



Allegany Area *Historical Association*

March 2006

Issue XXV Vol. 2

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What a wonderful spring season we have had this year! The flowers seem particularly lovely. Perhaps it's because we didn't have a late frost, but I shouldn't say that too loudly since we're not into June yet.

We are busy getting ready for the **24th** annual Allegany Heritage Days, hardly seems possible that we have been doing this that long. Our exhibits this year will focus on Education in Allegany. We have many pictures and items in our collection from the Allegany schools, St. Bonaventure Elementary and St. Elizabeth's Academy that we will be using, but I hope that some of our members might have pictures or items that they would be willing to loan us or to let us copy to make the exhibits even more interesting.

As you know, Heritage Days is one of our big fundraisers. We made a profit of \$1,510.83 last year, with the most money being raised in the Country Cupboard. So when you are called to contribute baked goods or canned goods, I know you will response very generously as you always have, and we will continue to make some money to help pay the bills.

The Heritage Center is now open for the season on Wednesdays from 1 p.m to 4 p.m. I hope you will stop by to see our exhibits or to do genealogical research. Volunteers will be there to help you. We have the obituaries from the *Allegany Citizen* indexed so it will be easy to find your relations. The *Citizen* was published from 1896 to 1976, and continues to be a marvelous resource for us in many ways.

Marge Geise, our Vice-President and Program Director, is busy planning our speakers and programs for the coming year. If there is a particular topic you would like covered, please let her know so we can try to find a speaker about it.

We have lost several long-time members during the past year. I am going to list them, because I think our out-of-town members would like to be updated.

Connie Diggs - July 1, 2005; Betty Nenno Wilson - Dec. 15, 2005; Charles Wing - Jan. 6, 2006; Betty Lucyszyn - Feb. 20, 2006; Barbara Kelly - Jan. 29, 2006; Mildred Zaph - Dec. 19, 2005; Sandi Petrovick - March 6, 2006; Leo Hoppy - Oct. 18, 2005; Clair Edwards - March 18, 2006; Virginia Yehl - March 31, 2006; Margaret Karl - April 28, 2006.

They were all strong supporters of our association, in particular Sandi Petrovick. Sandi was a tireless worker at any event we had, she served as an officer and a Trustee, and her common-sense questions helped keep us focused on doing all we could to help our members. I think her favorite event was the Ice Cream Social during Heritage Days. She helped haul ice cream and cake up and down the stairs, always with a smile and a funny comment or two. She will be greatly missed, as they all will.

Francie Potter, President

Allegany
HERITAGE DAYS
August 4 & 5, 2006

SHELD-O-KRAFT

The Cattaraugus County Historical Museum, located at the Stone House on the Pines Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center Campus on Rt. 16 in Machias, currently has a display called "Made in Cattaraugus County", featuring items that have been or are currently made in Cattaraugus County. Some of the items displayed are Sheld-O-Kraft products from our collection. In 1991, Marge Green wrote an article for our newsletter about Sheld-O-Kraft, which is reprinted below. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 9:30 a.m to 1:30 p.m.. Summer hours begin May 30 when the hours will be extended to 4 p.m. Special weekend summer hours will be announced in the Times Herald. It would make a lovely day trip to check out this interesting display and see our contribution, as well as other items "Made in Cattaraugus County".

The Allegany Area Historical Association recently acquired a waste basket made by Sheld-O-Kraft Co., from Margaret Geary Bowen. The gift piqued the interest of several members of the association regarding the company.

By searching through back issues of the *Allegany Citizen*, and questioning some of our older local residents, I have gleaned some information about the founder of Sheld-O-Kraft, Park Sheldon, and the short lived industry in Allegany.

Park Sheldon was born in Allegany in 1866. His father, George L. Sheldon, was a Civil War veteran. His mother was Georgianna Park. Both parents died in 1917.

