



Phelps Community Historical Society

February 2022 Volume 30 Issue 259



WINTER (Part II) by Don Tiffany December 2002

The arrival of the automobile drastically changed the way the human population tackled winter. By the time of Henry Ford's Model T some adventurous motorists tried the winter roads at their own risk. Tires had only acquired a tread about 1915 and this tread was rudimentary and ineffectual, so to improve winter travel chains were installed on the rear wheels. The high road clearance of the "T" and the chains took some of the uncertainty out of arriving where you wanted to go—and—getting back.

The first municipal snowplow was used in Wisconsin in 1862. The first practical snowplow was built in 1920 by a tire dealer named Frink for a man who had a bus route from Clayton to Alexandria Bay. It was mounted on the front of a Duplex truck and proved so successful that in a very few years the Frink Snowplow was being shipped all over the American continent. The Town of Phelps acquired a fleet of 4 Walter Sno-Fiter trucks in the mid 30s equipped with Frink Vee plows and wings. These trucks were the sole means of keeping Phelps roads open for about 15 years. These big rigs were capable of ramming through 12' to 15' snowdrifts. They were also capable of getting themselves buried. When this happened the driver would have to walk to the nearest farmhouse and call the highway garage and tell the Superintendent that he was stuck. The only machine capable of pulling him out was another Walter Sno-Fiter. So the Superintendent would then have to drive to another location, find the second plow and send him to pull out the machine that was stuck. There were occasions when 2 of these trucks would be needed to pull out the first one. Of course all this time only one of the 4 trucks was plowing roads. With heavy winter snows - the winter of 1944-1945 comes to mind - it is not surprising that farmers were snowed in for 2 weeks at a time and some roads never got plowed at all!

As farmers increased the size of their dairy herds and shipped milk by trucks to pasteurization plants the pressures to keep the roads open increased. Miles of snow fence were put up in October and November along critical parts of the roads susceptible to heavy drifting. During WWII some sand was used on icy spots. People in Orleans watched the road going east up the steep hill from the creek. If the cars started slipping and were unable to get up the hill someone would call Joe Mattoon and tell him to send out a truck loaded with sand. He would dispatch one of the Walter trucks with 2 men in the back and the truck would slowly back up the hill with the 2 men shoveling sand on the highway from the truck box. By 1950 salt was sparingly mixed with the sand to speed melting the snow. The U.S. automakers had never planned their cars

to contend with the rust caused by even the limited use of sodium chloride on the roads. Many motorists of the 50s became adept at putting replacement panels on their cars to cover the huge rust holes in the rocker panels and rear fenders.

Packed snow was still to be encountered on even the paved highways and tire chains were still common 50 years ago. It was a challenge on a sunny day to start in the morning with chains and then remove them after the sun had melted the snow off the pavement. My father did this in 1939 and 1940 on the original Phelps Central School fleet of 7 school buses.

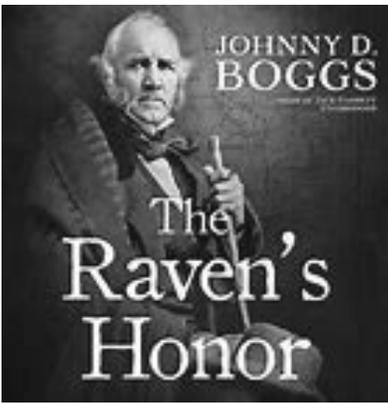
The first snow tires were very popular. No longer did you have to worry about the chain problem. The tread was covered with rubber knobs each about 1" high and 1" in diameter. They were excellent in snow but only lasted about one winter season. These were a long way from sleigh bells as you could hear a "knobbie" equipped car a half-mile away on dry pavement.



Automobile parked in front of the Howe House

Heavy robes were still used in winter travel in the touring cars. Auto manufacturers began installing heaters when the enclosed, steel bodies arrived. These heaters were the recirculating type. Defrosters were not part of the package so a rag or scraper was needed to keep the windshield clear enough to see through. A popular substitute for the inefficient early heaters was an accessory called the *SOUTH WIND* heater. It ran on the car's gas supply and would give quick and HOT air but the rear passengers still had to carry a blanket.

Now with radio-equipped snow plows, better designed roads, the *liberal* use of salt to clear the pavement, more efficient heaters and all-weather tires, the modern motorist expects to be able to travel anywhere at anytime of the year.



The Raven's Honor A historical fiction novel by Johnny D. Boggs
Book review by Marcia Maslyn

A history lesson on Sam Houston, much more than what you might have learned in school. The hero of the Battle of San Jacinto, he had defeated Santa Anna to win independence for Texas in 1836. He twice served as president of the Republic of Texas, helped Texas join the Union, and continued to serve as Senator and Governor of Texas. Even before Texas, Sam Houston, fought in the Creek War and served as governor of Tennessee. He was friends with Andrew Jackson and Davy Crockett, and had been adopted into the Cherokee tribe, whose rights he had often defended and who had named him The Raven.

