



# Gilboa Historical Society

*Dedicated to learning about, sharing, and preserving our history*

Summer 2008

Volume 10, Issue 2

## Hear ye, Hear ye, Hear ye

This issue of the *Newsletter* is devoted to transportation in Gilboa. *Gilboa Vacationers* by Flora Del Hubbard describes the central role of transportation to our history, while other articles cover roads (Chuck Brainerd's recollections of his tenure as superintendent, Art Van Aken's first-hand account of roadwork, the NYSDOT account of the replacement of the Minekill Bridge) and railroads (Linda Strategos's description of the U&DRR and the South Gilboa station, Richard Makse's recounting of the failure of the Delaware and Northern effort to connect Grand Gorge, Prattsville, Gilboa, and Breakabeen to Middleburgh, Schoharie, and Schenectady). Connie Rühle gives her recollections of Day Line steamers on the Hudson. The fall issue will have an article on aviation (airport farm and the BelCar restaurant in Mackey).

Please excuse the postponement of Janette Reynolds's Genealogy Corner, which will return in September.

## GILBOA VACATIONERS

Flora Del Hubbard

Shortly after the Depression and WW II, many families living in New York City and surrounding areas began to financially prosper and could afford to spare the expense of a vacation. Summer camps and second homes in up-state areas were purchased. Many city dwellers began seeking spacious places in the rural areas where the fresh air was cool, where children were away from unsafe, crowded streets and could freely romp around, and where the food was home grown in local gardens and produced on local farms. Boarding houses became the desirable vacation spots.

There was little need for an automobile in the city so tourists depended on public transportation to reach their destinations. Growing up in my parents' boarding house in Flat Creek, Gilboa, I often rode with my father to pick up our guests arriving by various modes of transportation to the area.

Traveling to Catskill to wait for the Day Liner ship to dock was a spectacular thrill. Once the guests and their luggage were loaded into my dad's '47 Chevrolet, we headed up 145 to Livingstonville Mountain and eventually to the Meadows Farm.

Usually New Yorkers chose to arrive on the Ulster and Delaware (aka the Useless and Dangerous) train, which stopped at the Grand Gorge depot adjacent to Becker Tire Shop. This train hauled freight as well as passengers from New York to Roundout, Roxbury, and on. My brother and I would carefully place a penny on the track and anxiously wait for our free, flattened souvenir.

Two bus services provided means to get to the country. The Trailways bus from the Port Authority had frequent scheduled stops in Grand Gorge. Other guests arrived on Kelsey's Bus line that ended at Lossee's Gas Station in Livingstonville.

During Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends and deer hunting season, many avid hunters from the New York area lodged at the boarding houses along Flat Creek Road. They drove their own automobiles up the Taconic to East Durham, Cooksburg, and on.

Access to the country benefitted many upstaters and allowed the boarding house business to flourish during the mid-forties and into the mid-sixties.

## Summer Schedule

### June 18, 7:00 P.M.

Scott Van Arsdale talks on eagles of New York State at the Town Hall.

### July-August, 12-4:30

The Gilboa Museum will be open 12-4:30 from July 5 through the Labor Day weekend.

### June 7, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

Greene County Historical Society's annual Tour of Homes. Reservations suggested, at P.O. Box 44, Coxsackie, NY 12051, or 518 966-8131, 518 756-8805.

### July 13 from 1-3 P.M.

The Gilboa Museum open house to formally open this season's feature of the art of Kristen Wyckoff.

### July 16, 6-8:30 P.M.

Ice Cream Social at the Museum (the school in case of inclement weather) with ice cream and toppings courtesy of Stewart's. Music by the Esperance Band under the direction of Peter Holmes.

### August 20, 6:30 P.M.

GHS Field Trip to the Paso Fino farm of Judy and Harry Wyckoff, who will talk about, and demonstrate, their national champion horses. Just north of the school on Wyckoff Road.

## RAILROAD ALONG THE SCHOHARIE: PRATTSVILLE'S STILLBORN RAILROAD

Richard F. Makse

The Delaware & Northern endeared itself to residents of the East Branch valley from Arkville south to the Delaware River as the major means of travel and communication during the first four decades of the 20th century. Founded in 1905 by a New York banker, Frederick Searing, the Delaware & Eastern (the original name of the railroad during the period between 1905 and 1911) was planned as part of a grand scheme to connect anthracite mines in Wilkes-Barre, Lucerne County, Pennsylvania, with commerce in Schenectady, New York. Ground was broken for the new railroad at Dry Brook in Arkville on September 14, 1905.

The core of the D&E was the segment from Arkville south to East Branch. This was opened for full service on November 17, 1906, and provided linkages with the main lines of the Ulster & Delaware Railroad at Arkville and the New York Ontario & Western Railroad at East Branch. The Andes Branch opened for service on March 23, 1907. Searing provided the new railroad with excellent station facilities to handle both passengers and freight.

Heading Searing's management team was an experienced railroader, R. B. Williams, a former superintendent of the NYO&W. Under Williams's competent oversight,

the railroad built its own creameries in the East Branch valley between Downsville and Arkville to tap this lucrative dairy market. Farmers heretofore were forced to endure long wagon hauls to the railhead at U&D at Arkville. Williams also tapped local business in bluestone and wood acid from small quarries and plants along the rugged lower part of the railroad between Downsville and East Branch.

In Searing's Manhattan banking office, grand plans continued for the expansion of the railroad from a rural shortline into a regional coal carrier. The railroad would serve as a conduit for coal and do so more economically than existing lines such as the Delaware & Hudson Railway and the New York Ontario & Western.

