

The Carlisle Historical Society

February 2010

Volume 3, Issue 1

Carlisle, Schoharie County, New York
Chartered 2008

Golden Years in Sharon Springs

Reviews:

Review of Fall 2009 Programs

- Golden Age of Sharon Springs
- Ancient Forests and Giant Trees
- The Cave House Restoration
- Hard Cider

Special Interest:

- Seagoing Cowboys
- Memories of Carlisle

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Jean Bakkom and Sandy Manko are a tremendous resource for anyone with an interest in Sharon Springs. They gave an interesting and entertaining slide-show presentation on the glory days of Sharon Springs at the September program.

Working around the three major influences of the development and demise of Sharon Springs (topography, transportation and social change), they wended their way from the beginnings of the town (two hamlets, actually) to its present day struggles.

Sharon Springs began as two hamlets separated by a steep hill. Rockville, named for the rocky ledge that lies parallel to the Mohawk Valley and the Springs area, located down a steep ravine housing a grist mill and saw mill. The social lives of the farming families of Rockville centered on their families and church. There was limited travel to and from Rockville until 1806, when the Great Western Turnpike was built, opening their markets and setting the stage for the next century of growth. The tricky location of the springs area made horse and wagon travel very risky. This all changed in 1825 when the Erie Canal was completed, providing easy access to the springs from the north, and opening up the area to growth. The first boarding house was built by David Eldridge to accommodate tourists

coming to “take the waters” – a very trendy activity. As travel was very difficult overall in those days due to the lack of adequate roads, when people did travel, they went to a destination and stayed, bringing the whole family, and often servants. So, by 1836 there was major growth, helped along by the completion of the Albany to Palatine railroad.

A New York corporation built the Great House high on Northern Hill, later called The Pavilion when it was enlarged by Mr. Gardner. It could hold up to 500 guests. The building stood until the late 1940, when the staunchly Republican Mrs. Gardner stated that if FDR was elected again, she would tear down the building. FDR was re-elected.

Topography made access to the spring area difficult, but improved transportation overcame that obstacle. The hilly nature of the hamlet made it difficult to support growth and provide amenities, yet from 1840 through 1900 there was a tremendous amount of building to support the influx of tourists coming to experience the health benefits of the various mineral springs. These were the Glory Days. Various hotels, including The American (1850), The United States (1861), The Union Hotel (1865-1970), The Roseboro, and The Washington (recently collapsed in a snowstorm) were built, and visitors included Generals Sherman, Grant and McClellan and members of the Vanderbilt family.

In 1871, Rockville and the Springs were incorporated into Sharon Springs. A rail spur came to Sharon Springs, providing (continued on page 4)



HOTEL SHARON AND ANNEX, SHARON SPRINGS, N. Y.

<http://www.usgwarchives.org/ny/schoharie/postcards/ppcs-schoharie.html>

GIANT TREES...ARE THEY THE TALLEST *OR* THE BIGGEST AROUND?

Ancient Forests. Giant Trees. What makes a tree a “giant” – its height or its girth? Are there any Ancient Forests left in America? The October meeting of the Carlisle Historical Society answered these questions, as well as showcased a huge variety of beautiful flowering autumn shrubs.

Fred Breglia, Director of Horticulture and Operations at the Landis Arboretum in Esperance, is also the co-founder and president of the Wildwood Ancient Forest Alliance as well as Team Leader of the Eastern New York Old Growth Survey and an ISA certified Arborist.

The purpose of the Alliance and Survey organizations are to protect, document and preserve the old growth forests in New York. The Landis Arboretum is a 548 acre botanical garden filled with hiking trails and gardens, as well as containing a spur of the Route 20 Bluebird Trail (they had 45 fledgling bluebirds this year). The arboretum hosts numerous family programs over the course of the years as well.

It is estimated that in 1620, a vast area of the United States was covered with old growth forests. By 1920, most of those forests were gone. An old growth forest is defined by a healthy forest population, with all age ranges represented: from seedlings to giant, dying trees, and the forest hasn't been cut or touched, with 6-8 large trees per acre. Of the 400,000 acres of old growth in New York now, approximately half are in the Adirondack Park.

There are many characteristics that differentiate an old growth forest tree from an old tree. First, the trees have antique or mature bark, which may look quite different from what is typically seen with that species. For example, white oaks normally have scaly bark. An old growth white oak has smooth bark. Also, the trees begin to “bald” (lose their bark) from the bottom up. A 325 year old red maple becomes scaly and looks like a shag bark hickory. Also, buttressing or flaring roots are another characteristic, as are bizarre growth forms (which are actually normal, but not usually seen outside of old growth forests). Bizarre growth forms include two different species intertwined, spiraled trees, stilted or perched root trees (the trees grow on a nurse log), and daredevil trees (trees perched over a cliff). Old growth forests have a lot of moss and lower plants like ferns and fungi because the soil is healthy with “rotten stuff”. The amount of biomass is equal: dead/alive, standing/lying. Often, old growth forests are found near waterfalls and gorges because the terrain is steep and difficult to reach.

