

BULLETIN

Cortland County Historical Society

Volume 3, Issue 1

February 2010

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See inserts for information regarding our upcoming lecture series and trips we are planning.

Mindy's Musings

All of my life I have been surrounded by strong women. Women of character, strength, and integrity. They raised families, loved, and taught lessons to those around them by how they lived.

My mom had it hardest of possibly all of these strong women. With the support of my dad she raised three children, and went back to school and got her bachelors degree in education. She was always there when we were little. She helped us through the trials and tribulations of being teenagers, and has successfully managed to get all three of her children out of the house and into the world on their own. Her influence on my life is inestimable, that on the lives outside of my own, even more. Mom worked as a teacher for students with special needs, and taught what many might look on as those with the least likeliness of learning.

My dad's mom is another strong woman in my life. She not only raised two sons but helped to take care of her sister after the young death of both of their parents. She worked her way into a career, going to college while raising young children. She pursued further education and moved up in her profession. When I was little I wanted to be an accountant just like her, then I wanted to be a teacher like my mom, all dreams outgrown to be my own strong woman.

Beyond my family I have a great group of friends that I would call strong women. These women make a mark on the world around them. One of my best friends works as the education director at another museum. She is a pillar of knowledge and strength. She is a wonderful supporter and a great teacher. She encourages and supports while knowing who she is in this world. She touches lives through her work in the museum by inspiring young and old alike to think in new ways about old things. Her influence will live forever.

My other best friend and I met through college. She is a mother and a wife. She has a wonderful son that she is raising to be the best man possible. She is also working on furthering her education while raising a son, running a household, and contemplating returning to work on top of all of that. She wants to work to help people. Her strength and example lies in her ability to maintain all of that while keeping her friendships true and strong.

These women have shaped and continue to shape who I am today. They encourage and support. Dry the tears and laugh with me in happiness. Despite this none of their names will be found in the pages of history, their influence is felt and impressed upon the world, but they remain nameless faces among a crowd of millions of other great women.

March is Women's History month and the National Women's History Project challenge for 2010 is to write women back into history. Let us take this challenge and remember the great women who have shaped our lives and molded us into the people we want to be. This issue will look on the great women of Cortland County who have made strides in changing history.

Mom - Rebecca Leisenring, Grandma - Diana Leisenring, Jennifer Haines, and Kristin Bateman, thank you all for who you are and who you have helped me to become. It is my pleasure to write you into the place in history you deserve.



Mom and I with Tigger at Disney, Summer 2009

Toys, Toys, Toys

In 1987, Motley Crue released *Girls, Girls, Girls*, in 2009 CCHS released our Toys, Toys, Toys exhibit.

Monopoly, Scrabble, Barbie, GI Joe, View Master, Rock 'em Sock 'em Robot, train sets, Hess trucks, Odd Ogg and many more.

Some toys we all remember, others are new to us, CCHS is helping us to remember our youth with this great collection of toys.

While the exhibit will only be here for a short time, the memories it sparks will last a life time.

Come in and view this exhibit during regular hours as part of a tour you'll be sure to relish.



Various Toys from the exhibit

Attic Treasures Sale

As you begin your spring cleaning and your wondering what to do with that odd trinket, consider donating it to the Cortland County Historical Society for our Attic Treasures Sale.

Donations can be made during normal business hours, or contact us at CCHS to schedule a special pick up if needed. Please have all arrangements made by April 30, 2010.

Sale scheduled for May 7 & 8, 2010

Membership Renewal October 2009–December 2009

Mr. and Mrs. Harley Albro

Ms. Rita Alcorn

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Mrs. Marjorie Beard

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Mr. James Cornwall

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Mr. and Mrs. Sean Cummins

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Ms. Mary Louise Dexter

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Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hoffmann

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jermy Jr. and Family

Ms. Rhoda Jones

Mr. and Mrs. John Kane

Mr. and Mrs. Carl Kimberly

Mrs. Lucille Kinsella

Mr. and Mrs. David Magin

Mrs. Shirley McMahon

Honorable and Mrs. Thomas Meldrim

Ms. Sylvia Mitchell

Ms. Susan Monroe

Mr. and Mrs. Francis Moore

We're on Facebook.

For the most up to date information join our Facebook Group (search Cortland County Historical Society).

See pictures, links, and other items of interest all available at the click of your mouse.

Also be sure to check out our web-site: www.cortlandhistory.com.

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Mr. Kenneth Wooster

Mrs. Diane Wuesthoff

Ms. Kay Zaharis

Mr. John Zelson

Mary Alice Bellardini

While I was indeed the first female mayor of Homer, I certainly was NOT the first female mayor in Cortland County. That honor goes to Imogene Passeri of Marathon who was mayor from 4-1-1972 to 3-31-1977. And how about Sue West, the first woman to serve on the County Board of Supervisors and from 1940 to 1956! Nevertheless, Homer had to make the adjustment in 1987, and not without some fear and trembling for some residents. A female constituent asked me if I thought I could handle all those men! "But I'm married," I said hopefully, "I have some experience."