We find him in his last years, just as Texas has chosen to secede from the union in the early days of the Civil War. Bitter, but not bowed, gray-haired and crotchety, Houston still fights the good fight. He has been cast out as governor, quickly loses power, prestige and friends. Lincoln sends him a request. Houston gathers his four strongest supporters, and gets their opinion of Lincoln's request to muster a regiment of 100,000 willing Texans to hold the state for the Union. He knows this battle will test his endurance and faith. He knows he will need his wife, Margaret, to save him from his own worst enemy – himself, and he knows this war, which will pit friend

and neighbor against each other, will also try to divide Houston's family.

Struggling with decisions to be made, he finds help in friends and family who had died years before but visit. Jackson tells him this war will be long and difficult days lay ahead. Davy Crockett reminds him that they lost the Alamo because Houston didn't get there with reinforcements in time, but Houston went on to defeat Santa Anna. When Sam's oldest son comes to him for his signature because he needed parental consent to join the army fighting with his friends and neighbors as a Confederate, Sam's mother's visit reminds him of his request as a 20 year old asking for her signature so he could fight. "It is the hardest thing a parent is asked to do," she replied.

As time moves forward, the Houstons have their summer home along the Gulf Coast where they see and hear blockade battles, and have to deal with the shortage of supplies of food. All contact with their son was lost and they fear for his life. Lincoln's Emancipation Declaration was in the newspaper and Houston tried to explain it to his slaves. Sam's Cherokee friends came to him when the Confederacy wanted to 'conscript' some of their braves into the army. Sam wrote letters to everyone he knew that might help stop this, as Cherokee and all other tribes are not "Texans" but of their own tribe.

Johnny D. Boggs, brings one of Texas' greatest heroes to life, warts and all, in a character study and love story of a man fighting for his country and legacy, but mostly for his family.

SAVE THE DATE

PHELPS ALUMNI

REUNION

Thursday August 4, 2022

Club 86 Geneva, NY

Details to follow

2022 ELECTION RESULTS

41 Ballots were submitted

President - Mart VanKirk

37 votes

4 did not vote/Write In

Trustees- (Re-elected)

Tom Cheney 41 votes

Ron Grube 41 votes

Sarah Riegel 41 votes

Changes to Constitution

In Favor 37

Not in Favor 2 2 did not vote

Thank you to all who voted.

The radio shop — Double birthday for John Hildreth

By MARGI LASH
Times Phelps Bureau

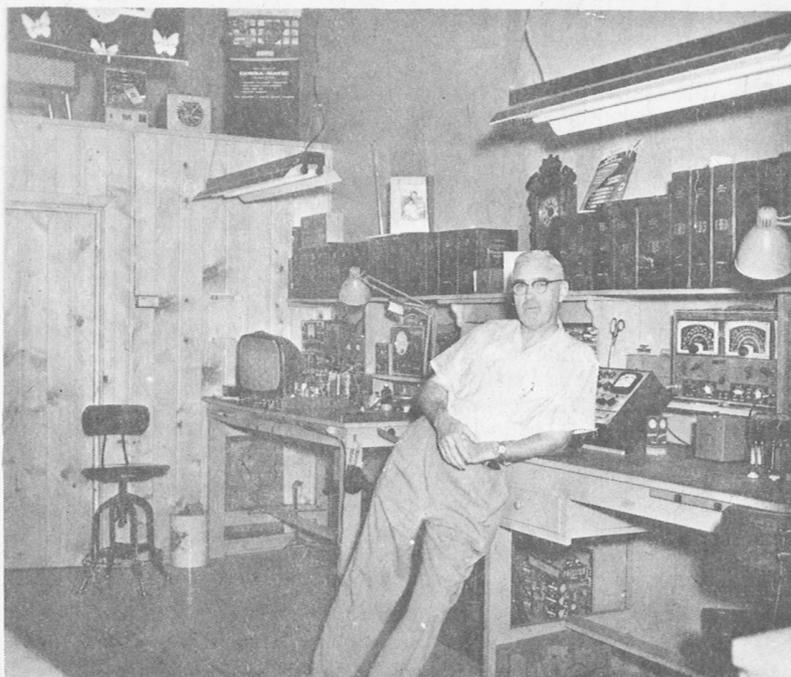
PHELPS — John Hildreth had two reasons to celebrate Sunday, Feb. 1, for yesterday marked his birthday and that of the business he started 40 years ago when Johnnie's Radio Shop became "service worth talking about" in 1930.