Forests with stumps, or with trees of approximately the same age, are most likely not old growth forests.

There are a lot of old trees and a lot of big trees, and they are not usually found in old growth

forests. The age of a tree can be determined by visual characteristics, but increment bores which extract plugs, or examining cross sections of a dead tree are other methods. Old trees will have a very tight center, indicating that the tree grew as an undisturbed plant for many years until it broke the canopy, then there will be a widening of the rings to show an explosion of growth once the tree got more sunlight.

Mr. Breglia had many examples of old a giant trees from New York State and throughout the United States. The oldest pitch pine in New York is 300 years old, in Minawaska State Park. There is a red pine at Rackett Lake that is 424 years old, and they don't get much older than that. At Vrooman's nose, the oldest cedar is 250-260 years old, but on the cliffs across the valley (on the Long Path), there are cedars over 500 years old and greater than six inches in diameter. The tallest white pine in New York is 159 feet tall, with a six foot basal diameter – and it is 80 feet before you see the first branch. The tallest ever documented was 240 feet tall, with a basal diameter of eleven feet.

Being the oldest doesn't necessarily make the tree the tallest. The oldest white pine is 464 years old. The oldest black gum is in Saratoga, and (continued on page 5)

Who were the Seagoing Cowboys?

Every once in a while, you hear a story which makes you begin to realize that “everyone has a story” – and also that there are so many untold stories out there. Here is one such tale.

Robert (Bob) S. Brown, Sr., mostly from Carlisle, but lately of Sharon Springs, shared this story with me, first over the phone, and then via a homemade DVD he and his wife created. It is the story of how young men volunteered to help struggling countries after World War II.

After the war, many countries in Europe, Africa and Asia were struggling to survive the ravages of the war. With much of their infrastructure demolished, their population decimated, and their countryside ravaged, the citizens of these countries were struggling to survive. Different programs and organizations were formed to help these countries rebuild.

Very shortly after graduating from high school in 1946, Bob Brown attending a meeting where the Brethren Service Committee, in association with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association (UNRRA), were looking for men to assist in providing relief to these countries.

Specifically, the mission was to restock the livestock. The herds of Europe, Africa and Asia had suffered greatly, and

the plan was to ship cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, mules, chickens, etc. to individual countries via Victory Ships (cargo ships built during WWII to replace those sunk by German submarines). During the voyage, the animals would need to be tended to by people with appropriate experience.

Bob signed up, and on December 7, 1946, flew from Albany to Washington, DC, then traveled on to Newport News, VA, arriving at 6:30 am on Sunday, December 8. He presented himself to the Merchant Marines in Norfolk on Monday morning, and got his ID card. Enlisting as “cattlemen”, the boys quickly became known as Cowboys...and since they were working on the seas, they became known as “Seagoing Cowboys”.

Bob was assigned to the SS Pierre Victory, and reported to Pier X for a physical and tetanus shot on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, December 11, he signed the ship’s articles and boarded, along with 776 mules and 33 other cowboys, destined for Salonica, Greece.

The mules were housed in cattle stalls located on the second tier of the ship. Below that the hay and grain was stored, and on the fourth tier was kept the water. The cowboys’ duties were to feed and water the mules. On Sundays, the cowboys would attend church service on the fantail (rear) of the ship, if the weather

cooperated.

Bob kept a journal of his voyage, along with pictures, in a memory box. His journal details each day: on December 14 they passed through the Gulf Stream; on the 12th and 13th, two mules died (6 died in total by the end of the trip); first land was sighted (Portugal) on the 18th; they passed the Rock of Gibraltar late at night on the 19th. On December 21 the ship’s horn blasted, warning another ship that it was coming too close. Bob has a picture of that other ship.

Once they started heading north through the Aegean Sea, they had to be cautious as there were many mines, and only a narrow shipping lane had been cleared. They anchored at 3:00 am on December 24 in Salonica Bay-the first ship to enter the heavily mined bay at night. Two other Victory ships were already anchored. In the harbor was a sunken ship still there from the war.

The Greeks unloaded the mules, and the Cowboys were given passes to leave the ship. Over the next several days, the Cowboys toured the city, encountering a great deal of destruction: the railway yard, a church (restoration was starting), and the Arch of Galerius (built around 300 AD) were a few of the places battered during the war.

