PRESIDENT’S REPORT

We had an old-fashioned winter, the kind that we had forgotten about, but it sure made spring feel sooo good. We had been so spoiled by the mild winters the past few years that when this winter hit, we were not quite ready for it. At times it was warmer in Alaska than it was in Allegany! I know I burned through a lot of firewood for my fireplace! And spring was very slow in coming but I think it’s finally here. Friends in warmer climates seemed to take perverse pleasure in letting me know that their flowers were up and the weather was warm. But we really appreciate spring after surviving a Western New York winter!

We are now busy with preparations for Heritage Days to be held this year on July 31st, August 1st and 2nd. Our big exhibit this year is about the Allegany Volunteer Fire Department – any pictures or artifacts about the fire department that you can share with us would be appreciated.

I am excited about our May meeting – we are going to visit the Dresser-Rand Challenger Learning Center here in Allegany. There are separate articles later in this newsletter about the history of the local center, and complete information about our meeting on May 18th. Not only is this about past history but it is also about history in the making. When I was growing up, I could never imagine that man would walk on the moon, and now the mission is to go to Mars! I hope you can join us for what should be an exciting and informational meeting. Please note the change in location for this meeting. The Challenger Center is at 182 East Union Street, Allegany. There is a sign on East Union St. where you turn in to the Center.

We recently learned of the death of 92-year-old Earl Rowe of Bellingham, Washington. Back in 2007 Mr. Rowe wrote two very interesting articles for our newsletter. One was about living part time with his grandparents, John and Emma Lauser, in Chipmonk because of his asthma. Another article was about the Joseph Sutter family of Chipmonk. I have his son’s e-mail in case any old Chipmonk friends want to send condolences.

Don’t forget, we have another way to donate to AAHA. Use the Cattaraugus Region Community Foundation website at www.cattfoundation.org, click on the Donate button and fill in the online form. Our fund is listed as Allegany Area Historical Association Fund. All donations help build our fund for our use in the future.

Gertrude Schnell, who wrote the article about the Allegany Elephant elsewhere in this issue, noted that Ted Bigham, the speaker at our last meeting, is a former 6th grade pupil of hers in Franklinville, and currently serves on the Franklinville school board. The joys of living in a small town where your former teachers still fondly remember you.

FRANCIE POTTER, PRESIDENT
DRESSER-RAND CHALLENGER LEARNING CENTER HISTORY

On January 28, 1986, the Space Shuttle Challenger/STS-51L "Teacher in Space" mission exploded 73 seconds after liftoff, killing the seven member crew. In the aftermath, the crew’s families wanted to carry on the spirit of their loved ones by continuing the Challenger educational mission. And so the Challenger Learning Centers were born. The first one opened in Houston in August 1988. Today, there are more than 40 Learning Centers in the U.S., Canada, South Korea, and the United Kingdom.

In 2002, a small committee of local organizers formed, with the notion of bringing a Challenger Learning Center to the Southern Tier. After six years of planning and preparation, then-Congressman Randy Kuhl, Jr. helped the group obtain a $500,000 NASA grant to get the project started. Dresser-Rand, one of the largest suppliers of rotating equipment solutions to the worldwide oil, gas, petrochemical and process industries, with offices in Olean, joined in, donating $250,000 and acquiring naming rights. Dresser-Rand believed the math, science and technology components of the center would not only educate students locally but would also keep them in the area for future employment. CUTCO, the largest manufacturer and marketer of high-quality cutlery and accessories in the United States and Canada, also joined in, becoming an initial sponsor.

St. Bonaventure University donated the use of a building near its campus to house the Learning Center. In January, 2009, retired teacher Tom Moser was hired as the director of the DRCLC. After $1.3 million of construction, the Challenger Learning Center flight simulator was installed. The first mission was launched in June, 2009. Since then close to 10,000 students from 17 counties in New York and Pennsylvania have participated in the center’s programs. After Mr. Moser’s recent retirement as director, retired teacher Fred Welch came on board in August of 2013 as the current director. Fred retired in June, 2013 after a 32 year teaching career, 30 of which were in the Olean school system. He taught Math, Technology and Engineering.

