



THE SENTINEL

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The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Spring 2018

Onesquethaw: A National Historic District

By Sherry Burgoon

Nestled in the southeast corner of the Town of New Scotland, the Onesquethaw Valley Historic District is a 3400-acre region along the Onesquethaw Creek, which includes 25 clustered buildings and 3 archaeological sites of historical prominence. O-nis'-kwe-thaw, a hamlet also known as Tarrytown, was settled by the Dutch on land originally owned by the Mahicans (Mohicans) but was overtaken by the Ma-quaes (Mohawks) during the Beaver Wars of 1628. The name can be translated from the Mohawk language meaning "sinking stream," which aptly describes the topography of the land. The area contains flat land along the creek and some wooded areas with Bennett Hill to the north.

In 1672 and 1673, Governor Francis Lovelace granted patents located for trade on the Normans Kill and the lower Coeymans Creek. Teunis Slingerlands, a trader from Beverwyck (now Albany) and his son-in-law Johannes Appel, purchased the land along the Onesquethaw Creek above the Coeymans Patent from eight Mohawk Indians who were authorized to sell it. Governor Thomas Dongan confirmed the 300-acre patent on May 13, 1685. Interestingly, the Van Sante (Van Zandt) house quartered as many as one hundred soldiers during the French and Indian War. Tory sympathizers were prevalent in the region during the Revolutionary War, while some local farmers resisted the British. Albert Vanderzee, Gerrit Van Sante, and others were accused of conspiracies against the British. Teunis Slingerland turned on his family and neighbors in the support of the revolutionary cause. In April 1778, he was appointed First Lieutenant of an Albany County regiment.



The Teunis Cornelius Slingerland House

During the nineteenth century several mills operated along the creek, but farming remained the main occupation. Fifteen to twenty Greek revival and Victorian farmhouses began to dot the landscape subdividing the original holding. The "Willow Brook," Slingerland-Parks House, Gregory House and the Old Elmendorf House exhibit the Greek Revival influence. Other homes of distinction include the following: Leonard Farmhouse, Manhattan Hook Farm, Hollyhock Hollow Farm, Chittendale Farm, and the Dawson House, to name a few. Despite new farmers moving in, the area never became overcrowded.

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President's Letter

The long winter is coming to an end and we can look forward to better weather.

I am hoping you will be able to attend our final two programs of the season. On Saturday April 10 the Helderberg Madrigal Singers will perform *Revels in the Cheerful Spring*, a celebration of the gentle season in a program of vocal music from the 13th-18th centuries accompanied by period instruments. On May 1 Voorheesville native and Clifton Park Historian John Sherer will present a program on the challenges of preserving history in a suburban town and relate his experience to growing up in New Scotland.

There are also a number of odds and ends I need to mention:

- Sometime between Christmas and January 6th a vehicle hit the historical marker installed by NSHA at the Henry Crouse House on Picard Road. It appears that there was no police report filed. We are hoping the marker was thrown into a nearby marsh and will be recovered. Please contact us if you have any information on the marker or the accident that destroyed it.
- The NSHA Board has reviewed and made changes in our Association's membership and dues structure. You will see those changes in your next membership renewal.
- Our programs will continue to be free of charge to the general public. However, the Board believes that we should encourage attendees who are not members to join NSHA. We will also have a donation jar available for attendees interested in donating to support NSHA. All funds will help support programs and other NSHA activities.
- Spring is the time that NSHA seeks potential candidates for Association officers and committee chairs. It is a good time for you to volunteer for our many committees or to staff our museum. If you are interested in becoming more active in NSHA, I encourage you to contact any of our committee chairs listed in **The Sentinel**. We welcome all volunteers with open arms.

Alan Kowlowitz, President

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.

Willard Osterhout: Helderberg Troubadour

By Sherry Burgoon

Willard Osterhout, life member, past president, and **Sentinel** contributor, passed away December 2, 2017. Anyone who met Willard will never forget him. Marion and Bob Parmenter, dear friends, described his fun-loving, quick-witted personality as the qualities which made him such a pleasure to work with for almost 20 years.