Interestingly, Bob sister, Grace Barber, visited Greece in 1963, and brought back a postcard of the church (fully restored) as well as the arch.

The citizens of Salonica had access to a limited bus and trolley system, but many either walked or used a

donkey and cart to move themselves or their belongings around.

On December 28, the SS Pierre Victory was untied from the pier, and the ship waited in the harbor. Just after they finished dinner, a stowaway was found. The man was handcuffed and put in a room – many of the Cowboys gave him things such as a coat and cigarettes. The ship started on its journey home. Near Athens, the stowaway was brought ashore.

The trip home was often very rough, and the ship bobbed about more due to its lighter load, so there were a lot of queasy stomachs. The Cowboys used their time to clean stalls and the ship. On New Years Eve, Bob watched some of the men play poker, and some drank the “stuff” they had purchased in Greece...Bob had a Coca Cola.

January 11 saw them 140 miles from New York City, and the seas were calmer. They anchored in New York harbor on January 12. They had breakfast and were free to go ashore (without their luggage). Bob and some of the other men saw a show and got some food, including a milkshake. Bob called his Aunt Hazel to make arrangement to get back to Carlisle before catching a boat taxi back to the ship for the final night.

They packed and were checked by Customs

(Continued on page 5)

Sharon Springs (continued from page 1)

a method for the farmers to ship their produce. Also, hops became a large crop, and people would come from Albany and beyond to help with the harvest; hence the building of the Hop Hotel and other accommodations for the workers and their families.

As the baths, the benefits of mineral waters, and Sharon Springs became more renowned, the number of buildings and amenities increased. Sewer and water lines were installed; general stores, a theater (the Sharon Academy) and special buildings for the different health treatments (such as the Inhalation Bath in 1871) were built.

Originally, it was the social-elite from the East Coast who came to enjoy the baths; but as this activity became less fashionable within their set, the Jewish community, with its close ties to Europe (where mineral baths were still fashionable) began to come to Sharon Springs. Travel became less difficult, so people did not stay in one location as long. Then, a series of events occurred, taking its toll on the prosperity of the spa community: World War I, the hop crop failure in 1920, Prohibition, a major fire in 1926 which wiped out a large part of the business district, including the Sharon Academy and Sharon House, and then the Great Depression.

The town did not give up, however, and new facilities were built, making the town a recognized destination for world-class spa treatments. The Imperial Baths, The Adler (1928), two magnesium spring temples (good for internal organ ailments), and the Blue Stone Spring (specifically for eye treatments) were built. The Adler cost \$250,000 and housed 150 rooms, baths, theater and a ballroom. It closed in 2004, but is the main acquisition of recent investors.

People continued to come to Sharon Springs, and the mineral waters were made world famous when their quality were recognized at the Paris World Exhibition and the New York World's Fair.

While the primary purpose for coming to Sharon Springs was the spa and mineral waters, visiting families found they had a great deal of free time. To fill that time, many activities were enjoyed: wagon rides, an opera house, pleasure driving, bicycling, strolls, afternoon and evening concerts. There was also the Mansion House, which catered to gentlemen, and the Casino Hotel which housed a bowling alley. Other types of accommodations were available including Rooming Houses, which provided rooms only, and Cooker Houses, where guests brought and prepared their own meals (the Wellington House is an example). There was Smith's Swimming Pool, Smalley's Theater, a ski area, a golf course which opened in 1932, and the Village Pool (originally a pond providing ice to the hotels, it opened in 1950).

The introduction and expansion of automobile travel required better roads (and better drivers: a Miss Empie was learning to drive, and had her car perched at the top of Washington Street. She attempted to negotiate the hill, but problems arose, and she had extreme difficulty in stopping the vehicle at the bottom of the hill. The car commenced to enter the hotel situated at the base of the hill, cross through a room with several people relaxing in chairs, exited the rear wall and landed on top of a new car – parked behind the hotel to keep it “safe”. Route 20 (the Great Western Turnpike) was rerouted and widened to accommodate this traffic, and new types of “do-it-yourself”

accommodations were built.

In 1954, the New York State Thruway was constructed, drawing drivers away from Route 20, and hence, Sharon Springs.

A synagogue was built in 1904, and after World War II, the portion of visitors who were Jewish expanded as German government paid for the treatment of concentration camp victims as part of their restitution.

