



THE SENTINEL

Vol. 21, No. 2

The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Winter 2012

Looking for Gift Ideas?

Times of Our Lives—New Scotland Memories—by friends of NSHA \$20.00

Voorheesville, New York: A sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town—A reprint of Dennis Sullivan's 1989 book \$15.00

New Scotland Township—NSHA \$18.98

All available at the NSHA Museum, New Scotland Town Hall, Voorheesville Public Library; Voorheesville Village Hall has the Voorheesville book. Or call Peg Dorgan at 768-2852. Books can be mailed for \$5 extra.



Mark you calendars!

Old Fashioned Christmas Party

**Tuesday, Dec. 4
7:30 P.M.**

**Oosterhout Community
Center**

NSHA Republishes Voorheesville History

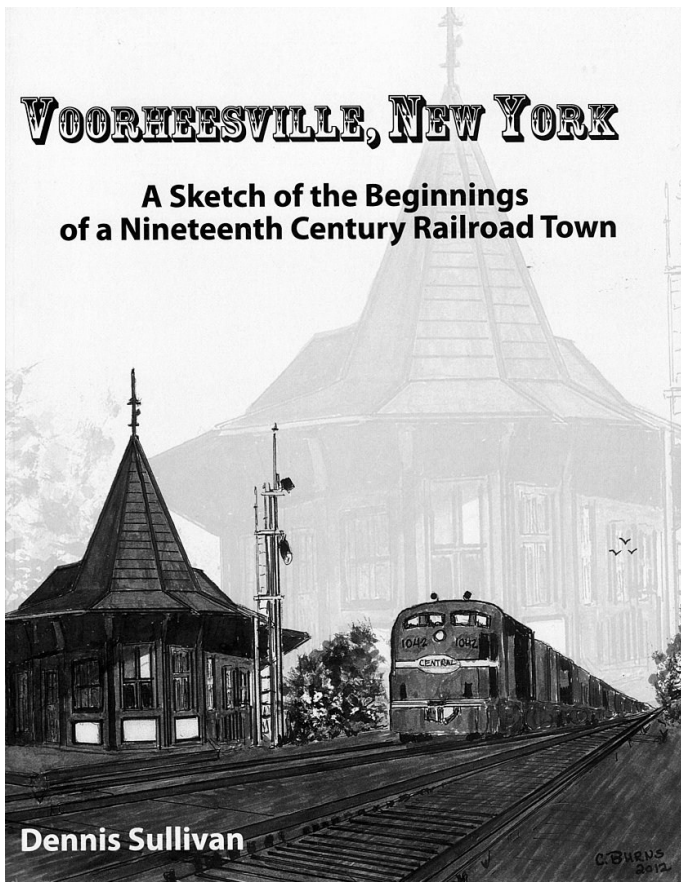
The New Scotland Historical Association (NSHA), with the permission of the author, has republished *Voorheesville, New York: A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town*. Written by Dennis Sullivan, noted local historian, criminal justice scholar and poet, this book was originally published by the Village of Voorheesville in 1989. It has been out of print for some time and used copies have been selling on the Internet for over \$130.

Voorheesville, New York: A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town chronicles the history of Voorheesville from its first settlement through the 1950s. However, the book focuses on the village's heyday as a railroad town, agricultural processing center, and tourist destination in the 19th and early 20th century. Sullivan extensively used primary sources and oral history interviews in researching the book and lavishly illustrated it with photographic and other material. All this illustrative material has been included in the new edition. The original publication had a cover designed by local artist Connie Burns and she has designed a new cover for the republished version.

Voorheesville, New York: A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town is on sale for \$15 at the New Scotland Museum and during NSHA events, the Voorheesville Public Library, Voorheesville Village Hall, and New Scotland Town Hall. It is also available outside of town for a slightly extra cost at the Book House in Stuyvesant Plaza.

VOORHEESVILLE, NEW YORK

A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town



Dennis Sullivan

NEW SCOTLAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P. O. Box 541

Voorheesville, NY 12186

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President's Letter

This autumn was not kind to many people south of us. It was heart wrenching to watch the misery hurricane Sandy brought to the people of New York City, Long Island and New Jersey. The scenes of devastation brought back memories of the disastrous impact of the Hurricane Irene on our area a little over a year ago.

