



# THE BULLETIN

*Cortland County Historical Society*



*Volume 6, Issue 3*

*August 2013*

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## Blues, Beer, BBQ

Join us August 24, 2013 for the 2nd Annual Blues, Beer and BBQ event, a joint fundraiser of The 1890 House and Cortland County Historical Society

Time: 5–9 pm

Entertainment: Unreal City

Food, Beer, and Soda will be available for purchase.

See CCHS or 1890 House for tickets.

## Mindy's Musings

While working on my Masters Degree at SUNY Albany we were required to take a research methods class. The assignment was simple, find one primary source regarding the American Revolution, and using that source write a 10 page paper. We would meet as a class periodically through the semester and discuss our progress.

I had found a diary in the library of a woman from Long Island; her husband was fighting in the war, while her father was a minister in the Church of England living on Long Island. All these years later I can not remember many of the details, but I remember after every class my friend Mark and I would engage in a debate about history.

It was the same debate each time: who should we view history through the eyes of. Mark taking the stance that history should be seen through the eyes of the "important people"; the leaders, the generals, all the names that we learn in school. My view was that history belonged to everyone, it was made by everyone and to truly understand how we reached this point, we must yes know the leaders and generals and all those names that we were taught in school, but that we must go beyond these people that history has immortalized and learn about the people that were the masses, their history was as important if not more to a complete understanding of our past.

Having been at Cortland County Historical Society for just over five years now, I can tell you I still stand where I did in college. That without everyone's story history is not complete. It is what causes genealogists to spend days searching for a source, a connection with their past. Recently a researcher was looking through church records which mentioned his relative, and found that the relative had been disciplined a number of times for foul language. It is moments like that, which bring the connection to the past that we all search for. In this newsletter look for stories of names not immortalized in history, yet whose lives shape a part of Cortland County history.



**During June I attended the dedication of the new monument for John Calvert in South Cortland Cemetery. CCHS was presented a family reunion book.**

## Bringing Back a Doll House Holiday

I can not count the number of times people have said to me, I remember coming to see the Doll Houses when you had them on display, or I wish I had come to see the doll houses on display. This November we will be bringing back the doll house holiday. While we have some in our own collection, we are looking for people who would like to share their doll house with the community from the last week in November until the beginning of January. We will also need volunteers to assist with setting up, as well as admission during this time. If you are interested please contact Mindy or Tabitha at (607)756-6071 or by e-mail at [info@cortlandhistory.com](mailto:info@cortlandhistory.com).

Help us make this a family tradition for years to come.





**Tabitha with her daughter Chelsea at Chelsea's Graduation**

## Meet Tabitha Scoville

My name is Tabitha Scoville and I am thrilled to have been chosen as the new Assistant Director at CCHS! I have lived most of my life in Cortland County and currently reside in Cincinnati. I was a great student all through school, but did not complete college upon graduation from high school and always regretted that decision. I went back to school full-time in 2007 and earned an Associate's Degree from TC3 and then a Bachelor's Degree in history from Binghamton University in 2011. While attending college, I was elected as president of the Parent Teacher Organization at Cincinnati Central School. I held that position for four years, during which time I was also a full-time college student. My husband and I have three children, so you can imagine that I was pretty busy! In my "free" time, I home school our two youngest children (our oldest has just graduated from college, and the two youngest are 15 and 12), garden, bike, read, crochet, and bake. I love to learn and will read just about anything! I have always loved history of any kind, but I am especially interested in women's studies and colonial history. I am looking forward to learning all I can about the history of both Cortland County and New York State, but I am even more eager to share what I learn. One of the things I hope to accomplish at CCHS is to bring more children and their families into the both the museum and the research center to introduce them to their heritage. It is imperative that children learn about the history of where they live and about their ancestors. We are brainstorming ways to get children to visit and to get them hooked on the history so that they keep coming back to learn more. History is way more exciting than the entertainment available today--just come and take a look at some of our stories from yesteryear that are preserved in our files!

Pumpkinfest

October 5-6

We will have the new Working book for sale at our booth.

This along with other publications, and a 2014 calendar will make our booth the perfect one stop shop!

## References for From France to Tennessee

- 1.[i] 1876 Atlas of Cortland County. And Correspondence in files of Cortland County Historical Society pertaining to Gillette family.
- 2.Batham, Esther, compiled and edited 1953 from material her father Charles Homer Gillett had gathered and stated to be available for sale at the Wilder Genealogical Bookshop, in Somerville Massachusetts.
3. Cortland County Historical Society files on Gillette family.
4. Telephone conversation June 22, 2013 with John H. Gillette

### Other References used

Jacobus D.L. compiled on behalf of Murray, W.P. Esq. of Peoria Illinois, July 1947, *The Other Gilletts*. 25:3 [The American Genealogist](#). 171-191.

