



Phelps Community Historical Society

May 2023 Volume 31 Issue 273



If you have the opportunity to be on Main Street in the Village of Phelps you will see the Hometown Hero Banners that have been hung (see page 7). The project was a community effort, our thanks to all who were involved.

PCHS newsletters from the year 2000 to 2022 are now available at the Phelps Library. The donor, Doris Spink, spent 25 hours creating an index for the newsletters.

The Ontario County Historical Society exhibit “*Let’s Go Have Fun*”, *Glimpses of Recreation in Ontario County 1900-1965*, opens at the end of this month. Three items from the PCHS collection are on loan for the exhibit (lacrosse stick, skis, a baseball bat made by Elderlee in Oaks Corners and an early 1900s photo of the Phelps Croquet Club).

The interior of the Country Lawyer’s Office, 7 Church Street, is being cleaned, painted and rejuvenated in preparation for the art gallery that will be in the building (see page 6). Visitors to the gallery will enter through the front room where items from the PCHS collection are already on display

In the April newsletter, volunteer gardener Dorothy Colvin was identified in a photo as Dorothy Altman. This was an editing error on my part - apologies Dorothy!

Diane Goodman
PCHS Director

1953 Phelps Central School Baseball Team



First row L-R: Robert Hofer, Stan Maines, Ken Conklin, Ken Overslaugh, Morgan Knapp, John Rector

Second row L-R: Gerald Guard, Mgr., Ray Howard, Don Ulmer, Dale Gelder, Gerald Yeckley, Gary Gleason, Coach Ollie Cook

Third row L-R: Bernie Miller, Skip Filiatreau, Donald Treadwell, Chuck Amidon, Bill Filiatreau, Richard McDonald, Ronald Horton

New Members!

William Broomfield- Phelps, NY
Ed Rockefeller - Newark, NY

Membership Renewals

Paul Bree
Woody Travis & Nancy Caves
Tom Cheney
Emme Cortelyou
Marion Donnelly
Jean Dorman
Gary & Gloria Fisher
Pat Lyon Jones
Mary McCallister
Daniel & Jocelyn McConnon
Sean Niles
Heather Olander
OTTC
Kurt & Karen Owens
John Parmelee
Kathleen Quigley
Nancy Roth
John & Diane Salisbury
Paul & Jeanne Salisbury
Don Ulmer
Barbara Van Kirk
Marie Westfall

Time and Talent

Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts
Ron, Rosa & Robin Grube
Gary Jones Lucia Marshall
Michael Nash Patrick O'Neill
Mart VanKirk Janet Walpole
Lynn White

PCHS Gardening
Billee Altman Dorothy Colvin

Newsletter
Barb Brennessel Bonnie Dixon

Telling Their Stories
Wendy Gaylord - Interviewer
Nancy Denisi Roland Penta Bob Spink

Transcribing the Past
Collette Barnard Rayne Hammond - Benz
Cathy Scott

Miscellaneous
Marilyn DeRuyter Barb Gillespie
David Grouschow Len Kataskas
Dennis King

Memorial Donations

Mark and Tracy Falkey
In memory of
Lowell, Joen, and Wade Falkey

Kathleen Quigley
In memory of
Bob & Pat Quigley

Marie Westfall
In memory of
Robert Westfall

Monetary Donations

Margaret Bovard
Emme Cortelyou
Gary Jones - *CLO painting*
John & Diane Salisbury
Paul & Jeanne Salisbury

Marion Donnelly
In honor of
*Carol Conklin and
the work she did for the PCHS*

Items Donated

Dorothy Colvin
Flowers for Howe House garden

Nancy Denisi
Cookbook - "A Taste of Phelps"

Linda Homco
J.M Rudio prints

Patrick O'Neill
LP vinyl records

Robin Perkins
Porcelain doll from early 1900s

Special Thank You

Marilyn DeRuyter
Nicole Fess

Cory Maslyn
*for your time and talent as
former PCHS Trustees*

Collecting the Stories of Phelps

First in a series of interviews by Wendy Gaylord

Wendy: This is Wendy Gaylord and I am talking with Nancy Denisi on May 1, 2023 at the Howe House in Phelps, NY. Hi Nancy.

Nancy: Hi Wendy.

Wendy: We are looking at this big old stove in the kitchen and I understand it was in your family. Can you tell us about it?

