s law office, and an 1890s one-room schoolhouse as well as the 1772 stone church that was fortified and attacked by British forces in 1780. Schoharie County Historical Society and Carle J. Kopecky, Director, Old Stone Fort Museum, 145 Fort Road, Schoharie, NY 12157, 518 295-7192, director@SchoharieHistory.net

Bottle Auction—Bring a Friend

Bring an attractively wrapped bottle—of anything that you yourself would like—to be auctioned off for the benefit of our society.

The Bidders bit on the chance that the bottle contains something special they would like to have—but don't unwrap the purchase until all the bidding is over. You can trade your bottle with someone else after the last bottle is "SOLD!"

Tony VanGlad, auctioneer extraordinaire, will again lead the festivities with the help of his elves, Kristin and Al. And of course, delicious refreshments will be served.

Historical Society Annual Bottle Auction
December 21st at 7 PM
Gilboa Town Hall

*Excerpts from an article in the Fall-Winter 1996
Schoharie County Historical Review*

FLOOD HISTORY SCHOHARIE VALLEY FLOODS

Chester G. Zimmer, Former Town of Wright Historian

Nothing makes headlines in the local newspapers of old, as well as today, like floods and bad fires. I remember an old saying ‘You can fight fire but not water.’

Following are local flood news—edited from my files of old Schoharie newspapers. These papers were at the Stone Fort Library at Schoharie and the State Library at Albany.

Floods were often called freshets back in the 1800s, and there were some really bad floods in the Schoharie Valley before the Gilboa Dam was completed (about 1926) and more recently the power dam at Blenheim.

History Sometimes Repeats Itself.

1839—January 31 Great and Destructive Flood. The destruction on the Schoharie Creek and its tributary streams is greater than has taken place within the memory of our oldest inhabitants.

Col. Z. Pratt at Prattsville lost his tannery, saw mill, and dam. The bridge was swept away, also the grist mill carried off. At Gilboa the dwelling house of Daniel Chichester was swept away also his store and lumber and tools belonging to an extensive wheelwright establishment. The water rose twenty-six feet and so suddenly it was impossible to save much. The damage at Esperance is said to be considerable.

(In the History of the Schoharie Reformed Church, mentioned elsewhere in the Review, is the following “Then as now, there were occasional floods in the Schoharie Valley. One such flood is recorded by the Rev. John Scribner in vivid detail on the fly leaf of the Book of Baptismal Records. January 26th 1839—“That day is remarkable for one of the greatest floods that was ever known in Schoharie. The water rising so as to surround the Parsonage on the east, west and north, & doing much damage, here and through the whole length of Fox Creek carrying away nearly all the bridges & dams & doing much damage to fields & fences.”)

1849—November 15 The Late Freshet. The rains of last week welled the Schoharie Creek causing it to overflow its banks into the low lands to a vast

extent doing considerable amount of damage. Sheep and cattle were lost.

We understand that at Middleburgh considerable damage was done to mill dams and bridges, corn crops and fences. The water was full four feet higher than it has been known for the last 20 years. The foundation of Mr. David Becker's store was undermined and fell [this mill was on the creek back of today's Mill Farm Greenhouses]. Great fears were entertained for the bridge and for the new works at Scribner mills. No damage except siding on the Grist mill.

1854—May 4 The Flood. The rain for the past week has caused immense damage. The Schoharie Creek we understand was higher than it has been since the memorable flood of January 1839. But except for the loss of the valuable bridge across that stream at North Blenheim, which was swept away, we have not heard of any other severe disasters.

1855—September 6. The North Blenheim Bridge, The New Covered Bridge. Let those who charge the inhabitants of Schoharie County with a lack of enterprise travel up the Schoharie Creek valley and see the new covered bridge now about completed on the site of the one carried off in the Spring Flood of 1854. Its span is 226 ft. supported by only two abutments with no middle pier.

1856—August 21. Tremendous Freshet. We have been visited with the most disastrous freshet ever witnessed in this county. The water rising in all the streams to a great height submerging fields of grain, carrying off bridges, barns and their contents, fences, etc.

An awful calamity occurred near Crary's mill on Fox Creek about 1 o'clock this morning [today's Shutters Corners in Schoharie]. Mr. Peter Wilty, residing on a small island, was aroused from his sleep by water rushing into the house. He was able to save himself before part of the house floated away. It is supposed his wife and 5-year-old granddaughter are lost. Mr. Wilty's barn, cattle, hogs and grain were swept away by the flood.

The flood last week was very destructive in the southern and eastern parts of the county. \$50,000 is a low estimate of the losses. At Gilboa very serious damage has been done. The cotton mill was badly damaged and the tannery inundated with a large loss. In Blenheim, many farms along the Creek have suffered severe losses. The splendid new bridge came near a total wreck. It will be repaired.

At Middleburgh, Judge Danforth's bridge, which has withstood the freshets of forty years, is seriously damaged.

At Gallupville the rush of water was tremendous and injuries sustained very large. The Plank Road through Waldenville was entirely carried away. Bridges here and on the Albany and Schoharie Plank Road are all gone. We suppose \$20,000 will hardly cover the loss in the Town of Wright.

1857—February 12. The freshet on Sunday last seriously injured the toll bridge across the Schoharie Creek at this place. The bridge at Middleburgh is a total wreck and will have to be rebuilt. It was built in 1813. The bridge at Central Bridge over the Schoharie on the Schoharie and Richmondville Plank Road is much injured, but it is still considered safe.

1857—November 19. New covered bridge at Middleburgh (a toll bridge owned by Judge Danforth on the old Loonenberg Turnpike, from Athens to Sharon Springs) At the advanced age of seventy-seven years, Judge Danforth has not only begun, but completed, an enterprise which might well tax all the energies of the most vigorous and determined of his contemporaries.

1869—Spring. It's reported that seventy bridges in the town of Berne were destroyed by the flood, and page 39 in the *History of the Town of Blenheim 1797-1959* reports that an especially severe freshet washed out a wide channel across the western approach of the covered bridge necessitating the erection of a small wooden extension across the gap. (This was replaced by an iron structure in 1895.)

