



# THE SENTINEL

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The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Winter 2020

## TWICE WARMED

By Judith Kimes

“He who cuts his own wood is twice warmed.”\* The origin of this popular adage is unknown, but it is said Henry Ford appreciated this saying so much that he had it engraved into his mantel piece in his Dearborn, Michigan, home.

Cutting wood was a necessary chore throughout the land, and the residents of the Town of New Scotland were no exception. Much of it was done during the snowy winter months which we are now entering. In looking through the diaries of local residents, many a day was filled with cutting, drawing, sawing, and splitting wood. Of course, most homes used firewood to fuel their kitchen stoves, fireplaces, and often their furnaces if they had central heat. Then there was the lumber needed for constructing buildings and fences. Many families had their own wood lots. In the 1890s, Case Slingerland had a wood lot in Tarrytown (Onesquethaw). In her 1891 diary his wife, Agnes, wrote of “the men” going there to cut timber for building an ice house.



Showing how wood was cut around 1929 on Jim LaGrange farm.

In his diary of 1885, Peter Brate of Feura Bush spent much time that winter “in the woods.” On March 20th he records, “I and Jesse went to the woods with oxen and sleigh. We drew three hemlock and one large oak log on Groesbeck Road, fetched one oak log home for firewood.”

Harvesting wood was a planned task. But sometimes unplanned events made the need for wood even more pressing.

Around 2:30 on the morning of January 17, 1915, a fire destroyed the barn of Vanderzee (Van) LaGrange. Thankfully for us, Van faithfully kept a diary. On January 22nd, Van records that Frank Osterhout came to draw up an estimate for building a new barn. The following day, an insurance man was there and allowed Van \$2,300 to help cover his losses. On the 25th, Van went to Voorheesville to hire Mr. Osterhout. Frank Osterhout was a master barn builder who also constructed the amazing Hilton barn (1898) still standing in New Scotland.

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This holiday season and winter will be like no other. Adding to the normal stresses of the season are burdens of the pandemic, which will likely grow worse as we move into the winter. Ironically, the pandemic has made it that much more difficult to reach out to neighbors, friends, and relatives who may be experiencing a heightened sense of isolation in the winter.

From a NSHA perspective, it is particularly frustrating not to be able to get together for our programs, special events, or at the New Scotland Museum. These are the activities that make us a community. With a vaccine on the horizon, I sincerely hope that we can have an annual meeting in the late spring. Until the time we can gather again, the *Sentinel* is the major means of reaching out to our members and the broader community. We owe a debt of gratitude to the NSHA members who write articles and get out the *Sentinel* every quarter.

I also wanted to share some good news with you to warm your hearts in this cold season. Due to the work of the Hudson-Mohawk Land Conservancy and the generosity of the Glover family, the Picard's Grove property including the house and viewshed of the Helderberg escarpment will be preserved. Additionally, the Conservancy was able to purchase the site of the Bender Melon Farm, preserving an important part of New Scotland's agricultural heritage. Along with the Hilton Park and barn, the Bender Melon property could provide a venue for highlighting New Scotland's agricultural past. In fact, the Land Conservancy is already thinking of instituting agricultural programs and exhibits on part of the property along with hiking and mountain bike trails to complement the Rail Trail.

Please stay warm and healthy through the winter!



Happy Holidays and a healthy 2021!

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Almost every day for the next two months (except Sundays) Van wrote of going to the woods to cut and draw timber to rebuild his barn. Finally, on March 2nd a sawmill was brought in to cut the timber into the boards, beams, and other pieces needed. On March 9th the sawing of the timber was finished, and the mill was removed. For the next month, Van, carpenters, and other workers prepared the stone foundation, laid sills, and constructed the framework of the barn. On April 13th, Van writes that he did the "inviting for barn raising." On April 15th he writes, "Raised the barn and shed. 104 men." A man of few words, but able to come up with a large body of help in just two short days! Of course, the barn still needed plenty of finishing work, but the biggest part was done and was constructed with wood obtained primarily from Van's own farm. This barn still stands on the LaGrange homestead on La-Grange Lane.



Sawing the lumber into the boards and other pieces needed to build the new barn replacing the old one that was destroyed by fire in 1915 .