By far, the Jewish community has made up the majority of the visitors to the spa town in recent times, although, with the closing of the last of the hotels and spas, the Golden Age is long over, and few if any visitors come to “take the waters”. In 1989, a schoolhouse and three room (!) outhouse were moved to create a museum complex, which is open during the summer by the Sharon Springs Historical Society. There are several businesses in the town, located in the old buildings, and a few of the hotels have seen renovation (some more successful than others). Recently, a Korean business group has purchased several of the closed buildings, with the proposed intent of resurrecting the spa tourism in the area. Progress has been slow, but perhaps we will once again see Sharon Springs prosper. Jean Bakkom and Sandy Manko did a superb job entertaining and enlightening us with their talk and slides on this wonderfully intriguing town.

Carlisle Historical Society Website

The Carlisle Historical Society has just completed work on its website (thanks to Carl Turnquist for his efforts!). For information about upcoming programs and other society news, log-on to: **www.carlislehistoricalsociety.webs.com**

TREES (continued from page 2)

is 550-600 years old. The biggest black cherry in New York is in Esperance off Creek Road, and the biggest black locust is in Schenectady County. These trees are not in old growth forests. The arboretum has a 400 to 500 or more year old oak.

Unfortunately, climate change is affecting our trees in a negative way. Trees help mitigate climate change by absorbing the carbon dioxide and releasing it slowly.

As our trees begin to die due to climate change, they release carbon dioxide more quickly, adding to the climate problem. Mr. Breglia noted that trees are dying at an alarming rate, due in part to the climate as well as disease and pests.

Think you have a champion tree? You can get more information from the Big Tree Registry on the DEC website (www.dec.ny.gov), or contact

Fred Breglia at the Landis Arboretum. Fred recommends the following website and book: www.ancientforests.us and *Forest Giants of the World: Past and Present* by Al Carder.

Ray Briggs brought a large collection of flowering shrub specimens, creating a beautiful and informative display at the meeting. He also handed out Autumn Olive bush seeds for attendees to plant.

Cowboys (continued from page 3)

Officers on January 13. By 5:15pm, Bob was at Grand Central Station to meet his aunt.

The Cowboys were paid \$100 for their trip and received a Thank You note from the Brethren:

“The Brethren Service Committee desires to express a word of appreciation to you for your assistance and cooperation in the Livestock project and trust that you may have received some new experiences and satisfaction while giving of your time and effort, thus being able to share with others the spirit of Brethren Service...”

Of the people on the ship, 34 were members of the “Cowboy” crew. In charge of the Cowboys were a veterinarian from Kansas, a foreman from Virginia, a foreman from Connecticut and a supervisor from Indiana. There was also the ship’s crew and the captain (John E. Munroe). Interestingly, the captain’s wife also made the journey. She signed on as a librarian, and was paid one cent per month. Captains were allowed to bring their wives on one trip per year.

The Cowboys on the SS Pierre Victory came from across North America: Canada, South Dakota, Louisiana, Connecticut, Indiana, Virginia, Ohio, New York, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Illinois, Tennessee, Kansas, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maine.

The program to bring livestock to the countries in Europe, Africa and China continued for 3 years, and over 7,000 men signed up to be Cowboys. Some made the trip several times. Over 4,000 cows alone were brought to Europe. A descendent of this program is still in place today; it is called Heifer International.

Current Executive Board Members:

President – Jacqueline Turnquist

Vice President – open

Treasurer – Michelle Holyoak

Recording Secretary – Joan Sisson

Correspondence Secretary – Steve Crapser

Trustee – Art Graulich, Kim Wigen-Walton (10/2012)

Trustee – Connie Costello, Bob Smith (10/2010)

Trustee – Allan Tillapaugh, Ray Briggs, Jr. (10/2011)

Town Board Member Trustee – Ed Sisson

Town Historian, Ex-Officio Trustee – Ray Briggs, Sr.

SPRING 2010 PROGRAM SCHEDULE AND OTHER EVENTS — GET OUT YOUR CALENDARS!

MARCH 17 - SPECIAL: Joint Meeting with the Cobleskill Historical Society

The Palatines in New York, presented by Carol Cassidy. 2012 will mark the 300th anniversary of the Palatine migration from Europe to New York. Ms. Cassidy will talk about their early settlements and life in the new world. Wednesday, March 17, 7:30 pm at the Carlisle Town Hall.

APRIL 10 (Saturday): Potluck Dinner at the Grosvenors Corners United Methodist Church 5-7 pm. Freewill donation to benefit the Grosvenors Corners Cemetery Association. Food, service and table setting provided.