In times of disaster our first concerns are for the people affected and helping them put their lives back together. Natural disasters also have their impact on historic sites, collections, and institutions dedicated to preserving our history. It is too early to know the impact of Hurricane Sandy on our "historic memory" but we do know that the damage caused by Irene was immense. Just a few examples:

The **Blenheim Bridge** on Schoharie Creek was completely destroyed. The bridge, built in 1855, was on the National Register of Historic Places.

At 18th century **Old Fort Johnson** the storm flooded the museum's first floor and another Colonial-era building, which served as the visitor's center. Centuries-old artifacts that couldn't be moved in time were damaged or destroyed. On Aug. 11, 2012, Old Fort Johnson reopened after months of work, \$150,000 in repairs, and a season of lost visitors' fees.

At colonial era **Guy Park Manor** in Amsterdam, floodwaters tore away large sections from the Georgian limestone home and carried off about 2,000 of the 20,000 artifacts belonging to the Walter Elwood museum. The floodwaters destroyed the entire contents of two exhibit rooms and ruined equipment worth tens of thousands of dollars.

At **Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site**, the storm destroyed the parking lot and parts of the old Erie Canal. Ironically the storm revealed the remains of British Fort Hunter built in the early 1700s to protect the local Mohawk Indians.

Many of us increase our charitable donation during the Christmas season. We may want to consider donating to historic societies affected by this year's and last year's storms or at least plan a visit to them when they reopen.

Donations to restore Old Fort Johnson can be sent to:

Montgomery County Historical Society (MCHS)

P.O. Box 196, Fort Johnson, NY 12070

Checks made to payable to MCHS.

<http://www.oldfortjohnson.org/>

Donations to aid the Walter Elwood Museum's collections can be sent to:

First Niagara

11 Division Street

Amsterdam, NY 12012

Attn. Museum Flood Fund

Checks payable to The Walter Elwood Museum

<http://www.wa;terelwoodmuseum.org/>

Exhibit Report

The Exhibit committee met for the first time this October to make plans for the 2013 Exhibit opening in mid April. It will feature "Entertainment before the 1950s and TV. We are looking for baseball uniforms with the village names on them and other like items that you could loan to us for a year. Other displays will feature dancing, early movies, radio programs, games, fairs, church functions, etc. One Sunday each month while the museum is open we will host an "old movies day," the following month on a Sunday perhaps a card party, another would be the old time board games. Some of our committee members will be there to assist our volunteers and to join in the fun. Bring your friends, and family to experience the "good old days!" Our Sunday Monthly Entertainment Calendar will appear in the next *Sentinel*.

We gave a private tour of our museum to the Guilderland Senior Men's Club consisting of 10 members, and the Voorheesville 1st Niagara Bank's display window is now exhibiting Russian nesting dolls. Stop in and take a look.

So far I have only one photo of a Vietnam War Veteran. Where are they all?

The survey map of the John Terwilliger Estate of 1834 has been restored by Gwen Spicer and is now on display in our museum in the case below the Slingerland Spoons. [*The Terwilliger farm was located in Voorheesville along Maple Road, much of it where the Salem Hills Development is now located.*] Take time to take a look at the map.

Sandy Slingerland—768-2462

Inclement Weather?

In the event of stormy weather on a meeting night, if you are unsure whether the meeting has been cancelled, please call Alan Kowlowitz, 765-4212, or Peg Dorgan, 768-2852. Emails will be sent to those on the email list.

\$1000 Junior Award!

The Town of New Scotland Historical Association is offering a \$1,000.00 award to encourage the study and enjoyment of history in any of its aspects. This award is intended for **Town of New Scotland residents who are in their Junior year of high school** and who are serious students planning to further their education at the college level. All Juniors are invited to compete for the award, whether they are public high school, private school, parochial school or home-schooled students.

Complete applications describing the information required for submission to the competition will be available beginning on Monday, January 7, 2013. These applications will be in public schools, local libraries, Town Hall and the New Scotland Community Center in New Salem. All applicants will be required to submit a completed application form, along with a copy of her/his resume and high school transcript, and a 250-word essay on a given topic (there will be three choices offered).

If there are questions, please contact Marie Hornick, 518 768-2933, and provide your name, address, phone number and email address. Your call will be returned promptly. **All completed applications must be postmarked no later than Friday, March 15, 2013.** Information will not be given out prior to January 7, 2013.

