



Gilboa Historical Society

Learning about, sharing, and preserving our history

SUMMER 2012 VOLUME 14.2

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Please check your address on the back of this newsletter and let us know of corrections or a temporary address.

Note: asterisk(s) or dagger(s) next to your name indicate that your membership is paid up. No asterisks or daggers? Please use the application (page 39) to join us in the GHS.



The Suffocation of Gilboa

At the June meeting of the Gilboa Historical Society, Chelsea Smith will discuss her senior thesis at Susquehanna University's Department of History: "The Suffocation of Gilboa: Construction of the Schoharie Reservoir 1917-1926." The background is the long relationship of Gilboa to New York City as a supplier of agricultural goods, a place for summering and recreation, and finally as a source of water.

The case study of the small village of Gilboa is discussed in an effort to explore the relationship of a rural town vis-à-vis an urban metropolis in the early twentieth century. Chelsea will discuss how the Gilboa Reservoir can be both a source of tension and a source of pride for the Gilboa people.

Carpool a Friend
Wednesday, June 20, 2012 at 7 PM
Gilboa Town Hall

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

The **Gilboa Museum**, 122 Stryker Road, is open noon-4:30
 Saturdays and Sundays, from July through Labor Day, on Columbus Day weekend,
 and by appointment (607 588-9413). <http://www.gilboafossils.org>

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

Send feedback or suggestions on the Newsletter to
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Gerry Stoner, 152 Starheim Road, Stamford, NY 12167

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ADVERTISERS IN THE GILBOA *MONITOR*, JANUARY 3, 1884

Hardware Store—A. S. Thomas—Ice cream freezer, harness and sewing machines, perfumes, whips, granite and agate ironware, grain cradles and barley forks, felloes, spokes and axles, Geneva Optical Co.'s best spectacles, emery cloth and sand paper. Fall in line with the crowd, and come and see.

Gilboa Foundry—A. M. Gilbert & Co.—Plows and castings, cultivators, scrapers, large kettles, box stoves, hop stoves, sleigh shoes, bolster plates, sledges, sap grates, plates and job work, Excelsior Churning Machine for dog or sheep; highest price paid for old iron.

The Gilboa Mill—G. A. Hartwell, proprietor. This mill is the place and don't your forget it—where you will find the largest stock of grain and flour of any mill in the country. Fresh ground wheat, rye, buckwheat or Graham Flour, Corn Meal, Feed, Grain, &c.

Millinery—Mrs. E. P. Richtmyer has just returned from the city with a splendid assortment of Fall and Winter bonnets, dresses, hats and cloaks and Trimmings. Everything which should be found at a first-class Millinery store can be found here.

A. Hagadorn has a large stock of goods and invites the public to call. Full line of ready-made clothing, boots and shoes, dress goods, all kinds of flannel, velveteen and heavy cloth for cloaks. All grocery stock. A new stock of mittens and gloves.

Reed & Bartley's new goods for the fall trade. We are headquarters for boots, shoes and rubber goods. Examine our stock of corsets before buying elsewhere. We keep the latest styles in ready made clothing together with a full assortment of hats. A cordial invitation is extended to all and no trouble to show goods.

First-class wagons—Geo. H. Bloodgood, Conesville—I am now prepared to fill orders for lumber wagons, buggies of all kinds, and platforms with the latest improvements in circle, box, wheel, reach and springs drawing direct from the axle. First class cutters a specialty. Painted first class and fully warranted.

And a reminder that Hood's Sarsaparilla is designed to meet the wants of a large proportion of our people who are either too poor to employ a physician, or are too far removed to easily call one, and a still larger class who are not sick enough to require medical advice and yet are out of sorts and need a medicine to build them up, give them appetite, purify their blood, and oil up the machinery of their bodies so it will do its duty willingly. No other article takes hold of the system and hits exactly the spot like Hood's Sarsaparilla.

THE SUSQUEHANNA TURNPIKE

Beatrice Mattice

Thousands of people passed through Conesville and Gilboa in the early 1800s traveling over the Susquehanna Turnpike. Commencing at Catskill, the turnpike came over the mountain from West Durham into Conesville, then followed the Manorkill Valley through the town, crossed the Schoharie Creek at Gilboa, proceeded over South Gilboa Road and on to Unadilla. Milestones were placed every mile marking the distance to Catskill.

Some travelers found desirable land on the hillsides of Conesville and Gilboa. Many of the first settlers of the other southern towns of Schoharie County, Jefferson and Blenheim, came into this area by way of the 'Pike.

Besides the families traveling west with all their worldly possessions, the road was heavily used by farmers hauling their goods to market in Catskill. Produce of all kinds was transported including butter, flour, hay, firewood, leather, hides and whiskey. Another major use of the turnpike was by the drovers who walked large herds of cattle, sheep, hogs and flocks of turkeys to market.

A stagecoach line was commenced in 1805. A New York City newspaperman in 1845 described a treacherous trip and said he could not be bribed to repeat the journey, but for one thing, "The Scenery, Sir! The Scenery."

The Susquehanna Turnpike (sometimes called the Catskill Turnpike or the Ithaca Road) was the most widely known road here. A future article will tell of the many smaller turnpikes in this area.



