



# Phelps Community Historical Society Newsletter

September 2020 Volume 28 Issue 244

## Howe House Museum

66 Main Street

Phelps, NY 14532

(315) 548-4940

E-mail: [histsoc2@gmail.com](mailto:histsoc2@gmail.com)

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### Museum Hours:

Wednesday, Thursday and

Friday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

or by appointment



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## From the Director's Desk

Diane Goodman

September is "back to school" time and we all have memories of the first day of riding on the school bus, going to classes, having new teachers and seeing friends we haven't seen all summer. This year is very different for students - lessons are being learned and homework is being submitted using a computer at home. The younger grades at Midlakes are attending classes in school two days of the week and from home the other three. Sport activities include those that allow social distancing - golf, tennis, swimming; football and basketball are not on the schedule at this time. Teachers are facing the challenge of having students online and in class at the same time. The articles on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter take a look back at school days.



It was my pleasure this past month to meet: Steve and Jackie from Swanzey, New Hampshire, who had traveled to Syracuse and then came to Phelps to do some research and walk through the museum; Tom and Angela from Irondequoit, Tom is originally from Oaks Corners and has always wanted to visit the Howe House; Rich and Kim from southern New Jersey (my home state!) who were on their way to Alexandria Bay and stopped in for a tour; PCHS member Mart Weigel, a PCS graduate and retired State Trooper, and his wife Maggie live in Pulaski and were in town for a visit; and Jeff, who was interested in seeing the Model T, and his daughter Emily. They were on a day trip from Alexander, NY and were happy to find us open and be given a tour of the museum. Also, Marilyn DeRuyter and her friend Greg, who is interested in historic homes, stopped in so he could see the Howe House and hear about its history.

Thank you to Gary Jones for making a storm door for the entrance to the second story of the outhouse. There was no storm door previously, and it will protect the inner door.

If you have a short story about living in Phelps we could consider for the newsletter, or would like to make a suggestion for an article, please do not hesitate to contact me. Input from our membership is always appreciated!

## 1924 Essex Comes Home to Phelps

**A very special thank you to the Salisbury family** for their great generosity in purchasing and donating to the PCHS, the 1924 Essex, originally owned by Miss Anna Salisbury.

**Thank you to Bill Shroh**, of Schoharie, NY, former owner of the automobile, for delivering it to the Howe House September 24.



Look in next month's newsletter for photos and stories of "Aunt Anna Salisbury" and her automobile.

**Bill Shroh parking the Essex in the Carriage House.**

## **Early Schools of Phelps**

The article below is from the first part of a history of early Phelps schools, written by Hazel L. Harland and completed on September 20, 1984.

*I am Hazel Harland and it is March 1984 in Florida, and John (a flat ruler with a widened end, used for punishing children) were and I are enjoying 80 degree weather. I have been trying to put on paper some of the information we collected last fall about the early schools in Phelps. I owe much of my information to the earlier books "The Corners", and "Phelpstown Footprints" by Mabel Oaks, and "When Phelps Was Young" by Helen Post Ridley. Also to the maps, and articles of Ruth Miller Bishop loaned to me by her daughter Jean. To these people I give credit. Schools of Phelps.*

The first log school room was held in part of John Decker Robison's shop. His children were taught there by a Miss Phelps, who was said to be a sister of Oliver Phelps. Soon other children joined them as more settlers arrived, and in 1802 a schoolhouse was built in what is now the village. It was on Seth Deane's land (his land joined John Robison's at a point near where the Town Hall now stands, and extended westward to Eagle St. The north line was near Clifton Street and he owned land far out to the south) and stood just west of where the Town Hall now stands, records say just opposite the Tavern. Here a woman known as Aunt Chloe Warner was the first teacher (undoubtedly a relative of Jesse Warner who had come to Warner Hill in Orleans in 1796), There were twenty-five boys and girls registered. A Mr. Gunning is also mentioned. This schoolhouse was built of planks. It was a long building in two parts. The east half was occupied by the Woodhal family, a son-in-law of John Robison. The west portion was the schoolroom. This room had a platform in the center with benches all around for the children to sit on as they studied. Behind these along the walls were continuous desks with benches for seats, but there were no backs on any of these benches. At these desks all of their writing was done. Classes were called to the platform to "toe the mark and make their manners" and recite, read, and spell.

Many lessons were committed to memory and recited in unison with great accuracy. They learned the "Rules" for everything they did and many "Tables". Text books were scarce and sometimes the teacher was the only one who had one. So each pupil made their own record of the day's lesson and kept this for future reference. They used foolscap paper and a quill pen and sewed the sheets together in a crude book form. One of these books still exists and the contents are mute evidence that the oft times despised "3Rs" of our ancestors were well grounded in spelling, syntax, and the science of numbers.

