



THE SENTINEL

Newsletter of the New Scotland Historic Association

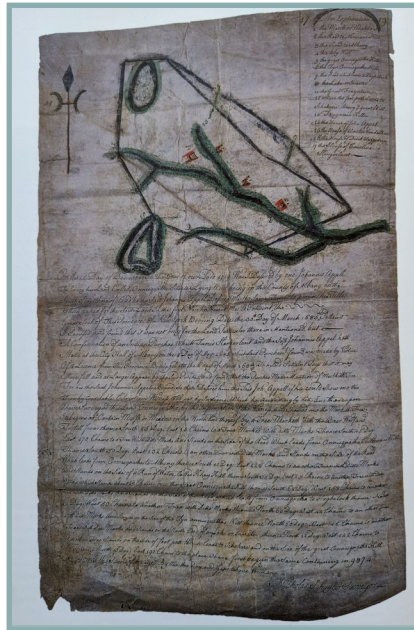
Fall, 2023
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THE ONESQUETHAW VALLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

By Judy Kimes

On September 9 NSHA unveiled and dedicated a historical marker identifying the Onesquethaw Valley Historic District. Financed by a grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, this marker commemorates an area filled with historic sites that have been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1974.

The marker is located at the intersection of Route 32 and Winne Lane, about 3 miles southwest of Feura Bush. It is close to the Route 32 end of La Grange Lane.



1719 survey done by Nicholas Schuyler to legitimize Johannes Appel's claim of ownership showing 4 houses along the creek: Slingerlandt, Haggedorn, Appel, and Van der Zee.

Image provided by Chris Albright.



1962 photo of stone house on LaGrange Farm (Haggedorn site on 1719 survey) illustrating the agricultural nature of the Historic District that the Onesquethaw Preservation and Conservation Association strove to protect.

The Sentinel plans to highlight some of the fascinating stories of this rich historical area in subsequent issues.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members and Friends,

It is an honor to once again serve as your President and a pleasure to tell you about happenings at NSHA as we begin our 2023-24 season.

First, I would like to acknowledge the recent passing of Donald "Don" Meacham. Please take some time to read the article about Don in this issue of the *Sentinel*. He was a lifelong New Scotland resident, NSHA Board member, and unique individual who contributed mightily to our community in so many ways.

NSHA received grant funding from the Pomeroy Foundation to erect a historic marker recognizing the Onesquethaw Valley National Historic District. The marker was dedicated on September 9th 2023. This remarkable historic district has been in existence since 1974 but has received scant recognition regionally despite its unique collection of late 18th and early 19th century stone houses.

This fall the New Scotland Museum will be hosting an exhibit developed by our friends in the Clarksville Historical Society. I hope many of you will visit the exhibit to learn about one of the most important and historic hamlets in our Town.

This issue of the *Sentinel* includes our program schedule for the 2023-2024 season. The programs cover a diverse range of historical topics including programs this fall on the Battle of Bennington, a participatory workshop on America's oldest hymn tradition – Sacred Harp, and on cemetery restoration by the region's foremost expert.

I hope people have had a chance to explore NSHA's new website. It is a work in progress, and we will be continuing to improve it and add content.

Please note that the New Scotland Museum will be open regularly starting in the fall through the spring.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our programs and at the museum in the coming months.

Alan Kowlowitz,
President

DON MEACHAM: A LEGACY OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

By Sherry Burgoon



Don, age 16, at the farm getting ready for a ride.

When Robert Meacham was offered the opportunity to become the manager of Indian Ladder Farms in 1940, he and his wife Bernice moved their children from Peru, New York, to raise their family. As an eight-year-old, son Donald continued to develop his love of animals and the outdoors under the Helderberg escarpment.

The Meachams lived in a 2- family house on the farm across from the big house on Altamont Road. Don's most vivid memory of living there was the night of the big fire which burned down the huge barn and silos. He was sleeping on the screen porch when he was awakened by the smell of smoke. As a teenager, he instinctively helped move many of the animals to safety.

While in high school, he excelled in basketball and baseball. After completing high school, he was admitted to Colgate University and after earning his degree, Don volunteered to serve in United States Army as a clerk typist.

After his discharge, Don and his brother Tom spent the summer running an orchard in Covert, New York. Don loved farm work, but decided in 1958 to enter Albany Law School. Don never wanted to be a big corporate attorney. Instead, it was his desire to make a difference in his community. Later in life, when someone would ask why he attended law school, Don replied, "It seemed like a good idea at the time." After his graduation in 1961, he set up practice in Voorheesville; thus began his 66-year legacy of serving his community.

