



Phelps Community Historical Society

May 2022 Volume 30 Issue 262



From the Director's Desk... the Month of May

The evening of the second Monday in May was warm and lovely, just right for a program on starting and maintaining a garden. Some of the information Dorothy Colvin and Billee Altman shared with the group of 26 can be found on our website phelpsnhistory.com. Afterwards, some of the attendees took a walk over to the museum to see the gardens and farmhouse kitchen. The PCHS would like to thank the United Church of Phelps for the use of their fellowship hall. Please see pages six and seven of this newsletter for the donations and time and talent that also contributed to the event.



Dedicated volunteers, Billee and Dorothy continue to weed, plant, mulch and water so that we may have a colorful display of flowers. Windy Hill Flower Farm gives the PCHS a much appreciated discount on our purchases.

People who come to the Howe House Museum find us in a number of ways: travel websites, vacation guide magazines, internet searches for things to do in Phelps or odd things to see in New York (the two-story outhouse!). One of the tours I gave this month was with a couple from Washington State who had visited their daughter and family in Pennsylvania and were driving through the Finger Lakes on their way to Alexandria Bay.

The 1924 Essex, transported by flatbed, spent a few days in Rochester last week and came home Monday with a new roof and running boards. Hard to believe she is almost 100 years old, looks good and still runs. Thank you to the Salisbury Family for keeping the Essex in good condition so that it may be appreciated for many more years to come.

The staff at the PCHS now includes Administrative Assistant Heather Olander. Her work experience and interests will be a great asset, allowing the Director to focus on other aspects of the museum operations. If you have a chance please stop in to say hello!

Diane Goodman

Phelps Central School Tennis Team 1962

First Row L-R: J. Marsa, R. Kenny, S. Rathbun, J. Crowley

Second Row L-R: Coach Joseph Silver, J. Phillips, J. Tornow, R. Wilkes, E. McManus, J. Baker



Interesting novel: we follow two brothers, aged 18 and 8, as they experience the 1950s with a cast of many colorful characters. American history, biblical references and legends are also part of the mix as we travel across the country on the Lincoln Highway.

The Lincoln Highway was invented in 1912, by entrepreneur Carl G Fisher. He believed the American people should be able to drive from one side of the country to the other. He named the highway after Abraham Lincoln, and there are statues of him along the way, made possible by funds that Boy Scout troops raised. It starts in Time Square in New York City and ends 3000 miles away in Lincoln Park, San Francisco. Mr. Fisher built the first section with donations from people who believed in his dream, including Thomas Edison and Teddy Roosevelt.

This was a journey across the country but also a journey of the heart. Brothers Emmett and Billy start out from Nebraska with plans to follow postcards from their mother, with hopes of finding her in California on the 4th of July watching fireworks. Two friends, whom Emmett knew from a work farm he spent time at, show up unexpectedly and suddenly everyone is heading east to New York City. All these characters and others who are introduced along the way are looking for "fresh starts", discovering who they are, how

they fit into this world and rising up to meet their fate. These three teenage boys are flawed and well meaning, trying to do the right thing, plus sweet eight year old Billy who is precocious, yet naive and believes in heroes.

Duchess' ideas and misguided good intentions fail to take into account the consequences of his actions, he seeks to balance the scales of justice in his life. Wooley is a dreamer, out of sync with the world and his wealthy family's expectations, requiring medication for his condition, looking for a one-of-a-kind day. Billy's precious book, *Professor Abernathy's Compendium of Heroes*, is key, including a thrilling freight train journey to New York, taking in a circus, the Empire State Building and more.

They encounter memorable characters on their journey including Ulysses, a veteran of World War II, in search of his wife and son. There was villainous Pastor John, who caused some stressful moments, add in Wooley's helpful sister Sarah and Sally a neighbor of Emmett's in Nebraska Towles storytelling is spellbinding, oozing with a sense of wonder, with its echoes of ancient myth, legends and heroes, brought to life in 1950s America. It is a multilayer read of life, brothers, love, friendship, the spirit of adventure, misfits that a world struggles to accommodate and the heartbreak of tragedy.

School District #13 Stryker School was a wooden structure on the west side of Stryker Rd just north of McBurney Rd. It was torn down and now a grove of trees marks its former location. Photo from the fall of 1935 was numbered as follows: 1-Kenneth Canne, 2-Charles Wilbur, 3-Brady Bellis, 4-Natalie Rector, 5-Elmer Mollenkopf, 6-Esther Mollenkopf, 7- Gloria Wilbur 8- Jolene Wilbur, 9-Clarence Mollenkopf, 10-Charles Mollenkopf, #11 -Teacher Margaret Mann (age 20)
Note: Margaret married Gordon Rector (age 24), older brother of Natalie (by 15 years) on September 15, 1935.