Park Sheldon was an inventive and artistic person, who was engaged in other pursuits before establishing the Sheld-O-Kraft company. He was a processor for several years at Allegany' Canning Factory. He conducted a Gymnasium, where he was the Physical Training Teacher. He and his two brothers, Charles and Ben Sheldon, had a wallpaper and fancy goods store in Salamanca for several years.

He then established a Woodworking and Picture Framing factory in Olean, under the name of the Sheld-O-Kraft Company.

Early in 1925, some men from the village of Allegany met to form an organization to acquire the old high school property at 69 North Fourth Street (then called Day Street) and convert it to industrial use. The organization was known as the Allegany Improvement Company. Co-partners were Thomas F. McMahon, Ray McAuliffe, E. F. Edwards, E. F. Smith, E. C. Green, Joseph Miller and W. N. Hall.

A credit of \$3,000 was opened at the First National Bank for the benefit of the Sheld-O-Kraft Co. The committee of the above named men were authorized to offer the Board of Education \$5,000 for the old high school property and to secure permission for the Sheld-O-Kraft Co. to occupy the premises as early as July 1, 1925.

This stock company, with Frank B. McLaughlin, Secretary and P. C. Sheldon as Vice-President, invited the public to an open house on August 14, 1925 at their new location in Allegany. It was hoped that the people of the community would learn something of the new enterprise, which would employ "30-40 hands". The public could also see the products being produced and to "observe the clean and wholesome and sanitary conditions under which the employees perform their duties".

The August 22, 1925 issue of the *Citizen* stated that about 200 people attended the open house. A large majority of the visitors were ladies. Those attending were pleased and surprised at the beauty of the models on display - 250 in all. Reproductions, in color, of the great masterpieces of the world were mounted in a variety of forms to make the article useful or ornamental but "pleasing to the eye and agreeable to the senses".

It was indicated that the holiday season would provide a market for the goods and that orders were being received from every state in the Union. Again, the article made mention of the wholesome and sanitary conditions in the plant, and it stated "no great mental or physical strain is required to produce the stock in trade".

Rhea Krampf, presently living on North 5th Street, recalls working at Sheld-O-Kraft after school while she attended Allegany High School. She pasted the pictures, such as The Blue Boy, on a board. Other women applied gesso (a plaster of Paris material) around the picture. Another decorative trim was applied with a cake decorator type instrument. Rhea did not recall the surroundings as "wholesome and sanitary", but attested that no great mental or physical strain was needed to produce the articles.

Sheld-O-Kraft discontinued operations in 1931. The Depression had an effect on the business. However, some who knew Park Sheldon claim that he was not a capable businessman.

Park Sheldon died in March of 1938. He and his wife, Katherine Miller Sheldon, were living at the time in the upstairs apartment at 12 North Fourth Street.

If any of our readers have articles of Sheld-O-Kraft that they wish to give to the AAHA, we would be pleased. Further information would be gratefully received. The donated example of Sheld-O-Kraft can be seen in the Heritage Center Library.

Since this article was written in 1991, we have received several more items of Sheld-O-Kraft, and most of these are now on temporary loan to the Cattaraugus County Historical Museum for their display, Made in Cattaraugus County. The waste basket is still on display at the Heritage Center.

BASKETBALL IN 1926

Margaret Karl, who recently died at the age of 99, wrote an article for our newsletter five years ago, which I think should be reprinted in her honor.

Would you like to know about basketball 75 years ago? Since I graduated 75 years ago and am now 94 years old, I am sure I have forgotten many things, but remember enough to fill you in on basketball. There was no football then. That was something colleges had, but high schools got into in a few years.

On Fifth Street where the post office parking lot is now was a large livery stable. You could leave a horse there all winter or while you shopped in Allegany or while you took the streetcar to Olean. No horse stood out in the cold for any length of time.

Basketball was played upstairs in the loft of the livery stable. Did we have uniforms? You just bet we did! We got a pattern for bloomers, and each one made a pair from black sateen, and wore a white blouse with it. The girls played first, and changed into their uniforms at Mabel Hall's place. Her folks lived in the apartment over what is now the Burton Hotel. The boys changed in a feed room at the livery. There was no heat so they moved fast to keep warm while changing.

