

The Historical Society
Of the
TOWN OF MINERVA

Quarterly
April 1971

Volume I - No. 2

A NEW VENTURE

The Minerva Historical Society is undertaking a new venture --publishing a quarterly -- somewhat similar to those published by our neighboring societies, John Thurman, and Chestertown.

This is our first issue. It will give us an opportunity to place in the hands of our members and other interested people, some of the materials we have been collecting through the years. We also hope that it will keep you more up-to-date on what we are doing.

The present plan is to issue the Quarterly in April, July, October, and January, the same month that our meetings are held. Our meetings are on the last Tuesday of these months. If you have any material of an historical nature which you would like to see in the Quarterly, please give it to one of the Committee.

Mabel Jones and Helen Shevlin are to be the co-editors, with the assistance of Alice Switzer, Shirley McNally, Kathy Halloran and Doris Wells. Doris will do the setting up and mimeographing on her own machine. Some of you may be called upon to use a stapler or to lick stamps, etc. The Quarterly will be free to members and 25 cents per copy to non-members:

INCREASED DUES

Tentatively, the Quarterly will be used to announce the date of the next meeting, also any pertinent information regarding the upcoming meeting will be given.

At the April meeting, dues will be collected and there will be election of officers. We will also have a guest speaker. The date is April 27th and the place the Town Hall in Minerva.

In order to pay for paper, stencils, stamps, etc, our dues are to be increased to two-dollars a year, instead of the one dollar we have been paying. This increase was voted on at the January meeting, and will also be used to purchase supplies for the Photo-Copier purchased in the fall as well as cassettes for the Tape Recorder. Students who wish to join may do so for one dollar a year dues.

William Brannon has used the Copier to duplicate several old maps and deeds of Minerva which would have disintegrated

soon. If you have some that you think worth saving, let us know.

The Plaque dedication was recorded on a cassette, but due to difficulties with the microphone at the speaker's platform, only part of the program is understandable.

OUR HISTORY BOOK

In order to make sure that the proofs for our 'Minerva 1817-1967' are not lost or destroyed, they have been divided up as follows: Andy Halloran has in his safe in North Creek the negatives from which the book was made, along with four copies of the book. Doris Wells has the pages from which the negatives were made and six copies of the book. Mabel Jones has five copies of the book.

The executive committee decided to keep these 15 copies of the original edition for future use. There are none for sale. If you happen to have two copies and are willing to sell one, there are plenty of people who would like to buy.

FUTURE OF THE ADIRONDACK PARK

We should all be giving our attention to the Report of the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondack Park. Eugene Porter obtained a copy of the full report for the Historical Society, and clippings on the subject are being saved. What is done as a result of this study may have a decided effect upon our area.

Our Supervisor, Francis Donnelly, in his capacity as Chairman of the New York State Forest Practice Board, is one of the advisors to the Commission. Former Congressman Leo O'Brien, whose son now owns the former Hand property on 14th Road, is one of the members of the commission.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE

The Memorial Plaque was purchased during the summer and was dedicated on Veterans Day. It was presented to the town in a program held in the Minerva Central School auditorium. The Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Brownies, the Board of Education, the Minerva Adult Chorus and members of the Historical Society participated in the program. Flags to be placed on either side of the Plaque when it is placed in a permanent monument were presented by Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Mangine. Plans are being made by the town to place the Plaque in a stone-faced monument in front of the Town Hall in the spring. The inscription on the Plaque reads as follows:

'In honor of the men and women of
the Town of Minerva who served in
the armed forces of the United
States in order that we might
live in Freedom.

Dedicated Nov. 11, 1970'

VITAL STATISTICS

A member of the Society has copied by hand the early records of births, marriages and deaths which were kept by the priests of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Churches, beginning in 1867. It was a difficult task since they were in Latin and some of the writing is very hard to read. Some of the names were impossible to decipher. However, it is a very valuable addition to our records. The material has now been typed in order that each Historian may have a copy. Those who wish to look up ancestors may have access to either copy, as well as census and other early records that have been previously copied.

It is interesting to note that many French families came into this area in the 1860's to 1880's. As a result, the first resident priest, Father LaRoche who came here in 1867, was French. He no doubt had trouble with the Irish names, just as later Irish priests had trouble with the French names.