Searing lured investors by describing how his new line would eliminate many of the steep grades out of the Lackawanna valley that meant increased costs for labor and materials to haul the "black diamonds." But court battles with the D&H and the NYO&W temporarily blocked this project until Searing won a favorable court decision late in 1908.

His engineers proceeded with the design of the line from Grand Gorge to Schenectady; Delaware & Eastern trains would operate over the Ulster & Delaware tracks between Arkville and Grand Gorge and over the Middleburgh & Schoharie tracks between Middleburgh and Schoharie Junction. The remainder of the line would be all new construction.

Construction progressed in 1909 and 1910 on the Schenectady Extension with work concentrated in the area between Grand Gorge and Gilboa. The work abruptly halted on February 9, 1910, **please turn to D&N Railroad, page 6**



Map of the proposed Delaware and Eastern Railway.  
(Richard F. Makse Collection)

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Kristin Wyckoff, Directors

**The Gilboa Historical Society meets at  
7:00 PM at the Gilboa Town Hall on  
the third Wednesday of the month,  
March through December**

The **Gilboa Museum**, 122 Stryker Road,  
is open noon-4:30 on Saturdays, Sundays, and  
Mondays of Memorial Day weekend, from July  
through Labor Day, and Columbus Day weekend.  
Also by appointment for groups (607 588-9413).

The **Tourism Map, Newsletters**, and other  
items of general interest are available online at  
<http://www.gilboahome.com/ghspublications/>

Please contact Gerry Stoner  
with feedback or suggestions on the Newsletter  
(607 652-5988, [gerrys@gilboahome.com](mailto:gerrys@gilboahome.com)).

## HUDSON RIVER DAY LINE STEAMERS

Connie Ruehle

During the mid-1940s, Day Line steamers were always on time. Their arrival and departure was heralded with a loud whistle that was the signal for young boys to race the streets of Hudson to the dock.

Meeting the morning docking was out of the question until school was dismissed for the summer, but during the springtime the children wore swim trunks under their clothing and raced from school—about 8 long blocks in the city of Hudson—to “catch” the Day Line return trip. After school was let out, the divers would repeat this twice a day.

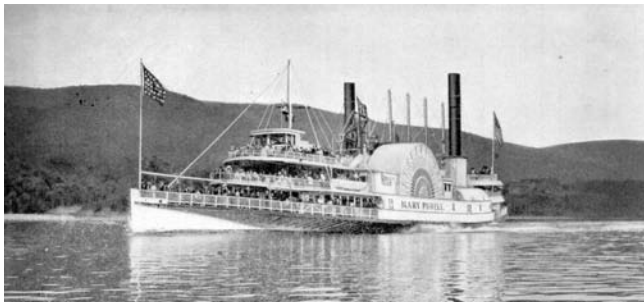
Teenagers would race to the dock, shed their outer clothes, and jump from one piling to another for a good position to dive into the water for coins that the passengers would toss. Pennies were common, although there would be an occasional silver dollar. Sometimes a passenger would aim a larger coin to hit a youngster on the head. I'm told this really hurt!

Once in the water, the kids could only see about three feet, and they stored the coins in their mouths. When they were successful and could no longer close their mouths, they swallowed river water, though no one ever seemed to get sick.

Sometimes a diver would be adventurous and jump on board and run to the top deck. This was never met with approval and he would be promptly escorted off ship.

The timetable for the steamers coordinated with that of the railroads and buses of the area. The round-trip fare from New York City to Albany was \$3.50, but the steamers also served local traffic—a 30 mile excursion from Hudson to Kingston Point and back cost 50¢. We would take our brown bags and sit on a rock eating our lunch before the return trip. At Kingston Point, you could cross the Hudson to Athens for five cents.

The wife of a *Mary Powell* pilot sold their river-front house in Chelsea to a couple from Westchester. The new homeowners were delighted with the beautiful paneling, curved staircases, and more—until they found the attic packed with rotting cork crumbs that had been the ship's life preservers.



The *Mary Powell* traveling between the city and Poughkeepsie

There is a film that highlights these majestic steamers traveling the Hudson. The movie, *Dragonwyck*, appears infrequently on television and is a story of the Dutch patroons, starring Gene Tierney (my favorite) and Vincent Price. It will take you on a trip viewing the orchards (and more) along the Hudson highlands—truly a page from the past.

Connie Ruehle wants to thank Joseph Gambino, who was one of the divers, for his remembrances. The art is courtesy of the 1903 *Hudson River Day Line: List of Summer Tours and Catskill Mountain Resorts*.

### Day Line Steamers “NEW YORK” and “ALBANY”

— OF THE —

#### HUDSON RIVER DAY LINE.



THE ATTRACTIVE ROUTE FOR SUMMER PLEASURE  
TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE

**CATSKILL MOUNTAINS,**  
*Saratoga and the Adirondacks, Hotel  
Champlain and the North, Niagara  
Falls and the West, The Thou-  
sand Islands and the St.  
Lawrence River.*



THE FAMOUS IRON STEAMERS “NEW YORK”  
AND “ALBANY” OF THE DAY LINE, ARE  
THE FASTEST EVER BUILT.

**They are unrivalled in point of elegance,** comfort and  
the quality of the service in every respect.

**They are constructed exclusively for summer tourist  
travel,** and carry no freight of any description beyond  
the personal baggage of the passengers.

**They have the lightness, grace and beauty of a yacht.**

**They are known the world over** as being the finest ves-  
sels of their class afloat.

**They have handsomely furnished restaurants,** open  
from 7.00 A. M., on the main deck, affording an unin-  
terrupted view of the magnificent scenery for which the  
Hudson is renowned.

