



THE SENTINEL

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The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Winter 2017

THE COUGHTRY FAMILY AND LIFE IN THE 1900'S

William Martin Coughtry

(7 Nov 1859 - 16 Jun 1936)

The following selections are from the memoir written by William's son, **Frank W. Coughtry**, in **1964-1965**. His heartfelt stories say so much about town life in the early 1900's.

"My father, Will Coughtry has been dead for nearly thirty years, and as time goes on and I have more time to reflect, I realize what a wonderful man he was. For a great many years he was actively engaged in church work at the New Scotland Presbyterian Church and was the superintendent of the Sunday School for about 25 years."

THE HILTON BARN

"My pop grew up on adjoining farms to the Hilton family, and he knew all about them, though there was no gossip ever heard around our table. The Captain Hilton farm is being turned into a golf course now, but it was once a darn good farm. Pa told me about working there with eight "big strapping Irishmen," mowing hay with scythes for Hilton, long before the mowing machine was invented. He told me it was a beautiful sight, all of those men swinging their scythes in unison, and a good man could mow a swath about seven or eight feet wide.

The Hilton barn was pretentious. It was the largest barn in our part of the country and maybe in the State. It has three driveways through it, which meant that it had six big mows for storing hay, wheat, rye and other crops. My pop was real young when it was raised. In the old days, all barns were built by raisin' bees. But first the frame of big timbers, cut by hand from virgin timber, cut square and straight, by men with a good eye and a sharp adze.

There was always one barn builder who was an expert and in our territory, that man was Frank Osterhout. He was the man who laid out the frame, cutting all of the tenons to fit his mortises and boring the holes for the oak pins, which would complete a perfect joint to withstand the ravages of wind and the stresses of monstrous loads which were piled on them at times. This exacting work was all cut, ready for the raising, and the big Hilton barn took a few days to raise and peg together. My Pa said that Mr. (I mean Captain) Hilton supplied a barrel of whiskey, and the very first day a man fell off of the frame and was killed. The next day, Mr. Osterhout said, "No more whiskey until the frame is up, or I walk off the job."

If there were any men who could lay out a building from the standing tree, today we would call them engineers and expect to pay them a big salary. But in those days all strong men were useful and very few men in any age ever got rich by the work produced by their hands."

NEW SCOTLAND STORE

"When Pa and Ma were first married, they "run" the New Scotland Store. At that time, it was the house which is across from the church, and my Pa had the contract to bring the mail bags up from Slingerlands; the Post Office went with the store, naturally. Later he moved the business up where the store is now, by the West Shore Railroad. Jay Whitbeck's father sold coal from the coal office and scales across the road, but my Pop carried nearly everything a farmer could possibly want, including cattle feed and hardware, as well as groceries and dry goods. Pa kept the store open every night, and there was always the usual hanger on who "set" in the same chair every night talking about the news and gossiping as men will. One customer, Kate Fitzpatrick, bought ginger by the pound and would get rip-roaring drunk on it. She lived in a little house by the side of New Scotland Road, and was known as Ginger Kate till the day she died."

(Continued on Page 3)

Correction to Fall Sentinel: Grandson of William and Arianna Coughtry was James Henry (not William Henry).

NEW SCOTLAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Voorheesville, NY 12186

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President's Letter

I hope everyone had a good Thanksgiving and that you are looking forward to a Merry Christmas and happy holiday season.

I wanted to remind folks that we have scheduled our winter programs (February 4th and March 4th) for Sunday afternoons from 2:00-4:00pm. This will allow you to attend programs without worrying about night-time travel on winter roads. Consider arriving early and visiting our museum to view the new exhibits if you haven't seen them.

