



Phelps Community Historical Society

March 2023 Volume 31 Issue 271



Howe House Museum

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histsoc2@gmail.com

Website:

phelpsnhistory.com

Find us on

Facebook

Museum Hours:

Wed -Thurs - Fri
10 am - 4 pm
or by appointment

President

Mart VanKirk

Vice President

Sarah Landschoot

Treasurer

Tom Cheney

Trustees

Billee Altman

Marilyn DeRuyter

Ron Grube -

PCHS Historian

Gary Jones

Len Kataskas

Dennis King

Barry Lee

Jane Pedersen

Cathy Scott

Student Rep.

Anna Lightfoote

Director

Diane Goodman

Administrative

Assistant

Heather Olander



Annual Membership Meeting

Saturday April 22 2 PM Howe House

Election of PCHS President and Trustees

Presentation by

Dr. Ron Grube *PCHS Historian* and

Sarah Landschoot *Phelps Town Historian*

Bring a friend and tour the museum!

Refreshments will be available



Midlakes Art and Music Program

Tuesday April 25

6 PM Howe House

Music will fill the Howe House as you gaze upon beautiful works of art by talented students from Midlakes. The PCHS encourages the community to attend this program in support of the students and to enjoy the museum too! Music and art provided by Midlakes students. Refreshments will be available.



Welcome New Members!

Lee Ann O'Connor-Tia Phelps, NY
Jennifer Webb Phelps, NY

Monetary Donations

The Quigley Family
For CLO garden maintenance
Elizabeth Homer

Membership Renewals

Cynthia Atkinson
Kathy Burnett
Arlene Copeland
Ernest and Lisa Day
Gail DeWeaver
Barbara Gillespie
Robert and Diane Goodman
Jack and B.J. Hicks
Virginia Konz
Connie Mosher
Linda Nieskes
Ann B. Oaks
Donna Webb

Memorial Donations

Cynthia Atkinson
In memory of
Rena Ruthven
&
Eldon W. Clement

Emme Cortelyou
In Memory of
Irene Copper

Time and Talent

Nancy Denisi
Kalamazoo stove cleaning

Marilyn DeRuttyer
Exhibit assistance

Linda Homco, DVM
B.E. Babcock documents & information

Billee Altman
John Altman
Dorothy Colvin
Patrick O'Neill
Howe House gardening

Ontario County Workforce Program
Cleaning crew

Bonnie Dixon
Barb Gillespie
Robin Grube
Ron Grube
Rosa Grube
Gary Jones
Dana Mark
Marcia Maslyn
Cathy Scott
Mart VanKirk

Items Donated

Richard Barous
1860 Strawberry Festival invitation

John & Ginny Bourke
Stoneware crocks & hand bell

Nancy Clark
Phelps, NY Town Hall plate

Ron and Rosa Grube
Phelpsopoly game

Steven Landschoot
Phelps hardware store ledger



In Memoriam

Florence T. Chaintreuil
PCHS Member

Sept. 19,1942-June 19, 2022

Leather Fire Buckets

Owned by Truman Heminway

(b. January 26, 1797 England d. August 28, 1863 Palmyra, NY)

Father of *Susan Heminway Oaks*

Father- in-law of *Nathan Oaks Sr.*

Kindly donated by *Ann Oaks*
Her husband *Nathan IV* was the
great-grandson of *Nathan Sr.* and
Susan Heminway Oaks.

Fire buckets would have been kept on hand in the house for water in case of fire, a constant threat due to the use of fires for heating and cooking. They were also there to aid firefighters if need be and were stenciled with the name of the homeowner, as was the custom, to assure they were returned.



Portrait in photo is Truman Heminway.



The median in the center of East Main Street ran from the North-South Wayne Street intersection to Exchange Street. A Civil War cannon sat on the median in front of the Howe House. Installed in the mid 1920s, at the time the brick paving was laid, the median was removed in September of 1946.

Home Built for Sauerkraut King Is 100 Years Old:

The Life and Legacy of Birton E. Babcock

Compiled by Diane Goodman and Dr. Ron Grube, with special thanks to the current homeowner Linda Homco, DVM, and her sister Leta O'Connor for providing new information for our files.



The story of one of Phelps' first millionaires begins in Ohio where Birton Enlester Babcock was born on May 20, 1870; attended Wooster College in Wooster; taught public school from 1894-1896; married Edna Charlotte Wilder on September 25, 1895; and determined to become a Presbyterian

minister, attended Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati from 1896-1898. But on the eve of continuing his seminary training, his health gave out and he was informed by his doctors that the strain of further scholastic life could prove fatal.

