



THE SENTINEL

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The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Winter 2019

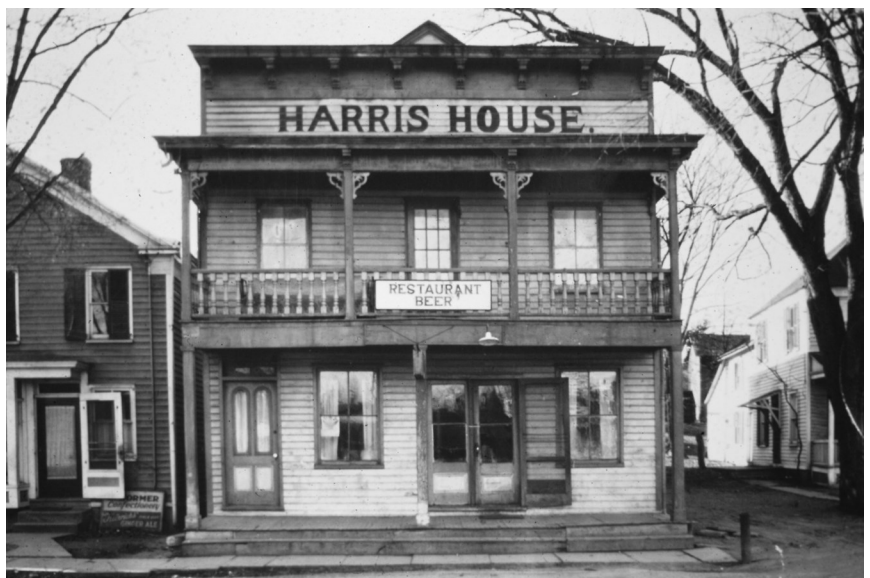
OUR PATH TO PROHIBITION

By Judy Kimes

On January 17, 1920, almost 100 years ago, Prohibition (the 18th Amendment) went onto effect. In our area, this day was met with several celebrations. In the January 9, 1920, issue of the *Altamont Enterprise* the Voorheesville column publicized a "Victory Watch Meeting" to be held at the Reformed Church the following Thursday. With the Women's Christian Temperance Union in charge, refreshments were to be served followed by the Watch Meeting from 11:00 to 12, with the Rev. Georgia Weston of Menands speaking. At 12 o'clock midnight, the church bell was to ring, "announcing the coming of National Prohibition." Everyone was urged to attend this "interesting and inspiring service" since "such an event has never before occurred in the history of our nation and will never happen again." Throughout the evening, the chorus choir was to lead the singing of songs from the "new book, Jubilee Songs." Similar meetings were to be held at the Presbyterian Church in Guilderland and the Reformed Church in Altamont.

This celebratory evening was a long time coming. The Temperance Movement had been gathering steam for quite some time. In 1870, the Sons of Temperance set up a division in the town of New Scotland. Then, in 1878 a representative of the Women's Christian Temperance Union came to the town to inspire residents to establish a local chapter. That was accomplished and in December of 1888, the Albany County WCTU held its annual convention at the Presbyterian church in Voorheesville. The WCTU became a popular social organization. In her diary of 1896, Hattie O'Brien of Clarksville (Mary Beth Frolich-Felice's great-grandmother) mentioned attending WCTU gatherings three times, commenting that she'd had "a good time."

In his book, *Voorheesville, New York*, Dennis Sullivan writes that by 1889 pressure was being applied to local saloon owners to stop serving alcohol. On May 25, 1889, a delegation of prohibitionists made up of local residents marched down Main Street in Voorheesville to the Harris House. There they confronted the board of excise commissioners with impassioned pleas to halt the granting of any more liquor licenses in the village. Though the board listened, it stated that it "would issue licenses to whoever wanted one."



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I hope everyone had a grand holiday season and are now ready to brave the next few dark cold months. I want to remind our members that the New Scotland Museum will be closed for January through March except before our February and March programs. We will be using this time to develop and install our new exhibits for 2020. Speaking of our February program, I hope you will be able to join us on Sunday, February 3 when our own member Bob Suss will provide a multi-media presentation on Big Band Era local musicians Bob and Ray Eberle.

I am pleased to report that on November 13 the New Scotland Town Board passed a version of the Historic Preservation Law originally proposed by NSHA. By the time this issue of the *Sentinel* is published, it is hoped that the Village of Voorheesville Board would have passed the law as well. This will be a major victory for historical preservation efforts in our communities. We can all be proud that our community would have established the first joint town and village historic preservation commission in New York State. I thank the many people that have worked and supported the effort to develop and pass this law and especially our political leaders who had the vision to move forward and pass this legislation.

Lastly, I would like to mention that NSHA has just republished Dennis Sullivan's *Charles Bender and the Bender Melon Farm: A Local History* as an e-publication available for download from our new Bender Melon Farm page on the NSHA website. As many of you know our museum has had a small but unique permanent exhibit on the Bender Melon Farm. Anyone interested or curious about the Hudson-Mohawk Land Conservancy's present effort to preserve the Bender Melon Farm property will enjoy reading this publication and visiting our exhibit.