1869—October 7. The Schoharie Creek overflowed its bank and the entire Schoharie flats were covered. We are told that it was twenty-two inches higher than ever before. The village was entirely surrounded at one time. It was feared the water would actually flow through the business section. Damage was done to the Schoharie Valley Railroad line. The brick kiln of Mr. Jas. Waterbury was destroyed, and a small barn near the Schoharie bridge was carried away. At Middleburgh, the grist mill and dam are damaged, and a bridge at Shutters Corners and one on the road leading to Central Bridge have been carried away.

Nearly all the bridges in the south part of the county have been carried away. At Gallupville nearly all the bridges across the Fox Creek and Kings Creek are all gone, and a great portion of the old plank road near Kings Creek is washed away. A barn and wagon house of J.J. Dominic is swept away. Alfred Zeh's mill dam is destroyed. Allen Brewster's carding mill property partly destroyed. Henry Flansburgh and Adam Warner lost barns and lumber. The families on the lower end of Factory Street were compelled to leave. No lives lost.

1874—June 11. *Disaster-Storm and Flood-Rain and Hail*

Little brooklets to mighty rivers

Great destruction of property and loss of life

Hundreds of acres of rich land swept away.

From the news copy it was a very unusual bad thunderstorm with incessant lightning. Storm damage was spotty, small streams did more damage than the Schoharie.

1901—December 15. A Real Flood. The waters of the Schoharie River reached the highest point in 32 years. The highest point reached was only second to the great flood of 1869. About Schoharie village the flats were flooded, the railroad tracks being covered and cellars filled.

At Middleburgh the water spread over the flats on the west side carrying off thousands of hop poles. The farm house of H.V. Pinder was surrounded. Along River Street the water filled the road flowing over the Danforth lawn. Many cellars were filled.

Much damage done at Fultonham, Breakabeen and Blenheim.

1902—March 6. Another Flood. The Schoharie spread over the flats in many places. Damage done by several ice jams. One damaged one of the piers of the Middleburgh Covered Bridge. At Shutters Corners a bridge was carried away, also at West Berne on the Fox Creek. The Mohawk and Hudson Valleys had damage estimated at three million dollars.

1903—October 15. A Disastrous Flood. Schoharie Valley Becomes a Vast Lake.

A flood which eclipsed that of 1869 filled the valley from mountain to mountain at some points, swept with resistless power down the Schoharie Valley destroying crops of corn, buckwheat and hay, carrying away fences, buildings, bridges, dams and hop poles, tearing great furrows through the valuable lands of the valley. Such is the flood of 1903, which came as a result of a tremendous rain storm which began on Thursday, making a record of over 10 inches in 24 hours.

Damage near Middleburgh. At Middleburgh the water rose to within ten inches of the covered bridge, and at one time it was feared it would be carried away. Main Street was covered as far as the Baker House, boats being run up that far. The cellars of the hotels and stores were all flooded and the merchants moved their goods to the first floor.

Families on Foundry Street were removed in boats and carriages. The water in the creamery was deep. River Street was covered its entire length. The boats plying about made it look like Venice. The first floors of the old Sanford home-
stead and the Reformed Church were covered with about a foot of water. Carpets were ruined and furniture damaged. The church shed was undermined. Friday afternoon Main Street was lined with people who watched the rapidly rising waters with anxious faces.

The H.V. Pinder farm was covered, nearly 50,000 hop poles carried off, the house and barn floors being covered. Mr. Pinder's family sought safety in the house on the hill. Mr. Pinder estimates his loss at nearly \$6,000. The poles on

the F.R. Hyde, Dow Vroman, and Neville hop yards were carried away. T.J. Engle, A. Almy, Jas. Schaeffer and others also lost more or less poles. H.S. Manning and a party of men who were baling hops in the hop house were surrounded before they realized it and were removed by team.

The river bank in front of the residence of Trustee T.W. Neville was cut deeply, causing the large trees to fall into the stream. The lands of J.H. Tator, Mrs. Neville, D. Beckman and others were washed badly, quantities of the soil being carried away. Near Huntersland, a bridge was carried away. Roads in many places were badly cut up. At Frisbieville the flume of the electric light plant was carried away, and the water reached the floors of the buildings. The island of Jas. Schaeffer was badly torn and the bank cut away. The loss to the electric light company is estimated at \$500.00. The small bridge was carried off its abutment, but saved. Farmers between Middleburgh and Schoharie all suffered more or less loss of crops.

Fulton Flats under Water. The rich Fulton flats were flooded, and the banks in many places carried off. Josiah Vroman lost nearly six acres of land. Win. H. Haines and others also had lands cut into. The families of C.W. Vroman and W.H. Haines were rescued by teams. Warner Bouck lost 2 cows and 4 calves. The barns were generally flooded, and much damage done to crops.

Damage at Breakabeen. At Breakabeen, the road along the river was destroyed in places and crops carried away. The Foland foundry was also badly damaged. The road along the rocks which was blasted out and built of rock was carried off, but a foot path remaining. Our local correspondent says: "Considerable damage was done around here by the high water on Friday. The older people say the water was the highest they ever saw it. Along the rocks the road is nearly all washed away. Fred Zeh lost 4 acres of corn. Jas. Zeh lost a quantity of corn and potatoes. Frank Weaver some corn. Abram Keyser's sheep were carried down stream, and some young cattle of Jay Hilts. Mr. Hilts' cattle were found near Bouck Island, all alive. The foundry race was carried away. Great damage was also done to the flats above the village. There was 18 inches of water in the school house. The wood house, which contained 14 cords of wood, was carried away."

At Blenheim. The road along the village of Blenheim was flooded, and considerable damage done to the raceway and flume of the Haverly mill. A barn was carried into the road near the approach to the covered bridge. Farmers suffered loss of crops in that vicinity also.

Havoc at Gilboa. At Gilboa the dam was carried out and the raceway of the grist mill also. The road on the west side of the bridge was destroyed while the houses were many of them flooded. The barn of H.L. Reed was moved from

the foundations but saved by trees nearby. Farm crops principally buckwheat and corn were carried off between Gilboa and Blenheim.