**They have fine orchestras,** and daintily appointed private  
parlors can be secured for the use of small parties or  
families.

**Every effort is made** by the management to perfect and  
maintain the service at the highest possible standard.

The title page of the 1903 *Hudson River Day Line: List of Summer Tours and Catskill Mountain Resorts*. By the time of this history, the ships on the river going all the way from the city to Albany included the *Peter Stuyvesant*, *Robert Fulton*, and *Alexander Hamilton*. While the names were different, the panache was the same.

## SOUTH GILBOA RAILROAD STATION

Linda Stratigos

*SOUTH GILBOA. Here the summit of the Delaware County track is reached, 1,747 feet above tide, which you have approached so gradually through the glade that you can scarcely realize it is within about one hundred feet of the Pine Hill summit. There are a few quiet boarding places in the vicinity and boating facilities upon Mayham's Lake, near the station. The hamlet is two miles toward the northeast. The train now turns into a westerly course, skipping over the level three miles at a lively rate when the whistle sounds and you see many passengers preparing to alight, having reached the end of their journey.*

— *The Catskills Mountains,*  
*The most picturesque Mountain region on the Globe,*  
 Ulster & Delaware Railroad, 1902.

A railroad line, running from Kingston to Oneonta, was the brainstorm of Thomas Cornell, founder of the Cornell Steamboat Company. At the age of 52, Cornell had visions of bringing products by rail from central and western New York to his boats at Rondout near Kingston. The Rondout and Oswego Railroad was chartered in April 1866 with Thomas Cornell as president. The R&O charter authorized the construction of a railroad from Rondout on the Hudson River through the Catskills to Oneonta, a distance of 107 miles. The line reached Roxbury in 1871. As the company tried to extend the line to Grand Gorge, financial problems became overwhelming because construction costs had been much higher than the engineer's original estimate due to the curving nature of the line and the steep grades it had to conquer. The company reorganized and became the New York, Kingston & Syracuse Railroad Company and this company managed to reach Stamford in 1872. The new company went bankrupt in 1873 and in 1875 the company reorganized as the Ulster and Delaware Railroad.

The line ran from Kingston to Oneonta, through Phoenicia, Arkville, Halcottville, Roxbury, Grand Gorge, South Gilboa, Stamford, Hobart, South Kortright, East Meredith, Bloomville, the Davenportes to Oneonta. A separate spur, The Stony Clove line, ran from Phoenicia through the mountains to Haines Falls and Hunter. While these rail lines were conceived to deliver farm product to New York City, the railroad opened the heart of the Catskills to tourism.

The South Gilboa Station, according the United States Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, is historically significant and representative of railroad-related architecture associated with the history of transportation in the Catskill region in the early twentieth century. The building is a rare example of the standardized, partly prefabricated stations erected by the railroad during the most important period of train commerce. The design of the station is consistent with many of the other stations that were on the line: the broad hip roof, oversized decorative brackets, raised platforms; a trackside bay window and beaded interior wainscoting.

Despite abandonment and lack of maintenance through the years, the station has remained in fairly good shape. The old rail bed has been turned into the popular Catskill Scenic Hiking Trail so that the station is now on that trail.

Please turn to South Gilboa Station, page 8

## GILBOA ROADS

Chuck Brainerd

When starting this assignment, I thought first about the people who had worked on the roads and the equipment that was necessary. I want to cover that, but I want to also discuss the way the fundamental goals of the road system have changed over the last century.

My grandfather had worked on the roads of Gilboa, and my father did also from 1935–1970. My first “job” on the Gilboa roads was around 1950 when I was 17 as a wingman on my father's snow plow in the winter or the lever operator on the gravel screen in the summer.

When I started, people did not demand a lot from their roads, but they did want them to be useable in winter—there were dairy products to be shipped and school buses to run. And, even as late as the 1970s and '80s, the snows were much heavier and more frequent. Because of this seasonal demand, the majority of the road crew were part-time winter employees—a perfect use of farmers who needed income in the winter and could always find time to plow roads seasonally.



One interesting piece of equipment was the Lynn tractor, a truck with wheels on the front and tracks on the rear—it was great for bulling through any terrain with problematic footing. The barely discernible child beside the front tire is a young Chuck Brainerd.

Please turn to Gilboa Roads, page 9

## Eagle Talk

Scott Van Arsdale is the wildlife technician with Region Four of the state's Department of Environmental Conservation. As such, his job is to get up close and personal (definitely hands on) with the bald eagles in our area. He will be show-and-telling about New York State's eagles at the 7:00 P.M. meeting of the Gilboa Historical Society on Wednesday, June 18.

Scott's professional goal is to tag every baby in the area's aeries—in the top of 130-foot trees which may grow on really high cliffs—and inspect the adults, using rocket nets, electronic monitors, and making extensive house calls. In the course of these activities, he has collected—and will share with us—personal stories about special birds, pictures of nature at its most pure, and tell us about the life cycle of eagles with hundreds of photographs.



## 2008 Gilboa Museum Calendar

Chrystl Reidman

Every weekend is a THREE-DAY WEEKEND! The Museum will be open from 12:00–4:30 on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for the Memorial Day weekend; for every weekend from July 5 through Labor Day, and for the Columbus Day weekend. Yes, you read this correctly: each weekend is a three-day weekend at the Gilboa Museum!

June is the month for school field trips. Pass the word that private tours during the week are always available upon request. Call Kristen Wyckoff for a guided tour—

607 588-9413.