Beatrice Mattice is the prolific historian for the Town of Conesville who has contributed to the New York Roots Web site, is the author of They Walked These Hills Before Me: An Early History of the Town of Conesville, and has written a number of articles and treatises. She loves music and plays the organ at Gilboa's Methodist Church,

Dr. C.S. Best House and Medical Exhibit

1568 Clauverwie, Middleburgh, NY 12122

(Across from High School, to east and behind Methodist Church)

518 827-4504 518 827-5142 518 827-7200 (Th. only)

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and by appointment**

RATES OF TOLL,

ESTABLISHED BY THE LAW,

RELATIVE TO THE

Susquehannah Turnpike- Corporation.

FOR EVERY score of sheep, or hogs, eight cents.

For every score of cattle, horses or mules, twenty cents ; and so in proportion for any greater or less number of sheep, hogs, cattle, horses or mules.

For every horse and rider, or led horse, five cents.

For every sulkey, chair or chaise, with one horse, twelve and an half cents.

For every cart drawn by one horse, six cents.

For every chariot, coach, coachee, or phaeton, twenty-five cents.

For every stage-woggon, or other four wheel carriage, drawn by two horses, mules or oxen, twelve and an half cents ; and three cents for every additional horse, mule or ox.

For every cart drawn by two oxen, twelve and an half cents ; and for every additional horse or ox, three cents.

For every sleigh or sled, six cents, if drawn by two horses or oxen ; and in like proportion if drawn by a greater or lesser number of horses or oxen.

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Email this address to friends & family.



1804 United States
halfpenny coin.

MACKEY PICNIC

AUG 26, 1936

*Oratory Goes—Mackey Still Hears Talks—27th Year of Reunions
Mackey Picnic Draws Big Crowds at Well Known Grove in Gilboa*

Mildred Bouck

Jared Van Wagenen Jr. of Lawyersville, A. L. Parsons of Central Bridge, and Senator Walter W. Stokes of Cooperstown were on the speaking program of the 27th annual farmers' picnic of southern Schoharie County, held yesterday at Mackey Corners, near Gilboa.

Other speakers were Capt. Chester Brown of the Breakabeen CCC Camp, Rev. W. L. Comstock of Windham, Rev. C. W. Crippen of Flat Creek and H. L. Smith of the Delhi State School. The original sponsor of the affair, Burton Scutt, still keeps interest alive in the annual outing and directs the arrangements. This year Ford Mattice was president of the day with Otis Hall as vice president.

The program included music by the Catskill Mountain Band, and numbers by Anna Rosenbluth, soloist. Another star on the program was Lorraine Betchley, an acrobatic stage star and a performer of rare ability. Miss Betchley is winner of the late Ripley contest and has been featured with Morton Downey, Loews Theatres, and R.K.O. playhouses and starring at Madison Square Garden.

Twenty seven years ago the Mackey Farmers' Picnic was launched. This southern Schoharie picnic institution which occasionally brings together as many as 2,000 farmers and their friends in the little hamlet of Mackey Corners, in the town of Gilboa, was originally sponsored by Burton Scutt of the town of Gilboa who went in and cleaned out a section of the forest on the John Good-fellow farm. At that time, Mackey Corners was a thriving little community. It had a post office, blacksmith shop, creamery and school. Now the residents get their mail through an RFD service. The horses, we presume, are shod by itinerant blacksmiths who place their equipment in the back end of a truck and answer telephone calls. The creamery is but a memory and in place of the small school house, the children of the neighborhood now are carried to the Gilboa Central School in huge buses over an excellent county road. All in all the community seems to be the gainer. Its children have immensely better school facilities, the community has better roads and it still retains its annual picnic.

Who can recall the events that surrounded the Mackey Picnic in its younger days? There was the Ashland band, which incidentally was the first band to play at a Mackey Corners picnic. Its arrival was an event in those days. There are

some who can remember the thrill as the heavily loaded band wagon, drawn by four horses, kicked up the dust as it rounded the bend. Those were the days when those eminent speakers, Judge George M. Palmer of Cobleskill and Judge Charles Nichols of Jefferson, thrilled the crowd with their oratory. Those too were the days when loyal supporters of the picnic were up at dawn, or before, in order to make the trip with horses. It was the day of three-seaters, surreys, and buggies, each with its lunch equipment safely stored in the back or under the seat. There are very few left in Mackey Corners who can recall the first picnic, when J. V. Lee was president of the day, when Franklin Clapper was vice president, and George Halleck was marshal. Most of the residents of those times have either passed on or moved away.

Mildred Safford (1910–2003) was born near Safford Hill in Mackey. Her father died in 1920, so the family moved to Breakabeen and Mildred graduated from Middleburgh High School in 1928. She married Kenneth Bouck; worked from 1932–73 as the secretary for the county Department of Public Welfare (Social Services), and later was secretary to a number of lawyers in Schoharie and Middleburgh. Active in both the Breakabeen Grange and the Presbyterian Church, she was a mainstay of the Grange's Children's Christmas Bureau, taught Sunday School, and was secretary of the County Sunday School Association. In 1988, she won a New York State award for quilting. This typed article was supplied to the Newsletter by Rose Mace and donated to the Gilboa Historical Society Museum. We do not know if it was ever published in a local paper.