At Cobleskill. The Cobleskill Creek was a raging torrent and did considerable damage to the abutments of the bridge at the lower entrance to the village. Telephone and telegraph lines were broken in many places and communication greatly interrupted.

In and about Schoharie. Not in the memory of the oldest resident, with the single exception of the flood of Oct. 5, 1869, has the Schoharie Creek raised such havoc in and about Schoharie as it did on Friday last.

From the village to the base of West Mountain nothing but rushing waters could be seen. Shortly after two o'clock it began to rise at the rate of more than a foot an hour, and reached its highest point at about the midnight hour.

At first no danger to the residences on Bridge Street was dreamed of. But soon those occupied by Harmon VanValkenburgh, Austin Shafer and Alexander Weatherwax were surrounded. The water steadily made its way toward Main Street from the end of Bridge Street, coming down as far as the residence of Dr. O.A. Snyder on Main Street. By this time, Bridge Street, Knowler Avenue, and that part of Grand Street at its juncture with Fair Street, were submerged.

The overflow from the river crossed the upper part of Main Street swelling the small stream which flows east of the village to immense proportions, filling Spring Street, and causing the water to cover a foot of Prospect Street to the depth of two feet or more. In front of the residence of Ira Wilsey the water crossed North Main Street to the depth of four feet and nearly three hundred feet in width.

While no particular damage was done to the houses in the submerged section, everything that would float was carried away, while on the flats all in the shape of corn, buckwheat, etc. was taken.

Late in the afternoon Ellsworth Vroman endeavored to get to the home of Mr. Weatherwax on Bridge Street by wagon but was unable to do so. The water around the house was deeper than on any other street. It was suggested that a raft be made, but the party saw they did not have the time. As the house must be reached immediately, Edwin Deitz, Jerry Wood, Wm. Kelley and several others made their way through the water, waist deep, about seventy-five feet to the house and carried Mrs. Weatherwax, who is seriously ill, to the second floor. Soon after they left the water rose into the lower story of the dwelling to more than a foot in depth. Mr. Weatherwax had some twenty barrels of apples and nineteen hens swept away.

The families of Ira Wilsey and R.V. Spencer were taken from their homes early in the evening without much difficulty. It was long after midnight before

Mr. Wilsey got his cow from the barn, and saw that his horse was safe. At about nine o'clock the family of Asaph Schoolcraft was, with much difficulty, taken from their home in a wagon, and driven to a place of safety.

The residence of C.P. Vroman, corner of Fair Street and Knowler Avenue, was surrounded by three feet of water.

Of course, it is impossible to note the damage to each particular case. Probably the heaviest losers of crops were S.E. Tennant, Charles Sholtes, Jacob Rickard, Hans Shafer, C.P. Vroman, David Dietz and Peter Cullings, the former three having large crops of corn, and the latter both corn and buckwheat.

The short bridge on the M. & S. R.R. near the depot was moved from its foundation and was saved from destruction by being against the water tank.

Several washouts on the Schoharie Valley R.R. were noted, delaying the trains until Monday morning, the passengers on Saturday being carried by wagon and the mail by handcar.

The east approach to the iron bridge was considerably damaged. At one time it was feared the abutment was damaged, but it turns out to be all right.

Jacob Stiffelaer, who resides near Shutters Corners, lost his entire crop of onions, cabbage, corn, etc., which was swept away by the Fox Creek.

All through the valley to Central Bridge the work of destruction is noticed. Everything in reach of the wild waters was taken.

The High Water at Gallupville. Our regular correspondent writes us: "Not since the Fall of 1869 has the village of Gallupville been visited by such a freshet and flood of water as that which occurred the past week. Early Friday morning the water in Fox Creek began to overflow, and the surrounding streams also. At about noon Haverly's mill dam began to overflow, flooding the lower end of Main Street, and filling the cellars of nearly all the residences on that street. Much damage has been done to bridges and roads. On Friday night at 12 o'clock, the large iron bridge across the Fox Creek went with an awful crash into the stream. The bridge had been built a few years ago at a cost of \$5,000 to the town. The private road belonging to Gideon V. Griggs was nearly washed away."

An iron bridge at Shutters Corners is damaged considerably, and the roads at that place are impassable. And the long iron bridge across the Fox Creek on the West Berne road is left on dry land, the creek taking a new course and cornering on the Gallupville side. Many of the small bridges of the town are gone and roads badly damaged.

This article appeared in the Fall-Winter 1996 Schoharie County Historical Review and is now also at <http://www.schoharietattler.com/Dam/FloodHistory.html>. This article appears here courtesy of the Schoharie County Historical Review. It continues on the next page with a description of the 1903 flood that to me is reminiscent of 2011.

BLENHEIM COVERED BRIDGE, 1855–2011

Replication, Remembrance, or R.I.P?

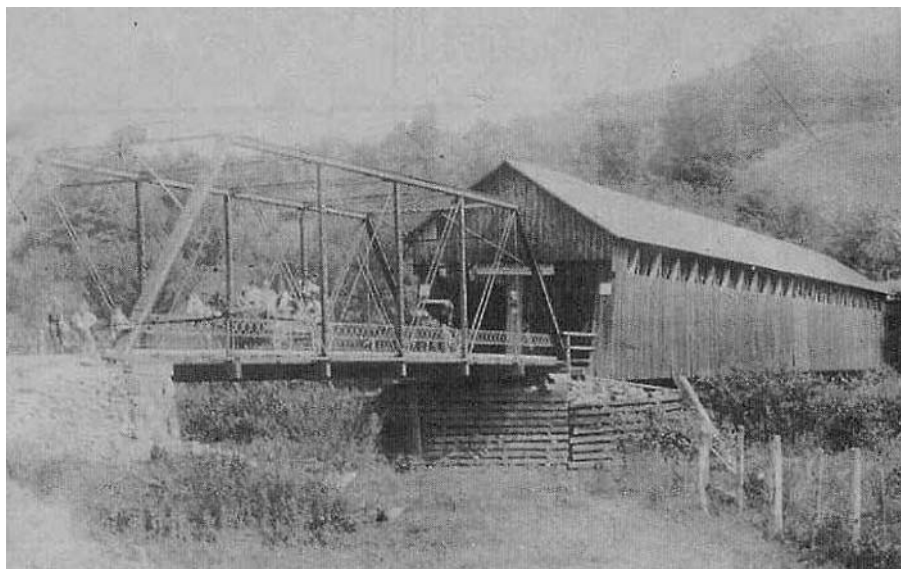
Norma Christie Coney

As almost everyone knows by now, the historic Blenheim Covered Bridge located in North Blenheim, NY is no longer—unprecedented flood waters from Hurricane Irene took the bridge down on August 28, 2011.

