



THE SENTINEL

Vol. 29, No. 4

The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Summer 2021

WHILE THE SUN SHINES

By Judith Kimes

The summer solstice is near. The sun is at its highest in the sky. Fast drying time, a necessity for top quality hay, is at its peak. For farmers, haying time is near and “Make hay while the sun shines” is heeded as essential advice.

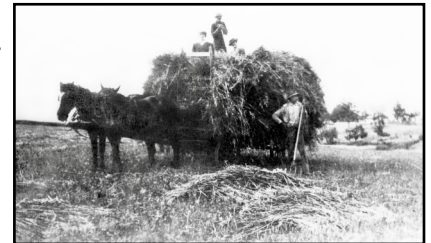
In the late 1800s, haying season typically lasted from late June through late July. In the July 15, 1892 issue of the *Altamont Enterprise*, the Feura Bush correspondent reported, “Haying time has begun in earnest and the farmers are now the busiest of men.”

Hay provided nourishing fodder for the farmers’ horses and cows. It was also a cash crop. Hay was needed to feed the thousands of horses providing transportation and muscle for much of the work done in more metropolitan areas. Hay was baled and sent by wagon, train, and steamship to towns and cities near and far. Early balers were stationary and horse powered. Hay was pressed into bales weighing around 200 pounds. The photo shows a stationary baler on Crystal Springs Farm, owned by Vanderzee LaGrange and located on the Unionville-Feura Bush Road. This photo is dated 1894. Some completed bales are to the right.



Bale weights were written on shingles and stuck between the bales. The farmer also often recorded the weights by writing them on the beams or siding of the barn. The next photo shows bale weights written on a wall in Jim Slingerland’s barn on Stony Hill between Clarksville and Unionville. This kind of baling could be done throughout the year according to the market or to empty the hay mow for the current year’s hay crop.

Gathering the hay out of the fields was hard, hot work, but this was sometimes made more enjoyable by having congenial help and handsome teams of horses. The next photo is taken on what was then Amasa Slingerland’s farm, now belonging to grandson, Jim. Amasa is on the ground. His wife, Bertha, is sitting on the load. Her brother, Fred Ingraham, is “making the load.” This photo was taken around 1930.



Then there is this photo taken around 1940 on the Elwood Vanderbilt farm in Onesquethaw. It shows three matched pairs of horses drawing in hay. Elwood is on horseback on the right. Such stunning working teams were magnificent to behold and a source of pride.

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NEW SCOTLAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P. O. Box 541

Voorheesville, NY 12186

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Robert Parmenter 518-765-4652

Voorheesville Historian

Dennis Sullivan 518-765-2468

Museum Coordinator

Dan Flynn 518-256-2802

Sentinel Committee

Sherry Burgoon 518-225-0797

Judy Kimes 518-768-2607

Mary Beth (Frohlich) Felice

Web Page

www.newscotlandhistoricalassociation.org

Email: newscotlandhistoricalassoc@gmail.com

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By the time you read this, my term as NSHA President would have expired. It has been a privilege and pleasure to serve the Association as its President for the last few years. I am also pleased that Sarita Winchell has stepped up to be our incoming President. Sarita has been a leader in NSHA and the community at large. She will be an outstanding President and we are lucky to have her. I will continue to serve NSHA as your Recording Secretary.

My President's letter in the summer issue of the *Sentinel* usually contains a summary of the Annual President's Report. 2020-2021 has been the most challenging year faced by the Association, but I am impressed by what we have accomplished under trying circumstances as evidenced by the following list.

The Collections Committee completed the entry of information on the vast majority of NSHA holdings into Past Perfect, giving NSHA greater control of and access to its collections than it has ever had. This was a tremendous long-term effort that has already benefited researchers interested in information about New Scotland.

A finding aid has been produced to the Hilton and Wood Family Papers.

The collection includes historical photographs, legislative documents, ledgers, journals, letters, and prize ribbons. NSHA believes this is one of the most significant collections related to Albany County agriculture.

The following items were added to the NSHA's collections this year: Hilton family floor clock, a wash bowl and basin set, and 19th century hymnal belonging to Maria Hilton; a Picard's Grove cup; and a letter to PFC Mike Ulion from Lil Smith, telling the news from Voorheesville including active-duty WWII personnel from the Village from March to June 1945.