## Ice Cream Social

Starting as Esperance's Volunteer Fire Department Band in 1946, members came from all over with Andrew Quick as director, succeeded by Peter Holmes in 1997. The size of the band varied on the venue and scheduling, but regularly visited the Broome Center Chapel for 25 years at an annual ice cream social. At that event, there were hot dogs, burgers, sausage and onions, and other traditional fare, followed by seven flavors of homemade ice cream and pies. Shirley Kutzscher will be writing an article on these events for the next *Newsletter*, and this will include ice cream recipes.

For the last three years, the Esperance Band has kept up this tradition with the Gilboa Historical Society. Always a great drawing card, this year the band will play as the sun is setting on July 16, 6–8:30 P.M. at the Museum (weather permitting, otherwise at the Gilboa-Conesville Central School) with ice cream and toppings courtesy of Stewart's.

## ACTIVITIES AND HISTORY OF LANSING MANOR AND THE BLENHEIM-GILBOA POWER PROJECT

Historic Lansing Manor is an early American country estate built in 1819 by John Lansing who represented New York as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1788. The Manor House, built for Lansing's daughter and son-in-law, Jacob Livingston Sutherland, was restored by the Power Authority in 1977 and is filled with authentic furnishings from the first half of the 19th century. The Manor includes a servants' quarters, horse barn, land office, tenant house, and the visitors center housed in a 19th-century dairy barn.

**Sunday, June 8**—annual DARE Car Show. Registration of vehicles from 8:00–12 noon. Open to the public from 12 noon–4:00 P.M. Admission is \$5 per car load.

**Saturday, June 14**—Vintage 19th-century baseball game: Roxbury Nine vs. The Mountain Athletic Club. Game starts at 12 noon. Admission is free. Ball park fare on sale including hot dogs, popcorn and beverages.

**Sunday, July 20**—Antique Auto Show and Antique Appraisal Show. Free admission. 10:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M.

**Saturday, August 2**—Victorian Tea (TBA). Reservations required.

In 1804, John Lansing sold approximately 120 acres of land to Abraham Shoemaker, who made substantial improvements—a barn, several small structures, and what we now call the tenant house. Thirteen years later, the property was sold back to the Lansings and became the nucleus of the home farm which, by 1836, contained 842 acres of the Blenheim Patent. The building housed farm employees and their families over the next 150 years and is the oldest building associated with the NYPA's Lansing Manor. It has been fully restored, and for the first time is open to the public.

Admission to Lansing Manor is free and guided tours are available from May 1–October 31.

Closed on Tuesday. For more information, call 800 724-0309 or visit [www.nypa.gov](http://www.nypa.gov).

Blenheim-Gilboa Power Project Visitor's Center, 1378 State Route 30, North Blenheim, NY 12131 (800-724-0309)



**D&N Railroad, continued from page 2** when Searing's bank failed because of some bond manipulations by an agent of the bank. With this bank failure, the payroll evaporated and all work ceased on the Schenectady Extension. The railroad would sink into its first bankruptcy and evidence of the plan to reach Schenectady would be scars on the countryside in Delaware and Schoharie counties. In a scant few years, evidence of the grading work north of Prattsville would be obliterated by the construction of the Schoharie Reservoir.

The two major historians of the Delaware & Eastern/Northern, Thomas Archer and Gertrude Fitch Horton, both made ample reference to the construction of the D&E Schenectady Extension (also referred to as the Schenectady & Margaretville Railroad, the name that appeared on stock certificates) in the vicinity of Grand Gorge/Prattsville. While a number of contemporary photos of the grading survive and the nearly 80-year-long existence of the Johnson Hollow Road undergrade bridge provided us with a significant artifact of this work, little research has been done about the precise alignment.

During 2005, Doug Kadow, president of the Ulster & Delaware Railroad Historical Society (a regional historical society that runs the Roxbury Depot Museum and is dedicated to the preservation of Catskill Mountain and Hudson Valley railroad history) and your author engaged in new research on the line. Using original railroad surveys and profiles from the county courthouses in Greene and Delaware counties, Doug mapped the alignment through the Prattsville area on contemporary USGS quads. The locations were further confirmed by field observations of the terrain and the use of GPS to confirm the elevations on the D&E's official profile.

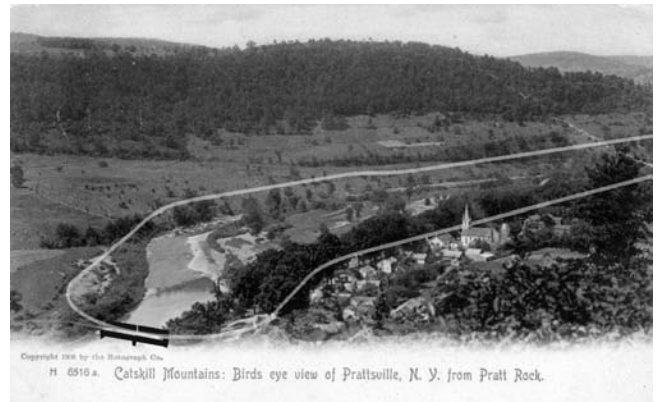
The map on page 7 provides a key to specific locations around Prattsville where tangible evidence of the construction exists. More telling is the concordance of these locations with the route that was mapped by Otto F. Wagenhorst, chief engineer of the Delaware & Eastern.

Much more research remains to be done on the route of the Schenectady Extension. One of the questions to be addressed in the future is the gap of two years between the Greene County and Delaware County route maps. While both maps complement one another, the extant Delaware County map begs the question as to the possible existence of an earlier version that used a separate D&E right-of-way between Arkville and Grand Gorge, pointing to the original stock issuance of the Schenectady & Margaretville.