Priest, A.L. 1946. (Compiled by Alice Lucinda Priest of Brookline, Massachusetts) *The Brothers Jonathan and Nathan Gillett and some of their Descendants*. [The New England Historical and Genealogical Register](#). Vol. C, 272-277.

## From France to Tennessee by Nancy Garvey

It was always my understanding that my family had a Revolutionary War soldier who settled in Scott, County of Cortland, and State of New York. In review the records at the Historical Society it became evident that the most prominent local citizen in the family was actually the son of the Revolutionary War soldier who shared his name, and not the veteran himself.

The Revolutionary War veteran was born May 21, 1756 and died November 11, 1810. He came to Scott, New York in 1805 and was married to Mercy Benedict December 18, 1777. It is not clear from the available records how the older John Gillett came to acquire a portion of the military tract in what was then the Town of Tully, Lot # 14. The township of Scott was named in honor of General Winfield Scott according to the 1876 Atlas of Cortland County.<sup>[i]</sup> This same source mentions “*the early settlers here were greatly annoyed by the depredations committed by wild animals: Most particularly by ‘Bruin’ and his frequent visits to the corn field requiring strict watch on the crops.*” This early Atlas also notes bear hunts occurred frequently.... After all this is in the general vicinity of what is known to the present day as ‘bear swamp’.

The documents available from the independent publication of private material collected by Esther Bathan from material gathered by her father Charles Homer Gillett in 1953, record Jonathan, Nathan and Jeremiah Gillet, as early settlers of Windsor, Connecticut and the progenitors of the Gillett family in America.<sup>2</sup>

The ancestors’ of these three men came from France living in Guyenne, Bergerac Province until the time of the Massacre of the French Protestants beginning on St. Bartholomew’s Day, August 24, 1572. They went to Scotland for about 30 years and then to Devonshire, England. The original spellings are suspected of being Gylet or Gillet.

The documents available from the material gathered by Esther Bathan in 1953 reveal that Jonathan, Nathan, and Jeremiah Gillet, were early settlers in Windsor Connecticut, and traveled in the company of one hundred and forty Puritans from the counties of Devonshire, Dorsetshire, and Somersetshire, England . Jonathan and Nathan sailed with the Rev. John Warham and Rev. John Maverick as pastors in the ship **Mary and John** arriving off Nantasket, Massachusetts on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1630.

Subsequently Jonathan and Jeremy received 50 acres each of land for service in fighting the Pequot Indian War, although there is no mention of the specific reason for the award in Jeremy’s case. Nathan Gillett received a grant of 50 acres from the Colony in 1671 and Jeremy received a grant of land of the same amount in Simsbury in 1678.

The first mention of a John Gillett appears when John Jun. is recorded at his marriage in 1746 in the Newtown Church records. He was born September 18, 1729 and died before February 4, 1760. The **American Genealogist** of July 1948 records the first child John was born May 21, 1756. The second son of John Gillett and Mamre named William and born February 1, 1758 and was married to Abigail Bishop they removed from Wethersfield to Madison and Cortland County, New York. The birth date of this John Gillett, the 1st born, of John and Mamre is the same birth date as the Revolutionary War soldier buried in Scott, New York.

The son of the veteran John was the third child born in September 2, 1784 and died September 6, 1878. This John Gillette was apparently the solid citizen of Scott who is pictured with his wife and home in the 1876 Cortland County Atlas. He was recorded as being the first postmaster of Scott, he was elected several times as Supervisor, and held several other offices according to an obituary in the files of the Cortland County Historical Society.<sup>3</sup> In 1833 he represented Cayuga and Cortland county in the electoral college. In addition he was judge of the old Court of Common Pleas and remained on the bench until the current system of County Court was set up in 1847.

Finally there is still a John Gillette, my uncle, who is 97 and was born in Scott in the house that still stands on the land of a portion of Lot 14. (Not the same house as pictured in the 1876 Atlas.) He graduated from Cortland High School in 1935 and St. Lawrence University in Canton in 1939.<sup>4</sup> He majored in Chemistry and worked on the Manhattan project in during World War II. He still resides in Oak Ridge, Tennessee with his wife, Doris (Chilton).

CCHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Dr. John Miller ..... Some are born great.