At this moment, the idea of building a replica of the bridge or a partial rebuild using some of the original pieces found after the flood has been considered, but action may be some years away. North Blenheim was hit very hard by floodwaters and the road to recovery will be long and hard road for the tiny community.

The stretch of creek bed that the bridge spanned has been altered greatly over the years, and an extension was put in place on the western end of the bridge. The bridge barely escaped the floodwater in 1996.

The Blenheim bridge belonged to Schoharie County. It was a rare and



A sign posted in the bridge stated: “In the spring of 1869 a severe freshet washed out a wide channel across the western approach. A wooden extension was added to the Blenheim bridge to span the new channel. In 1895 it was replaced by an iron extension. The wooden covered bridge was retired from use in 1931 and the Board of Supervisors voted to retain the bridge as a public historical relic.”

treasured gem, and has been a local attraction and source of community pride for over 150 years. Now, with the bridge gone and nothing left but a memory, it is interesting to note that funding for bridge repair and maintenance has always been difficult to secure in this rural county. A 1970 Fall/Winter *Schoharie County Historical Review* chides the bridge's caregivers by stating:

During the past decade, the abutments were in need of repair and an official carelessness set in. Survival of the old bridge was due to the persistency of one member of the board who offered reminders at every meeting of the county board. Monotony of repetition finally wore down the holders of the public purse strings and the maintenance project was undertaken.

In 1964 the bridge was added to National Register of Historic Places by the National Parks Service, and in 1983 it was recognized as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, one of only 254 designates in the U.S. In recent years the bridge had been the scene of Art Walk in August, an event that attracted an estimated 1400 visitors the first year.

After Irene, one town supervisor told this writer that the issue of raising the bridge higher on its abutments was discussed when new roofing and siding were undertaken after the 1996 flood. The cost was not estimated as terribly great, but the proposal was never followed up in the aftermath of the flood recovery.

The Old Stone Fort Museum is acting as liaison for the county in the recovery of pieces of the bridge. In time, they hope to recover substantial portions of the bridge that are architecturally significant. This would not necessarily be siding or roofing material, as that was replaced in the 1990s. What they are specifically looking for are pieces that evidence the technology used to build the bridge. This includes the center arch truss, which allowed the long span to be accomplished and the joints which include a singular style bolt characteristic to that bridge. Contractors working in the creek bed have been alerted to this and are cooperating with the effort.

To date a large, 20-foot-long piece of the arch has been located, as well as several smaller truss pieces and a few joints have been recovered. A portion of the sign from the end of the bridge has also been found.



An arrow on the left points to the long beam in a mass of detritus. Right: some of the truss bolts.

There were many initials of residents and passersby carved on the bridge that would be of interest to the restoration effort. Meanwhile it is asked that any flood debris thought to be part of the covered bridge be reported to the Old Stone Fort Museum at 518-295-7192 for authentication and proper storage.

In a recent telephone interview with museum director, Carle Kopecky stated that first choice for a bridge restoration effort would be a replica or reproduction of the original bridge spanning Schoharie Creek. Architectural plans for the bridge do exist. The knowledge base to accomplish such a task is available from covered bridge enthusiasts who have the practical know how to undertake a building effort. In lieu of this, an archway could be recreated to accompany exhibits of original bridge components, documents and photos, creating an addition to and expansion of the Blenheim Museum and its current contents. In the event of such an effort, the County Historical Society may be able to take the lead, as Blenheim has no historical society from which to draw support, volunteers, or funding.

There is no doubt that the loss of the Blenheim Covered Bridge, once called Power's Folly, has left an emotional scar countywide and beyond. County residents and bridge devotees are hopeful there will be a day when they can recapture history via a replica of the bridge or at least a representative memorial arch along the creek.



Norma Coney has been an avid gardener for 30+ years. She was a dried floral designer and taught adult education classes on gardening and craft work for 7 years at OCM BOCES. Norma is the author of a handful of craft and gardening books such as The Complete Candlemaker. She currently is owner of the online site Lady of the Lake Vintage Costume Jewelry. Norma and husband Dennis have lived in Schoharie County since 1997. They can usually be found tending flowers at Tanglewood Gardens but also enjoy kayaking, hiking and studying history, both natural and human.

Gilboa Historical Society Museum Web Site

OPEN 24/7

www.gilboafossils.org

Email this address to friends & family.

THE BLENHEIM SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM

Past, Present, and Future

Norma Christie Coney

The Blenheim Museum houses the tools used to construct the Blenheim Covered Bridge, and the building still stands following the recent flooding caused by Hurricane Irene. The museum is located on Eastside Road across from the park at the east end of the lost covered bridge. It is housed in the old Blenheim schoolhouse and its adjacent garage-style addition. Since 2009, the museum has been open during Art Walk.

Since Irene, the museum's future has been uncertain, but with diligence and work, the future of the museum may be brighter than it has been for some time. The importance of the museum lies in its restoration as a one-room school, but also in the tools used to create the bridge and the genealogy of the Vermont builder of the bridge, Nicholas Powers.

The one-room schoolhouse (Blenheim School No. 3, also known as Lower Village School, or Bridge School) was closed officially in September 1949. In 1958, the town acquired the schoolhouse to use as town hall, and it was also used as a polling place for elections. The Blenheim Hose Company was formed in 1961, and the adjoining woodshed was reconstructed as a stall for the fire engine. A second stall was added for the Blenheim Hose Company and its Ladies Auxiliary kitchen.