****Ted Shuart will speak on *Civil War Vets in the Grosvenors Corners Cemetery at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary.*** Come for the dinner and stay for the program, or come just for the program. All are welcome! (*This is Part I*)

APRIL 14 (Wednesday): Ted Shuart will speak on *The History of*

Grosvenors Corners. Raised in Grosvenors Corners, Ted is now Historian for the Town of Cobleskill as well as the Village of Cobleskill. Wednesday, April 14, 7:30 pm at the Carlisle Town Hall.

(*This is Part II*)



MAY 8 (Saturday): 3rd Annual Bird Tour with Chris Keefer. Bring your binoculars for a morning of bird watching and identification around Carlisle, checking out the birds' natural habitats. Meet at the Carlisle Town Hall at 7:45 am. Rain or Shine.

MAY 12 (Wednesday): Al Bullard will discuss the *Old-Time Flourishing Hop Industry in Schoharie and Otsego Counties.* Mr. Bullard will display his collection of antique hop tools. Wednesday, May 12, 7:30 pm at the Carlisle Town Hall.

Tentative, date TBA (May?) - Sons of the American Revolution laying of a marker for John Philip Karker, Revolutionary War Scout. Ceremony and refreshments.

All of our events are open to the public, so bring a friend. Refreshments are served.

The Evolution of the Cave House at Howe Caves

Driving past the old cement plant in Howe Caves is always a bit mysterious. You see the steep walls of the quarry, several large old factory type buildings and a very tall smokestack...and what is that gothic looking building doing just off to the east? It has “always” been there, but what was it for, and – is someone restoring it?

Clemens McGiver and Rich Nestaway cleared up a lot of the mystery and presented a hopeful view of the future for this building and the area at the November program. Clemens is the Director and Chief Architect of the Cave House Museum of Mining and Geology, and the focus of his talk was the preservation of the building. Rich is Curator of the Cave House Museum, and he shared the history of the building and cave area.

About eight years ago, Emil Galasso and Cobleskill Stone Products (CSP) purchased the abandoned land in the middle of the old quarry, including the Cave House building (that gothic looking house). The Cave House had deteriorated badly and was unsafe. The tornado of 1989 had blown off the east wing room, and within four years all the floors inside had collapsed. There was 15 tons of material sitting on the third floor. With a view to restoring the building and expanding the area into an educational site, they got to work using the Secretary of the Interior Historical Preservation Standards as a guide.

To date, over 1 million dollars has gone into replacing the roof and all 57 windows and doors as well as instillation of a geothermal heat pump. The machine used to make the original doors and windows is owned by a man in Sharon Springs, and he remade them for the renovation. The building is well on its way to fulfilling its purpose as a museum and anchor to the planned expansive learning and exploration center.

The original wooden Cave House structure was built in the 1840s by Lester Howe, soon after he discovered and explored the cave bearing his name. Rich noted that the caves were known to the Native Americans, and a German settler was said to have hidden there. The cave was opened to the public in 1843, and many people came to take the 8-10 hour, 1mile tour. Explorers wore oil skins and carried oil lamps and box lunches.

Although the total distance traveled was only 1 mile, it was an all day event as they squeezed through narrow passageways and crossed through the underground lake (twice!). Their tour started at the entrance situated next to the Cave House and went northwest until reaching the approximate location of the elevators that take tourists down to the cave today. They then had to turn around and make their way back to the Cave House. Both of Lester Howe’s daughters, Hulda and Harriet, were married in the cave in the 1850s. Howe sold the property in 1869, and Joseph Ramsey eventually had controlling interest in the whole operation. The wooden Cave House burned and the current stone structure was built. A second building, the Pavilion Hotel was built in 1880-1881 and boasted steam heat, gas lights, a billiard parlor and bowling alley. People came from far away just to stay at the Pavilion.

The Railroad came through the area in the 1860s, and the geologists noticed the high quality of the limestone, leading to the limestone mining above and below ground in the 1880s and 90s. The underground operation used mules to haul out the limestone as the mines were 42 feet below the quarry floor. By 1900, the Heldeberg Cement Company (the new name), closed Howes Cave “forever”, as they deemed the limestone was more profitable than the tourists, and they actually blew up 800 feet of the cave in order to expand their operation.

In 1909, a fast fire burned the Pavilion Hotel, and several visitors had to jump from the second story to escape. The Cave House was used as a boarding house into the 1920s. Around 1926, John Mosner and Walter Sagendorf came up with the idea of the modern Howe Caverns. It took two years to get ready, but on Memorial Day weekend in 1929, the new facility was opened. The Cave House entrance was used until the elevators were installed, and the Cave House was used as an office building.