A Letter From Germany Tells of Living and Working for the Howe Family

Last December I received a phone call asking for information on Frances Howe (Frances Griffith Howe Wiltsie), daughter of Dr. William A (1862-1940) and Elizabeth Partridge Howe (1872-1955). The caller, Virginia Smith Storz, originally from Phelps, NY, has been living in Germany for the past 50 years. Her mother, Margaret Helen Smith, worked for the Howes from 1937 until 1942. Margaret had talked about Frances being a rebel and Virginia was curious as to what happened to her. I found an obituary for Frances, who had passed away in 1965. She went to college, was a teacher, married and had children. It was emailed to Virginia Storz with information on the family from FindAGrave.com. She in turn sent the following along with a quilt pattern. *Diane Goodman*

Life with the Howes as told to me, Virginia Smith Storz, by my mother, Margaret Helen Smith nee Smith. The following may not be 100% correct. If I had known that there was interest, I could have verified the info while she was alive.

My grandmother passed when my mother was six, she was the second youngest. My grandfather had eight kids to find homes for, which was not easy in 1927. After Mom contracted pneumonia at age 12, which was deadly in those days, her older brother and his wife got her from my grandfather. My aunt thought she would die. They lived on Jones Road in Phelps. She attended a nearby country school until the eighth grade. No school buses in those days to enable her to continue schooling. She was 16 when her sister, Mary Adsitt, was told in a beauty parlor (possibly by Gladys Hobart) that the Howes were looking for a girl. When interviewed, Mrs. Howe asked if Mom could cook. She answered "no". Mrs. Howe told her she would teach her how, and she did. Mom took great pride in cooking and baking. We always ate very well. Mom was called Helen, so that there would be no confusion as there was a Howe daughter also named Margaret. She worked there until 1942, when she left to get married.

Meals: Since Mrs. Howe had heart problems, she spent the mornings in bed. Possibly they had a telephone, as groceries and meat were delivered. They ate lamb chops. I assume Mom's taste for exclusive foods was influenced there. We had oyster soup once a week and oyster loaf on holidays, until they were found to contain poison in the 50s. There is a cookbook she wrote recipes in while working there. She made a fruit salad with whipped cream and Miracle Whip which my cousins still remember from family gatherings. It was delicious, but too many calories for me! Meals were served in the dining room. Mother wore a white apron and ate alone in the kitchen, as was the custom. When something was needed, a bell was rung.

Phelps life: Dr. Howe was a retired doctor but did care for some older patients, mostly older women. An older lady came (weekly) to play cards. She was a widow and lived north of the thruway in a big brick house. Dr. Howe drove her to and fro.

Mother was responsible for the cooking and laundry. They had a half-automatic washing machine, laundry was done in the kitchen. Mrs. Pease did the cleaning. Mom said she did the floors on her hands and knees. A man came to stoke the furnace during cold winter nights.

When Mom started there, there was only Dr. and Mrs. Howe. But a daughter and Mr. Drake and family moved in (*Margaret, Archibard and daughters Margaret and Frances*). There were photos of the flower garden which Mr. Drake planted. There was an archway to enter. The photos were black and white so the flowers were not identifiable, but the garden looked beautiful.

Later a son and daughter-in-law and family moved in (*John Q. Sr., Alice and three children*). This daughter-in-law was born in Central or South America (*Alice Bates was born in Puerto Rico where her father had a business venture in San Juan*). That meant Mom was responsible for a big family. She had Thursdays free, so she went to the Adsitts and continued doing tasks there as Aunt Mary was working. She also had Sunday evenings free. She had a friend, Ruth Pease, with whom she went to the movies, biked around, and ice skated on Flint Creek.

Although she was a "girl" she was treated well. When Mrs. Howe realized that she liked to sew, the furnace man brought a sewing machine down from the attic. Mrs. Howe showed her how to knit, crocket and embroider which she did until she was old. I used some of the lace in my home. Mom copied Mrs. Howe's quilt pattern which you now have. I kept letters Mrs. Howe wrote to Mom telling her, among other things, she could always return if her married life did not go well. After Mom left, another girl was not hired.

The house: Dr. and Mrs. Howe's bedroom faced the church (North Wayne St). The bathroom was in the hall facing Main Street. Mom's bedroom is now the bathroom. She said she was never aware of the unusual toilet.