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.

(continued from page 1)

By 1905, the Anti-Saloon League was lobbying members of the State Legislature and also pressuring village tavern owners. In January of 1905 Morris Harris of the Harris House, Christopher Fisk of the Grove Hotel, and Elmer Peters appeared in Albany City Court accused of selling liquors illegally. Later that year (December 1905) Mr. Sullivan recounts a newspaper article reporting that some villagers applied “a coating of oil and lampblack’ to several of those stumbling home at night.”

Also around this time another pro-prohibition group, the Law and Order League, established a headquarters in Voorheesville. The village correspondent for the *Altamont Enterprise* wrote on May 19, 1905, that its members “hold secret councils and send out spies that sneak under sheds.” Apparently, this was to spot and report on violators of whatever liquor laws were then in place. The following week’s issue contained an anonymous letter to the editor taking issue with the correspondent, vehemently defending the League as “honest, decent, law-respecting” people who “have the desire to see lawbreakers brought to trial and punished,” further stating that even “at the speed of electricity “ it would take “infinite ages for you to get in sight of the ‘better class’ miles above you and almost forever beyond you.”

The pressure to establish Prohibition kept growing, intensifying even more with the onset of World War 1. The argument was made that the ingredients used in making alcoholic drinks could be of better use at the battlefield. And, of course, the fact that most large breweries were owned by those of German descent created its own prejudicial spin on popular sentiment.

So the Prohibitionists achieved their victory. The headline on the January 31, 1919, *Altamont Enterprise* reads “New York Ratified Amendment – 43rd to be put on the side of ratification.” The resolution carried in the NY Senate with a vote of 27 to 24 after 9 hours of debate. During this debate, a Senator Sage declared the amendment “a fraud and a sham,” stating that those states having already ratified the amendment had “violated the spirit of the Constitution.” He then declared, “The enforcement of the amendment concurrently by the nation and the states will inevitably lead to confusion.”

Almost 101 years later in hindsight, Senator Sage’s last statement resounds as an incredible understatement. Prohibition, “The Noble Experiment,” had a profound effect on the Town of New Scotland, its environs, and the nation.



Sources:

Altamont Enterprise 1905, 1919, 1920

nyshistoricnewspapers.org (Images provided by Guilderland Public Library)

Sullivan, Dennis. *Everyday Life in Clarksville, New York: The Diary of Hattie O'Brien For the Year 1896.*

Sullivan, Dennis. *Voorheesville, New York. Voorheesville: The Village of Voorheesville, 1988.*

Thank you to Bob Parmenter and Don Slingerland for their help in providing the photo.

Sunshine's Corner

By MaryBeth (Frohlich) Felice

The days are getting shorter now. Early dark means reduced playtime with friends; longer “nights.” The chickens must be fed early and eggs gathered, as any cold might freeze them. My grandpa, Everett Hal-lenbeck, gets out and sets up the chickens’ water heaters. He knows his “girls” not only love their water, but it is necessary for egg production. For that same reason, an automatic night light is adjusted so those “girls” can read in the evening. (Ha! Ha!)

In the house, the flannel sheets and down quilts are on the beds. Our lovely old farmhouse as yet has no central heat, and though the extra bedding makes for cozy sleeping, it means getting out of bed in the morning is almost a dreaded event! There is an oil stove in each living room, but the heat upstairs is what radiates from the stovepipe running through the bedroom. It’s a wonder I even made it to school in those days!

The only good thing to me about winter was that the ponds would freeze. The “turtle” pond was shallow enough to freeze safely solid so we could ice skate. A creative kid could even find a way to glide along without doing any work – thanks to the family dog.



So it goes – cold, dark winter with the highlights of Thanksgiving and Christmas. You had to be tough to survive the Voorheesville winters in the 1950's.

SAVE THE BENDER MELON FARM CAMPAIGN

By Sherry Burgoon, Editor

For those of you who live in the Route 85 and 85A corridor of the town, you are familiar with the Save the Bender Melon Farm campaign by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy because of the numerous signs erected along the roads in the area. As a result of the new interest in preserving this historic property, the New Scotland Historical Association has republished Dennis Sullivan's original history of Charles Bender and the Bender Melon Farm as an e-publication.

