



Allegany Area Historical Association

May 2008

Issue XXVII Vol. 2

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I'm disappointed in us. We had a meeting on Sunday, March 16 - the weather was decent, good driving - and Barb Kubiak of Franklinville gave a very interesting talk about Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton and Harriet Tubman. There were **eight** people in the audience, **five** of whom were AAHA officers. It is an insult, I think, to our speakers when we only have eight people in the audience, and an embarrassment for our association. We pay our speakers a minimum of \$75, with many programs costing more, so we spend at least \$300 a year on speakers.

We changed several years ago from a Wednesday night meeting to Sundays at 2 to accommodate our older members being able to get there safely. We need to hear from you - do you want us to continue having these meetings with speakers? As you can see, it's not cheap for us to do this. Is it the subject matter? Let us know what you would like to hear. Marge Geise works very hard to get us good speakers and educational programs. I have learned something from each speaker. Hopefully, our next meeting will be better attended.

We received a wonderful donation from Dottie Riley. It's a primitive painting of a young boy. His name was Ullman (Brooky) Merrill. He was the son of Lot and Belle (Altenburg) Merrill. He was born January 3, 1877 and he died October 8, 1882. He was related to our treasurer, Alice Altenburg. We are looking for just the right place to hang it for all to see.

Two of our past presidents, Steve and Betty Eaton, will shortly be moving to a retirement community near Philadelphia. They were very active in our association as well as the Olean Historical Society. But Betty assures me that they will stay in close contact with our group. We wish them all the best in the next adventure in their lives.

We mentioned in our last issue that our history book would now cost \$10. At that time we didn't know what the shipping costs would be, but now we do - shipping will be \$2.50.

This is our last newsletter before Heritage Days - it seems like we just had them a few weeks ago. However, the dates this year are Friday, August 1 and Saturday, August 2. Our format will be much the same, with our main display this year focusing on Early Life in Allegany. We have a collection of wonderful, strange artifacts that we will be displaying. Whoever said that life was easier in the "good old days" hasn't seen some of the household items we have. It's more like "women's work is never done". I know you will be getting calls to donate items for our Country Cupboard booth and/or cakes for our well attended Ice Cream Social. And I know you will be as generous as you have always been in the past. And be sure to come to the Chicken BBQ on Friday night to see Allegany's beautiful new fire hall.

A while back, Tom Martin of Martin Studio of Photography offered to take photos for us whenever we needed some. Well, that time came. Tom has done some great photos for us of some of the more obscure items we have in our collection, and we will use these photos in our Heritage Days street sheet in a "can you guess what this is?" contest. I can hardly wait for the answers!

AAHA lost a long-time member recently with the death of Richard Stephan (Steve) Gollaher. He had been a strong supporter of Heritage Days, and very much enjoyed our newsletter. I always had interesting talks with Steve whenever I met him. A short trip downtown turned into a long one, but a thoroughly enjoyable one, when I met Steve in my rounds. He was very well versed in the area's history, and pleased to share it with me.

FRANCIE POTTER, PRESIDENT

This is the second and last part of the oral history interview conducted by Marge Geise with her mother-in-law, Catherine Martiny Geise. We have received many, many comments about the first part which was in our March newsletter. Everyone really liked it. We hope you enjoy this as much as you did the first part. Our thanks to Marge for her delightful interview.

CATHERINE MARTINY GEISE INTERVIEW

November 5, 2007

My family was Catholic. Every night during Lent after the dinner was over, we all had to go into the living room and kneel down by a chair, while Dad led us in the rosary. One such time, Red, who had gotten a wind-up tractor for Christmas, (that had rubber tracks on it and made noise, of course) wound it up and let it go over toward Chuck. It veered off and went over to Mother. Boy, did she ever holler at him! That was the end of the prayer gathering for that night! As a family we would attend May Devotions every Wednesday evening during May. At the end of the month, the May Crowning was held and that was quite an impressive ceremony. On Memorial Day we all attended Mass at the St. Bonaventure Cemetery. It was a big event and we'd meet all the relatives there. We'd go through the tombstones of relatives and friends, kneeling down and saying a prayer at each one. We'd bring flowers from home, that were in bloom at the time, to lay on special gravesites.