You would be surprised at how many people came to see the games. They brought a blanket to keep warm and sat on hay bales to watch the games.

The girls played first, and the only ones I can remember are Mabel Hall, Victoria Forness, Ruth Spring and myself. In August of 2000, Ruth Spring, who by then was blind and living in a nursing home in Buffalo, died a couple of weeks after our "Over 75" dinner. I'm sure I would remember more if I just heard the names. The boys I remember who played were Hank Cram, Howard McCabe and a Rietz from the Buffalo Road.

I think we played teams if we could get to their place by streetcar. I guess the school must have paid for the tickets, as I know none of us had the money.

The game that stands out in my memory is one where we left Olean by train about 6 p.m. We arrived at the depot at Lime Lake, which was across the lake from the school. A man with a sled met us and we went across the lake on the ice. We all held our breath, as we were afraid the ice would break and leave us in the water. The man told us later that they would cut the ice in 50 and 100 pound blocks to sell during the summer. When we got to the school, ladies had hot food ready for us. The girls played first, and the boys had to hurry their game along so we wouldn't miss the train coming from Buffalo. The horse and sled got us back to the depot in time.

When we played our of town, Hank Cram's mother always had a kettle of hot chocolate and a big bowl of cookies or doughnuts waiting for us when we got back. My mother knew Mrs. Cram fed us, but we never told her that it was in the back of the poolroom. That was a "no-no", but the poolroom was closed at that time of night. The poolroom was a men's hangout. When it was cold in the winter, they played pool and cards, talked and ate. Word was that no lady went in the front except "that kind of lady". Well, we never saw one, wouldn't have known one or who she was, and we always had a teacher with us.

Kids think I'm crazy when I tell them I played high school basketball and never made a basket. At that time I was a guard, and a guard did not make baskets. She guarded the vistor and saw to it that she did not make a basket. (Ed. note - This was called half-court basketball. Guards from one team and forwards from another were on one half of the court and were not allowed to cross over the center court line. This was still being played in the 1960's.)

THE THINGS YOU FIND ----

In our last newsletter, we published a letter written in 1939 by Marion Brinson, a former Allegany resident, who was traveling with her husband to Moscow. We wondered what happened to them. Well, I found out. While doing some research, I happened upon Mrs. Brinson's obituary in a July, 1953 issue of the *Citizen*. I'm going to print some of it as it completely answers our question.

"Marion Wilber Brinson, wife of William Brinson, died last Sunday at her home in Ridgewood, N.J. She was 50 years of age. Marion Arlouine Wilber was born in the town of Allegany on October 12, 1902, the daughter of Stanley Palmer Wilber and Catherine Pierce Wilber. Her grandparents, both Pierces and Wilbers, were well known in the early history of Cattaraugus County, having moved by ox team to the Five Mile valley and Humphrey in 1835.

On the paternal side, she was a descendant of Evert Van Wickle, who erected the first frame house in Allegany County in 1802. She was the great granddaughter of Catherine Mullender Palmer who was the first white child born in Allegany County.

Mrs. Brinson was educated in the public schools of Allegany. Upon her graduation from Geneseo state teachers college, she taught in the public schools of Olean.

Since her marriage twenty-five years ago, Mrs. Brinson had lived in Glen Rock and Ridgewood, N. J., *with the exception of one year when she accompanied her husband, an engineer employed by an American firm, to the USSR.* (Ed. italics)

———Surviving besides her husband are three sons, William Stanley, David Wilber and Allan Pierce Brinson; (Allan was the son who was left at home when Mrs. Brinson traveled to Russia); a sister, Mrs. Allan Fuller of Rochester; an aunt, Miss Julia G. Pierce of this village; two uncles, Senator George H. Pierce of Allegany and Elmer S. Pierce of Buffalo. ———

———Interment was in Allegany Cemetery."