Father F. X. Pelletier, who started his work here late in 1879, ministered to the people in Boreas River, Newcomb, North Hudson, Schroon and Indian Lake. When we realize that he baptized infants in those areas at almost any time of the year, we know that he did not have an easy life in the horse and buggy days. He died in October 1881 and is buried under St. Joseph's Church. Later priests had the same schedule to follow for some years. A church was built in Schroon about 1882, but they were still under the supervision of the Minerva priest for some years. At least some births, marriages and deaths are to be found in Minerva church records up to 1895.

Many births are recorded in Catholic records and not in town records. We are told that a state law was passed making it mandatory for towns to keep vital records in 1847 and 1848, but this law was revoked. It was again passed in 1882 and it has been compulsory for towns to keep such records since 1883.

However, we know from comparing Catholic records and town records, that neither is without omissions. A few town records are available before 1883 and we have copied those of 1847 and 1848 in Elizabethtown.

The 1970 census gives Minerva a population of 733. This an increase of 38 since 1960.

The greatest population that Minerva has ever had was in 1865 when it reached 1082. Among these were 75 men from Canada who were living in shanties and boarding houses, and were no doubt working in the woods and the tannery.

ROOSEVELT - MARCY MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

Although the bill designating Highway 28-N as the Roosevelt-Marcy Memorial Highway was passed and signed by the Governor in 1969, it was not until last fall that signs to that effect were erected. They read as follows:

"In commemoration of the famous ride to the presidency of the United States by Theodore Roosevelt from Tahawus, in the Town of Newcomb to the Town of North Creek at the time of President McKinley's death, Sept. 14, 1901."

Our history of Minerva erroneously states that this was a 2-hour drive. Mrs. Teresa Cronin Maier has given us the correct information which follows: "From the Upper Tahawus Club to North Creek was at that time a 35-mile ride over country dirt roads with horses and that night it required six hours and one minute to cover the distance in three relays -- two hours from the Upper Club to the Lower Club House, ten miles; two hours and twenty minutes from the Lower Club House to Aiden Lair, nine miles; one hour and forty-one minutes from Aiden Lair to North Creek, sixteen miles." The three drivers were David Hunter, Orrin Kellogg and Michael Cronin.

The bill to designate this as the Roosevelt-Marcy Memorial Highway was introduced in three successive legislatures by Senator Ronald B. Stafford to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his persistence and interest. Two members of our society also deserve much credit for pushing the matter to a successful conclusion -- Supervisor Francis Donnelly and Mrs. Theo Cronin Owens. Mr. Donnelly was given one of the pens with which the bill was signed.

The carriage in which Mr. Cronin drove Mr. Roosevelt from Aiden Lair to North Creek is now in the new Transportation Building at the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake. One of the horses lived for many years and ended up in Chestertown. With the permission of Mrs. Mark Fish, we here reproduce excerpts from the story of that horse as given in the Chestertown Historical Quarterly.

"Thanks to Marion Burge, now living in Glens Falls, we have a picture of "Teddy", a famous Adirondack horse. Her father, Charles Burge, at one time owned the horse, and she presented the museum with a clipping which reads in part: 'The horse driven by "Mike" Cronin on that memorable night in 1901 is still alive but nearing the end of its career. The animal is owned

by Charles H. Burge of Chestertown, a Warren County Justice, and well-known politician in that section. Throughout the countryside the horse is known as "Teddy", It is now more than twenty years old and a cripple that has outlived its usefulness. It was born and raised on a farm in the Alden Lair country and for years was an ordinary farm horse. After the famous ride Teddy has had several owners. A few years ago, he drifted into the livery of "Lew" Young at Chestertown and was in great demand for a time among the summer visitors who knew the history of the animal.'

The article traces his sale to Ambrose Waddell and his final purchase by Justice Burge. He was crippled when loaned out by the Justice and was out to pasture until Mr. Burge determined to have him shot. In his heyday the stalwart bay weighed about 1200 pounds."

Mrs. Fish learned from Mr. Willis Kingsley that, with the horse Teddy, he helped to lay the first telephone line over Mountain to Chester, when communications in the area stemmed from the Chestertown Telegraph, Telephone and Cable Company.