Wood is a useful and renewable resource, but lumbering is dangerous work. Agnes Slingerland's father, William Vanderpoel, was killed in a logging accident around 1860, leaving behind his wife and four young children under the age of 10. Almost anyone who has dealt with wood has a story of an injury to tell. I remember my father, Harold Slingerland, while splitting the evening's wood for the kitchen stove, managed to bring the axe down on the top of his foot causing quite a gash. Yet, in spite of its dangers, the harvesting of wood was part of living in those days and in this area. Many a child's first chore was

keeping the kitchen wood box filled. Every evening before going to the barn to do the milking, my father would split a day's worth of wood, and it was my job to bring it in. Not my favorite task, especially on Saturday nights when I was reminded that Aunt Dorothy would be coming the next day and she liked a really hot fire, so bring in an extra armload or two.



A young Don Slingerland getting acquainted with firewood .

As soon as my brothers were able to carry a stick, they were out in the woods helping my father and grandfather cut down, gather, and cut up the year's supply of firewood. They both just grew up with the job.

If one heats with wood, keeping the stove and stovepipe clean is essential. Ours was a three generational household, and it was my grandmother who took care of the kitchen stove. She got up every morning around 4:30. Her first order of the day was to get the stove's fire going. This she did by soaking corn cobs in kerosene, putting them and some kindling in the stove, and then feeding in larger pieces. She did this even in summer.

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In the summer we used limb wood because it did not burn as long. If the wood happened to be wet because of rain or snow, she would set a few pieces on the stove's surface or in the oven to dry. That gave the kitchen a nice woodsy smell. She also cleaned the stove of its ashes and cinders and kept the stovetop polished. Once or twice a year she cleaned the stovepipe. This was quite an extensive operation, but one she carefully carried out, in spite of it making some of us rather nervous, especially in her later years.



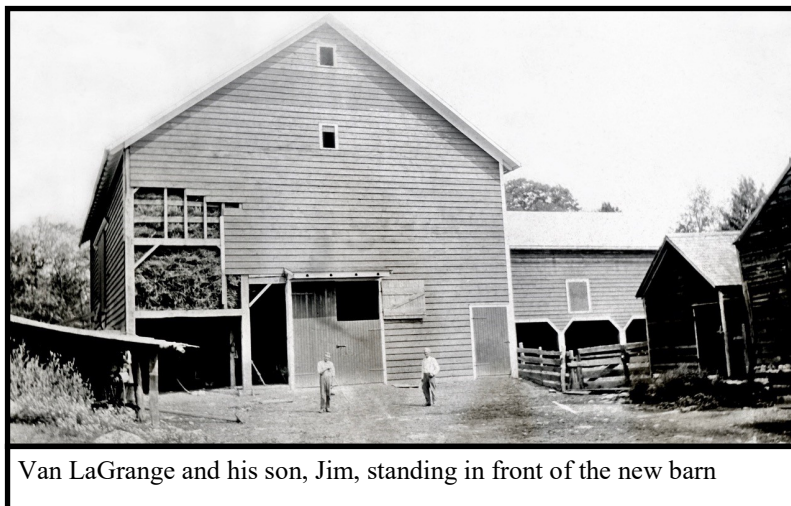
Bertha Slingerland, cleaning the stovepipe at the age of 80



Don Slingerland, as an adult, now an expert in splitting wood.

Today my brothers and I are still firewood gatherers, although my brothers are certainly much better at it than I. Seeing a large, neatly stacked pile of wood for which one has labored deservedly inspires a sense of accomplishment and preparedness. We still love the heat from a wood stove. And loading up an armful of firewood on a cold, crisp, snowy night brings about a sense of tranquility in anticipation of the coziness awaiting inside by the wood stove.