At that time, he and his brother Jim, rented the Roberta Munks house next to what is now the fire house on Altamont Road. He married his first wife Carolyn, and along with her three children, Patty, Bridget and Jody, moved to his dream home on 116 Altamont Road which he bought from farmer, Roy Crouse. With this new space he could expand his family and farm the land! Children Darcy and Dean soon came along and he now had five children to raise. With the new acreage, the farmer at heart could plant a huge garden and have horses and tractors to fulfill his love of the outdoors. He also bought an old wooden sleigh that he would take for a ride with his horses on the new fallen snow on Koonz Road. In his later years, he enjoyed giving tractor rides to his grandchildren.

Being a small-town attorney fit Don's personality perfectly. As the only lawyer in town with an office at 24 South Main Street, he was able to meet the needs of the community members. He didn't specialize. Whether it was a real estate closing, an estate issue, or a traffic court visit, Don Meacham was the man to call. He was especially proud to represent new adoptive parents. It was not unusual for people to stop him on the street or walk into the office without an appointment.



Don enjoying a tractor ride with his grandson Logan Bellouny

One client offered him a pig for payment and another, cherry wood. He didn't charge by the minute or tell a perspective client to come back later because he was busy at his desk working on another case. He stopped, listened, and provided his expertise. He would walk around town and happily greet a person with a smile even though they had not paid their bill to him. It was never all about the money. Being able to make a difference in the community was all he needed.

In 1998, Don married the former Lauren Hatch. She had worked as a secretary in his office. Lauren then became both the treasurer and clerk of the Village of Voorheesville. Together they shared service to the village. Lauren and Don resided in the village at 26 Orchard Path for 34 years. Lauren's daughters, Heather and Courtney, were able to share their life together into adulthood.

Ultimately, Don's legacy is the service he brought to the Town of New Scotland and the Village of Voorheesville. In 1965 he eagerly ran for the Town Assessor position. Although he lost that race, in 1971 he ran again for the position of Town Justice.

As the long-time Village Attorney and attorney for the Zoning and Planning Board, he served under Mayors Bates, Lennon, Clark, and Stevens before retiring in 2002. Don is credited for his part in keeping the signage in the village "aesthetically pleasing."

As a member of the New Scotland Historical Association he served as vice president and donated items to the museum. Bob Parmenter, town historian, remarked that he was "a collector of information," providing so much knowledge about the town and community from his many years as a resident. Alan Kowlowitz, current president, is thankful for his encouragement to join the organization. Don served as attorney for the Voorheesville School District as well. The following organizations were also recipients of his expertise: Voorheesville Library Board, and New Salem Fire Dept., and of the Board of Mount Pleasant Cemetery, to name a few. It was not unusual for him to provide pro bono work for many of those organizations. He was a member of the American Legion and created the Voorheesville HorseshU League along with Dennis Sullivan in 1992.

To know Don Meacham personally was a gift. His fun-loving personality and sense of humor made him relatable to all who met him. He wore a sweater and jeans in his office and attended some house closings in a blazer and jeans. Hosting theme parties and performing practical jokes on his friends was the norm. He didn't flinch when the Maple Avenue Crazies asked him to be the judge and jury over the demise of a local tomato plant killed by a neighbor. He even attended the funeral of the plant. Before his passing, his wife Lauren texted Don to see if he was okay while she was out doing errands: he quipped back, "I am not dead yet." There are some funny tales which will never make it to print!

Don remained a hometown boy. No formal suit and tie. No talk of his prestigious law degree. He ate soup daily at the Voorheesville Diner, gave his business to the local merchants, and chose to stay local in his final resting place - Mount Pleasant Cemetery in New Salem.



Sue Rockmore, village board member, Lauren Meacham village clerk, and Don working on the village budget.

Special thanks to Lauren Meacham for sharing her memories and photos.

NSHA HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

By Jesse Sommer, Trustee

On June 13, 2023, the New Scotland Historical Association launched its new website at www.NewScotlandHistory.org with a mission to make New Scotland more accessible to residents.

The site offers a brief history of both the town and organization, and exhaustively lists every historical marker in the jurisdiction. On the site you'll find information about the New Scotland Museum and its featured exhibit as well as a slew of "New Scottish" literary titles, to include "A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town" — Dennis Sullivan's heartstring-tugging treatise on Voorheesville — as well as an "Images of America" series installment entitled "New Scotland Township."