I did enjoy the challenges of the job. Holding elective office offers the opportunity to do things to benefit your community. Working with four others, the Village Trustees, who felt the same as I, made governing a pleasure - most of the time. There were moments. We did new water and sewer lines and all the traditional work mayors of all villages and cities do, but I did toss in historic preservation and beautification. Our Federal and State historic district is a significant economic factor in our Village. This was a new approach to some residents and only recently does it seem to be more broadly accepted.

It's hard now to be on the sidelines and to use a more subdued approach to local issues. How did Harry Calale ever do that so well?

Submitted by Mary Alice Bellardini

Jeanette Benton Sherwood

As 2010 marks our 85th Anniversary any list of great women of Cortland County would be remiss to pass Jeanette Benton Sherwood. I have heard her name in passing during my time here, but researching for this newsletter I have come to learn a great deal more about Jeanette Benton Sherwood.

Born September 10, 1863 in Cortland, she spent most of her life at 79 Railroad Street (the Benton homestead) (editor's note: Railroad Street is now Central Avenue). She married Silas Sherwood who died 23 years prior to her death in 1938. Jeanette was a busy woman, who not only helped found the Cortland County Historical, but also the Twentieth Century Club, and the Tioghnioqa Chapter of the Daughter of the American Revolution.

She was also active as a Sunday School teacher and from the time she was 15 was active with the same Sunday School for 35 years. Beyond this she was a President of the YMCA Auxiliary, board member of Cortland County Hospital, in the Federation of Women's Clubs, first secretary Home Bureau Cortland County, and secretary-treasurer of the Central New York Historians, to name just a few of her involvements.

It is because of women like Jeanette Benton Sherwood that Cortland County grew during the 20s. Her example to women today can not be overlooked. She is owed a debt of gratitude for her role in the history of Cortland County Historical Society.

CCHS Receives Grant from Cortland Community Foundation

When our boiler malfunctioned on January 13, 2010, we knew we were going to have to replace it immediately. Thank you to the Cortland Community Foundation for a grant to cover the cost of installing a new boiler. CCHS is once again warm, and open to the public.

The new boiler will serve the Historical Society for years to come and we appreciate the support. Visit the Cortland Community Foundation at <http://cortlandcommunityfoundation.org/> and see what other worth while programs and projects they support.



"A female constituent asked me if I thought I could handle all those men! "But I'm married," I said hopefully, "I have some experience."



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Rhoda Beebe

Mrs. Beebe was evidently made of the material which one imagines in a true pioneer. Her house was made of poles hastily put together. There was yet no roof to cover the cabin when Mrs. Beebe was called upon to test her qualifications as a pioneer's wife.

Their team of horses elected to wander away into the surrounding forests, and the men went in search of them leaving Mrs. Beebe to face the privations of the wilderness as best she could. A wolf put his inquisitive nose under the blanket which served as a door, but otherwise Mrs. Beebe spent a calm and uninteresting period of waiting, for three days and nights.

This was only a foretaste of what she was to experience during the following winter (1792).

Her menfolks were obliged to go to Binghamton for further necessities, and being snow-bound for six weeks they were unable to return to Homer (or Cortland). Mrs. Beebe endured the loneliness with the proper composure of a first settler (Mr. Kingsbury says that a daughter, Clara, was with her) until her food supply gave out. Then it was that she decided to follow the river bank on foot to some settlement near Binghamton where she might find her husband.

This courageous plan for a woman in the dead of winter was not carried out because at the dramatic moment of her departure she saw a boat appearing in the bend of the river. Three men approached instead of two, and Mrs. Beebe was overjoyed to see her husband and brother and to hear the tinkle of cowbells from the cows and oxen, which they had driven up the river bank. No doubt she enjoyed the sight of good flour and meal, for Mrs. Beebe had been reduced to eating roots and the bark of trees while her husband was away, so Mr. Goodwin says in his "Pioneer History of Cortland County."

From: Stories of Cortland County, 2008, pg 12-13

Amelia Jenks Bloomer



Amelia Jenks Bloomer
 (Seneca Falls Historical
 Society)

While here for only the first six years of her life, Homer, lays claim to Amelia Jenks Bloomer, most famous for her popularizing of the Bloomer outfit. Bloomer's family moved to Seneca Falls where she would be exposed to radical thinkers in the field of women's rights. She met with people including: Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, as well as Susan B. Anthony.

In tales of Cortland for Boys and Girls, Bloomer's 1850 visit is recounted:

"Imagine her costume in 1850 when she came back to Homer to visit her family and friends. She wore a dress, very tight to the waist and very full as to the skirt. The skirt was gathered in at the belt-line and with the aid of petticoats beneath, stood out on all sides like a bell. The odd part of it was that the skirt stopped at the knees to show a very baggy pair of trousers which reached to the ankles, there to be gathered into ruffles which spread above her tiny feet. As she walked mincingly down the main street of Homer, it is no wonder the boys of the village followed her with many giggles.

