



THE SENTINEL

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The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Summer 2020

HISTORY IN THE MAKING: COVID-19

“We’re all in this together”

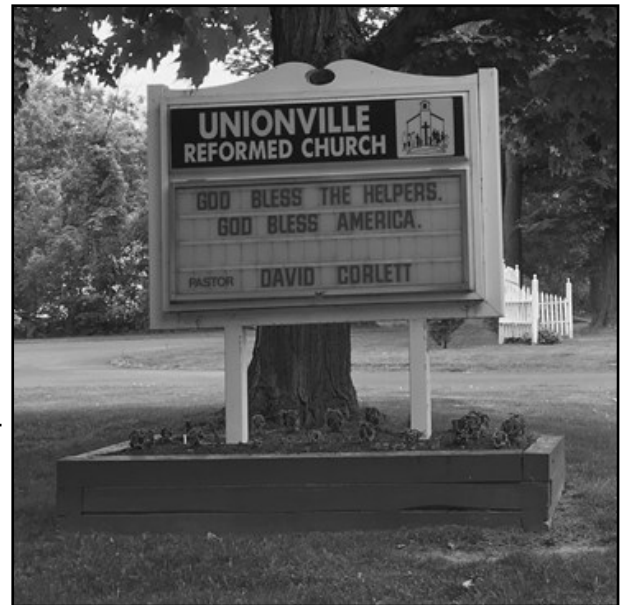
By Sherry Burgoon, Editor

As winter began to fade and the welcome signs of spring emerged, no one could imagine a new coronavirus was about to flip our lives upside down. As the daily newscasts delivered warnings that the virus had made its way to the west coast, few residents in the United States were prepared for the drastic life changes we were to experience. Three months later, the hardships and struggles of so many businesses and establishments in our society have become clear.

“The effect COVID-19 had on my real estate business with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services has been profound,” shared Lauren Meacham. “Suddenly, we could no longer show houses. We could not meet clients or take new listings.” Showing houses had to be done “virtually.” If the house was vacant or the homeowner was agreeable, sellers could vacate the home and leave the home unlocked. “This was not a comfortable position for either the buyer or seller,” according to Lauren. “All clients, if they did enter houses, were told to wear masks and gloves, and not touch anything in the house.”

For houses which were under contract, closings did take place under the “pause” but the realtors were unable to attend. They had to depend on attorneys to send their checks to the corporate offices. “Being independent contractors, we were eligible to receive unemployment, but more importantly, the pandemic payments were what sustained us,” shared Lauren. Future contacts with clients will be done by phone, mail, and email. Advertising will be through media including Facebook, emails, newspaper advertising and reaching out to friends, past clients and family. Social distancing and masks will continue to be requirements for all showings, inspections, and appraisals.

Rev. David G. Corlett, the pastor of The Unionville Reformed Church, emphasized the struggles of attending to the needs of his congregation. “It was quite a challenge, to say the least. Never, for example, in the history of the Unionville Reformed Church, did the celebration of Easter not occur in our sanctuary.” Rev. Corlett could no longer conduct study groups, committee meetings, or worship services. “Nor could I personally call on members, even if they were hospitalized,” shared Rev. Corlett.



Sign at Unionville Reformed Church reads “God Bless The Helpers. God Bless America.”

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a difficult time for everyone. NSHA has been forced to close temporarily the New Scotland Museum, and, to cancel the remainder of its 2019-20 program schedule and its May full membership meeting. However, it is easy to overlook all the things that have been accomplished in 2019-2020 including during the last few months. Below is just a sampling.

- The Museum was open from June through December 2019. It featured exhibit was "History Lost, History Preserved" that highlighted four themes: old hotels that once operated in New Scotland; a charming collection of postcards, the "tweets" of the past; memorabilia from the Helderberg Ski Club founded in 1934; and a collection of milk bottles and ephemera from New Scotland farms that bottled their own milk and sold it under their own names.
- NSHA Collections Chair Lea Warden completed the transfer of collection items to new archival cabinets. The new space allows objects to be stored in such a way that makes them visible and reduces handling. The museum space now has a research and collection management area.
- Lynn Samuels and Sarita Winchell updated the accession record of all items acquired before 2019 including published material that are stored in the Museum, entering this information into PastPerfect software program including their location. This will greatly improve access to NSHA's collections.
- Among other acquisitions, the Association accessioned the Hilton and Wood Family Papers including historical photographs, legislative documents, ledgers, journals, letters, and paper and silk prize ribbons donated by Jennifer Hilton. This is a major collection that compliments the effort of the Town to preserve the Hilton barn.
- Despite a prematurely terminated season, NSHA was able to host five programs that covered a diverse range of topics from the building of Empire State Plaza to a musical program on the songs of temperance and prohibition. All five programs were extremely well attended with over 60 people in attendance.
- NSHA secured the passage by the New Scotland Town and Voorheesville Village boards of a joint Town and Village Historic Preservation Law. The five-member Commission established, which also includes the municipal historians as ex officio members, includes three present NSHA Board members – Chris Albright, Alan Kowlowitz, and Bob Parmenter as well as three former Board members – Debbie Mahan, Gwen Spicer and Dennis Sullivan.