Nancy: Yes, I remember when I was in fifth grade, my mom had the kitchen remodeled and we took out the wood stove that we used for heat. And shortly after that, this stove appeared in the kitchen. We used it mainly for heat on extra cold days and winter mornings when you didn't want to start the furnace. My mom was very proud of it - because it is a Kalamazoo stove, and it's the Emperor model. We used it a lot -she used to always keep a cast aluminum tea kettle on the stove full of water, so she humidified the kitchen with it. On the top is, they are called warming ovens, where you could like fry your bacon and then put it up there and keep it warm while you cooked your eggs. I remember we always had our mittens and hats and scarves in there, so they were always toasty warm in the winter, but that is what we used it for, mostly. It is a model that does have the water reservoir on the right hand side, which if you fill it with water you have a ready supply of hot water at all times. Unfortunately, you have to dip it out, fill it by hand and dip it out by hand, but it was a great convenience when the stove was new. We didn't use it for a water reservoir, my mom used that for storage. It has six burners on the top, a place where you set your pots and pans. It has the oven, unfortunately it is no longer usable because the oven got cracked. You can't use the stove at all anymore, but I do remember after my mom got it and was using it to heat the kitchen a little, she asked me if I ever wanted to cook on it. So I told her yes I would love to cook on it, so I remember she said okay I'll have you make dinner! So I must have been 13 or 14 and I remember still I made hamburgers and fried potatoes , and I don't remember the vegetable because that you just set on the far burner and let it warm. I learned that you turn your heat up or down by moving your pan from over the firebox to over the oven, and dinner came out very well considering I was 13 and had never used the stove before. It was interesting to learn that you had to keep feeding the fire by putting in pieces of wood, you had to mind the fire while you minded the food. So it was a very interesting experience, which I am glad I had. None of my siblings chose to do that, their loss my gain.

Wendy: Did your mom cook on it?

Nancy: No, she might have made pancakes once or twice when the grandchildren were around just to show them you could cook on it, but she had a nice, beautiful electric stove that she used on a daily basis. This was more nostalgia, and my mom was a big antiquer and she felt we should know what the antiques were and what they were used for and how to use them.



Nancy Denisi smiles while recalling fond memories of the Kalamazoo stove, seen on the left. Interviewer Wendy Gaylord is on the right. Photo by Heather Olander

R.E. Connolly's Department Store

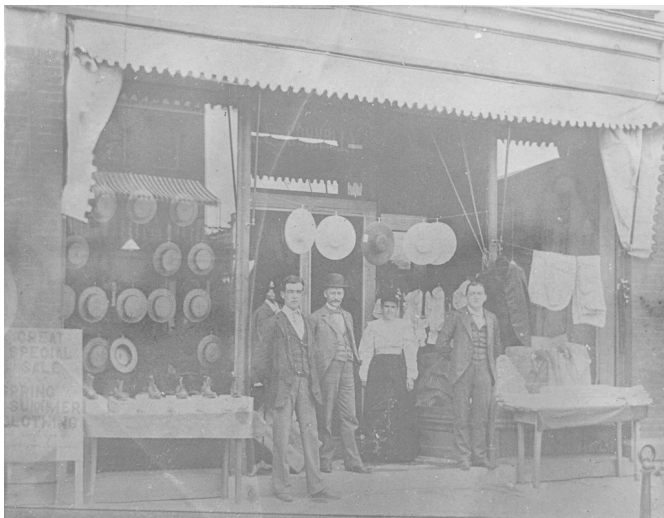
Compiled by Diane Goodman

The Early Years

On April 1, 1880, his twentieth birthday, Robert E. Connolly began what would be a life long career in the mercantile business. He partnered with Emmet J. Ryan in a small store on Main Street, Phelps, where the sign above the door said "Ryan Connolly Dry Goods Grocery and Clothing". A few years later Connolly took over interest in the business when Mr. Ryan moved to Seneca Falls.



Ryan Connolly store on Main Street.
R.E Connolly is on the left.



1894 - sidewalk sign on left advertises
"Great Special Sale Spring and Summer Clothing"

New Location on Main Street, Phelps

R.E. Connolly purchased the building block on Main and Church streets in 1915 and moved Connolly's Department to the newly acquired location. The grocery department was discontinued about 1929, but for sometime Mr. Connolly continued to carry his famous home cured cheese. He aged each cheese in the store basement for two or more years before putting it on sale.

Expansion to Clifton Springs & Elsewhere

Connolly expanded the business year by year. On September 12, 1912 he took his son John E. into partnership and two new Connolly Enterprise stores were opened in Clifton Springs. The first was for the sale of groceries and known as R.E. Connolly & Son. In 1915 John gave up his position as exporter for the Crown Manufacturing Co. in Phelps and took over active supervision of the store in Clifton Springs. The second was a men's furnishing store (haberdashery) opened in 1920 near the village hall and managed by John P. Hewitt, a nephew of R.E. Connolly. Later the shop moved next to the grocery store.