There wasn't a lot of celebration for the holidays, just a special meal maybe. There'd be a turkey for Thanksgiving, of course. One holiday stands out in my mind. My brother, Chuck, raised turkeys and they always seemed to escape from their pens. We were forever having to go up to Spindlers after them. On Thanksgiving that particular year, we invited them for dinner since the turkeys were up there so much. We kids were quite excited to have company for dinner. For Christmas we would usually get only one or two presents. One would be homemade clothing and maybe we'd get one toy. There wasn't much. The whole family would enjoy fruits and nuts for a special holiday treat. We always cut down our tree and decorated it with paper chains that we would make. We'd also string popcorn to put on the tree. There were candles on the tree, but they'd only be lit on Christmas Eve for a short while because of the chance of fire. Other than that, they'd be just decorations. We had some ornaments that we saved in a box and used from year to year. Going to church on Christmas Day was something special that we looked forward to because we always got to go up front to see the Nativity scene.

In the early years the Catholics in town celebrated mass at the chapel at St. Bonaventure University. When the chapel was destroyed by fire in 1930, we worshiped in the parochial school gym until the new (present day) church was built the following year. We'd get there in the winter in a one-seated cutter, or maybe the sleigh, and we'd use a two-seated buggy in the summer. The conveyances, along with the horses, were left in an unattended shed on the other side of the tracks (near where the St. Bonaventure cemetery grotto is today) and then we'd have to walk to the university for Sunday Mass. We never attended Mass in the St. Nicholas Church, which was located across the street from the present day St. Bonaventure Church (where the Main Street parking lot is located). Even though it was built in 1854, parishioners only used it for worship for four years because the Catholic population had outgrown it. We did, however, attend catechism classes there. I remember it was kind of spooky because all the windows were yellow stained glass, which seemed to cast an eerie glow over the interior of the building.

For our birthdays we usually got a gift of some kind and a special birthday cake. It was a family tradition to have a "checkerboard" cake, (chocolate and white), with candles on top. There was no special meal for birthdays.

I knew my husband, Clarence (Snowball) Geise, as a neighbor and a grammar school classmate. We started dating when I was teaching. We went to a lot of square dances that were held in some of the schools in town. We also played card games and went to movies at the Palace Theater in Olean. We were married in a small ceremony in the St. Bonaventure Church (where it is now) on June 17, 1936. My wedding dress was made of white lace and was midlength. I bought it, I didn't make it. I wore a matching picture hat. My sister, Margaret, was my matron of honor, and her husband (Arthur Karl) was Snowball's best man. The wedding was at 9:00 AM on a Wednesday, as was customary in those days, and then we went to the Village Inn (where the Bird Cage Restaurant is today) for a wedding breakfast with the immediate family. After coming back from our honeymoon at Letchworth Park, we were treated to a shivaree. That was a loud time! Friends and relatives would wait until they thought the couple would be sleeping, then they'd wake them by pounding on pots and pans (or anything else they could get their hands on), serenading the "newlyweds" from outside their home. It was traditional for the couple to go to the door and invite their noisy guests in for beer, cigars, candy or something. They didn't bring any presents, but if they got a chance,

somebody would sneak into the bedroom to put salt or cereal in the couple's bed, loosen the bed slats, or sew legs or bottoms of their night clothes together, if they could find them. Every married couple expected this "celebration". If people didn't come, I suppose you would feel that you weren't very popular.

After our wedding, we moved to a lease house on the corner of Geiger Hollow and the Four Mile. Needing more room after our first two children were born, we moved to another lease house on Geiger Hollow where we remained for fifty years. In 1987, my husband and I moved from Geiger Hollow to Linwood Apartments in Olean, where we lived for ten years. When the nearby Olean General Hospital expanded, these apartments were torn down to make way for the new addition. We then purchased a mobile home in the Valley View Estates in Allegany.

