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Gilboa Historical Society

Learning about, sharing, and preserving our history

WINTER 2012, VOLUME 14.4

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Happy New Year, and resolve
to renew your membership for 2013

Regarding the sources in the GHS Newsletter

When the newsletter first expanded to a 40-page quarterly publication, many wondered if there would be enough information to maintain a publication of quality, size, and frequency.

The answer is a resounding “yes!” This issue, for instance, continues the ongoing series on the construction of the reservoir and additional articles on the Gilboa fossils. In addition, the Dr. C. S. Best House and Medical Exhibit lent us some of their archives on the family of Dr. Duncan Leonard; the students of Wes Laraway’s class at Middleburgh High School have contributed stories on the construction of the Blenheim Bridge and a personal glimpse of the Prattsville flooding from Irene; Karen Cuccinello as an archivist for both the Gilboa Museum’s library and the Historical Room at the Stamford Village Library has supplied newspaper articles on *Caprice of the Mountains* (the silent movie made in the Gilboa Hills) and on local fire departments and bands; and individuals and scrapbookers contributed biographical and geographical histories as well as personal vignettes that are destined for the “They Lived in These Hills” use.

Yes, there is a plethora of history being documented for Gilboa, Conesville, and the surrounding areas.

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**The Gilboa Historical Society meets at 7:00 P.M. 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
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Send feedback or suggestions on the Newsletter to
gerrys@gilboahome.com

Gerry Stoner, 152 Starheim Road, Stamford, NY 12167

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Reprinted from the Stamford Mirror Recorder, April 1969

A Stamford Citizen

FRED MURPHY'S SUCCESS STORY

Harry Gilroy, New York Times

Fred P. Murphy, who was 80 last week, was busy as usual as chairman of the executive community of Grolier, Inc., an encyclopedia publishing concern that had sales of \$181 million last year. He bought the company in 1936 when sales were \$2 million.

This increase represents both a success for Grolier and Mr. Murphy as well as exemplifying the growth of the encyclopedia business.

The American Educational Publishers Institute said last year that the total business reported to its reference-book division—the category in which encyclopedias are the largest part—was \$490 million. In 1948, when the institute began collecting such figures, the total was \$70 million.

Of 18 American companies in the reference and encyclopedia business, Grolier, Encyclopedia Britannica, Crowell Collier and Macmillan and Field Enterprises share 95 per cent of the trade. Sixty-seven per cent of Grolier sales last year, or \$120 million, was accounted for by reference books.

Reasons for Growth

Mr. Murphy took time the other day to ponder the question, what was responsible for the enormous growth of Grolier and the subscription sale of encyclopedias and reference in general. He was at his desk in the Grolier Building, 575 Lexington Avenue, where the company publishes Encyclopedia Americana, The New Book of Knowledge, and Encyclopedia International, among a score of reference sets.

Erect, still with a touch of brown in his hair and a glint in his blue eyes, he settled on two fundamental causes for growth: increasing interest by the public and capital advanced by banks.

"People have become sold on the value of education," he said. "They know that their



Fred Murphy, November 1967.

Reprinted courtesy of the Binghamton Press,
January 11, 1968

children are in a competition to get into college and believe the youngsters cannot get anywhere without college training.”

He reflected on his own selling days, beginning in Flint, Mich., in the summer of 1908, when he earned \$900 to put himself through Cornell University Law School. “It used to be the first thing you had to do was to establish the need for a reference work in the home, but that is no longer essential,” he said.

He added: “The business is growing and growing all over the world. The company is operating in 40 countries. Everywhere we find that parents realize that instead of having their children dream that some day they will go to the library and look up a fact, there should be in the home an encyclopedia with the needed information.”

Explaining the role of financing in development of the encyclopedia and reference book business, Mr. Murphy said: “The more sales you make on an installment basis the poorer you get. No one can get far without a banker.”

“Columbus had to find a royal patron. Chase gave us credit. Charles Fagg, when he was with the Bank of Manhattan Company and later Chase Manhattan, had the courage to see the future in the book business, and John Taylor over there continued in that faith.”

The widespread nature of banking support for book publishing was indicated by Mr. Murphy’s recollection that “when Charley Fagg put up the first money for me in 1936, he was introduced to me as having 20 book accounts.”

A Leader in Sales

Mr. Murphy had been with Grolier for 23 years before he acquired the company in 1936. As a salesman for the company he had led the Kansas City office to sell more than a million dollars’ worth of books in a year, the first time a branch office had done this, and thereafter was known in Grolier circles as the Million-Dollar Kid.

He was born in South Gilboa, N. Y., and he keeps his home in that area in Stamford, N. Y., a town of 1,200 in Delaware County. To help the regional economy, he has developed Catskill Craftsmen, Prospect Dairy, Timberland Products, and Audio Sears, and gives executive attention to these companies and holds offices in them.

Mr. Murphy has a story to tell linking his interests in country industries and encyclopedias. He fell ill a while ago in Stamford and in the absence of his regular physician was treated by a surgeon, Dr. T. M. Manzanero.

“When I asked for his fee,” Mr. Murphy said, “he told me, ‘You can’t pay me because if your company had not sold *The Book of Knowledge* in the Philippines to my father, I would not be a doctor, and if it weren’t for the companies you have up here I probably wouldn’t be able to collect my bills.’”

He smiled over the doctor's comment, then added: "The field of books is inexhaustible. Once a fellow has learned to sell books he has struck the shackles of economic slavery off his wrists and he is a free man."

So salesmanship, too, has accounted for the rise of Grolier and the whole encyclopedia business. "It's the hard core of many businesses," Mr. Murphy said.

Reprinted from the Stamford Mirror Recorder, April, 1969. Editor's note: this feature on Stamford's prominent citizen, Fred P. Murphy, was written by Harry Gilroy, a member of the New York Times staff. This article reprinted courtesy of the Stamford Mirror Recorder and scrapbooker Norma Cook.

Murphy was as much a benefactor to Gilboa as he was to Stamford. Future issues of the GHS Newsletter will feature not only stories on his Gilboa businesses (Timberlands and Prospect Farms), but also the Stamford businesses (Catskill Craftsmen, Audio Sears, and the area's DEC operations) that have impacted so well on the economy of Gilboa and Conesville.

Miscellaneous Gilboa Monitor Notes

submitted by LaVerne Hubbard

May 8, 1879

They had a little cider and egg "jamboree" at Oscar Jackson's, Mackeys Corners, one night last week. One chap ate 23 boiled eggs, "suck" lots of cider, and got gloriously drunk.

July 24, 1879

Dr. Leonard has nearly completed the largest barn ever built in this county. It is three stories tall and is 45 x 80 feet. It contains 5,625 feet of flooring and took nearly 150 bunches of shingles to cover it.

March 31, 1898

J. M. Case has sold 12 tons of dried apples and has men hauling them to Middleburgh this week.

July 8, 1898

J. M. Case took in 9,000 pounds of wool at Broome Centre last Saturday and about 13,000 pounds in all at that place. Tuesday he took in over 5,000 lbs. at Gilboa. He is an extensive dealer, handling the greater portion of the clip in parts of Schoharie, Greene, and Albany counties. By paying fair prices and honorable dealing he has established a business reaching \$100,000 in a season.

HELEN WYCKOFF CARSON

Kristen VH Wyckoff

Imer Wyckoff—Kate Mattice

Harry Wyckoff—Ursaline Dauner

|

Helen Wyckoff Carson

Walter Edward Wyckoff—Alice Simpson

|

...

Walter Fred Wyckoff—Kristen VanHouten

|

...

Helen Wyckoff attended the Oneonta Normal School and started teaching in 1921 at the Hubbard School near the home of her parents, Imer and Kate (Mattice) Wyckoff.

Laverne Hubbard thinks his father had her as a teacher even though they were probably very close in age, and after teaching two years at the Hubbard School, she spent one year in Clay Hill in the Snyder District and another year in the Roe District. Then, Helen taught for 17 years at the Hauver District School in Manorkill, a year in the Bridge School in North Blenheim, and three years teaching remedial reading in the Gilboa-Conesville Central School. She



Helen Wyckoff Carson in the village of Gilboa. Helen started teaching in 1921 and got around with her horse and carriage. This picture shows her as an independent female of her time.

