



Phelps Community Historical Society

July 2021 Volume 29 Issue 253



Howe House Museum

66 Main Street
Phelps, NY 14532
(315) 548-4940

E-mail: histsoc2@gmail.com
Website: phelpsnhistory.com

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Museum Hours:
Wednesday, Thursday and
Friday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
or by appointment
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2021 Phelps Croquet Club

Although the locations have changed over the years, the tradition of playing croquet each summer has continued.

The original club, organized in 1890, was discontinued in 1917 because of World War I and wartime restrictions. The Phelps Croquet reorganized in 1938, and with the exception of the year 2020 (when the world was put on hold), has played at the homes of various members, the Phelps Community Historical Society and at Redfield Park in 2021.

Front Row: Velma Crouch, JoAnne Winburn (seated), Barb Wilson, Audrey Phelps and Sue Datthyn

Middle Row: Bonnie Dixon, Pam Whyte (Secretary), Jo Gifford, Cindy Atkinson, Billee Altman (Treasurer), Barbara Kesel, Barb Brennessel, Terry Allen, Nancy Turner, Marge Norsen and Cathy Thomas (President)

Back Row: Cathy Young, Marlene Treese, Betty Lannon, Laurie Sielawa, Sandy Snyder, Donna Nellis, Betty Raes, Pat Adams, Irene Copper, Carol Conklin and Nancy Denisi.

Absent: Pat Hart, Teresa Rodgers and Jeannine Dutcher



Howe House Museum Open

Saturday July 31 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Welcome Phelps Central School Alumni!

Saturday August 7 1 - 4 p.m.

Watch the Sauerkraut Festival parade from the front porch or lawn

Pay your membership dues or visit our Gift Shoppe online at phelpsnhistory.com

PCHS members can obtain their **10% Gift Shoppe discount** by entering a digital coupon on the first checkout page. Click on **" + Add a coupon code "** (blue text).
Coupon code for August 0919R

Phelps Celebrates Sauerkraut Season

The Ithaca Journal (Ithaca, New York) July 25, 1975



By
Tamar Sherman

The Sauerkraut Capitol of the World (yes, the world) is located in the Finger Lakes region—in Phelps, between Waterloo and Rochester. Home of Silver Floss Foods, McIvor Kraut, and Seneca Kraut & Pickling Company, more of the “sour cabbage” is produced in Phelps than anywhere else on earth.

To kick off the sauerkraut season, when the cabbage plants are first harvested and brought to the sauerkraut factories, Phelps holds an annual Sauerkraut Festival, set for Saturday, Aug. 3 this year.

Most of the town’s 6,000 residents turn out for the festival parade, scheduled to begin 2 p.m. from the Firemen’s Field on Ontario Street, and people are attracted from all over the region to the antique show and sale and arts and crafts fair held in Redfield Park beginning at 10 a.m. Some 25 antique dealers are expected as well as 40 artisans and craftsmen with individual displays.

Started eight years ago to foster friendship and pride in the community, the festival will also feature a marathon race of 11.5 miles, a garden tractor pull, a Little League baseball game, a western jamboree featuring several country and western bands, from 4 to 7 p.m. and a chicken barbecue beginning at 4 p.m.

Chocolate sauerkraut cake, baked by local women, will be cut by Sauerkraut Queen Patricia Fullwood of Midlakes High School at 7 p.m. and distributed to visitors. For those who might be repulsed at the idea of chocolate and sauerkraut together, let this writer assure you that it is very tasty. The sauerkraut, drained and chopped fine, gives the cake moisture and a slight sour taste, much like the same as sour cream in a cake batter. The bits of sauerkraut are crunchy like coconut.

Other activities at the festival will include a barbershop group singing from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., a western square dance festival from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. and a fireworks display beginning at 11 p.m. to top off the day’s events.

Except for the sauerkraut cake, however, very little of the festival has to do with sauerkraut, although some vendors will be selling franks and kraut. For those who are interested in seeing how sauerkraut is made, Silver Floss, the largest sauerkraut producer, offers free tours throughout the work week.

Located on Eagle Street, the factory is open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. from the end of July through the end of May and shuts down for June and July for maintenance work.

Climatic conditions around Phelps, warm days and cool nights, make for particularly good cabbage for sauerkraut—large, firm Heads. Nearly all the cabbage used by Silver Floss is grown by farmers in Ontario County, with the remainder coming from neighboring Yates County.

(continued on page 3)

Chocolate Sauerkraut Cake

For the more adventurous among you who might not get to the Sauerkraut Festival at Phelps but would like to try Chocolate Sauerkraut Cake, here is the recipe:

2 1/4 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1 1/2 cups sugar
2/3 cup shortening
3 eggs
1 1/4 tsp. vanilla
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 cup cocoa
1 cup water

1/2 cup sauerkraut, drained and chopped

Sift together flour, soda and baking powder; set aside. Cream together sugar, shortening and then add eggs, mixing well. Add vanilla, salt and cocoa. Mix well. Alternately add flour mixture and water. Add kraut. Bake in greased and floured 13 x 9 x 2 pan at 375 degrees for 35 minutes.

