



THE SENTINEL

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The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Summer 2007

War Years on an Albany County Farm

By Martha Slingerland

When the U.S. entered World War II, I was a freshman at New York State College for Teachers in Albany. Our whole family was a substantial part of the operation of our farm and my involvement continued whenever I was able to be at home. From that farm, we operated an egg route (and dressed chickens, during boiler season, about 35 a week) in Schenectady and my brother, Ralph Gardiner, shipped milk to Albany.

On December 1, 1942, my oldest sibling, Belva, a graduate of Bellvue Nursing School, was sworn in as a 2nd Lt. in the Army Nurse Corps, attached to first U.S. General Hospital, the Bellvue Unit. She was sent to Pine Camp (now Fort Drum) for basic training and eventually to England and then, after D-Day, to France where First General operated a hospital for the duration of the war in Europe. Whenever she was away from home, she saved most of the letters she received from the family. In 1987, after she retired, she put them together in a booklet that she called "LIVING in the 1930s and 1940s." This book gives a pretty graphic picture of life "down on the farm."

Mother was the most faithful correspondent, though her letters were often written near midnight after a busy day. These quotes are from her letters.

In January of 1943, coal was in short supply. Mother writes: "Applebee boys have not been able to bring us any coal yet." (Jan. 12) "Ralph drove out today...went to Altamont for a new radiator for the Fordson [our old tractor with mud lugs, no rubber tires]. He was fortunate to get 400 pounds of coal too. The man expected more tomorrow. We will call up and if he has, someone will go for some more. He is sort of doling it out. It is the first we have been able to get this winter." [We could get by with wood in the house stoves, but coal held the fire better and was necessary for the brooder stove that kept the baby chicks warm.]

April 12, 1943: "I hear that [a neighbor boy] was drafted and left last Friday and the main thing that comes to my mind over that news is that it ought to save both tires and gas." [said neighbor was known as a rather wild driver!]

[In July, 1943, our father suffered a stroke and Dr. Perkins ordered complete bed rest. It was still necessary to keep up the farm work.]

August 22, 1943 "It seems that everything we do to further the war effort is done with the prayer that Harry shall have everything he needs when he needs it in order to carry on and be safe. [Belva's fiancé, who was an officer in the 45th Infantry Division, was killed on November 9, 1943, in the Italian campaign.] I am sending in another 15 pounds of fat tomorrow for ammunition. [Waste fat or grease was salvaged as part of the war effort.] These last installments of grease are fairly good quality too but not too good to go into combat.Our two pigs are making a lot more, too.

April 6, 1944: The men went to Albany...They looked for a



Tail gunner Tom Kendall (right) and his pilot Keith Sprague of California pose by the cabinet containing Tom's WWII flight jacket. Keith's visit to Unionville in May was the first time they had seen each other in 63 years. We could tell they were both enjoying the time together.

tube for the radio which they could not find. Ralph had to meet up for his farm gasoline [ration coupons,] to do his milking machine priority...and put in a call for two new tires for the Plymouth (he got one). [Flat tires on our 1932 Plymouth occurred with distressing frequency.]

May 1, 1944: [The above mentioned neighbor] is home on a 30 day furlough ...Ralph drove down to see him and said he was quite changed. He was in actual combat only about 45 minutes and was hit while digging a foxhole... He is in uniform yet and doesn't know just what they will do with him. He is minus some ribs. [When he was hit], he doesn't know how the news got around so quickly, but it was no time at all until [the medics] were around and had him on a stretcher. Both his division and the 45th were in Anzio beachhead when he shipped out.

May 15, 1944: Egg prices have run into a real low this summer, 48 cents for large eggs and feed prices are still climbing! We have bought 900 chix this year.

July 9, 1944: Ralph was in to see about gasoline coupons (for tractors) that didn't arrive [until Saturday.] We had used up the car coupons two weeks before to get some gas in our barrel.

This clipping is about the Appleby man you square danced with at Grange. [The clipping was about Sgt. Stanley Appleby of Clarksville who took part in the D-Day invasion of France and received a decoration for bravery from General Eisenhower.] (You can see a picture of this on the Honor Roll board.)