The cement plant operation grew through the 1940s, 50s and 60s, but the village of Howe Caverns stopped growing. The cement plant, which owned many of the village buildings, began tearing them down, including the manager houses on Lester Lane (then Church

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The Cave House (continued from page 7)

Street). The Spinello brothers bought five houses and moved them to Spinello Lane.

Over the next thirty years, ownership of the cement plant changed a few times and operations began to dwindle. Glens Falls Cement removed equipment in 1980 and used the silos for cement. Later, there was a well published proposition to store fly ash at the facility. This never came about. The property can never return to a cement factory unless kilns are brought in, and there doesn't appear to be any interest by the surrounding community in having that happen.

The group who owns the Cave House purchased Howe



The Cave House and the Pavilion Hotel (right).

Carlisle Cookbook and History Book on Sale!

“From Carlisle’s Kitchens”, the cookbook put together by the historical society, is now available. Garnering rave reviews, the cookbook is a compilation of recipes from folks in and around Carlisle. With over 170 recipes, and over 170 pages, the cookbook holds something for everyone. As a bonus, there are lots of stories and quotes about the recipes and about food that use to be very common in Schoharie County.

Having sold all 500 first editions of “History of the Town of Carlisle”, the historical society had more printed – with a few (only 4!) corrections. With over 350 pages, it is packed with lots of interesting stories and pictures.

Interested in getting a copy of either book? Here is what you need to know:

The cookbook is \$16.20 and the history book price remains unchanged at \$27 (tax included) and is available from either Ray Briggs (234-3969) or Jacqueline Turnquist (234-3041).

Both books make great gifts – for you or someone else. You don’t need to be from Carlisle to enjoy either book.

All proceeds go to the historical society. Thank you for your support!

Caverns in 2007, and they have begun this ambitious restoration project.

Though the restoration process is far from over, the building is now the home of the Cave House Museum of Mining and Geology, and is open, free of charge, Saturday and Sunday from Memorial Day through Columbus Day, 12-5, and July 1 through Labor day 12-5 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Future plans for the facility include reopening the part of the cave that was closed 100 years ago, turning the smokestack into a rock climbing structure, and perhaps rebuilding the 800 foot section that was blown up.

At the end of the presentation, there were many questions – it seems people have memories of living near or working at the cement plant when it was in operation. One memory in particular seemed to be etched in peoples’ minds – that of the cement dust. If you worked at the plant, you had a good car and a “junkie”. You took the junkie to work, because at the end of the day, there would be a thick layer of dust all over the car. It was not uncommon for people to take jackhammers to the several-inch-thick layer of cement that would form on their roofs every few years from the cement dust.

This was a fun and informative program!

THANK YOU!

The society wants to thank the following people for their generous donations:

Judge Karen Sisson – laptop computer
Chuck Kistner/GE – office furniture, screen, cabinets

Colleen Crofts – DVD player

Bob and Helen Brown – 2 large hand drawn maps of Carlisle

Allan Tillapaugh – projector screens, TV, DVD/VCR

Carl Turnquist – website work

Miscellaneous News Items

- Gerry Stoner of the Gilboa Historical Society would like people to know that they can access their newsletter, past articles, audio files, interviews, pictures and other information at <http://www.gilboahome.com>, as well as www.northerncatskillshistory.com. Also, he is always looking for interesting articles, so if you have something of historical interest that you think might be appropriate, please contact him at www.northerncatskillshistory.com or gerrys@northerncatskillshistory.com
- The property with the Rock House is currently for sale. There is concern that once it is sold, access to the Rock House may be denied. Is there interest in pursuing some sort of right-of-way? Contact Ray Briggs.

“Hard Cider” Beats out the Weather

Every once in a while it is refreshing to do something different. The historical society did something different in December by adding a special musical program. This was a bonus program to the schedule – we don’t usually have programs in December, January or February, mostly due to the predictably unpredictable weather.

Well, the weather did threaten to cancel our plans, but we held strong and the snow eventually turned to rain, but not before dissuading some people from joining us in welcoming “Hard Cider”, the two-man bluegrass band of Fred Breglia and Dave Smith.

Opening with a joke about the difference between a dead raccoon on the side of the road and a dead banjo player on the side of the road (the raccoon had skid marks in front of it), Fred played a solo banjo tune blending two 18th century folk tunes of the Appalachian area. Note that Fred has been playing the banjo for a mere five weeks and it was his first performance in front of an audience.

Dave joined in, and Fred switched to mandolin, with the second song, written in the 1930s by Jimmy Rogers called *Blue Yodel #9* or *Standing on the Corner*. There are 13 songs in the *Blue Yodel* group: *Blue Yodel #1*, *Blue Yodel #2*...you get the idea. This song’s tempo sped up to a frantic pace by the end, making me wonder if their fingers would get tangled.