Along with the above accomplishments, NSHA secured a competitive grant from the Pomeroy Fund to address some of the issues raised by the pandemic (see article in this edition of the *Sentinel*). The NSHA Board has continued to meet remotely through the pandemic and is working on a reopening plan that puts member and public safety first.

Please be safe and thank you for your continuing support.

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“While we were “apart” we tried to stay “connected.” I rely heavily on phone calls and an email prayer chain in which we support one another by praying for the special needs of people in our church family. I also resorted to sending emails through a platform called “Mail Chimp.” I drafted devotional messages of comfort and encouragement, shared the news of the congregation, and offered links to other resources, Rev. Corlett added. Telephone conferencing has allowed the church board, the Consistory,” to meet. An appeal from Rev. Corlett and the church treasurer kept the financial support strong. “Thankfully, our church family continues to send their financial gifts via the mail and our bills are being paid. Marvelous! Praise God!” rejoiced Rev. Corlett.

Hopefully, The Unionville Reformed Church will have its first gathering on Father’s Day, June 21. A long list of procedures for social distancing and cleaning the sanctuary will have to be followed. Rev. Corlett shared, “It’s been a difficult journey, but I am so proud of this little congregation. They have accepted the restrictions the COVID pandemic has imposed on them with grace, patience and goodwill toward the community in which they live and worship.”

COVID-19 has also created challenges for Lysenko Dental in Voorheesville. Dr. Steven Lysenko and his daughter Dr. Kristen Geist “worked nonstop for weeks dealing with the pandemic and preparing to reopen,” according to Laurie Lysenko, Steve’s wife. Of the twelve team members, only one was able to work on a part-time basis. Drs. Lysenko and Geist worked 5-6 days a week during the shut down, making changes in the office, seeing emergencies, and preparing for reopening. When the crisis first began, hygiene appointments made six months in advance had to be canceled. Since this involves hundreds of appointments, and there was not a definitive reopening date, rescheduling was a challenge.



Encouraging sign outside of Lysenko Dental.

Mitigating the possibility of infection has been the priority. Patients are questioned about exposure when booking appointments, wait in their vehicles, have their temperature checked, and answer screening questions before entering the office. All disinfecting protocols must be followed between patients. The office had just undergone an extensive remodel, but when COVID-19 arrived, Dr. Lysenko added glass around the reception area and glass doors on the operatories. He also purchased high tech air purifiers, specialized suction units, as much PPE as possible, and countless other items to safeguard his patients and staff. Dr. Kristen Geist uses the Lysenko Dental Facebook page to disseminate inspirational, informational, and sometimes humorous posts for the office. Recent posts show changes in the office and the impact of the pandemic. Future visits to the dental office will reflect how the medical profession is meeting the challenges of COVID-19.

As reopening occurs, those of us who haven’t ventured far from the house will find a multitude of changes made to work spaces, retail establishments, restaurants, and places of worship. How long these changes will last or whether they are permanent is unknown. What we do know is “we are all in this together.”

DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: VICTORY IN EUROPE

By Judy Kimes

2 May 1945: Today there are screaming headlines of Hitler's death. Somehow, I doubt it. Only yesterday the French orderly on my ward came in all excited, "La guerre, c'est fini!" He told all the patients and no one budged. The reaction of all of us was, "Je ne le crois pas," or "I don't believe it."

So wrote Lt. Belva Gardiner to her mother back home in Westerlo, NY. Belva was the oldest sibling of Martha Slingerland, a NSHA Charter Member and my mother. Belva was serving in the Army Nurse Corps with the First U.S. General Hospital. At this time, she was stationed in France after the liberation of Paris (25 August 1944).