A careful check of the indices as well as physical maps at Delhi Courthouse failed to locate an earlier edition for Delaware County. Additionally, a check of maps on file at the county clerks' offices in Schoharie and Schenectady counties has not yet been pursued to determine the route of the railroad north of the Gilboa reservoir. Tantalizing traces, however, exist in North Blenheim and Breakabeen.

We also know that Frederick Searing, president of the D&E, made an

**Please see D&N Railroad, page 11**



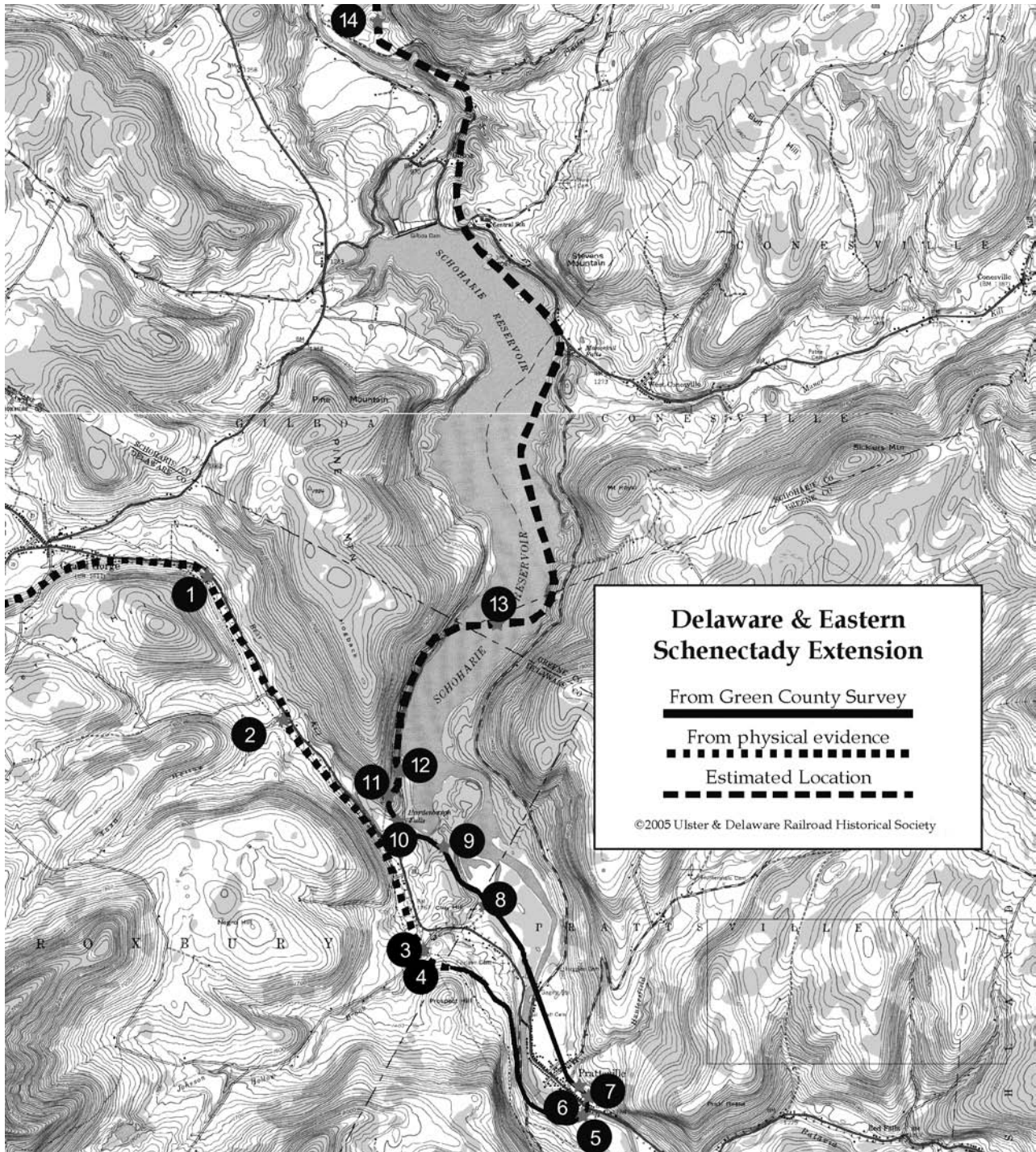
This bird's-eye view from Pratt's Rock depicts the horseshoe curve planned by the Delaware & Eastern. Doug Kadow has superimposed the railroad's alignment on a 1906 Rotograph postcard. Note the curved bridge across Schoharie Creek. The lack of dense forest growth does not hint at the change in grade as the railroad loops around the creek. (Richard F. Makse Collection)



While we are not certain, the terrain suggests that the steam shovel in this view is working Clay Hill behind the Hardenburgh House in the Town of Roxbury. After leaving the cut at Clay Hill, the railroad crossed Bear Kill at Hardenburgh Falls, north of which a short tunnel was planned. (Richard F. Makse Collection)



Railroad fan and photographer Lambert Cook snapped this 1938 view of the bridge over Johnson Hollow Road. The bridge was unceremoniously demolished in 1988 to make it easier for school buses to negotiate the turn off of Route 23. (Steve Delibert Collection)



- 1. Probable Field Evidence: Grade visible on hillside most of the way from U&D Grand Gorge Station area to Johnson Hollow Road from Route 23.
- 2. Probable Field Evidence: Dry laid bridge abutment visible alongside Route 23 (current highway occupies former grade just west of this site).
- 3. Field Evidence: A 20 foot wide concrete highway overpass over Johnson Hollow Road (removed 1988).
- 4. Calculated location: There was to be a 112 foot wide culvert and fill across Johnson Hollow Brook.
- 5. Possible Field Evidence: Fill leading to abutment location on south bank of river across from Pratt's Rock.