Photograph from the Wyckoff Family archives, courtesy of Kristen Wyckoff.

taught kindergarten in Prattsville from 1952 to 1955, and then became the kindergarten teacher in the new wing of the Gilboa-Conesville Central School for her last 10 years in the classroom.

When Aunt Helen was a young woman, schools would not hire a woman who was married—and would fire one who decided to marry—so Aunt Helen was single for a long time and then secretly married Ken Carson.

She loved every one of her students, was a warm positive teacher, and she tied everything she taught to music. The kids learned to read and write through songs and finger plays; they cleaned up the kindergarten room to special songs that encouraged all the kids to pick up their belongings. Bee Mattice remembers coming to the classroom for her children and if the kids became unruly and loud, Mrs. Carson would go to the piano and bang out some chords and all the kids became quiet and knew they had to be good.

Helen taught with love and with discipline. One of her many sayings was “discipline is love.” She felt children wanted to know their limits and if you did not give them boundaries they would not feel loved. One thing she would say when she had a difficult child or one needed a little more attention: “you know, kids don’t come sorted.” Another saying showing her understanding nature: “When you’re overwhelmed, you can’t hit all the keys at once.”

. . .



Aunt Helen's last kindergarten class in 1965: Front table: Larry Parker (Lester's older brother), Wayne Lewis, Walter Fred Wyckoff (behind the milk carton), Jeffrey Clark, Steve Voorhees, Lester Parker, Wayne Bevins, Tim Hallock. Back table starting on left end with the girl with blond curly hair: Darlene Clark (Briggs), Diane Martin, #1, #2, #3, Mary Richtmeyer, #4, #5, Caroline Clark, Cindy Latta (Buel), Brian Buel. Regretably, we could not distinguish 5 people in the back row. Please let us know their names if you can identify any of them. Photograph from the Wyckoff Family archives, courtesy of Kristen Wyckoff.

Throughout this time, Aunt Helen was close to the extended Wyckoff family, but the closest relationship was with Harry and Ursaline's youngest boy: Walter was born 11 years after the birth of his next older brother, and was such an active child that his mother could hardly keep up with him. His aunt Helen stepped in as a second mother to this child.

It was only natural that she carried this relationship over to Walter's marriage to Alice in 1950, and over the next 30 years, Aunt Helen was Alice's champion on the farm and in the community. Alice adored Helen, and it was obviously mutual.

She helped raise all four of Walter and Alice's boys. The youngest, Walter Fred, saw Aunt Helen as his honorary grandmother, and Uncle Kenny was the grandfather who took him fishing, taught him all sorts of outdoorsy things, and called him "whistle britches" for his corduroy pants.

Helen taught until the last of Alice and Walt's four boys were in school. Only when Walter Fred completed kindergarten did she retire from her 44-year career.

I met Aunt Helen in the late 1970s (Walter and I were married in 1979), so I only knew her for about 3 years before she died in 1980. She was one day shy of her 80th birthday. That short time was important to me, and my impressions about Aunt Helen have been expanded by my mother-in-law, Alice Wyckoff Hinman.

Helen had a lot of interests in her life—she played the organ and piano, and she loved her pets and teaching Sunday School. Our second child—Delana Helen—and Helen's books (of music, crafts, and children's stories) and many little knickknacks are continual reminders of this very special woman.



Kristen Wyckoff is co-owner of Aqua-Tec Water Services, Inc. with her husband Walter Fred. They live in Gilboa and Kristen is the chair of the Gilboa Museum committee. Kristen enjoys painting, hiking, kayaking and baby sitting her granddaughter.

Griffin Collection: 1841–1879 Marriage & Death Records

Karen Cuccinello, Archivist at the Stamford Village Library

The Griffin Collection is being digitized. Common area family names include Barlow, Bray, Blish, Brewster, Case, Champlin, Churchill, Cowan, Dales, Decker, Foote, Grant, Hager, Howard, Mackey, Marshall, McDonald, Powell, Reed, Rulifson, Secord, Silliman, Smith, Stevens, Taylor, Wood.

For information, contact Karen at Stamford Village Library (607 652-5001) or karenc@midtel.net.

From the Gilboa Monitor, May 25, 1916

UP AGAINST IT

The Weather Man Delays Actors in Making Pictures

Director John G. Adolphi and his company of William Fox photoplayers have certainly suffered greatly (picture-wise), because of the unprecedented weather that has been accorded to Gilboa since May 13, the day of their arrival. There may be nothing in the fact that the party came on the 13th, but those who are superstitious will find therein cause to unburden the old battle cry "I told you so!"

Mr. Adolphi could not turn a crank until the 19th and then for a few hours in the afternoon only. On Saturday work could not be started until after two o'clock and before dusk showers came up. Sunday showed promise, and while Mr. Adolphi is averse to Sunday labor, so much time had been lost that the company got an early start, but little could be done because of the floating clouds, which are beautiful to the eyes of the beholders but bad for the photographer.

Monday the sky was completely overcast but as the rain held off until night-fall, Monday, material discomfort did not affect the mental discomfort of the company who quit work around two o'clock because further hope to photograph had disappeared. Tuesday was showery and the sun wasn't seen all day. But despite the serious weather condition about 3,500 feet of negative was taken.

The working crew has left considerable money with Gilboans in the way of wages and trade. A great garden has been planted on top of Stryker hill at the hunting lodge that the William Fox carpenters erected and 400 feet of mesh wire fence was built to protect the garden against cattle. It is to be regretted that Gilboa could not furnish the needed plants, thereby compelling the purchase of same in Kingston and Oneonta, necessitating spending a considerable amount of money in telephone and telegraph tolls. We are also sorry that assistant director Kellette had to go out of Gilboa to find a baby of age and size to work in the picture. He visited nearly every mother in the country before he found the right one. This meant consuming considerable time and money in locating a desirable "prop."

As a community, of course, we are glad our scenery

The film *Caprice of the Mountains* was a nitrate film that deteriorated quickly. Artifacts like this glass slide portrait of June Caprice were used in a trade magazine ad are all we can see from the film.

Glass slide courtesy of Janette Reynolds.



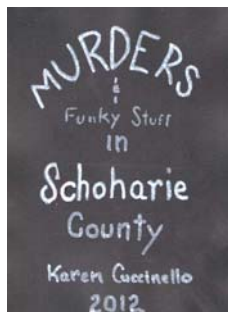
made it possible for this Fox company to be with us, for it gives a greater impetus to trade and labor, but we would prefer to see the sun shine every day, even though every hour of sun shortens their visit to us just that much, and they, as well as we, should be philosophical enough to know that it is impossible to fight the elements.

On the Hardenburg property at Prattsville, another house has been built, and the distance between the two places is about a dozen miles. Mr. Adolphi has assured the editor of *The Monitor* that he has found some wonderful scenery here and the only thing objectionable is the weather. One of the carpenters caught a severe cold while building the hunting lodge and is now confined to his room at the Gilboa House, but has excellent medical attention. He escaped pneumonia by the timely arrival and attention of Dr. Billings, who has been making daily calls. A nurse is also in attendance and it is hoped he will soon recover and be returned to his family in good health.

Many members of the company, particularly "Old Tom Burroughs," have traveled all over Gilboa meeting people, staying just long enough to pass an hour's chat and spread the gospel of smile. Little June Caprice has daintily won her way into the hearts of all she met, and Mr. Pierce has promised he'll try to secure this Fox picture, *Caprice of the Mountains*, to show at the Hippodrome upon release. The company will remain another week.

Published in the Gilboa Monitor, May 25, 1916. Reprinted courtesy of Karen Cuccinello and the Gilboa Historical Society Museum library.

See also Janette Reynold's article "Gilboa (Tinseltown), New York" in the Gilboa Historical Society Newsletter Spring 2011, vol. 13.1).



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<http://www.gilboahome.com/>.

