

Amenia Historical Society

...where what was old is new again

November 2007

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Happy 90th Birthday, Betty Toombs !



photo by Bob Riemer

We were so happy to have you at the potluck dinner!

If you have never visited the Town of Amenia website, you can find AHS newsletters of the past there. Go to www.ameniany.gov and click on Community and find Amenia Historical Society.

AHS Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of AHS was held at the South Amenia Presbyterian Church on October 19th, wrapping up a great year and laying the ground work for the year ahead.

Despite the rainy night, there was an excellent turnout for the delicious potluck supper (AHS members are great cooks) which was followed by an interesting talk on the Union Society. Bob Meade and Bill Unger traced the organization's history from its founding by the Reverend Knibloe in 1759 through the 250 years of its active role among the farm families of the Oblong Valley.



So much food, and so delicious....Rhoda Lubalin and Ken Hoadley fill their plates. Bill Burke(right) goes for the meatballs .Save some for Woody!

Members from afar...

Of interest is the fact that nearly one-third (21) of our members live outside Amenia – spread from California to Florida and Maine. They still love Amenia and contribute to our memories through e-mails, letters and old photos. They have assisted with our research projects as well. Those that live close enough have returned for some of our programs.

From Connecticut

Catherine Downey
Gallagher – South Winsor
Mary Silks – Woodbury
Betty Pitcher – Sharon
F.A.Zanino – Kent

In New York State

Barney Epstein –
New City, NY
Leif Erickson – Ghent, NY
Larry Holzman - Hurley, NY
Susan Brehm – Holmes, NY
Stephen & Belinda Kaye –
Millbrook, NY
L. & Mary Goodman –
Millbrook, NY
Lynn Mordas – Millerton, NY

Outside the Area

Gary Thompson –
Albuquerque, NM
John Flanagan – Crossville,
TN
Philip Flint – Pompano
Beach, FL
Paul Kinney – Climbing
Rose Turn, NC
Helen & Ham Meserve –
Newagen, ME
Edna Miller – Sarasota, FL
Chris & Robert Regan –

The Union Society

The Union Society was founded to promote Christian values in the valley, and through its efforts, the South Amenia Presbyterian Church flourishes to this day. To mark the 250th Anniversary of its founding in 2009, the Church is planning several major functions.

The re-creation of the South Amenia Field Day – a community based farm fair – will be one event. Originally held in the field just south of the bridge in South Amenia, the old fair featured agricultural exhibits, Boy Scout activities, races, great farm food and a dance pavilion. The Amenia Historical Society hopes to participate in this historic event.

Committee Reports

In keeping with a recent state ruling which separates the job of Town (Municipal) Historian from the responsibilities of genealogical research for the Town, AHS has created a **Genealogy Committee**, chaired by Betsy Strauss. Members of that committee include Ken Hoadley, Bill Burke, Norm Moore and Catherine Murphy. Members of AHS interested in genealogical research are welcome to contact Betsy at jmsvet@aol.com to volunteer their services.

The **Financial Review Committee**, chaired by Norm Moore, reported that the books and accounts of the Society are in accord with the Society's by-laws. Included in the report was the suggestion that serious consideration be given to adoption of Section 501 c3 status to provide tax advantage to potential donors and expand our ability to receive grants.

Catherine Murphy, Treasurer, reporting on **Membership**, noted that as of the beginning of October AHS had 76 members, with all but 19 choosing to receive our e-mail newsletter.

The **Archives Committee** told of the progress being made by the Archives Partnership (AHS, Indian Rock Schoolhouse Association and the Immaculate Conception Archives Group) in digitizing the files of all three organizations, beginning with information referring to schools and children. The work, which has been going for more than a year is being financed by a matching grant from the Berkshire Taconic Foundation.

Ann Linden and Bill Burke of the **Programs Committee** reviewed the year's meetings which focused on the hamlets of Amenia – Smithfield, Leedsville, Amenia Union and Wassaic. Each of the meetings featured talks by long-time residents of the hamlet. Prior to the meetings newsletters were published that featured written pieces by various residents of that area and AHS members.

The **President's report** presented by Arlene Iuliano commended the

Mendham, NJ
Cliff & Alice Waldow –
Kent's Store, VA
Doc Weeks – Sorrento, ME
Joseph Comstock –
Claremont, CA

CONTACT US:

Amenia Historical Society

Genealogy Committee:

Betsy Strauss, chair

845-373-9587



photo by Bob Riemer

Bill Unger shows antique coffee urn made by Bill Benton. Look closely, it was originally a milk can! This urn was used for the South Amenia Fair back in the 1930's

DUES...DUES...DUES.....

October WAS dues month!

Turkey Day is fast approaching

ANNUAL DUES:

e-mail only (no vote)...\$10

Individual\$15

Family.....\$25

True history buff..... \$100

If you have not already done so,

program committee for its meetings that “promoted community interest in Amenia’s history”. She also spoke of the bulletin board displays at Town Hall assembled by member Judy Carlson. Credit was given for the Society’s role in the publication of the Amenia Baseball Book, published for the Indian Rock Schoolhouse Vintage game.

To wind up the meeting ballots for 2007-2008 were tallied. Returning officers are: Arlene Iuliano - President; Charlotte Murphy - Vice President; and Catherine Murphy - Treasurer. Maureen Moore was elected to the Secretary’s post. The Board welcomes Margaret O’Brien, Dan Brown and J.C. Webb, joining trustees Betsy Strauss, Norm Moore and Bill Burke. Ann Linden will continue as Archives Manager.

In Appreciation...

