



THE SENTINEL

Vol. 25, No. 1

The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Fall 2016

Where Have All the Taverns Gone?

By Sherry Burgoon, Editor

Over the past five months, members of our local communities have poured out their sadness and concerns with the impending sale of Smith's Tavern in Voorheesville. The outcry of support for our beloved Smitty's has even gone beyond the village and town limits. Patrons from all over the Capital District have expressed their shock with the possible loss of a loved pizza parlor and bar.

Reflecting on this loss personally, I realize that the controversy of its sale goes far beyond who the new owner might be; it is the loss of our personal and collective history as a community. Taverns have had an integral part of history for centuries even before our country was even established. In Colonial America taverns were critical meeting places where political decisions were made leading to the emergence of the United States. People gathered there for a meal and perhaps an alcoholic beverage. Community members could discuss local news, read papers from the big cities, make business deals to sell their produce or wares, and even pick up their mail. Often centrally located, they served many functions. As I was researching the topic, I was surprised to find the history of the Reid farm which was located next to the present Voorheesville Fire House. Even though they were basically farmers, in the late 1800s they did have a tavern on the site. Later, they turned it into a hardware store which also served as a post office.

During the 1800s the Delaware Turnpike through Clarksville was a bustling thoroughfare making its way to the Hilltowns. The Clark Tavern was a critical meeting place during the Anti-Rent Wars in 1839. Maj. William Bloodgood made the tavern his headquarters when the state militia arrived in Clarksville, naming it Fort Clark. The New Salem Hotel, along what is now New Scotland Road (Rt. 85), would have provided the same needs for the local residents. Many of us remember it as Happy's Bar and Tavern during the later 1900s. Voorheesville's Harris House and Grove Hotel were frequent meeting and rest stops as the village grew during the building of the railroads. I remember the Harris House when Mike Michele owned it as a bar in the 1950s and 60s. If you take time to read *Images of America: New Scotland Township*, you will find numerous hotels and taverns which were an integral part of the town's history as each village and hamlet had them. All of these are now gone.

Smith's Tavern has a similar history as all the other hotels and taverns. Originally, it was Nick Oliver's "West End Hotel", although not much is known about it other than it took in boarders and served food and spirits. It became the Brook View Hotel under the ownership of Ernest E. Albright. When the Smith family took ownership, their pizza brought the tavern its fame as we all know it today.

The patrons of Smitty's are facing what all small rural areas face. Where do we now go for a bite to eat or an alcoholic drink as we mingle with family and community friends? Everyone that I have spoken to in the last few months about the loss of our local tavern have all shared the same sentiments. Kathy Fairbank, a waitress for more than 25 years, remembers fondly the day Gert Smith hired her on the spot, becoming close friends. Carrying on Frank and Gert Smith's legacy has been personally rewarding. She has established many friendships over the years and is especially happy to see those from afar who come in after a long absence. Shirley Kendall, who remembers Osterhout's on the hill and Happy's in New Salem, doesn't know where she will be able to socialize when Smith's Tavern is gone.



(Continued on Page 3)

IF YOU HAVE ANY PERSONAL MEMORIES OF HOTELS OR TAVERNS IN THE TOWN THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE, PLEASE CONTACT SHERRY BURGOON (STBurgoon@aol.com)

**NEW
SCOTLAND
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION**

P. O. Box 541
Voorheesville, NY 12186

OFFICERS 2016-2017

President

Deborah Mahan 779-0993

Vice President

Alan Kowlowitz 765-4212

Corresponding Secretary

Marion Parmenter 765-4652

Recording Secretary

Peg Dorgan 768-2852

Treasurer

Sarita Winchell 765-2133

TRUSTEES:

Lisa Boehlke '17 765-4485

Peter Henner '17 768-8234

Ann Marie Hess '18 229-4750

Chris Albright '19 765-2018

Robert Parmenter '19 765-4652

Sherry Burgoon '19 765-4387

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Membership

Amy Heebner 937-2906

Programs

Alan Kowlowitz 765-4212

Publicity

Ethie Moak 753-4692

Hospitality

Lisa Boehlke 765-4485

Museum Coordinator

Lillian Byers

Collections

Lea Warden 588-8602

Exhibits

Ann Marie Hess 229-4750

Genealogy

Martha Slingerland 768-2184

Finance

Janet Betlejeski 522-4794

Historic Sites

Tim Albright 765-2396

Electronic Communications

Alan Kowlowitz 765-4212

Town Historian

Robert Parmenter 765-4652

Voorheesville Historian

Dennis Sullivan 765-2468

Sentinel Committee

Sherry Burgoon 765-4387

Deborah Mahan 779-0993

Judy Kimes 768-2607

Mary Beth Frohlich Felice

Marie Hornick (Proofreader)