Next was *Soldier’s Joy*, an early 1700s Scottish tune sometimes called *Soldier’s Horn Pipe* or *Chicken in a Bread Pan*. This

song was old at the time of the Civil War, when it was often played after battles and on pay day. Eventually it was incorporated by the Appalachians as a square dance song.

Following *Whiskey in the Jar*, a traditional Irish song, they played *Shady Grove*, an 18th century folk song of the Appalachian Mountains about either a girl whose name/nickname was Shady Grove or a place where two lovers met (called Shady Grove). We were invited to join in on the chorus. (continued on page 10)



Left: Fred Breglia



Right: Dave Smith

HARD CIDER

(Continued from page 9)

Continuing the festive air, they chose to play a murder ballad originating in Scotland around 1770. Known there as *Eggs and Marrow Bones*, the Appalachians changed it to *Over the Waterfall*, and the song became about a man pushing his wife into the water.

Balancing that bit with some humor, Fred switched back to banjo and they launched into that classic Christmas-time romp *Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer*. Poor Grandpa! I know I sang along with a grin on my face.

“Hard Cider” played *This Land is Your Land* next, and Fred noted that in 2002 it was one of 50 songs chosen by the Library of Congress to be added to the National Recording Registry. Dave stumbled a bit with the lyrics (trying to play guitar and sing lyrics which are lying on a table behind you can’t be easy!), but we enjoyed the tune anyway.

Returning to the blues genre, they played *Lewis Collins*, a song written by Mississippian John Hurt (from Mississippi, Fred enlightened us). John Hurt was very influential in the blues industry, and this song was a bit somber.

The beautiful hymn *Amazing Grace* was next and the evening ended with *Me and My Uncle*, written by John Phillips of the “Mamas and the Papas”.

I think everyone there was glad they made the effort to come out and join us.

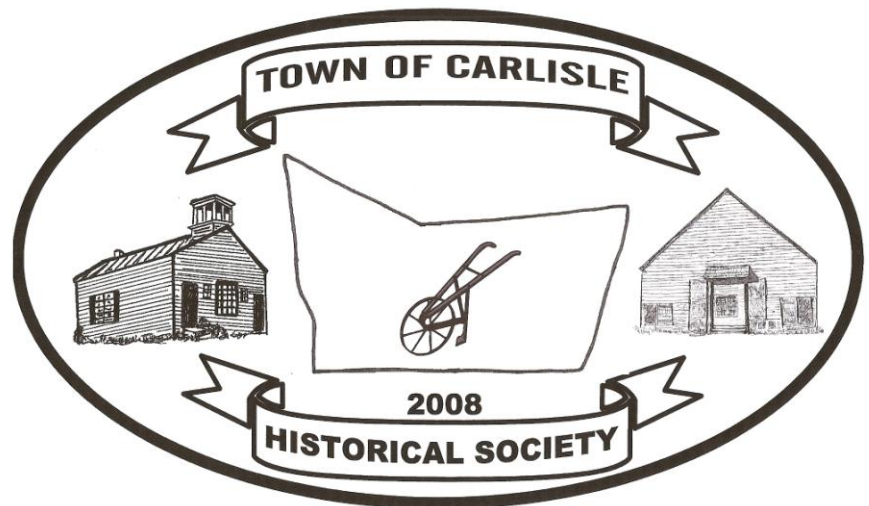


Dave Smith and Fred Breglia comprise the band “Hard Cider”, which played traditional folk songs to the Carlisle Historical Society.

LOGO CONTEST WINNER(S)

The Carlisle Historical Society held a “Logo Contest” in an attempt to develop a logo for the society. We received several designs, and after a vote at the September meeting, had a tie between a design by Helen Brown and one by Carl Turnquist. Helen Brown took both designs and refined them into one logo, which will be used on our letterhead and newsletter masthead.

Thanks to Helen and Carl for their artistic efforts!



Carlisle Native Shares Memories of the Town

by Jacqueline Turnquist

I spent an hour and a half one snowy morning this January speaking with Gerald Crosby, a 93-year-old Carlisle native, about some of his memories of Carlisle that few other living souls can share. The following are some of the highlights.

- Gerald and his sister Charlotte (Morris) grew up in the Crosby Homestead on Crosby Rd. He attended the Root Schoolhouse which they skied to in the winter, or his dad would bring them on a horse in a sleigh. One time, dad took them on the cutter, but something broke, so they had to continue on horseback. On the way home, a plane (which was scarce at the time), went overhead and scared the horse, and his sister was thrown into a snowbank. She refused to get back on the horse, and proceeded to struggle through the deep snow for a while, until she finally gave up and got back on the horse.