*Cutting wood - part of the rhythm of the seasons in the great northeast.  
Twice warmed – at least.*



Van LaGrange and his son, Jim, standing in front of the new barn

Sources:  
English.stackexchange.com

*With thanks to Donald Slingerland for providing the photos and many memories.*

# **BOYSCOUT TROOP 73 FLOURISHES UNDER STRONG SCOUT LEADERSHIP 100 YEARS ON HISTORY CONTINUES**

*By Sherry Burgoon, Editor*

## PART 2

Early research seemed to indicate that Clayton A. Bouton began Troop 73, but the 50th Anniversary Program in 1970 revealed that a group of citizens calling themselves the Voorheesville Troop Committee filed an “Application for a Troop Charter” on May 12, 1920. It named five committeemen along with the first scoutmaster Paul Morrison, the local Methodist Episcopal clergyman. Twelve scouts were included, named as a “tenderfoot,” ranging from age 12 to 15. Reverend Morrison shared his experiences in a letter shared at the anniversary event:

April 2, 1970

Dear Assistant Scoutmaster, and of all things: a Morrison: (reference to Bill Morrison, future scoutmaster)



First scoutmaster of Voorheesville's Troop 73, Rev. Paul Morrison.

“It was a delightful surprise to receive your letter; and it was hard for me to believe that it was 50 years ago when I struggled to start the troop which is now flourishing with nearly 50 (scouts)”... He continued to add that he wished he had started his diary from the beginning; he only had 47 years covered. Rev. Morrison shared the many struggles keeping the troop going in those earlier years giving the credit for the successes to the Scout offices and executives in the Albany office. “I sincerely hope you will have a great anniversary year. In other churches that I have served, and the church that I now am serving, there is a very strong Scout Troop and Cub Packs, and excellent leadership.”

Clayton Bouton, the focus of the Sentinel Fall 2020 issue, succeeded Rev. Morrison in 1924. The Voorheesville Troop 1 designation was changed to “Troop 73,” most likely due to the fact there were so many Troop 1's by that time. Bouton continued as scoutmaster until 1938. Frederick Myers and Charles Grace took over as leaders; David J. McCartney took on the position from 1943-44 during the war years when scout numbers dwindled. Documents reveal that the troop was dropped from the records until 1948, when American Legion Post 1493 picked up sponsorship of the troop. Throughout the 1950s, a variety of local organizations sponsored the troop as scouting numbers began to rise.

The resurgence of Troop 73 in the 1960s and 1970s can be attributed to several committed scout leaders, especially Robert Shedd, Howard Coughtry, Bill Morrison, and Frank Person, to name a few. Through this period the scouts advanced rapidly. The patrols met each week usually at the home of the patrol leader. The troop entered every district event, including the first freezouts at Camp Allen. Coughtry's woods on Hilton Road became a favorite campsite. On Sunday mornings, between 5 and 9 AM, scouts were doing ten mile hikes or 25 mile bike rides to earn merit badges. A week during the summer was spent at Stratton Mountain Scout Reservation where the scouts were well known for their sharp appearances and marching songs. Not content to spend the whole week at routine camping, the troop began taking over-night hikes following the trail over the Stratton Mountain to Stratton Pond. Troop leaders pitched in on district work weekends and training sessions, and the scouts became experienced campers. A group spirit developed that made Troop 73 the troop to follow. (From the 50th Anniversary Program)



Ray Ginter, current Scoutmaster, and Frank Person on French River canoe trip in 1997.

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Obviously, the inspiration and dedication of these adult leaders created this scout spirit which continues to exist today. The multitude of experiences of the Boy Scouts were regularly recorded in the *Altamont Enterprise* by Howard Coughtry.

*Some boys plan to go to Philmont State Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico. This is a 137,000 acre ranch in the Southern Rockies, owned by the Boy Scouts of America. They will leave Albany by plane on July 29, and return home Aug. 14. They will visit many famous sites in the mid-west and south-west. The main attraction is a 12-day back-packing expedition through the beautiful and rugged terrain to Philmont. (March 7, 1969)*

*The scouts assembled at the school at 6 a.m. and in 5 cars traveled to the north country. The site selected for camping was on a point between the Sacandaga River and West Branch, both swift mountain streams. ....The morning was spent fishing or just poking around the rocks. ....In the afternoon the troop took a five mile hike. Using a topography map they hiked along the stream, down a country road then straight back over the heavily wooded hills. ....Saturday night it rained. (May 8, 1970) [abbreviated version here]*