In the early days Johnnie's Radio Shop was located in the building which now houses the Phelps Community Memorial Library, and John sold and serviced all makes of radios, which included the big name in radio at that time — Atwater Kent. John recalls, "In the old days the take home pay used to be eight to ten dollars a week!"

In the late 40's television made its debut and John added RCA, Admiral and Zenith to his line. In the 50's he moved across the street to his present Main St. location. In the new store, gleaming white new appliances — stoves, refrigerators, washers and dryers greeted visitors to the opening celebration. Hand rubbed tv and radio cabinets proclaimed the latest in electronics and small appliances and portable radios appeared in the windows and glass cases.

Color television appeared about eight years ago and was promptly enjoyed by the customers who gathered to see this latest marvel in the world of Johnnie's Radio Shop.

In his 40 years of business John has relied on the advice and encouragement of his "silent partner," his wife Armeda. Armeda has lent her hand in the creation of many lovely and unusual window displays and centerpieces which are seen throughout the store. Her land-



JOHN HILDRETH of Johnnie's Radio Shop who celebrated his 40th anniversary in business Sunday, Feb. 1.

scapes of the area and still lifes are as well known in the store as the brand names. Armeda has recently added a line of gift items which are ideal for weddings, anniversaries and birthdays. Included are Corning Ware items, brass, copper and enameled teakettles, stainless steel items and a complete line of Shetland floor care products.

The success of Johnnie's Radio Shop can be measured in part by John Hildreth's keen sense of business and by

the comfortable, old-fashioned hospitality that permeates the air as much as the smoke from John's pipe. Witty signs of homespun humor dot the walls and a World Series doesn't go by without a crowd around a tv set. Friday nights are the nights neighbor bumps into neighbor. Much business, political, social and economic, has been transacted in Johnnie's Radio Shop since 1930 and the service is still worth talking about — and so is Johnnie.



In Memoriam

Robert G. Burns

Penn Yan, NY

March 3, 1939 –
February 7, 2022

Stanton Shannon

Riverside, CA

December 1928-
January 6, 2022

Calvin W. Treese

Phelps, NY

December 23, 1941-
January 9, 2022

Exhibits

Top left: East Exhibit Room, quilts on display, including the WWII quilt by Gertrude Symonds.

Center: Drainboard, farmhouse sink and hand pump in the kitchen.

Below left: Kalamazoo stove donated by Nellie Keller in 2004. Also in the exhibit: a Hoosier Cabinet, an ice box, and a 1930s enamel top kitchen table.



Chair Caning Needed

The museum has two chairs that need their cane seats repaired. If you are interested in donating your time and talent to re-cane the chair seats please contact our office by phone at 315-548-4940.





From the Director's Desk

During the time we were closed exhibits have been changed out, the kitchen project is done but for a few minor details, the switching of the Archives Room with the Textile Room is underway (to provide better space for the archives), and three companies have been consulted regarding the installation of a stair lift for the main staircase. We now have a part-time caretaker (general housekeeping, yard work, helping hand) at the Howe House. Robin Grube is working for the PCHS as part of the Ontario County Youth Employment Program.

In the meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Monday February 21, Ron Grube was re-elected Vice President, Tom Cheney re-elected Treasurer, and Nicole Fess elected as Secretary. (see page 2 for President and Trustee election results).

Did you ever wonder how information is updated on the Find a Grave website (findagrave.com)? Volunteers, like the husband and wife team of Ken and Mary Jane Hutton, spend time in cemeteries locating gravesites and researching families. Recently they have been traveling from their home in Fairport to Phelps, working on the Rest Haven Cemetery records. The PCHS has provided cemetery records and maps to assist in their research. Ken and Mary Jane visit the Howe House when they are in town to collaborate with Carol Conklin and share the results of their work.

The PCHS office and Howe House Museum will reopen on March 2 with regular hours of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10am–4pm.



School District #10

Another joint school district outside of the Town of Phelps. The district ran about 2 ½ miles in the Town of Arcadia, along the northern border of Phelps and southern border of Arcadia. The school building still exists and is located in Wayne County on Clark Road ¾ of a mile west of Route 88 just south of Newark.



*Photo taken by
Dr. Ron Grube
February 2022*

Thank you for supporting the PCHS and Howe House Museum

Membership Renewals

Welcome New Member!

