



THE SENTINEL

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The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Spring 2024



On the Trail of the Odd By Thea Snyder

In October, 2023, The Voorheesville Public Library (VPL) had a Halloween costume drop off plan where the robes pictured here were donated anonymously. Realizing that these were not just ordinary Halloween costumes, VPL contacted NSHA to see if we were interested. Lea Foster, the NSHA Collection Manager, took up the challenge to figure out just what these robes were all about—and the hunt began.

It turns out that these robes are vintage ceremonial robes from the early 1900s for the fraternal group know as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF). Friendship, Love, and Truth are the key words of the IOOF, and their historic command is to “visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan”. The red robe was worn by a “Noble Grand Supporter” which was like the President’s aide. The blue one appears to be for the “Vice Grand”.

As the Sentinel rookie, I took on the challenge to figure out what the IOOF was, and why would these robes be in Voorheesville. The quest took me to the Sovereign Grand Lodge of the American IOOF, headquartered in Winston-Salem, NC, to the NY Jurisdictional Head in Lafayette, NY, to Dennis Sullivan, the Voorheesville historian, to the VPL archives, and our own NSHA archives—Judy Kimes had done a Sentinel article on the IOOF historic marker placed on the site of the current Voorheesville American Legion in the Summer 2023 Sentinel. The building at the corner of Main Street and Voorheesville Avenue which currently houses the Voorheesville American Legion Post #1493 since 1951, was originally built as the home for the IOOF Lodge #668, which was extremely active in the Voorheesville community in the first half of the 1900s. Thanks to Wendall Thayer at the American Legion, I was able to tour the upper floors and see what was once an incredible space for their IOOF rituals and the public in general.

The Odd Fellows Order originated in England in the 1700s. One explanation for their odd name is that the original Odd Fellows were men who were engaged in various or odd trades that didn’t have the numbers to form the security provided by a trade guild or union like the Masons. These workers of “odd jobs” banded together and initially met in the back rooms of pubs, paying a penny per week in dues that would help members who fell ill or had passed away. Eventually, the idea spread and formed a network of more formalized Lodges and the Odd Fellows developed their own unique rituals, philosophy, and purpose.

The first official Lodge in America was known as the Washington Lodge, No. 1, of Baltimore, which was organized April 26, 1819 under the leadership of Thomas Wildey, now recognized as the founder of American Odd Fellowship. Thomas Wildey was born in London, England in 1782, and raised in on orphanage. After 9 years of schooling, he became an apprentice to a maker of coach springs, and was initiated into the Odd Fellows in 1804. Wildey immigrated to America in 1817, and decided to start an IOOF organization in America which grew quite well. In 1861, Thomas Wildey passed away at which time there were more than 200,000 members of the American IOOF. On September 20, 1851, IOOF became the first national fraternity to accept both men and women when it formed the Daughters of Rebekah.



The IOOF ceremonial robes left in the library as Halloween costumes: blue and gold on the left and red and gold on the right.



The original IOOF Lodge when it was built ca 1908 at Main and Voorheesville Ave. Now the American Legion Post #1493.

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President's Letter

I hope you made it through our mildest winter on record and are enjoying the spring.

With the coming of better weather, our program series moves to the first Tuesday evening of the month at 7:30pm. The Community Center is a polling site for the April 2 Presidential Primary Election. Therefore, we will be moving our 7:30pm program on that date, **Beyond the Pines: Colonial Schenectady**, to the Voorheesville Public Library's (VPL) Community Room. The program is co-sponsored by the VPL.

On May 7, we are back at the Community Center for our Annual Membership meeting and final program **Extraordinary Art: Painting and Politics in Albany** presented by Kathryn Kosta, Director of the Albany Historical Association.

NSHA is also beginning to think of ways to increase its membership among residents/former residences and businesses of the Town. We have a task force looking at various approaches to reach targeted audiences. Any ideas that you have would be welcome. Feel free to contact any of our Board members. Additionally, if you would like to become more involved in NSHA, please let us know as well. We can always use additional members on our many committees.