There's also corporate sponsor information, membership applications, a list of ways to volunteer with NSHA, and a donation page where site visitors can lend financial support to NSHA's mission of "preserving, protecting, and promoting history in the Town of New Scotland through the stewardship of material culture directly related to the Town."

You can additionally peruse nearly two decade's worth of issues of *The Sentinel*, NSHA's quarterly newsletter!



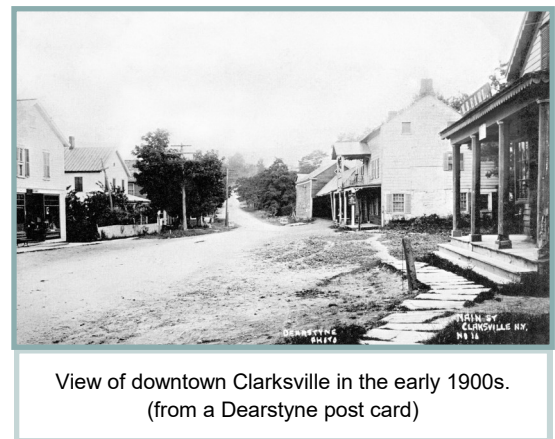
THE MUSEUM RE-OPENS WITH AN EYE ON CLARKSVILLE!

By Judy Kimes

On Sunday, September 24 from 2:00 PM-4:00 PM, NSHA's museum is reopening with a new exhibit created by our friends of the Clarksville Historical Society. The exhibit highlights many aspects of this historic and important part of the Town of New Scotland. There are photographs and artifacts that illustrate such points of interest as the area's veterans, farms, churches, early autos, schools, hotels, stores, caves, disasters (floods and fires), and the historic (1867) Onesquethaw Cemetery. Also featured is Clarksville Historical Society's ongoing restoration of the M.B. Earl Store's building which may, in the future, house Clarksville's own museum.

Come and experience the history of this robust community that was once the largest village in the Town of New Scotland!

The Museum is open Sundays from 2-4, on Election Day, for a half hour before each of NSHA's scheduled programs, and by special arrangement with any of its board members. It is located at the Wyman Osterhout Community Center in New Salem on 7 The Old New Salem Road, Voorheesville, NY 12186.



View of downtown Clarksville in the early 1900s.
(from a Dearstyne post card)

NEW SCOTLAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

DRAFT PROGRAM SCHEDULE 2023-24

Titles are tentative and subject to change

The Battle of Bennington

Date: October 3, 2023 - Time: 7:30 pm

The defeat of British forces at Bennington in 1777 paved the way for victory in the Battles of Saratoga and ultimately in the Revolutionary War. However, few people realize that this crucial battle was fought in New York's present-day Capital Region. David Pitlyk, historic site interpreter, will relate the story of the Battle of Bennington and touch on how the battle has been commemorated and interpreted over time.

Sacred Harp Singing: Singing School & Participatory Community Sing

Date: November 5, 2023 - Time: 2:00 pm

Learn about, and participate in America's oldest hymn tradition hosted by the Albany Sacred Harp. The singing is known for its driving rhythms, full loud voices, and archaic melodies and harmonies. At this workshop, you will learn to read and sing from shape note notation, an ingenious 200-year-old variation on traditional music notation that enables participants to sight sing in harmony even if they cannot read music.

An Introduction to Gravestone Conservation

Date: December 3, 2023 - Time: 2:00 pm

Genealogist and gravestone Conservator, Christopher White, will take us on a journey into local cemeteries where time has taken its toll on 18th and 19th century gravestones. Conservation of these artifacts is extremely rewarding to all involved. White will present the process of gravestone conservation, maintenance, and restoration.

Archaeology and History of 19th Century African American Farms in the Capital Region

Date: February 24, 2023 - Time: 2:00 pm

Michael Lucas, Archeologist with the State Museum, will discuss the little known but surprising and fascinating story of owner-operated African American farms in the Capital region in the 1800s as revealed in unique historical and archaeological sources.

Finding a Place of Origin for Your Irish Ancestors

Date: March 3, 2024 - Time: 2:00 pm

Anyone with Irish ancestors is usually eager to find out just where in Ireland they came from. This can be a very difficult task for researchers. Professional genealogist Lisa Dougherty will focus on sources to use in the United States to help identify a place of origin for your Irish ancestor, and hopefully help further your research with Irish sources.

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