



# THE BULLETIN

Cortland County Historical Society



Volume 7, Issue 1

February 2014

## Inside this issue:

President's Corner	2
Tale of a Home	3
Tale of a Home continued	4
Board Listing	4
Membership Renewal	5

## Special points of interest:

- See insert for upcoming events
- Looking to volunteer stop in and check out our volunteer binder for exciting opportunities available!
- Have a great story to share in *The Bulletin*? E-mail it to [info@cortlandhistory.com](mailto:info@cortlandhistory.com)
- Stop in at the gift shop for great publications including the 2014 Calendar, and Working 2.

## Mindy's Musings

This past Thanksgiving my family took a cruise to the western Caribbean. One of our excursions included a six hundred foot climb up Dunn's River Falls in Jamaica. My Mom and I both decided: "we will do this." What we did not realize however was that, unlike other falls I have climbed, you actually climb right up this fall, rather than stroll along a path beside it. When we got to the bottom of the falls, I began to worry. "I cannot do this," I said. With my mom telling me I could, we linked up with the other people in our group, and began following our leader up the falls. I stumbled a lot (there is video proof), but by holding on, taking one step at a time, following our leader, and listening to the encouragement from my mom. I did it. I made it to the top.



**Mom and I near the top of Dunn's Falls**

Each year, Cortland County Historical Society stands at the base of a falls we must ascend. Boosting our fundraising, developing our programming, preserving our collections, increasing our membership are goals we must accomplish to move on successfully to the next year. The assets needed to succeed at climbing Dunn's River Falls are the same CCHS needs to succeed each year: encouragement from our friends and supporters, clear attainable goals to move us forward, sage advice from those who blazed the path before us, and the boost from our dedicated volunteers whose helping hands pull us up and over the top.

Our successful 2013 Dollhouse Holiday exhibit demonstrated the power of our assets working together. Assistant Director Tabitha Scoville and I decided to revive this program. We talked with those who had curated this exhibit in the past. We reached out to our regular volunteers and enlisted new friends to help. We pushed forward one step at a time by soliciting the loan of dollhouses from our members to supplement ones from our permanent collection. We curated the exhibit, readied the space, developed promotional materials, and finally opened the doors to a wonderful program. Working together, CCHS and its members, friends, and volunteers, helped to make this year's event successful.

I thank you for your help in getting CCHS to the top of the falls each year for the last 88 years, and I encourage you to find new ways to get involved in 2014. As we go forward, it is only by working together that *your* historical society will succeed.

## President's Corner

### “Changes”

By Edmund Hart

As I write, the polar vortex has moved back north (where it belongs) and we can again begin to imagine what the wonderful seasonal change to spring will be like. Those of us involved with the Cortland County Historical Society are looking forward to other forms of change as well.

The Board of Trustees tasked our Long Range Planning Committee, chaired by Dr. Kevin Sheets, to prioritize the board's 'wish list' of goals for CCHS. With that prioritization now complete Dr. Sheets is meeting with the various committees responsible for reaching these goals and they are writing descriptions of each step that will be necessary to meet them. These steps include identifying all resources required including personnel, funds, space, etc.. The order of the work with timelines to completion is then created.

One of the tasks selected, and on which work has begun, was to improve our web site. Well, the current site was quickly diagnosed as “terminally ill with little chance of improvement”. As a result it was decided to design and build an entirely new site. This effort is being led by our Technology Committee chaired by Lynne Lash. Working with Mark Travis, owner of Good News Computing, the committee has set a target date of early spring to unveil the new site. Based on the initial planning sessions I believe that it will be a truly excellent site to visit and that it will contain the capacity for serious CCHS growth into the digital age.

In addition, our Building and Grounds Committee, chaired by Jim Miller, has begun the task of finding ways to make our Kellogg Memorial Research Center more organized, efficient and inviting to researchers and guests. The area and its existing contents have been mapped and now begins the next phase which is to decide what changes can reasonably be made and then on to completing any physical changes.

Another goal, being led by Mark Curran who has agreed to chair a newly formed Membership & Volunteers Committee, is to increase our membership and volunteer corps. To begin the group is creating a list of all of the possible areas of work within CCHS that could be done by volunteers. The work list, which is fairly long, will require a variety of talents and interests. Everything is included from answering the phones to cleaning to computer input and carpentry. The object is to have needed work identified clearly as to description, estimated time to complete and the talents/interests required. The talents and/or interests of folks who volunteer as well as the dates and amount of time that they can offer will then be cataloged allowing the tasks to be matched to a volunteer. This should make for a more productive and, in turn, enjoyable volunteer experience.

Thank you! Join us and tell us what type of volunteer work might interest you!

## Tale of a Home

By Tabitha Scoville

Have you ever wondered about the people who lived in your house before you? If you are curious, CCHS is a great place to learn more about the former inhabitants of your home.