My last few letters have focused on how the Comprehensive Planning processes in the Village of Voorheesville and the Town of New Scotland can promote the cause of historic preservation. I am pleased to report that the Town's Comprehensive Plan Update Committee has been in contact with NSHA. Lead by our Historic Sites Chair Chris Albright, we have been able to provide input to the Committee on identified historic structures and sites as well as the Onesquethaw Valley Historic District. We have also pointed out that the sites and structures with historical markers only represents a small percentage of those with historical significance in the Town. In some respects, the unidentified or unrecognized sites are those that are most endangered. We noted that a historical resources survey has never been conducted in New Scotland. Such a survey is critical to preservation efforts since you can't preserve what you have not identified.

We have also been able to share ideas on how an updated Comprehensive Plan can support or promote historic preservation. A couple of ideas I have shared include incorporating in an updated plan the following:

- An aspirational statement supporting individual and collective historical preservation efforts including the establishment of historic districts.
- A commitment to work with other stakeholders (e.g., Village of Voorheesville, Land Conservancy, NSHA, other local historical societies, etc.) to seek grants or other funding for a historical resources survey.
- Support a study of town ordinances to see if modifications can be made that would prevent or delay the destruction of historic structures or sites before possible preservation options can be explored.

I invite all of you to share any ideas you may have with NSHA. At the time I am writing this letter, the Voorheesville Draft Plan is available for review by the general public. It contains an extended and thought-provoking essay by Village Historian Dennis Sullivan that puts the draft plan into historic context. Dennis' essay made me think that sometimes we tend to view history as a march of progress but forget that history can also inform us about what we have lost as a community such as what Dennis terms a "face-to-face community-wide sense of community." I invite you to think about this during the holiday season and beyond. Spend some time talking and socializing with your acquaintances and neighbors as you run into them in public spaces, local businesses, and other gatherings. After all, the people who live in town and their relationships make the town a community.

The Town's Comprehensive Plan Update Committee has made a good start in its initial online survey by asking citizens the importance they put on the preservation of the Town's rural character, open space, historical buildings, agricultural lands, and natural vistas such as the Helderberg Escarpment. The outpouring of support for preservation of the Hilton Barn has already demonstrated the depth of support for the preservation of historic structures. The survey is just the beginning of what will be an extended process. I would urge the Committee and Town to directly engage NSHA as well as other stakeholders in the planning process. Perhaps our very able Town Historian could be included as an ex officio member of the Committee. For our part, we will reach out to the Town to see what part NSHA can play in aiding the planning process.

Alan Kowlowitz, President

The Coughtry Family (continued from page 1)

PREACHER ADAMS AND THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“My uncle, Whitbeck Coughtry, lived in a nice house he had built in New Scotland Village, and for a long time, he was a partner of Mr. Crawford, in the business of buying hay and straw which they shipped to the New York City market. I was a young boy when Mr. Crawford died, and I remember the to-do that was made because a young preacher by the name of Adams made the mistake of doubting that Mr. Crawford would ever make the heavenly scene. I do not know what Mr. Crawford had done to rile the Dominie, but I never heard any reason to set him apart from the other good people of the village of New Scotland.

Preacher Adams soon learned that nobody sends a Crawford or a Coughtry to Hell. He was asked to leave, pronto. That is one big advantage a Presbyterian has over a Methodist who has a Bishop for a boss.”

COUGHTRY FAMILY

My Uncle Whit (Whitbeck) was one of the nicest men I have ever known. He liked to read the Sunday paper as he reclined on a long window seat in the big east-bay window. He always had a wonderful garden on a vacant lot next to his house, and the finest strawberries. I liked to visit him, especially in the winter time, because he always had the best buckwheat flour, and Aunt Carrie make the best buckwheat cakes with all the sausage a boy could want, with plenty of maple syrup.