He oversees a staff of seven commanders who run the missions and the Extra Venue Activities (EVAs) such as Great Rocket Design Challenge and Simple machines. All of the staff must be comfortable working with kids, and must have worked with children at some time in their careers.
The Dresser-Rand Challenger Learning Center partners with teachers, schools, school districts, universities, museums, science centers and local communities to make their vision of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education a reality.

There are three main components of the Challenger Learning Center experience – Pre-Visit activities, the Mission, and Post-Visit activities – each of which contributes to the strength of the learning process. A visit to the Challenger Learning Center is not just a field trip – it is a chance for students to see themselves in successful roles as scientists, engineers and researchers.

The Learning Center also does “Rocket Camps” for two weeks each summer. One week is exclusively for girls, and one week is open to all students.

ACME ELECTRIC

Since we are going to visit the Challenger Center for our May meeting, we thought it would be appropriate to give our readers the history of the building. This is from our newsletter of May, 1993, from an article written by Margaret Green.

Recently St. Bonaventure University purchased the one-story steel frame masonry building of 66,322 square feet formerly owned by Acme Electric Corporation. The purchase included 6.54 acres of property also. With the sale of this property Acme Electric Corporation’s impact on the village of Allegany has come to an end. Since 1986 the facility has not operated as a manufacturing plant, but did serve as a warehouse and shipping facility. In 1986 there were only 75 people employed at the Allegany facility. They were transferred to Acme Electric’s Cuba plant.

At one time, 300 people had been employed at the Allegany plant. They were involved in producing transformers for automotive battery chargers. They were distributed through Sears Roebuck Co. as well as under the name Atec.

Back in 1944, a plant called the Electrical Reactanse Plant started operations in the McCabe building, now the building owned by the Allegany Credit Union. (Ed. Note – this building is located at 49 West Main Street). They employed thirty-five. Growth forced them to move to larger quarters in less than a year to the former Wing Garage, now owned by Duggan & Duggan. Employees had grown to seventy-five. The plant was closed after V.J. Day in 1945, and the machinery was moved out in October of that year. They
had been making war equipment entirely and in the short term of their existence had, at their peak, employed 200 women.

Allegany Business Men's Association was influential in inducing the Acme officials to locate in Allegany. They opened with a skeleton crew on October 25, 1945 in the Wing Garage. This was a peace time industry. Guy Dilly, superintendent from Olean, stated his intent to employ Allegany people as much as possible. The plant manufactured electric motors, generators, transformers and related parts. By November 1945 they employed 50 people—all but five were women. Hours of employment were nine hours a day Monday through Thursday and eight hours on Friday, giving the workers 40 hours of straight time and four hours of overtime.

The business thrived and in 1951 a new building was erected on East Union Street. The Allegany Improvement Corporation set about selling stock to raise the necessary amount to complete the building, constructed by Stohr and Rowe of Portville. The building was entirely built of steel and concrete. The total cost of the building was estimated at $115,000. The stockholders received 3% interest per year. When the building was taken over by the company, the stockholders received their money. Harry M. Krampf was president of the Improvement Corporation. Many Olean businessmen invested in stock for the local project.

A February 1951 issue of the Allegany Citizen stated: "The structure of steel and concrete has now been roofed and the work of completion is being rushed—the dimensions of the building are 124’ by 200’. The corporation owns sufficient adjacent land to provide for expansion when necessary." And indeed expansion occurred, for in 1957 expansion brought the facility to 46,800 square feet, and in 1973 another expansion brought the space to 65,757 square feet.

As stated in the Diamond Jubilee News, 1977, Acme Electrical Corporation, "In Allegany transformers and stabilizers are produced both for sale to original equipment manufacturers and for assembly in power supplies at Cuba.... This plant employs 350 people." Unfortunately for the village of Allegany the plant closed. However, we are fortunate Acme Electric chose to remain in our neighboring county in the village of Cuba.