Web Page

www.newscotlandhistoricalassociation.org

President's Letter

Dear Members and Friends,

I hope you had an enjoyable summer. I was excited to hear from many new friends who shared some great information about their ancestors and families who were important in shaping the town of New Scotland. A member of the Coughtry family generously sent us a copy of Frank Coughtry's memories of his father, William Coughtry. We will be reprinting excerpts from this in coming issues of *The Sentinel*. We also met members of the Van Auken family who donated some family items to the museum, as well as shared many photos and stories from the family. We will be sharing these also. Stay tuned!

After you read our cover story, I hope you are inspired to share your own stories with us of your recollections of enjoying the many taverns that once thrived in the town.

Debbie Mahan

Mission Statement

The Town of New Scotland Historical Association preserves, protects and promotes history in the Town of New Scotland through the stewardship of material culture directly related to the town. The purpose is to promote an appreciation of local history, heritage and culture. through research, publications and educational programs.

MUSEUM CLOSED

**October 9, 2016 (Columbus Day Weekend)
November 27, 2016 (Thanksgiving Weekend)
December 25, 2016 (Christmas)**

If you would like to become a member, please do so!

NSHA Membership Form

\$10 Individual
 \$15 Family
 \$25 Sustaining
 \$100.00 Life (per person)

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Make checks payable to NSHA.

Please send dues to:

Amy Heebner
NSHA Membership Chair
1403 Delaware Turnpike
Delmar, NY 12054

Where Have All the Taverns Gone (continued from page 1)

Personally, Smitty's has been a part of my history since 1962, when my family moved to 104 Maple Avenue two doors away. Every Friday night, the Burgoon family ordered pizza for pick up just a two-minute walk away. As I became an adult, it was a popular meeting place for college students on Thanksgiving Eve, knowing we would be meeting up with our high school friends during the weekend break. For many years, Voorheesville High School Class Reunions begin the weekend with a Smitty's gathering. My partner Joerg Siemann and I regularly stop in for a quick dinner and cocktail always seeing people we know, either long-time friends or former students and soccer players.

Where have all the taverns gone? Looking at the history of taverns, the economy has had a lot to do with their demise. Making a living as a tavern owner requires long, late hours, costly licenses and liability insurance, as well as the ability to purchase liquor and food at a reasonable cost. As a private owner, this is quite prohibitive when chain restaurants and bars can purchase in large volume. The maintenance costs and necessary updates keep profit margins for the small business owner low. When deciding to retire or sell a business, finding a purchaser who is willing to take all of the risks involved makes the decision to sell a huge dilemma. Obviously, the local taverns in our town and across the country have faced the same problem. Finding buyers willing to take these risks has resulted in the closing of these once valued establishments.

There are other restaurants in neighboring communities where a meal can be enjoyed along with a glass of beer or wine, but the sense of community and shared belonging and history will not be found in these establishments. The loss of Smith's Tavern will be a loss of not only our shared personal histories but of an American history institution in our society.

IN MEMORY OF

The New Scotland Historical Association was saddened to learn of the death of the following friends and members. We offer our condolences to their families.

Jerrine M. Osterhout (1937-2016.) Jerrine Osterhout passed away on July 14, 2016. She was the wife of Willard J. Osterhout of New Salem.

Earl F. MacMillen (1931-2016) Earl MacMillen passed away on July 25, 2016. He was the husband of Beverly Frisbee MacMillen.

Daniel A. Driscoll (1938-2016) Daniel Driscoll passed away on July 26, 2016. He was the husband of Maureen Hourigan Driscoll.

Robert Samuel (1947-2016) Robert Samuel passed on August 3, 2016. He was the husband of Lynne Samuel of Voorheesville.



Indian Ladder Farms celebrated 100 years in operation with the dedication of an historical marker. The marker (seen in the picture) was financed jointly by the New Scotland Historical Association and current owner, Peter Ten Eyck.

“Indian Ladder Farms is part of the history of all who live in New Scotland, and with its recent land preservation efforts and the opening of the farm cidery and brewery, it continues and will continue to make history in the Town of New Scotland for the next 100 years.