Uncle Whit was not very “churchified,” but Uncle Rob, who lived in Voorheesville, was the pillar of the Voorheesville Presbyterian Church, until some of the leaders played a dirty political trick on him. He attended the New Scotland church from then on and the Voorheesville church folded. About the only time Uncle Whit came to church was when there was some special entertainment and my Pa coaxed him to sing in a quartet comprised of his two brothers,



Lizzy Wademan Coughtry

and Mr. Levi Moak, for the bass. They made the best quartet in the land, and when they rendered the old favorite “Tenting Tonight,” the cold, cold ground made the chills run up your back. Whey they sung a hymn, there wouldn’t be a dry eye in the church. These were three wonderful men.

I was glad they my Pa lived to hear some good music on the radio. Music made life worthwhile, and any man with music on his mind is a happy man. The radio gave him the advantage of listening to good music, without having to listen to a lot of preaching.”

(Photos from David Raynsford)



Robert Coughtry’s house in Voorheesville

Note:

James Henry Coughtry and his wife, Gitty Whitbeck had four sons and two daughters. William M. was their fourth child, Whitbeck was their first son, and Robert was the youngest. William M. Coughtry married Elizabeth “Lizzy” Wademan (see above photo), and Frank Wademan Coughtry is one of their sons.

Many Thanks to Henry Rauch, grandson of Frank W. Coughtry, for sending his grandfather’s memoirs to the NSHA. The above selections are full of interesting and pertinent information for anyone interested in knowing the town’s history.

A School for the Community: Part 1

-by Judy Kimes

Usually one thinks of September as the month for school openings, but on Saturday, January 3, 1885, the little schoolhouse in Feura Bush was dedicated. The 1885 diary of Peter William Brate (1826-1903) notes that on this date, his stepson, John (age 13), “went to the school house dedication and to the skating ring (sic).”

That Monday, the 5th, he writes, “John and Mate (his stepdaughter, age 7) started for school the first days school in the new schoolhouse.”

On Wednesday, the 7th, Peter and his wife, Maria, went to Albany and in his record of expenses, Peter lists 25 cents spent on a globe and a school pail.

On Friday, the 9th: “The building committee put a bell in the belfry.”

On Saturday, the 10th: “At night I and Charley (a neighbor and hired hand) went down to a special school meeting to get the report of the building committee, cost \$1,102.”

On Wednesday, the 21st “...paid my school tax (\$22.82).”

And so the life of the one room schoolhouse, School District #5, Feura Bush, NY, began. Throughout the years, this school served as a focal point for the community and a source of pride. Its events were occasionally reported in *The Altamont Enterprise*. For example, in 1892:

“The school house is being kalsomined (whitewashed) preparatory to opening, Monday, September 8. Miss Hattie Hudson, teacher.”

“Columbus Day was celebrated in grand style.”

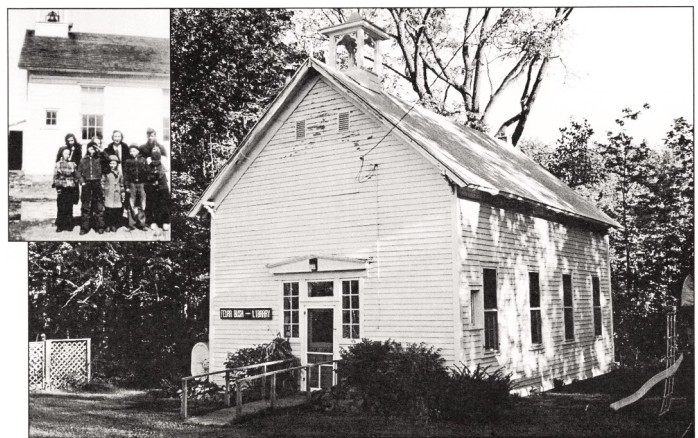
“Commissioner Hotaling held a teachers’ examination at the schoolhouse. There were only two examined.”

“We have a magnificent flag on the schoolhouse.”



In the photos are the interior of the school (circa 1910) and two views of the school’s exterior; one circa 1920s and the other showing the school in its role today as the neighborhood library. In the 1910 and 1920s photos, perhaps we are seeing the globe and the bell mentioned in the 1885 diary of Peter Brate.

