

SMITHVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

July 12, 2012

PROGRAM: Friday, July 27, 2012, 7:00 pm, Smithville Center Methodist Church

Perhaps you've heard of the Little Brown Church in the Vale. Smithville has its own Church in the Wildwood—the Smithville Center United Methodist Church. Those who read Bea Lobdell's *Chenango American* column know of this church. Our next program will be held there, where Edele Thompson will tell a bit of its history and give us a tour.

Built in 1841, the church has been a community hub since its organization in 1840. We'll learn of conflicts during its construction, what led to its basement being built some fifty years later (and how did they do it?), changes in the sanctuary, and what has kept the church active for 172 years.

A memory of a church event from Charles L. Davis, born in 1874: *At the exercises, the children spoke pieces. A little dark haired lad of about five or six went up those little steps, made his bow, spoke one line, his mind went blank, and he ran down the little steps, buried his face in his mother's lap, and bawled like a baby.*

Mark your calendar for this program, which is sure to take us back in time. The church is located at 142 Hammerle Road, just north of where Hammerle and Harbor Roads intersect County Road 3. We look forward to seeing you.

WORKING BOOK: Peg Ross and I are working on a book meant to publicize and preserve stories of people's working lives. Focused on our two towns of Greene and Smithville, we're gathering written memories and photos about people's work. The intended time frame is from 1900 to the present, allowing writers to include the work of their parents and grandparents. Summer jobs, first jobs, farm work, gas stations, office work, factory work, teaching, and more: we're interested in all working experiences. Give us your story. With a goal of ninety, and one month into the project, about thirty have been promised or submitted. Peg and I agree: what we have are wonderful stories, one of which is written by SHS member Bev Eaton. All writings are welcomed, from a few paragraphs to a few pages. Please contribute yours, and encourage friends and neighbors to write. An emailed Word document is ideal, but we have volunteers who will type from handwritten work. Help us preserve our history. The book's profits will be shared by the Greene and Smithville Historical Societies.

Bea Lobdell: Will you write about your years as a *Chenango American* correspondent? How and when did you get started? What has changed during your tenure? Why do you enjoy the work? Do people share their secrets?

Ed and Connie Stone: How about telling of working on your beautiful Whitehall? What brought you to Smithville Flats? What was the house's condition when you bought it? What's its most unique feature? What repairs and improvements have you made?

Mary Harrington-Utter: When did you work at the Victory Store, and what were your responsibilities? Who was your boss? Co-workers? How did you fill time when customer traffic was slow? What did you like and dislike about the job?

Fred and Pat Heisler: Tell us about your antiques business: when, where, why?

Volunteer committee members include Heather McCloud-Huff, Gwyn Richards, Nancy Bromley, and George and Peg Marr. The publication target date is Labor Day, 2013.

OTHER NEWS:

Welcome to new member Jim Dunne from Norwich. Smithville was home to two of Jim's great-grandfathers, both blacksmiths: Michael Flanagan of Smithville Flats and Michael Dunne, a Tyner resident. Jim's interest is tracing Chenango County's Irish population, especially the Irish Catholics. He's now researching the McEneny family and is looking for descendants who might have information. Anyone???

Next Business Meeting: Wednesday, July 25, 6:30 pm, Smithville Community Center. All members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Nancy Borruso thoughtfully donated her late husband Sam's collection of Harrison family materials to SHS: diaries, papers, research notes, slides, and photos. We are inventorying the materials and will provide more details in a future newsletter. Sam was a first-class historian. We value the contribution.

It was a magical night in June when we visited the Loomis/Ridgway stone house and barn in Tyner. We counted thirty-nine members and their invited guests who delighted in seeing the house in its refurbished condition, the restored barn, and the grounds. We thank Dick Ridgway for allowing our presence. We were a much larger contingent than he expected.