Flood Relief Organizations

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Blenheim:
and
Breakabeen: | { | Rural Area Revitalization Effort, Inc., a non-profit at 125 Creamery Road, North Blenheim, NY 12131 (518 827-3166, rareny.org) and/or North Blenheim Presbyterian Church, Clauverwie Road, Middleburgh, NY 12122 |
| Middleburgh: | | Village of Middleburgh Flood Relief, P.O. Box 789, Middleburgh, NY 12122 |
| Prattsville: | | Prattsville Relief Fund, c/o NBT Bank, P.O. Box 380, Grand Gorge, NY 12434 |
| Schoharie: | | Schoharie Recovery Fund, P.O. Box III, Schoharie, NY 12157 |

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MACKEY PICNIC

In the late 1930s and 1940s

Franklin Clapper

There is a long tradition of social gatherings in our towns. I believe the Farmers Picnic on Doc Leonard Mountain was held in the late nineteenth century and according to Mildred Bouck, the Mackey Farmers Picnic began in 1909. I don't know if there was any overlap between these events, or if there was a break for a few years between them.

The last of the Mackey picnics occurred in the early 1950s, but the traditions remain: later social celebrations include the Broome Center Chapel Church and the Gilboa Historical Society carrying on the tradition of ice cream socials and music by the Esperance Band; and the summer picnic is reincarnated at the July 4th Flat Creek Picnic and Parade. These have not been unbroken traditions—there has been temporal and spacial discontinuity—but the traditions are certainly ingrained in our area.

I am familiar with the Mackey Picnic from 1933 until the late 1940s. The picnics until the mid-1940s were held in Goodfellow's Grove just to the west of Mackey on the south side of Harrington Road. People would park their buggies or cars on the two fields next to the road, and then wander over to enjoy the festivities and meet old friends. These were the days when farming was king, and when "retired folk" wanted to come back and revive old memories and friendships. No one ever counted how many people came, but my impression is that really successful ones had to have around 1000 people, or even more.

One major difference between then and now was the importance of weekends: nowadays, most people work five days and have a two-day hiatus at the end of the week. When you're a farmer, however, there is no weekend—farmers work seven days a week. To my recollection, the Mackey Picnic was most often held in mid-week and most people would come back to visit with their old friends.

By the end of the war, the location had been moved north to Mace's Grove, and stayed there until the last Mackey Picnic.



Organization of the Picnics

The purpose of the picnics was first and foremost to get together away from work, meet with old friends, and simply to socialize. I never was aware of alcohol use or any sort of competition among the adults.

Each year, a local man (women need not apply) would volunteer to be the promoter of the day. I remember Burton Scutt headed several picnics; and also Charles and Rudy Blakesley's father, Floyd Blakesley. I don't remember any ministers handling the picnic until the late 1940s when local auctioneer, Laurence Starr, took the reins—Starr was also the very active minister at Broome Center Church and had a strong support group of women from his flock: the two Brown girls (Shirley Kutzscher and Bonnie Mace), the two Bailey girls (Maude Haskin and Clyda Mace), Nina Wood Forsell, and Joan Laraway Hallock. (Please forgive me for any missed names—I just remember that this group of people together were fantastic at organizing whatever they set their minds to.)

The job of the promoter was to provide a memorable day, promote the community, and maybe make a bit for himself at the same time. The promoter was always a local man, and would undertake to advertise the event, organize local supporters, coordinate the various events, sign up any concession stands, etc. The typical concessions included vendors for sodas, hamburgs, hot dogs, ice cream; and often there was a concession selling cigars manned by my father and Harrison Reed (who clerked in the Mackey Store when my parents were away). I think the Thimble Club also sold sandwiches.

I don't remember service organizations or churches participating (until Laurence Starr became the promoter), although a minister often opened and closed the day's programs with a few words. I don't remember veterans groups participating either, but my first participation was in 1933 when I led the parade onto Goodfellow's Grove on my pony. At that time, there was an honor guard with the colors marching right behind my pony and me in that procession. [Ed. note: when teased about people saluting for the boy opening the parade, Franklin opined that "that pony was as proud as she could be."]

Another time, the parade was to start at Five Points, go up to Mackey and then over to Goodfellow's Grove. It was quite a little step from Five Points to Mackey, so I was down at Five Points ready to lead the parade. At the last minute, one of the Blakesley boys came and said that the parade was going to start at Mackey; we galloped back so a sweaty horse and rider could lead a cool, calm, and collected parade into the Picnic.

There was no Gilboa Fire Department, so our local service came from Grand Gorge and later Conesville. As I recollect, the fire departments didn't regularly participate in the parades, but I do remember fire equipment at some point

being in a parade going into the park; nor do I remember the town constable, Tony Harrington, being in a parade.

At Goodfellow's Grove, there was a grandstand on the third field. The first two fields nearest the road were used for parking, although many preferred to park along the road to avoid the stones prevalent in that area. I recall that the planks of the grandstand might be appropriated for some other use during the rest of the year, but would be replaced so that people could enjoy the entertainment at the picnic.

One speaker at the Mackey Picnic that I remember was Charles John Stevenson, the editor of a paper in Washington County who also spoke at the 1945 GCCS graduation. He and Jared Van Wagenen Jr., a farmer from Lawyersville (also mentioned by Mildred Bouck) alternated days hosting a radio talk show over WGY out of Schenectady. It was called *The Chanticleers*, and was aimed at the agricultural community with home philosophy. One of Van Wagenen's lines: "make a hole in that Schoharie Valley soil, and anything will grow" while I also remember Stevenson saying: "never plant in May more than your wife can hoe in June and July."