In need of income, Babcock took the first job available—in a Clyde, Ohio sauerkraut and pickle factory. After three years in that work, his health recovered (he attributed his recovery to drinking sauerkraut brine), Babcock was convinced of the possibilities the sauerkraut business offered. In 1901, Birton, age 31, and Edna came to Phelps and lived in an apartment at what is today 42 Park Street. He went to work for Whitney, Vincent and Garlock, operators of the Empire State Pickling plant on Pleasant Street (south of the railroad tracks and east of the Crown Drill Company). After a short time he borrowed \$1,200 and in company with Mr. Durand purchased the pickling plant for \$4,000 with a downpayment of \$1,000. Mr. Durand retired after a few years and in 1907 Babcock went into business with L.S. Foster, a vinegar manufacturer, to make sauerkraut.

Over the years Babcock bought out Foster and the Silver Floss name (at the cost of \$265,000) but continued operating under the name of Empire State Pickling, eventually expanding the business with 2 plants in Phelps, and plants in Shortsville, Junius, Geneva and Gorham. At one point, the company was processing 500 to 800 tons of cabbage a day. Phelps was the "Sauerkraut Capitol of the World" and B.E. Babcock a millionaire several times over.

While an important Phelps citizen as head of the village's largest industry, Birton Babcock was also good for the community. His theological education and passion for the church was displayed by his generosity. He was financially and personally supportive of the First Presbyterian Church (now the United Church of Phelps), where he directed the choir and was a church elder. He

built the service wing for the church in 1929, furnished coal for the furnace during the Depression and purchased the church organ. He even played Santa at the Sunday School Christmas party.

In November of 1938 Babcock and Harry E. Hovey (Hovey made his fortune in grocery and other stores) gave an anonymous gift to the Finger Lakes Council of the Boy Scouts of America to buy a 147 acre site on the east shore of Seneca Lake near Ovid. In January of 1939, after naming the benefactors, the Council dedicated the location as Camp Babcock-Hovey. The Boy Scouts awarded them their highest honor – the Silver Beaver Award (Birton's award certificate is in the PCHS files).



Babcock Hall Wooster College, Wooster, Ohio

The building features paneling, woodwork and a fireplace, all similar to the Babcock home in Phelps.

Other generous acts of note include contributions to the Clifton Springs Sanitarium and the gifting of a residence hall for his alma mater, Wooster College, in 1935. Babcock Hall houses 98 students.

While the success of his business allowed him to enjoy his hobbies that included horseback riding, an amateur greenhouse and growing roses, he was not so fortunate in his personal life. Sadly, over a period of eight years, Birton and Edna had lost four children in infancy. Edna developed a neurological disease in her sixties and had to be taken care of in the Babcock house. Edna's best friend Alice Myhill Bailey and her husband Alva, who managed one of the sauerkraut plants, lived in the house with the Babcocks during the latter part of her illness. Near the end of Edna's life, a special room was created for her in the Clifton Springs' Sanitarium where she died August 5, 1939. The Baileys continued to reside at the Babcock house with Birton until he died April 7, 1941 of a heart attack in his office.

The Last Will and Testament of Birton E. Babcock left the real property in the Village of Phelps to Alice M. Bailey. The property, initially acquired in parcels, was now in one piece and included the house built in 1923, a horse barn, and a greenhouse. The horse barn was eventually moved to the north side of the Presbyterian Church to become the Christian Education building. The house at 103 East Main Street (now 48 Main) was inspired by a home in Rochester. Upon leaving the country club there, Birton Babcock would admire a house that could be seen across the road. He contracted the architect, Arthur B. Headley, to build a similar house here in Phelps. The two are almost identical.

When Alice Bailey died in August of 1975, her will left the property to her husband Alva. He died in January 1979 and in June the house and 3 acres were purchased by Michael A. and Margaret A. Faul. Michael practiced law in Phelps and was Town Justice for 12 years.

The property was sold in 2010 to the Keeblers when the Fauls moved to Florida. In 2014 the Keeblers sold to present owner Linda Homco, DVM, who is maintaining and upgrading the house and property with a passion for its history and preservation.



Birton E. Babcock



Edna Babcock

Sources: Article by Richard Rathbun 1981—PCHS files; "Birt Babcock Sauerkraut King" by Jimmy Wilkinson Meyer, July 2006; Wooster College website; 1910 United States Federal Census; Findagrave.com



103 East Main Street - built 1923



48 Main Street - 100 years old

From the Geneva Daily Times January 14, 1905 Phelps, N. Y.

One of the large bloodhounds belonging to the Uncle Tom's Cabin Company, that played at Geneva Thursday evening, escaped from the baggage car as the train passed through here yesterday morning. In jumping from the train the dog struck on the icy platform and broke its right hind leg. The company was notified of the accident but evidently cared but little for their property as they wired back instruction to dispose of the dog to any one that would accept it.

Mr. Babcock of the Phelps Pickling works took the dog and succeeded in reducing the fracture and placing the leg in splinters. The dog is believed to be a genuine Cuban bloodhound.