We have begun two new research initiatives:

1) Identifying and researching recipients of the Smithville Citizen of the Year Award. Gary Huttleston was the first in 1976 and Jim VanGiesen the most recent in 2011. Other names—a handful—have been mentioned, with no years known. We believe the award was initiated by the Grange, with perhaps SHS or Smithville Day taking over some years. Mindy Eldred is searching Grange records for us. Please let me know if you have any knowledge of recipients.

2) Identifying and researching Smithville Civil War soldiers and collecting any available photos. This task, a major one, combines Internet, newspaper, cemetery, and family research. We started with no soldier images, and now have two: Theodore Henry Fitch and Herbert Clark Rorapaugh. Do you have a Civil War photo we could scan? Help with this project would be welcomed.

Other projects, not yet started, are to update a 1980 photo survey of Smithville houses and buildings, to organize and provide proper storage for our photo collection, and to re-inventory our holdings. Who knew that we have a three-hole outhouse on our inventory?!

To continue our oral history project, I interviewed John Auwarter on June 28. He told many Smithville memories and chose to concentrate on houses and fires. His knowledge of Smithville is a treasure. We'll talk with him again.

In May we asked for cookie bakers, and we got them. Thank you to everyone who helped to make our Doug's Fish Fry and cookie sale fundraiser a success. Also, thank you to those who purchased fish dinners and cookies. Our share of Doug's sales was \$308.11, and donations and cookie sales brought in another \$190.81, for a total of \$498.92. A lifetime achievement award is due John and Rolly Buchholz, who have been purchasing leftover cookies from my freezer. I'm sworn to secrecy about the number. "Fresh as the day they were baked," they say. "We'll buy the rest." Thank you, John and Rolly! Also thanks to cookie bakers and/or workers Alison, David, Jacob, and Matthew Owens; Bev Eaton and her daughter; Jeanette Lamb; Joan Barker; Tom Griffin; Mary Dominick; Retha Tompkins; Heather McCloud-Huff; and Chris Buck. Have I missed anyone? The cookies were flying in. Our next fish fry sale will be in Whitney Point on Saturday, September 29.

Our gorgeous fundraising quilt pieced by Joan Barker and Christine Richter has been tied and finished. We're selling chances for \$1 each, or six for \$5. Look for them in your mail this summer. The winner will be chosen at our annual meeting on November 9.

NEWS NOTES FROM THE PAST. Some *Chenango American* items from June, 1905:

Greene—Work on the “good road” between Smithville Flats and Greene was commenced Friday, and it will be pushed until completed. A large number of teams and wagons to be used on the work, as well as a lot of Italians who will do the labor, arrived and passed through this village “to the place of beginning” on Thursday. They commenced at Smithville Flats and will work towards Greene. Everybody rejoices over the prospect of good roads between Smithville Flats and Greene, for there is much travel over this highway. (6/8/1905) [This is today’s Route 41.]

30 Woods Men Wanted. For bark peeling and log cutting: the largest job in central New York, near Ludlow Pond, northeast corner town of Smithville, Chenango County. C. L. Clark. (6/15/1905)

Smithville Flats—Preparations are being made by the members of the Trinity Episcopal Mission to hold a social in Keough Hall next Tuesday evening, June 20. All will be made welcome. (6/15/1905) [This is the second floor meeting room of the red two-story shop next to Huttleston’s Garage.]

Greene—Special Notice. The riding of a Motor Cycle upon any of the sidewalks in the village of Greene is strictly forbidden. By order of the Board of Trustees. (6/15/1905)

Greene—A temporary structure has been built “up the road” in which the Italian laborers will reside during the life of the job. It is said to be “done off” in stalls or bunks, and they enjoy their habitation immensely. (6/22/1905)

PLEASE...DON’T LET THIS BE YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER. We appreciate all who have renewed and joined this year. Our membership roster now stands at forty-one. If you’ve meant to renew and haven’t, your dues of \$10 per person may be mailed to SHS, PO Box 176, Smithville Flats, NY 13841. New members are always welcome.

**Christine E. Buck
President**