Email this address to friends & family.

HURRICANE IRENE

Prattsville, New York

Sarah Armlin

August 28, 2011 was one of those Sundays where you just wanted to sit in your pajamas, listen to the rain, and relax. My mom, Debbie Armlin, was watching the news, heard Prattsville mentioned, and started to listen in. She then called my Aunt Beth, who owns Beth's Cafe on Main Street in Prattsville, and they were talking about how Prattsville has flooded before so they weren't too concerned. The next thing I knew we were being evacuated from our apartment in Middleburgh. We went to Windy Ridge to wait out the rain.

Once we got out of town, my mom called Aunt Beth as my grandpa was getting rescued from the roof of their garage with a bucket loader. I recall her saying that she doesn't understand how it all happened so fast. One minute she was working at the cafe, and the next minute there was about four feet of water inside. Everyone got evacuated to a local restaurant up the hill behind the cafe where they stayed, waiting to return home to see the damage.

It was three days after Hurricane Irene that my mom and I were finally able to get into Prattsville. Even after talking with my family, watching the news, and seeing everything on the Internet, I was still not prepared for what I saw



The Prattsville bridge, September 1, 2011. The plastic sheeting is used to contain the sandblasting materials within the construction site, and the bridge was reopened 6 months later by the Department of Transportation, March 19, 2012. This picture copyright © Albany *Times Union*. 9/2/12, used with permission, courtesy of the Albany *Times Union*.

when we got to the end of the Gilboa Road. It was complete devastation. The houses were washed up farther than you thought was possible. When we first saw everything that had happened we felt sick to our stomachs. As we went farther into town, we couldn't believe how bad it really was. Everyone came together with such high spirits and started the clean up right away.

My aunt was devastated—the cafe she had put her life into was filled with mud and debris. But along with Beth's Cafe, Moore's trailer park was almost completely swept away, the cemetery was ruined, there was nothing left of O'Hara's gas station, the Great American grocery store was destroyed, and houses upon houses were either condemned or demolished. Between Prattsville and Schoharie County there were 1,600 houses condemned.

Immediately there were volunteers trying to help everyone they could. The National Guard set up a temporary cell phone tower and a kiosk so the locals could access the Internet and make phone calls. Everyone was so thankful for the American Red Cross, which provided cleaning supplies and breakfast, lunch, and dinner for all of the Prattsville residents and volunteers.

I could go on and on—there are so many individual stories within the catastrophe that it seems neverending. Without all of the volunteers and donations, Prattsville would not be where it is today. At this point, the Great American, Beth's Cafe, the Prattsville Tavern, Moore's Motel, Lutz Insurance, Young's Agway, O'Hara's, and the Prattsville Diner are again open for business, and hopefully the Prattsville Hotel will soon join them on the list of open businesses.

The residents of Prattsville held their head up through all this. They did what they had to do to be where they are today. Some are still struggling to return to normalcy, but they are not giving up. This was a terrible thing that happened, but good things came out of it. Everyone stayed positive and by doing that, the community of Prattsville got stronger and closer.

Sarah Armlin is a junior at Middleburgh High School.

Sources: Beth Ballard, Debbie Armlin, Mr. Laraway

Wes Laraway teaches Schoharie County History at Middleburgh High School where students write essays about local history. These students also enjoy presenting their papers to the Middleburgh Historical Society, but Wes has added a new option: students receive extra credit for getting an essay published in a newspaper or historical journal like this Newsletter.

Thank you, Wes, for this win-win solution!

THE BLenheim BRIDGE

Hannah Laraway

The Blenheim Bridge had been around for about 155 years. Back in the 1800s, bridges were very expensive to build and repair, but very necessary so that horses and wagons could cross a body of water such as the Schoharie Creek.

Usually private companies would do the job of building the bridges, and an act was passed by the New York State Legislature to incorporate the Blenheim Bridge Company in 1828. This company then went on the search for good contractors when it was learned that a great builder, Nicholas Montgomery Powers, was coming to Schoharie to repair the covered bridge there. He was asked immediately to take the job in Blenheim.

Nicholas Powers was born in Pittsford, Vermont in 1817 and before the age of 21 had built a bridge that, 96 years later, held a 20-ton steam roller. He continued building bridges and experimenting with new designs, also building one of the best reputations in Vermont. At Blenheim, he ended up building a covered bridge unlike any other designed before or since.

The unique feature of the bridge was its single center arch that supported three trusses. The distance between each truss was 228 feet, giving the bridge a total length of nearly 500 feet. It had two lanes—at the time, such a bridge was called a “double-barrel”—and each lane was 13 feet wide.

Bolts and washers were used to connect the timber and braces. It is said that 3,600 pounds of bolts and 1,500 pounds of washers were used. Most of the wood used consisted of huge, uncut pieces of pine and a small amount of oak. The estimated amount of wood used was 94,000 feet, or 127 tons. The iron used to build the bridge weighed 2.5 tons. The bridge itself was massive for the time period.

Surprisingly this massive bridge was not built over the Schoharie Creek. It was actually built piece by piece in the village of Blenheim. Once all the pieces were put together, Nicholas and his crew began the very difficult task of taking the bridge apart and reconstructing it over the Creek. Temporary scaffolding, or bents, was set up across the creek to assist in the rebuilding of the structure. One of the workmen, known as a “climber” because he worked high over the fast-moving water, was killed when a heavy log fell on him.

This dangerous job earned Nicholas Powers \$7.00 a day and a total of \$2,000.00. His workers, whom he chose himself, earned \$1.00 a day. The Blenheim Bridge was completed in 1855 at a total cost of \$6,000.

Once the bridge was rebuilt across the Schoharie Creek the task of removing

the scaffolding began. Many townspeople watched while the job was being done and said the bridge would fall under its own weight. Nicholas Powers disagreed. He had so much faith the bridge would not fall that he bet his life on it. While the scaffolding was being removed he climbed up on the ridgepole, saying "If she goes, I'll go with her." The people of Blenheim watched in suspense while the last of the scaffolding splashed into the Schoharie Creek. The bridge creaked and settled. Powers' face was lit with a smile as he looked at his completed masterpiece. Although he never built another like it, Powers continued building bridges until he died in 1897.

After the completion of the bridge in 1855 the Blenheim Bridge became a toll bridge. The cost for foot men was one cent, and horse-drawn traffic was charged twelve cents. The toll keeper lived in a small house connected to the bridge. In the winter snow was put on the bridge for the horses and sleighs. The bridge was used daily until an iron bridge was built nearby in 1931. The covered bridge was then retired. Later, another bridge was built out of concrete and steel to replace the iron bridge and is presently the bridge used to cross the Schoharie Creek in Blenheim.

The Blenheim Bridge remained the longest single-span covered bridge in the world until 2011 when hurricane Irene brought massive amounts of water to the Schoharie Creek and pulled the entire bridge downstream. All that remains today are the abutments that it was built on and several pieces of wood that have been located by community members. Although the Blenheim Bridge is no longer in existence it will be remembered by many people and hopefully will be learned about by future generations as one of the most amazing historical sites ever built.



To the left: Hannah Laraway and Boomer.

I am a junior in high school, I enjoy school, my favorite courses are in the sciences, and I plan to go to Morrisville State College for Equine Science and Management. If I could explain what I enjoy most in one word, it would be "horses." I consider myself a happy, nice, outgoing person who is blessed by liking, and being liked by, many people.

Works cited:

Fanchon Dewell Cornell and Alicia Tara Cornell: Blenheim History 1710–1991: Albany: Fort Orange Press.

National Grid: Schoharie County: Stronger than Irene, a collection of photos put together by National Grid line supervisor Jeff VanDeusen of Cobleskill and printed by the Times-Journal: October 2011.

The GHS membership year is the calendar year. Please use the application on page 39 to re-up, and thanks for your past & future support!

FROM MOUNTAIN MEN TO RAGMEN AND OTHER PEDDLERS

There have been merchants travelling out to the frontier from the earliest exploration of the Catskills until the maturity of the automobile industry. During those 300 years, commerce was carried on individuals riding a circuit bringing manufactured products to consumers on the frontier, and taking furs, metals, and agricultural produce to distributors back east.