(Continued on Page 5)



(Continued from Page 4)

In her book, *A Short History of Feura Bush*, Judy Wing shares some interesting facts about the old school such as taxes gathered, school budget, and wages paid, and a contract in the possession of the Jerusalem Reformed Church (right beside the school) between its consistory and School District #5 leasing the school building to that district from September 1905 to September 1925.

Also included in her book are anecdotal memories by Sarah Martin (born 1909) audiotaped by Norma Walley. Sarah Martin lived all her life on Martin Road off Rt. 32. She remembered attending the old school and several of the teachers she had. Two teachers taught grades one through 8 at the same time in the one room, with the group of younger students and that of older students sitting back-to-back to each other. Mrs. Billington taught the younger children. This teacher would make the transition to the new brick school when it opened in September of 1928. The teachers often boarded with families in Feura Bush. Ms. Martin remembers how cold the school was in winter. The students would keep their coats on and pull their benches around the one stove until about noon when the schoolroom was finally warm. In bad snowstorms she would come to school by horse-drawn sleigh. For drinking, the students would fill the water pail at the parson's house next door. The bathroom facility was a two-hole outhouse behind the school. She remembers there being gravestones right behind the school and being told that Indians were buried there.

The 1885 schoolhouse stopped operating as a school in June of 1928, but its usefulness to the community did not end there. After functioning in many capacities, in 1987 it became the Feura Bush Neighborhood Library, and is still operating as such to this day. A cozy place to find and enjoy a good book, it is open Tuesdays 7-9, Thursdays 3-5, and Saturdays 2-4. When you visit you can also see the original blackboards.

The history of "A School For the Community" does not end here. Coming in Part 2, the "new" brick school has its story to tell as well, including a bit of mystery about the bell.

Thank you to Judy Wing and Norma Walley for sharing their knowledge and information, and to Donald Slingerland for his expertise in enhancing the photographs from the New Scotland Historical Association's archives.

*Melvin, Tessa. www.nytimes.com/1987/11/01.

**Gable, Walt. *Finger Lake Times*; Mar 26, 2017.

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

MUSEUM UPDATE

**The Museum will be closed on the
following dates:**

Sunday, December 24, 2017
Christmas Eve
Sunday, December 31, 2017
New Year's Eve

Happy Holidays!

SUNSHINE'S CORNER

By MaryBeth (Frohlich) Felice

Willow Brook Farm is located on rte. 85A in Voorheesville. It was formerly called New Salem Road (I guess because it went to New Salem!). We were not even in the village limits. The big old farmhouse still stands, beautifully restored and inhabited by my brother, Richard Frohlich and his wife, Sue. Many of the old outbuildings still stand, including the big L-shaped barn, privy, brooder house and various chicken houses.

The barn itself was amazing. The long leg of the barn was a hay mow with a huge hay fork hanging above it, fastened to a ceiling beam. That was the creepiest thing to me growing up. If there was any breeze at all through the “modern” 1800’s barn, that hay fork would move ever so slightly. With limited lighting in the barn, I always felt there was some ghostly spirit floating through the rafters, tugging on the rope.

Richard says there are “ghost marks” on the beams. In black ink on a high beam are the names of farm workers, F. Wagner, April 29, 1885, and W.M Bradt, 12/22/06. How they had the time and wherewithal to climb up there and leave their names for posterity is a mystery to me.

The shorter leg of the barn has been a garage for as long as I’ve known it. My grandparents, Everett and Mabel (O’Brien) Hallenbeck, bought the farm in 1909, and at some time the short leg of the barn became the garage. A cement floor was poured and stood ready for Gram’s car, a jazzy Hudson Terraplane. Literally, she drove it to church on Sunday and to the market. The barnyard was populated in part by bantam chickens, one of which we discovered had gone to church with us on the rear bumper of the Hudson. Apparently he had flown the fence and roosted in the safety of the Terraplane, which was backed into the garage. He was as shocked as we were when we arrived at church and found him joining us. I guess he wanted to get religion. Someone was elected to take him home. Long after my grandparents moved to Florida, the great hulking car stood watch over the garage.