After the March 1990 gas explosion in Blenheim, the town hall and the hose company moved to new quarters on State Route 10 between the upper and lower village, and the building became the North Blenheim Museum.



The front of the restored one room schoolhouse taken at the 2011 Art Walk and some of the tools used by Nicholas Powers in constructing the Blenheim Covered Bridge. Photos by Gerry Stoner

The original building has been restored as a schoolroom, and the hose company addition houses Powers' hand tools, genealogy, and other artifacts. Glass cases with sloped shelves provide a very nice display for the bridge tools, and the fact that the museum is so close to the bridge site makes it very convenient for visitors. During the three-year span of the Art Walk, the museum has been open and had some 300 visitors sign the guest book in the first year alone. But there has been no budget for opening the museum other than at this time.

The schoolhouse sits slightly above the garage and appears to have had marginal flood damage. The Bridge Museum in the garage did flood as much as two feet during Irene, but all the tools used to build the bridge, photos, documents, and the Powers genealogy had been removed to a safe location and survived. Most school documents are safe as well, but a few school ledgers were lost, according to town historian Rebecca Littlejohn. Volunteers spearheaded the clean-up at the school and museum after Irene. Lower walls of the schoolhouse have been stripped to the studs in order to dry.

Currently, flood recovery and infrastructure rebuilding is the priority—the town was particularly hard hit by the flooding and there is little time to give thought to much else with winter closing in.

Nevertheless, it should be known that hope may lie at the end of this dark chapter in town history. There is a great deal of popular sentiment to rebuild or memorialize the covered bridge, and the future of the museum may be enhanced by linking itself to this effort. In fact, as this writer sees it, the museum will likely play a much more important role than at any previous time.

It is very likely that the Schoharie County Historical Society will take the lead in any bridge memorial or rebuilding effort, and according to Stone Fort Director Carle Kopecky, that would almost certainly include an enhancement of the Blenheim Museum.

Statements, recollections, and photos of the bridge are optimistically being collected by Blenheim Town historian Rebecca Littlejohn for the museum re-opening. If historically minded people come together to help save this treasure, a bright future can be secured for this important part of Blenheim's history.



Norma Coney has been an avid gardener for 30+ years. She was a dried floral designer and taught adult education classes on gardening and craft work for 7 years at OCM BOCES. Norma is the author of a handful of craft and gardening books such as The Complete Candlemaker. She currently is owner of the online site Lady of the Lake Vintage Costume Jewelry. Norma and husband Dennis have lived in Schoharie County since 1997. They can usually be found tending flowers at Tanglewood Gardens but also enjoy kayaking, hiking and studying history, both natural and human.

Bridge School Tidbits

- Bridge School, or Lower Village School, Blenheim #3, Route 30 next to the Blenheim Covered Bridge, closed 1949, sold 6/1957 to the Town of Blenheim, used for town office/highway purposes, then as a schoolhouse museum in the 1990s, still in good shape.
- Teachers at the school: Miss Lydia Ann Curtis 1845, Seneca Wolford 1896, Lena Bessie (Keyser) Wood 1901, Margaret (Bergh) Martin 1904, Lena Mattice & Reverend Brown 1907, Leona Patrie 1908, Adell Stewart 1913, Daisy (Kingsley) Neer 1914 & 15, Lillian Earles 1916 & 17, Mrs. Anna Becker 1918 & 19, Helen C. (Patchin) Bliss 1920, Miss Gertrude Danforth (Mrs. Haverly) 1921-23 & 25-26, Susan (Granby) Hotaling 1924, Hilda (Keyser) Mattice 1927-29 & 33, Lena (Bessie) Keyser 1930-31, Wilhelmina Haverly (Mrs. Fred Keyser) 1932-46, Fred Keyser 1938, Mrs. (Helen Patchin) Samuel Bliss 1947, Helen (Wyckoff) Carson 1948, Anna (Hager) Sitzer, Marcus Sternberg, Nancy & Caroline Fink, Fred P. Jones, Michael Govern, Bruce Lewis, Floyd Keyser, Winn Patrie, George Shelmandine
- State aid 1931, \$1343.00. At the annual school meeting held recently Fred Shafer was named trustee of the Bridge School, with Wilhelmina Haverly as teacher. Fred Casper was elected trustee in the upper village, with Helen C. Patchin as teacher, 1936. Pupils of the Lower Village, Upper Village and the Hauverville school at Manorkill went to Howe Caverns and Old Stone Fort, 1948.
- At a special school meeting held recently at the Bridge schoolhouse, the school was officially closed and sold to the Town of Blenheim to be used by the town, 6/1957.

From One-Room Schoolhouses in Schoharie County by Karen Cuccinello, published July 2011. Used with permission. A useful & interesting book to historians, educators and genealogists. Cost \$20. Please email karenc@midel.net; write Karen Cuccinello, Box 2, Summit, NY 12175; or call 518-287-1945 for more information.

Please check your address on this newsletter and send us corrections. Going south? Let us know—we'll send your newsletter wherever you are. Asterisk(s) next to your name indicate that your membership is paid up. No asterisks? Please join (application on page 39) and earn *your* star.