Alan Kowlowitz

Brown Winters

By Judy Kimes

The Winter of 2023-24 is set to be one of the least snowy winters on record – but not THE Least Snowy. That would be the Winter of 1912-1913 when just 13.8 inches of snow fell. In the Slingerlands column in the March 13, 1913 issue of the **Enterprise**, there is the heading, "Autos Stalled In Mud." An intriguing story follows:

"A mud hole on the new state road opposite the residence of Dr. Becker in this village stalled seven automobiles from Saturday afternoon to Sunday afternoon. Two cars caught in the mire Sunday were hauled out with broken axles, and two cars to rescue one party were caught in the mud and had to be yanked out by two additional rescue cars with 200 feet of rope. Three cars were caught in this mud hole Saturday and one of these broke an axle."

A big car from Albany was carrying a party of six people for a ride in the country when their chauffer failed to notice the mud hole. The engine stalled, "full power was turned on and an axle snapped." A garage in Albany was telephoned and a car was sent to the rescue. This car became stuck a short distance from the first car, and a third car was phoned for. By the time this car arrived, the second car had been pried out, and "a large audience had gathered to see the fun."

"It was decided that the party would walk to the other side of the muddy spot and drive home in the third car which was to be run right through the mud. The people got around the mud safely, but the car stuck. The crowd cheered. The telephone was again called into play and two more cars were sent out, this time with a long rope to drag the victims out of their captivity. After a delay of three hours, the party started homeward.

"Complaint has been made to Governor Sulzer concerning the dangerous strip of comparatively new state road in the outskirts of the village of Slingerlands....

"Nearby farmers with teams of horses have been adding materially to their incomes of late, towing stranded automobiles out of the mud."

Brown Winters bring consequences of their own.

With gratitude to the detailed reporting found in the decades-deep archives of the *Altamont Enterprise & Albany County Post*.

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The Voorheesville Lodge #668 was founded in 1893, chartered by the Grand Lodge of the IOOF New York. The names of founders and trustees included: Morris Harris, Abram Relyea, Frank Bloomingdale, James Fowler, and W.H. Ferguson. The Voorheesville Rebekah Lodge #551 was also created in a similar timeframe.

Morris Harris, the owner of the Harris Hotel in Voorheesville, held a Valentine's Day fundraiser in 1893 and raised enough money to form the Lodge and rent meeting space in Leroy Schell's store. The Lodge building mentioned above was built in 1909 and quickly became not just a location for Lodge members to meet, but the social community center for the entire Voorheesville area for most of the first half of the 20th century. The fire department used it for awhile, and the Lodge hosted political functions, concerts and fundraisers for various village groups. When motion pictures came out, there were movies for the public at the Lodge every Saturday night which were always well attended. The building held about 450 people.

By the early 1900s, the group had grown to over 80 local business men. One of their crowning achievements was



when member and local Grand Master Stephen Daring became the Grand Warden of the New York State Jurisdiction of the IOOF in 1908. Everyone celebrated with their white hats and white umbrellas under the Daring banner.

Stephen Daring was very active in Voorheesville civil life. In 1915, he became the first President of the VPL Board of Directors. While he lived in Voorheesville, he was a practicing attorney in Albany, who had been born and raised in Schoharie County.

The Voorheesville IOOF Lodge #668 played a very important and active roll in the Voorheesville social life for over 50 years. This was commemorated in 2023 by the placement of a historical marker on the Lodge property for all of us to see and remember this remarkable organization.

We are grateful to the donor of the robes, even though we do not know from whom they came. If anyone knows, we would love to hear from you.

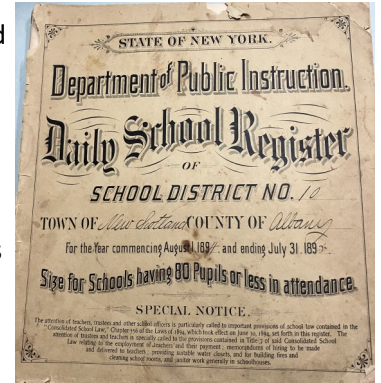
And a grateful Thank You to Dennis Sullivan (and his books and archives), to the VPL staff who were very helpful, and to Wendall Thayer and the American Legion. While the internet was helpful, I could not have found all of this information without their help.