In 1942 groceries were discontinued and the space was used for the department store until it was sold in May 1955. Mr. John Connolly retired at that time because of his health, but continued to help his sister Marie with the Phelps store. (Their father had died in February of 1940, after 60 years of being active in the store).

A few years before his death, R.E. and his son John, established two more department stores in the area; one in Canandaigua, managed by Frank Riley, brother of Mrs. John Connolly; the other in Seneca Falls, managed by Miss Martin. Both stores were liquidated by the year 1958.

	Ladies' Simplicity House		
	Dresses, -		\$1.00
	Ladies' One-Piece House		
	Dresses, -		\$1.00
	Ladies' Fancy Lawn		
	Dresses, -		\$1.50
	Ladies' Fancy Percale		
	Dresses, -		\$1.50
	Ladies' White Linen		
	Skirts, -		\$1.50
Ladies' Waldorf Shirt			
Waists from			
50 Cents to \$3.00			
SPECIAL			
For Saturday!			
Ladies' White Linen and			
Peque Dress \$5.00 to			
\$6.00; Saturday, - \$4.50			
R. E. Connolly's			
DEPARTMENT STORE,			
Phelps, N. Y.		Phelps, N. Y.	

Advertisement - Phelps Citizen July 11, 1912

(Continued from previous page)

79 Years in Business

November 1959 saw the closing of Connolly's Department Store after 79 years in business. J. Bostwick of Andover purchased the stock and conducted a closing-out sale.

The building was owned by Mary Louise Connolly (granddaughter of R.E. and daughter of John E. Connolly) until 1978 when it was sold to John "Jack" Gifford. In 2014 the building was purchased by its current owner, Cheney Properties of Phelps, LLC.



Top photo: Interior of Connolly's Department Store, Main St, Phelps.

Bottom photo: There were two entrances: left side into the women's clothing department, the right side into the men's department and grocery. The two sides connected at the archway seen behind R.E. Connolly on the left.

Robert E. Connolly (1860 - 1940)

The son of Andrew and Julia Dunn Connolly, Robert E. was born on April 1, 1860 in Phelps, two years after his parents emigrated from Ireland. He was the youngest of nine children. He started working in a grocery store in town around the time he was 13 years old.

Mr. Connolly served as Postmaster in Phelps during the Cleveland administration. During his regime as trustee and president of the village, the present system of building concrete sidewalks was established. He originated the plan of apportioning the expense equally between the property owner and the municipality. Shortly after the system was inaugurated, the old board walks began to disappear and concrete was substituted. Phelps was one of the first villages in the state to build concrete walks.

Mr. Connolly also held the position of commissioner of elections of Ontario County for 17 years, served as member of the Democrat county and town committees and in 1930 was state committeeman of Ontario County. On April 1, 1930 a surprise party to celebrate his 50 years as a businessman was held at the Phelps Hotel and attended by 120 business associates and friends. The day was also his 70th birthday.

Robert E. Connolly died on February 18, 1940 at his home on Pleasant Street in Phelps.



R.E. Connolly

John E. Connolly (1887-1960)

The son of Robert E. and Mary Sommers Connolly, John E. was born on October 12, 1887. He married Miss Charlotte Riley (b.1888 d.1976) on September 22, 1915, and they made their home on Pleasant Street in Clifton Springs. John E. died on August 13, 1960 in Clifton Springs.

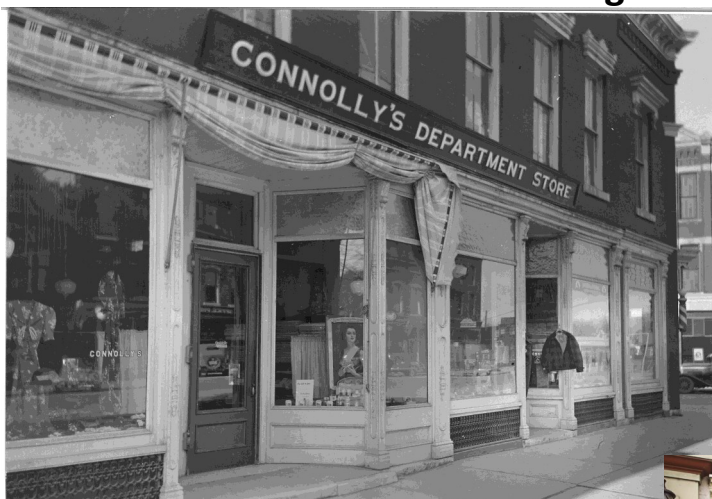
Mary Louise Connolly (1916-1981)



Mary Louise, daughter of John E. and Mary, was born on August 3, 1916 in Clifton Springs. She became an English teacher at Phelps Central School and lived in her parents house on Pleasant Street, Clifton Springs all her life. She died at home on September 22, 1981, the day that would have been her parents anniversary.