Early travellers were called mountain men, and a century later peddlers were seen as an essential means of obtaining the benefits of modern society. In a previous issue, Ruth White told us of a ragman who sold clothing and bolts of cloth to the area's farms, and who also bought wool (and possibly other farm products) to take to market. She could not recall the name of the ragman, but Jefferson's Charlie Buck remembered Joe Farris, a ragman who drove an old Ford with a wood enclosure on the back to protect his clothing and bolt goods.

Come with us to those golden days of yesteryear . . . when our retail needs were met by circuit merchants like Joe Faris, Paige Stilwell, and Nate Simon; before they were hurt by catalog giants like Sears-Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, and J. C. Penney and faded from the scene when Fords and Chevrolets could quickly take customers to local retail stores.

Reprinted from They Walked These Hills Before Me

PAIGE CROSWELL STILWELL, SR.

Beatrice Mattice

Paige Crosswell Stilwell, Sr. was a tin peddler through this area. His diary has been loaned to me by his great-granddaughter, Carrolyn Tryon Davies. Stilwell at 29 lived with his wife and two small children near Gilboa and loaded his one-horse cart at Luman Reed's store there. Following is a portion of the diary telling of one trip through this area.

8/10/1875

I started from Gilboa for a two week trip. Went up to George Lewis's and then went up Owl Vile. Ate dinner with John Darling. After dinner went through the hollow and came to Delos Ellerson's and stayed all night. Sold \$10.60.

8/11/1875

It looked like rain and did not start. I stayed in the barn until I got nervous and then I harnessed the horse and drove around to the doors and before I got my bill paid it began to rain. I told them it did not make me mad.

8/12/1875

It looked like rain but I started and went to Flat Creek and ate dinner with Mr. Griffin and then went on the Patent. Had good sales and some rain. Stayed all night with Mr. Rose. Sold \$8.27.

8/13/1875

I went on the Patent and it looked like rain. I had good luck but I don't like to peddle there. Ate dinner with Mr. Elliott. After dinner started on and stopped to James Allen's and stayed all night.

8/14/1875

Went most to Stone Bridge and then went on the Patent and ate dinner with Ransom VanLoan. After dinner went to Strykersville and run my cart in Wash. Stryker's barn and went home to stay over Sunday.

8/15/1875 (Sunday)

Stayed in the house with the children and had a good time. We always have good times when I see them. I bought George Mulford's hens for \$1.25.

8/16/1875

Went to Strykersville and got the cart and started for Stone Bridge. Went in Toots Hollow and ate dinner with David Clark. After dinner went one mile and stopped till the next morning with Zen Disbrow. Rained half the day.

8/17/1875

It looked like rain but I started on and peddled in the forenoon. Ate dinner with Den O'Brien. After dinner it looked more like rain so we ran the cart in the barn and it did rain, you can bet. I stayed there all night. It is a good place to stop. One can have good times there.

8/18/1875

It rained all day. I had good times with Wood's household. Read magazines and played dominos all day.

8/19/1875

Started on my way rejoicing. Went to the top of the mountain and then to Mitchell Hollow. It rained when I got over there so I went in and ate dinner with Mr. Van. After dinner went to Windham and from there to Mr. Fink's and it rained so I stayed all night. Sold \$3.50 and went 15 miles.

8/20/1875

Started in the morning. It looked like a good day. I went to North Settlement Church and from there to West Settlement. Ate dinner with Mr. Pangman. I

did not sell anything on the road. It looked dull but I struck oil just at night and sold \$7.18 at one house. That made \$11.50. Stayed all night with J. Statt's.

8/21/1875

Started and peddled through Huntersfield and then came to Strykersville, and then home to Gilboa.

8/22/1875 (Sunday)

Stayed home all day. Wrote a letter to Mother in the morning.

8/23/1875

Got up and dug my potatoes. After breakfast Willie and I went up to the village and drew gravel around the store. It was a hot day. We had good times, we always do when we are together.



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.

This portion of Stilwell's diary is reprinted from They Walked These Hills Before Me with permission, courtesy of Carolyn Tryon Davies and Beatrice Mattice.

Flood Relief Organizations

- Blenheim:
and
Breakabeen:** { Rural Area Revitalization Effort, Inc., a non-profit at 125 Creamery Road, North Blenheim, NY 12131 (518 827-3166, rareny.org) and/or North Blenheim Presbyterian Church, Clauverwie Road, Middleburgh, NY 12122
- 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
- SALT** Schoharie Area Long Term, P.O. Box 777, Schoharie, NY 12157 518 702-5017 <http://www.saltrecovery.org/>

Gilboa Historical Society Museum
Web Site OPEN 24/7 www.gilboafossils.org

Reprinted from the Times Union, March 5, 1986

NATE SIMON, PEDDLER

Fred LeBrun, Executive Arts Editor

Just after the war, back in the very early 1950s, most of the still sleepy Catskills were served by entrepreneurial Mohammeds who were willing to come to the mountains.

Once or twice a week, delivery trucks would toodle along the most obscure byways, which was most of the byways. Freihofer trucks competed with Hunter Bakery back then for the pumpernickel trade, and everything else from pots and pans to Bibles were brought farmhouse to farmhouse, by the same regular routemen who took orders and filled them from one week to the next.

Nate Simon was one of these, probably the most colorful, because he was a ragman, a sort of traveling junk dealer who seemed to exist out of his very tired and eccentric '48 Ford panel truck painted two shades of green and smelling of the burlap feedsacks Nate always folded neatly in the back end. Nate bought and sold things that cost a dime or a quarter, but he really doted on the haggling more than the money. He loved to talk, generally to himself, but also to anyone who would listen. Nate had escaped the lower East Side a few years before and still carried the accent and a lifetime of stories. But the mountains back then were a lonely place for someone who liked to talk and was used to bumping bodies along busy streets.

To us, Nate was from another planet, a Fagin-like character who drew our mocking jibes, the special cruelty children have for the different. Until he started to talk. Then we were mesmerized. Naturally, the ragman was a philosopher.

"Learn to do the little things in your life well, and the big ones take care of themselves," he importuned with a wolfish smile, carefully putting into the recesses of his truck bolts of fading cloth only the most sympathetic farm wife would even look at.

No one knew how Nate got by. He died some time ago, but not before he retired very comfortably to a condo in Florida, much to everyone's amazement. Clearly, Nate Simon knew how to take good advice, even if it was his own.

Master the little things.

This tribute to Nate Simon was published on March 5, 1986 in the "Starting Gate: A Master of the Basics" column by Fred LeBrun, Executive Arts Editor of the Albany Times Union. Used with permission, courtesy of the Times Union.

BUSES IN GILBOA

Schoharie County Public Transportation (SCPT)

Ethel Benninger

www.schohariecountypublictransit.com—518 234-0952

Schoharie County Public Transportation serves the southern part of the county, and wants to hear from you as to how to improve this service.

Fares are paid to the driver in cash or tokens, and the tokens can be purchased at the SCPT office or from the driver. Gold tokens cost \$1.00 each, and silver tokens (available only to seniors) cost \$0.50 each.

The existing services to Gilboa/Conesville/Blenheim are as follows:

Do you have medical issues to be addressed at the VA Hospital, Albany Med, or St. Peter's, and can you get to the Middleburgh Library?

If the answer is "yes," schedule your medical appointments for between 10 A.M. and 1 P.M. on any non-holiday weekday. (Make sure to let the facility know you use public transportation so that they can best accommodate you.)

Phone SCPT (518 234-0952) before 3 P.M. on the day before your appointment to get a reservation on **Route 20**. You will get on the bus at the Middleburgh Library at 7:55 A.M. The return leaves the capital region at 3:00 P.M.

NOTE: after the stops at the VA, Albany Med, and St. Peter's, the bus can then take you to other appointments along the Albany-Schenectady corridor. Bus fare: 6 tokens, veterans travel for free.

