



PITTS TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue IV

Fall, 2003

Getting To Know Pittstown's Historic Places

Silas S. Herrington (born November 22, 1821, died April 25, 1881) is an ancestor of many Pittstown residents. His grandfather, Silas, was among the earliest settlers in Hoosick. Silas S. was the son of Josiah Herrington and Phebe Chase. Silas S. married Arlina Brownell, and they had four children. When he was about 25 years old, he moved to a farm on Prospect Hill in Johnsonville. In the census of 1865, Silas S. had property valued at \$1,000.

The Pittstown Historical Society has a copy of a diary written by Silas S. dating from December, 1874 to December, 1877. See Page 3 for a transcription of the month of September, 1875.



This historic home on Prospect Hill was owned by Silas S. Herrington in the 1800s. It is currently owned by Robert Brenenstuhl.

More About The Vandercooks

By Maren Stein

In our last issue, we wrote about the early Dutch settlers in Pittstown. This article provides more information about the Vandercooks.

Michael Vandercook and his family may have been the first to settle in Pittstown. In 1763, Michael, his wife, Cornelia (a descendant of William of Orange, King of Holland), and their six sons and three daughters, settled on a large tract of land, which included parts of Pittstown and Schaghticoke and extended to the Hudson River.

In 1770, Michael established the hamlet of Cooksboro, which was located on what is now Cooksboro Road (near the intersection with North Pole, Cushman, and Fogarty Roads). The village came to include a school (now used as a private residence), an inn, three cemeteries and a church.

The Vandercooks were establishing their farm in Pittstown just as the United States was coming to be. Michael and his sons were part of the American forces and some were at the Battle of Saratoga. Later, the War of 1812 also touched their lives. Michael's sons and daughters inherited his land.

Subsequently, Jacob Hayner bought or received the rights to all of the land owned by Michael's children. Jacob was the son of David Hayner, who rented land in Rensselaerwyck, part of a gigantic land-holding

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Please note that all lectures will begin at 7:30 PM. Each lecture will be preceded by a brief meeting of the Pittstown Historical Society. Meetings are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served following each lecture.

September 18: "The History of Rope Making in America"

Ropesmith Mike Speranza will demonstrate the art of rope making, and he will talk about the importance of rope in colonial America. Speranza has been recognized for his outstanding work in making historically correct rope and cordage. Along with his partner Dave Kean, Speranza has made museum quality reproductions of the M1862 Artillery Lanyard, Civil War era cavalry lariat and horse lead, slow match, drum rope, bed roper "Ranger Rope", and all sizes of general purpose tarred hemp rope. His company (D & M Engineering) has become the official cordage consultants for the NY State Museum Conservation Facility at Peebles Island. Speranza has given numerous lectures and demonstrations to historic societies throughout the state as well as at historic villages.

The meeting will be held at the Pittstown Town Hall in Tomhannock at 7:30 PM.

October 16: "Ghosts from the Knickerbocker Mansion's Past"

The Knickerbockers were important, as well as lively, characters in American history, and for our Halloween presentation, they will come to life. Ghosts from the Knickerbocker Mansion will tell stories about the Mansion and their lives there. Colonel Johannes Knickerbocker led the 14th Albany County Regiment at the Battle of Saratoga. Famed writer Washington Irving is reputed to have been good friends with the Knickerbockers and based his 1809 book, "The Knickerbocker History of New York", on them. The Knickerbocker Mansion is a 1770 home built at the site of the 1676 Peace Treaty between the French, English, Dutch and Indians. The Knickerbocker Mansion, which is located in Old Schaghticoke, is being restored as an historical and cultural education center.

The meeting will be held at the Pittstown Town Hall in Tomhannock at 7:30 PM.