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IN MEMORIAM

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Helen Barnes Keenan

1881-1971

Mrs. Helen Keenan died on January 25th at her home in Olmstedville at the age of 89. She was one of the charter members of the Minerva Historical Society in 1955 and one of its first officers, being its first Vice-President. She was the daughter of Wesley Barnes who served as a Member of the State Assembly and sponsored the bill that created the Forest Commission, forerunner of the Conservation Department.

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Helena Lavery

1881-1971

We here reproduce what Elizabeth Sullivan wrote about her neighbor and friend of many years:

"St. Petersburg, Fla.

With the passing of Miss Helena Lavery, who died at her home in Olmstedville, January 8 at the age of 89, we lose a person whose life was lived in the service of others, with much self-denial on her part.

Left motherless at an early age, she assumed the duties of caring for a large house, a very young brother, and kept the business records for her father, who operated a sawmill and gristmill for many years.

A member of the Methodist Church from youth, she was the organist for more than 60 years, and always participated in all the activities of the church until unable to do so.

Her last years may have been lonely ones, as she outlived all of her family. We are sure she passed on to where there is no loneliness and of her life here on earth, her Lord will say, "Well done!"

Catherine Cronin Rice
1890-1971

Mrs. Catherine Rice died in New York City on March. 2nd at the age of 81. She was one of the daughters of Michael and Lillian Butler Cronin of Aiden Lair and sister of Theo Cronin, one of our members.

Jean Robert Foster
-1970

The death of Jean Robert Foster in Schenectady on September 22, 1970 is of more than passing interest to our Historical Society, for she lived in Minerva at one time. Too late to be put into our History, we received a very fine picture of the log house in which she lived as a child in Leonardsville, In front of the house stands her father's Frank Oliver, with his Hambletonian mare, Nancy. Nearby are his wife, Lucia Newell Oliver, and his two daughters, Julie and Clara. On the back of the picture, Mrs. Foster wrote, "The house had been the Burteau house. It then belonged to my father's aunt, Joanna Lavery of Olmstedville. After eight years of farming, my father moved to Chestertown and went back to lumbering and building. The years on this 150-acre farm are my treasured years."

After moving to Chestertown, the Oliver family lived next door to the family of the Rev. Salmon H. Foster, an evangelist for the Wesleyan Methodist Church. At the age of 17 Julie married Matlock Foster who sent her to a dramatic school in New York, and later to Boston University with some classes at Harvard. Julie became a writer of both prose and poetry, using the penname Jeanne Robert Foster. In 1916, she published a book of her poetry called "Neighbors of Yesterdays". It is about very down-to-earth people whom she knew and shows a keen insight into human nature. A few of the poems are about people who lived in Minerva.

She later published "Wild Apples" and "Rock Flowers".

Mrs. Foster wrote for magazines and later became associated with the great art collector John Quinn. She was well acquainted with the Irish artist John Butler Yates who painted pictures of her which hang in galleries in Dublin, London and Rome. Her work took her across the Atlantic seven times.

Illness in the family brought Mrs. Foster back to Schenectady and in 1938 she became Housing Counsellor for the Municipal Housing Authority, which position she held until 1955- Since that time she was very active in work with senior citizens,

art and writers' groups and has continued to write poetry. In 1959 she was named "Senior Citizen of the Year" and in 1961 she was made a Schenectady "Patron". Last June she received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Union College.

Reidinger and Reidinger Publishing Company of Schenectady have the publishing rights to the works of Mrs. Foster and they plan to publish the volume on which she was working at the time of her death. The work is tentatively to be called "Adirondack Folklore".

Mrs. Foster was a great lover of nature. In the spring of 1964, she wrote the following poem in memory of Rachel Carson, author of "Silent Spring".

Let Me Go to the Heaven Where Birds Go

If I should deserve of my Maker
To come to a heavenly place
I will ask one boon at the gateway.

Let me go with the birds to their heaven;
It will not be heaven to me,
If I cannot hear each morning
Their song from the skyland tree.

Let me live where the birds live;
They have been my friends so long,
It would not be heaven without them
And their cascades of song.

The God of the birds is my God;
He marks when a sparrow falls;
He guards the nests they have builded;
And answers their fluted calls.


Let *me* go to the heaven where birds go ...
Give me song and wings to fly
With them in the amaranth gardens
Of the great Bird-Heaven on High.

Jeanne Robert Foster

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