



Phelps Community Historical Society

July 2023 Volume 31 Issue 275



Howe House Museum

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

E-mail:

histsoc2@gmail.com

Website:

phelpsnhistory.com

Find us on

Facebook

Museum Hours:

Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
10 AM-4 PM

Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts

7 Church Street
Phelps, NY 14532
(585)-789-0017
Director

Find us on

Facebook

Gallery Hours:

Thursday 5-7pm
Friday 3-7pm
Saturday noon-7pm
or by appointment

July 1, 2023 has come and gone, including a highly successful soft opening and the grand opening of the Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts (see photos on page 4). It was incredible to witness the culmination of four very busy months leading up to these events. To put this in perspective, a count of attendance at the gallery was taken after the opening weekend events and during the first week of regular operation. The total attendance during this time was well over 150 people. Of course, the opening events drew the most attendees, but numbers have been steady since then. We have had overwhelming positive feedback on the space and the art in the first show, "Right Here, Right Now!" which gives us confidence in moving ahead.



CLGOA Director Michael Nash and Gallery Associate Janet Walpole

Michael Nash, Gallery Director

The Artists

Artwork currently on display includes a variety of photography, textiles, oil paintings, jewelry, watercolors and woodworking.

Rick Warner, Pamela Frank, Daniel Garrow, Ken Riemer, Cathy Roe, Ischa Lawrence, Evie DuBois, Nancy Bellina, Anne DeJohn, Steve Duprey, Vaughn Jackson and Tim Goodman

The PCHS Board of Trustees would like to thank the following volunteers who devoted time, talent and sweat to whatever job needed to be done to improve the front exhibit room, create the art gallery and enhance the beautiful garden; clearing out rooms, painting walls and floors, construction, plumbing, trips for supplies, planting flowers, mulching, decorating, the list goes on!

Michael Nash, Janet Walpole, Lucia Marshall, Lynn White, Robin Grube, Ron Grube, Rosa Grube, Gary Jones, Patrick O'Neill, Dennis King, and Mart VanKirk

Thank you Heather Olander for all your extra time and effort!

Monetary Donations

A very generous donation from John and Lee Parmelee, in memory of Mildred Parmelee, provided funding for the much needed building repairs and upgrades. John's grandfather John Barnes Parmelee practiced law and sold insurance at the Country Lawyer Office.

Marilyn DeRuyter, Diane Goodman, Ron Grube, Gary Jones,
Mart VanKirk, Michael Nash, Janet Walpole

Garden Donations

The Quigley family – 2023 funding for flowers and mulch
Windy Hill Farm - tree and flowers

Collecting the Stories of Phelps Wendy Gaylord Interview with Bob Spink

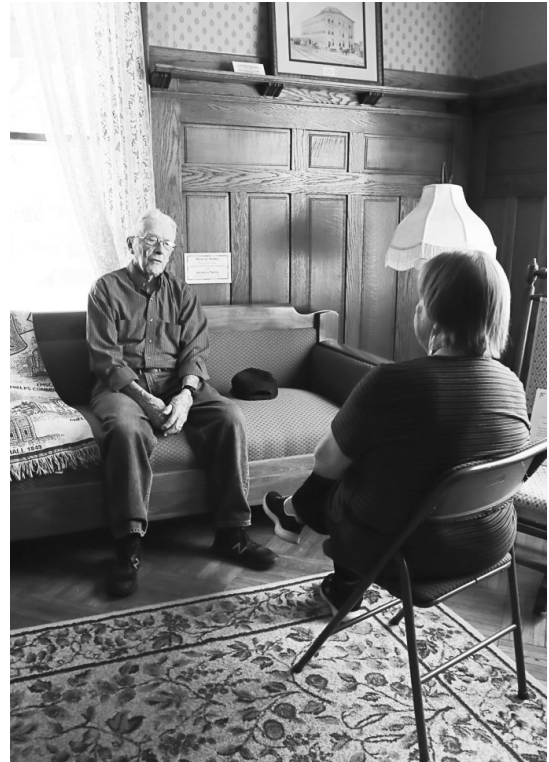
Wendy Gaylord interviewing Bob Spink on June 7, 2023 at the Howe House in Phelps. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Wendy: Today our topic is going to be about your experiences as a child in World War II. Maybe you could tell me whatever you want about that.