*The scouts who planned to go to find adventure in the snow didn't have to make the trip. The action came to Voorheesville Troop 73 in their own hometown last week. (Highway travel was impossible due to a snowstorm) Saturday, Dec. 27, during the windiest part of the storm the troop had an emergency call out to help the fire department keep the hydrants uncovered. Some of the volunteers walked three miles to the village. (no date given)*

From the 50s thru the 70s, no Memorial Day Parade would be complete in Voorheesville without the presence of the many Cub Scout and Boy Scout troops throughout the town. Dozens of cub packs and dens would proudly walk parent leaders, dedicated moms and dads, while proudly wearing their uniforms displaying their hard-earned badges, arrows, or other awards. Although the numbers have dwindled it is still a yearly tradition. (Of course, the Girl Scouts marched too!)

The final installment of the 100 years of Boy Scout 73 in the spring issue of the *Sentinel* will highlight how these dedicated scouts and leaders have enriched the community up to the present.

Source: *NYS Historic Newspapers; Altamont Enterprise* 1958-1983.



Troop 73 marching in the Voorheesville Memorial Day Parade in the 1950's.

**Editor's Note: Important information about the troop's origin was discovered by Colleen Ellithorpe, librarian at the Voorheesville Public Library, who researched the hundreds of documents donated to the library by Robin Coughtry providing answers to my many questions about Troop 73's history.**

**SUNSHINES CORNER**  
**BUCKAROO STORY**  
**CONTINUED**  
By MaryBeth Felice

Out on the range we've seen many interesting sights. There are herds of wild mustang which roam the hills. The stallions leave their manure in stacks like stone pillars. The wrangler says that is to mark their territory. What a signpost! Many deer and elk share the ranch also – all 400,000 acres of it! Unlike our deer at home, their tails are round like powder puffs, and not like white flags.

One of the other women met a critter I can't stand.....a snake! A rattler to boot. I just hate snakes! I'm so glad I didn't see that one. The wrangler was prepared to shoot it, but it wriggled away.

We ride out in the morning to work the herd. Sometimes it takes up to two hours just to get to the cows. The wranglers like to ride at a fast trot in order to get there quicker. Oh, my sore legs and bottom. Today we left the ranch before 8 in the morning (LATE, the ranchers say!). We had to "gather" the bulls and cows and babies and move them to another range where there was good water. We chase the cattle onto the dirt road and head them on. By noon it's hot, and they're tired and getting hungry. Now and again, a cow or group of cows will run off the road and head for the sage. They find little bits of grass to eat. The calves want to nurse. And if mama and baby get separated they BAWL! MOOO! MOOO! Where are you?? It's hot, dusty and dry. It makes me appreciate how hard REAL cowboys work.

By 2:00 that afternoon I had had it! The cows wanted to scatter, to wander. And I wanted to go home! I finally asked a wrangler if some of us could call it quits and head for the ranch. So this is how it worked. One of the wranglers rode at a fast trot for an hour to get to the ranch. There she got the truck and horse trailer and drove another 30 minutes back to us on the range. While we waited we squatted down in the sage looking for some shade, ate our lunch, and waited. At last we were able to head for home and a NAP. There is no swimming pool here, no cool pond. However there are two hot springs on the ranch. Now during the day when you've been riding in sun and dust and sun and dust, a hot spring is not too appealing. But then it's evening and perhaps even a little breeze appears and the sun gets lower in the sky. Then the hot spring starts to sound pretty good.

A group of us climb in the van and head out with a wrangler. The first spring is deep, over my head in fact. The water is hot like a bath tub! We jump in and splash around. OOOh.....feels good on sore muscles. Suddenly, my feet touch bottom, Yuk!....soft, gooey mud.....YUK!. Now someone says, "Hey, it's a mineral spring, so the mud must be healthy. Let's put it on our face. We'll make our own mud pack." So under the water they go, and up they come with hands full of this disgusting slime. They rubbed it on their cheeks and forehead and chin. Ooooooh, double YUK!! That's when it was time for me to hop out and just take pictures.



TO BE CONTINUED IN THE SPRING 2020 edition.

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## **Museum Hours**

**Due to COVID-19 the  
museum will be closed  
until further notice**

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