There were often politicians invited to speak (especially before elections held on the even-numbered years), but they were never very vitriolic. They might try to stir people up a bit, but most elections didn't seem to be hotly contested. State representatives such as Sharon J. Mauhs (he was also a registered Holstein farmer from Cobleskill), spoke, as did various municipal politicians.

There was a bandstand there; the bill almost always listed one of a number of town, brass, and cornet bands that might be invited to play, and I often saw the Esperance Band perform at the Mackey Picnic or the Broome Center Church ice cream social. I wouldn't say that families often got up and performed, but I remember Harold Hallock singing and playing his guitar; and I expect that Lyle Blakesley, Raymond Maybie, and Andrew Moore might at some time have added their talents to the festivities. I also remember some barbershop singing by Ivan Hallock, and Merle and Clifton Hubbard—but I cannot remember the fourth singer. I also remember dance performances by scantily dressed women and even young girls, and other acts that toured for opportunities like this.

On an adjacent field, local entrepreneurs might try to perform and then pass the hat. Walt Wyckoff and I would jump our horses over walls and do other stunts; later, our ponies from earlier years provided rides for youngsters visiting the picnic. There was also a baseball game, but the field was very rocky so both teams would go out and police the area, clearing the stones from at least the base paths. Generally a team from nearby towns like Roxbury, Hunter, Windham, Ashland, or Oak Hill would be invited, but I remember a team came up from Harlem. The out-of-town team would play a pick-up team of local school

boys and farmers who loved baseball, like Raymond Kingsley and Raymond Maybie. The success of the local team rested on their being able to field a full team, have at least one hitter who was really good, and had a leader who could organize a rag-tag group of players.

Goodfellow's Grove was used up until the late 1930s. I don't recollect the exact sequence of events, but the picnic was held for the last time at that location; the Fastert brothers built a house for the Truesdells where the parking lot had been; and the Mackey Picnic started to be held in Mace's Grove. I don't recall if there was a break in there, or if the construction dislocated the traditional event. Right after that, the Power Authority towers took a wide right-of-way though those woods.

A sidelight on the Fasterts: they were two bachelors who both farmed their lands and were good builders who constructed barns and houses for the area. I remember them at a church fair bidding on a big chocolate cake. The bidding was spirited because everyone knew that these two single men were dying for a home-baked chocolate cake, and so everyone was bidding them up. I don't recall the last bid, but it was considerably above the going rate that day.

Games

I am hard pressed to think of any activities aimed at the girls who (I think) generally sat and observed. There were occasional sewing displays by the Thimble Club and maybe two girls might enter the three-legged race, but I cannot think of females working up a sweat like the boys could do.

There was one game where boys would throw a ball trying to knock a man-sized mannikin over (this was apparently a low-tech version of the pitch'n'dunk contest at fairs, or a high-tech video game like *Diablo 3*). There were also contests for watermelon eating (with a cash prize), and I also remember hot-dog eating contests, the coin toss, horseshoes, and many versions of tag.

All in all, everyone had a very good time!



Franklin Clapper was born on a Gilboa farm in 1928. His father took over the Mackey General Store in 1930 and they moved into the hamlet. The author graduated from Gilboa-Conesville in 1945 and became a farmer. He married Phyllis Dewell of North Blenheim in 1948 and had 3 sons and a daughter. He has been a farmer in Breakabeen, a merchant in Preston Hollow, and an insurance agent, retiring in 1995. Phyllis died in 1966, and he and his second wife, Isabel, live in Middleburgh.

Gilboa Historical Society Museum
Web Site OPEN 24/7 www.gilboafossils.org

MACKEY PICNIC

Photos of August 1954

Beatrice Mattice



Above in buggy: Alice and Alton Brand behind Paul Mattice and Beatrice Haskin. Verne Carl, driver.



Left: Horse riders and walkers ahead of parade.



Bottom: Baton twirler Bonnie Brown Mace; band probably is the Esperance Band.

Photos courtesy of Beatrice Mattice.



Above: Conesville Firemen's Auxiliary with banner carriers Alice Brand and Madeline Wyckoff; middle row: Mary Austin and Kathleen Mattice; back row: Kay Cammer or Wilma Harty, possibly Pearl Buel.

Below: Conesville fire truck, possibly the first purchased by the Fire Department in 1937. Photos courtesy of Beatrice Mattice.



THIMBLE CLUB

Organized 1927, Later Known as the Guild

Maude Haskin

The Thimble Club helped raise money for the church. At their monthly meetings they put on a lunch that was open to the public as a fundraiser with the men of the community joining the ladies and often the town road crew would attend.

Here are the minutes from the first two meetings:

January 29, 1927: The Thimble Club of Broome Center met for the first time at Mrs. Dell VanDyke's, to elect officers. The officers were as follows:

President: Mrs. Ivan Hallock	Social Committee:
Vice President: Mrs. Dell VanDyke	Mrs. John Hubbard
Secretary: Mrs. Leland Cook	Mrs. Selleck Mace
Treasurer: Mrs. Stanley Mace	Mrs. Geil Spencer
Floral Committee: Mrs. C. W. Bailey	Mrs. J. D. Wood
Mrs. Frank Nickerson	Buyer: Mrs. Ivan Hallock

The meeting opened with singing and prayer. Those who were present were: Mrs. Stanley Mace, Mrs. Leland Cook, Mrs. Ivan Hallock, Mrs. Clive Bailey, Miss Lorraine Hubbard, Miss Maude Bailey, Miss Evelyn Hubbard, Mrs. Dell VanDyke, Miss Emilda Spencer, Mrs. Emma Hallock, Mrs. Frank Nickerson, Mrs. Charles DeLong.