Bob: In 1941, I was 10 years old. Well, I wasn't old enough for the Boy Scouts at that point. But in another year or two I was. The Boy Scouts got very much involved during World War II to support the effort made by the community and the country. Some of the things we did, we collected cans, got truckloads of cans, maybe once a month and we would take them to the metal factory in Newark. We got involved with milkweed pods and people would say, "What are they?" Basically they are floatable plants that grow to a solid and become buoyant. They stuffed them in life preservers, and they would hold quite a while. We collected newspapers and, of course, newspapers were pretty common back then. And once again we would get a whole truck full of bales of newspapers.

The final thing that we spent a considerable amount of time on was watching for aircraft flying over Phelps. And of course, you know how your imagination goes. They could be Germans, they could be Japanese, and all this other stuff. Well, we knew better, but because of the war effort going on, I think the government felt that they should get as many people involved as possible. There's not a better source of energy for something like this than Boy Scouts, and or Girl Scouts.

So, we had a shed on Mary Preston's property. She lived at the end of South Wayne Street; it's a dead end, the house on the left-hand side. She let the scouts use an old shed that she had up in a lot, I don't know if there were chickens in it or what. We rode our bikes up to her home and walked across the lot to the shed. It could have been a chicken coop; it didn't smell like a chicken coop. In that shed, we had places to sit down and we had a telephone, the old type that was on the wall, the wooden one with the gooseneck that came out of it and you had to crank it to get the attention of the operator. We had charts on the walls that showed silhouettes of our airplanes and enemy airplanes. So somebody came over during the day, now of course, we only did this during the daytime. We couldn't do anything for the night, but we probably went from maybe 8:00 o'clock in the morning to, maybe in the summer, 8:00 o'clock at night. We would do a scan to see if they put any new airplanes on the charts. All of a sudden there would be a roar, and then maybe a whole flock of airplanes coming up. Aircraft were built at a factory near Buffalo and Bell was a maker of airplanes (*Bell Aircraft Corporation's main factory was in Wheatfield and the headquarters in Buffalo*). They would fly over a group of airplanes that seemed to come right over Phelps fairly low. They weren't trying to hide themselves; we could see them. There would be two of us, always two up



Bob Spink and Wendy Gaylord

there, and you would count them and when done counting you got on the phone.

The phone was automatically hooked up to Buffalo, central headquarters for this (I had never seen a crank phone before in my life). I had heard about them and didn't know how they worked, but there's a little magnetic needle in there and I guess you make electricity cranking this thing, and that sends a message to Buffalo or wherever it was. They had spotters all the way down the state, and the phone of the day was a crank phone and with a crank phone you can't use it for anything else. There's no dial on it. You cranked it and cranked it till you think you had got it to spark up, then you would start talking and they would hear you and you would say to them now we have X amount of this plane and Y amount of this plane. They're going north or northeast or wherever place. So we would give them the idea that the flight that took off was going where they wanted it to go (*heading to New York City to be shipped overseas*). So that was the start of it.

But things got to the point where we were getting airplanes coming all over during the middle of the war. They were just turning out airplanes. In the course of the day, I don't know, I'm probably exaggerating, but it seems like we might count from the morning to night 50 to 100 airplanes. I don't know where they all came from, but I know Buffalo was a source and maybe this is one of the air avenues they took to get to where they wanted to go. It was interesting. It was educational because I think we realized what had to go into the ingredients of a war, part of which were airplanes. And the Lehigh Valley Railroad was noted for trainloads of soldiers.

(continued on page 3)

Collecting the Stories of Phelps (continued from page 2)

So we're watching airplanes, and we can hear railroad cars going behind us or in front of us with personnel on, so we were kind of in the middle of a lot of activity as far as the war was concerned. With the scouts, I think probably maybe eight or ten of us took part. You wouldn't do it every day, but you had your time that you were expected to be there. My stuff that I got from that, a certificate, a little set of wings and so on, was displayed at the PCHS at one time. I'm guessing but I think it was from 1941 to 1944 that we were doing this.

All the planes that came through were U.S. planes. Every now and then we would see a B-17 – that's a big airplane. We'd see a few of them and I don't know where they were made, but you could tell they were coming because they roared. They all had four engines. And then we were all looking out. We still reported them. The fighter planes were the ones with the one engine and that, that came over a lot - like I say, a dozen, maybe two dozen would be a lot, and they had big engines and they flew low enough so unless you were really hard of hearing you knew they were coming. And we took turns talking to Buffalo. It got pretty old hat. Our crank phone went strictly to Buffalo and I suppose they didn't want everybody to know what was going on. And the kids? We did it. But we saw, part of the war that I wish everybody could see, but not the end result. But it was just a great education.