Strict order was maintained. The "Dunce Cap", and the ferule

freely used and punishments were inflicted upon the platform in full view of the pupils as a warning to others. On the other hand water for drinking was passed and the fires tended by selected pupils as a certain award of merit.

One teacher was very stern and flogged both boys and girls as the occasion seemed to require. He then insisted that the culprit remain on the platform until he could control his face and voice enough to say "Thank you sir". He was then allowed to take his seat. Another dismissed the school with instructions "to proceed directly to your homes making your manners politely to all whom you may meet by the way".

This school building was once remodeled that it might be used for religious services, and after 20 years it was removed to a location near where the depot used to stand. There it was used for a coopers shop until the railroad was laid in 1840.

In the early days of the settlement the children were all dressed alike until they were six or seven years old. One straight outer garment was worn, made of homespun material with a draw string at the neck and waist. These were dyed in simple colors. There were no special styles for children. As they grew older, their garments were made much as their parents were. These were handed down to younger or smaller children as long as there was no wear left in them. In the first place they had probably been made over from father's or mother's old ones.

The teachers boarded around from home to home in the district staying in each home to board out the share according to the number of children in the family who went to school. If a family sent five children to school the teacher remained there five times as long as where there was only one, and that regardless of cramped quarters! Each father was expected to furnish his share of the hard wood for the schoolhouse fire and pay his cash tax as well. Teachers received from \$10 to \$12 per month in cash. That was a lot of money in those days!



In memoriam  
**Marjorie Whitson Aude**

PCHS Member

April 7, 1935 - September 15, 2020

## RULES FOR TEACHERS 1872

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session.
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils.
4. Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church regularly.
5. After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
7. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years, so that he will not become a burden on society.
8. Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity, and honesty.
9. The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.

## *Do you remember.....*

From page 71 of the 1955 Phelps Central School yearbook.

### *Cafeteria Staff . . .*



Seated: Miss Carmen Johnson, cafeteria manager; Mrs. Margaret Worden, Mrs. Mary Raes, Mrs. Ruth Whitbeck, Mrs. Hazel Hood

Standing: Mrs. Iva Britcher, Mrs. Nellie Hughson, Mrs. Marge Sidell, Mrs. Sara Fitzgerald, Mrs. Beatrice Schafer.

### *Bus Drivers and Custodians . . .*



First Row: M. Lockemeyer, R. Bremer, J. Harland, M. Tiffany

Second Row: A. Hollenbeck, S. Totman, K. Wilbur, A. Adams, C. Phillips, M. Hall

# The Early Grist, Flour and Feed Mills in Vienna/Phelps by F. Lee Johnson 2020

**History question:** Who built the stone house on the east corner of Flint and Mill streets? Answer at the end.

Grist/flour and feed mills flourished in and around Vienna in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Besides the Oliver Phelps Mill at Littleville, there was another mill in Waterloo, NY called the Bear Mill. Probably some of our settlers to the east of East Vienna/Five Points might have used this mill. The mills in our area sprang up fast and furiously as the demand increased for this service.

There were two types of grist/flour mills: the large two-grinding stone type and later the single roller type. The two-stone was the heart of the mill and the early millers used the old American two-flat stone grinding system. These stones varied in diameter from 36" to 72". The thickness varied from 4" to 8". The weight varied from 3400 to 4800 lbs. depending on the type/density of the stone used.

The early mills were mostly one and two-story, although later some were three-story, and used the common 36"/48" diameter stones. In some cases, millers had a pair of stones, one pair for corn (large kernel) with deeper furrows or grooves and one for wheat, barley, oats and rye (small kernel grains) with shallow furrows or grooves.

The early mills were crudely constructed of stone and logs, as was the Oliver Phelps Mill at Littleville. The bedstone was the stationary stone embedded in the floor of the mill. This stone had a clearance hole in the center (or eye) to allow the white oak, drive spindle through it. The top, or runner stone, had a square hole in the eye or center and was mounted on the square end of the vertical white oak spindle shaft that turned it. Raceways, bins or hoppers mounted above the spindle hole, allowed grain to be gravity feed into the furrows or grooves for grinding.

As the stone furrows became duller and the lands became glazed from grinding, the hotter and more moist the grist would be. When this happened the stone furrows had to be dressed (made deeper) and the lands deglazed. The rule of thumb was to grind once, sift once. Bolting (sifting) the flour was done by hand. When grinding, the grist/meal exited the skirt or the outer diameter of the furrows, and was collected in a wooden vat that surrounded the grinding stones and fell through a small hole in the floor down a metal spout, later to be dried and ground into flour.

