

Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter

Vol IV, Issue III

February 2002

<http://cbsco.com/shs> IS ON THE WEB!

The 21st Century is here. The Stephentown Historical Society has a state-of-the-art computer. And now the Society also has its own Worldwide Web site. <http://cbsco.com/shs> became available August 14, 2001. Eric Shyer of Dragonfly Designs has put together a beautiful home page featuring a picture of the Stephentown Heritage Center and the Society's logo. A menu of eight site elements appears on the home page, along with the email link:

Guest Book – Sign in, leave a message, comment, or request or browse the comments of other visitors.

Events – A schedule of the next 6 month's upcoming meetings and events.

Exhibits – Learn about the Society's next exhibit, coming this fall.

Location – Three maps of increasing detail to help out-of-area visitors find the Stephentown Heritage Center.

Genealogy – A brief description of the Society's extensive catalog of index cards and the capabilities for genealogical research, including instant email capability.

Publications – Detailed descriptions of the Society's eight publications, including an order form (the Society pays shipping and handling).

About the Society – A brief description of the Society, the Heritage Center, and the mission of the Society.

Membership Information – Categories of membership, rates, and a downloadable membership application.

The web site has been quite active for an unadvertised site, with 560 visits to date and over 60 communications in the guest book. But we've barely scratched the surface of the capabilities of the computer and the web site. About 10 percent of the *Living Gravestones* index card file has been entered into Family Tree Maker, so research is still mostly manual. Our cemetery file is still being entered. And there are many other projects to put onto the computer for online availability: accessions, publications, newsletters, etc.

CORPORATE THANK YOU

The Stephentown Historical Society would like to thank three Stephentown businesses that contributed to the Society's fund drive in 2001:

Atlantis Equipment

**The Berry Patch at Stone Wall Hill Farm
Zwack, Inc.**

Like individual fund drive contributions and memberships, corporate contributions provide support for Society operations throughout the year. In addition, corporate contributions help to cement the commercial and noncommercial segments of our community together.

* * * *In Memoriam* * * *

Doris Lotz
1911 – 2001

Donald Leab
1922 – 2001

Klaus Burg
1921 – 2001

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STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2001 ANNUAL REPORT

Although the world will never be the same after the events of this fall, thankfully our little corner of it is still peacefully intact. The Society had another good year with numerous volunteers and the leadership of:

President	Beverley McClave
Vice-President	Donna Mullet
Recording Secretary	Howard Leibensperger
Corresponding Secretary	Isabel Krebs
Treasurer	Caroline White

Trustees:	
Alvin Berry	Betty Feathers
Bill Jennings	Helen Koepp
Beverly Liebenow	Dale Riggs

Despite a falling market our investments are holding and enabling us to continue the repairs of our building. This year after the roof was further tightened and painted, the Center evolved into a very handsome cornerstone of Garfield and Staples Roads. The metal poles supporting the balcony were finally replaced and set in cement, making the balcony a much sturdier place to work in the library and archives. Finally, plastic was laid under the entire floor area of the Center to correct a moisture problem. We are truly seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, with only cosmetic repairs to the windows and woodwork left to be done. The town of Stephentown can certainly be proud of the restoration of the 1870 Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Strawberry Festival saw a new venue this year at the Berry Patch of Stonewall Hill Farm. Dale Riggs and her husband Don Miles opened their farm to us, and the partnership proved very fruitful (no pun intended). Pies, jams and jellies and baskets were added to the sales, and each year we hope to improve on that.

The Kimball Farm luncheon was attended by 18 residents, and the 12th Annual Craftfest was its usual successfully pleasant day.

Another partnership was formed when the Society joined the Stephentown Memorial Library to present "Mary Brown, Abolitionist, A Dramatic

Portrayal of the Wife of Abolitionist John Brown". This dynamic performance by Kathleen Thomas was made possible in part with public funds from the NYS Council on the Arts Decentralization Program. Other fine programs included Stephentown author Laura Lee, who wrote *Arlo, Alice, and the Anglicans* and Alex Brooks, editor of the *Petersburgh Press*, speaking on the George Holcomb Diaries. Other large crowd pleasers were "Dutch Culture in the Upper Hudson Valley" and "Barns of the Hudson Valley". A total of 364 people attended these very interesting programs.