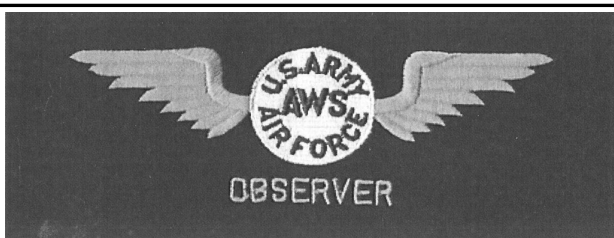
The older boys had gone off to World War II by the time I got involved. They had just scooped them all up. They were gone. Most of the boys that I dealt with were Class of '49 and most of us were in the Korean War. And out of 16 boys in the class, 14 of us joined the service, which is quite an effort. They only had two that didn't go for whatever reason, and most of us were in for four years, maybe two. But so we had, I think some of that thinking about wars and what you do if you have one, started with the Boy Scouts. We realized

what was required to a certain degree. And when it came time to go, that's what you did. So anyway, it was a very interesting experience. And now the Girl Scouts. They weren't involved with it then, but probably in today's environment there might be Girl Scouts doing the same thing.

During the war, lots of things were rationed, not the least of which was gasoline. The cars had different big stamps that were on your windshield, like where you put your inspection sticker. And there was an A sticker and a B sticker. Farmers always got the most. There were allotted X amount of gallons of gas a week. And they needed it, of course, for the machinery and the people who gave it to them kept track of how much gas they got each week, but that that's what they got and the pleasure cars got very little comparatively, which is as it ought to be. You know, there's wasn't a lot of time for pleasure driving. Anyway, the farmers needed the gas to do what they had to do.

We had a car when I was a boy, a 1941 Chevrolet. And it had what they call vacuum shift; the shift was on the steering wheel and it was easier to shift and we got it from the Shortsville Chevy dealer and that's where I cut my teeth on learning to drive and oh, did I have a good time. My father was very patient. I never had any problems with it.

During that period of time in high school, most of the boys played sports of some sort. I would say probably three-quarters of them. And the other half, two or three of them were real brains and they were studying. You know we had one boy that studied so much that when we got into history class, he would tell the teacher what the current events were for that day because he read the paper before school. So we were a pretty loose group. We were fortunate, I think, to live in that era.



The Aircraft Warning Service (AWS) was a civilian service of the United States Army Ground Observer Corps instated during May of 1941 to keep watch for enemy planes entering American airspace. It became inactive on May 29, 1944.

The second Ground Observer Corps, with aims and methodologies similar to the first, was organized in the early 1950s, during the Cold War. The following is from Phelps native Scott Gifford:

Does anyone else remember the airplane listening and identification site in the 1950s that was located behind the American Legion and staffed by volunteers? As a young boy I remember going there with Mrs. Longyear, our neighbor. She showed me how the equipment worked and how by using the headphones we could hear planes fly nearby. I think there were posters on the wall of airplane profiles to use in identification.

The Ground Observer Corps and their Operation Sky Watch existed from 1952 - 1958.

Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts! Exhibit Room and Gallery

Photos by Heather Olander



Reinstallation of Our Historic Clock Tower



The clock tower, originally fitted with a bell, was removed from our Town Hall on November 19, 2020 for roof repairs as well as repairs and reconstruction to sections of the clock tower. Once removed, it quickly felt as though something was missing. The Town Hall is a Colonial Style building, one of only a few in Phelps, and was constructed with cut stone from a quarry north of the village. The building has survived fires, been the gathering place during America's difficult times of war, and has been the site for countless meetings of organizations and our local government for over 170 years.

Reverend Anson Titus grew up in Phelps, and after moving away wrote his memories of events which were published in area newspapers. He recalls going to the Town Hall to hear music, see wax figures, glass blowing exhibitions, attend reform meetings, political rallies and specifically the call to recruit men for war and speakers who gave updates on the Civil War. He also remembers citizens ascending the Town Hall with pails of water as sparks fell on the roof from a fire across the street. Thanks to the quick thinking citizens, the Town Hall survived the 1864 fire which destroyed the opposite side of Main Street, almost in its entirety.