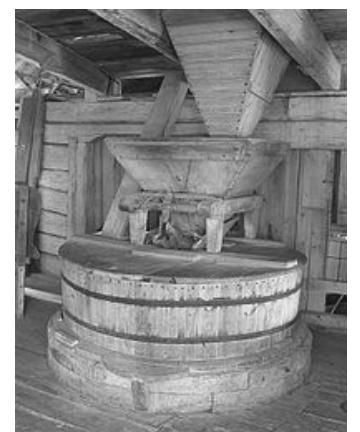
The problem when grinding oats was it had a high moisture content. This effects its ability to be bolted for storage. "Oat Hulling"- oats were placed in a kiln outside the mill so the oat hulls can be cracked open and the oats could be run thru oat-hulling stones. The hulls (bran or offals) were a by-product and were tossed out by pouring it into the mill stream.

Rye was also ground/milled into grist which, when mixed with good spring water, became a mash which was fermented into rye whiskey -"early moonshine."

Milling was a seasonal occupation and coincided with the fall harvests. The millers had other occupations to subsidize their income. Some were doctors, merchants or millwrights. The miller was paid for his services by collecting a toll - a portion of the grain brought to the mill for milling. The usual toll was 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the flour for corn and 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the flour for all other grains. No one was allowed in the mill when it was operating or when the miller measured out his toll. (Hope he was an honest man!)

Grain storage bins were located under the loft or attic. The flour was put in sacks that were carried to the upper floors. It was spread out on the floor for drying. The miller's helper was called a "hopper boy" also a "sack boy".

The loft was the best place for storing grain and flour meal-grist because it was dry. Also the loft was less likely to be flooded by the millstream. Rats and mice were also a threat to the grain, and the miller employed several cats to keep the vermin at bay. There were no stairs to the second or third floors so that access by mice and rats was less likely. The miller used ladders to gain access to the upper floors. Sometimes heat would cause the grist or flour to lump or clump and it had to be cooked before bolting. The person who dispersed the lumps and clumps was called "a hop to it" person. Bolting was a method to sift and grade the flour using coarse cloth... where it was spread out on the floor for drying.



# The Early Grist, Flour and Feed Mills in Vienna/Phelps

continued from page 4

The expression "keeping your nose to the grindstone" means if you keep your nose pointed toward the grindstones, your ears are also in that direction. "Pay attention to your work by using your senses of sound, sight and touch".

Some of the early grist and flour mills in Phelps :

- Seth Deane Mill 1792
- Dickinson, Hawks and Bannister Exchange Mill 1799  
On the same site as Fridley's Saw Mill
- Isaac Dean Mill 1805
- Rufus & Oliver Warner Mill 1802
- Jacob and A.D. Miller Mill 1812  
North end of Stryker Road
- Edmonston flour mill 1819
- McNeil Mill sold to Mr. Affleck then to the Fridley brothers in 1883
- Leman Hotchkiss Eagle Mill 1812. Burned in 1858
- Isaac Pickney Mill east of Unionville
- Philetus Swift Mill 1817
- Thomas Edmonston 1819
- William Hildreth Red Mill 1829
- Moses Swift-Rathbun mill 1839
- Frederick VanDemark Mill 1835
- Coon Mill
- Snyder brothers mill



Photo Credit:  
Kelly Lucero - NYHistoric.com

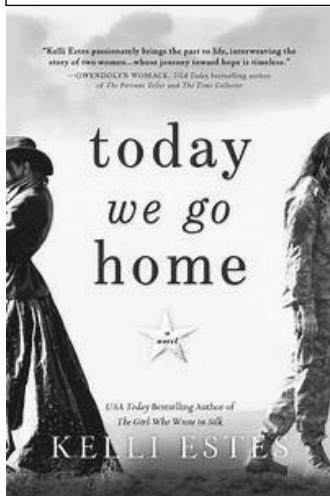
## Seth Deane's Old Stone Mill

- VanVarnken Mill
- Richard Willing New Mill 1875- started by Oliver Granger
- Plaster Mill 1814 sold to Mr. Doblinski, converted to a paper mill that burned in 1874 killing Mr. Doblinski

Answer to history question: The stone house at Flint and Mill Streets was built by John White in 1831. It is still a home today.