November 20: "Muscle, Wind, and Water"

This lecture concerns the life and work of New Yorkers from the end of the American Revolution until about 1850 – a period when the modern map of New York State began to take shape. Richard Arnold will discuss the settling of the New York frontier, its settlement by New England Yankees and other immigrants, "jack-knife" cottage and extractive industries, the transportation revolution, the beginnings of urbanization, and the emergence of the "Empire State." Arnold is Chief of Government Records Services at the New York State Archives. He has been very active in a wide range of historic activities, including serving as the Albany County Historian and Commissioner of Historic Resources for the City of Albany. Arnold has also taught regional and colonial American history at Albany's College of Saint Rose and other area schools.

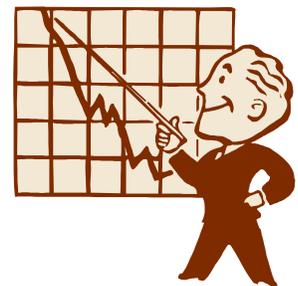
The meeting will be held at the Tomhannock Methodist Church in Tomhannock at 7:30 PM.

For further information about the meetings, contact: Constance Kheel 686-7514 or Ellen Wiley 663-5601

Pittstown in 1833...

Did you know these facts?

Population:	3,772
Farmers:	775
Mechanics:	198
Traders:	8
Foreigners:	14
Free Blacks:	30
Slave:	1
Cattle:	4,447
Horses:	1,140
Sheep:	9,623



According to the 1833 Gazetteer of the State of NY

September, 1875, Diary of Silas S. Herrington

The following is a transcription of the month of September, 1875. The format has been altered to maximize space in this newsletter, and there are some notes added in italics to help clarify the text.

DATE	ENTRY
1	AM Went to Valley Falls of foot PM sick headache
2	Went to see Emma Joslin Dinner at Parker Bosworth
3	I plowed the Boys drew manure in South lot
4	AM finished Plowing PM to mill and Blacksmith Top dressed all for Rye
5	J and Joel went to the corners to see Miss Russell and Miss Baker & to the Methodist Church (CE Hewes Preached evening Temperance Lecture) <i>J refers to a laborer named John and Joel Hall was a laborer as well. Both men seem to be living with the Herringtons.</i> Montgomery Yates Barn Burnt Also another at Buskirk By lightning (<i>Sunday</i>)
6	AM went to W Banker got Grain Drill PM the Boys drilled Rye east of house
7	AM finished drilling in south of about 4 acres PM took the drill home
8	AM went E Taylor got Rolls PM to Tomhannock to Church convention Paid Joel Hall \$1.00 Paid ¼ bus (<i>bushels</i>) Potatoes 50 cents Joel & John gone to Picnic
9	AM to EJ Weatherwax got Fan (<i>name of horse</i>) Shod PM to J Pay got a tire set Joel & John gone to Picnic
10	Set Rolls and rolled of 330 bundles Flax bound
11	Finished the Flax 450 <i>bundles</i> Wm Haviland & I bound the boys and Arlina went to (<i>this sentence was not finished</i>)
12	At home done all the Chores & pulled Beans (<i>Sunday</i>)
13	AM went to Johnsonville & Spread flax
14	Went to Johnsonville & Spread flax & finished John Joel & Arlina went to Church
15	Sold Apples at Johnsonville \$2.70 Received of E.F. Herrington Cash \$20 PM I & Arlina went to Advent Tent meeting
16	Went to see Emma Joslin & to DL Hitchcock evening a shower
17	To Johnsonville & cut corn all day Paid John Sherman \$14 Crates of Peaches from Delaware The dog killed Sheep Received for Apples \$2.70
18	All hands cut Corn Joel went home I bound Corn
19	Picked 8 bus (<i>bushels</i>) Apples John went to Brier Hill (<i>Sunday</i>)
20	Went to W Hoosick & Clarks
21	All cut & finished cut Corn I bound First Frost but slight
22	AM cleaned Flax seed PM to Tomhannock to mill Paid \$1.20 for 1 ½ barrel Rock Salt Paid Arlina (<i>his wife</i>) \$10.40
23	I & Arlina went to Troy Received \$17 Sold 33 ¼ lb Butter 3 doz eggs Miss Adams paid \$5.10
24	I and John threshed buckwheat about 8 bus (<i>bushels</i>) Joel at Clarks
25	AM went to Johnsonville to mill &c
26	At home all day (<i>Sunday</i>)
27	I & John worked on road under Wm Kipp (<i>required town road maintenance</i>)
28	I & John worked on road
29	Arlina & Phebe (<i>wife and daughter</i>) went to Troy 3 doz eggs, 6 yards Cloth; 2 lbs butter, 4 yards for Coat
30	All hands Picked Apples