- Gerald was the son of a farmer, and started running a tractor at the age of 9. He purchased his own farm in 1941 from Clarence Uttman, son of Jake Uttman, for the assessed value of \$1,650.

- There were several businesses in the “village” of Carlisle. One was the general store, which was run by Ralph and Jessie Brown. It had a gas pump and sold machinery and feed, too. It was located in the building of the present-day Post Office. Two houses up (west) of the firehouse was another general store owned by Charlie Hutton, and there was a tin shop owned by a Crosby. Carlisle boasted two blacksmith shops, one owned by Will (?) Roscoe, which was located a few more buildings up (west) and on the south side of Route 20. Grant (?) Brown owned a sawmill/gristmill/cider mill. Gerald said they would bring their buckwheat there to be ground. It was on the southside of Route 20 and generally across from the current town barn. I wonder if it is the same business featured in a photograph titled “Brown’s Quarry”? The mill was powered by a steam engine.

- Gerald’s mother (Phoebe Louisa Tillapaugh Crosby) started the first Rural Mail Delivery run in Carlisle. She asked the residents of Bear Swamp Road to sign a petition and submitted it to the Post Office in the early 1940s. The idea was approved, and Robert Mickel was the first mail carrier. Both David and Mary Elwood, who live on South Crosby Road, also delivered the mail.

- Gerald’s uncle was a phone man in World War I. When he came home, he was instrumental in setting

up the “hemlock” line – a one wire line that was still in operation in 1944/1945. New York Telephone bought the line just prior to 1950. There were phones at the Carlisle General Store, at the Brown Homestead on Corbin Hill Road and just north of that to where Howard Crosby (Gerald’s cousin) lives now. Not everyone had a phone at first, and the service was a “party line” – if a call came through, every house on the line would hear the ring. Each phone had a certain ring (one long, two short, for example) to indicate who the call was for...but anyone could pick up and listen in (and many often did).

- Electricity came to Gerald’s farm in 1942/1943.

- Gerald has always lived around the Bear Swamp. He notes that it is not as wet as it once was. They used to be able to take horses in when it froze over to cut wood. About 15-20 years ago they were going to cut some wood and in brought a skidder, but it got stuck so they gave up. There are a lot of tamarack/larch in the swamp and huckleberries, which his mother liked. She insisted on going to pick one day. They heard thunder and his father indicated they needed to leave – his mother kept picking until it started to rain. When they tried to leave they couldn’t because the brush was so thick they couldn’t find the path.

- Gerald remembers a snowstorm in the 1950s where they were snowed in for quite a while. The state had to bring in bulldozers, which plowed paths all over the place – even through fields. In 1934 or 1935, there was a bad flood. He, his sister and Ernest (father to Gerald’s daughter-in-law Sally), went to New York City on the train. When they returned, they had a message not to try to get to Carlisle, but to stay in Albany. They attempted to get home anyway, and found the bridge in Sloansville was sandbagged. Several bridges in Carlisle were out – sometimes they had to turn around and try a different route, and at one they were able to find old planks and lay them across the water to form a new bridge. An ice storm in 1942 kept the power out for three weeks.

- Gerald went to Nellie Gordon, an attorney in Cobleskill, to have some work done. She wouldn’t accept payment, so he gave her a watch as a gift. Eventually he gave her a ring and she agreed to marry him. They were married for 43 years.

Thanks for sharing your memories!

The Carlisle Historical Society is a non-profit organization seeking to promote the history of Carlisle and the surrounding region as well as highlighting other topics of interest to the local community. Chartered in March, 2008, the society features a minimum of 6 programs a year – March, April, May, September, October and November. Our programs are free and open to the public, and include refreshments. Unless otherwise noted, all programs are currently presented at the Carlisle Town Hall on Crommie Road, on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm.

Although our programs are free, annual membership is \$5 for individuals and families who wish to support the society and be members. Membership includes two newsletters per year and voting privileges. Membership dues are collected beginning with the September program. You may mail in your dues to The Carlisle Historical Society, PO Box 28, Carlisle, NY 12031, or pay them at any meeting.

Because we are non-profit, any contributions made to the society are greatly appreciated and are tax-deductible. The society can be contacted either by mail (PO Box 28, Carlisle, NY 12031), e-mail (carlislehistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or at 234-3041. Check out our website for information and updates: www.carlislehistoricalsociety.webs.com.

The Carlisle Historical Society

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7:30 pm
(unless noted)

Carlisle Town Hall
Crommie Road

Refreshments are always served and all are welcome

The Carlisle Historical Society
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