To compensate for a lack of a program season NSHA assembled a directory of virtual historic tours and museum visits in the *Sentinel*.

NSHA and the Town were featured on Bob Cudmore's podcast The Historian: <https://soundcloud.com/obudmore/new-scotland-the-historians-friday-july-10-2020>

The Sentinel Committee produced four issues of the *Sentinel* in 2020-21 despite the difficulties of producing the publication during the pandemic.

NSHA supported the Hudson-Mohawk Land Conservancy efforts to preserve Picard's Grove, including the house and viewshed of the Helderberg escarpment, and the Bender Melon Farm site, an important part of New Scotland's agricultural heritage.

NSHA was 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. Of all the grant recipients, NSHA had the smallest budget and no paid staff. The \$1,826 in grant funded the purchase of a digital camera, PastPerfect online exhibit software, increased storage from NSHA's web hosting provider, and a monthly subscription to WebEx, a remote conferencing platform.

I hope everyone has a great summer as we look forward to the reopening of the Museum and new program schedule in the fall.

- Alan Kowlowitz

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Throwing hay onto a wagon in the blazing sun was laborious. Some farms had a horse-powered machine called a hay loader to help with the task. The next photo shows the hay loader scooping up the windrows of hay and dumping it on the wagon. The load still needed to “be made” and the team needed to be driven. This photo was also from the Vanderbilt farm around 1940.



Eventually, tractor powered mobile balers became available. In 1950 my grandfather, Amasa Slingerland, bought his first such baler. It cost \$2,210, equivalent to about \$24,000 today. Amasa traded in his hay loader to put toward this baler. He was allowed \$60 on the trade (\$650 today). The bales the new baler made weighed about 40 pounds, more manageable than the 200-pound bales produced by the old stationary balers. These bales were stacked on a wagon directly on the field. The next photo, taken in 1975, shows my father, Harold Slingerland, driving the tractor, and my brother, Jim, stacking the bales as they came on the wagon. The person along for the ride is this writer. This baler was the replacement for the original one of 1950.

Progress in haying continued. This photo from 2014 shows Jim working solo out in the field.



Another part of haying was getting the hay into the hay mow. Early on this was accomplished by big hay forks running along rails mounted in the peaks of the barn roofs. They were attached to a pulley system with ropes. A horse, and later a tractor, would move forward to pick up the hay and then would back up to lower it. This photo shows a hay fork from Jim Slingerland’s farm.



Hay forks were actually quite beautiful in their form, but labor intensive. They were replaced by the hay elevator shown in this photo, again from Jim’s farm (2004).



In earlier days, hay was not always stored in hay mows. In his diary of 1885, Peter W. Brate of Feura Bush wrote about building a hay barrack, a small structure consisting of four or more posts with a roof that could be raised or lowered as hay was added or removed. An example of a hay barrack can be seen at the Wemp Dutch barn located on Onesquethaw Creek Road.

In early summer, a farmer’s focus is on haying. In the July 28, 1893 edition of the *Altamont Enterprise*, the Onesquethaw correspondent reported, “It is now July 25th and as a general thing the harvest is over, thanks to inventive genius, reapers, mowers, etc. Rye is a good crop. Hay through the valley is 90 per cent. We learn Elmer Shear put away in his ample buildings 135 loads of hay and 85 loads rye. Michael McCulloch in the like proportion.”

Am ample supply of hay stored away. The satisfaction of a job well done.

Sources:

The Altamont Enterprise through NYS Historic Newspapers.

With gratitude to Donald Slingerland for his memories and for his extensive photo collection.