To join the Club you have to pay \$.25. All that were present paid and others sent pay. Those who sent pay were: Mrs. Coello Spencer, Mrs. Geil Spencer, Mrs. Verge Nickerson, Miss Norma Nickerson, Mrs. E. P. Cook, and Mrs. Elmer Hubbard.

We already have \$4.50 in the treasury. All the members have to make two quilt blocks between this meeting and the next meeting which is February 12, 1927 at Mrs. Ivan Hallock's. She will serve lunch and all that eat have to pay \$.10 and that goes in the treasury.

February 12, 1927: The Thimble Club met at the home of Mrs. Ivan Hallock, lunch was served, and \$2.75 was collected. A quilt was tied and 4 of the girls hemmed towels. There is to be an Oyster Supper at the home of Mrs. Stanley Mace. Those present were as follows (members): Margaret Hallock, Mrs. Verge Nickerson, Emilda Spencer, Mrs. C. Geil Spencer, Norma Nickerson, Mrs.

Leland Cook, Lorraine Hubbard, Maude Bailey, Evelyn Hubbard, Mrs. Jared L. Wood, Mrs. Frank Nickerson, Mrs. John Hubbard, Mrs. E. P. Cook, Mrs. Stanley Mace, Mrs. Selleck Mace, Mrs. Ray Schermerhorn, Mrs. Dell VanDyke, Mrs. Emma Hallock, Mrs. C. W. Bailey, Mrs. Elmer Hubbard.

“Company”: C. Geil Spencer, Everett Wood, Earl Hubbard, Ivan Eugene Hallock, Ivan Hallock, Kieren Orin Spencer, Winifred Hubbard, Dora Mace, Buelah Schermerhorn.

A collection was taken for the names on the quilt and \$31.21 was collected. The Social Committee went in a separate room to discuss what was to be served at the Oyster Supper.

The next meeting is at the home of Mrs. Emma Hallock with Mrs. Selleck Mace, Mrs. Elmer Hubbard and Mrs. John Hubbard to assist in getting lunch.



Maude Bailey Haskin, born on July 24, has been an activist, observer, and recorder of life in Gilboa for all of her nearly 99 years, and a frequent contributor to the Newsletter.

The 10th Flat Creek Kids Parade July 4, 2012

Participation open to all.

Line up for the parade will start at 12:30 at the Flat Creek Baptist Church parking lot, and the parade will step off about 1 PM.

The parade goes around the “block”—up Flat Creek Road to the Back Road, then across Back Road Spur, and then back to its beginning. The parade is held rain or shine.

Join friends and neighbors afterward for a pot luck picnic at 843 Flat Creek Road. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and lemonade will be provided. Please bring a dish to share.

A collection will be taken for the Conesville Fire Department and Rescue Squad.

**The 10th Flat Creek Kids Parade
Wednesday, July 4, 2012, 12:30 PM
843 Flat Creek Road, Gilboa, NY**

Please carpool a member or bring a friend!

BLenheim RIDGE VS. BLenheim HILL

Before the act creating the Town of Gilboa was passed in 1848, the area we now call South Gilboa was a part of Blenheim and had separate sections.

Blenheim Ridge was the present-day hamlets of *South Gilboa* (where Cape Horn and South Gilboa Roads meet, with a post office, store, school, church, grange hall, and many houses) and the area where South Gilboa Road meets Route 23 at Mayham's Pond (with grist- and saw-mills and a school, and later called *South Gilboa Station* with the train station).

The rise we call Blenheim Hill now divides Gilboa and Blenheim, but the phrase *Blenheim Hill* then referred to the hamlets on both sides of the hill. On the south was *Cornell Hollow* (at Cornell and Shew Hollow Roads, with a post office, school, and called "West Gilboa" in Beers *Atlas*) and *Shew Hollow* (at the end of Souer Road with a Dutch Reformed Church and school). On the north side was *Ruth* (with a school and historic Brimstone Church).

EMAIL THESE ADDRESSES TO FRIENDS & FAMILY

www.gilboahome.com

www.gilboafossils.org

Ice Cream Social

Starting as Esperance's Volunteer Fire Department Band in 1946, members came from all over. Andrew Quick was the band's director and was succeeded by Peter Holmes in 1997.

The size of the band varied for the venue and scheduling, but it regularly visited the Broome Center Chapel for 25 years at an annual ice cream social. For the last several years, the Esperance Band has kept up this tradition with the Gilboa Historical Society.

Always a great drawing card, the band will play as the sun is setting on July 18, from 6-8:30 PM at the museum (weather permitting, otherwise at the Gilboa-Conesville Central School), with ice cream and toppings courtesy of Stewart's.

Wednesday, July 18, 2012

at the Museum (or the school in case of rain)

Bring the kids, and carpool neighbors who don't do night driving.

Reprinted from the Windham Journal, April 12, 2012

THE NEW GILBOA FOREST

An Arbor Day Celebration

Robert and Johanna Titus

Many things come to mind when you mention the Catskills to people; they think of glorious old resorts, or skiing and hiking in a beautiful mountain setting, but if you're a scientist, as we are, you understand that the Catskills are also famous for containing the world's oldest forest, the Gilboa Forest. During a brief period in 2010, because of repairs to the dam on the Schoharie Reservoir, a slice of that ancient forest was uncovered once again.