From the March 16, 2023 TV program Jeopardy!

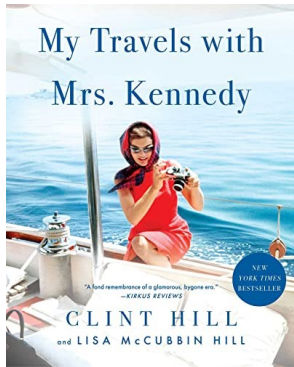
Question: Hot Dog! Phelps, New York is the capital of this cabbage-based topping & it's time to pile some on right now.
Answer: Sauerkraut

My Travels with Mrs. Kennedy

Book review by Marcia Maslyn

By Secret Service Agent Clint Hill & Lisa McCubbin Hill

Published October 25, 2022



Sparked by long forgotten gifts and memorabilia discovered in an old trunk, retired Secret Service agent Clint Hill reminisces about private moments, shared laughs and crazy adventures with one of the world's most iconic women, during her time as First Lady. He commented "There was no formal job requirement for the spouse of the President of the United States and each one created her version of it in the White House. Mrs. Kennedy had no interest in politics, but in just three years she proved herself to be one of the best ambassadors the United States has ever had." Mrs. Kennedy visited Paris, enchanting Charles de Gaulle, and made similar splashes in Greece, England, Italy, and even the dueling countries of India and Pakistan. Her fluency in multiple languages, combined with her understanding of world history and unmatched charisma, proved to be remarkable.

One of the memories is when Mrs. Kennedy was invited to tea with Queen Elizabeth. Though they had prominent

positions in their countries, both women were in their thirties, only a few years apart in age. They spent their time together talking about their children and being a mother watching and enjoying a child's life. A picture of Mrs. Kennedy and her sister sitting side saddle on a camel, brings on a chuckle. "Those memories are the epitome of who she was - fun loving, adventurous, spontaneous, down to earth and elegant at the same time." In all the small countries she visited, large friendly crowds gathered along the roadways everywhere. Yet she never got credit for how much she helped the image of the United States in that part of the world and the inspiration she gave to young girls and women.

Immersive, packed with rare imagery and fond reminiscences, this book will appeal to historians, but also anyone interested in the world inhabited by one of the most beguiling, enigmatic First Ladies in American history.

My Travels with Mrs. Kennedy unveils a personal side of history that has never been told before and takes the reader on a breathtaking journey, learning what it was like for Clint Hill to travel with Mrs. Kennedy as the entire world was falling in love with her.

Annual Elections To Be Held Saturday April 22, 2023

President - elected for a term of one-year:

Mart VanKirk has been PCHS president for the past three years.

He is up for election to a fourth term.

Nominations from the floor will be accepted.

Trustee - elected for a term of three years. **Four (4) to be elected**
(PCHS Board 8-12 Trustees)

If a Trustee does not complete their term, the Board of Trustees may elect a replacement to serve the remainder of the three year term with the position confirmed by vote of the historical society at the Annual Meeting.

This maintains a three year rotation of positions.

Billee Altman - one year term. Billee is a Phelps resident, PCS graduate, and PCHS volunteer maintaining our flower gardens.

Dennis King - one year term. Dennis served three terms as PCHS president and is currently chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee.

Barry Lee - three year term. Barry is a Clifton Springs resident, PCS graduate and member of the Collections Committee.

Cathy Scott - three year term. Cathy is a Phelps resident, volunteer and has served on the Personnel Committee for the past three years.

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): _____

New Item added to our Gift Shoppe!



20 oz Travel Tumbler
(black with white graphics)

Price \$21.50 Members \$19.35

(Prices include NYS Sales Tax)

Shipping & Handling \$7

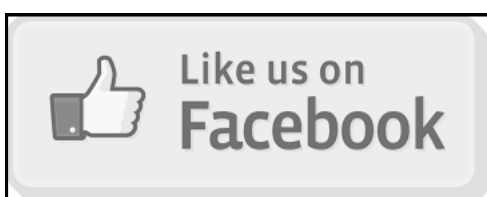
Available at Gift Shoppe, online at phelpsnyhistory.com or by mail



PHELPS COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

66 Main Street
Phelps, NY 14532

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A decorative banner with a scalloped, dotted border. The words "UPCOMING EVENTS" are written in a bold, serif font across the center.

Saturday May 20, 2023

Off Site Excursion - details soon to follow

Sunday June 11, 2023 at 1 PM

Redfield History and Park Picnic

Saturday July 15, 2023

Off Site Excursion - details soon to follow

Saturday August 5, 2023

Sauerkraut Weekend!

Howe House Museum will be open to the public

Saturday September 16, 2023 at 7 PM

Historic Program/Re-enactment

Sunday October 15, 2023 at 3 PM

Cemetery Walk at Pioneer Cemetery