Membership Report

Attention NSHA Business/ Corporate Members: membership letters will be in the mail in December.

Thank you to all of the members who renewed their membership and to those who gave so generously to this year's Annual Appeal. We couldn't do it without you.

Happy Holidays!

Melanie Ernst

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.

NSHA Winter Programs

December 4, 2012 **An Old Fashioned Christmas Celebration**---We will be kicking off the Holiday Season with an old-fashioned celebration featuring holiday music and refreshments from an earlier time.

February 5, 2013 **The Underground Railroad Turned on Its Head: Old Themes, New Directions** Based on the latest research, Mary Liz and Paul Stewart, co-founders of the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region (URHPCR), will provide an updated view of the Underground Railroad that sheds light on the role of the Capital District, women and African-Americans in the Pre-Civil War fight against slavery.

March 5, 2013 **Mayor Corning: Albany Icon, Albany Enigma** Award-winning journalist and author Paul Grondahl will discuss aspects of the life and career of Albany's iconic Mayor, Erastus Corning III, based on in-depth research into the Mayor's own records and other primary sources. Mayor of Albany for 42 years, Corning's life is intertwined with Albany life and politics spanning more than four decades.

All programs will be held at the Wyman Osterhout Community Center, 7:30 P.M., 7 Old New Salem Rd., New Salem, off Route 85. Programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. The museum is open one half hour before the program begins.

Memories Dr. Clifford Casey

*The following article was written by Dr. Clifford Casey of Voorheesville and published in the **Spotlight** on the 50th Anniversary of Bethlehem Central High School. Dr. Casey graduated from BCHS and was a doctor in Voorheesville for many years, until his retirement. Since we have many Town residents living in the Clarksville, Unionville area who also attend Bethlehem Schools, it seemed that these memories would be interesting to our readers. Reprinted with permission of the **Spotlight**.*

The all-consuming memory of the eighty-five graduates of 1944 is World War II. We were freshmen on Pearl Harbor Day and sort of grew up in the war. There may have been nastier or longer wars, but this one was right up there on top of the charts. It was a war you could take sides on. We believed in our side and showed it. Shortages of sugar, gasoline, meat or shoes were taken for granted. We had ration books. You bought War Stamps in homeroom. One June morning, the whole school was called to a sobering assembly program, as our troops went ashore at Normandy.

Everyone had family and friends in service, and they were scattered all over the world. A few of those little gold stars showed up in windows and we knew who they all were. You were shocked to hear of the death of some guy that sat next to you in class last year.

It could have been a scary time, but it wasn't. We lived in a strong, supportive community and felt safe. I never thought of losing the war.

Like kids everywhere, we didn't know any better, and thought we were having a great time.

The district was small, with only five thousand residents. The school had six hundred students. You knew everybody in town, and it was hard to get away with much. There was a part-time policeman, but he wasn't needed very often.

Half the students lived near enough to walk to school. Many of us went home for lunch. There was a cafe-



teria. I remember with pleasure an occasional chance to buy a sandwich and carton of chocolate milk there. School buses were not run by the school, but by the United Traction Company. Kids who used buses were given special school tokens.

Sports were about as today. There was no pool. Football was of the six man variety and made for a wide open game. A basketball game was sport and social event. You stayed for the dance afterward. No records were broken by track and field, but we did have a guy who could high jump 5—10 on a good day. It was hard to get a coaching staff. The draft board saw to that.

Social life was pretty good. Very few students had cars because of scarce tires, gas and parts. If you could get the family car for an evening, you were doing well. We walked a lot. A wise move was to locate a girlfriend who lived around the corner. Few of us ever did that. Dances were held at the school, the music live and of the “big band” type.

Drugs were no problem. Cigarettes took their toll. Most of the controlled substances that we have today had yet to be discovered. War-time beer was available if you tried. The trouble was its low alcohol content. Over hydration wore you down long before the nervous system became seriously involved.

It is widely believed and hoped for that the addition of aspirin to Coca-Cola produced a compound of unparalleled value. If one could induce a date to take a swallow or two of this concoction, its persuasiveness plus any god-given talent of your own could turn an everyday trip to the soda fountain into an event beyond the wildest dream. I’ve never heard of a success, but, no doubt, the work goes on. Today I believe that two aspirin before breakfast reduce the risk of stroke or heart attack, but that’s about it. A far cry from 1944!