The original discoveries in Gilboa were made back in the 1920s in a location called the Riverside Quarry. That's just upstream, on the right side, from where the Route 990v Bridge crosses Schoharie Creek. Back then the quarry was actively providing stone for the Gilboa Dam. A horizon of dark shale was discovered with petrified tree stumps. These, at the time, were reckoned to be the oldest known fossil trees and that made the discovery a big one. Some 200 of the stumps were uncovered. They all belonged to a very primitive species of tree called *Eospermatopteris*. The downside was that little, other than the stumps, was found from these trees. That problem waited about 80 years to be solved when the rest of the tree, the trunk and foliage, was found at a quarry in the eastern Catskills.

But it was frustrating for modern scientists who could not research the original site. It had been covered over with fill and left hidden since the early 1920s. Then, in 2010 while work was underway renovating the Gilboa Dam, the ancient forest floor was once again uncovered, but only for two short weeks to allow a select group of researchers to explore the original 1920s location. Paleobotany, as it is called, has improved considerably over the decades and a team, led by SUNY Binghamton's botanist Dr. William Stein, was chosen to study the site.

They went right to work, cleaning off a full 1,200 square meters of ledge and surveying what was there to be seen. The results were worth the effort. Previously, only one species of tree, *Eospermatopteris*, had been known, but careful study revealed two others. That first form, *Eospermatopteris*, was a very primitive sort of "tree." It is thought to have had a long straight hollow trunk with no branches. Its foliage lacked anything that could be called a leaf; there were photosynthetic and reproductive branches instead. It had a primitive broad rounded bottom with very skinny and very numerous rootlets, all enabling it to root itself in a marshy coastal wetland. *Eospermatopteris* is the large tree in the left center of our illustration, drawn by Gilboa artist Kristen Wyckoff. With its



The Gilboa Forest, by Kristen Wyckoff.

Copyright © 2012. Painting courtesy of the artist.

fragile hollow trunk and an absence of wood, this tree must have grown fast but not lived long. It was prone to being blown or knocked down easily. It was a very early and very primitive effort at evolving a tree.

The second species of tree did have wood and may have lived a lot longer, but it was truly bizarre. It is a type of tree called an *aneurophytalean*. It had a peculiar long curving stem that reached out across the ground until it found a standing tree and used it for support, growing up its trunk. We have heard this form sometimes called a “snake tree.” It too had tiny roots, growing out of its ground-hugging stem. It did have foliage and that is portrayed in Kristen Wyckoff’s drawing.

These first two species are bizarre, primitive terrestrial plants, just the sort

of things you would expect in the early evolution of land plants. The third species, however, was a good bit more familiar to the research team. It even has a common name and you may know it. It is an early form of “club moss.” Club mosses, also called “ground pines,” are common in the Catskills today. None of today’s forms, however, are much more than a few inches tall. The fossil Gilboa versions grew into tree-sized plants. Very few were located at the Riverside Quarry, but these provided important new information. Ground moss belongs to a group of plants called Lycopods and they are common throughout younger Devonian strata but the specimen found at the Gilboa site are the oldest known to science. They push back the age range of the group. Two of them are portrayed on the right side of Kristen’s drawing.

All in all, it was a fine piece of scientific research that was done in 2010. The shameful part is that this location has, once again, been buried. As we write, great heaps of earth and boulders lie atop this priceless scientific location. It is again lost to science.

Robert Titus is well known to Catskill residents for his articles in Kaatskill Life magazine. He teaches in the geology department at Hartwick College. Johanna Titus has recently started co-authoring those articles. She is a biologist and teaches at Dutchess Community College.

Article reprinted courtesy of the Windham Journal.

A WANDER INTO WONDER

Peter C. Fox

The natural beauty of Gilboa invites a pleasant wander in any season. It is there for all to enjoy. However, the magic of life often increases when we allow ourselves to wander into wonder. Too much of our lives pass by unexamined, and it is only when we take the time to open our minds that the magic shines on the all too familiar. If you have free time this summer, you might want to come to the Gilboa Museum because we are working to have wonder come alive.

This past spring, *Nature* magazine published the latest findings on the Gilboa fossils as they existed during the Devonian period—the purpose of this Newsletter article is not to give you technical information about these fossils beyond saying that the forest floor (exposed during the Department of Environmental Protection work on the reconstruction of the Gilboa Dam) revealed for the first time how the earliest forests in world history functioned as an interdependent ecosystem. In addition to the “fern tree” stumps that we have had for many years, there is now evidence that two additional trees were a part of the forest ecology: lycopsida, a type of club moss; and a “snake tree” that wound around the forest floor and perhaps even “climbed” the other adjacent trees.

The scientific work at Gilboa reminds us of how science really works. Although we think that scientific fact is “cast in stone” (or, for us, cast in fossil), all science is still developing. Scientists take the available evidence and make their best interpretation about what that evidence is telling them.