Willard first became involved with the New Scotland Historical Association when the goal of writing the Town of New Scotland book began. When Marion called Willard requesting photos of Osterhout's Indian Ladder Lodge, he enthusiastically replied that he had a number of pictures she might be interested in. They met a few days later and Marion said, "He was hooked!"

A new chapter of Willard's life unfolded. The process of using the computer was new, but he quickly became immersed in sharing pictures and stories from home. Willard already was collecting postcards of Warner Lake. He then transitioned to writing down local history and sharing stories he had about growing up in Voorheesville and living at the Lodge. Willard self-proclaimed himself "an excavator of history." (*Altamont Enterprise Jan. 14, 2010*) While living in Berne on the lake, daughter Amy Anderson shared that he loved traveling the mountain talking to people while gathering stories, historical information and photos.

He never liked history in school; but seeing history in photos and having the gift of storytelling lead Willard to write five books. *Life on the Lake* about Warner Lake was his first. He followed with *Life Along the Way* about the hamlets of Berne. *The Journey Continues* and *The Final Journey* followed as more stories and interesting pictures came forward. In 2010, *Osterhout Brothers Indian Ladder Lodge* was his final publication. (*Altamont Enterprise, Oct.28, 2010*)

Willard, a family man, wasn't alone in his devotion to the Association. His wife Gerrie was always at his side. They would attend **Sentinel** meetings together as stories were developed. His four daughters were the first guinea pigs for his Highway Man tales. They couldn't escape hearing the day's harrowing adventures or hilarious tales every evening when they sat at the dinner table. Family trips with grandchildren in tow often involved side trips to historical sites like Gettysburg. Preparing new exhibits was a passion and turned into a family event. His grandson Tyler, Amy's son, was intrigued by the exhibits. "His grandfather would antagonize him for weeks about the upcoming openings to the point that he couldn't wait to see what was new at the museum," Amy fondly shared. Tyler is now a history major in college following in his grandfather's footsteps.

The Town of New Scotland Historical Association is indebted to Willard's loyal service. He served as president from May 2003-May 2007, began writing Reflections each issue from 2001 until his last issue the Summer of 2015, and continued to share stories and photos through his laptop as his health began to fail. Just the day before his passing, Bob and Marion received a photo from Willard.

Although his presence will be missed, his storytelling and passion for local history will live on for generations to come in **The Sentinel** and the five books he passionately authored.



Willard's grandson Tyler at historic exhibit for NSHA



Willard, five of his nine grandchildren and "Henry Hudson"

Photos showing some of the beauty and architecture that can be seen on a drive in the Onesquethaw Historic District



Bennett Hill



Slingerland-LaGrange Farm stone house built circa 1750's



The Onesquethaw Creek runs through the historic district.



The Stanton farmhouse



The Appel-Dryden house and barns

Photos courtesy of Debbie Mahan

(Onesquethaw: A National Historic District; Continued from page 1)

Architecturally, the Dutch influence is evident in the eight stone structures built in the area. It is noted that they are oriented toward the course of the creek mostly on secluded private lanes. Five homes, in particular, have similar designs: two Winne farmhouses, as well as the LaGrange, Bradt-Slingerland and the Appel-Dryden houses. Each is one and a half stories, five bays wide with centered doorways. (A bay refers to the main compartments of the structure.) Inside there are two end chimneys. The side facades tend to be two bays wide. The Slingerlands-Park house has a Dutch urban architecture with two brick walls and a steeply pitched roof. With more generous proportions and grandeur, the Vander-Zee Nyquist and Nisquethaw Farm (Oriskatach) are two full stories. The doorways are wider with the windows placed further apart providing a much larger living space.