(continued on next page)

The Building at 91-95 Main Street



Connolly's Department Store 1937

91-93 Main Street, Phelps, NY
(Barber shop on corner at 95 Main)
In the past thirty years the building
has been the location of:
Bev's Variety Shop (91-93),
Harvey's Barber Shop (95),
Kimberley Marie's Antiques (91-93),
Wade's Fresh Foods & Café (91-93),
and a pottery shop (95).

Local Palate 2022

91-95 Main Street, Phelps, NY
Businessowner Megan Kasperek opened
Local Palate Cafe & Foods Market
in January of 2021 at 91 Main St.
The business expanded into
93 and 95 Main St in September of 2021.
The café offers takeout or dine-in and
has weekly community events.

Photo taken by Barry Lee 2022



A New Chapter in the History of the Country Lawyer's Office by Michael Nash

Just a few short weeks ago, I was asked to oversee the Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts. The gallery would be in the historic Country Lawyer's Office at 7 Church Street. There had been no preliminary work done to the building or organization of the project. This was an idea the PCHS Board of Directors put forth to bring attention to the building and utilize the space for our community.

In these past few short weeks, a small, dedicated group of people have come together with the common interest of seeing the board's idea become reality. This group has been actively planning, goal setting, doing needed physical work, and building connections with artists and other successful art galleries in our immediate region. There has been little down time in these weeks.

In another few short weeks from now, the Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts will open its doors to our community and the region with our first artists' exhibitions. Visitors to the gallery will be stepping into the front room, previously the lawyer's office and now a PCHS exhibit room. Historic Phelps photographs and artwork will be rotated through this first space and greeters will be there to give a brief history of the building. But, that's not all!

After taking in the historic office space, visitors will experience two gallery rooms of contemporary art produced by artists in the Finger Lakes Region, some of them from right here in Phelps! We will offer themed shows of all kinds and display a unique and diverse mix of art mediums. We will hold classes, workshops and artist gallery talks on a regular basis.

We are looking for regional artists who would like to show their work and people who know others who create art - both established artists and those artists who are not necessarily represented in other galleries.

We welcome anyone who is interested in helping with the Country Lawyer Gallery of the Arts. What is it that you like to do? What special skills do you have? Are you looking for an opportunity to meet and greet new people?

The gallery is a project of the Phelps Community Historical Society. Please reach out to us if you would like to get involved. You can contact the PCHS office (315-548-4940) or get in touch with me, Michael Nash, Gallery Director (585-789-0017). We hope you will come to visit the gallery, consider getting involved, and be part of the history being made right now.



Country Lawyer's Office by Michael Nash

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): _____

Honoring Our Hometown Heroes

The first phase of the banner project to honor Phelps hometown heroes began in the fall of 2022 and was completed during the first week of May. The 37 two-sided banners honor 74 veterans.

Those who were instrumental to the success of the project include: Ginny Phenes, Bette "BJ" Hicks, Fred Gaylord, Maureen Quigley, Joe DeBrock and Barry Lee. The committee received great cooperation and help from the Village of Phelps and the Phelps American Legion Post #457. Monetary donations were made by many individuals and businesses.

Mac Seago of LumberMac Tree Service and Josh Aiken and his crew from the Village of Phelps, were superstars who identified appropriate poles, installed the necessary hardware and hung all the banners.

Applications for the second part of the banner project will be available June 1 online on the Phelps Alumni Facebook page, and at the American Legion, Phelps Hometown Pharmacy and the Phelps Community Historical Society (PCHS will also mail an application if requested.)

Thank you to all who participated!

Barry Lee



**Hometown Hero Banner, PVT Robert Naukam, on Main Street in front of Howe House.
Photo by Heather Olander**

PHELPS COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

66 Main Street
Phelps, NY 14532

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Dennis King

Barry Lee

Jane Pedersen

Cathy Scott

Student Rep.

Anna Lightfoote

Director

Diane Goodman

**Administrative
Assistant**

Heather Olander

Howe House Museum

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Phelps, NY 14532
(315) 548-4940

E-mail:

histsoc2@gmail.com

Website:

phelpsnhistory.com

Find us on

Facebook

Museum Hours:

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



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!**

September 2023

Historic Program/Re-enactment

Sunday October 15, 2023 at 3 PM

Cemetery Walk at Pioneer Cemetery