July 23, 1944: Ralph is writing the gasoline rationing board this morning. It keeps us jumping to keep tractor gasoline.

(Continued on page 4)

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members and Friends,

As your new president, I should tell you how your Historical Association is faring as we complete one year and are about to begin another. I came up with a long list of projects completed and another list of future plans. Hopefully you already know about many of these activities or will read about them in this issue of the *Sentinel* because I'm not going to explain them here.

When I thought about the accomplishments of the year, all that kept coming into my mind was the huge commitment of so many volunteers who make these things happen. This is not only true of our association, but throughout the community. Volunteers help Town Government, service organizations, fire departments and ambulance squads, Care givers, etc. I could go on and on. Many of these volunteers go to the workplace daily and still they manage to share a large portion of their time with others. I wonder "how do they do it?" Others go under the umbrella of "retirees." My dictionary defines retiring as "withdrawing from office, business or active life." Hey! You people need to figure out what retiring is all about! You haven't withdrawn, but rather, many of you are working overtime! But, until you do figure it out, know that there is a large community that recognizes your generous spirit—or they should.

A special thanks to all of you who made this year so productive for the Historical Association. Naming individuals would be inappropriate since someone would certainly be missed.

Perhaps you can bring a friend with you as you participate and volunteer with your New Scotland Historical Associates. Let them feel the enthusiasm. Perhaps they will want to be a part of the team.

Peg Dorgan, President

Finding Those New York State Library Bulletins

Dr. Chuck Ver Straeten, who spoke on the fossils and rock layers of the Helderberg Mountains at our April 17 meeting, has sent some websites to consult should any members be interested in bulletins provided by the New York State Museum. It requires a bit of "traveling" from one website to another to find what a particular member might want, but at least here are some starting points.

First, to find titles of publications, there are two websites:
<http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/publications/geolpub.html#bul> Note that many of these are listed as "out of print." To find a listing of Museum publications currently in print, the site is <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/publications/>

To get digital copies (pdfs) of out-of-print New York State Museum bulletins:

1. Go to the NY State Library webpage (<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/>)
2. Click on Catalog/ Digital Collections
3. Near bottom, click on Search Digital Collections
4. In the "Search" box, type in key words (for example, Berne, Catskill, Thacher Park...) from the title you are looking for.
5. You'll find links to the publication you want. Note that the text and various figures are listed separately—open each one and "Save" the pdfs to your computer.

Some computer settings require turning off the "pop-up blocker" under the "Tools" heading in "Internet Explorer" to open the pdfs.

No Award This Year

Earlier this year, the New Scotland Historical Association agreed to give a \$500.00 award to a graduating high school senior residing in the Town and planning to further his or her education in some field related to history. In order to qualify for this award, the student needed to fill out an application and submit it along with an essay, a resume and a transcript of grades.

We were disappointed with the response to the award offer. Basic criteria were not met and/or parts of the application were missing. We are currently reexamining our criteria and consulting with guidance counselors, students, and members to see how to improve for the future. Some suggestions made include starting publicity earlier in the year, like in September or October, giving a choice of topics for the essay, offering the award every two years and doubling the amount of the award, or offering younger students, like juniors or sophomores, the opportunity to compete. If you have ideas or suggestions, please contact Marie Hornick (768-2933).

Museum Report

Our new exhibit "**From the Home Front to the Front Lines: New Scotland in World Wars I and II**" opened on April 29th with a wonderful turn-out. Visitors enjoyed viewing the WW I ambulance and the WWII vehicles and observing the various re-enactors in action. Bob Humes displayed a fine collection of World War II artifacts and answered questions about them. The New Scotland pictorial Honor Roll was a big hit. More photos of New Scotland Veterans are being added weekly. The exhibit was well received by all who attended. Many took the time to watch recorded interviews of New Scotland Veterans. These were provided by the Saratoga Military Museum.

The museum committee was very pleased when Military Historian Bob Mulligan wrote to committee member Stu Lehman that "he was very impressed with both the exhibit, and with the Sunday event. It was a remarkable effort for a town history society to achieve."