By Donald McCall, Truxton N.Y. Historian

I will go on record as saying that Dr. John Miller is the greatest citizen to come out of Truxton. Others may argue that John J. McGraw, baseball's "Little Napoleon" is our more famous son. It does merit argument as J.J. McGraw was born here and Miller was not. But Miller spent his life here and forged out of the wilderness this place we now call home.

John Miller was born in Dutchess County New York in 1774 and as a young man decided to study medicine with his uncle. Soon he received an introduction to Dr. Benjamin Rush who had been a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He took the young man as a private student. Rush would influence his life in many ways as a doctor, surgeon, politician and mentor. He received his license to practice medicine from Vermont as New York had not enacted medical practice laws. In 1801 he set out for the wilderness that would be his home for the next 60 years. However he left behind his darling Phoebe. He kissed her goodbye, promising to write often and return and claim her as his bride once a home had been built. This would produce a love story so dramatic that it could have come straight out of a Hollywood film. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

Dr. Miller's land was in the part of Fabius that would become Truxton, when Cortland County was formed as we know it today. A home was built somewhere near our present Truxton School and he started his practice as our first Physician. New settlers began to stream in. The first school and post office had been established two years before his arrival and a town was beginning to take shape. The days were busy as he had to ride 20 or 30 miles to his patients in all weather. There were epidemics of cholera, diphtheria and scarlet fever as well as surgeries to perform. Hours were long and conditions were primitive. He looked forward to a letter from Phoebe which was anticipated with great joy. However they began to trickle off until they stopped altogether. Little did he know that Phoebe never received his letters either. Their love seemed so great, yet they began to work that each other had had a change of heart... The years of 1801-1804 were severe and sickness plagued the area and required the diligence of the young doctor. A cold wet spring in 1805 followed. No letters from Phoebe came and he had lost hope as three years had passed. One day a friend he had known wrote him and told him that Phoebe was to be married. The friend knew that Miller was an honorable man and figured rightly so that there was foul play afoot. However the wedding day was to be the next day as it had taken some time to receive the mail. John Miller knew what he must do. Promptness inspired by desperation, he mounted upon his great horse Gershom and set out for Troy N.Y. 130 miles away and to his beloved. It was late March and the streams were swollen. Roads were primitive and at their worst covered in a combination of snow, ice and mud. It seemed an impossible task but Gershom and his young rider rode on through the day and into night. Along the route they had to cross the mighty Hudson River and the flat bottomed ferry was leaving the dock. Miller urged the great horse forward and leaping the distance, landing on the boat. In the late mornings light, Phoebe's house was in site. He made a mental note of the carriages and beautifully attired people entering the house and hoped he wasn't too late. The exhausted rider reined his horse at the post and alighted. He must have presented quite a figure covered with water and mud with riding stick in hand as he strode into the room. The wedding guests had already assembled. Her father appeared and without apologies Dr. Miller said "Is Miss Phoebe at home?" "Yes, come in and I'll inform her". It is said a joyful reconciliation occurred. The intended groom had intercepted both John and Phoebe's letters to win with deception, Phoebe's hand in marriage. One can only wonder what happened as the culprit was exposed. We are told he left chagrined, ashamed and wifeless.

Dr. Miller and Phoebe were married in 1805. He built her a beautiful home where the Truxton School now stands. The school would use the home as its school from 1905-1934. The Miller's had 8 children 5 daughters and 3 sons. Their marriage was a happy one. Dr. Miller became an important figure in Truxton, and New York State and indeed the Federal Government as well. He gave the land for the new Presbyterian Church as well as a parsonage and school which he supervised and funded and it was used for 100 years. The church built in 1821 and would evolve into our present day Methodist Church. He was a member of the New York Temperance Society going to Albany for meetings. He was temperate all his life and anti-slavery as well. He was a founder of the Cortland County Medical Society in 1806. He served as Truxton's Postmaster from 1805-1825 and Justice of the Peace from 1812-1821 and he was an Associate Judge with the Cortland County Court from 1817-1820. Miller served in the New York State Assembly 1816-1817, 1820 and 1846. Miller was an Adams Federalist and was elected to the Nineteenth United States Congress from 1825-1827. He was a delegate to the United States Constitutional Congress in 1846. He would continue serving the people of Truxton and the State of New York until he died 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1862 at the age of 87. He and his Phoebe and their children are buried in Truxton's Town Cemetery.