For a quicker and just as good cake, use a devil’s food cake mix. Prepare according to directions on the box and add 1/2 cup drained and chopped sauerkraut before baking.

Phelps Celebrates Sauerkraut Season

(continued from page 2)

The cabbage is bought by the truckload and the farmer is paid according to the quality of his produce. After sitting outside for a few days, to dry out a little, the cabbage is taken by conveyor belt into the cutting room.

There a drill-type machine breaks apart the core, the cabbage is cut, green outer leaves and bruised spots are trimmed off., and it is fed through a shredding machine. The shredded cabbage is taken by conveyor belt past a salting machine, which dumps two and a half pounds of salt on every 100 pounds of cabbage, and dropped in one of 66 100-ton tanks to ferment.

A nylon cover is placed over the tank to give a water and air-tight seal and four inches of water is placed on top to give it a hermetic seal and to provide weight for compaction.

Lactic acid bacteria, which are normally present on the surface of cabbage, cause the natural sugars to ferment, forming lactic acid. When tests indicate an acidity level of 1.5 per cent, the cabbage has completed the four-to-six week fermentation process into sauerkraut.

Two men then shovel the kraut out of the vats with pitchforks into large tubs. The sauerkraut is packed into containers—either glass jars, cans or plastic bags—and sent through a steam bath which brings the temperature up to 180 degrees, which sterilizes the container and stops the fermentation process.

The sterilization cannot be done with polyethylene bags, so a slight amount of chemical preservatives is added to stop the fermentation and retain the color.

The bags were introduced in an effort to appeal to the younger housewife. Displayed in meat counters, often alongside spareribs or frankfurters, bagged kraut has proved to be successful without detracting from canned or jarred sales.

Canned kraut contains no preservatives, but kraut in a jar contains a little to retain color. Sauerkraut is graded largely according to color, with a very light beige, almost an ivory color, considered the best. A slightly darker color, not enough to be noticed by the average consumer, means the kraut is labeled Grade B rather than Grade A Fancy.

After being heated, the kraut is cooled gradually, sealed, labeled and packed to be distributed up and down the eastern coast.

Sauerkraut was originated by the Chinese, who were known to have eaten it as early as the third century B.C. Roving tribes of Tartars introduced it to Western Europe, and the Germans, who named it sauerkraut, brought it to North America in the 16th century.

The cabbage was originally ferment in wine, but salt was substituted by Americans and found to produce a better product. Rich in vitamin C, it was often taken along on voyages to prevent scurvy. Because of its acid content it can be kept indefinitely under refrigeration, the vitamin is not destroyed in cooking, and it is considered beneficial in cases of digestive disturbance.

Sauerkraut is served traditionally with frankfurters, spareribs, sausages and hams, but can also be used in , appetizers, soups, cocktails, relishes, salads, casseroles, and desserts.

Phelps is located on Route 96, approximately 50 miles out of Ithaca. The ride takes about an hour. To get to Redfield Park for the antique and craft show, turn left at railroad crossing. Ontario Street, where the rest of the festivities take place, branches off from the main road a little further into town. Eagle Street, where Silver Floss is located, is midway between the two.

Daily Record (Morristown, NJ) August 5, 1985

Excerpt from article titled "Village loves its sauerkraut":

"I like the kraut. I like to eat it out of the vats. That's when its sauerkraut— not when your wife washes it and bakes it so it's brown like a dirty road," said John Finch, manager of the Seneca Foods Inc. sauerkraut plant in Phelps.

In August of 1988 Phelps, NY held its annual sauerkraut festival, but it was the also the year it lost its boast of being the "Sauerkraut Capital of the World". One of its two plants had closed that spring and the other moved its operation out of town.

Until March, Phelps had been producing the pungent, chopped up cabbage for 84 years.

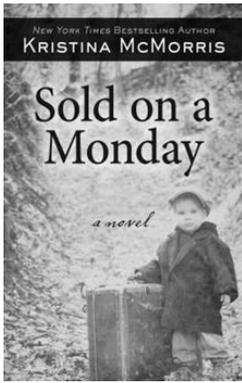
Source: The News and Observer (Raleigh, N. Carolina)
Saturday August 6, 1988



In Memoriam

Anna "Midge" Mollenkopf
PCHS Member
09/17/1920 - 07/05/2021

Robert F. Westfall
PCHS Member
06/11/1939 - 07/04/2021



When I saw this book recommended in the newspaper, the cover just captured my heartstrings, I had to know more. It takes place during the 1930s when many families were struggling to survive on little income and no jobs were available. Besides the recession, the country was also dealing with political unrest, gangsters, and prohibition, plenty for busy newspaper

reporters to write about.