My home in Cincinnatus was owned by the same family for almost 100 years. It was purchased in 1897 by Dr. Marcellus L. Halbert and used as both his family home and office. With some digging at CCHS, I discovered some very interesting things about Marcellus that make him less of a stranger and more like a long-lost friend. After all, my family and I are the strangers in his house!

We have beautiful flower gardens full of every kind of flower you could imagine: peonies, roses, poppies, lilies, lilies-of-the-valley, snowdrops, crocuses, hyacinths, ferns, daffodils, tulips, lilacs, and more. The beds are a glorious sight but they are also a pain to maintain. They sometimes get the best of me. My husband and I always assumed that Marcellus's wife Delia or his daughters Dorothy and Elise were responsible for the flower gardens. Then, I came across a reminiscence written by Dorothy where she described her father's gardens. With her help, I can just see Marcellus out there with his sleeves rolled up tending to his flowers, carefully dividing, transplanting, and weeding, just like we do each season. Like the house, the gardens are rich with history. They are too precious to ignore so we continue tending the gardens he first sowed years before.

It turns out that Marcellus never met a cat he didn't like. I don't know if it is the house itself, Marcellus's lingering presence, or just the 21<sup>st</sup> century saps now walking those floors, but the cats continue to inhabit the house and to outnumber the humans. As of this writing, my family owns seven cats, none of whom were chosen by us! Each has his or her unique story of arrival here and all of them are adorable and needy. Some were born under our house (don't ask, we have tried in vain to keep them out!), in the garage, or somewhere nearby. None could resist the call of the house. I'm sure Marcellus is happy to have them here. We certainly enjoy their company.

At CCHS I found a lot of information about the kind of man Marcellus Halbert was. Popular and kind, he had a successful medical practice and a reputation for helping even those who were unable to pay. Dorothy remembered people coming to the house at night, calling out "Doc! Doc!" until he was roused from sleep. I can just see him going out onto the balcony of his bedroom to see who was there and how he could help. At the time of his death in 1932, he was one of the longest practicing physicians in New York State, having delivered three generations of babies in some families! Dorothy recounted how in the bitter cold days of winter, he would suit up in a bear skin ensemble, ready his favorite horse and cutter, and ride to his patients. Households would telephone neighbors or run next door to let others know the doctor was coming. He might be gone for hours and sometimes overnight depending on the need. He stitched cuts, set bones, pulled teeth, and dispensed both medications and reassurance. When Dorothy passed away in 1993, all of her father's medicines were still in his office, just as he had left them more than 60 years before.

Marcellus was civic minded and a strong supporter of the Republican Party. He held numerous offices in the town of Cincinnatus throughout his life. For fifty years he served as a justice of the peace and took turns as town clerk, county coroner, president of the board of education. He was president of the Otselic Valley Telephone Company from its incorporation in circa 1906 to the day he died. He was remembered as diligent and faithful in his public duties. Marcellus also belonged to the Masons and was a member of the Baptist Church in Cincinnatus.



Above: River Cabin, loaned by Michelle Ball

Thank you to the following people who loaned us a dollhouse's for the Dollhouse Holiday.

Michelle Ball (2)

Kathy Beardsley\*

Andrea Van Patten Drake

Jaff and Nadyne Harris (2)

Maryanne Wilbur-Hart

Karen Holcomb

Mary Ann Kane

Rianna Sickmon

Morgan Theise

Jennifer Latetia White\*

\*Special thank you for donating dollhouses for raffle/silent auction.

## Tale of a Home continued

Marcellus and Delia faced heartbreak when their 15 year old daughter Rachel died from a brain tumor after three years of suffering. However, they also had reasons to celebrate. Their son Victor was in the Navy during WWI and became a successful businessman. Their two other daughters, Elise and Dorothy, both graduated from college (Cornell and Syracuse) during a period when women did not go to college in great numbers. Both became teachers. Neither Elise nor Dorothy ever married, and though they lived and worked in Georgia, they came home every summer. When they retired they moved back to their childhood home they loved so well.

When Marcellus bought his house I'm sure he didn't anticipate his family living there for nearly a century. They loved the house as my family and I now love the house. I hope the Halberts consider us proper caretakers of their family home. We certainly feel their presence.

I've learned a lot more about Dr. Marcellus Halbert and his family than I knew when I began digging through the sources at the Historical Society. I have come to think of the Halberts as part of the family because we picked up where they left off. We are raising our family, tending our gardens, enjoying our cats, and building memories and adding layers of history to the story of our mutual home. We will continue to piece their stories together whenever we can and unlock more mysteries of our home. Of course the oldest part of the house *was* built in 1830, and the Halberts bought the property in 1897, so we still have 67 unaccounted for years that we need to investigate. I wonder what secrets await discovery in the files of the CCHS.

I encourage you to investigate the history of your home and share the stories with us. We can file that information away for the next family to discover when they start wondering, "Who lived in my house?"