- 6. Calculated location: Depot was to be on Washington Street.
- 7. Probable Field Evidence: Grades visible from roads on both sides of Schoharie Creek in Prattsville, and fill can be seen across many backyards in the village.
- 8. Probable Field Evidence: 50 foot deep cut through Clay Hill (partially excavated).
- 9. Probable Field Evidence: Grade visible.
- 10. Possible Field Evidence: Possible railroad abutment (which would provide tunnel's south portal alignment).
- 11. Calculated location: 900 foot tunnel about a mile below Blenheim (Horton).
- 12. Calculated location: Short curved tunnel through shoulder of Pine Mountain to

- avoid 210 degree curve to north. Probably would have been almost a reverse curve!
- 13. Probable Field Evidence: North tunnel portal calculated location—grading evident at location with appropriate elevation and attitude.
- 14. Calculated location: Trestle that was to outshine Lyonbrook, Cadosia, and Liberty trestles on the NYO&W was to have been built at Grand Gorge (Horton). Geographically, this is Grand Gorge and there is no place closer to Grand Gorge where a large trestle makes sense based on other evidence. Trestle here would have been approximately 60 feet high and almost as wide as the reservoir is today.

## Updates to the Previous Newsletter

The story of Catherine Kaufmann Harwood White and her enlistment in the Marine Corps was published in the last Newsletter. However, she was not the only Kaufmann enlisted at that time.

After graduation in 1940, Catherine spent the summer working as a nanny before going to school in the fall. She worked for a family who had just adopted a German Shepherd pup, which they called "Shep." Well, Shep bonded with Catherine and refused to eat after she went back to school in Albany. It became so bad that her summer family



called and asked if she would please keep the dog, as they were afraid for his health.

Naturally, Catherine agreed.

Later, when Catherine wanted to enlist in the Corps, she had to decide what to do with Shep, and again the Marines came to the rescue: Shep enlisted with Catherine, and joined the War Dogs for the duration.

As far as Catherine is concerned, she didn't free a Marine to fight—she freed two Marines.

There is a Web site with information at [www.qmfound.com/War\\_Dogs.htm](http://www.qmfound.com/War_Dogs.htm), and Representative Mike McNulty's office reports that the Department of Defense has recently rediscovered this program, and is writing its history.

In a second development from a contributor to the spring issue, Bob Stetson recalled being involved with research on artificial aortic heart valves in 1967–68.

Leaving Gilboa, Bob returned to school, studied hydrodynamics, and went to work for a wunderkin who was trying to create an artificial valve for the aorta. It was a team effort that needed plastics and hydraulic engineers as well as medical personnel. Bob's task was to build simulators using experimental plastics and to conduct flow studies with them.

The project succeeded early in 1968 and was later sold to a pharmaceutical conglomerate.

Forty years later, Bob has now been successfully outfitted with the latest version of that life-saving device.



## South Gilboa Station, continued from page 4

The original South Gilboa Station was on the eastern shore of Mayham's Pond. In photographs it appears to have been a pole barn structure with a long platform that was used for loading cars with ice during the winter for Kingston's ice houses.

Amazingly, South Gilboa and South Gilboa Station were busy places at the turn of the last century. South Gilboa had several churches, a store, post office, a grange hall and quite a few residents. In 1897 the Catskill Mountain Creamery was established at South Gilboa Station. In 1905 the Sheffield Creamery was built and their products were shipped out by rail until 1932. A lumberyard and custom milling shop was in operation along with a blacksmith, church, and store.

In 1905, after what Daisy DeSilva writes was "a controversy lasting over 30 years based on the question of the necessity of a station at this place and the choice of site," the current South Gilboa Station was built. It was in operation until 1932 when it closed due to lack of business. Kate Mattice remembered her weekly commute to and from the station to school in Stamford on Mondays and Fridays.

The South Gilboa Station was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in May 2000. Very few of the original stations remain standing. The Phoenicia Station was restored and is now the Empire State Railroad Museum. The Haines Falls Station has been restored. The Ulster & Delaware Historical Society is restoring the Roxbury Station; others are in private hands; most were destroyed by fire or simply rotted away.

In 2002 the Gilboa Historical Society purchased the station, which was in danger of suffering structural damage, with funds granted by the Catskill Watershed Corporation. The historical society hoped to restore and open it to the public for use as a rest stop and exhibit space on the Catskill Scenic Hiking Trail. But raising funding for historic preservation is difficult and while the O'Connor Foundation had committed to a grant of \$84,000, finding the match for that money proved to be impossible.

The most likely match opportunity was a grant that was available through the NYS Department of Transportation two years ago. One of the requirements to that grant application is municipal support—a resolution from the town board was needed in order to submit the application. Unfortunately, the Gilboa Town Board voted against writing that resolution despite the fact that the historical society would have done the paperwork and there was no risk to the town.

As a result of this lack of support, it became apparent that Gilboa Historical Society would not be able to raise the funds to restore the building and so has sold the station to the Catskill Revitalization Council in the belief that they will respect the history of the building and of our community.



### Gilboa Roads, continued from page 4

Winter road equipment hasn't changed that much—one-way plows maintain the majority of roads and a heavy truck pushing a V-plow would bull through drifts on South Gilboa, Blenheim Hill, or Flat Creek roads.