## Thank you to the following for their contributions & continued support

Membership Renewals	Memorials
Ann Bohner Robert Burns Bill & Irene Copper Susan Galens Scott Gifford Lawrence & Barbara Howe Stephanie & Kevin Kelley	Joshua Houseknecht in memory of <b>Carlton R Beechler Sr</b>  Jack Lundgard in memory of <b>Lowell Falkey Ronnie VanCamp Harry Peake</b>  Lois Main in memory of <b>Frank and Marion Main Lewis Main</b>
Welcome New Member!	Monetary Donations
Ted Baylard Phelps, NY	<b>Lawrence &amp; Barbara Howe</b>  <b>Mike Waters</b>  <b>Mark &amp; Sally Zelonis</b>
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Terry Allen Billee Altman Barb Brennessel Tom Cheney Dorothy Colvin Carol Conklin Mary Ellen Darling Marilyn DeRuyter Bonnie Dixon Wendy Gaylord Barb Gillespie Ron Grube Dennis King Lee Johnson Sarah Landschoot Roberta Leu Dana Mark Kim Maslyn Marcia Maslyn Ann Oaks Curt Petzoldt Mart VanKirk	



This is a dual timeline novel, we follow two separate but interwoven related threads. Larkin Bennett, a US Army Veteran who receives a medical discharge after being wounded in action in Afghanistan, is now suffering from PTSD, and the tremendous guilt felt over the death of a best friend and fellow soldier. Cleaning out her friend Sarah's storage unit to return items to family members a diary is found, the diary of Emily Wilson, who fought as a man in the Civil War. Larkin remembered that Sarah had mentioned an ancestor who had fought in the Civil War.

Emily Wilson's father gave her a diary to write in while he and her older brother went off to fight for Lincoln and the Union in 1861. Emily was to keep track of farm happenings so when he returned he could read it. This diary was like medicine for Larkin as she tried to deal with PTSD, reading it was taking her to another time and place. It helped her sleep and fight her nightmares, and she also related to what Emily was talking about, how the first battle gave a clear understanding of the enemy.

Larkin's story is moving and tragic, happiest serving her country and being with best friend Sarah, through college, in training or in Kandahar. With that 'door' closed to her, she struggles emotionally and has flashbacks. Larkin chooses to live with Grandmother near cousins, finding more peace in that environment, but still resists reaching out for professional help. Her growing obsession with Emily's diary gives her purpose, and the more she reads, the more determined she becomes to both tell the stories of military women and find out more about the real Emily Wilson. Through these two remarkable women, we see devotion to duty and family, as well as the toll that war takes on a person's soul.

Emily - "Jesse" - Wilson's story is just as powerful. When she learns her father is ill and with no word about her brother, she convinces her younger brother that they must go and help nurse Father and learn news of their brother. In the 1860s we learn several women fought in the Civil War: "a woman did not put on pants and go to war any more than a man would put on a hoop skirt or birth a baby. So if it looked like a man, it was a man, simple as that". Within the pages of Emily's diary we learn of the first transcontinental telegram sent from San Francisco to Washington, DC in October 1861, and the request of Western Virginia asking for the right to break off from Virginia and become a separate state.

The author Kelli Estes does a great job of weaving together these two timelines. The whole story just flows along. I liked how she ties in modern technology, mentioning doing a blog and researching family roots to find Emily's family and learn about other women in history. The comparison of women soldiers one and two hundred years ago with women in military now made a good substory.

### From Our Mailbox

To: Diane

Hi,

I wanted to make a donation to say I appreciate all that the society does.

Thanks for everything and keep up the good work. As I said, have always been proud of Phelps.

**Lois Main**



### From Our In-Box

Good morning PCHS

I read with interest about the Hen Peck school because my mother, Edwina (Mahoney) Maslyn taught there while she was courted by my father, Bud Maslyn. I know very little about it because I was young and not too interested in it, but I do remember her talking about it several times. She lived with the Mattoons, maybe Joe Mattoon family.

I believe the time was the early 1930s. Look forward to each edition of the PCHS. You are doing a great job.

Yours truly,  
**Ed Maslyn**



# **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 \_\_\_\_\_

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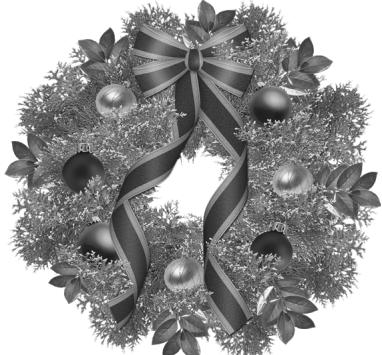
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## **PCHS ANNUAL HOLIDAY WREATH SALE**

Howe House Museum 66 Main Street, Phelps

**Prepaid orders only** - 40 wreaths available

To place an order stop in or call the PCHS office  
(315-548-4940) before November 1st

Pay by credit card, cash or check payable to PCHS

### **Pricing**

\$15 - Undecorated wreath

\$20 - Wreath with bow (choose one)  
red white silver blue

\$25 - Wreath fully decorated

\$25 - Spray with bow (choose one)  
red white silver blue

### **Pick Up at the Howe House Carriage House**

Saturday November 28

10 - noon

or

Saturday December 5  
10 - noon

**PHELPS COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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