

Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter

Vol IV, Issue I

February 2001

HISTORY OF THE TOWNS OF RENSSELAER COUNTY

FAIRS AND COURTS OF PYPOWDER

The holding of fairs and markets in each city and county throughout the province of New York was as early as the year 1692, commanded by law. An act passed by the general assembly March 8, 1773, directed that there should be held in the city and county of Albany, two fairs yearly; the first fair to be kept at Albany, commencing on the third Tuesday of July and ending on the Friday following; the second to be held at Crawler in Rensselaerwyck, commencing on the third Tuesday in October and ending on the Friday following. These fairs or public markets brought together the country people, and were made not only occasions of pleasurable reunions and of relaxation from toil, but also opportunities for the sale of produce, cattle, clothing and other articles. The fair was kept open from 10 o'clock in the morning until sunset.

The governor of the province issued a commission to a proper person who acted as ruler of the fair and who was also delegated to hold courts of pypowder, as was the custom at fairs in England.

As explained by Blackstone the lowest and at the same time the most expeditious court of justice known to the law of England was "the court of *piepoudre*, *curia pedis pulverizati*; so called from the dusty feet of the suitors; or according to Sir Edward Coke, because justice is there done as speedily as dust can fall from the foot; upon the same principle that justice among the Jews was administered in the gate of the city, that the proceedings might be more speedy as

well as public. But the etymology given us by a learned modern writer is much more ingenious and satisfactory; it being derived, according to him, from *pied puldreaux* (a peddler, in old French), and therefore signifying the court of such petty chapmen as resort to fairs or markets. It is a court of record, incident to every fair and market; of which the steward of him who owns or has the toll of the market is the judge, and its jurisdiction extends to administer justice for all commercial injuries done in that very fair or market, and not in any preceding one.

Pneumonia Cure

From the Calvin Atwater Collection

Winter will soon be upon us and if all prognostications are true we are to have a very severe winter so those who have weak lungs or inclined to take cold easily should be wise and read this valuable cure, then cut it out and preserve it for future use. It is a simple remedy formulated by a noted doctor and has cured no end of patients: Take 10 large onions, chop very fine, put in a spider over fire; add about same quantity of ryemeal and vinegar to make a thick paste, stir well and let simmer for ten minutes. Then put sufficient in a cotton bag to cover lungs and chest and apply as hot as patient can stand it. In ten minutes apply another and continue repeating the poultices and in a few hours patient will be out of danger. Always continue until the perspiration starts freely from the chest. The doctor who formulated this was noted for his simple remedies and by using this cure he could boast of never having lost a single patient from pneumonia. To my knowledge other doctors are using this cure with pronounced success.

- Mr. E. M. Williams-Campbell
East Chatham, NY

STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2000 ANNUAL REPORT

The end of this millennium saw the completion of our 27th year and many accomplishments of which we can be very proud. The Society was directed by the following officers and trustees:

President -	Beverley McClave
Vice-President -	Donna Mullet
Recording Secretary -	Donna Herrick
Corresponding Secretary -	Libby Kogan
Treasurer -	Caroline White

Trustees:

Betty Feathers	2001	Helen Koepp	2003
Wyatt Haley	2000	Judi Tarr	2003
Bill Jennings	2001	Bill Zimmerman	2000

To properly enter the new millennium the Society made an acquisition of a Micron Millennia EX computer system and accompanying Canon printer. Now our capabilities are endless for entering archival and genealogical information as well as perhaps setting up a web page. After a tutorial session with Eric Shyer, data entry began in Family Tree Maker during the latter part of the year. Over 1000 entries had been made by the end of the year.

Kimball Farm residents again enjoyed another delicious luncheon and tour in May.

The Strawberry Festival was another successful event, as was the 11th Annual Craftfest.

This year's exhibit was entitled "A Century of Change - Then and Now". A milestone was achieved when the entire student body of the Stephentown Elementary School (approximately 80 students) was bused to the Heritage Center to view our ninth exhibit. Sally Fox and Betty Feathers guided the tour and answered many questions. We hope this will be the first of many annual visits.

The Society was the recipient of a generous donation from Pat and Don Bowman of a new 8-foot square projection screen, which has been

mounted on the proscenium and will facilitate slide presentations by guest speakers.

Another first for the Society was the use of the Heritage Center for Barbara Peterson's Rug Hook Show, which brought 159 people to enjoy the artwork and also our facility and its artifacts.

A small but important part of our town's history was restored and painted and is now housed at the Heritage Center. The Vanderbilt House sign is now ready to be hung in a place of honor. This historic landmark was honored with a beautiful brass ornament that was made not only to preserve it in our memories but also as a fundraiser this year. They made lovely Christmas tree ornaments.

Finally, the physical plant underwent an exterior painting and now looks very respectable, especially with its new BUILT 1870 sign and a new encased outdoor bulletin board. Work in tightening down the roof is proceeding and nearly completed in readiness for a spring painting.

Four hundred eighteen people enjoyed our monthly meetings - a fine testimony to the efforts of our Program Committee.

This year a blanket mailing of letters of solicitation to every town resident was tried for the first time. The Fund Drive Committee was pleased to announce that our goal of \$5000 was exceeded by \$376.

The active members of the Society are doing a fine job maintaining our status while at the same trying to forge ahead into the new computer age, but new members are always welcome to help in the myriad of tasks associated with preserving and protecting our heritage. I am pleased to be a part of this organization and hope to achieve even more in the field of education and preservation.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverley B. McClave

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Program Chairperson **Pat Bowman** continues to inspire us with outstanding programs in a wide variety of historical fields. **Blanche Nelson, Meredith Rhindress** and **Isabel Krebs** help Pat in her continuing searches for outstanding talent in our own and neighboring towns. All programs and events are held at the Stephentown Heritage Center on the first Monday of the month and begin at 7:30 pm unless otherwise specified.