Speaking for the New Scotland Historical Association, we appreciate and celebrate all that the Ten Eyck Family and Indian Ladder Farms have done and means to this community. “

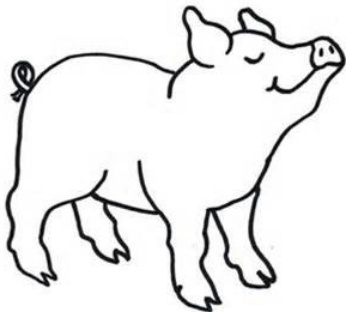
Alan Kowlowitz, Vice-President, NSHA

SUNSHINE'S CORNER

By Mary Beth (Frohlich) Felice

Summer brought lots of activity to the farm. We leased out the back acreage to a local farmer who then planted various crops – wheat, oats, buckwheat. I loved hearing the farm machinery and seeing the little green sprouts as they began poking through the earth. Unfortunately we had some neighbors who owned critters who also appreciated these young green stalks. But I get ahead of myself.

Mom had never learned to drive, as we had previously been city dwellers where they actually had buses and trolleys. Suddenly we now found ourselves living in the “middle of nowhere!” No bus, no trolley, no neighbors. Through great struggles and perseverance, dad taught mom to drive. Now all she needed was a vehicle. I think it was meant as a joke, but the vehicle dad chose for mom's transportation was a Model A Ford with red wheels. It even had window shades in the rear windows! I don't think mom saw the humor in it, but it ran well and got her around. Richard and I loved it.

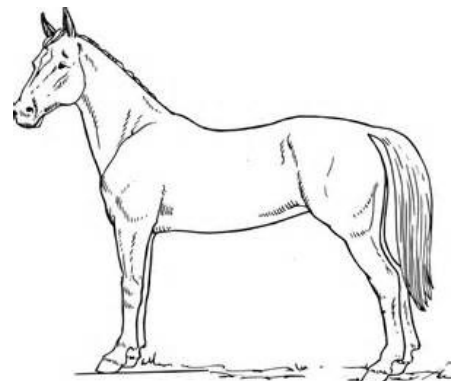


One lovely summer day, mom noticed movement across the field along the fence line. “Yikes! Crouse's pigs have found a hole in the fence and are munching on the young buckwheat.” Mom turned into a wild woman. “Get in the car!” she shouted. Rich and I jumped into the Model A and off we went, tearing across the field. Half-way across was a dry drainage ditch that bisected the field. She backed up a bit and floored it. We literally flew across the ditch, the three of us screaming, the ooogah horn blaring. The pigs looked up, saw the crazy people racing toward them and made a dash for the fence – never to be seen again. Mom gave a victorious “Yeah!!” and we returned to the house. Obviously by this long epistle, you can see that it was an unforgettable experience.

Another fond summer memory was about swimming. We had no pool; the Vly Creek was too shallow for any swimming, and there was no town or school pool. A friend located this great “swimming hole” called Little Falls on the other side of the village. I would bike over to Senning's house on Voorheesville Avenue, gather up Ann, and off we'd go. Somehow we'd find the right spot, walk our bikes across the field and lean them against trees at the edge of the field. It was a steep incline down to the cool, rushing water traversing the rocky falls. There was NO diving, but you could sit in the falls or swim in the pool below the falls. So lovely. No “posted” signs, no life-guards, no depth indicators, etc. Summer in the 50's.

It was also a good time for horseback riding. At age 11, my uncle, the veterinarian, gave me my first horse, a western saddle and bridle. My folks knew nothing about horse care and neither did I! But here he was – good old Rusty, former lead pony at the race track. He quickly learned how to pick the latch at the barnyard gate, and then he was off to visit the oat field. Not a good thing. Overdosing on oats for horses is like overdosing on SPEED for humans. Needless to say, we had to create a more secure gate.

Early in my “horse experience” I decided to head down New Salem Road (85A) toward Marion Badgley's house. They had a long driveway that should be a safe place to ride. Off we went. At my tender young age I knew how to “tack up,” but one important piece of information was missing. I found out the hard way that horses tend to “puff up” when you pull their girth tight, and as you ride, the belly relaxes. The result was that as I began to ascend the hilly part of the drive, the saddle began to slip. Not only slip, but it was heading for the left side of the horse, and the ground was not far away. I managed to jump off before the saddle was actually under the horse, but it was a scary lesson.



A Glimpse of the Past—1896

By Judy Kimes

As autumn approaches, let's revisit the writings of two of the diarists we drew on back in our spring edition. They are Harriet O'Brien of Clarksville and Vanderzee LaGrange, then of Unionville. The year is 1896, 120 years ago.

Their homes separated by less than five miles, Harriet and Van may have known of each other. Van certainly would have known Harriet's husband, Smith. Smith O'Brien was an attorney who practiced law in Albany and in Clarksville, as well as in Voorheesville and New Salem. Smith also served at least one term in the New York State Assembly (1886). Van LaGrange had an interest in politics and the law too, serving sixteen years as Justice of the Peace.