Our summer exhibit, "Doing Business in Stephentown," astounded many with the discovery that the town had 57 former businesses and has 56 current ones. It is amazing that such a small community could support so many, and we don't know how many "cottage industries" are out there.

The fund drive mailing saw another successful goal of \$5,000. We also had 4 new life members added to our list, bringing the total to 85 and 3 businesses, 14 contributing and 51 individual memberships, making it a banner year.

Our computer has been busily humming every week under the expert direction of Eric Shyer, who has helped enter 3,900 names into our Family Tree Maker program. In addition, Eric has created our beautiful web page at www.cbsco.com/shs, which has already received lots of hits from people looking for their ancestors. Our very capable genealogist, Virginia Atwater, is getting help on this from Eric and his assistants. At our web site you will find a picture of the Center, information on our publications, membership, exhibits, genealogy, the Society, calendar of events, articles for sale, and a guest book where you can leave a message. Take a look; it is fun to be part of the 21st Century. Our email address is shs@webramp.net.

There's lots of work to be done, but it is fun when there are many hands. If you are interested in helping out, especially with computer data entry work, just contact anyone in the Society or stop by on a Friday afternoon. We'd love to see you!

Respectfully submitted,

Beverley B. McClave

RECENT PROGRAMS

July 2 – Naming of Local Roads

Pat Bowman led an interesting discussion on the origin of road names in Stephentown. Road names are as varied as the characters and events that led to them. Horse Heaven Road stems from teams of horses going off the road at a sharp corner. General Henry Brown Osgood, a Civil War general from Maine, is the source of Osgood Road. Tom Titus had a less distinguished reputation but nevertheless had a road named after him. Most roads are named after families or individuals, some early, some later: Madden, Cranston Hill, George Hunt, Brown, Newton, Mary's Camp (Atwater), Greenman Hill, Jones, Griffin, and Bert Hager.

August 6 – Local Businesses Past and Present

Members and guests took a trip down a memory lane of businesses, some renowned, some obscure, some old, some new, all interesting. Remember Walden T. Askins' Fireworks on Garfield Road? Gustav Johnson harvested hundreds of thousands of ferns in the early 1960's for meat market decorations and cherry bark for cough syrup. Donald Ant's pharmacy closed in 1978 but had the only telephone in town in the 1950's. The Stephentown House Hotel, Sykes' Store, Zwack, Atlantis, Meisberger's Antiques, Down in Denver, and many cottage industries are still operating. The Taconic Valley Medical Center, Charles Vary, Ben Hoag, Dee & Whitman, Tylerville Forge, McClintock Chevrolet, W. C. Woodward Flour (& Everything Else), and McClave & Company are gone.

September 10 – The Civil War in Berkshire County

Stuart Murray, author of 22 books, gave us a detailed and informative description of Berkshire County's participation in the Civil War. Berkshire had 5000 enlistees out of 55,000 residents, which met the quota, thus avoiding a draft. Berkshire had citizens in New York and other states' regiments, including a few Confederate regiments. The Massachusetts 54th Regiment, the first black regiment in the North (not in the nation), fought discrimination as well as the Confederacy, holding out for equal pay of \$13 per month vice the \$10 offered. They were often sacrificed on the field of battle as well.

October 1 – Dutch Influence in the Upper Hudson Valley

Ruth Piwonka of Kinderhook explained many aspects of the Dutch influence in the upper Hudson Valley. Dutch names, the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, and Dutch architecture are prime examples. The Dutch revered children and made furniture to fit them. Dutch women were way ahead of other ethnic groups in sanitation and health. Although English replaced Dutch among New York City Dutch children by 1650, the Dutch language was used to preserve Dutch culture in the Helderbergs as late as the 1940's. Dutch settlers were noted for their unique architecture, utensils, and practices.