### *Board of Trustees*

President—Edmund Hart

Vice President—Dr. Kevin Sheets

Treasurer—F. Michael Stapleton

Secretary—Jennifer White

Diane Ames, Kathy Beardsley, Charles Bernheim, Joseph Compagni, Mark Curran, Jean Edwards, Mary Kimberly, Lynne Lash, Paul Lorenzo, Dr. James Miller, Ben Wells

## Membership Renewal October–December 2013



Thank you to our new and renewing members!

Ted and Helen Ackroyd  
Rita Alcorn  
Patricia Arnold  
Marsha Ashbarry  
Cathy Barber  
Irvin and Nel Lo Bassett  
Ina Bean  
Marjorie Beard  
Harry and Mary Alice Bellardini  
Barbara Bergeron  
Doris Blackstock  
Susan Bleistein  
Karl Blixt  
Betty Bonawitz  
Rosemary Bracciale  
Betsy Brewer  
Muriel Brooks  
Joseph Brownell  
Jean Cadwallader  
Ward and Louise Calaway  
Anne Caratelli  
John Churchill  
Sheila Cohen  
Joseph and Katherine Compagni  
Suzanne Conley  
Mary Jane Corey  
Carol Darling  
Eva De Line  
K. Ann Dexter  
Tom and Susan Dilts  
Thomas and Martha Dumas  
Linda Eberly

Warren S. Eddy  
Bella Fabrizio  
Harley Finkelstein  
Louis Fiorentini  
Roland Fragnoli  
Barbara Gebhardt  
Ed and Nancy Graczyk  
Sue Guido  
Robert Hall  
Kathleen Howe Handiboe  
John and Lorraine Hannon  
Edward and Patricia Harrison  
Elima Higgins  
John and Lisa Hoeschele and Family  
Peter and Doris Hoffmann  
Johanne Holcomb  
Roger and Sally Horak and Family  
Maureen Isaf  
Peter and Jan Jeffers  
Ruth Jordan  
Elisabeth Kalilec  
Thomas and Beth Kanalley  
Carl and Mary Kimberly  
Richard and Nancy Kroot  
Paul Lorenzo  
Joseph and Elizabeth Ludewig  
Joan Mack  
Brian Meddaugh  
Mary Michener  
James Monteverde  
Mason and Jane Morenus  
Michael and Susan Morgan

James Miller and Ms. Catherine Seager  
Jim and Barb Nichols  
Thomas and Sandra Niederhofer  
Debbie Ossit  
Marilyn Partis  
June B. Paser  
Carol Foster and Paulette Fry  
Gigi Peterson  
Lee and Sandy Price  
Russell and Linda Ruthig  
Robert and Maria San Jule  
Richard Schieffelin  
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob H. Schühle  
George and Elaine Smith  
Robert E. Smith  
F. Michael and Kathy Stapleton  
Linda A. Stead  
Jim Stevens  
Judy Swartwout  
Angela Thurlow  
Wayne and Sherry Thurston  
Philip Underwood  
Grant and Jule Van Sant  
Harold and Helen Walker  
Kim Walsh  
Dale E. Watrous  
Sheila Weidlich  
Kenneth and Janice Wheeler  
Jennifer White  
Newell and Ardis Willcox  
Janice Young

Thank you to the following businesses, organizations, and families for donating a wreath for our first Adorn-a-door wreath auction.

Bailey Place Insurance  
Bev & Co  
Boland Family (Chris, Cathy, Deedi, Caitlin & Jimmy)  
Coffee Mania  
Cortland Regional Medical Center - Cardiac Rehab Department  
Crossroads Veterinary Clinic  
Elmira Savings Bank  
First Niagara Bank  
Gretchen Abbott Designs  
Hart Family (Aaron, Andrea, Isabelle & Caleb)  
Homer Garden Club – Karen Siebert  
Homer Garden Club—Mary Alice Bellardini  
Indulge  
Kinney Drug #36  
Lily Lanetree Boutique  
Main Street Antiques Gift and Collectibles  
Marathon Boat Group,  
Shaw & Boehler Florists,  
The Bling Store  
The Crawl Space Artigiano Gifts & Gallery  
Tompkins Trust Company  
Town and Country Garden Club

CORTLAND COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

25 Homer Avenue  
Cortland, NY 13045



*Your primary source for Cortland  
County History*

Phone: (607)756-6071  
E-mail: info@cortlandhistory.com

WWW.CORTLANDHISTORY.COM

HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/

CORTLANDCOUNTYHISTORICALSOCIETY

Non Profit- Org  
US POSTAGE PAID  
Cortland, N.Y.  
Permit No. 50

Return Service Requested

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"/> |                                   |

Check your mailing label  
has your membership  
expired? Use this  
convenient form to renew  
if necessary.



**Suggett House, Home  
of Cortland County  
Historical Society**

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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