Sometime during our junior year, the citizens found out that the youngsters were making poor use of their spare time. We were standing around the Four Corners talking to each other, or sneaking up to Charlie Sanders’ place in Slingerlands. It came to pass shortly thereafter that we were provided with a structured environment in which to spend Saturday nights, dancing, playing games and eating healthful snacks. We kids went along with this for quite a while. I still have the rusted knob from the front door of the hall.

It has been my experience that every community rediscovers this great truth about every ten years. The idle youth play along. Then, somebody steals the doorknob and things lighten up for ten more years.

Like most BC students, we received an excellent education. The faculty was small and they knew us by name and deed. They prepared us well for what came later in life. Some still live among us. I’ll always remember Mr. Hall telling us, with a straight face, that in his youth the sides of triangles were called limbs, and not legs. The high point of my life came when an English teacher wrote me a letter with a glaring sentence structure error in the first paragraph.

Speaking for my friends of 1944, I salute the school today. You have grown in size, moved the building and teach more than we ever dreamed of. You have TV monitors, jet planes interrupt lectures and you deal with the sub-atomic particles as commonplace. However, I suspect that the students and teachers are the same. Only your names have been changed, and a Friday afternoon looks as good as it ever did.

Highwayman

First time over the ‘Mountain Route’

Well, here I was, a death grip on that huge steering wheel, with both hands, ready to put the pedal to the metal and head up the mountain. I just prayed that any motorist I might meet would realize that there was a rookie at the wheel and give me plenty of room. We started off and I made it around the first turn and was looking at a fairly straight stretch of road and feeling somewhat relaxed when John shouted above the din, “turn left here!” This is the conversation that followed. “Turn left,” I said, “that looks like a small narrow driveway.” “It is,” he replied, “but look at the road sign.” It proclaimed in bright green and white letters, “Swack Lane.” “Where does it go?” I asked to which he replied “down past Mr. Swack’s trailer.” “Where does it end?” “In the woods,” he said. So off down the Lane we went, barely able to fit between the trees until we passed the trailer and the road ended facing a number of large trees and a forest. “What’s next?” “Turn around,” he told me. “Here?” I exclaimed, “In this little opening?” “Yup,” came the reply and after what seemed like a half hour of wrestling that iron monster and nearly exhausted, I headed back the way we

(cont. on page six)

(cont. from page five)

came. Now back on Indian Ledge, and some straight road ahead, I began to settle down a little.

We proceeded for about a mile when I heard that familiar refrain, “turn right here.” I looked to my right and the road sign said Castle Road. In we went on another small narrow dirt road and I asked the same question again, “Where does it go?” “All the way back to the Castle he replied.” Well, I had been to the Castle many times as a youngster, but never driving a huge snow plow with a mouth and teeth painted on the front V like some rabid animal attacking the snow. As we approached the Castle I noticed a stone pillar on the right opposite a stone wall alongside the building. John had me stop so he could put the wing away and then told me to go ahead. “Will we fit?” I asked. “Yup” he replied, “if you go real slow and careful.” I followed his advice and made it through with inches to spare. In another storm I gave that pillar a good shot, but it stayed up, thank heavens. I guess old Bouck White knew what he was doing.

Now back out Castle Road onto Indian Ledge and proceed to Wolf Hill. A short time later I heard it again. “Turn right here.” Not again, I thought as I saw a road sign that said Countryman Road. Well, I had been on this road before so I knew where it went. What I didn’t realize is how it would look with over a foot of snow on it. As long as we were in the woods, I had a good sense where the road was, but when we broke out into the fields it was a different story. I stopped the plow and looked out over a sea of white with no idea where the road was. “OK, John. What now?” I inquired. “Do you see those fence posts sticking up out of the snow?” “Yes,” I replied. “Follow them but stay about three feet to the left and you should be on the road.” Well, believe it or not, we made it in and out

without any real tragedies. I believe it must have been beginners luck and not from any skill on my part.