In 1896, the O'Brien's owned what is known as the Meed House on Delaware Turnpike in Clarksville. This house still stands today inhabited by its current owners, the Art Van Praags and a life-sized papier-mache dinosaur. It also has a New York State Historical Marker in the front yard. In the 1890s, on the twenty acres in back, the O'Briens grew plums, peaches, pears, currents, gooseberries, and black and red raspberries.

Van LaGrange heads his 1896 diary with "Crystal Spring Farm. Butter, Fruit, and Berries. V. LaGrange. Union Church, N.Y." This farm was on the Unionville-Feura Bush Road close to the Delaware Turnpike end. Its farm house is also still standing.

By 1896, the O'Briens had two daughters, Grace, 17, and Mabel (Mary Beth Felice's grandmother), 10. Van LaGrange and his wife, Agnes, had a son, James, 23, and two daughters, Hester, 21, and Anna, 10.

It is interesting that two events are mentioned in both diaries. On Wednesday, September 16, Harriet and Mabel went to the Altamont Fair with Harriet's sister and brother-in-law (Grace was away at school in Poultney, VT). Van also notes that he attended the fair that same day. He does not mention if he took the family, but one cannot imagine being left behind on Fair Day!



Hattie O'Brien with daughters Grace and Mabel

In 1896, the Altamont Fair was three years old. Admission was 25 cents. There was to be a hot air balloon "ascension." The Flower and Fine Arts Building (also known as Exhibition Hall) was newly erected, styled after a similar building on the Cobleskill Fairgrounds. One can imagine Harriet and Mabel and Agnes, Hester, and Anna taking in all the flowers and art in the new venue, but horse racing was also on the calendar of events, and Van loved a good horse race (and a good horse trade)!

(Continued on Page 6)

DIARY OF HATTIE FLANSBURG O'BRIEN (1892)

Submitted by Mary Beth (Frohlich) Felice, Hattie's great-granddaughter

Monday 7/4/1892 Cold

Freddie Wrights baby born. Quiet 4th of July. We sat and visited. Mary read some. Bill and Grace went to John's berry patch and picked 2 full quarts red raspberries. After dinner we made some ice cream flavored with strawberry & raspberry & vanilla. At night Mary and I went to the church festival. I gave dollar for supper then came home. Smith was to bed. David called this afternoon. He and Ida came, shared the fourth nite.

Saturday 7/9/92 Rainy all day till after 4 o'clock.

I baked a mulberry pie and spice cake. Mrs. S. churned and cleaned floors. After noon she took her umbrella and went to make a visit to Ida Earls when it stopped raining. Smith and I went out to the barn got sow and little pigs out of the mud and got them into the barn, fed chickens and ended work.

Monday Aug 15, 1892 Nice & cool, some cloudy yet.

We have done a large washing and after dinner Smith took horse and wagon and we went to the orchard and picked 19 small baskets of peaches, brought them down and sorted them. Set them in the pantry till tomorrow. This eve Mrs. Clarence Miller & Myrna Slater called here.

Sun. Sept 18, 1892 Weather nice

Our minister is away so there was no preaching but I went to Sunday School. Then after noon the wind commenced to blow so that peaches fell fast so Smith got Vy & Ell, Alson & Emeline and some others to help and picked 25 baskets and a lot of small ones. I feel bad to have such done on the Sabbath but do not know wether it is wrong.

(continued from Page 5)

The second event mentioned by both diarists was the result of the 1896 Presidential Election. Both noted on November 3, “McKinley elected.” Van added, “...over Bryan.” This would be the renowned orator, William Jennings Bryan. Neither expresses any sentiments about the election’s outcome. McKinley was a Republican, as were both Van and Smith, so one supposes they were pleased. Harriet, of course, could not vote and would be unable to do so during her lifetime.

Van had a way of being present at news-making political events. On April 26, 1865 his diary states, “was to Albany to the President’s Funeral.” President Lincoln’s Funeral Train stopped in Albany on that date. Van was then 19 years old. Thirty-six years later, on September 6, 1901, President William McKinley was shot at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, dying eight days later on the 14th. For September 16, Van writes that he left Albany on the 8:15 a.m. train to go to the Exposition. He attended on the 17th and 18th. On the 19th Van writes, “Exposition closed. President’s Funeral. Went to Niagra Falls forenoon. Afternoon to stock yard.” And that was that. Theodore Roosevelt succeeded William McKinley as President.