For twenty-five years Snowball worked as a roustabout on the oil lease. When he had his heart attack in 1961, he bought a chain saw and worked in the logging business with his nephew, Floyd Putt, Jr. Snowball bought and cut the logs and "Putty" dragged them out of the woods, and hauled them on the log truck to the buyer.

Snowball and I had six children. Kenneth was born in 1938; Kathleen came along in 1940. Harold was born in 1943, Bernice in 1945, William in 1950, and Roberta was born in 1956. Ken (Beverly Balacki) lives in Portville, while Harold (Marjorie Karl) and Roberta (Herb Edwards) live in Allegany. Kathleen (Lyle Allen) lives in Batavia, and Bill (Linda Bloom) lives in Knoxville, Pennsylvania. Bernice (Bill Schlosser) resided in Franklinville for many years, but now lives in Navarre, Florida. For seventeen years I did housecleaning for area clients in order to help put my kids through college.

During the Great Depression my family survived pretty well because we had the farm. We had all the meat, eggs, fruit and vegetables we needed. We did our home baking and my mother sewed all the clothes; we occasionally ordered stuff from Sears & Roebuck. It was a big deal when the catalogs came. Everybody would spend a lot of time looking through them, dreaming of the things they'd like to have. Many of our Christmas gifts came from the catalog. If we killed a pig or cow, we'd sometimes sell meat to the neighbors. Dad sold his apples to the grocery stores, and then we could get lard, sugar, flour, soap and other staples. The stores gave him 25 cents more a bushel for the apples than what he could have gotten from selling to individuals. We'd raise about 500 bushels each year. We kids weren't allowed to do the picking, Dad did it all. When he was finished, he shook the trees and then it was our turn to help by picking them all up. I remember we always did this on Armistice Day every year. We picked up cider apples and took them to the cider mill in Portville or Allegany to be made into cider. When we brought it home, we stored it in wooden barrels and milk cans. We enjoyed drinking that fresh cider, but we boiled some of it down for cooking (to sweeten mincemeat) and we canned some. In the summer during haying times, we'd open some cans and dilute the cider with water. This was just tart enough for the hayers to drink to quench their thirst. (Lemons for making lemonade were expensive, so this worked well). To some of the cider we added raisins and sugar to make "hard cider". (My Aunt Kate Martiny always called this "champagne"!). We made our own cider vinegar from the dropped apples, to use at home for cooking. We'd take "mother" from the old barrel of cider vinegar to put in the new one as a starter for the next year's batch. ("Mother" was just thick, slimy, rubbery stuff that collected on the bottom of the barrel of vinegar.) We used a good deal of the vinegar for canning.