To show this, we have included two pictures, each interpreting the theory based on what was actually found at the Gilboa site. The picture on the left of the next spread was drawn in 1925 based on Winifred Goldring’s examination of tree stumps during the original construction of the dam. Some of those stumps may now be seen beside the Gilboa Town Hall and at the Gilboa Museum. The

Vintage Images of Margaretville

Post card collectors Lynda Stratton and Kathy Roberts will present a slide show of vintage images from Margaretville and vicinity in the Historical Society of Middletown's new hall. \$2 admission, free to HSM members

Wednesday, July 25 at 7 pm
Historical Society of Middletown
788 Cemetery Rd., Margaretville
.www.mtownhistory.org

stumps are blocky, with rounded bottoms, with tall, slender trunks. Goldring did not believe she had fossils of the crown, so she drew in a lacy, fern-like crown. There is little ground cover in Goldring's illustration.

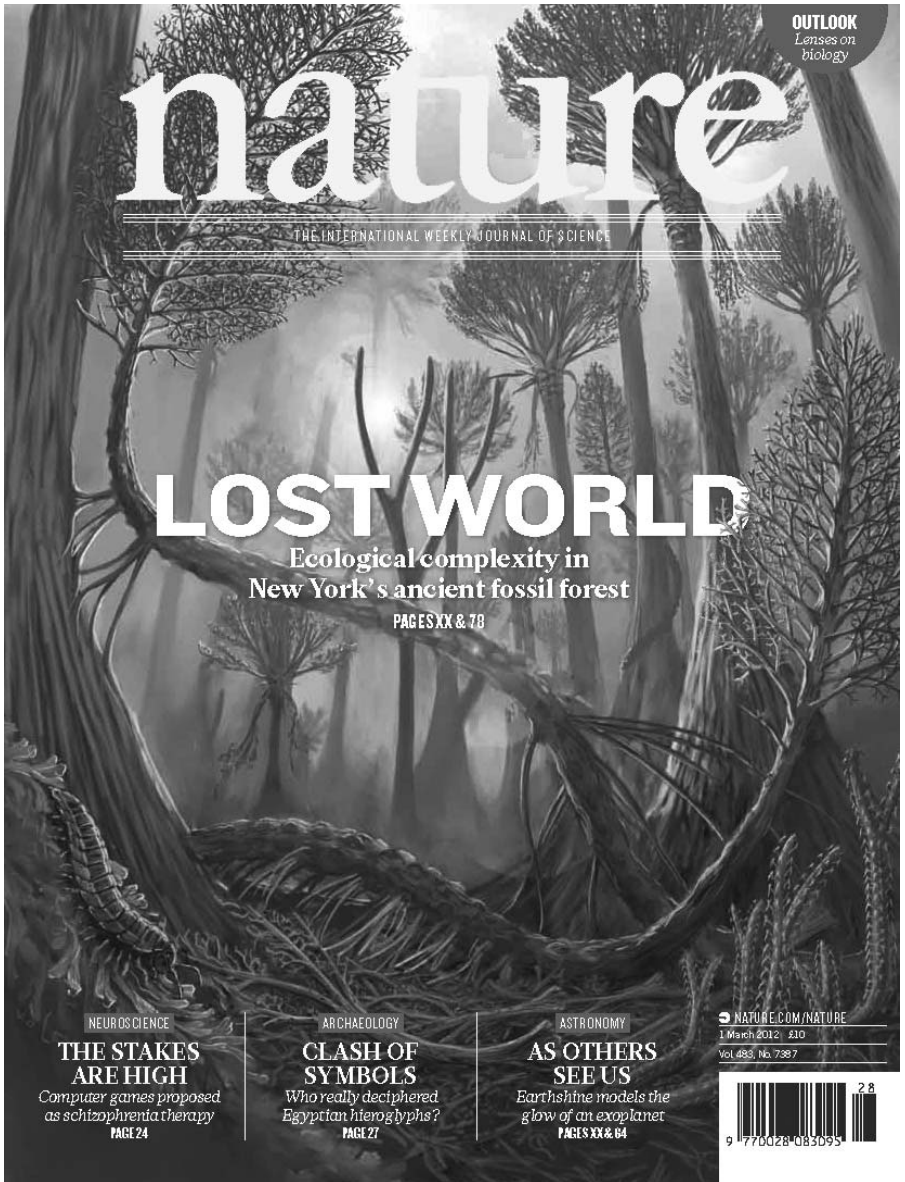
The second picture (on the right) is on the cover of *Nature* in which the 2012 fossil article was published. The long fossil found in 2007 was revolutionary—it was a single fossil showing the actual shape of the stump, the development of the trunk, and an apparently complete crown. The scientists in both 1925 and 2007 had stumps of the trees; therefore the stumps in both pictures have similar, rounded butts. Because of the 2007 discovery of a fossil of a complete tree, the trunks on the *Nature* cover appear shorter, with broad, almost skirt-like stumps; and because the scientists of 2007 had discovered a fossil that included the crown, the leaves of *Nature*'s crown are fuller, more bottle-brush in shape, and with a method of reproduction different from Goldring's trees.

The 2007 scientific exploration of the Devonian Sea bed showed additional fossils of two other trees: a club moss that would later become more dominant, and a snake tree that winds around the forest floor in the foreground.

Goldring's theory of the Devonian Sea was good for its time; but with the further discoveries of 2007 and 2010, an improved and more detailed theory has emerged showing a more vibrant ecology and proving the vitality of science. The display at the museum this summer allows us to wander into wonder.



Goldring's diorama of the Gilboa fossil forest for the New York State Museum, 1925. *Winifred Goldring (1888–1971): New York Paleontologist*. Copyright © 2005 by Michele L. Aldrich, All rights reserved. Plate courtesy of Michele L. Aldrich.