Do you work in the Albany/Schenectady area and can you get to the I-88/Route 145 or I-88/Route 30 Park 'n' Ride? (Don't forget the possibility of carpooling to these sites.)

There are two bus routes Monday through Friday:

Route 22 serves downtown Albany, with stops around the Empire State Plaza, Corporate Woods, and Bryant & Stratton. Phone SCPT (518 234-0952) to determine the times when you will arrive at, and leave from, work.

Bus fare: \$8.50 per day, or \$37.50 per week, schedules at the Gilboa Post Office.

Route 21 serves the Schenectady/Albany corridor, with stops at the end of I-88 in Schenectady, SUNY Albany, the State Campus, and Wolf Road. Phone SCPT (518 234-0952) to determine the times when you will arrive at, and leave from, work.

Bus fare: \$8.50 per day, or \$37.50 per week, schedules at the Gilboa Post Office.

NOTE: Most employers will adjust work schedules for people who use public transportation, and you can arrange with the driver to drop you off or pick you up along their routes.

Do you want to shop in Cobleskill and can you get to the Middleburgh Library?

Every Monday, **Route 5** serves the Gilboa, Conesville and Blenheim area by transporting people to the Cobleskill area. Call the SCPT (518 234-0952) by 3 P.M. on the previous Friday to arrange a convenient pick-up location. The bus will then pick you up at the Middleburgh library, transport you to Cobleskill for shopping, medical, or personal destinations; and then bring you back. Bus fare: 4 tokens.

A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT COBY TECH

As We Used To Call It

The diary of Frances Hubbard

SUNY Cobleskill was chartered in 1911 and opened in 1916 as the Schcharie State School of Agriculture with one building, five faculty members and eight students, all young men desiring post-secondary education in agriculture.

By 1928 the College consisted of four main buildings, now known as the quadrangle, with Frisbie Hall being the headquarters for the teacher training classes, an outcropping of the home economics program which had been started for young women.



*From the diary of Frances Hubbard, and used by permission of
<http://gerryhubbard.blogspot.com/2012/12/tuesday-december-8-1964-frances-hubbard.html>*

The Gilboa reservoir is 5 miles long, covers 1,170 acres with a maximum depth of 150 feet, and holds 22 billion gallons of water.

Reprinted from the Windham Journal, September 13, 2012

WINDOWS THROUGH TIME

A Loss to Science

Robert Titus

It's no secret that the fossils of the Gilboa forest are among our chief scientific distinctions here in the Catskills. The forest lived during the middle and late Devonian time, about 390 to 360 million years ago. It formed a pioneering terrestrial ecology. Gilboa trees made up the oldest forests that we know of. Plant life on the land had only recently evolved and it was, back then, quickly spreading across tropical landscapes worldwide. That makes these fossils very important. They speak to us of what the earliest forest ecologies were like. For that reason, it is always exciting when a good new specimen comes to light. That happened recently.

My friend Kristen Wyckoff, from Gilboa, has long been on the lookout for new Gilboa fossils. A few weeks ago, she was exploring the recently constructed berm along the Schoharie Creek at Prattsville. They have piled a large number of sizable boulders atop it, presumably in hopes of preventing future floods. You can see this easily from State Route 23 at the eastern end of town. Kristen suspected that she might find something interesting on the surface of one of those rocks and she was rewarded with a good sized Gilboa tree.

It was a real beauty, the sort of fossil that gets your heart beating fast. It was about four feet tall and represented much of the original trunk of the tree. Kristen reports that she could see impressions of the bark. Her first thought was that it should be donated to a museum where it could be protected and studied by specialists. She did the right thing; she went to the Town of Prattsville to ask permission to remove the specimen. Such permission was quickly granted; the people of Prattsville appreciate the value of such a fossil. Kristen went to work arranging for equipment to pick up what was a pretty big boulder and remove it.

The museum was exactly the right place for this tree. It was the Gilboa Museum. I have written about the museum several times; it is the little museum that could. It houses a world-class collection of Devonian Gilboa trees, along with specimens of the foliage that grew on them. The new fossil would have been the museum's prize specimen. A cursory look at photographs by people who know these things suggests that the tree is something called a cladoxylopsid. This is a very ancient and very primitive group of land plants. Some argue that they are ancestral to ferns and horsetails, but those notions are always controversial. We need more specimens to be more certain.

And that is the problem; this wonderful specimen is gone. When Kristen Wyckoff returned to pick up the specimen, she found that somebody had gotten there ahead of her, recognized what was there and chiseled it out of the boulder. It was simply gone! All that was left was an imprint of the trunk. You can imagine Kristen's disappointment. This would have been the finest fossil find of her life, and quite likely the most scientifically important one. And you can imagine the disappointment among paleontologists in general. People at various museums and research universities would have been eager to see this tree. It might have added a great deal to our knowledge about an early time in the history of terrestrial life. It is a sad, even tragic loss to science.

These things do happen. The most regrettable was the loss of the "Peking Man" fossils. All during the 1930's there was a cave near Beijing (then called Peking) that yielded good bones from an ancient type of human belonging to the species *Homo erectus*. It was commonly called Peking Man and it was an important discovery. But war broke out between China and Japan and, as the Japanese army came to threaten Beijing, it was decided to evacuate the bones. A contingent of U.S. marines was given custody of them and they boarded a train headed for the Pacific coast on December 6, 1941. The next day, of course, the war broke out and the formerly neutral U.S. marines were soon prisoners of the Japanese. The bones of Peking Man were lost and have never been found.

That gets us to the most important part of this column. The fossil tree does not have to stay lost. Somebody has it, and they probably did not realize how important it is. Kristen Wyckoff is appealing for their return and so am I. Please return this wonderful fossil to where it can be taken good care of and to where it can become part of science. Maybe just leave it at the Gilboa Museum or contact me (titusr@hartwick.edu) or Kristen (kwyckoff@dmcom.net).

No hard feelings; we promise.



Robert Titus teaches at the Geology Department at Hartwick College. He writes for Kaatskill Life Magazine, The Woodstock Times, and The Windham Journal. He and his wife, Johanna, have recently published a book called The Hudson Valley in the Ice Age, Black Dome Press.

This article reprinted with permission of the Windham Journal.

Sept 13, 1906: Wm H. Vroman, a Blenheim hop grower, had over 200 boxes of hops this season. He sold them for .15 cents a pound.

From "Looking Back" in the *Windham Journal*.
Reprinted with permission, courtesy of the *Windham Journal*.



The Lost Fossils of Gilboa, by Kristen Wyckoff

I spotted this boulder at Prattsville, a perfect example of the trunk section of the *Eospermatopteris* (“Gilboa Tree”) just before the crown attaches to the top. I know of only one other such fossil—the one found at South Mountain. It had the crown still attached and is at the NYS Museum, but this fossil has more detail in the trunk, a longer section with much better quality, amazing detail, and carbon from the original tree. (An eyeglass pouch shows scale.)

The town of Prattsville approved our moving the stone; Jim Rion (a Prattsville excavator) moved the boulder onto a trailer; Aqua-Tec (a Gilboa-based company) brought the trailer to the museum complex; and the town of Gilboa Highway Department moved it to the fossil shelter (the entrance was too small, so they had to leave the fossil just in front of the shelter).

After the boulder arrived at the Museum, I went to see our find, and realized someone had chipped the fossil out! What is left is a partial imprint of the tree trunk—still a worthy specimen, but nowhere near what had been originally uncovered.

Paleobotanists Dr. Bill Stein, Linda Hernick, and Chris Berry (from the UK) concluded it still is a great specimen for research, but without the vandalism, this boulder would have been one of the best examples of the trunk section ever found.

Thank you, Prattsville Town Board, Clerk, and Supervisor; Rion Construction; Aqua-Tec; and the Town of Gilboa Highway Department. I just wish that we could be showing you this fossil in all its original detail!

DOCTOR DUNCAN LEONARD

Files at the C. S. Best House and Medical Exhibit

Doctor Leonard's daughter married the youngest Doctor Best, and so the C. S. Best House and Medical Exhibit in Middleburgh has a considerable set of records on the Leonard family passed down by the Bests. The archive demonstrates the benefit of collecting and analyzing a large number of artifacts.