While wandering down a country lane waiting for his car radiator to cool, Ellis Reeds sees a sign on a farmhouse porch, “2 Children for Sale”, capturing the desperation sweeping the country during the Great Depression. Its an era of breadlines, bank runs and impossible choices. Its gut-wrenching scene evokes memories of his family's dark past. He snaps a photograph of the children not meant for publication.

Lillian Palmer, haunted by secrets of her own, sees more in the picture than a good story. She brings the picture to her editor's attention and there the ball gets rolling about whether or not this can be a feature story. Eventually Ellis gets the chance of a lifetime to write an article that will get widespread review. Keeping the article about the times and what many families are facing, not wanting to spotlight a certain family or expose the humiliation of their hardship.

Ellis is a character who does a lot of growing in this story, first in a direction where he isn't really comfortable, but gets him much acclaim and then he changes course. Lillian is also a very well described character and her interaction with Ellis makes each of them better people in the end.

Their tale is filled with loopholes, lies, regrets, guilt, turmoil, doubts, and determination leading to a dramatic end. We witness Ellis and Lily fight their own inner battles of what's right and what's wrong – their own issues - their independent struggles and their working together with purpose and passion. They fall down plenty – but they grow from their falls.

Inspired by an actual newspaper photo that stunned readers across the nation, this novel explores the tale within the frame and behind the lens, a journey of ambition and far-reaching effects of our actions.

This is a very powerful story of a desperate time in our history. It will move you to tears but there is also laughter at times. Wonderfully developed characters, well described scenes of the times and beautiful flowing story is hard to put down. There is a little romance, other family drama, adventure, and mystery but all in the name of love and children.

A thought provoking Quote at the start of Part 1 is so truthful:

“Photography is the art of observation. It has little to do with things you see and everything to do with the way you see them” ---- *Elliott Erwitt*

Kristina McMorris invites us into her storytelling with warmth and ease. This book was written with much compassion, Our author really cared about Ruby and Calvin, and you will too.

Phelps, New York An “Ideal Town”

Would you like to see an Ideal Town
In western New York state?
It was founded in 1789
And now it is up to date.

Along its numerous tree lined streets
Are cozy homes
With well kept lawns, and a garden plot
And fields where children roam

Thro pastures green, and neighboring farms
A winding out-let flows
And closely bordering on its banks
The feathery willow grow.

There are friendly folks in the Ideal Town
As they nod and smile, when you meet them there
Folks you feel you would like to know
You can feel your friendship grow.

There's a Central School with room for all
From grown up folks to children small
A Rotary, Mason, Grange and a band,
And a park to where they play base ball.

There are stores where you buy your pretty things
To make life more complete
Town Hall, a bank and a large hotel
A good place to eat and sleep.

There are trains to take you to and from
Wherever you want to go
A Model theatre with a Cineria
Where you see the best in shows

There are churches here for every one
With friendly open doors
Which bid you welcome to come inside
Why don't we use them more?

There's work for all. And a quiet rest
In this modest place is found
So come and live in Phelps, N.Y.
And enjoy an Ideal Town

- Author Unknown

From the writings of Mabel Oaks - The Brooder House

Behind our farmhouse by the old stone wall, stand three small buildings which for many years sheltered 1500 day-old chicks. 500 animated yellow balls to a house. By July these had become slender white pullets and were moved to the large henhouse on a west field.

Then my young son and his friends would feverishly begin brooming the brooder house for human occupancy. To my surprise I learned during those years that little girls have no monopoly on playing house. Usually, two boys would choose to live together; sometimes a child would play hermit. Squatters' rights were always respected.

Next commenced the annual flow of furniture from our woodshed chamber storeroom, down the kitchen stairs and out to the "huts", as the boys called them. If I now had in my possession all those worn rugs, chairs, rickety tables, torn sofas, folding cots, bedding and general bric-a-brac, I could set up quite a shop.

We always knew during which hours of the day or evening the boys were in occupancy and what types of activity were being enjoyed. Loud hammering denoted a home improvement project. Mouth organ music and wails from the coronet that had gone thru the Civil War indicated a cultural period. At other times, strange, startling, unidentifiable noises filled the summer air—all a part of their games of imagination.