Thanks to all who worked with us on the exhibit, including committee members Martha Slingerland, Vicki Seymour, Stu Lehman, Bob Parmenter, and Will Osterhout. In addition, thanks go to NSHA members Don and Sandy Slingerland, Janet Klopp, and also Voorheesville resident Bob Humes, who provided advice, insights, and much information. Hours and hours go into creating an exhibit—beginning with returning all the items from the former exhibit, to putting names on every borrowed item, paperwork for each item borrowed, planning the display, doing research, talking to folks, arranging the display in a logical fashion (we hope!), making labels, cutting Plexiglas, building shelves, blowing up mannequins (!) and creating bases for them, padding hangers, scanning photos, cutting foam core labels, arranging for the opening events, publicity. The Senior Citizens continue to be a wealth of information for us. Bob and Lorraine Felter did a super job arranging for refreshments, as always.

We want to thank all of the veterans and their families who so willingly loaned us items and provided us with so much information. Without them, there would not be an exhibit.

The exhibit will remain until March 30, 2008. If you wish to arrange for a special visit please contact Marion Parmenter at 765-4652, Martha Slingerland at 768-2184, or any of the officers—they will get the word to the committee!

Marion Parmenter

Mission Statement

The Town of New Scotland Historical Association preserves, protects and promotes history in the Town of New Scotland through the stewardship of material culture directly related to the town. The purpose is to promote an appreciation of local history, heritage and culture through research, publications and educational programs.

Special Appeal

Our special appeal this year is two fold. We want to do whatever is necessary to improve our sound system used for programs at the Community Center. In addition, we are in the process of creating our own NSHA website. The grant we applied for through the Upstate History Alliance was denied, so we need help with the funding to cover the cost of the websites creation. We hope that the membership will support us in these endeavors. To date, these special appeals have purchased our storage barn, our computer system, and the recent Banner Conservation project. Without your support, we could not have accomplished all this. There is an area on the membership renewal form for this donation. Thank you.

The Flu Epidemic—World War I

This memoir written by Harriet Appleby Ross, Lorraine Felter's aunt, gives us a little insight into the horrors of the flu epidemic, which was going on during World War I, and how it had an impact on one Clarksville family.

During the First World War, at the time of the flu epidemic, our family was no exception, except great Aunt Kate, even my grandmother was ill. My mother was the hardest hit with pneumonia on top of the flu. In fact, they didn't expect her to live. The six month old Stanley was at one of mother's brother's and Elena, the two year old, was at Mother's sister's home. The other three of us around 7, 6, and 4 were kept upstairs. We did have a slight case of the flu but evidently not too serious, for I remember distinctly I couldn't get the others to take the pills, so I took them all.

It may have been at this time, with too little to do and by ourselves, I happened to take a celluloid card and held it over a lighted lamp. You know what happened, but to this day, I can't remember how we got the fire out!

Another time I crept downstairs out of curiosity, no doubt, to find out why we had to stay upstairs, and I remember as I crossed the living room, I heard from the bed room, my mother say, "Let the little girl across the railroad track."

Later I was told Mother was delirious, and everyone was worried for her life.

(What scary times for little children. To hear talk of the war and the flu and not really have any idea what either was all about.)

(Continued from page 1)

Used up all the Buick tickets one spell while waiting for completion of all the red tape. We had to take two trips to Albany concerning them and called a couple of times, then a few came. But the G.L.F. boss has been good enough to extend us gasoline a few times and we then sent tickets to him later. The last bunch which were supposed to be for 360 [gallons,] were only for 130. [We must have wasted quite a bit of gas running to Albany trying to get ration coupons.]

[In December 0f 1944, Mother reported that Christmas tree ornaments could not be bought in the stores, so everyone was just using what they had.]

[Always hanging over us was the possibility that as the war went on, more farmers would be called in the draft.]

Jan. 16, 1945: There is to be a roundup of farmers again. All between 18 and 26 are being sent to New York for physical examination after which all who pass will be turned over to the Draft Board for decision as to whether they go back home or into the service. Ralph and Douglas [a friend and fellow farmer] have had their call from the president to be at Delmar at 6:45 A.M. day after tomorrow. The president said that farm work can be done by older people. [Father was an invalid, our older brother, Russell (age 28), was in Chicago, officially a radio technician in the navy though not yet called up, I was in college and Lois, in high school, was already missing quite a bit of school during busy times. Ralph would turn 26 in May.]