February 5 **Mary Brown, Abolitionist**
Monologue by Kathleen Thomas
Cosponsor, Stephentown Library

March 5 **Old Road, Albany to Deerfield**
Slides by Hughes Gemmill

April 2 Reading the Taconic Landscape
Slides by Henry “Hank” Art

May 7 **George Holcomb Diaries**
Alex Brooks, Editor, The Press

June 4 **Arlo, Alice, and the Anglicans**
Laura Lee

**July 2
6:30 pm**

**Summer Potluck Supper &
Naming of Area Roads
Audience Participation**

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

January 1 - December 31

Membership categories and dues are:

Individual Member	\$ 5.00
Contributing Member	15.00
Business/Organizational Member	25.00
Life Member	100.00

Please remember that Contributing and Life memberships, like Individual memberships, are for individuals, not couples.

Please join us this year. Make your tax-deductible check payable to:

Stephentown Historical Society
P.O. Box 11
Stephentown, NY 12168

EVENTS THIS SUMMER

**July 1 20th Annual Strawberry Festival –
Berry Patch of Stone Wall Hill
Farm (formerly Koepp's Farm)
Route 22 12 – 4 pm**
Shortcake, ice cream, and good company

TBD Exhibit
Heritage Center
Dates and times to be determined

**August 4 12th Annual Juried Craftfest –
Fire Department Muster Field &
Pavilion
Grange Hall Road 10 am – 4 pm**
High-quality craftspersons and discriminating
shoppers make the Craftfest a special event

Sept 1 Tag Sale –
(Rain Date **Gardner's Field**
Sept 3) **Route 22 9 am – 3 pm**
Start the weekend off right. Exchange your
castoffs for someone else's treasures

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers:

President	Beverley McClave	733-5170
Vice-President	Donna Mullett	733-5278
Recording Secretary	Howard Leibensperger	733-5716
Corresponding Secretary	Isabel Krebs	733-5935
Treasurer	Caroline White	733-5250

Trustees:

Alvin Berry	733-6149
Betty Feathers	(413) 637-7218
Bill Jennings	733-5923
Helen Koepp	733-5640
Beverly Liebenow	733-5517
Dale Riggs	733-6772

Committee Chairpersons:

Cemeteries	Wyatt Haley	733-5771
	Alan White	733-5250
Collections	Help Still Needed	
Fundraising	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Genealogy	Virginia Atwater	733-5136
Heritage Center	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Membership	Donna Mullet	733-5278
Nominating	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Newsletter	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Program	Pat Bowman	(413) 738-5420
Refreshments	Mary Gorman	733-9661

* * * * * *In Memoriam* * * * * *

Robert Nelson
1931- 2000

Everett Tatro
1921- 2000

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50-YEAR TURNAROUND Anonymous

When I was very little
All the Grandmas that I knew
All walked around this world
In ugly Grandma shoes.

You know the ones I speak of,
The black, clunky-heeled kind,
They just looked so very awful
That it weighed upon my mind.

For I knew, when I grew old,
I'd have to wear those shoes.
I'd think of that, from time to time.
It seemed like such bad news.

I never was a rebel,
I wore saddle shoes to school,
And next came ballerinas,
Then the sandals, pretty cool.

And then came spikes with pointed toes,
Then platforms, very tall.
As each new fashion came along,
I wore them, one and all.

But always, in the distance,
Looming in my future, there,
Was that awful pair of ugly shoes,
The kind that Grandmas wear.

I eventually got married,
And then I became a Mom.
Our kids grew up and left,
And when their children came along,

I knew I was a Grandma,
And the time was drawing near
When those clunky, black, old lace-up shoes
Were what I'd have to wear.

How would I do my gardening
Or take my morning hike?
I couldn't even think about
How I would ride my bike!

But fashions kept evolving,
And one day I realized
That the shape of things to come
Was changing, right before my eyes.

And now, when I go shopping,
What I see fills me with glee,
For, in my jeans and Reeboks,
I'm as comfy as can be.

And I look at all these teenage girls,
And there upon their feet
Are clunky, black, old Grandma shoes,
And they really think they're neat.

Playing with names in a Ruidoso, NM, cemetery

Here lies
Johnny Yeast
Pardon me
For not rising

Fabric of Freedom Grant Programs

The **Stephentown Memorial Library** has received funding for three programs celebrating Black History Month from the New York Council for the Humanities. Programs are free and open to the public.

On **February 5** the **Stephentown Historical Society** will co-host "Mary Brown, Abolitionist," a dramatic monologue by Kathleen Thomas. John Brown's second wife Mary endured the hardships of poverty and the sorrows of death. While John and his sons were in Bloody Kansas, she and their daughters led a marginal existence on their Adirondack farm.

On **February 6 at 9:30 a.m.** the **Berlin Elementary School** will co-host Troy resident Beverly Mills' dramatic reading of her story about Harriet Tubman.

On **February 10 at 10:30 a.m.** at the **Stephentown Town Hall** the Stephentown Memorial Library will host an illustrated talk by Joanne Lilliard on "Secret Codes: the Hidden Meanings of Quilts and the Underground Railroad."

20th ANNUAL STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

The Berry Patch of
Stone Wall Hill Farm

Route 22
Stephentown

Sunday, July 1
Noon – 4 p.m.



©
Stephentown
Historical
Society

Editors:

Virginia Atwater
Klaus Burg
Ruth Leab
Bill Zimmerman