But Amelia Jenks Bloomer was "emancipated." She could afford to hear them laugh. She knew that long skirts which swept the ground were dust-gatherers and unhealthy. She knew they tripped a woman up and were always in the way. She stood for a principle in life.

And who shall say that Amelia Jenks Bloomer, Homer-born, with her own monthly newspaper, "The Lily" to back her principles was not a great woman?" (pg 90)

Amelia Stone Quinton

Amelia Stone Quinton was a tireless advocate for the rights of Native Americans in nineteenth century America. Though not born in Homer, she was raised in the village, always maintained ties with Homer, and is buried there.

Amelia was born on July 31, 1888, in Jamesville, NY, to Jacob and Mary Stone. The family moved to Pine Street in Homer, and she attended Homer's Cortland Academy on the Green from 1845 to 1850. She was formally baptized on February 1, 1852, in the Homer Baptist Church, where her grandfather's brother, Alfred Bennett, had been the first pastor.

In the early 1850s, Amelia assumed a teaching position at an academy near Syracuse. From there she moved to Madison, Georgia, where she met her future husband, Franklin Swanson, a Baptist minister. Upon his death in July, 1869, Amelia moved to Philadelphia to teach for a time at the Chestnut Street Female Seminary. Moving next to New York City, she did volunteer work over the next several years in the city's charity asylums, almshouses, infirmaries, prisons, and women's reformatories. She joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1874, becoming a state organizer.

In 1877 Amelia sailed to England. On board ship, she met a London-born professor, Richard Linton Quinton, whom she married in London on February 21, 1878. Returning to Philadelphia in the fall of 1878, Amelia became reacquainted with Mary Lucinda Bonney, founder of the Chestnut Street Female Seminary.

The following year the two women founded the Women's National Indian Association (WNIA), an evangelical reform organization that continued until 1951. Their well-meaning goals were to elevate Indian women and their homes, bring civilization and education to all Indians, protect their rights, and promote their citizenship. In 1891 she went to California where she established more missionary fields than in any other state. The WNIA supported teachers, missionaries, and physicians, and built schools, chapels, and cottages for their missionaries. Their success was due to Amelia's organizational skills. She served as secretary, president, and editor of the association's monthly magazine, *The Indian's Friend*. All the while, she deftly dealt with government officials and chauvinistic male Indian reformers.

She often returned to Homer to visit family and friends. She eventually moved back, and in 1910, according to the federal census, she was a widow living at 17 Cayuga Street and had retired from the WNIA. Eventually she moved to Ridgefield, New Jersey, where on June 23, 1926, she died of a cerebral hemorrhage. She was interred in Homer's Glenwood Cemetery in late June, next to her second husband. Three years later, she was posthumously credited with being the one who had laid down the foundations "of future freedom and security of the Indian race in the nation."

Submitted by: Martin Sweeney, Homer Historian

Florence B. Potter

"Syracuse University Has New Scholarship Named for Mrs. Florence B. Potter of Truxton"

Mrs. Florence B. Potter, of Truxton, a past president of the State Home Bureau Federation and long active in civic and women's organizations of the county, will be honored at Syracuse University tomorrow as the \$5,000 Florence B. Potter Federation Endowment Fund is presented to the school by Federation officers.

The fund will provide for a Florence B. Potter Home Bureau Scholarship at the university's Home Economics College which will be available to students for the fall semester, according to Dean M. Eunice Hilton of the college.

Mrs. Francis Todd, state federation treasurer, will make the presentation to the school at the annual Orchid Dinner to honor all students of the college maintaining a "B" or better average.

...

Mrs. Potter, who was recently elected president of the Rural Church Institute and the Rural Department of the State Council of Churches, was ninth president of the Federation and served during three arduous war years. Her contributions then to Federation unity and accomplishments are being marked by naming the scholarship after her.

Mrs. Potter was born on a Cortland County farm and lives with her husband, Dr. Wilburn H. Potter, on a Cheinango Road farm about a mile and a quarter south of the Truxton community. They have four children, three of whom are married. Mr. Potter has been a veterinarian for many years.

A graduate of Cortland High School, Mrs. Potter attended two years before becoming an original member of the Truxton Home Bureau unit. She was chairman of the unit for two years and went on to various offices before becoming state president.

Mrs. Potter has also served on the Carl E. Ladd Scholarship committee of the Cornell Agricultural School, the Cortland County Hospital Board, the county Committee on Tuberculosis and Public Health, and she was a member of the board of managers of the Cortland County Home for the Aged. (3/9/1955)

**CORTLAND COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Cortland, NY 13045



*Your primary source for Cortland
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Membership Form for New Members

Senior (optional 65 years & older)	\$18.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	For "Family" Category please list
Individual	\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	names of family living at this
Family	\$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	address.
Supporting	\$60.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Sustaining	\$125.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Sponsor	\$300.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Patron	\$600.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
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