Several of our AAHA members were formerly employed by Acme. Marie Shipman worked there from 1966 to 1982 and recalls the close relations of the workers. They still gather on a social basis to enjoy time together. Ruby Skroback, Margaret Karl, Mary Ann Taylor, Charlotte Tyler and Margaret Gregory all worked there. Margaret Gregory came from Cattaraugus to Allegany and worked from 1948 to 1953. She met Orin Parker at Acme and they were married in 1952. Orin Parker retired in February of 1993 after working there 41 years.

\[\text{Milestones in the Acme Electric Growth Pattern:}\]

- Originating and chartering as Acme Electric & Manufacturing Company by Mr. H. C. Back, Mr. C. E. Hillstrom, Mr. E. A. Loe, Mr. C. R. Svermeke and Mr. J. B. Armsteg in Cleveland, Ohio with a capitalization of $50,000. Initial products were motor-driven battery chargers, electrical appliances and electrical generators.
- Free public stock issues to friends and Allegany businesses to supply capital needed for expansion. The company name was changed to Acme Electric and Manufacturing Company.
- Acme Electric introduced the first transformer-type battery charger.
- Transformer type chargers for the maintenance of battery-powered trains, then in their heyday.
- The fledgling company continued to grow and to develop new products. By 1946 a modern transformer was developed for use in the coal mines of West Virginia, and a change of name was made to Acme Electric Company.
- The company moved to a larger facility in 1951, where it continued to expand and develop new products.
- In 1957, the company expanded again, building a new facility on East Union Street.
- In 1960, the company introduced the first fluorescent lamp ballast.
- In 1964, the company moved to a new facility on South Union Street.
- In 1969, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for fluorescent lamps.
- In 1974, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for compact fluorescent lamps.
- In 1980, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for high-pressure sodium lamps.
- In 1985, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for mercury-vapor lamps.
- In 1990, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for low-pressure sodium lamps.
- In 1995, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for induction lamps.
- In 2000, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for compact fluorescent lamps.
- In 2010, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for linear fluorescent lamps.
- In 2015, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for high-intensity discharge lamps.
- In 2020, the company introduced the first electronic ballast for metal-halide lamps.

- \[\text{Engineering Research: new product development and advanced manufacturing techniques are paying the way for continued growth and expansion.}\]
ALLEGANY ELEPHANT
By Gertrude Schnell

My family tells the story of the Allegany Elephant. Fred Forness, Sr. was married to my Grandmother Delia’s sister, Mary Rehler. Their farm was on the Birch Run Road where the Boser farm is today. Fred ran the farm, but was also a Singer Sewing Machine salesman, oftentimes carrying the machines on his shoulder. However, he liked elephants. One time when the circus was in Olean or Allegany he attended and bought an elephant. After walking it home, it up and died. Therefore he had to bury it on the farm. No one seems to know where it is buried. Will bones be found someday and people think it was a pre-historic Mastodon?

From the 1908 book “Household Discoveries and Mrs. Curtis’s Cook Book” –

Hair Dyes -

Dyeing as a means of changing the normal color of the hair is now very little resorted to, except by a small number of thoughtless girls and women who are misled by ignorant or interested persons. This practice is regarded by all intelligent persons as an unmistakable mark of vulgarity. Even the young men themselves who are supposed, if any are, to be deceived and attracted by this process have coined the expression “chemical blonde” and “peroxide blonde” to define a woman who has been deluded into following this silly fad, and boast themselves able to recognize such an individual at sight. There is more justification for the use of hair dyes in case of premature grayness and especially for those cases where irregular patches of gray hair make their appearance.

How times have changed!

Soap - Odds and Ends

There are several ways of disposing of soap scraps. Dry them out thoroughly on tins in a warm oven, run them through a meat chopper (which can, of course, be easily cleaned afterwards), pound to a powder, mix with bran or oatmeal, and place in small cheese-cloth bags for the bath.

Or, when the scraps have accumulated, boil them with water until they melt and thicken. Use just enough water to keep them from burning. Pour into small molds like can covers, and allow them to harden. These give you new cakes of soap.

Or make a jelly of bits of fine white soap by melting a cupful of broken bits in a pint of hot water. Or run the soap through a meat cutter, or shave fine and melt with gentle heat. The soap will jell when cold. This soap jelly is useful in washing delicate fabrics, as silks, laces, and ribbons, and also for the toilet.

Or take a small spice can, fit a round stick of wood inside to keep the can in shape and perforate the bottom and top by driving nails through the can into the wood. Put soap scraps in this and use as a shaker when washing dishes.