For instance, there are 15 notes and letters on the facts and dates of the Leonard family. Examples range from snippets like this:

No 2.

Henry - ^{born} July 4, 1789 + died Dec. 2
m. V

Huldah Hull - ^{born} June 20, 1799 - died

↓ 12 children

I Salinagane - born Oct. 5, 1820 -

II John - " June 6, 1822

3. Peter Hull - " May 21, 1824.

4. George H - " Jan. 1, 1826.

0. 1. 11. 1827

to handwritten prose like this:

History of the Leonard family.

John Leonardhardt as some claim the name, lived in Germany, he had a family of two or three sons, Henry died in Germany and John the great, great grandfather of our generation in company with his brother, name unknown, came to this country as we understand as a paid soldier of the British. After coming here and seeing the conditions as they were, he deserted ~~from the army~~ and joined the American Army under and served as Lieutenant under Gen Schuyler in the Revolutionary

From these materials, a family tree of 9 full pages has been reconstructed with this type of detail:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
			Henry Leonard (b. 4/4/1789; d. 12/20/1871) in Roxbury						
			married Huldah Hull (b. 6/20/1799, d. 9/11/1864)						
			12 children denoted by a • [note: used to make this generation clearer]						
			• Salina Leonard (b. 10/5/1820, d. 4/6/1903),						
			married 6/23/1844 George Hamma (b. 3/4/1806 in Stuttgart,						
			Germany, d. 7/14/1886).						
			6 children						
			Henry L. Hamma (b. 4/25/1845; d. Feb. 1868) [From Pauline						
			Blythe Long #850010]						
			married Margaret Cantwell, 11/2/1898						
			Mary Elizabeth Hamma (b. 12/25/1846; d. Sept. 1868) [From						
			Pauline Blythe Long #850010]						
			Huldah Leonard Hamma (b. 1/24/1849; d. Nov. 1919)						
			married Cornelius Melville Blythe, married 1/19/1870						
			[Confirm this, as one other source said that Huldah's						
			husband was Henry.]						
			3 children						
			Henry Blythe, (b. 2/17/1872, d. 9/10/1934)						
			married Margaret Cantwell, 11/2/1898.						
			4 children						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The Leonard family is not unique in having periodic reunions, but they elected a secretary at these meetings and asked attendees to bring pictures, facts, and details of their own portion of the Leonard family tree. This pride allowed interested parties to collect, organize, and publish artifacts to preserve their heritage.

They also took group pictures of these reunions, and the picture of 1908–9 has a key to the names of people attending. The 1912–13 picture also has a key, but it is handwritten and hard to decipher so there are gaps in content. The 1930 picture has a list of attendees but with no key. Nevertheless, these various pictures provide an opportunity to identify most of the individuals. We have enlarged the following pictures and put copies in the Gilboa Town Hall with a magnifying glass. Please stop by and help us match names to faces—help us reach our goal of having 100% identification of all these folk.



Photo 819111—1908 or 1909 Leonard Family Reunion at Summerset House (compare with picture #819121 3–5 years later)

- 1 Lizzie Leonard
- 2 Andrew Raeder
- 3 Christine Raeder
- 4 George Hamma
- 5 Charles Meade, brother of Philanda (6)
- 6 Philanda Meade Leonard, sister of Chris (5), 2nd wife of Asa (8)
- 7 Wilson Leonard, son of Asa (8), husband of Lydia (22), father of Archie (29)
- 8 Asa Leonard, husband of (6), father of 7, grandfather of 22 & 29
- 9 Lucy Winston
- 10 William Winston

- 11 Nellie Leonard
- 12 Duncan Leonard
- 13 Emma Leonard
- 14 Mate Stahl
- 15 Jennie Leonard
- 16 Emma Leonard Steadman
- 17 McClellan Steadman
- 18 Fannie Shoemaker
- 19 Ursula Leonard
- 20 Mrs Loren Cole
- 21 Sadie Jennings
- 22 Lydia Leonard, wife of Wilson (7), mother of Archie (29)

- 23 George Weckel
- 24 Mel Blythe
- 25 Helda Blythe
- 26 Leta Oliver
- 27 Loren Cole
- 28 Lawrence Conro
- 29 Archie Leonard, son of Wilson (7) & Lydia (22)
- 30 Leora Ellison
- 31 Asa Junior, grandson of Asa (8), son of Wilson (7) & Lydia (22)
- 32 John S. Leonard, husband of Lizzie (1)
- 33 George Patterson
- 34 Mrs. George Patterson

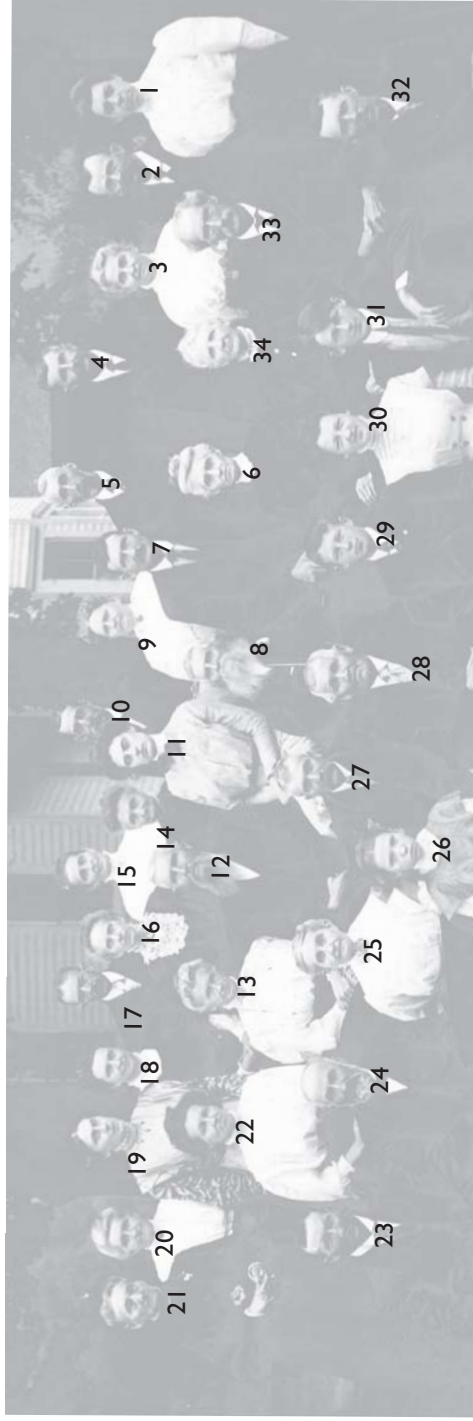




Photo 819121—between 1912 and 1914 Leonard Family Reunion (compare with picture #819111, 3–5 year earlier).

Number to left is where people are placed in this photograph; number to the right of their name is where they were placed in earlier photograph, if known.