November 5 – Barns of the Hudson Valley

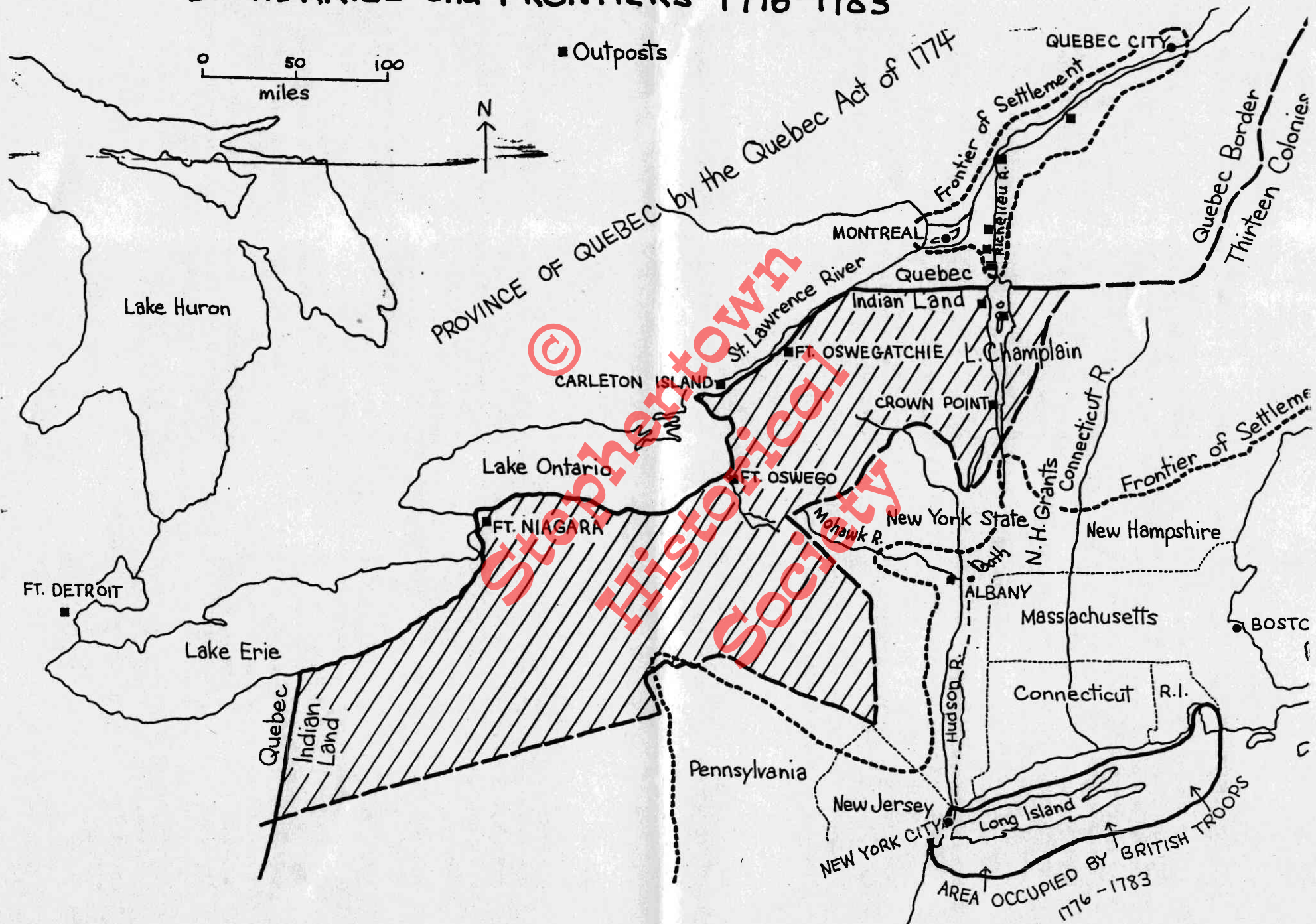
Ted Hilscher is a Catskill lawyer with an interest in barns. He described and illustrated the characteristics of Dutch and English barns, their construction, and their practical functions. Most of the 600 Dutch barns in New York state were built before 1790. Their functions were multiple: housing livestock, storing hay, and threshing grain. Their architecture contrasted markedly with later English barns in frontage, roofline, and framework.