Before the actual meeting, President Arlene Iuliano expressed the Society’s appreciation for Ken Hoadley’s 16 years as the Town Historian and AHS genealogist, saying, “*without your due diligence to the tasks you undertook many persons in many locations would not have found the materials and/or insight into the historical information on Amenia that they sought.*”



John Quinn, retiring AHS Trustee, helps congratulate Ken Hoadley on his many years of service to Amenia as Town Historian.

Special Thanks to Roger Fazzone, CEO of Maplebrook School, and John Quinn for their generous spirit and service as Trustees of the Society.

Historic Kent Organ moved to

please send your check made out to "AHS" to:

AHS, PO Box 22, Amenia, NY 12501

PLEASE tell us your membership level, any additional donation, your address, phone and email. We would also like to hear your special memories of Amenia's past that you would like to share.

Contribute to the newsletter and to the Archives: send Scanned vintage photos (as JPEG files) to AmeniaHistorical@aol.com

Please identify with names, dates and places.

Spring 2008 we will explore Sinpatch and the history of the State School. We will learn how its construction and presence affected the entire area.

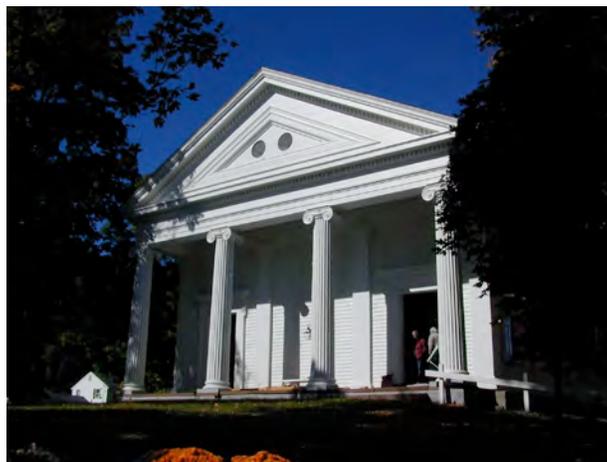
Did you know that when the state school was being constructed, Bill Benton lost most of the workers on his dairy farm. When the facility opened, the rest of his farm hands left to work for higher wages. The Bentons gave up dairy farming, and changed to raising chickens and selling eggs...much less labor intensive.

Anti slavery project

The Mid-Hudson Anti-Slavery History Project (MHAHP) was initiated by the Dept. of History at Vassar College in 2006 to research the history of antislavery in this region, with special emphasis on the Underground Railroad.

John Polhemus, who has become part of the MHAHP team, has shared with AHS a report on the data that has been collected thus

Smithfield Church



Smithfield Church today photos contributed by Dan Brown

By Dan Brown, AHS Trustee-elect

"The Smithfield Presbyterian Church is the recipient of the gift of a pipe organ, recently decommissioned by the First Congregational Church of Kent, Connecticut. It is a 2 manual, 7 stop mechanical action ("tracker") organ, manufactured by Johnson & Son of Westfield, Massachusetts, and installed in Kent in 1893. It is a small organ, with fewer than 500 pipes, and was designed for hymn singing, which makes it a perfect fit for the congregation and for the space in Smithfield, which hasn't had an organ for some time.

The gift was arranged by Dan and Nancy Brown of Smithfield, who in a conversation with Bob and Darlene Riemer, also of Smithfield, said that the Congregational Church in Kent, where Nancy is the organist/choir director, was purchasing a new organ and looking for a new home for the old one. Bob immediately expressed interest in an "organ transplant" (Bob Riemer's turn of phrase) for Smithfield.

The old "tracker," which has been well maintained and is in good condition, is being installed at Smithfield by Stephen Russell, an organ builder from Chester, Vermont. He was found by Arlene Pettersson, Amenia's new Town Historian, who is also an organist and a resident of Smithfield and is quite excited about the successful "operation."

Carol Coon, a member of the Session, and Lynn Boyer, minister of the church, were also instrumental in deciding to take the gift and install it in the large, raised organ loft at the rear of the church. After the full session voted to accept the gift, as many as a dozen members of the church rallied to help transport the disassembled organ in perhaps a thousand parts in two convoys of vans and flat bed trucks from Kent to Smithfield. Alterations necessary to accommodate the organ were designed by Darlene Riemer, architect, and constructed by Lynn Boyer, minister/carpenter, J.C. Webb, Fred Harbold, Dirk, Peter and David Coon, and Sidney Davidson, among others..

far. He has invited us to gather more information regarding the many anti-slavery 'activists' from eastern Dutchess. We will be reporting on the project in the next newsletter. B. Strauss



"Tracker" organ reinstallation, view of interior of Smithfield Church

It took one day to disassemble and move the organ to Smithfield. It will take 5 days of skilled labor for the Russell crew to reassemble and make the "new" (114 year old) organ operational, which is now scheduled for November 15th. The original pipe façade, which included 32 mostly decorative pipes (only 12 were "speaking") was retained by Kent; so, a new façade, incorporating 12 "new" pipes furnished from another organ, will be required and will be incorporated into a new enclosure at a later date, to complete the installation.

The Smithfield Presbyterian Church is already planning to inaugurate their "new" organ with appropriate programming as the Christmas season approaches.

Programs Coming Up...

In 2008 the Society will focus on the south end of town, including Sinpatch, the Benton Farm and the impact of the construction of the State School. The meeting in March or April will take place at the World Peace Sanctuary, which occupies the site of the old Benton farm.

Later in the season, AHS plans to study the airport that existed in Dover. Remember that our border on the south is the old Beekman patent (land grant) line just above the Dover Police Barracks. In 2009 we will be spotlighting South Amenia and the Union Society.