Please submit your ideas for future Sentinel articles. Send out the sleuth! Or research and write your own article. We really want to know what would interest you the most!
Email judy.kimes@gmail.com or thea@cornergateway.com

**Arbor Day:
A Holiday with Its Focus on the Future
By Judy Kimes**

*“Other days repose upon the past; Arbor Day proposes for the future.”
-J. Sterling Morton, Arbor Day’s Founder*

Among NSHA’s collections at the museum are some old record books entitled, “State of New York Department of Public Education. Daily School Register for School No. 10.” In looking through these books, it is interesting to note that, along with attesting to such facts as the value and construction of the school building, the number of students, the number of books in its library, how many students were vaccinated, and if the privies complied with “the provisions of the ‘health and decency act,’” was a place to report when Arbor Day was observed at the school and how many trees were planted. Toward the front of these record books, amid other rules and regulations, is the heading “Arbor Day: Consolidated School Law.” This section describes when, where, and how this day was to be celebrated. These record books date from 1894 to the early 1900s and are for the Clipp Road school, Locust Vale, and Voorheesville.



Front of *Daily School Record* for 1894-1895, District #10 (Voorheesville).
NSHA Museum Collections

These days, Arbor Day pretty much comes and goes without much fanfare but, beginning in 1889, its celebration was mandated by the State of New York, and for good reason. By the end of the 19th century only 25 percent of New York State consisted of forested lands, and popular game animals such as white-tailed deer, became extremely scarce. Our population was increasing, cities and towns were growing, and farms were expanding. Citizens throughout the country became concerned, and Arbor Day was born.

Arbor Day was mandated to occur on the first Friday following May 1. Turning to the issues of the *Altamont Enterprise* following that first Arbor Day on May 3, 1889, one can see that the holiday was embraced with enthusiasm, especially in the schools. The correspondent for “The Clip” (Clipp Road School) reported that 16 trees were planted, and “a large number of scholars and friends were present.” In New Salem, Arbor Day was observed at the schoolhouse “with exercises consisting of readings, recitations, and singing under the direction of the teacher, Miss Foreman. Two trees named for George Washington and Rebecca Foreman were planted in the school yard, and a bed, previously prepared by the pupils, was set with a collection of flowering shrubs and plants, to which there will be, in due time, added a ‘Sweet William’.”



Clarksville School in 1920, located at the corner of Clarksville South Road and Delaware Turnpike. its first celebration of the first Arbor Day (1889) was described as a “Red-Letter Day.” -Collection of Don Slingerland

The correspondent for Clarksville reported that at its school, “Arbor Day proved to be a red-letter day. Delightful May weather, interest in the school, and a little feminine curiosity perhaps to see what would be done on such an occasion, called out a large attendance.... The speaking and singing, of which there was not too much, was very creditable both to teacher and scholars. This was interspersed with a brief and pleasant address by the M.E. minister, and an original poem by Mrs. Brown (was read). The tree-planting that followed very appropriately concluded the exercises. There were in all six saplings dedicated to Geo. Washington, Mrs. Cleveland, Prest. Harrison, Longfellow, Garfield, and Fred’k Blessing. The last named for the past year has been the popular and very efficient teacher of the school.”

(A side note here: In reading the reports of various tree plantings on this first Arbor Day, one of the planted trees was often dedicated to George Washington. This was due in part to the fact that April 30, 1889, marked the 100th anniversary of President Washington’s inauguration.)