A really big event in my life was attending the World Fair in Chicago before I got married (1930's). I went with my friend, Florence Carls, and my cousin, Mary Miller. I paid for the trip myself, probably, with my teaching money. Florence didn't think she could go because she didn't have the money. Finally her brothers, Ken and Louie, came through and chipped in their money so that she could go. Mary worked in her mother's ice cream parlor so she had her own money. Somebody drove us to Buffalo and we took a boat from there to Detroit where we stayed overnight with my sister, Clara, then took the train to Chicago the next day. My brother, Chuck, had gone a year before so I didn't have too much trouble convincing my parents to let me go. It was really the first time I had been so far out of town other than to Olean and the surrounding area. I had been to Buffalo, of course, to stay with my sister, Leona, for a little vacation, but this trip to Chicago was a really big adventure for me. It was a package tour that we probably heard about in an advertisement somewhere, and it included several things. I think we had a book where we tore off tickets or coupons for admittance to the different events. We stayed at a nearby hotel and walked to the fair each day. The best thing about it was for us to see the new modern improvements. I remember going through the Ford museum and seeing all the new cars. Owning an automobile was just new enough that people were anxious to get a ride in them. The line for that opportunity was too long, so we didn't bother with it. We enjoyed the ride on the elevated train that toured the fair grounds. There were a lot of electric lights flashing that were a sight to see. We ate at stands from the exhibits of the different countries. A special treat for us at the fair were the ice cream cones; we really enjoyed them.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed I heard about it on the radio. I was sitting in a chair feeding a bottle to Kathleen. I remember just sitting there crying afterwards. I had cousins who were already in the service, George Gerringer and Clem Martiny, to name a few, and we knew a lot of the Allegany boys who were already serving. My husband got called up on the draft after the bombing. Because he was working in the oil fields and had small children, he was excused. School children collected milkweed pods to put in the life vests of the soldiers for the war effort on the homefront. We purchased war stamps for ten cents each and when we got so many, they were collected in a book. I knit rifle mittens (that had one finger for the trigger), socks, sweaters, and scarves for the Red Cross. I could never put the heels in socks and have them turn out correctly, so I'd knit to that point, then Margaret would finish the heels and feet. We had ration books with red tokens. There were just so many stamps for commodities like sugar, gasoline, meat, and shoes. By having a large family, we received an abundance of stamps for everything. Whatever we didn't need, we traded them with other people for things we did need (although I don't think we were supposed to do this). For example, we never seemed to use many of the shoe rationing stamps, nor did we need a lot of meat, fruit or vegetable stamps because of the products we grew on the farm, so these we would trade.

Another world event that had a huge effect on our family in later years was the Vietnam War. Our youngest son, Bill, was called to serve in March of 1971 at the age of twenty-one. The whole family watched in agony as the war was covered on the television screen. It was so stressful to live in fear for his safety. He was injured in a tank accident in October 1971, for which he was later awarded the Purple Heart. Family Christmases were just not the same with his being in harm's way. He was finally discharged in March of 1973.

There were a lot of organizations over the years that I belonged to. I was a fifty-year member of the Grange, held all the offices, and attained the rank of sixth degree. I was a charter member of the Catholic Daughters for fifty-nine years and held all offices. I also belonged to the L.C.B.A (Ladies Catholic Benevolent Association) and the Altar Society. While my kids were in school I belonged to the PTA. Currently I attend the 60 Plus meetings and activities regularly and I'm a member of the Allegany Area Historical Association. If I could do anything over again I'd have furthered my education and become a teacher. Other than that regret, I have none. I had a happy marriage and a good life.

As for all the tales throughout this narrative about my brother, Red Martiny, he always entertained others while enlightening them about his pranks. I remember his telling about a talk he did at the K. of C. one evening where he had people howling. Father Bonaventure, who was in the audience, told about going home with his sides aching from laughing so hard. Until the day he died he was an imp and delighted people with his shenanigans. He was a good one to have owned the Model T Inn in Derrick City, because he sure kept people coming back for more fun.

ITEMS FOR SALE

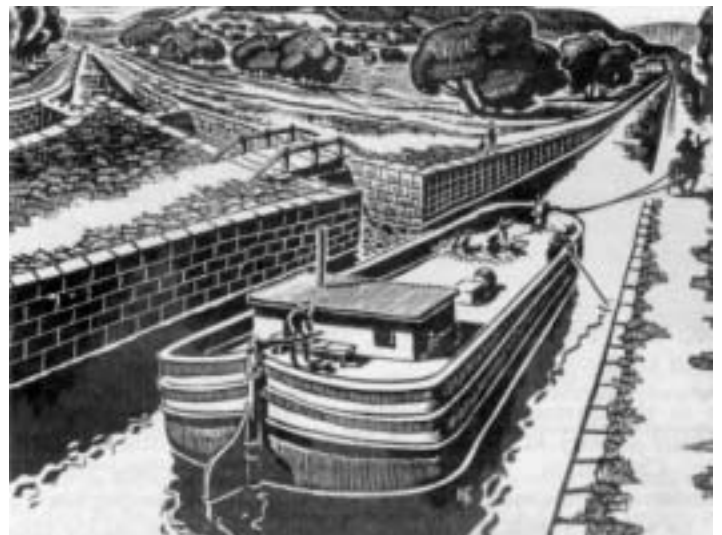
In addition to our history book, we have many more items for sale. These make good birthday presents, or just anytime presents. Here's what we have:

POST CARDS - 4 different Allegany scenes -
75 cents each, plus shipping.