Photo of Oriskatach: The Gerrit Van Zandt house built circa 1755

A driving tour quickly reveals the pastoral surroundings enticing both the Mohican and Dutch settlers to make the Onesquethaw Creek Valley their home. On one site along the creek opposite the Nisquethaw Farm, artifacts were found and documented on a map published by the State Archeologist in the 1930s. Bennet Hill looms over the area like a sentry guarding the homeland. It is easy to imagine the Mohican's longhouses dotting the landscape long before the Dutch arrived. Two important wooded areas, the Douglas Arboretum on the south side of Onesquethaw Creek and the lands surrounding Hollyhock Hollow farm on Rarick Road, obviously provided protection as well as hunting areas for food and furs. Much of the district is still secluded today from major thoroughfares. With the passing of the land to the Dutch, the region has remained incredibly rural for more than three centuries. Descendants of the LaGrange, Slingerland, and Stanton families still remain. The Onesquethaw Valley Historic District is a national treasure to be preserved for many centuries to come.

Special thanks to Chris Albright who provided me with the nomination application submitted by Cornelia E. Brooke and Paul Huey, senior scientist and research assistant for the New York State Division of Historic Preservation, in December 1973. This 25- page document, including maps and photographs, is the primary source of this piece.

Cornelia E. Brooke and Paul Huey (December 1973). "National Register of Historic Places Registration: Onesquethaw Valley Historic District." New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Visit the museum to view a copy of this document. A driving tour guide will also be available.

SUNSHINE'S CORNER

By Mary Beth (Frohlich) Felice

It's a bleak time. Days short—days cold—outdoor activities at a minimum. The old farm house on New Salem Road (Rte. 85A) shivered in the arctic blasts and seemed to moan in the south wind. Ah, central heat, wouldn't that have been lovely? Too bad we didn't have it. My grandparents, Everett & Mabel Hallenbeck, moved to Florida for the winter. Smart people. Nowadays they would be called “snow-birds;” I admit that now I am one of them! When they left, we closed up the rooms on “their side” of the house and lived in the other half. Let me tell you about the dandy heating system we had; an oil stove in the living room, and a combo heating/cooking stove in the kitchen. That was it. Needless to say, not



much time was spent upstairs. Flannel sheets and down quilts did make sleeping comfortable. Snow? Well we had plenty of it “in the day.” Of course walks and driveway had to be cleared, especially when we still had “critters” living in the barn and outbuildings. Cleaning the walk (before snow blowers) created great mounds of snow all along the walkway. One particular snowy winter, my brother, Richard, and I created a great snow fort by adding to one especially large pile. It was hard packed enough that we could actually dig a doorway into a small cozy room. Well, maybe not cozy by today's standards, but to us kids—MAGICAL! When we were as frozen as our igloo house we would adjourn to the real house and peel off our snow togs. Mom made us hot chocolate and if we had them, she floated in some marshmallows. Life didn't get any better than that. When the days were cold

but bright, Rich and I would trudge across the fields to the small escarpment on Windelspecht's property. At that time, we were garbed in Navy pea coats that my father had apparently appropriated from the Navy YMCA/USO when he worked there. Man were those things warm, AND, needless to say, big. So to Rich and me, they made the perfect



sled/toboggans. Once we had created the track for sledding, we could throw ourselves on our bellies and with our arms out straight like the letter “T”, we would barrel down the track. Who needs a sled? Hidden rocks and bumps made the run occasionally uncomfortable, but we felt it worth the challenge. At the end of our escapade it was back to the house for the yummy chocolate concoction. Winter is long and slow-moving and dark for a lot of the time. But by March the days would be brightening and hope for spring would be growing. Life in Voorheesville in the winter time, looking forward to elusive spring.