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Stepping a little beyond the boundaries of the Town of New Scotland, the writer for the Altamont section of the May 4, 1889 issue of the *Enterprise* expressed ardent support for this new holiday. He wrote, “Yesterday was Arbor Day and an important one for our community. We need more shade trees. A number of trees were set out on the school grounds, but a hundred or two more should be set out about the residences of our citizens. Many more Albanians would summer in this place if there was more shade. A gentleman told us only a few days ago that he would have brought his family to our village, to a fine new residence on the lower part of Main Street, but there was no shade around this house. When will our citizens wake up to the business of planting more trees for shade. They can procure them close at hand, and at small labor and expense. Imitate the school children and trot out your maples and elms and basswoods.... Awake up, friends, and show the world about us that we have at least a thimble full of enterprise, and although Arbor Day has passed, it is not too late to act in this matter.”

Almost 135 years have passed since that first Arbor Day, and its goal to increase the number of trees and other greenery has met with success.

According to a report by the Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State is now one of the most heavily forested states. The percentage of the State being forested has risen from 25% in the late 1880s to currently nearly 63%.

This increase is beneficial to all New Yorkers. As stated in DEC’s report, “These benefits, collectively known as ecosystem services, include clean water and clean air, fish and wildlife habitat, flood protection, open space, and reduction of greenhouse gases. Other forest benefits include recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, and economic benefits from forest products.”



Photo circa 1915 showing pastoral view of New Salem, and not many trees.
From NSHA Museum’s photo archives

A popular poem, “The Heart of the Tree,” was written by Henry Cuyler Bunner in 1893 and was subtitled, “An Arbor Day Song.” It surely was featured at many schoolhouse recitations in the following years. Below is a brief excerpt from that poem:

*What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants cool shade and tender rain,
And seed and bud of days to be,
And years that fade and flush again;
He plants the glory of the plain;
He plants the forest’s heritage;
The harvest of a coming age;
The joy that unborn eyes shall see—
These things he plants who plants a tree.*
by Henry Cuyler Bunner (1855-1896)

This year, Arbor Day is celebrated on April 28, 2024. So, on that day, let’s go out and plant a suitable tree, or, at least, hug one.

Credits:

dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/forests-and-the-environment.
nyshistoricnewspapers.org; *The Altamont Enterprise & Albany County Post*, May 4, 1889; May 11, 1889.
With thanks to Donald Slingerland for providing the photographs.

Springing Ahead

By Judy Kimes

Whether we love it or hate it, Daylight Saving Time is here. This time change has always been wrapped in controversy. While researching another topic, an article in the January 4, 1974 Altamont Enterprise, this headline appeared:

**“Daylight Saving Time Here Again.
Begins on January 6”**

Daylight Saving Time beginning in **January**? Ah, yes, it did. As a possible way to conserve fuel during the 1973-74 energy crisis, Congress passed a law making Daylight Saving Time permanent from January 6, 1974 until the last Sunday in October 1976.

According to the Washingtonian magazine, in December of 1973, 79% of Americans approved of this change. But, according to the New York Times, three months later, the approval rating had dropped to 42%. Even though an official for the Federal Energy Administration noted that a 1% energy savings due to switching to DST would equate to 20,000 to 30,000 tons of coal not being burned each day, Standard Time was restored on October 27, 1974. A House panel commented that energy savings “must be balanced against a majority of the public’s distaste for the observance of Daylight Saving Time.”

When was Daylight Saving Time first implemented? That has no clear answer. Some credit Benjamin Franklin with the idea, but there is some evidence that tweaking time based on the sun far predates even Mr. Franklin. It is said that the ancient Romans adjusted the weights on their water clocks to match solar time more closely.

In the United States, the switch to DST was first made on March 31, 1918, as a fuel-saving measure during World War I. It would stay in effect for seven months.

During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reinstated DST, calling it “War Time.” War Time began in February 1942 and remained in effect until September 30, 1945.

The Uniform Time Act of 1966 put the U.S. government in charge of setting the dates for when DST would begin and end. States are allowed to opt out of using DST, but if a State chooses to participate in DST, it must adhere to the dates the federal government has mandated. Currently, Hawaii and Arizona (with the exception of the Navajo Nation) are the only states that do not use DST.