SHANDAKEN TUNNEL GATE-HOUSE

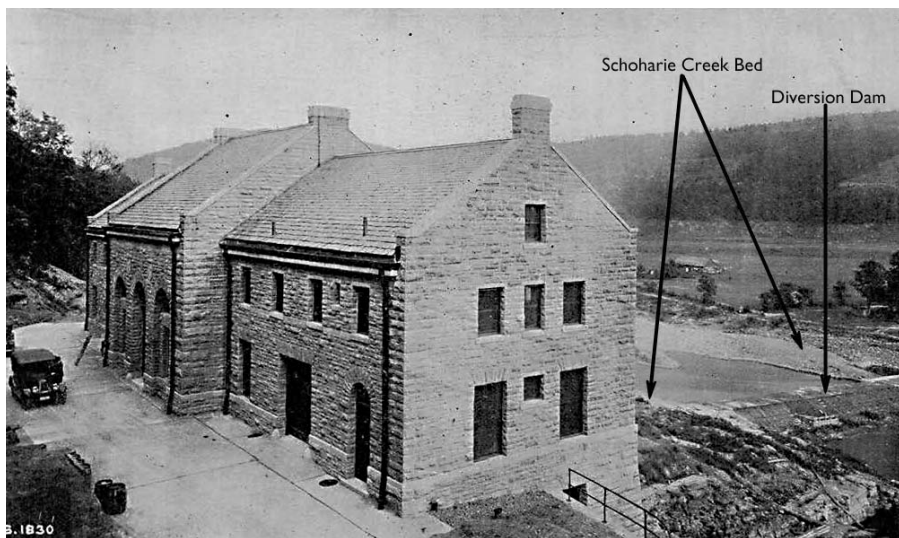
Board of Water Supply

The Gate-House of the Schoharie Reservoir was built under Contract 203 from the Board of Water Supply (BWS) of New York City by the Hugh Nawn Contracting Company of Roxbury, MA. It is located on the west side of the reservoir just off Intake Road, and has been the center of water operations since its completion in 1924.

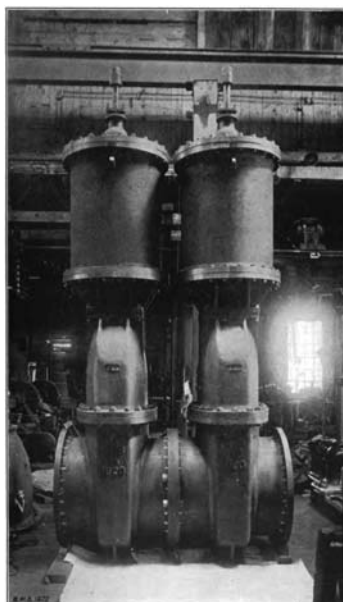
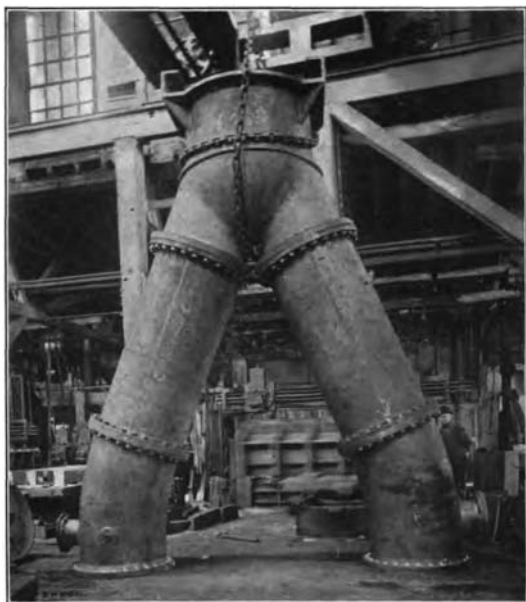
The intake channel under the building was protected by 3-foot by 7-foot sluice-gates—their purpose was to keep flotsam from getting into the plumbing of the gate-house and tunnel.

The plumbing included four 30-inch bronze gate-valves with hydraulic cylinders; two 12-inch and two 8-inch bronze gate-valves; and 30-, 12-, and 8-inch bronze piping. These had been fabricated by the Coffin Valve Company of Neponset, MA and were billed at \$89,529.15 on April 11, 1922.

In anticipation of placing the Shandaken tunnel into service, each of the lines were operated manually. On January 10, 1924, the first tests of operation were made on lower-level gates Nos. 7 and 8. After readjustment, a second



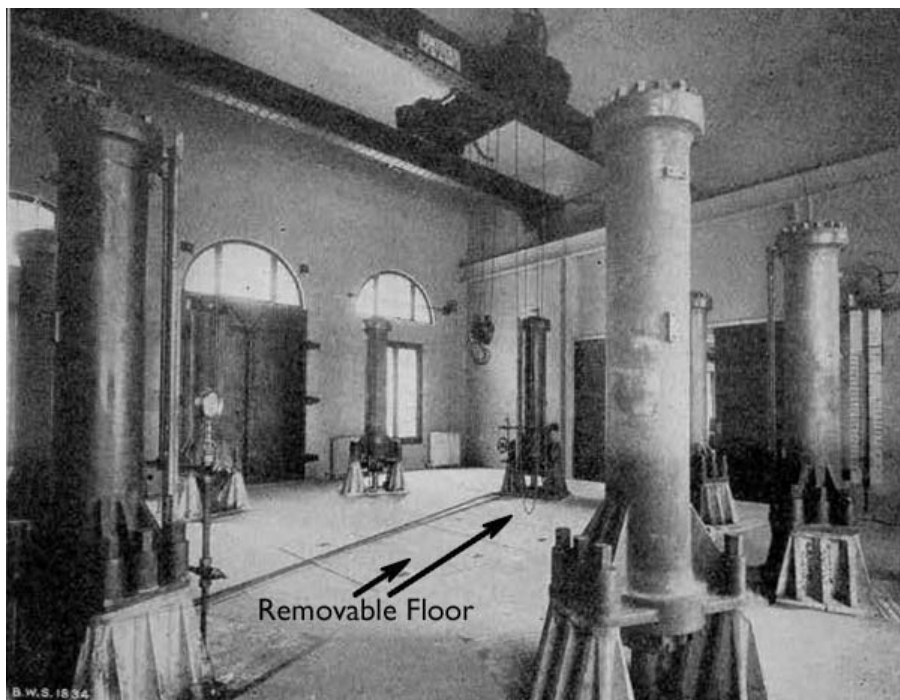
This picture of the Shandaken gate-house shows the to-be-filled reservoir behind the building and a diversion dam to the right behind the building. This dam shunts the Schoharie water into the tunnel and protects the construction site in the creekbed. Photo courtesy of the Department of Environmental Protection from the Board of Water Supply *Annual Report*, 1924.