Robert E. Quigley Phelps, NY

Monetary Donations

Anonymous
Elizabeth Meath

Memorial Donations

Cynthia Atkinson Charles R. Conklin
in memory of in memory of
Eldon W. Clement **William Conklin**
Rena R. Ruthven **Robert Conklin**
Marilyn DeRuyter &

Robert F. Goodman Ann B. Oaks
in memory of in memory of
Philip S. Salisbury **Nathan Oaks**
Mabel Oaks

Patricia Rittler
in memory of
Bonnie Hatch Bowden
Mildred Fairman Parmelee

Mart VanKirk
Marsha Gibbs
Loren Gifford
Margery Fairman Stallman
in memory of
Mildred Fairman Parmelee



Paula & Terry Atkinson Carol Lord
Cynthia Atkinson Dana Mark
Betty Bankert Lois McCann
Debra Bennett Edward McManus
David Bloom Elizabeth Meath
Charles R. Conklin Minerva Milliman
Marilyn DeRuyter Ann B. Oaks
James and Sherry Ebel Boni Overslaugh
Nicole Fess Dianne Prentice
Julie Files Michael Priebe
Loren Gifford Eleanore Ridley
Barbara Gillespie Randolph & Kim Ridley
Mary Ann Gilman Bob & Doris Spink
Ramon & Charlotte Howard Mart VanKirk
Roberta Leu Donna Webb

Time and Talent

Personnel Committee

Tom Cheney Ron Grube Jane Pedersen Cathy Scott

Newsletter

Bonnie Dixon Wendy Gaylord Ron Grube
Marcia Maslyn Curt Petzoldt

Technology

Bob Quigley

Carol Conklin Marilyn DeRuyter Barb Gillespie
F. Lee Johnson Dana Mark Mart VanKirk

DONATION

Donated by the author, **Craig R. Humphrey**

Book: - “ *The New York Highlands Humphreys and Their Descendants John, Little Britain, New York, 1694-1770 To Roger, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1918-1998*”
Published by Montauck Printing in 2022. This is a continuation of the work done by the late Jacqueline Baker Humphrey (1925 –2021, buried in Rest Haven Cemetery).
Included in the acknowledgements: “A special acknowledgement goes to the Phelps Community Historical Society (PCHS) in Phelps, New York. Their library collection includes the work by Jacqueline Baker Humphrey (1989), the work which I have dedicated this Humphrey genealogy”.

MEMBERSHIP and DONATION FORM

*If "Reminder" is highlighted please renew your membership.
If "Final Notice" is highlighted this will be your last newsletter if dues are not paid.*

Application: New _____ Renewal _____ Gift _____ Send membership card _____ For Office use:
Individual: \$20.00 _____ Family: \$30.00 _____ Business: \$50.00 _____ Member #: _____
Name: _____ Date Rcvd: _____
Address: _____ Check #: _____
Winter Address: (if different from above): _____ Amt. Rcvd: _____
_____ Exp. Date: _____
Dates Winter Address in effect: _____ Computer: _____
Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____ Index Card: _____
Member Card: _____

DONATION: Amount _____

_____ In memory of (Optional): _____

_____ In honor of (Optional): _____

_____ Allocate funds to (Optional): _____

From our mailbox.... A sample of the Thank You letters received from the 1st and 2nd graders at Midlakes expressing their sentiments after their holiday visit in December.

Thank you Howe House
My favorite part was the cool train. One thing I learned was the out-house. Merry Christmas.
Love Parker

Thank you for letting us in. My favorite part was the arrowheads. One thing I learned is that was the first double decker outhouse.
Merry Christmas
From Owen

Thank you for having us and showing us around the Howe House. Thank you for taking time out of your day to teach us about history. I like the Jingle Bells.
Love
Japhia

Thank you for showing us the Howe House
I enjoyed the military room. My favorite was the guns and the swords. This is what I loved most about my trip to the Howe House.
Eli

Thank you for letting us see the Howe House. My favorite part was the doll house. One thing I learned was the wooden toys.
Merry Christmas
Love Nadine

One thing I thought was interesting was the sports stuff was cool. Thank you
From Kyle

***Thank you so much for having us.
We loved our visit to the Howe House.
Miss Mayer's 2nd Grade Class***

Volunteers of the Howe House Museum-

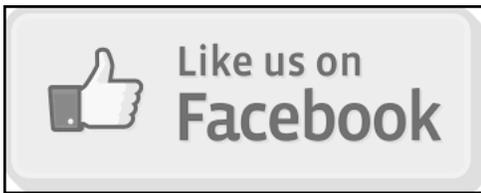
Thank you so much for the wonderful tour, explanations and warm smiles you provided our class. The children couldn't stop talking about it.

Mrs. McGuire's 2nd grade class

PHELPS COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

66 Main Street
Phelps, NY 14532

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Permit No 31
Newark, NY 14513



Howe House Museum

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(315) 548-4940

E-mail: histsoc2@gmail.com

Website: phelpsnhistory.com

Find us on Facebook



Museum Hours:

Wednesday, Thursday and
Friday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
or by appointment



President

Mart VanKirk

Board of Trustees

Ron Grube, Vice President
Nicole Fess, Secretary
Tom Cheney, Treasurer

Marilyn DeRuyter

Gary Jones

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Director

Diane Goodman