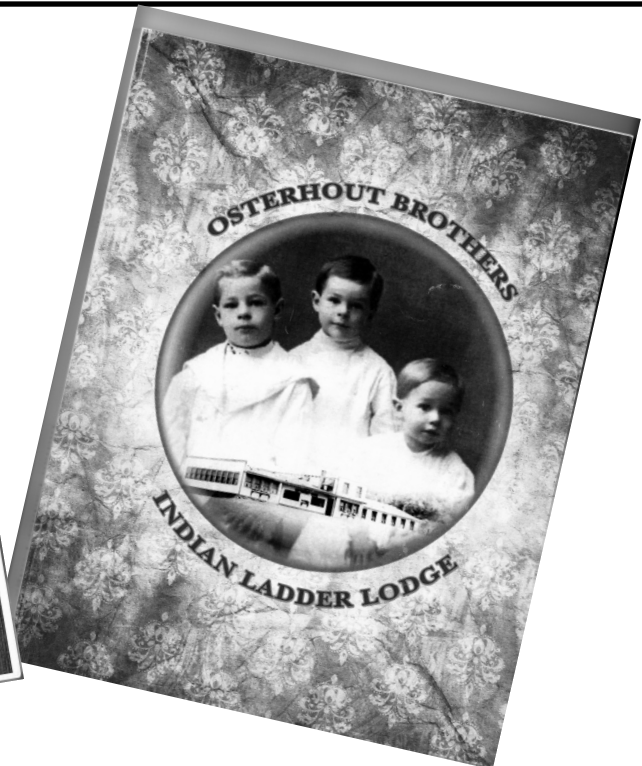
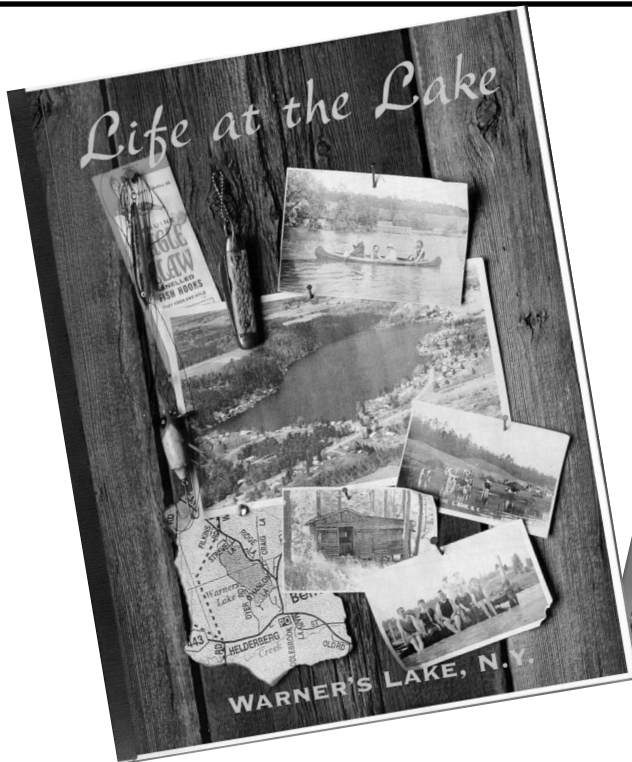
Photos Courtesy of Richard Frohlich

DIARY OF HATTIE FLANSBURG O'BRIEN

Friday, 1 January, 1892 A bright clear day rather cold. Our horse, Bess, died this morning early. We feel sad for she was good and we will feel the loss a good while. Smith went to Albany and back. Will Wame and wife came to make us a visit and Ed's Hattie went too --- supper with us. We have just come home – had a pleasant time.

Sunday, February 26, 1893 Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us. Oh, be swift to love, make haste to be kind.* Ma seems very feeble today. I will have to give her some morphine.

*(Author's note: So interesting that this little paragraph was also a benediction our minister in Woodstock, CT would use; I wonder where it came from!)



Two of Willard Osterhout's books, *Osterhout Brothers Indian Ladder Lodge* and *Life at the Lake*

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:

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NSHA Membership Chair
1403 Delaware Turnpike
Delmar, NY 12054

MUSEUM UPDATE

The Museum will be closed on the following dates:

- Sunday, April 1, 2018
 Easter Sunday
- Sunday, May 27, 2018
 Memorial Day Weekend

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Museum Hours

The museum is
open year-round
on Sunday

from

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THE SENTINEL

New Scotland Historical Association

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