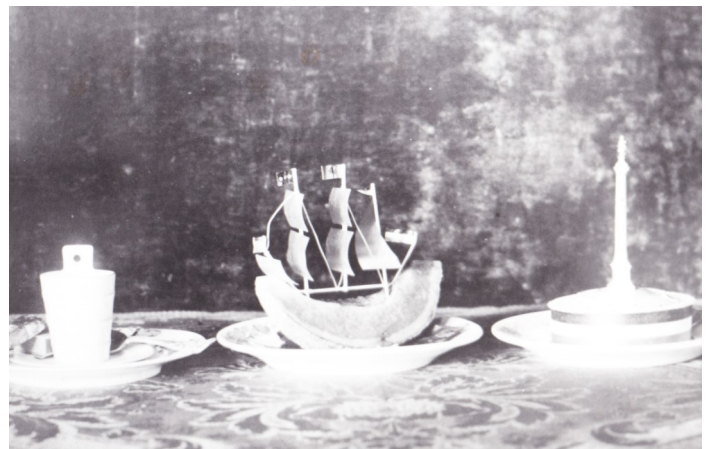


Charles Bender and Bender Melon Farm: A Local History was originally published by NSHA in 1990 and was based on earlier articles that appeared in the August 28 and September 4, 1986, editions of the *Altamont Enterprise*. The history is based on original primary source research and interviews with community and family members associated with the Bender Melon Farm. Dennis Sullivan, the author, is the Voorheesville Village Historian, a Criminal Justice scholar, and poet. He is also the author of *Voorheesville New York: A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town* as well as scholarly publications and poetry. The e-publication contains all the photographs and facsimile documents in the original. It will be available on our website.

The New Scotland Museum has a small but unique permanent exhibit on the Bender Melon Farm. NSHA hopes that the republication of the Bender Melon Farm history will satisfy those interested in learning more about the historic property and that it raises the awareness and appreciation among those unaware of this farm's importance to our region's local history and agricultural heritage.



The Bender Family Farm on Route 85A in the hamlet of New Scotland.



Melons at a place setting at the Astor Hotel in New York City.

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

By Sarita Winchell

It has taken a year and a half, but museum volunteers have been able to enter just about all of the museum contents into the collection management database software program, PastPerfect. This included entering into the program all of the items accessioned since 2006, and then doing an inventory of every cabinet, drawer, bookcase and cupboard and noting each item's location into the program. Luckily, items accessioned before 2006 had been entered, but dealing with over a decade of items since then was pretty daunting, and adding the location of every item in the collection was a big task. All this work has been worth it. Now we can search and find items by category (i.e. World War II), by a person's name (i.e. Joseph Hilton), location (i.e. Feura Bush), or by an item's name (i.e. milk bottle). We are still learning how to do this efficiently, and will be training more volunteers this winter. The goal of this entire project has been to make our collection accessible and useful to the public, and to help our organization create better displays in the exhibit room highlighting the history of the Town of New Scotland.

THANK YOU TO DEBBIE MAHAN

On behalf of the New Scotland Association's Board, Judy Kimes and I would like to thank Debbie Mahan for her contribution to the Sentinel over the past three years. Debbie was a prolific writer eager to provide fascinating articles as well as laying out each issue of the Sentinel. We greatly appreciate her contributions and will miss her dedication and enthusiasm.

WELCOME TO DARCY MORRISON

The NSHA Board would like to welcome and thank Darcy Morrison for filling the vacancy of Lisa Boehlke as the Hospitality Chair. Although we will miss Lisa's friendly smile at our special programs serving drinks and the baked goods, we eagerly welcome Darcy to the board. We usually ask for three bakers for each program. Darcy welcomes NSHA members to contact her if you would like to be put on a baker's list for future events.



Image found on Listverse.com

NOTE: April Date Changes Below
New Scotland Historical Association's Draft Program Schedule 2019-2020
(Titles are tentative and subject to change)

Feb. 2, 2020 (2:00pm) Bob and Ray Eberle, the pride of Hoosick Falls - Hoosick Falls natives, Bob and his brother, Ray Eberle were both singing stars of the Big Band era. They were extremely popular, singing with the likes of Jimmy Dorsey, and Glen Miller, and in popularity polls were consistently ranked with Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. NSHA member and musician Bob Suss will describe the brother's careers with pictures, and audio clips.

March 1, 2020 (2:00pm) Genealogy Research at the NY State Archives - John Diefenderfer, of the New York State Archives, will provide an overview of the records at the State Archives that are rich genealogical sources including real property records, military service records, census records, naturalization records and wills and probate records. He will also demonstrate the online access tools available to researchers to locate information at the Archives.

April 7, 2019 (7:00pm) Board Meeting
(NOTE: CHANGE OF DATE (was April 14th, now April 7th))

April 14, 2020 (7:30pm) "Getting the Job Done: Construction, Builders, and Building Materials in the Upper Hudson and Mohawk Valleys, 1755-1765."
(NOTE: CHANGE OF DATE (was April 7th, now April 14th))

The French and Indian War transformed Albany and its surrounding area. The growth in the region included the construction of a number of large residences that followed the model of English "country seats." Archeologist Walter Wheeler will examine construction practices, materials acquisition, and labor sources used to construct these buildings.

May 5, 2020 (7:30pm) The Ten Broeck Family and its Mansion 1798-1947 - Ten Broeck Mansion

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_____ \$50 Patron

_____ \$30 Sustaining

_____ \$150 Life (per person)

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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**

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