On May 8, 1945, 75 years ago, Victory in Europe was declared. On that day, Belva was in Paris. She recalls, "There was dancing in the streets and everybody was kissing everybody else!"

During the time period leading up to and through World War II, Aunt Belva and her family corresponded regularly. Thankfully, a good many of these letters were saved. In 1986 and 1987 Aunt Belva organized these letters into two books, *The Life and Times of an Army Nurse 1942-1946* and *Living in the 1930s & 1940s*. Through these books one has a glimpse of what Americans were enduring on the home front and "over there." Take a look:

21 Jan. 1945: In bed again to keep warm. My hands are more chapped than they have ever been. I have cold cream, too, but I can't be putting it on every time I wash my hands. That would be 100 times. I worked alone with 2 corpsmen 7:00 A.M. to 7:30 P.M. My ward has 56 patients and that is capacity. The Bellevue Unit is going full capacity all the time so that is commonplace.

17 Mar. 1945: During the Battle of the Bulge we all wondered how far the German army was going to get. We were very busy with patients. Often these are the first real beds they have hit with sheets and all. We are getting many soldiers back from the front with frost bite of the feet.

15 April 1945: I am upset tonight about a patient I hope will make it. Hope I'll be able to sleep. Many a night I run around all night in my sleep answering calls. This one tonight is a chest case and very apprehensive – he wants me to sit and hold his hand. I wish I could. It seems easier for him to have someone near, someone other than patients. [Happily, this patient survived.]



Belva with 3 of her hut mates and fellow nurses in the cow pasture, Normandy. This does not do justice to the mud!

2 May 1945: I got a letter from a kid I had in November. He is home now in Georgia. I cleaned the original battle dirt, blood and gore off him and gave him a shave. He was a stoic, uncomplaining youngster – an 88 shell had exploded a few feet behind him. His legs were badly infected. I scrubbed his hands and nails with a brush on two mornings before they started to look the color of the rest of him. Funny what getting cleaned up will do for them – they feel more like a human among humans again. As the scrubbing progressed, he brightened up and even beamed a little..

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A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

By Judith Kimes

Peg Dorgan retired from the New Scotland Historical Association Board this Spring. With much appreciation and with thankfulness we reflect on the contributions Peg has made over the past years.

First joining the Board in 1997 as a Trustee, Peg filled the following 23 years with devoted and dedicated service to NSHA. In the Association's records and photos covering those years, one can see the scope and diversity of Peg's involvement. There she is in the Voorheesville Memorial Day Parade. And see, she's helping to select the wording and the optimal placement of that NSHA Historical marker. She's leading the singing at the annual Christmas Program. She's competing in Game Day at the Museum.

Peg held almost every office and served on so many important committees. She was our President, our Vice President, our Recording Secretary, our Corresponding Secretary. She has helped with the *Sentinel* and has found and made arrangements for programs. She has helped guide fourth grade students in their learning of local history through using and explaining the artifacts in our museum. Peg served on committees which saw the publication of the books *New Scotland Township* and the *Times of Our Lives: New Scotland Memories*. She initiated the Oral History Project, which recorded interviews with many of New Scotland's older citizens who hold in their memory irreplaceable historical experiences, both monumental and day-to-day. Before every program, Peg leads and accompanies us in the singing of the National Anthem. She sends out reminders to members about upcoming programs.



Peg Dorgan

In 2010, Peg received the Arthur Pound Award, which is given by the Officers and Trustees of the New Scotland Historical Association when a member has demonstrated an exceptional level of service to the Association. Certainly, Peg was a worthy recipient.



Peg Dorgan with Martha Slingerland celebrating Peg's award.

These are just a few of Peg's contributions. Perhaps most important is that through all her work, those who labored with her were inspired by her enthusiasm, her graciousness, and her unfailing sense of humor. The New Scotland Historical Association had its first meeting on May 19, 1971. There were 15 members. Today there are 186. Its growth, in large part, is because of members like Peg, who are wholeheartedly involved and who provide a warm welcome and support to all who would become a part of the Association.

In her message announcing her retirement, Peg promised to keep attending our programs and to keep baking cookies for the refreshments after. Another service that is sure to attract a larger audience. Thank you, Peg, for all you have done!