We seldom disturbed the boys; the huts were their private world. A blast on a referee whistle brought my son to the house if I needed him. One day there was a special message to deliver to his personal hut. I approached the building timidly, as a sprawling, white painted sign on the closed door told me I was not welcome. The sign read:

*"Warning - Keep Out
No Trespassing
No Girls Allowed"*



However, I knocked and was admitted. My son was reclining on a high bunk bed, built by himself, with a stepladder close by nailed to the wall for easy access. A far from clean feather bed covered by remnants of a steamer rug that once had gone to Europe, supported him comfortably. The bedside hangings were G.L.F. feed sacks neatly tacked into pleated place. A pile of comic books rested on his stomach. An arrangement of low bare electric bulbs with a long extension cord provided light. A round brooder stove in center of the room was laid with wood ready for cool weather.

A pint jar of water hung on a string from a nearby nail, could be tipped toward his mouth in case of sudden thirst. I noticed the glass sign on the wall in front of him .

"Drink Coca Cola", he was advised, which urging of the advertisement may have necessitated the can of water.

Other wall decorations were a "No Smoking" sign, a cracked mirror, a large framed French landscape (one of my wedding gifts 25 years earlier) and an inverted horseshoe for luck. A school desk, wash bench and campstool completed the current furnishings. Thoreau might have admired him, I thought, as I delivered my message and hurriedly left the sanctum. Only then did I remember his companion - a neighborhood boy, sitting silent in one corner, contentedly hand cuffed, probably waiting out an interlude in a western drama.

During the summer months any boys from out-of-town were probably shown the huts and allowed to participate in the play. I still recall one of these visitors. Returning from a shopping trip one day, I entered the first - floor bathroom only to find a strange boy enthroned there. I quickly managed to recover my composure and retreat, leaving him in sole possession.

Moving is always a pleasurable excitement and one summer the huts waited a while, empty, while the boys furnished the large, square cupola on the top of the big barn. They must have been cramped for room up there and of course, entrance to the new home was neither simple nor safe. So it was only a week or two before they abandoned this airy aerie, leaving my bed pillows and blankets there, literally "for the birds", pigeons mostly.

My writing resembles the mills of the gods. Only now are my rough notes, scribbled 20 years ago, being ground into smoother sentences. Today my son has become a man, and another generation of Oaks Corners boys has moved into the huts, then left them, for boys will be boys forever, or so we hope. **Mabel Oaks** April 30, 1968

Note: Mabel's son was Nathan H. Oaks (1938-2017). He lived his entire life in Oaks Corners, NY.

**Thank you to the following for their support of
the PCHS and Howe House Museum**

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Judith Beechler
in memory of
Carl Beechler

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in memory of
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in memory of
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in memory of his father
Julius R Pensworth

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Deborah J Halderman
The employees of OTTC
WW Surge, LLC
in memory of
Robert F Westfall



Welcome New Members!

Kathleen Ekeren Webster, NY
Gift from Nancy Doubleday

Julie M Nolet
Montague, MA

Judith VanKirk and family
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Membership Renewals

Tom & Rosemary Baker
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Margie Miles
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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 #: _____
Summer/Winter Address: _____	Amt. Rcvd: _____
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Dates in effect: _____	Computer: _____
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_____ In honor of (Optional): _____

From our in box... Friday July 9, 2021



Good morning-

Lee Johnson's article about the 37 Club in the most recent issue of the Newsletter certainly brought back memories. It appears that a substantial number of the members of the Class of 1955 served in the Navy, more than was mentioned in the article.

I too was born in 1937, was from Phelps, and was a member of the Class of 1955, but chose to enter the Navy in 1954, a year earlier.

I was in Company 307 at the Bainbridge Naval Training Center in Maryland, which was closed in 1976. Subsequently, every building on the base was destroyed and at this point there is no physical evidence that the base ever existed.

Coincidentally, there was another sailor in Company 307 from Phelps, Ken Buck. I had entered through Buffalo, he had entered through Syracuse, and we ended up in the same Company.

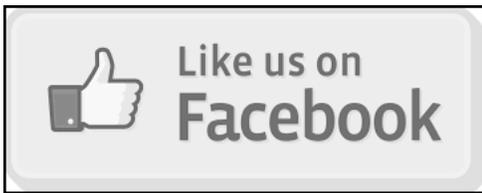
After electronics school I went aboard a destroyer, the USS Miller DD535 out of Newport, Rhode Island. It was there that I often saw Les Bailey, also a member of the Class of 1955, who was aboard another ship in the Division. Briefly, I was back at Bainbridge where I encountered still another member of the Class of 1955, Bette Ann Enders.

Subsequently, I attended Officer Candidate School, was commissioned, and was assigned to the USS Luiseno ATF156 as the executive officer. I was injured in an accident aboard the ship, however, which abruptly ended my career as an active-duty officer. I remained in the Navy Reserve for 28 years, retiring as a Captain.

Fred Kirch

PHELPS COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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***Sauerkraut
Festival
Parades***

**Upper left:
August 6, 2011**

**Upper Right:
August 4, 2012**

**Bottom:
August 3, 2013**