The Town Hall has seen major repairs over the last century. But through it all, the building has remained the center of our Town government, in the center of our town, available for all to see and access. The building's unique stone material and classic style elements are unlike any other building in Phelps. Watching the crane lift the clock tower up the morning of July 7 was incredible. Many citizens were there to watch the process as

the clock tower was raised up by a crane, glided through the sky and set back into place. All the coordination, time, and work that our Town employees and Town Board have dedicated to this project's completion has brought a welcomed sight; our historic clock tower back home and no longer missing from our little skyline. *Sarah Landschoot, Phelps Town Historian*



The restored clock tower patiently waited for installation in the Village parking lot.



After over two years, the clock tower is back home. Plans are being made to display the bell that has been removed from the tower.

The Town of Phelps received \$50,000 from the Genesee Valley Rural Revitalization (GVRR) Grant Round 2 for roof repairs and upgrades to the Phelps Town Hall, which was constructed ca. 1849 and is listed on the State/National Registers of Historic Places. A portion of the grant was used to reinstall the clock/bell tower, which underwent restoration and rehabilitation. Source: <https://phelpsnyc.com/town-of-phelps/news/gvrr-grant-award>

Welcome New Members!

Collette Barnard & Family
Clifton Springs, NY

Membership Renewals

Judith Beechler
Jack and Laurie Caves
Doug Coston
Steve Darrow
David, Debra and Joseph Lord
Mary Peake
Jon Schafer
Nickie Shannon
Sue Van Camp
Marty Weigel
Dan & Tammy Westfall
Roy Wilkes
Leon Willson

Time and Talent

Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts
Ron and Rosa Grube
Gary Jones
Dennis King
Michael Nash
Janet Walpole
Mart VanKirk

PCHS Gardening
Billee Altman
Dorothy Colvin

Headstone Restoration
David Bloom

Newsletter
Bonnie Dixon
Jane Pedersen
Cathy Scott

Telling Their Stories
Wendy Gaylord- Interviewer
Rick Darrow
Betty Raes

Transcribing the Past
Collette Barnard
Rayne Hammond - Benz
Cathy Scott

Memorial Donations

Judith Beechler
In memory of
Carl Beechler

Dominic & Donna Giardino
Clayton & Mary Ruggles
In memory of
Sheldon & Hazel Frederick

Robert Pensworth
In memory of
William Pensworth

Robert and Diane Goodman
In memory of
Lt. Colonel Donald Ulmer

Monetary Donations

Shiela B. Hall
Carol Harmon
Mary Peake
Mart VanKirk
Dan & Tammy Westfall

Item Donations

John & Virginia Bourke
Buckboard wagon bench, canning jar

Al Cauwels
Spools of ribbon for wreaths

Linda Homco
Framed 1904 map of Phelps

Elizabeth Salisbury Homer
In memory of parents & grandparents
Sleigh bells from Sunnyside Farms

Barry Powell
200 Years of the Town of Phelps

In Memoriam

Lt. Colonel Donald Ulmer

PCS Class of 1955
PCHS Member and Volunteer

August 17, 1937 -
July 1, 2023

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.
Dues may be paid by: check to PCHS or online at phelpsnyhistory.com*

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): _____

Chocolate Sauerkraut Cupcakes

Simply delicious cupcakes made with a cake mix and sauerkraut.
From Gloria Fisher

Devil's Food cake mix (Gloria prefers Pillsbury)

1/2 cup of sauerkraut, rinsed, drained, liquid pressed out,
and finely chopped

Follow directions on cake mix box for making cupcakes

Stir in sauerkraut until well mixed

Bake according to directions on cake mix box
(baking time may take longer (5-10 minutes, test with toothpick)

Best if made a day ahead and then frosted with
chocolate frosting of your choice.



PHELPS COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

66 Main Street
Phelps, NY 14532

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Barry Lee

Jane Pedersen

Cathy Scott

Director

Diane Goodman

Administrative

Assistant

Heather Olander

Peace, Love, Kraut!
Phelps Sauerkraut Weekend
August 3 - 6, 2023
Parade Saturday at 4pm

Howe House
Open Saturday August 5
2pm - 4pm

Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts
Open
Thursday 3-7pm
Friday 5-7pm
Saturday noon-7pm