Jan. 21, 1945: [Ralph had been to New York for his service physical, which he passed. It must have been more than a regular physical since he got a bid to volunteer for radar work, saying he had passed high enough to warrant it.]

Now he will have to show up at the draft board whenever the call comes and after that, we will know whether it's a deferment again or not.

March 26, 1945: [They were preparing for the arrival of baby chick.] If we could get some litter [probably shavings, for the floor of the pen] and the stove up, we'd be ready. The stove is easy, but there's no litter to be had. There is report over the radio that meat is going to be scarce and people should depend on chickens, so of course everyone is getting them.

As to the farmer draft, I guess a good many have been taken around the country and we have another affidavit to fill out and sign.



Cars on the Gardiner farm waiting for gasoline during WWII.

May 8, 1945: [V.E. Day had come!] Our president [Truman] reminded us that our war is not won yet and gave us a slogan, "Work, work and more work!" He dedicated next Sunday as a day of prayer and thanksgiving and a memorial to those who have laid down their lives.

June 24, 1945: This is broiler season and we sold 40 and ate 3 this week. There is the worst holler for eggs ever. Stores in Schenectady allow only 3 eggs to a customer. Too many have sold their hens on the black market at \$4 each. [We didn't have to collect ration coupons for the chickens we sold for meat, but there were price controls.]

[On July 1, Mother reported that she had made a cake, the first one for weeks. "We are quite short of sugar at present." I remember a friend who had just had a baby splurging by making lemonade, using some of the baby's quota. On Aug. 12, Mother reported that we had been able to get some canning sugar coupons.

On August 14th Japan surrendered, bringing an end to the war, but it took a while for things to return to normal.

Cheap Meat!

I found a reference to eggs in a letter my father (Jerry Badgley) sent to my mom at the lake on August 15, 1945. "Delivered your eggs today. Sold four extra dozen. Had some fun with the extra eggs. Just whispered to the customers that I could let them have an extra dozen and they are so used to buying anything they can get, it was easy. You will have to put the price up next week. One customer told me eggs were the cheapest meat she could buy." M. Parmenter

Pound Award Presented

Feura Bush resident Norma Walley (left) is shown receiving the Pound Award at the April meeting of NSHA. Norma has served on the Board, worked to collect historic information and pictures from the southern part of the Town of New Scotland. She helped author our book "*New Scotland Township*" and was chairperson of the first Feura Bush "*Plum Fest.*" She is currently the chairperson of the historic sites committee. Norma continues to be a dedicated member of NSHA.



The Fire and Ambulance Companies of the Town of New Scotland

By Marie Hornick

This is the fourth and concluding part of an article featuring a look at the volunteer fire companies and ambulance companies in the Town of New Scotland. This part includes a look at the Ladies' Auxiliaries of both the Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Company and Rescue Squad and the New Salem Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. In addition, the last fifteen years in OVFC's history will be summarized, as well as the examination of the New Salem Fire Department's history from 1969 to the present. The information for the Onesquethaw segment was gathered from company records through the assistance of Carol Latham, Ladies' Auxiliary chairperson, Fred Spaulding, Chief, Jeff Houck, Engineering officer, and Michael Dorgan, President, from the Program Booklet of the 16th Annual Albany County Fireman's Association Convention (1992), and from the Altamont Enterprise & Albany County Post Special Section, "Salute to our Lifesaving Volunteers," June 22, 2006. Information about the New Salem Volunteer Fire Department was provided from company records with the help of Charles Unser, Assistant Chief. In addition, two documents contained a great deal of historical information: "A Decade of Fire Service," written by Harold Lonnstrom, chronicled the years from 1972-1981, and "History of the New Salem Volunteer Fire Department" written for the Program Booklet of the 13th Annual Albany County Fireman's Association Convention (1989) by a committee headed by Patrick Hunsinger. The June 22, 2006, Special Section "Salute to our Lifesaving Volunteers," from the Altamont Enterprise & Albany County Post was also consulted.

Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary

Two years after the Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Company was organized, a group of thirty-nine women formed a Ladies' Auxiliary on June 22, 1944. Three of the Charter members were already members of the Fire Company. Helped in the beginning by the Delmar Ladies' Auxiliary to organize their by-laws and philosophy, the Ladies' Auxiliary sponsored antique shows, which were three-or four-day programs, with more funds raised serving lunches and dinners. These shows continued into the 1950s. Following the example of the Delmar group, the Onesquethaw Ladies' Auxiliary helped ladies first from Berne, then from Knox, to form their own groups.

Proceeds from Auxiliary card parties, barbecues, banquets, pie sales and antique shows were used for the many things needed by the Fire Company: supplies for the firehouse and kitchen, equipment for firefighting, material for uniforms. When the Fire Company hosted the 1953 Hudson-Mohawk Convention in Clarksville, the Ladies' Auxiliary helped with this major project. Later, they started a "mini-carnival" that in 1967 turned into an annual event held in its later years at the Unionville Firehouse site.

On October 22, 1963, at the request of the Fire Company, the Ladies' Auxiliary reorganized to become Unit #4 Ladies, joining the other three units at Clarksville, Unionville and Feura Bush. In June, 1995, Unit #4 was renamed the Auxiliary. Through all these years, the Auxiliary has continued its many fundraising events, putting on dinners, holding flea markets and craft fairs, along with contributing to an Emergency Fund

for the local community and to the Albany County Burn Fund to assist families of burn victims with housing, should it be necessary.

The October 4, 1987, snow storm tested every member who volunteered to help with meals and housing for citizens who had no power and thus no water or a way to cook. Rescue crews were also fed during the five days the community was without power. Currently, the Auxiliary has 42 members, 24 of whom are Life Members with 25 or more years of service. To meet emergency fire/rescue squad support needs, fundraising functions and meetings, the Auxiliary can most often count on a minimum of twelve of these members (several of whom are Life Members) for faithful support. The Auxiliary of the Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Company and Rescue Squad continues its service to the community in the organization's seventh decade.

Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Company

Early in the 1980s, through the efforts of the Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Company and the New Salem Volunteer Fire Department, the Rural Fire Chiefs' Association was formed. After public water became available to the hamlets of Feura Bush and Clarksville, fire hydrants were added in 1986 and 1990, respectively. Previous firefighting depended on there being water available from local ponds or creeks or OVFC's own pumper trucks, so the benefits of having water readily available in populated areas were easily apparent.

Fire prevention programs and a strong educational commitment have been part of the company's efforts to provide community service. One such program on fire prevention was initiated at Clarksville Elementary School in 1985, then offered at Becker Elementary. Other programs highlight safe use of wood stoves. The Calendar Drive fundraiser each year provides all residents with pamphlets on home exit drills, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and other safety programs. Over the five days of the October, 1987, snowstorm, volunteers fed several hundred people and checked on elderly citizens to be sure they had food and a way to keep warm. The Onesquethaw Caves under Clarksville attract year-round visitors. OVFC members have been called to the rescue of stranded cavers, lost cavers, and once, to the recovery of the body of a caver trapped by a flood.

Through the years since 1992, when OVFC hosted the Albany County Fireman's Association Convention, several important additions have been made to the company's firefighting equipment and trucks. In 1995, a one-ton GMC brush truck was added; replacing a 34-year-old truck in 1997 was a Marion pumper with the ability to pump 1000 gallons /minute, and in 2002, a Marion tanker with a 2000 gallon tank and the ability to pump 1500 gallons per minute. In the spring of 1998, the old Unionville block building was demolished; in the summer, it was replaced with a modern, efficient 75' x 54' building which housed multiple bays, a meeting room and showers equipped for decontamination procedures. As preparation for the future home of the new Feura Bush station, property was purchased in 2004 at the corner of SR 32 and Unionville Road.

In the last several years, OVFC has received several grants for specific purposes, including: a 2002 grant for the purchase of a Bullard thermal imaging camera for help in locating peo-

(Continued on page 6)

