

SMITHVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

October 14, 2013

As autumn unfolds, we bid adieu to our snowbird members—those who spend the winter in warmer climates. We'll miss you and wish you each a safe and happy trip.

Friday, October 4, was a magical evening at the Community Center. The United Brass Quintet and Praise Band entertained us with a concert that will long be remembered. From the Hallelujah Chorus to hymn medleys to blues numbers, the music was lively and professional. It seemed fitting to sit in the former Unitarian Church built in 1843 and hear music resonating. Reluctant to have the evening end, almost everyone stayed after the concert to visit with band members and enjoy refreshments. Thank you to the bakers, all first-class: Ellen Adams, Joan Barker, Marie Kehl, Jeanette Lamb, and Alison Owens.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

October 19 (Saturday), 9:30 a.m. at the Community Center—business meeting. On the agenda will be a review of our successful September Doug's Fish Fry fundraiser, further discussion of our 2014 Smithville pictorial calendar, and plans for the Annual Meeting. We encourage all members to attend.

November 8 (Friday), 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center—Annual Dinner Meeting. Bring a dish to pass and your table service. Following dinner (always sumptuous) and a brief business meeting, Chuck D'Imperio will present the program. If you attended the 2010 meeting, you won't have forgotten "Big Chuck." A radio personality and author, he's a master storyteller. His specialty is gathering unique history stories from Upstate New York and writing and telling about them. He looks forward to returning to Smithville to relate his latest adventures. "Get me a crowd!" he said. Please mark your calendar and invite friends and neighbors to join the fun.

Also at the annual meeting, we will draw the winner of our beautiful fundraising quilt donated by Joan Reno. Pieced by hand by her aunt, Maria Ruth Infantine, it's the colorful Grandmother's Flower Garden pattern. Members of SHS tied it this past winter, and Joan Barker backed and bound it. It's a beauty.

Maria, born in 1919, made the quilt in the 1960s or '70s. It's the only one she ever made. Perhaps you'll understand why when you see the amount of work that went into this quilt. It has hung in the window of Thomas Real Estate but is now back in Smithville waiting for display at the Annual Meeting. If you haven't purchased raffle tickets and would like to, packets are enclosed. You don't need to be present to win. The cost is \$1 each, or six for \$5. The completed tickets may be returned with your check to SHS at PO Box 176, Smithville Flats 13841—or bring them to the meeting. I feel certain that member Marie Kehl, winner of last year's Civil War-replica quilt, will try her luck again this year.

OTHER NEWS:

By the time you read this newsletter, a group who volunteered at the last business meeting will have performed fall cleaning at the SHS Headquarters—sweeping, vacuuming, washing, and dusting. Thank you, all.

Milly Auwarter, a long-time, active member of SHS, passed away last January. We were honored that her family asked that memorials be directed to SHS. The number of people who honored Milly with contributions and kind notes was touching. We're discussing a way to publicly recognize Milly. We miss her.

A new member this year is Ellen Adams, who lived at Smada Farms for a number of years. Ellen is a quilter, craftsperson, and baker. We welcome her participation in our activities—from attending programs, to quilt-tying, to booth-sitting, to baking refreshments. We've enjoyed your company, Ellen.

Peg Ross, Greene Town Historian, gave us a wonderful program in April. Her topic was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and their nearby camps in McDonough, Chenango Forks, and Chenango Valley State Park. She showed images and shared first-person recollections about the camps' activities. Later, member Bernie Kneller sent along her memory: "When I was a teenager, and attended the North Fenton Methodist Church, some of the CCC fellows from Chenango Valley State Park (new name for Lily Lake) also came to that church." SHS was able to add to Peg's photo collection with a shot of CCC men on the porch of the Ticknor Hotel. Ruby Eggleston White told us they were brought to town to help with the 1935 flood cleanup and were housed at the hotel.

Several recent donations of interest: Brian Auwarter, Milly's son, gave us three original tickets to the 1882 Smithville Fair, mounted and attractively framed. This agricultural fair ran from 1858-1867 in the fields north of today's Community Center and again from 1877-1882 on the broad flats below the brick house on Route 220 (often called the Urda farm). Our fair collection includes all *Chenango American* news articles of the time; an 1880 fair booklet donated by the late David Purdy; two photos from 1880 (recently restored); and admittance tickets.

Second, Gary and Carol Huttleston donated a notebook full of clippings, photos, and memorabilia from Smithville's celebration of the country's 1976 bicentennial. It's impressive how Smithville citizens planned, orchestrated, and enjoyed major events every day over a one-week period. We'd love to organize a program or exhibit on this topic. Is anyone interested in working on this? We have material to work from and people who remember. What seems like a current event quickly becomes history.

Gary and Carol also donated two calendars, *Smithville in Bygone Days*, that complete our collection of those published by SHS in the past: 1989, 1990, and 1993. Each displays old photos of Smithville—people and scenes.