Travels: Summers were spent on Murray Island, one of the Thousand Islands. Food was delivered by boat. There was a photo of kids sitting on a bench by the boat house. Mom then had a Brownie box camera so she took lots of photos. In 1973, I sorted and disposed shoe boxes full of them with the negatives that I felt were unimportant to us. I often wondered about the drinking water and sewage but she said they were on opposite ends of the island. Later I read that the water is so cold that bacteria can not exist there. They went to Florida during the winters (St. Petersburg?) There was a photo of the house which they rented. I am not certain if they went while their kids lived with them. Dr. Howe drove. They spent the first night with a daughter who lived on Long Island. Dr. Howe drove Mom and the granddaughters to a movie in NYC. Mom complained that during the trip south, they ate rice three times daily, even for breakfast.



Photo taken by Margaret with her Brownie box camera
Her bedroom window is above the porch.

Train Wreck in Phelps - June 26, 1906

Dr. Ron Grube

The westbound passenger train "Buffalo Express" collided with a freight train called "Morning Glory" on June 26, 1906, at 9:28 a.m. The westbound "Morning Glory" was stopped on the New York Central Hudson River line near the Crown Drill Company and the pickle works on South Wayne Street. Apparently, the flagman did not go back to flag the on-coming "Buffalo Express". If you stand on the tracks on South Wayne Street and look easterly, you will see a bend that would eventually obscure the "Morning Glory". Reports in the Phelps Citizen (June 28, 1906) stated that the passenger train was moving at a "pretty lively speed". The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (June 27, 1906) agreed that the "Buffalo Express" was moving at a fairly high rate of speed.

The passenger train rammed the caboose of the freight train and then plowed into three box cars. The whole area became a high pile of debris. The crash could be heard all around the middle and east end of the village. According to the Rochester paper, the passenger train was buried beneath the wreckage. This might explain why in one photo viewed from the north side of the wreck, it appears that the roof of a passenger car is lying on the ground. The view from the south side, including the view of the Crown

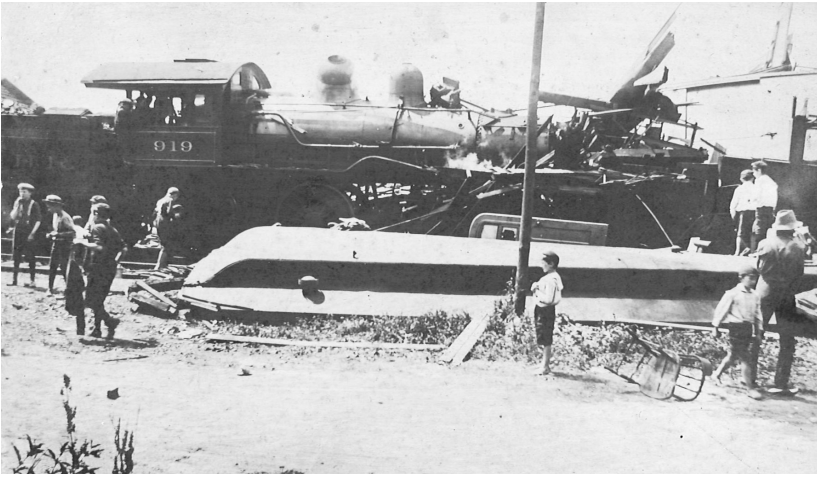
Drill building, shows what looks like the windows of a passenger car.

The Crown Drill Company whistle blew which brought the fire department. They, in turn, called the five medical doctors in Phelps to the scene. Luckily, there were few injuries. This is probably due to the "telescoping" of the passenger train into the freight train. The caboose and three box cars absorbed the impact of the passenger train. Injured was the fireman on the passenger train, who jumped from the engine before the crash. He said he rolled over 14 times. The engineer said he was too large to jump so he stayed in the locomotive when it crashed. The engineer was not hurt – the fireman was. One lady on the passenger train suffered a cut hip.

When a passenger train from the west arrived at the Church Street station, the passengers from the "Buffalo Express" were transferred to Geneva where they continued their eastward journey. Wrecking crews from Canandaigua and Syracuse arrived to clear the tracks shortly after noon. Another crew from Newark arrived with a steam crane to help in the removal of the debris. The photos provided show the audience from Phelps and likely from the passenger train.



Train Wreck in Phelps - June 26, 1906



View from north side of the wreck. It appears that the roof of a passenger car is lying on the ground.

The view from the south side, including the view of the Crown Drill building, shows what looks like the windows of a passenger car.