December 3 – Hotels, Inns, and Taverns Around Stephentown

Isabel Krebs discussed the colorful history of the 20 hotels, inns, and taverns in and around Stephentown. The first inn in Stephentown was started by Rowland Hall in 1811 on the south side of Giles Road at Route 22. In 1820 Benjamin Carpenter ran an inn near Stuart's Laundromat. Simon Cranston's Inn at the corner of Cranston Hill and Newton Roads burned. Alf Reynolds ran the Taconic Inn (Pig's Ear) on an "ear" of land on CCC Dam Road. Later the Inn was moved to the northeast corner of the intersection of Giles Road and Route 22. The 1871 Vanderbilt House was named after the Commodore to attract his attention and patronage. He never visited there. The Stephentown House Hotel (Mac's) was started by Peter Kushow. The Morin family has run it for over 60 years, starting December 8, 1941. The oldest inn in the area was 100 yards outside Stephentown. In 1790 the Caleb Gardner Inn was established in what became Don and Pat Bowman's residence, which they operated as a bed and breakfast.

(Continued on Page 6)

BOUNDARIES and FRONTIERS 1776-1783



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 4	Nostalgia Night Audience Participation
March 4	Popular Culture of the 1840's and 1850's Gregg Berninger
April 1	Sand Lake from Mills and Hotels of the 1800's and 1900's to Suburbia 2000 Mary French
May 6	Shape-Note Music Greg and Jean Seiler
June 3	What's New in Farming Larry Eckhardt
July 1 6:30 pm	Summer Potluck Party Bring a Dish to Share

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 7	21st Annual Strawberry Festival – Berry Patch of Stone Wall Hill Farm (formerly Koepp's Farm) Route 22 12 – 4 pm Shortcake, ice cream, good company, and more
August 3	13th 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
Aug 31 Sept 7 (Rain Date Sept 8)	Tag Sale – Gardner's Field Route 22 9 am – 3 pm Start the weekend off right. Exchange your castoffs for someone else's treasures - or vice versa
Fri & Sat - 9/21 – 10/26	Exhibit - Stephentown Churches Heritage Center 1 – 4 pm

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers:		
President	Beverley McClave	733-5170
Vice-President	Donna Mullett	733-5278
Recording Secretary	Bonnie Buddenhagen	733-9295
Corresponding Secretary	Isabel Krebs	733-5935
Treasurer	Caroline White	733-5250

Trustees:		
	Alvin Berry	733-6149
	Patricia Flint	733-5871
	Bill Jennings	733-5923
	Helen Koepp	733-5640
	Beverly Liebenow	733-5517
	Dale Riggs	733-6772

Committee Chairpersons:

Cemeteries	Help Wanted	
Collections	Help Still Needed	
Fundraising	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Genealogy	Virginia Atwater	733-5136
Heritage Center	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Membership	Donna Mullett	733-5278
Nominating	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Newsletter	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Program	Pat Bowman	(413) 738-5420

Recent Programs (Continued)

January 14 – Geology of the Northeast

Dick Hamilton of Hancock, the University of Massachusetts, and the University of Missouri, described the geology and plate tectonics of the Northeast. Some 800 million years ago North America was smaller, sat on the equator, and was rotated about 90 degrees clockwise. The Adirondacks are made of this very ancient rock, but, since they are still rising, they are classified as young mountains. The Atlantic Ocean began to form 230 – 196 million years ago as the then 100-million-year-old single continent of Pangaea split into roughly the continents as we know them today. Locally, the glaciers had a leveling effect. New Lebanon was a lake at one time, as was the north end of the Hancock valley.

A Lawyer's Epitaph in England

Sir John Strange
Here lies an honest lawyer,
And that is Strange.

21st ANNUAL

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

*The Berry Patch of
Stone Wall Hill Farm*

*Route 22
Stephentown*

**Sunday, July 7
Noon – 4 p.m.**



Post Office Box 11
Stephentown, N.Y. 12168

Editors:

Virginia Atwater
Ruth Leab
Bill Zimmerman