Above left: A machinist standing beside a casting of a 30-inch bronze blow-off pipe.
Above right: An assembled bronze gate-valve with hydraulic cylinders to control water flow through the system. Photos courtesy of the Department of Environmental Protection from the Board of Water Supply *Annual Report*, 1921.

Below: One of the four assemblies of blow-off pipes with hydraulic shut-off valves under the gate-house. Photo courtesy of the Department of Environmental Protection from the Board of Water Supply *Annual Report*, 1922.





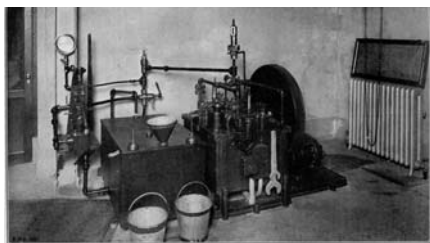
operating test was conducted on February 2. Then each of the other gates were similarly tested.

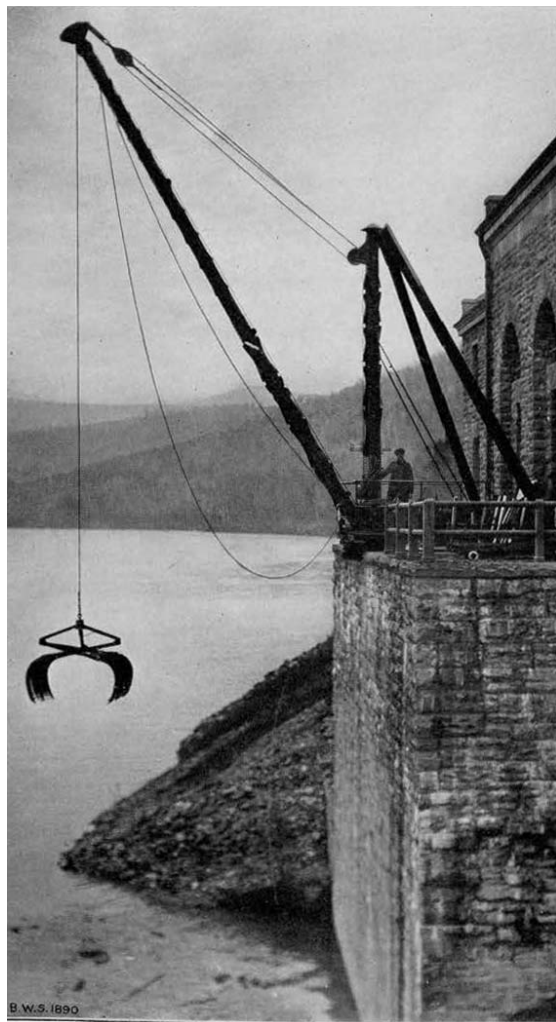
A series of trial runs of the Shandaken tunnel began on February 3, 1924. These trials broke in the leather seals on the hydraulic lines and measured the pressures necessary for the hydraulic control system shown on the right. On February 9, the tunnel was officially opened with ceremonies by the Commissioners of the Board of Water Supply. Since that date, delivery of Schoharie water has been continuous except for short interruptions. Water delivered in 1924 totalled 4.95 billion gallons.

By the end of 1923, the intake

Interior of the main gate-room showing the hydraulic cylinders, removable floor slabs over the shaft, 10-ton electric crane in the ceiling, and the float-board in right background indicating water elevation flow rate. Photos courtesy of the Department of Environmental Protection from the Board of Water Supply *Annual Report*, 1924.

Below: After extensive manual testing, this electric-powered hydraulic pump furnished the power to operate the sluice-gates starting in 1926. Photo courtesy of the Department of Environmental Protection from the Board of Water Supply *Annual Report*, 1926.





Electric trash-handling derrick and grapple removed debris from the intake channel. Photo courtesy of the Department of Environmental Protection from the Board of Water Supply *Annual Report*, 1926.

chamber superstructure had been completely closed in. Exterior work that remained included placing the slate roofing on approximately one-half the roof area of the south wing and the entire roof area of the main chamber, installing the copper leader pipes from the roof gutters to the drains, and attaching two cartouches on the west face of the structure. This work, with the exception of the cartouches, was completed by March 1924.

The cartouches were carved on blocks of native bluestone from the River-side Quarry at Gilboa and installed in mid-summer.

The completion of the Shandaken Tunnel established a permanent connection between the Schoharie and Esopus Creeks. The next issue of the GHS Newsletter will describe other events that had to be completed before the dam itself could become operational. These included the preparation of the work site in the village—most notably the reinterment of our early settlers and remuneration for property—and construction of infrastructure that would support the construction—area roads, quarries, sand, gravel pits, and control of water flow in the site.

The Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply of the City of New York for the years 1907–1927 are now available as searchable .pdf files at http://www.northerncatskillshistory.com/Writing_History/200_Documents/BWSAnnualReports/

SHEEP AND GOATS

Ruth Welch White

Abraham Welch established the Welch Homestead, Welch's Corners, that was later owned by his son George and eventually his grandson, Claude. Ward, Claude's brother, was my father who was born at Welch's Corners in 1890, and, with his new bride, Irene Hartwell, moved bought a farm in Blenheim in 1930.

Oh, how times have changed! Welch's Corners as a location has just about gone out of people's memory; Welch Homestead is now known as the Wilson farm; that portion of Cornell Hollow is now Shew Hollow Road; and the address of the new farm became Welch Road when the electric came in and needed a street name to put on their maps!

My earliest recollection of farm life did not include sheep or goats. My love of sheep came when a couple of strays appeared in the field across the way. Since then, I have always had sheep and often a few goats. I don't want to give you a false idea—I actually like goats, but ten goats can get in more trouble in a day than a flock of sheep can find in a year.

Sheep

An immature sheep (less than a year old) is a lamb; a mature female sheep a ewe; a mature male a ram; and a castrated male a wether. The lambs may be sold for meat and the mature animals may be farmed for their production of wool or sold for meat as mutton.