(Continued from Page 1)

owned by Stephen Van Rensselaer III. Jacob married Jane, a grand daughter of Michael's.

One of Jacob and Jane's sons, Sylvester, married Betsey Freiot. It is interesting to note that three of Sylvester's sisters also married Freiotics. Sylvester and Betsey's son, Henry Clay Hayner, married his second cousin, Mary Hayner. Their daughter, Cora, married Charles Ryan in 1880. This couple are Norman Vandercook Ryan's grandparents.

Norman is the 9th generation of Vandercook descendants living in Pittstown. He and his wife, Eunice Bennett, live in an historic home on Plank Road (County Route 128) on the original Vandercook tract of land.

Thanks to the Ryans, who have generously shared their time, photographs and historic family documents with the Pittstown Historical Society, we have learned more about the early lives of the Pittstown Ryans.

The Ryans emigrated from either Germany or Holland. They first moved to Ireland. In the 1740s they settled in the Kinderhook area, which was then part of Rensselaerwyck. They later moved to Stamford, Vermont. Edward and Lena Ryan finally settled in Cooksboro in the 1780s. It was their grandson, Charles, who married Cora Hayner (hence the Vandercook connection). Their only son was Bernice Grant, Norman Ryan's father.



Bernice Grant with his prize sheep, undated (photo courtesy of Norman & Eunice Ryan)

Bernice married Carrie Burdick. They farmed on the family homestead. The production of wool was an important part of their farm life. They raised up to 200 sheep of four different breeds. They also had Angus cattle, and Carrie took care of their 300 chickens. The Ryans grew their own feed and ground the grain for themselves and others in a grist mill on the Deepkill stream.



The Grand Union Tea Company making a local stop, undated (photo courtesy of Norman and Eunice Ryan)

Pittstown Historic Farm Honored

The Sherman Farm, located on Sherman Road, has received recognition for its historic significance by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Last May, the farm was listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places, and on July 22 of this year, the Sherman Farm was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register includes properties which are deemed to be worthy of preservation because of their importance to the history of our country.

The next issue of our newsletter will include an in depth article about the Sherman Farm.



Historic Pittstown Barn Received NYS Preservation Award

Last fall Nicholas Halford was the proud recipient of a grant from the NYS Barns Restoration and Preservation Program. The grants were highly competitive and only one other barn in Rensselaer County received funding. Halford was awarded \$14,360 for repair work.

Left: Nicholas Halford Barn, Cooksboro Road

The NYS Barns Restoration and Preservation Program was established in 2000 to bring attention to the importance of preserving barns. In the Program’s guidelines, it is stated that “These structures tell a unique story of our agricultural history and heritage, and provide a visual account of rural life both past and present in New York State. They have become an integral part of our agricultural scenic landscape and one of heightened importance in New York State where agriculture has traditionally been and continues to be, an industry of economic importance. It is important to protect these treasures and preserve the scenic landscape for future generations.”

For the past three years the NYS Barns Restoration and Preservation Program has accepted applications from owners of historic barns. To qualify the barns must have been constructed for agricultural use. They must also be at least 50 years old and in substantial need of repair. It is not yet known when (or if) the next set of applications will be available. Check local papers or visit the web site for the NYS Barns Program: <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/grants/ProgramInfoBarns.htm>



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