In the summer, then as now, the state subsidized one mile of macadam road per year. The roadbed would be prepared by the town crew and the asphalt was laid down by a company contracted for that purpose. Aside from this single mile, the summer crew would seal previously macadamized roads, use a towed grader to smooth and refinish dirt roads, and oil one of the town's "main" roads. Occasionally, we would also be called upon to reroute a road.

Starting in the 1980s, Gilboans wanted wider and smoother roads, and these required heavier equipment, larger summer crews, and more professional skills. Thus, at the start of the twenty-first century, the Gilboa Highway Department has larger and more sophisticated equipment used by full-time professionals.



Other early equipment was a steam shovel (yes, driven by steam) next to the Lynn tractor (above) and a crane (below).



## HANDS ON THE LOCAL ROADS

*Art Van Aken, Canajoharie, New York*

When World War II started, all the boys in my high school class were excited about entering the service, and I was no exception. However, the description of infantry training did not appeal to me but trucks did, so I decided to try for an army transportation unit. While driving on the farm I had learned how to double-clutch, but I figured I'd need to know more than that. When I learned that a driving job had become available with the town highway department, I quit school in order to get some real truck driving experience before Uncle Sam called.

I was given a 1939 Chevrolet dump truck to drive that had no booster brakes and, of course, no power steering. Back then in the northern Catskill Mountains of New York the roads were dirt, so most of my driving consisted of hauling and spreading gravel. The town only had an old steel wheel, towed grader, and they wanted the gravel spread thin. I soon discovered that by leaving the tailgate flat, the PTO in gear, and maintaining the proper speed, I could spread the gravel out perfectly.

Then one of the men said that it was time for me to try the roller. This sounded fine until I saw what they were referring to. It was a homemade unit, nothing more than a huge old boiler full of concrete that was connected to the truck with a big clevis (U-shaped shackle). They loaded some gravel for weight and started me up a big hill. The poor little Chevy groaned some, but we made it to the top and after a little difficulty turning around in a barnyard, we started back down the hill. The roller was much heavier than the truck, and with the brakes on and the wheels sliding in the loose gravel, the ride down was a thrill a minute.

With that loose coupling, the truck was all over the road and I was hanging onto the steering wheel for dear life. If we had hit a tree, both the truck and I would have been flattened by that roller. After we reached the bottom of the hill safely, my fright gave way to anger, as the road crew was standing there laughing at my antics. But the boss

**please turn to Local Roads, page 12**

## Art Show at the 2008 Gilboa Museum

*Chrystl Reidman*

The Gilboa Museum (122 Stryker Road) will hold an open house on July 13 from 1-3 P.M. to formally open this season's featured showing of the art of Kristen Van Houten Wyckoff. Refreshments will be served.

Kristen documents scenes from our glorious Catskills—birds, butterflies, and wildflowers with burst of color in the plein air style, expressing the joy of being out in nature. There will be over 35 framed watercolors, many of Gilboa, but some also of neighboring mountain towns, Vroman's Nose, and the wildlife and flowers of Florida. There will also be many oil paintings, and "Where Have All the People Gone?" will be taken from the town hall for the season to be on exhibit.

There seems to be a theme among her oil paintings this show—and that is "trees." Her newest painting, "The Oak Tree," is of the second largest white oak in Schoharie County back in the 1990s, painted from memory and photographs.

# MINEKILL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

*NYS DOT Department of Design*

The New York State Department of Transportation announced it will be replacing the Minekill Bridge on Route 30 in the town of Gilboa, starting in May 2008. The existing Minekill Bridge has been featured nationally and it is on the cover of the NYSDOT report of the "Historic Bridges of New York." Built in 1931 it has reached the end of its useful life.

Arch masonry bridges, in general, date back to before 2000 B.C. They were perfected during the Roman times and later during Medieval ages. Concrete arch bridges first appeared around 1900. The United States holds the distinction of having the first concrete arch bridge (by Ernest Ramsone, in San Francisco).

Prolific Michigan engineer Daniel Luten first studied concrete arch bridges during the late 1890s and applied for a design patent in 1899. In 1900, he built the second concrete arch bridge in the world. Shortly thereafter, Luten's designs became very popular. Over the next 35 years, Daniel Luten was credited with the design and construction of more than 16,000 concrete arch bridges in the 47 contiguous United States.

The Minekill Bridge is an open spandrel concrete arch bridge which was designed "in house" by what was then called the Department of Public Works. H. O. Schermerhorn, the engineer who oversaw the design and parts of the construction, began his career with the New York Canal Corporation in late 1890s. By the early 1920s he was working for the DPW.

The Minekill Bridge was built in 1931. It was designed between 1928 and 1929, at the end of the Beaux Arts movement. The Minekill Bridge design is reflective of the euphoria that characterized the 1920s in the United States, and in particular, the aesthetic movement in New York. The existing Minekill Bridge has been featured as one of the most important historic bridges in New York State and is a candidate for the National Registry of Historic Places. Minekill Falls and the Minekill State Park are part of the Appalachian Trail and enjoy a significant amount of tourism year round.

NYSDOT reached out to the public, other agencies, historic societies, and organizations during the scoping phase

of the project to gather as much input as possible. Early in the design phase, after considering all of the input provided, it was decided that a design similar to the existing bridge would be the most appropriate to preserve the character of the area and the character of the bridge itself.

So, the new bridge will once again be an open spandrel concrete arch bridge.

The construction of arch bridges is more complicated than traditional bridges and every step requires careful consideration. In addition, due to the proximity to the falls, the reservoir, and the state park, special attention will be taken into account to preserve all of the area's natural resources during construction. The designers were faced with many challenges in order to provide the best environmental protection during the building of the bridge and they have answered them successfully.

A detour bridge will first be built to accommodate the traffic during 2008–2009.