ALLEGANY HISTORY VIDEOS - \$10, plus \$5
shipping

ALLEGANY HISTORY DVD'S - \$18, plus
shipping

TALES OF WAR AND CONFINEMENT - \$6,
plus \$3 shipping



Genesee Valley Canal

Memorials



For: Steve Gollaher
From: Bob and Francie Potter
Jim Kinley
Ruby and Denise Skroback
Nickey Nichoson
Mary G. Stephan
John and Frances Stayer
Bucky and Ellen Peck
Catherine Geise
Paul and Chris Carlson
Larry and Nancy Kardos

For: Caroline Lauser Jacobs
From: Kay and Bill Palmer

For: Kenneth Rehler
From: Sandy Rehler
Mike and Barb Rehler
Bob and Sue Bubbs
Pete and Ginny Rehler

George Hall, whose memoirs we published last year, turned 100 in March. A wonderful birthday party was held at the First Presbyterian Church in Allegany. A sheet listing some of the things that happened in 1908 was at each place setting. We thought you would be interested in it.

1908

- The first ball drop in Times Square took place. It was a 700 pound "electric ball", and it fell from a flagpole on top of the New York Times building.
- 1908 was a leap year, and ended with a nearly two and a half hour flight by Wilbur Wright, the longest ever made in an airplane.
- The U. S. Navy's Great White Fleet sailed around the world; Adm. Robert Peary began his conquest of the North Pole; six automobiles set out on a 20,000 mile race from New York City to Paris; and the Model T went into production.
- 1908 was an election year (and like today) America was coming off two terms of a Republican president who had set the country on a new course. Just like George W. Bush, entered the White House without winning the popular vote.
- Predictions made in 1908 included that human organ transplants would soon be common. Hampton's Magazine predicted that citizens would walk around with a receiving apparatus compactly arranged in their hats and could be tuned to vibrations of their choice.
- In 1908 the Chicago Cubs took the National League pennant from the New York Giants, and then defeated the Detroit Tigers in the World Series.
- Automobiles cost between \$2,000 and \$4,000, and only the well-to-do could afford them. They were used largely for sport.
- In 1908 a boxer, 30-year-old Jack Johnson, fought Tommy Burns for the heavyweight championship of the world, and became the first African-American to win the title.
- And oil was discovered in Iran in 1908.

But the most important thing to happen in 1908 was that George Hall was born.
Congratulations, George, on your 100th birthday!!

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be on Sunday, May 18 at 2 p.m. at the Heritage Center, 25 North Second Street, Allegany. Rob Stanton, a Regional Land Surveyor for Region 9 of the Department of Environmental Conservation, will speak on the Genesee Valley Canal and the Genesee Greenway Trail.

Rob is a native of Delancey, New York, graduated from Paul Smith's College, and has been in Allegany for 25 years, working for the D.E.C. He has many stories about the Genesee Valley Canal which ended in Olean. Cuba Lake was built to be a feeder for the canal. The Hinsdale historical group has exposed a lock of the canal, and there are extensive locks in the Nunda area.

New York State acquired the canal right of way from Rochester Gas and Electric, and Rob has done a great deal of surveying to help lay out the Genesee Greenway Trail, more in the northern part of the canal area than in the south.

COME JOIN US ON SUNDAY, MAY 18 AT 2 P.M. TO HEAR ABOUT THE GENESEE VALLEY CANAL AND GENESEE GREENWAY TRAIL.

**Allegany Area Historical Association
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INSIDE SPECIAL ISSUE:

Presidents Report

Catherine Martiny Geise Interview-
part 2

Things that happend in 1908