Sheep are social animals, going out to graze in the morning, hanging around in the flock during the day, and coming back to the barn in the evening. They



get into little mischief, and are satisfied eating the grasses of the fields and a little cracked corn when they are nursing their lambs. I have maintained a flock of up to 100 ewes and raised them both for wool and meat. I also had a carefully selected ram or two to keep the babies coming. A mature ewe may give birth to 2 or 3 lambs after a 5-month gestation.

Sheep for meat may be sold individually to a local family, or sold at an auction with other animals. However, the price for mutton, low before World War II, was even lower after the war—the military had used mutton in some of their rations and the meat earned a very bad name with the returning vets.

Lamb, on the other hand, is a different story: the price for fresh lamb has

always been variable—extremely high just before the Christmas and Easter holidays but during the rest of the year is still higher than that of mutton.

Sheep are generally sheared in the spring, and peddlers going from farm to farm would buy our wool. These peddlers were both male and female, and would have a pull-cart, horse cart, or truck from which they would sell needed items to the farm families and also buy from the farmers. For instance, our rag peddler would *sell* sewing materials (pins, needles, new or used fabric, etc.) but would also *buy (or trade for)* reusable rags, paper, and the wool that the sheep produced. Peddlers were common before the war, and the last rag peddler that I remember also had a line of kitchenware (fry pans, pots, etc.) and came until the late 1940s. The last peddler price I remember for wool was \$1.00 per pound. Recently, I have been taking my wool to the Morris Fairgrounds, but it didn't work out this year due to the road conditions after the hurricane.

The hides of sheep, lambs, and goats were generally used in clothing articles (slippers, vests, coats, mittens, etc.), although it is hard to find the market now.

I never tried to specialize in meat or wool—this always seemed like a way to double your losses. I generally raised breeds that can produce both wool and meat, and favored Cheviot and Tunis sheep. The Cheviot is smaller, but is less social unless you give the animal a lot of TLC when it's young (true with all dogs, sheep, and goats).

Periodically, I have had problems with wild dogs and coyotes, so I always bring the sheep into a closed pasture or a barn at night, and have always maintained good fences—not to keep the sheep in so much as to keep predators out. A good, hot, 42" electric fence is wonderful. I have heard of farms using donkeys and llamas to protect animals, but I have always used normal precautions, good fences, and a dog.

Pyreneans, Maremmas, Border Collies, and Icelandics are good, but the best dog I had was a Maremma called Snowball. The only problem was that when someone came by, he would automatically round up the flock and protect them from the visitors, barking all the while.

Sheepdogs have an inbred sense of herding. When Snowball got too old for the job, I got a replacement who immediately was able to take over. The secret to a good sheepdog is to get an



Ruth White with Snowball, a Maremma whose genetic line came from Italy. Photo courtesy of Ruth White.

inherently good dog, then treat him as a worker and reward him with food and “good dog.” Don’t housebreak him, and *never treat him as a family member*. You will ruin a good sheepdog by inviting him into the house for the night!

Goats

Goats are most commonly kept as a dairy animal, producing milk and cheese that is widely used as a means of reducing joint pain and gout. Goat meat may be used in sausage, and is now sold through specialty outlets offering items like elk or buffalo.

As opposed to sheep, goats can be loners and are very inquisitive—they always want to see what is on the other side of the fence or the backside of a distant tree. While sheep eat grasses, goats will eat trees, flowers, wood, vegetables, and anything else their nimble lips can find—preferably *outside* the fence.

Nevertheless, there is a stable market for goat milk and cheese (most notably feta cheese). Many human youngsters and the elderly cannot digest cow’s milk but may thrive on goat’s milk with no problems. And, when you have developed a taste for it, you will always prefer it to other milks.



Milking a goat is relatively time consuming—mechanical milkers can speed the process as it does on a cowfarm, but I have never gotten that professional. Yet goats have to be milked or they will dry up. Sheep may become “automatic” milkers. Photo courtesy of Ruth White.



Ruth White was born on the Welch Road farm in Blenheim, moved to a farm in Hobart in 1951 with her husband. She returned to the farm on Welch Road in 1991.

Woodchuck Lodge Spared by Irene

Thankfully, Irene spared Woodchuck Lodge, only felling a large ash tree across Burroughs Memorial Road, that did not impact the Lodge or grounds.

We didn’t open for tours as planned on Labor Day, but welcomed visitors for our last tour weekend in October.

Plan to come back in 2012 when trained docents will offer tours the first weekend of the month, Saturday and Sunday from 11 AM to 3 PM, May through October.

The name and address that we have for you appears on the reverse of this application. Please check to make sure that the information is correct, and let us know of alterations or scheduled alternative addresses.

Our membership year is the calendar year. One asterisk next to your name indicates that your individual membership is paid up for the current year; two asterisks signifies a couples/family membership; three asterisks indicates a lifetime membership.

Membership Application Form

Name: _____

Subscription format for Newsletter: Physical ☐ Electronic ☐

Email: _____

Address:* _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

* Please specify temporary addresses in effect for our mailings in early March, June, September, and December.

† The Board is developing a wish list of memorial gifts: please inquire of a board member, and provide the wording of the dedication, your name and address, and the name and address of a next-of-kin who should be notified.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| () Lifetime membership (\$100.00) | \$ _____ |
| () Family membership (\$25.00) | \$ _____ |
| () Couples membership (\$15.00) | \$ _____ |
| () Individual membership (\$10.00) | \$ _____ |
| () Senior or student membership (\$7.00) | \$ _____ |
| () Scholarship fund | \$ _____ |
| () Gilboa Historical Society <i>Newsletter</i> | \$ _____ |
| () Gilboa Historical Society Museum | \$ _____ |
| () <i>Old Gilboa</i> DVD (\$19.70 total) | \$ _____ |
| () <i>Family Letters</i> by N. Juried (\$8.40 total) | \$ _____ |
| () General fund | \$ _____ |
| () Memorial gifts [†] | \$ _____ |
| () _____ | \$ _____ |
| Total amount enclosed | \$ _____ |

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