Then, the contractor will proceed with the removal of the old bridge and the construction of the new one.



Detour bridge



Concrete bridge alternative



Existing conditions

Simultaneously, this project will address areas adjacent to the bridge to bring them up to contemporary standards and requirements, inasmuch as the road was built at the same time the bridge was constructed, in 1931.

When the new bridge is open to traffic, the contractor will remove the detour bridge and perform the necessary restoration and landscaping work.



Road after reconstruction

**D&N Railroad, continued from page 6** arrangement with the Middleburgh & Schoharie to use the tracks of that short railroad. Presumably, the investment in the M&S would have provided that railroad with an improved roadbed necessary for the operation of heavy coal trains. So much more remains to be learned about the Delaware & Eastern's two-year quest to become a major player in the hauling of coal to New York Capital District.

While our focus has been on the extension to Schenectady, it is important to summarize the narrative of the railroad after the bank failure. The railroad emerged from bankruptcy in 1911 as the Delaware & Northern and was under the ten-year management of court-appointed receivers.

Ironically, the first receivership was a generally profitable period for the railroad. After World War I, more financial troubles again forced the railroad back into bankruptcy court with new receivers appointed in 1921. Dramatic action had to be taken to stem the flow of red ink. Wages were cut and station agents eliminated. The marginal Andes Branch, the newest part of the railroad, was closed down in March 1925 after only 18 years of operation. In 1926, to reduce passenger train costs, the railroad purchased a gasoline-propelled coach from the Brill Company (noted primarily as a trolley car manufacturer) to provide passenger, mail, and express service. The car quickly acquired the sobriquet *The Red Heifer* because of its dull red color and its galumphing motion on the railroad's irregularly maintained track.

The bankrupt railroad was purchased in 1929 by Sam Rosoff, a NYC subway contractor who had bought the railroad in speculative anticipation of the construction of the Pepacton Reservoir. Rosoff saw dollar signs with his Catskill railroad hauling materials for the third great Catskill reservoir.

**please turn to D&N Railroad, page 12**



Faint traces of railroad grading exist parallel to Route 30 in Breakabeen. A photographer named Bearstyne, believed to have been active in Schoharie and Delaware counties, made this faked view of a D&E coal train many decades before the word Photoshop became synonymous with altered photographs. (Richard F. Makse Collection)



Middleburgh's sleepy depot was slated to be on the route of the Delaware & Eastern's Schenectady Extension. The building still exists on Maple Avenue as a private house. (Richard F. Makse Collection)

**Membership Application Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address:\* \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- Individual membership (\$10.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Lifetime membership (\$100.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Senior or student membership (\$7.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Couple membership (\$15.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Family membership (\$25.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Memorial gift† \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Gilboa Historical Society Museum \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Scholarship fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Old Gilboa* DVD (\$19.70 w/ shipping) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- General fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\* Our Newsletter uses bulk mail and will not be forwarded by the Post Office. Please notify us if you have a temporary address during our mailings in early March, June, and September (there is no winter issue).

† For memorial gifts: please provide an idea of what you would like to see purchased. We are developing a GHS wish list: please talk with a board member, and provide the wording of the dedication, your name and address, and the name and address of a next-of-kin who should be notified.

Total amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Gilboa Historical Society, Post Office Box 52, Gilboa, NY 12076**

**Local roads, continued from page 9** came by and chewed them out for their little joke. In time I learned the proper way to bring the roller downhill with only an occasional hairy ride.

Until the town bought a large plow truck, all the snow plowing was done with two Chevrolet trucks, a 1938 and a 1939, using a Cletrac loader for the heavy work. Each truck was equipped with a V-plow that was raised with a hand-powered hydraulic pump in the cab—the driver had to pump a long lever to raise the plow. No operator-friendly equipment here! It was no wonder that people were snowed in for days and even weeks at a time. Most farmers still had horses so they could get their milk out on time.

Sanding the roads was another fun activity. Two men stood on a load of sand with shovels while a third carefully drove the truck. There was no room for “cowboy” driving because the men rotated between driving and shoveling, and when it was

**D&N Railroad, continued from page 11** His investment, however, didn't pan out, as the Depression and World War II delayed the construction of Pepacton. After much negotiation, the railroad between Downsville and Arkville was sold to New York City for the reservoir and Rosoff covered some of his losses through the sale of the railroad's iron to support the war effort. The Delaware & Northern became another legend of the East Branch valley on October 17, 1942 when the Red Heifer snorted down the tracks for the last time.

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Richard F. Makse has been in railroading for 41 years, retiring from the Long Island Rail Road in 1997. An independent consultant specializing in schedule development and computer simulations of railroads, Dick has served as webmaster, editor, and secretary/treasurer of the Ulster & Delaware Railroad Historical Society for the past ten years. He resides in New Jersey.

your turn to be on top of the sand, you would have to pay for your wildness. Even so, when the roads were icy the trucks would slide, and some men did get thrown off. Those poor little Chevys took a tremendous beating, pushing snow banks while in first or second gear and the driver's foot to the floor.

A common problem we encountered was breaking an axle shaft, so we always carried spares. But fishing out the broken pieces in zero-degree weather was interesting. Possibly the worst trouble was wet ignition wires, which usually happened after you rammed a snow bank.

With this truck-driving experience, I was hoping to get into some army truck unit, but I was sent to the infantry after all. The experience was worth it, though, and later I was transferred to an Army truck unit.

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Art Van Aken attended GCCS, served with the U.S. Army in Europe during World War II, and until recently was a resident of Conesville. This article had previously been published in the June–July 2005 issue of the magazine *Old Time Trucks*.

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