Allie Leonard ()	6	Emma Steadman (16)	Lenora Brooks ()	1	Mildred Smith ()
34 Archie Leonard (29)		Emma Weckel ()	1 Lawrence Conro (28) guest	27	Nellie E. Leonard (11)
33 Asa D. Leonard (8)		Fletcher Mackey () guest	Leora M. Leonard ()		Osmar Leonard ()
35 Asa R. Leonard (31)	31	George Parterson (33)	3 Lida Leonard (22) (Lydia?)	32	Philinda M. Leonard (6) (sp?)
Charles Mead () guest	22	George R. Hamma (4)	Lizzie Leonard (1)		Dr. R. S. Moscrip () guest
Duncan M. Leonard (12)	30	George Weckel (23)	Loren Cole (27)		Ruth Smith ()
Edna Hawkins ()		Harriet Parterson (34)	Martha Hawkins ()	2	William Beebe ()
Ella Weckel ()		Huldah J. Leonard ()	Mary Enderlin ()		Wilson V. Leonard (7)
Emma Booth ()		Jane Mackey () guest	Mary Rose ()		
Emma J. Leonard ()		John M. Leonard ()	14 McClellan Steadman (17)		
29 Emma Leonard (13)		John S. Leonard (32)	Mildred Hawkins ()		

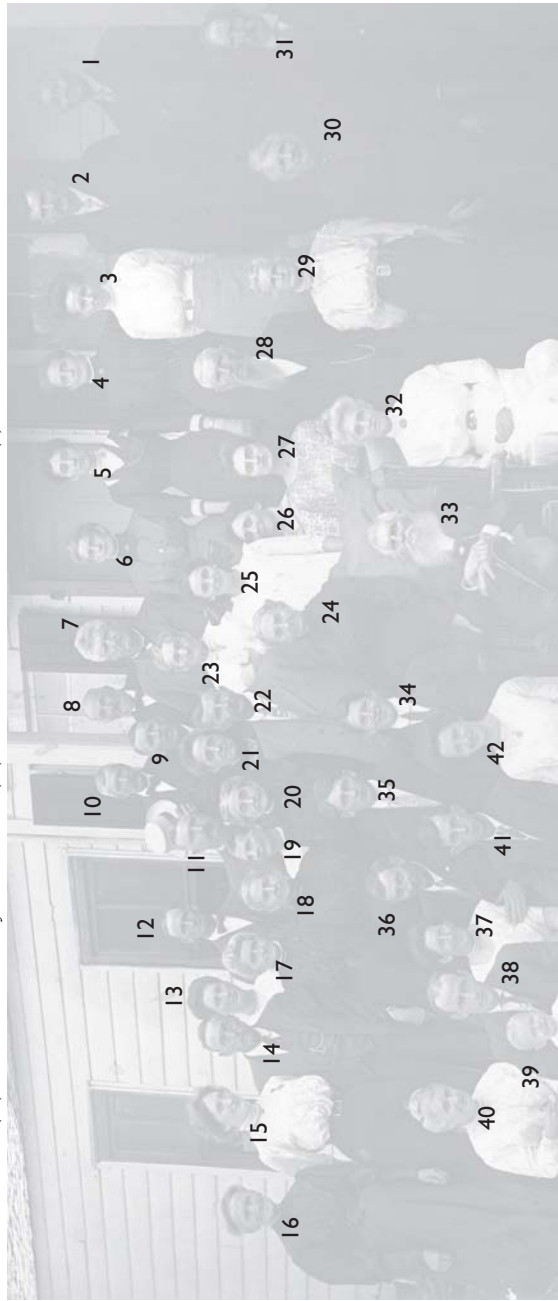




Photo 8/19/24—1930 Leonard Family Reunion, Wilbur Park, Oneonta, NY (compare with pictures #819111 (1908–09) & #819121 (1912–13))

- 1 Frederick Dugan
- 2 Dick Hawkins
- 3 Glen Leonard. On far right
- 4 ?
- 5 ?
- 6 ?
- 7 ?
- 8 ?

- 9 Patricia Ellison
- 10 Ed Raeder
- 11 Jennie Leonard
- 12 Christina Raeder
- 13 Mary Leonard
- 14 Rose Leonard
- 15 Abner Leonard

- 16 L. P. Cole
- 17 George Manna
- 18 Julius France
- 19 Mellie Horton
- 20 John Dugan
- 21 Connie Prino
- 22 Edna Hawkins
- 23 Lenora Kenyon
- 24 Martha Hopkins
- 25 Rowena Hopkins
- 26 Leticia Oliver
- 27 Marjorie France
- 28 Loraine France
- 29 Ella France Erwin
- 30 France
- 31 Rena Raeder
- 32 ?
- 33 Asa Leonard
- 34 Hanah Leonard
- 35 Anise Dugan
- 36 Charles Hawkins
- 37 Pearle Leonard
- 38 Archie Leonard
- 39 Anna Leonard
- 40 ?
- 41 ?
- 42 John Oliver
- 43 ?
- 44 Erwin France
- 45



CONTROLLING THE SCHOHARIE CREEK

While Building the Gilboa Dam, 1921–1926

In earlier issues of the Newsletter, we've given pictorial histories of preliminary tasks necessary before actually building the dam:

An overview of the project—Summer 2012 (vol. 13.2)

Building the Shandaken Tunnel—Fall 2012 (vol. 13.3)

Connecting Shandaken Tunnel Gate-House—Winter 2011 (vol. 13.4)

Preparing the dam site and new roads—Spring 2012 (vol. 14.1)

Developing the quarries and sand pits—Summer 2012 (vol. 14.2)

Constructing the berm—Fall 2012 (vol. 14.3)

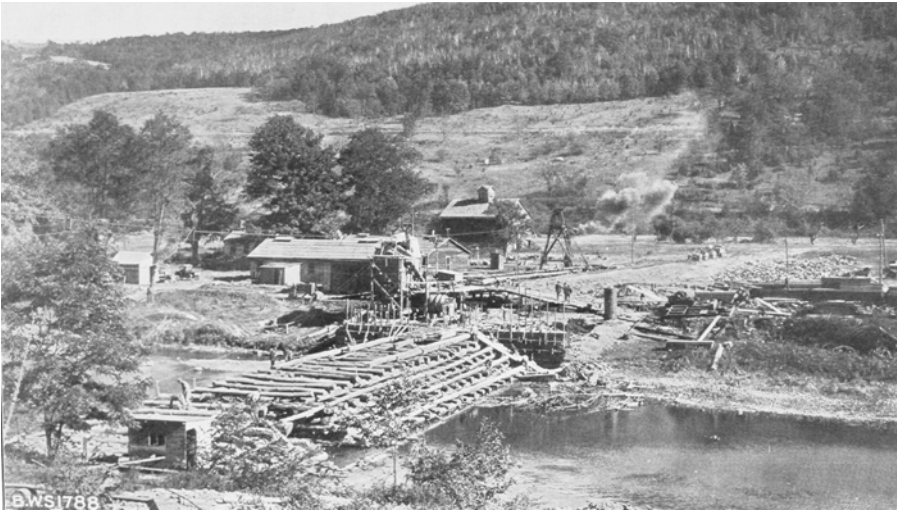
To build any structure in a stream bed—from an early waterwheel to power a gristmill to the construction of a permanent, year-round dam to provide water to a metropolis—you first have to control the flow of that water around or through the construction site.

In this issue, we'll discuss the cofferdams that accomplished this task. These are light, temporary dams that are built in pairs—one upstream from the construction site, and the other downstream. They are connected by a diversion stream of some type that channels the water from above the first cofferdam safely past the construction site, and then releases the water below the lower cofferdam. At Gilboa, the diversionary route was through two 9-foot diameter steel pipes.

The upper cofferdam was begun after the spring in 1920. The crew made a masonry abutment on the west shore and laid 12- to 30-inch diameter timbers out to nearly the midpoint of the streambed. This nest was built to a height about 10–12 feet above the water level, and as you can see from the picture, it had a wide footprint. However, the Schoharie water could run around the east end of this dam so there was little pressure on the footing. This half of the upper cofferdam was then filled with concrete and allowed to harden in place.

When this half was completed, workers made a similar structure on the eastern side, leaving a gap of about 20 feet between the two parts. The downstream cofferdam was being simultaneously constructed. When both cofferdams were in place with a gap in the middle, two 9-foot in diameter steel pipes were laid on the west side of the stream bed. These would take water from above the upper cofferdam down through the work area and release it downstream from the lower cofferdam.

When water flow was minimal, the space between the east and west portions of each cofferdam were filled and cemented in place. There was a notch left in



This picture is of the western half of the upper cofferdam, begun at end of the spring in 1920. The skeleton is built of 12- to 30-inch diameter timbers, and this section is assuming its final shape. The weight of the timbers holds it firmly to the riverbed, and the entire structure will then be concreted together. Board of Water Supply Annual Report 1921, photo courtesy of Department of Environmental Protection.