Changing time was and is a hot topic of debate. My grandfather had a cousin, William Vanderpoel, who lived in Selkirk. He and his wife, Hester, refused to make the change from Standard Time to DST (They also refused to install electricity.). When going to visit them on any summer afternoon in the 1950s, we had to remember that what was 1 PM to us was 12 noon to them, and they were probably having dinner. Great Grand Uncle Willie always said he refused to “make an honest clock lie!”

A popular anecdote that my brother, Don, brought to my attention describes the response made when someone explained the reason for DST to an old Native American. The Native American observed that this is like cutting a foot off the top of a blanket, sewing it to the bottom of the blanket and believing you would be left with a longer blanket.

My own feelings toward DST are more in line with that of an Altamont Enterprise reporter who, in announcing the first U.S. implementation of DST, wrote the following in the March 29, 1918, issue:

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Great Grand Uncle Willie’s “Honest Clock.”
Still running and ticking along in a family
home in the Town of New Scotland

Shifting the Hours

“Extravagant estimates of results of some new procedure are easily made. It is therefore very easy for the promoters of the so-called Daylight Saving Law to assert that through its operation a million tons of coal and \$10,000,000 in lighting bills will be saved to the people of the United States. That may or may not be true. For obvious reasons account figures of the savings will never be available. However, the operation of the law can do only good, because it will have a tendency to make ‘early to bed and early to rise’ more generally the rule.

It may seem a little childish to set the clocks an hour ahead instead of to get out of bed an hour earlier by the clocks as they are set; but the habit of timing our daily doings by the face of the clock is so firmly fixed that the change of the setting is unquestionably the quickest and surest way to establish the innovation of beginning the day and ending it an hour earlier.

On March 31 the clocks will be set ahead, and so shortly thereafter that many will be surprised, the new adjustment of time will seem as natural as the old.

For seven months, the hour will remain shifted upon the clocks. Then, when the period of minimum daylight begins, the hands will be set back again, and adjustment to that change likewise will require only a few days.”

Happy Daylight Saving Time! May your adjustment period go as smoothly as the Enterprise reporter promised it would.

Credits:

nyshistoricnewspapers.org; *The Altamont Enterprise & Albany County Post*; 1918, 1974.
Washingtonian.com>2022>March>15

NSHA MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Town of New Scotland Historical Association was chartered by New York State in 1975. The Association operates the New Scotland Museum which has permanent exhibits on the Geology and History of New Scotland, and displays one major new exhibit on an aspect of New Scotland History each year, along with several smaller exhibits. Each year the Association presents a popular series of programs on topics relating to the history and culture of the Town of New Scotland. The association conducts and supports local projects promoting history including scholarships, historic markers, resource surveys, and oral histories. The association promotes historical and genealogical research and makes its documents, photographic resources, and book collection available to the public, for use at the museum. In addition, the Association publishes its Newsletter, *The Sentinel*, quarterly. It is filled with articles on New Scotland history and the reminiscences of longtime local residents. Along with the hard work of all of our wonderful volunteers, your financial support helps make this a viable organization.

Become a member: Don't let us or the Community forget who we are! Thank you for joining NSHA.

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New Scotland Historical Association Membership
1403 Delaware Turnpike, Delmar, NY 12054

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Don't Miss the Spring Programs!

Programs Schedule for April through May 2023

Date: April 2, 2024 - Time: 7:30 pm (Site change to Voorheesville Library)

Beyond the Pines: Colonial Schenectady:

Michael Diana, Historian and Director of Education at the Schenectady Historic Society, will take us back to 1661 when Schenectady was founded as a tiny trade post where diverse cultures and languages met. He will relate the remarkable stories of the first generations of Schenectadians and the community they built.

Date: May 7, 2024 - Time: 7:30 pm

Extraordinary Art: Painting and Politics in Albany

Kathryn Kosta, Director of the Albany Historical Association, will relate how a single, seemingly ordinary painted scene in the Ten Broeck Mansion, of an old Albany Boarding House, can reveal so much about the politics and people of early nineteenth-century Albany.

THE SENTINEL

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