I do remember saving soap scraps during the war and putting them together to make a “new” bar of soap.
Though it’s a bit late in the season for making maple syrup, we thought you might enjoy this description of syrup-making from our April, 1985 issue. This was originally written by Agnes McClure Chapman and appeared in the McClure Family History.

THE SUGAR BUSH

Looking backward over the growing up period of the family, some phases of life on the old home farm stand out vividly – among them sugar-making. When the spring-time came and the sap buckets were taken out of storage and put in order, and the maples were tapped and sugar-making began, the monotony of winter was broken and fresh prospects opened up. The sugar bush was three-quarters of a mile from the house at the back of the farm and many days during the sugar season Father and the hired man disappeared with the team soon after breakfast and did not return until dark, and on the sugaring off days Franc and I disappeared with them and spent the entire day in the woods. Happy sticky days! We dug under the snow for crinkle root which we greatly enjoyed, and when the syrup approached the sugar stage there close at hand were we with our saucers and wooden paddles which Father has whittled out for our stirring and eating.

We were not limited as to quantity, there was abundance for the inner as well as the outer woman and I vividly recall that uncomfortable stickiness of short hair, hood and cheek which nothing but water and a thorough scrubbing could cure.

Sometimes when there was a big run of sap, we worked with the men emptying the buckets into the big gathering tub which stood on a platform on the bobsleds and was drawn by the horses over the very rough rootty roads which were opened up for the purpose. And at times when Nature was in her most generous mood, the boiling down would go on throughout the night and a man would be left to watch the fire and add sap as evaporation progressed.

Occasionally when the syrup had become thick enough, it was taken to the house for completion where Mother super-intended it and the entire family participated in the eating. Large pans of snow were brought in, covered with the hot syrup to be converted into wax that some preferred, while others stirred theirs off to a light brownish yellow and ate it as grained sugar, or else before it hardened poured it into little scalloped patty-pans.

We can almost taste that maple-sweet sugar!
Memorials

For: Louis “Sonny” Williams
From: Kay Severtson

For: Betty Weil
From: Rhea and Paul Carls

For: Virginia Strotman
From: Harold and Marjorie Geise

While I was getting a start on my spring cleaning, I came across a book called “Games (and how to play them).” It certainly brought back a lot of memories. Some of the games I had never heard of – such as Fizz-Buzz and Have You seen My Sheep? and weren’t ones we played in Michigan.

But we did play Statue Tag. Here are the rules. “This is a game for about ten players. One player is chosen by counting out or drawing straws to be It. Mark a starting line with a stick or chalk. It stands fifty feet away from this line with his back to the other players. He counts to ten and everyone starts to walk or run toward him. As soon as he reaches ten he turns around quickly and all the players must “turn to statues.” This means that they must stay in exactly the positions they were in when he said ten. Anyone caught moving, even a tiny bit, is sent back to the starting line by It. Then It counts to ten again. As soon as any player is close enough to tag It, he does so, and all the other players run back toward the starting line with It chasing them. If a player is tagged by It, he becomes It for the next turn.”

As I recall, this could go on for hours, until our mothers called us home or we got tired of it. Some of the other games we played were Gossip where one person started a sentence and passed it down the line until it reached the last person who then said it out loud to everyone. Of course, it rarely resembled the original sentence. Hopscotch was a favorite with the girls. Everyone always had a piece of chalk in their pocket so we could play whenever the mood struck. I Spy was good for rainy days when we were stuck in the house.

Of course, games today all seem to be played on a computer. But what a lot of fun today’s children are missing by not playing some of the “old-fashioned” games.
NEXT MEETING

We will meet on Sunday, May 18 at 2 p.m. at the Dresser-Rand Challenger Learning Center, 182 East Union Street, Allegany.  *(Please note the change of meeting location).*

Fred Welch, Commander of the Center, will talk to us about the history of the Challenger Centers, and what the future holds for them.  He will also discuss what is happening with NASA and the hurdles that need to be overcome for a manned mission to Mars.

Tours of the Center will be conducted by Commander Welch and his staff.  If you have always wanted to see the Challenger Center, now’s your chance!  It truly is an amazing place, and will give you a small idea of what happens on space missions.

Join us on Sunday, May 18 at 2 p.m
at the Dresser-Rand Challenger Learning Center,
182 East Union Street, Allegany
for a glimpse into the future.

www.allegany.org