This picture shows the upper cofferdam (in distance) and the lower cofferdam (in foreground) connected by the 2 large steel pipes. In this picture, the flow in the Schoharie is too great to be handled by the pipes, and so the overflow is occurring in the upper and lower gateways. Without these gates, the water pressure would be too great for the cofferdams. Board of Water Supply Annual Report 1921, photo courtesy of Department of Environmental Protection.

the two cofferdams to relieve pressure against the dam: water could flow over the dam whenever the pipes were not able to transport all of the water. These notches were the safety valve so that water pressure would not knock out the cofferdams.

This system was operational by the fall of 1920, although not really tested until 1921. These pipes carried the water through the work area until 1923, when the foundation for the dam was firmly in place and stormwater could be channeled through a culvert built into the dam itself.



The 2 large steel pipes were integrated into the work site as it evolved in the years to come. Here, the pipes were routed right through the foundation excavation. Board of Water Supply Annual Report 1921, photo courtesy of Department of Environmental Protection.



However, everything doesn't necessarily go according to plan. On 6 different occasions, freshets overtopped the cofferdams and flooded the work area for a cumulative loss of work time of 104 hours (4.25 days). A 6-inch electric centrifugal pump was used to suck the work area dry.

Board of Water Supply Annual Report 1921, photo courtesy of Department of Environmental Protection.

Medallions on the Intake House

Two of the last stones taken from the Riverside Quarry were destined to become medallions above the windows on the facades of the intake house.

They show 4 vanes on a central pivot, with barrels between the vanes on the sides, and beavers at top and bottom.

These elements were originally on a seal adopted in 1686. The windmill recalls Dutch history, while the beavers and flour barrels are symbols of the area's most lucrative trade goods. This symbol has been in use since that time, is on the current NYC seal, and is also used in a number of city-based fraternal organizations such as Washington Irving's St. Nicholas Society.

Photo taken by Michael Fleischman, used here courtesy of Michael Fleischman and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.



THEY LIVED IN THESE HILLS

Gerry Stoner

These articles were contributed anonymously 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, but to remind us of some of the personalities and events that occurred in Gilboa and Conesville over the past 200 years.

Please email, write, or phone with your comments and contributions to this effort: gerrys@gilboahome.com; GHS Newsletter, 152 Starheim Road, Stamford, NY 12167; or phone 607 652-2665/866 652-2665.

Early Church Builders: Darius and Stephen J. Hitchcock

Darius and Stephen J. Hitchcock, who may have been brothers, were hired to build the Gilboa Methodist Church in 1845. Sometime around 1853 they also moved the Reformed Dutch Church from Conesville to Gilboa.

Darius lived on the Gilboa/Conesville town border, about where Kenny Clark's restaurant is now situated, and the 1872 Schoharie County Directory listed him as a carpenter and millwright.

That same directory listed Stephen as a notary public, sawyer, carpenter, dairyman, and farmer with 270 acres in Town of Conesville. Roscoe's 1882 *History of Schoharie County* adds that he was born in the Town of Durham (Greene County) on May 14, 1814, and settled in Schoharie County in 1833. At that time, indigents who could not support themselves were required to live in poorhouses—tax-supported residences called “outdoor relief” managed by an elected town official called the Poor Master. Over the course of his life, Stephen served as Poor Master, Justice of the Peace, and Town Supervisor. Stephen lived just above Conesville village on the farm locally known as the Freeland Case place.

Darius died in 1884 at age 80, and Stephen died in March 1895 at the age of 81. They are both buried in Manorkill Cemetery.

Public Personalities of the 1950s

Gene Hallock was widely considered the best County Clerk we ever had, and was always courteous and helpful.

Catherine Mattice was the Gilboa postmistress, a wonderful lady, and great at her job.

May you and yours have a wonderful and prosperous 2013

MEMORIES OF YESTERYEAR

Clifford Hayes

The Fall 2012 issue of the Gilboa Historical Society Newsletter brought back many memories of the early 1930s when I lived in Grand Gorge. My mother took my brother and me up to the hillside looking into the dam one summer when there was a drought. We could see the exposed basements of homes that were destroyed to make room for the dam. Mom was pointing out to me the foundation of the house that she was born in. I must have been about 7 or 8 years old at the time and could not distinguish exactly which foundation she meant. It was evident that she knew and I was happy for her.

We lived in a two-family house divided vertically from front to rear with a shared hallway and stairway to the second floor. We lived in the uphill side and a family named Debus lived in the other side. Mary Debus, the wife, died of some communicable disease, I believed diphtheria, and we were quarantined and kept out of school for two weeks. It sounded good but with no one to play with for two weeks it was a real drag. I usually played with Billy Sickler, who lived across the street in a house that was well back from the street front. I also played with a girl named Beverly Cronk, who lived in the house next to ours located on the downhill side of our house. I wonder if her Dad was the Cronk mentioned in the newsletter. Across the street from us and a couple of houses toward the center of town was the Telephone Company. Mrs. Telephone was Laura Tucker, who ran the switchboard 24/7 most of the time. I believe she got off every third weekend (with maybe an extra day off) and would go to Unadilla to spend it with her husband who was a farmer there. She was on the switchboard daily until 10:00 P.M. She would then turn on an alarm that rang if there was a call from then until next morning. If there was, she got up to handle it.

The Hitchcock boys, Harold and Marshall, were my friends. One day Harold and I were conversing when a younger neighbor girl came over and wanted to play. We had no use for her and Harold began tormenting her. She broke into tears and shouted, "I'm going to tell my mother on you, Tiny Marshall Hitchcock!" It tickled us that Harold's older brother, Marshall, was nicknamed "Tiny" and would get in trouble for what Harold did.

My cousin, Josephine Rikard (nee Fredenburgh), lived in Prattsville most of her life until after 2000 when she and her late husband, Herb, moved to Duncanville, Texas to be near her daughter, Barbara.

My great grandparents, Melvin and Harriett (Snyder) Champlin, both grew up in Conesville and were distantly related to George Cook who ran the grocery store in Conesville. I recall riding on the wagon with their son Frank while he

ran his route every morning, gathering the cans of milk and delivering them to the creamery in Manorkill, and then returning the sterilized cans to the farms.

You should be aware that the men never gossiped—that was what the women did! But the men did discuss the weather, the crops, the livestock, the price of farm goods, and other things. But gossip—NEVER.

There were church socials where the women brought all kinds of goodies, mainly dishes that they had a reputation for making well. After church the men would set up tables and chairs, and the women would set up the luncheon while we kids would mill about and try to snatch a cookie or a piece of cake to nibble on. Money was tight but those in the farming community ate well, mostly home-grown foods and meat. Newlyweds did not go on a honeymoon. They usually moved in with one of their parents and had a bedroom to themselves. The groom worked the farm where they lived and the bride assisted with the household chores. Sometimes they were given a small house and, perhaps, a few acres so that they had their own spread.

The current Gilboa school and the cemetery behind it were part of my great grandfather's farm. Several of my Southard ancestors are buried in that cemetery, and I have some Champlin ancestors buried in the West Conesville cemetery and others in the Manorkill cemetery. I also have some ancestors in the Fairlawn Cemetery just up the hill from Prattsville on the road to Grand Gorge, and Melvin Champlin's Bible is in the Gilboa Museum (as is the one of Giles Champlin, one of Grandad's kin).

Clifford Hayes.

July 29, 1880

Dr. Leonard's famous annual picnic takes place near Broome Center August 25. Last year about 4,000 people attended. He has managed those things for several years with eminent success. *Gilboa Monitor* submitted by LaVerne Hubbard.

Sept 1, 1881

The farmers' picnic at Broome Center on Aug. 27th, was attended by an unusually large crowd, the number being estimated at about five thousand. Everything passed off pleasantly, and all who attended report a good time. Judge Holmes and M. A. Baker of Cobleskill and "Ned Buntline" of Stamford gave appropriate orations, and the Gilboa and the Stamford cornet bands furnished the music. The Gilboa Cornet band got \$42 for playing at the Broome picnic. *Windham Journal*. Reprinted with permission, courtesy of the *Windham Journal*.

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* 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.

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