THE FLOURISHING OF THE HAY AND STRAW MARKET

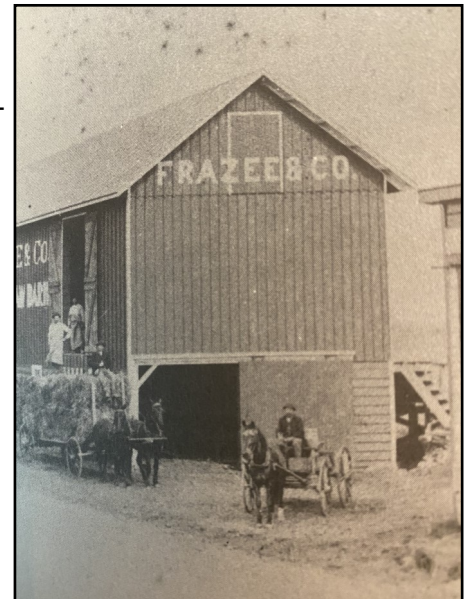
Editor's Note: The following is condensed and edited by Sherry Burgoon with permission from Dennis Sullivan: "Ch. 3 Hay and Straw Market," in Voorheesville, New York: A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town, pgs.29-36. Including ad and photo.

<p>CATALOGUES FARM WAGONS SLEIGHS HARNESS</p>	<p>FRANK BLOOMINGDALE DEALER IN HAY, STRAW AND GRAIN</p>	<p>D & H • C • CO'S COAL FERTILIZERS FARMING UTENSILS</p>
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The early history of the Town of New Scotland before 1880 identifies Clarksville and New Salem as the two largest settled hamlets and well-rounded villages. Although they were farming communities, both also had a variety of other trades and services including hotels, a bakery, stores, a milliner and dressmaker, and the like. Not yet developed, Voorheesville was "out of the economic center, far from the turnpike and plank road systems situated further south." Getting local hay to a bigger market was difficult.

By the mid-1880s Voorheesville tripled in population within a five-year period. What changed? The establishment of a railroad station in the hamlet provided opportunities for local residents to establish businesses and building lots. Voorheesville became a major shipping station for the agricultural markets of New Scotland, as well as Knox, Berne and Guilderland. Farmers, large producers of hay and grains, could now get their produce to Albany, Brooklyn and New York City. From 1854 to 1865, the tonnage of hay produced grew from 5000 tons to more than 11,000 tons.

John Tygert was the principal producer of hay and straw in the 1880s; but by the fall of 1885, he was overtaken by the firm of Hallenbeck and Bloomingdale, leading merchants from Guilderland Station, when they moved their business to Voorheesville. With the ability to employ a dozen men, they were able to buy out John Tygert's business and buildings by 1887. Tygert also operated a lumber business with partner William Swift and decided to sell out to Swift in March of 1888. Swift's move began a series of business transactions beginning the "golden" age of the village. Frank Bloomingdale had recently bought out his partner Jacob Hallenbach followed by the hay barn and business of Mr. Frazee making him the principal hay and straw merchant in Voorheesville. There were minor competitors, Teunis Quackenbush and John H. Shafer, who also started a hay business, but Bloomingdale had control of hay and straw for over three decades.



Bloomingdale's hay and straw business soon became one of the largest in Albany County. At its peak, the business shipped between 6000 and 10,000 tons of hay to New York, Brooklyn and other major markets each year. He was able to employ about a dozen men to cut and press hay. By the fall of 1898, he set up an electric plant in his hay barn to keep his crew working all day until about 10 pm. His purchase of "state of the art equipment" gave his business its boost.

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SUNSHINE'S CORNER

By Mary Beth (Frohlich) Felice

Fickle spring is here. Oh, yes, she's a tease; gray days, 40-degree days, then BANG! a 70-degree day, maybe two. But in April, those warm days don't last. They just make you excited to go outside without a coat....and of course, catch a cold. It seems to me that April was always a busy time at the office of the school nurse!

A big event for my brother, Richard, and me was our birthdays near the end of April. These celebrations were just 2 days apart....plus 6 years. We each had a favorite cake, which Mom created for us every year. Now in our 70's, we still enjoy chocolate pudding cake for Rich and a plain nut-frosted cake for me. Oh boy.....2 cakes, 2 days apart!

Springtime was always time for events like picnics, prom, garden visits in Albany, and the opening of the baseball season. Things moved quickly into summer and the annual July 4th celebration. The parade began at the school (now the elementary school) and rolled down Maple Avenue to a park behind Legion Hall. All sorts of goings-on occurred there....games of chance, music,, and at dark, FIREWORKS! Big doings in the village of Voorheesville.