By going on the Internet, I found that the Max B. Miller Corporation, that Mr. Brinson worked for, was an oil company based in New York and was under contract with the Soviet Union to construct lubrication oil plants in the Caucasus. Their engineers were expelled from the USSR in the spring of 1940. The letter from Mrs. Brinson was dated August 13, 1939, so they had a short stay in Russia.

So with some luck and some searching, our question of what happened to the Brinson family has been answered.

We received the following from Dr. Winifred Prozeller Wirth, written about an actual event in early 1920. Dr. Wirth says she enjoys the newsletter as a connection about her growing-up years.

Leaving our home up the Four Mile Road
We sang "To Grandmother's house we'd go".
The horse pulled the surrey with its fringed top;
How he knew the way, we'll never know.

It carried our Mom and her 6 little girls
And boxes of goodies and clothing we'd need.
And with white puffy clouds and warm summers'
breeze
The horse trotted on at a steady speed.

The further we went our joy increased.
Old maple trees made a canopy or'head
As we kept on singing our favorite song.
Life was overflowing with nothing to dread.

We rode down our valley twixt Allegany hills
And noticed fenced pastures with cattle in herd.
Then came a river with a single lane bridge
And Mom kept the reins, and said not a word.

We stopped at a store with front hitching posts.
Inside were harnesses, tools, nails and such.
We bought penny candy, pencils and more;
From our own penny banks, we'd not spent too
much.

There were rows of barrels on sawdusted floors,
And Mom gave the grocer some jars to be filled,
But first her newborn weighed in at 5 pounds;
Then added a sack of flour just milled.

We stopped at a font of 1910 date
In front of the post office near a big tree
For horses and dogs and people on foot.
Imagine that! And the water was free.

Our town, like most, had railroad tracks
With houses built along the leeward side.
Mom showed us the place where our ancestors lie,
And St. Bonaventure where students abide.

In Olean we followed street after street
And soon found Grandmother's house that we sought.
T'was on Queen Street near Bleiston's small store
From which came peaches and food she'd bought.

A little black box on her wall did ring.
It talked and we listened with breathless awe;
"Ten minutes after we left that morn
Our home burned up - there was left nothing at all!"

Memorials



For: Barbara Kelly
From: Thomas, Cheryl and Kyle Stetz

For: Fred Grace
From: Francis Hirt

For Betty Lucyszyn
From: Francis Hirt

Bob and Francie Potter

For: Margaret Karl
From: Bob and Francie Potter
Harold and Marge Geise

For: Virginia Yehl
From: Paul and Doris Kelly
Bob and Francie Potter

For: Sandi Petrovick
From: Jim and Marion Elling
Tina Elling Smith

Marge Geise
Margaret Green
Orin and Margaret Parker
Alice Altenburg

For: Elizabeth Nenno Wilson
From: Clyde W. Nenno
Leo and Patty Nenno
Michael and Martha Nenno

For: Clair and Emma Edwards
From: Bill and Louella Keim

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



UPCOMING MEETING
MAY 21, 2006

Our next meeting will be on Sunday, May 21 at 2 p.m. at the Heritage Center. Our speaker will be Jay P. Tennes, the Director of the Eldred World War II Museum in Eldred, Pennsylvania. Mr. Tennes has been director since January of 2004. Some of the highlights of his tenure include meeting veterans and homefront workers who served their country during World War II, and a September 2005 trip to Moscow. He will speak on "How World War II Changed Everything".

If you have never visited the museum, Mr. Tennes' talk will be the next best thing. I know he will be interesting, and I encourage you to attend. He will have brochures about the museum, listing their hours, so perhaps a nice day trip might be in your future.

See you on **Sunday, May 21 at 2 p.m. at the Heritage Center.**

**Allegany Area Historical Association
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INSIDE SPECIAL ISSUE:

Presidents Report

Shield-O-Kraft

Basketball in 1926