Working Lives...Stories from Smithville and Greene, a book compiled and edited by Christine Buck and Peg Ross, has been on sale since Labor Day. Seventy-seven stories and 148 photos submitted by local people tell personal memories of working. Smithville topics (from all around the town) include Stone's gas station, the Cowles farm, Grandma's baked goods, Tarbell Farms, Echo Lake, Hansmann's Mills, Thomas's hardware store, Smithville's gas stations and garages, Amanda Hofmann's teaching career, Eggleston's blacksmith shop, Smithville's telephone company, the Eaton farm,

the Wrobel farm, the Smithville Flats milk plant, Adams Corners, and maple sugaring. SHS members who contributed to the book are John Buck, Mary Harrington Utter, Joan Barker, Peg Ross, Byron Harrington, Bev Eaton, Milly Auwarter, Phyllis Lerwick, and Christine Buck. Sales and compliments from readers have been rewarding. The books are on sale (\$22) at Moore Memorial Library and the Smithville and Greene Town Clerks' offices. We'll also have a few at the Annual Meeting. All proceeds benefit the Smithville and Greene Historical Societies.

Lidell's store—what do you remember? We've been gathering memories about the Lidell family and their tiny store that dispensed candy, ice cream, and sundries. It was located in the same building as the Victory Store on the corner of Main Street (Route 41) and Round Pond Road. This building has been updated and made into apartments.

In the summer of 2012, we began searching for names of Smithville's Civil War soldiers—those who were born here, buried here, lived here, or enlisted here. We've looked at gravestones, obituaries, newspapers, the 1865 NYS census, an 1890 veterans' schedule, and the Smithville Town Clerk's register. The tally to date? An amazing 254 soldiers, at a time when the entire Town of Smithville's population was 306 families. There is more hunting to be done—for instance, those who were born here but enlisted elsewhere or lived elsewhere have been missed. Next we'll begin learning more about these veterans.

Speaking of obituaries, SHS has a terrific collection. Filed alphabetically in notebooks, they include people from surrounding areas. Names mentioned in these obituaries can sometimes move a researcher forward.

SHS was present at the Grange's Harvest Festival on October 12. The heart of our booth was a photo display put together by Alison Owens. The old photos of Tarbell Farms were a special draw for many viewers. Thanks, Alison, and thank you Joan and Howard Barker for lending us your canopy, setting it up, and taking it down.

NEWS NOTES FROM THE PAST (from the *Greene Chenango American*):

1/27/1898. Smithville Flats. Entertainments are right in line. Prof. Comfort gives his celebrated Phonograph concert tonight, for the benefit of the Methodist church. Friday night the Presbyterians will give the play "Broken Bonds." Both to be held at the Opera House. Feb. 11 the Universalists will give a dance for the purpose of raising money to repair their church. All are for worthy causes and should be well attended.

6/2/1898. Greene. The ice used in Greene is drawn at night from the neighborhood of the Smithville ponds, say about nine miles away, where it was stored last winter, when it was found impossible to harvest it from the river. Our ice man has a hard row to hoe this season, and our people will have to pay more for their ice than usual.

6/23/1898. Lake View known to our older citizens as Cincinnatus Pond and for many years a great resort for fishermen not only from Greene, but all over this section, has, within a few years, taken on considerable importance as a favorite outing resort and it is there that Grange meetings are held, picnic parties entertained and small squads of people go to enjoy one or more days away from city and town, dust and sun, to mingle among the grand scenery, breathe the fresh air and glide on the beautiful waters of the lake.

A large and well conducted hotel for the accommodation of guests may be found there with a large dancing hall and all the conveniences necessary for a pleasurable outing.

Recently there was held a great gathering of farmers at Lake View that was termed a farmer's picnic, when 2,000 of the sons of toil met and had a great time.

They came from nearly every town in this and Cortland County and with speeches, music and lots of the good things of earth to eat, besides merry dancing, they put in a day filled with pleasure to the brim.

Speaking of this beautiful spot and the farmer's picnic recently held, a reporter for the Cortland Democrat says: "Of Lake View and its surroundings one can but see it to admire the scene. Imagine a sheet of water a mile long and a half mile wide, thickly wooded on the south side, with here and there an opening to admit the building of neat cottages, a hotel, dance hall and immense shade trees on the north side, numerous boats skimming over its surface, and one has an idea of this popular resort. Place more than 2,000 men, women and children around the lake, with hundreds of buggies and farm wagons, and the grange picnic is before the reader in imagination."

11/17/1898. Cameron Knickerbocker of Smithville has raised about fifty turkeys for Thanksgiving, if thieves do not steal them. A member of the turkey thief gang has already lugged off his old gobbler and two young turkeys. But Cam says he has loaded up his old shotgun...and woe be to the sneaking turkey thief that invades his premises.

We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and events. Please plan to join us at the Annual Meeting. Until then, enjoy the apples and pumpkin pies of autumn.

Christine Buck, President

SMITHVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2014 Membership Application/Renewal

**May be mailed to:
Smithville Historical Society
PO Box 176
Smithville Flats, NY 13841**

Annual dues are \$10 per person.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Thank you for your membership.