As we rolled into summer our favorite (and only) drive-in movie opened. Indian Ladder Drive-in on New Scotland Road, aka Rte. 85, was a choice spot for weekend activities. If it was hot enough (outside the car!) we'd sit outside on lawn chairs and enjoy the film along with the company. A trip across the street brought us to a little eatery called Neal's Drive-in owned by Chet and Sally Neal. My absolute favorite there was the fried clam sandwiches or the fried clam basket. YUM! Sandwiches and sodas were carted back across the street to our spot at the outdoor theater. What a life!

When the Methodist church in the center of Voorheesville closed for renovation one summer, services were held at that same drive-in. Folk parked, put their speakers in their car window. The choir and piano were on a flat-bed truck near the projection booth. A beautiful, big birchbark cross put us in the proper mood. The minister came, complete with lectern and microphone. It was an awesome service out in God's beautiful country.

Many summer activities were held at Picard's Grove on - wait for it - Picard Road. Cookouts, clam bakes, and all manner of summer parties occurred at "The Grove." At the foot of the Helderbergs, it was just a perfect spot.

Besides exams, dances and proms, senior class play, etc. - June was a winding-down time. I strongly remember how sad we all felt as we lined up for the graduation procession. It was truly a case of endings and beginnings as we left the small town life of Voorheesville and stepped out into the unknown: jobs, tech schools, universities, military, marriage. Thank you, Voorheesville, for sending us on our way.

Hattie Flansburg's diary Monday, April 18, 1892 Weather, nice. We washed. Smith went away again this morning. Grace and Mabel at school.

Ma is not well...has heart trouble, cannot walk or exercise much. She had a poor spell after she went to bed. Mrs. Oliver came up and called me. I was frightened.

Monday, May 1, 1893 Raining. Caroline came up with Brad, stayed till noon. I did not wash for was not very well today. Libby Crooks moved today to Ma's house. Smith went to New Salem and back on some business I think is not doing right. I fear with regret but someday I am hoping in the Lord to sustain me in this hour of trial.

A JOYFUL OCCASION

Transcribed by Judy Kimes

This is a wonderful time of year for weddings. One such happy event took place on May 21, 1890, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Slingerland, located on Indian Fields Road (Route 32) between Onesquethaw and Feura Bush. The house stands today and a historical marker commemorates its history.



The following is the write-up of the wedding as published in the May 31, 1890 issue of the *Altamont Enterprise*. It provides a delightful glimpse of a social event as reported in the writing style of the day.

HYMENEAL A JOYOUS WEDDING NEAR FEURABUSH

The residence of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Slingerland was on Wednesday, 21 inst. A sense of festivity and gayety; the occasion being the marriage of their daughter Susie to Elmer V. Shear of Coeyman's Hollow.

The estate upon which the house stands has belonged to the family for generations. Here, living with his son, is found Maus Slingerland in hale and hearty old age, honored and beloved by all, and who takes pride in the ancestral domain to whose skill and industry, a very large part of the beauty and fertility is owing. The old manor house has welcomed brides, and has sent them forth, but the occasion of the 21st will long be remembered for the distinguished event then occurring.

The interior was tastily decorated with wreaths and festoons. The day was all that could be wished, the clouds of the preceding days had all passed away, and from a cloudless sky the sun poured his genial beams. The brilliancy of the surroundings was equaled by the company which had assembled. Nearly one hundred and fifty guests graced the marriage halls and tendered congratulations to the young and popular bride. Among the guests we noticed Mr. and Mrs. John Moorell, of New York; Mr. Harvey and Miss Clara Shear, Mr. and Mrs. E.D. Renan, Mr. and Mrs. C. VanAllen, H.J. Nodine and G.E. Knowles, of Albany; Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Slingerland and Mr. Wm. Slingerland, Jr., of Slingerlands; Mr. and Mrs. H. Hotaling, New Scotland; Mr. and Mrs. Geo. L'Amoreaux, Indian Fields; Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Vanderzee, Coxsackie; Miss Jennie Matthews, New Baltimore.

G.E. Knowles presided at the piano and played the wedding march as the bridal party descended to the parlors.