The rest of the route went pretty well without any further problems until the very end. As you may recall, I started on Indian Ledge and that is where I would finish. After making it around the hairpin at the bottom, we found a car parked on the other side, where we had plowed earlier. It was going to be a tight fit, but with the wing put away I thought we could squeeze by. I was so proud of myself as I looked out and saw the big V plow had cleared the car. Just about that time John dropped the wing down into the snow which acted like a fulcrum point and caused the back end to swing out farther into the road. In complete amazement I watched the rear of the plow truck crumple the driver’s side rear door, which caused window glass to explode into the back seat. We returned to the building where I made a report to my boss, Peter VanZetten. He said he would take care of it and that the car should not have been parked on the road. I guess that is what you would call on the job training, the Town of New Scotland way.

Until next time,
Will Osterhout



Mark B. Simiele Collection

Civil War Letter #7

This Civil War letter is a continuation of a series of letters from John Lewis Houck to his wife Sophia Elizabeth Beller Houck in Clarksville, NY. He enlisted September 12, 1862 for 3 years as a musician and played the fife. He is described as having "gray eyes, light hair, light complexion," and being 5'6" tall.

March 14, 1863

Camp near Falmouth Va

Dear Wife

I now take my pencil in hand to let you know of my health which at present is very good hoping this may fine you all well I received your letter last night and was very glad to hear from you again the stamps came safe we have had two or three days very cold weather here and it is not very warm yet the boys are all well I was over to see John I Hallenbeck and Len Applebee the other day and I had a good dinner with the boys Baultes Delong and John I Hallenbeck had each got a box from home and I had to stay and eat with them it seemed like old times to have something good to eat once more one of our boys had a box sent to him but it was over a month before he got it and most of the things were moldy so it was not much account we buried one of our boys last Sunday his name was George Swarhout he was a cousin to George Fuller he died with a fever I had to play the death march the whole Regt followed him to the grave they fired three volleys over his body after it was in the grave he leaves a wife behind him there was a beautiful prayer made at the grave and that was all the ceremony there was quite a stir in camp last night on account of a large number of signal lights a going up all around us we have not heard yet what it means but they seem to think that there will be a fight very shortly but the old boys swear that they will never go in a battle again I want you to let me know what they think and do about the drafting business there I suppose some of them begins to feel very much afraid of the draft but they certainly will undertake it whether they succeed or not I want you to send me three or four threads of black linen in the next letter for I am entirely out you can put a few threads in so and it wont make a bulk you don't say how uncle Lewis is I should like to hear from him too give my love to all enquiring friends and keep a good share for yourself and children and now I shall have to close by saying good bye

I remain

Yours

Forever

John L Houck

Schoharie Barns!

Marion Parmenter

Bob and I took a brief camping trip to the St. Lawrence River, Thousand Island area this fall. We crossed into Ontario, Canada and spent a day visiting **Upper Canada Village**, near Morrisburg, Ontario. If you haven't visited this, you are missing a treat. It depicts life during the 1860s through an active and working community. Many of the buildings were moved here when the St. Lawrence Seaway was being built. This was our fourth trip here since 1965, and each time it is bigger and better. The interpreters are very knowledgeable and certainly help make it a wonderful experience.

During this visit we came across the following marker for a couple of barns. The barns we were looking at were what we call Dutch Barns!! We suspect that the many Tories who fled to Canada during the American Revolution took their barn plans with them! Has anyone ever heard Dutch Barns referred to as "Schoharie Barns"?

The marker stated:

Schoharie Barns

Many of the barns in the St. Lawrence River Valley have an unusual frame and design that originated in the Schoharie Valley of New York State. These two barns, probably built in the early 1800's show evidence of this influence.

This is one of the barns we saw.



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www.stewartsshops.com

**Museum Hours
Sundays**

2:00—4:00 P.M.

Closed December 23rd

If the weather is bad, stay home!

If you would like to become a member,
please do so!

NSHA Membership Form

- \$10 Individual
 \$15 Family
 \$25 Sustaining
 \$100.00 Life (per person)

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Make checks payable to NSHA.

Please send dues to: NSHA

Melanie Ernst, Membership Chair
P.O. Box 541
Voorheesville, NY 12186

Museum Hours

**The museum is
open year-round
on Sunday
from**

**2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.
Handicap Accessible**

THE SENTINEL

New Scotland Historical Association
P. O. Box 541
Voorheesville, New York 12186