From Our Archives

The Crown Manufacturing Co., formed in 1883, made farm equipment including the Crown Fertilizer Drill. Built in 1883 it was located on Pleasant Street and South Wayne. At the time it was the largest employer in Phelps with 100 men. It burned in 1909. It was rebuilt as a one story building but they never regained their former business and closed in 1930.

In 1988 the photo on the right was donated by Mrs. Updyke. Several weeks ago it was found in the archives; the framing was in poor condition and needed to be replaced.

Thanks to ***Framing by Frank Allen*** in Stanley, NY, the photo has been beautifully framed with conservation glass and preservation materials as a donation. She also donated supplies for storing photos and small maps.

Thank you Frank Allen!



Membership Renewals

Tom Cheney
Rich Hoven
Marlene Jones
Len Kataskas
Barb Middlebrook & family
OTTC
(Ontario & Trumansburg Telephone Co)
John & Diane Salisbury
Woody Travis & Nancy Caves
Marie Westfall
Roger & Shirley Westfall
Tom Willson

Donations

John & Ginny Bourke
Napkin ring, Phelps According to Don
framed Phelps Art Center poster

Anne Boutelier
Book-"When Phelps Was Young"

Dorothy Colvin
Flowers in planter for Howe House

Marilyn DeRuyter/Jane Pedersen
Ferns for outside urns

Betty McMahon
Family funeral registers, genealogy

Rodney Sunderlin
Silver Floss Special jacket

Vienna Café & Consignment
Gift certificate

Flower Power Program

Dorothy Colvin & Billee Altman
Door prizes

Marilyn DeRuyter & Mart VanKirk
Refreshments

Windy Hill Flower Farm
Flowers for door prize

Welcome New Member!

Heather Olander Stanley, NY

Monetary Donations

John & Diane Salisbury
Roger & Shirley Westfall

Memorial Donations

Nancy Caves & Woody Travis
in memory of
Nancy Doubleday

Al & Marge Cauwels
in memory of
Kymberley Maslyn

Lucille A. Rockefeller
in memory of
Anne Britting Sheppard

Al & Marge Cauwels
Marilyn DeRuyter
Dana Mark
in memory of
Calvin W. Treese

The Salisbury Family
in memory of
*Anna Salisbury Phil Salisbury
Joel Caves*

In memoriam

Dr. Joel L. Caves
June 2, 1940-
May 11, 2022

Kymberley Hoven Maslyn
Former PCHS Trustee
October 19, 1967-
May 10, 2022

Anne Britting Sheppard
December 9, 1956-
March 28, 2022

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: _____

Dates Winter Address in effect: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Computer: _____

Index Card: _____

Member Card: _____

DONATION: Amount _____

_____ In memory of (Optional): _____

_____ In honor of (Optional): _____

_____ Allocate funds to (Optional): _____

Thank you to all for your Time and Talent

Flower Power Program

Dorothy Colvin

Billee Altman

Program presenters

Bob Quigley

Technical Assistance

Marilyn DeRuyter

Jane Pedersen

Mart VanKirk

Set up and Meet and Greet

Ron Grube

HH kitchen tours after program

Program flyer distribution

Al & Marge Cauwels

Marilyn DeRuyter

Bonnie Dixon

Dana Mark

Carriage House Clean Up

Ron Grube

Gary Jones

Mart VanKirk

Gardening

Billee Altman

Dorothy Colvin

Membership and Thank-yous

Barb Gillespie

Newsletter

Barb Brennessel

Bonnie Dixon

Marcia Maslyn

Personnel Committee

Tom Cheney

Ron Grube

Jane Pedersen

Cathy Scott

Mart VanKirk

Helping Hand

Dana Mark

Correction to Business Member listed in April newsletter:
Vienna Café & Consignment LLC - **new phone numbers:**
Cell 585-557-0135 Land Line 315-318-1040

Thank you Carol Conklin for your
many years of volunteering for the
Phelps Community Historical Society
at the Howe House Museum.

PHELPS COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

66 Main Street
Phelps, NY 14532

NON-PROFIT ORG
PRST STD
US Postage
PAID
Permit No 31
Newark, NY 14513



Like us on
Facebook

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 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, Trustee
Gary Jones, Trustee
Len Kataskas, Trustee
Cory Maslyn, Trustee
Jane Pedersen, Trustee
Sarah Riegel, Trustee



Director

Diane Goodman

Administrative Assistant

Heather Olander

SAVE THE DATE!!

PHELPS ALUMNI

ASSOCIATION

REUNION

THURSDAY

AUGUST 4, 2022

CLUB 86 GENEVA, NY

Details to follow