A few minutes after one o'clock, the bride, leaning upon the arm of her affianced, and preceded by the ushers, Harmon P. Vanderzee and Harvey Shear, appeared and the marriage ceremony was pronounced, by the Rev. John H. Scarlet.

The bride was elegantly attired in white, with train and veil, and carried in her left hand a bouquet of marechal neil roses.

The banquet was served by caterer McElvany, of Albany; and for elaborateness, elegance, and management in serving, would be difficult to equal. Every thing which heart could wish was provided for the welfare and comfort of the guests, and to each guest, upon departing, was handed a souvenir, consisting of a box of cake.

The bridal party left the house at 4:30 p.m., for Albany, from which place they took the cars for Washington, D.C., and points west. Possibly few brides have gone forth from their father's house under such favorable surplus and showered by so many congratulations. May the future of this couple be as bright as the very happy circumstances under which their married life began.

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The presents were costly, numerous, and useful. We will not weary you with a full list but give a partial one. To his bride the groom gave an elegant diamond broach; Mr. Cornelius Slingerland, a check for \$200; Mrs. Cornelius Slingerland, a handsome oak bedroom suite; Miss Eva, a marble clock; Mr. Maus Slingerland, \$20; Mrs. Harvey Shear, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. L'Amoreaux and Charles Wedman, \$10 each; Mr. and Mrs. Charles VanAllen, handsome set of dishes, numbering more than a hundred pieces; Mrs. Jane Tompkins, tea spoons; Mr. H.L. Mosher, nut picks. There were also several sets of table linens, counterpanes, bureau scarfs, photographic album, etc., etc. One might go on for a long time and yet may forget or overlook some amongst so many.

Quite a remarkable event, so completely recorded!



Here is a photo of Susie Slingerland Shear and family taken 15 years later – about 1905. She is the woman in the checkered dress. Her two sons stand in front of her. We are unsure who the other people are, although the man to the right is probably her father, Cornelius Slingerland. She and her husband were successful farmers (see the reference in the haying article to Elmer Shear and his full, “ample buildings” written one year later in the *Altamont Enterprise*.) Donald Slingerland remembers our grandmother’s insistence on going to Sher’s farm in Coeyman’s Hollow to buy our apples.

With thanks to the *Altamont Enterprise* for the capturing of an era in their newspaper and to Don Slingerland for his photos.

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His E.W. Ross and Co, hay cutter could chop up to 30 tons a day and his Columbia hay press, that turned out two bales to each pressing, could handle between 25 and 30 tons a day. Sometimes the baler was stretched to its limit. The hay was pressed in a 30X60 foot hay press building that was also used for milling grain. The building stood on 22-foot posts that were covered from top to bottom with steel sheeting.

But having a successful business near a railroad also brought much loss. It was not unusual for the sparks of the train to cause barns with as many as 60 tons of hay to burn to the ground in an evening. Tramps who rode the trains would start fires near the barns to cook or keep warm. More than a dozen fires over the years brought great losses. Fortunately, Bloomingdale, an astute businessman, had insurance with Lloyd’s and Co. which helped him recuperate some of his losses. Frigid winter temperatures could cause machines to fly apart due to the lack of heated barns. Interestingly, winter was a good time for farmers to bring their hay to the station for shipping due to the ease of transporting over the snow-covered roads.

Bloomingdale continued to build other successful businesses keeping him at the top of the hay and straw market: a saw mill, a patent for a dump wagon, a foundry, and the sale of D&H coal along a side track. More importantly, he became the exclusive dealer for McCormick farm machinery. It was easy for him to sell as many as two dozen McCormick mowing machines in an afternoon after offering a clam bake and free demonstrations of new machinery to local farmers. His unusual management style of offering oyster dinners for his crews or enjoying a drink and cigar after a day’s work brought Bloomingdale great respect. He was the first elected president (mayor) of Voorheesville leading him to pursue other positions in Albany County. By the end of the 1890s, he was the largest taxable property owner in the village and perhaps the wealthiest person in Voorheesville.

The farmers of the Town of New Scotland could be thankful for his efforts building their prosperous livelihood.

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museum will be closed
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New Scotland Historical Association
P. O. Box 541
Voorheesville, New York 12186