Thursday, November 27, 1896 was Thanksgiving Day. On that date, Van writes, “(Went) to pay for phosphate to Flansburgh’s. Adams’ to pay for cow.”

Harriet’s diary for that date reads, “Thanksgiving Day and I am truly thankful. Smith is better (He had been suffering with “neuralgia.”). John O’Brien took dinner with us. Had chicken. I called on Emma Ward this forenoon. She has been sick for a week. Attended oyster supper in our church (the Clarksville Methodist Church, practically across the street). Cleared \$10.50. Gave to Mr. Allen (their minister) on salary.”

Thanksgiving Day is a good place to close. How thankful we can be that these Town of New Scotland residents took the time to record the happenings of their days, and that these diaries have survived for 120 years! And thank you again to Dennis Sullivan and Martha Slingerland, who carefully transcribed them so that they could be read and treasured by us all.

Photos from
the Collection
of
Don
Slingerland



Photo Above: Vanderzee LaGrange is seated on the left. We do not have names of the other men. 1920



Left: Vanderzee La Grange (Far Left) with his family

Right: Van is the young man in the middle of this threshing crew (wearing the large white hat). Probably around 1900 on Crystal Springs Farm.



New Scotland Historical Association's Program Schedule 2016-17
(Titles are tentative and subject to change)

Oct. 4, 2016 (7:30-9:30pm) - Thacher State Park: A Classic North American Geologic Site

The rocks of Thacher Park record the history of Earth, from the deep geologic past to recent times. Ancient seas, modern and ancient earthquakes, and today's retreat of the Indian Ladder cliffs can be "read" from the rock layers. Explore these various Helderberg histories with Dr. Chuck Ver Straeten, geologist at the New York State Museum.

Nov. 6, 2015 (2:00-4:00pm) Citizen Activism and Political Change in New York State History - Historian Dr. Bruce W. Dearstyne will explore a number of dramatic events over the 200 year course of New York State history. These events altered the course of the State and nation, illustrating the "spirit" of New York—the elusive traits that make New York State unique and a leader among the fifty states.

Dec. 6, 2016 (7:30-9:30pm) "Politics & Patriots"

The Lost Radio Rounders present a musical program featuring campaign songs and stories from America's founding to World War II; from George Washington to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Humor, history and hummable melodies from across the aisle and across the years. Turns out candidates talking trash about each other is nothing new!

Feb. 5, 2017 (2:00-4:00pm) World War I Impact on the Capital District German-American Community – The Capital District was home to a vibrant German-American community supported by a network of German language clubs, businesses, and institutions. The Great War had a devastating impact on this community, changing it forever. Historian Christopher White will provide a vivid picture of the Capital Districts German American community and its sad fate.

March 5, 2017 (2:00-4:00pm) – "Riot in Greenbush -The Anti Rent War Renewed!" – Historian Jill Knapp will relate the fascinating story of the murder of Rensselaer County Deputy Sherriff Willard Griggs, a former anti-renter, by William Witbeck during an eviction at the tail end of the anti-rent movement in 1869. This 'affray' as it was often called in the local newspapers and subsequent trial, was one of the major news stories of the time.

April 4, 2017 (7:30 –9:30pm) (Speaker TBA).

May 2, 2017 (7:30-9:30pm) – Mount Pleasant Cemetery, New Salem, NY: New life for a Civil War Cemetery (est. 1864) 1993-Present -Herb Reilly, Mount Pleasant Cemetery President, will discuss the history and challenges of preserving one of the Town of New Scotland's most historic cemeteries.

All Programs will be held at the Wyman Osterhout Community Center

All Programs are free to the public; Parking is available

Please Support our Corporate Sponsors!

Atlantis Security Group Inc.

asg01@nycap.rr.com

Corner Gateway

www.cornergateway.com 512-5454

Dunston Brothers

768-2205

Elemental Landscapes, Inc.

www.gotstone.com 765-5002

Helderberg Oil

768-8300

Hennessy Engineering

475-1670

Jaycees Pizza Depot

765-2000

Morrison Engineering, PC

765-5672

Robinson's Hardware and Garden Center

475-9483

Smith's Tavern

www.smithspizza.com 765-4163

Something Olde Something New

475-0663

Steven Lysenko, DMD, PLLC

765-4616

Stewart's Shops

www.stewartsshops.com

Union Dutch Reformed Church

439-5020

Voorheesville Rod and Gun Club

765-9395

Museum Hours

**The museum is
open year-round
on Sunday**

from

2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

Handicap Accessible

THE SENTINEL

New Scotland Historical Association

P. O. Box 541

Voorheesville, New York 12186