Over the years the garage housed other cars and family items. Remember, the 1800’s farm house had very few closets. So as we began to accumulate “stuff” it was stored in the barn and the garage. Also, there was no such thing as trash or garbage collection. Organic residue from the kitchen was kept outside in a covered metal can. When the can was full, my dad would lug it across the street and throw it over the bank of the creek (YIKES!), since we had no pigs at the time.

But I digress. Non-food items often ended up in the barn/garage, any place they could be “stored,” and I use this term loosely. As a result of all this “storing,” when we recently began to clear the garage for its restoration, Rich and I found a bounty of treasures. Three of them are pictured: a crazy decorative salt shaker and two horsey guys from my 1950’s horse craze (which has never ended). The mounted cowboy was part of a huge horse collection of mine. I even built them a stone fort under the grape arbor with some of those plentiful Voorheesville rocks. Our play was always what we imagined and created.



Of course there was always plenty of farm work. One fun chore was to create cracked corn for the chickens. Harvested corn was dried in the corn crib, which was on short legs to keep it away from the critters. When needed, you would take a bunch of cobs, put them one-at-a-time in the top of this magical corn shucker. The turn of the handle, requiring some muscle, caused the kernels to be stripped off the cob. They came out of a chute at the front of the machine, and the empty cob exited the side. Under layers of corn dust and dirt, some delicate green stenciling was revealed. What a treat!



DIARY OF HATTIE FLANSBURG O'BRIEN



Mon 10 Oct 1892. Very nice Feel a little better today.

This morning Maria came & we wash. Then I went down and helped her finish cuffs. Aunt Sofie is in to Ma's today, stayed last nite. Smith sent for a barrel of cement to fix my cistern but it was not the right kind when we got there & I don't know what we will do.

Tues Nov 15 1898

Ida & I done washing and then went downstreet afternoon. I bought a new cape \$10.00

Tues Nov 14 1893 Weather nice, very nice.

I dressed 20 hens & chickens. Libbie & Emeline helped me some. We expect to go to Albany tomorrow, Groat & I.

Weds Nov 15 1893 Snow.

We had breakfast some time before daylight storm hindered us going. Sun came out before noon & I was sorry we had not started. Libbie went with Tom Brown.

Dec 31 1892

The last day of the year has come. Little did we know just how it would end. Yet the changes have not been so many. We do not think it possible that ma can be with us another year perhaps another week. Yet God knows best – little did we think that Will's wife Hattie would die so soon when they visited us the first day of this year.

Tomorrow I will write in my new diary – Grace sent for it for me by Melissa a surprise for Christmas. I am glad for I would not have had it at the commencement of the new year perhaps.

(A few selections from various years of Hattie's diaries)

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.

Our Upcoming Programs ...

Feb. 4, 2018 (2:00-4:00pm) – The Women of Schuyler Mansion - The "Schuyler Sisters" have been causing quite a stir in the Broadway musical *Hamilton: An American Musical*, but did you know that there were really five Schuyler sisters? Michelle Mavigliano, Schuyler Mansion Educator, will present an in depth look at the history of the Schuyler women, their daily lives, and the impact they had in shaping their family's history.

March 4, 2018 (2:00-4:00pm) – Beer, Brewing and Pieter Bronck: Brewing in Beverwyck and Early Albany – Educator, local historian, and enthusiastic home brewer Richard Muggeo will review how beer was brewed in Beverwyck, visit with Pieter Bronck an early brewer of Beverwyck, and demonstrate the tools used in home brewing.

All Programs will be held at the Wyman Osterhout Community Center

All Programs are free to the public; Parking is available

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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
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