(Photo provided by Don Slingerland)

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17 May 1945: Yes, the war here may be over but I can see no difference yet. I just can't figure out where they all come from. Ten days later, it is obvious it isn't over. Not until every homesick American can be removed from this continent is it really over.

23 May 1945: It is some sad specimens that are arriving here from Nazi prison camps! One boy hardly raises the sheet as he lays in bed. I don't see how he can make it.

29 May 1945: My last night on night duty ended by losing one of our gamest patients unexpectedly and it left me shook up. The playing of that lovely music, especially "Ave Maria" and "Lord's Prayer" made me feel a little better.

15 June 1945: Sometimes the way these older service units are being redeployed, I'm convinced I won't be getting home for a long time. They could do a lot for our morale by taking us via the U.S.A. I'll go to the Pacific if I'm needed – I don't like snakes, spiders, bugs, malaria, yellow fever, tents, etc., but I'll go. Just let me get home first for a 30-day leave.

A year earlier, Belva had written to her mother: Spare time has been rather scarce. We have been putting in considerably more than 8 hour shifts, more like twice that. It has been a long time since I have been so physically tired but don't get the idea we are over-working. It is well within our abilities and that is what we are here for.

About the same time, Belva's mother sent her words of encouragement:

May 1, 1944: There are so many questions to which there are no answers which our minds can comprehend. Our only solace is that there is a place and time when we will understand, and our questioning sorrows will turn to understanding joys.

She then included a tribute to nurses written in gratitude by an injured soldier:

This is what we think of you and all the American Army Nurses Corps. Amid this strife and turmoil, we are constantly seeking for that which will let us forget the present, remind us of the past and make us look to the future....With millions of men around us, we have been alone.Your presence is a tonic, your kind words are medicine, your smile is like a message from home. You are an angel leading us back to heaven from this hell in which we suffer.... We love you and pray God to bless all our dear American nurses.

Now, during this time of pandemic in which we are living, one sees the same service and devotion from today's nurses and care takers. Our nursing home residents and hospital patients are experiencing isolation similar to that of the frontline soldiers during the war. An ocean does not separate them from their loved ones, but still they are alone. Our nurses and care takers have had to step up and be these patients' families. In so many cases they have, and we are forever grateful. Mr. Rogers put it so well: In times of tragedy, "Always look for the helpers."

Thank you to Don Slingerland for providing the photo of Belva and her mates.
Newspaper picture from johnstownhistory.blogspot.com.



Pomeroy Grant Awarded

By Alan Kowlowitz and Lea Foster

The New Scotland Historic Association (NSHA) was fortunate to be one of 31 out of 172 applicants to receive a grant from the Pomeroy Fund for New York State History. The grant is designed to help museums and other historical organizations deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. All recipients have operating budgets of \$100,000 or less -- a qualifying factor for grant consideration.

“History organizations help to enrich our communities,” said Bill Pomeroy, founder and trustee of the Syracuse-based William G. Pomeroy Foundation, in a press release. “The Pomeroy Fund for NYS History was established to provide much needed assistance during these challenging times. This was a very competitive grant program and our hope is that the funding that’s been awarded will make a meaningful difference in the time ahead.” NSHA’s grant application explained that the Covid-19 pandemic had forced it to close the New Scotland Museum, and, suspend its programs, events, and collections management and acquisition activities.

NSHA requested grant funds to increase its ability to perform its mission remotely including increasing remote access to its collections. The application requested \$1,826 that would be used to purchase a digital camera and PastPerfect museum software Web Edition which includes tech support . The money would also be used to purchase increased storage and support from NSHA’s web hosting provider to increase its website’s functionality and to enable it to provide remote access to collections. Lastly, NSHA would use the funds to purchase a monthly subscription to a remote conferencing platform such as Zoom to use for its Board meetings and hosting remote programs, possibly beginning this October.

The letter informing NSHA of its grant award stated that “We are pleased to let you know that your application requesting \$1826 was accepted in this highly competitive process. We were able to fund only 18% of the applications that were submitted.” Local radio personality Bob Cudmore has contacted NSHA to record an interview for his podcast based on the Pomeroy Foundations press release announcing the grant recipients.

Dedicated board members have been adding collections data into the museum’s electronic database. When the database is upgraded to the cloud-based system individuals will be able to access the data remotely. The Pomeroy Foundation grant has contributed significantly to NSHA’s goal of making the collection more accessible.

NSHA MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Museum Hours

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

THE SENTINEL

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