No other person has equaled Dr. John Miller. He was a brilliant physician, gifted orator, dedicated to his people and had the foresight and spirit in helping form this town and state. He was a dedicated family man, philanthropist and deeply religious while remaining humble. Rather he was sitting in court as judge, or in everyday dealing with his fellow man he was noble and just. Lastly Dr. John Miller was a born romantic and I believe made him so very human and compassionate. Few men then or even today have achieved what he did or changed so many lives for the better. Indeed he was born great.

## Membership Renewals April–June 2013

Thank you to our new and renewing members for their support.

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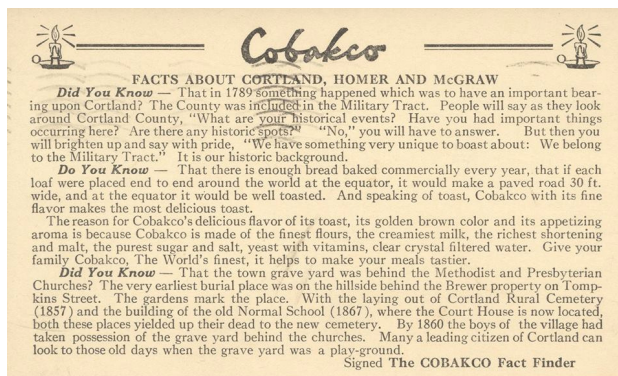
Mr. and Mrs. Don and Barbara Tisdale

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Mr. James Yaman

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## Cobacko Card Wednesdays



Do you follow CCHS on Facebook? If you have not liked us yet, I encourage you to do so. Every Wednesday we share another card from our Cobacko Card collection.

Facebook is the quickest way to learn about upcoming events and to learn a little history of Cortland County.

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/  
CORTLANDCOUNTYHISTORICALSOCIETY](https://www.facebook.com/CortlandCountyHistoricalSociety)

### Around the County

#### McGraw Historical Society:

**Thurs., Aug. 8 - 7 pm** - "Ezra Cornell and the early days of his university", Corey Earle, guest speaker. Mr. Earle will have a power point presentation on Mr. Cornell and the history of establishing his new school.

**Sat., Aug. 10 - 10 am-Noon** - Pat McConnell, historian for the Town & Village of Marathon, will give us a tour of the Marathon cemetery on Galatia St. After the tour, we will go to Lowell Field and tour the 1861 history museum and other buildings in the park.

Refreshments will be served at the end of the tour.

**Thurs., Sept. 12 - 7 pm** - John Nauseef, Jr., retired Air Force Brigadier General, will speak on his military experiences and share memories of his Ossite and Nauseef families. John grew up in McGraw, graduated from McGraw High School and went on to have a successful military career.

Our programs are held at the Community Building, Clinton Street with handicap entrance and parking. Programs are free and open to the public.

#### Cincinnati Area Heritage Society :

**Saturday, August 3**—Open House. 11 AM until 4 PM with an exhibit of memorabilia from past area businesses. In conjunction with Kellogg Free Library Founders' Day, there is a musical program at 1:00 PM on the lawn of the Kellogg Free Library provided by the Old Timers Band, bring your own chair. Free refreshments following musical program. Corner of Telephone Road and Rt. 26, Cincinnati, New York. Events take place rain or shine. All events are free and open to the public.

Glen Haven Historical Society (programs take place at 7325 Fair Haven Road, unless otherwise noted)

**Wednesday, August 14**—Book Group: *Queen of the Breman: The True Story of an American Child Trapped in Germany during World War II* by Marlies Adams DiFante, who will lead discussion, 7 p.m.

**Monday, August 26**—Society Biennial Benefit Dinner and Silent Auction, Glen Haven Hotel, 6:30 p.m. (Advance reservations are required, and a fee is charged.)

**Tuesday, September 17**—"The Abraham Lincoln I Knew: Reminiscences of Homer's William Osborn Stoddard," Martin A. Sweeney, author, historian, and re-enactor, Scott United Methodist Church, 6816 New York Route 41, 7:30 p.m.



CORTLAND COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

25 Homer Avenue  
Cortland, NY 13045



*Your primary source for Cortland  
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Membership Form for New Members

Senior (optional 65 years & older)	\$20.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	For "Family" Category please list
Individual	\$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	names of family living at this
Family	\$40.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	address.
Supporting	\$75.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Sustaining (Cody Higgins Club)	\$150.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Sponsor (Charles Jones Club)	\$300.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Curator (Mary Ann Kane Club)	\$500.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Benefactor (Joan Siedenbug Club)	\$1,200.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Life Member	\$10,000.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	



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of Cortland County  
Historical Society**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Return to: Cortland County Historical Society; 25 Homer Avenue, Cortland, NY 13045