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biology

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THE INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE

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Pete and Jane Fox live in Gilboa. He taught in the Gilboa-Conesville Central School for 32 years, then moved to the United Kingdom for 10 years, where they did teacher training throughout Scotland, England, Wales and the Channel Islands. They returned full time to Gilboa in 2010.

GILBOA MUSEUM, 2012

Gilboa Museum Open House on July 8

The Gilboa Museum has an exciting agenda for the coming season: “New Fossil Discoveries; New Hypothesis” is the theme for the exhibit this year.

The Gilboa Museum Open House on July 8 will start with a dedication ceremony at 2 PM for the new fossil and farm equipment shelter, built with the help of the Juried Family Foundation. This will assure our museum complex is not only built but maintained. (Nick is a 1947 graduate of Gilboa School residing in Texas.)

The Town of Gilboa surprised us with new oil and stone on our parking area and provided gravel for the new shelter. The town has also purchased benches and is securing them at our museum and at the fossil kiosk.

The fossils found since the flood of 2011 will be on display, along with a new painting of the Devonian Forest by Kristen Wyckoff. Team members from that dig site—Dr. Bill Stein from University of Binghamton, Linda Hernik and Frank Mannolini from the NYS Museum—will be there to answer any questions regarding the fossil discoveries and identify any fossils you may want to bring.

Also at the open house will be folk music by Staber and Chasoff, a duet with guitar and mandolin.

We will also have vendors attending: Laura Potter, jewelry; Helen Moltzen, braided rugs; and Dottie Pickett, wooden crafts.

Gilboa Gifts (the gift shop within the museum) has a new supply of fossil jewelry (wire wrapped brachiopods and beautiful trilobites, geodes, ammonites and coral from around the country). As always, the shop’s a great place to buy local books, unique gifts, American-made wooden toys with designs that have been around through many generations; tin whistles, yo-yos, jacks, and jump ropes are just some of the items available.

Gilboa Museum Open House
Sunday, July 8, 2012, 2 PM
Gilboa Museum at 122 Stryker Road, Gilboa, NY
Please carpool a member or bring a friend!

Museum hours: 12–4:30 Sat. & Sun. July thru Labor Day
Columbus Day weekend, and by appointment (607 588-9413).

GILBOA QUARRIES

Riverside Quarry, Sand Pits, and Stevens Mountain

Gerry Stoner

In the last issue, we had seen how the Board of Water Supply had developed roads and bridges to diverge traffic around the construction site at the village of Gilboa, and to allow construction vehicles to access the center of the construction site itself.

Before construction of the dam and tunnel could proceed, however, the BWS had to develop the infrastructure necessary to quarry construction stone for the dam and gatehouse; sand for the manufacture of cement; and crushed stone for the manufacture of concrete.

This story is told in the various editions of the Annual Reports of the Board of Water Supply from 1920 until 1925. The following is extracted from those books. Note: some of these pictures were obtained from the Archives of the Department of Environmental Protection.

The Riverside Quarry

Development of the Riverside Quarry was started in 1920. A portable crushing plant was set up at the quarry and furnished crushed stone, and in September, cutters also began quarrying stone of excellent quality for the face and edge stones for the dam as well.

Quarry works in this area was seasonal, so workers enlarged the working area in April, 1921; quarrying began in May; and cutting of face and edge stones in June. This stone was particularly adapted for facing the dam and walls: it was a good quality gray sandstone naturally divided into blocks up to 5 to 6 feet in thickness by horizontal and vertical seams. This sedimentary stone naturally split to nearly the needed height and the stones were easily quarried, sized, and finished. Deliveries from Riverside in 1921 were made by truck, but a narrow-gauge railroad was constructed by the end of the season.

It was understood that fossil tree stumps were likely to be found in the area, but they first were found in large numbers in 1921—their bases resting on a layer of shale, they were found in a stratum of hard bluestone, the size of the stumps varying from about 12 inches to over 3 feet in diameter.

Quarrying and cutting of face stone were resumed late in March of 1922. The surplus of the cut stone accumulated was depleted in July, and thereafter, until mid-October, the demand for stone exceeded the quarry output, notwithstanding the fact that successive increases were made in the number of



The Riverside Quarry, where stone is obtained for the construction of the Gilboa dam. The stones shown have been quarried and are ready to be dressed. Grading of Road 8 is shown just above the top line of stone. Photo courtesy of the NYC Bureau of Water Supply's Annual Report for 1921.

stone cutters and that a night quarry shift was started. During that season, 4,752 cubic yards of stone were cut, and 4,309 cubic yards were delivered to the dam. Additional fossil tree stumps of the Devonian period were uncovered in considerable number by the contractor's operations at the Riverside Quarry.



A group of tree fossils found in the Riverside Quarry while quarrying face stones for the Gilboa dam. Photo courtesy of the NYC Bureau of Water Supply's Annual Report for 1921.

Quarrying and cutting continued in 1923 with an inadequate force of stone cutters and a serious depletion in production during the season; 2,450 cubic yards of stone were cut and 3,838 cubic yards delivered to the dam. A season-end study showed that the face was about 200 feet long and 20 feet high, under a cover of about one foot of earth, with large quantities of good stone remaining both at and below the present working level. The total volume of stone cut from the quarry was estimated to be 37% of the probable total requirement.

To provide more stone in 1924, the quarry area was extended downstream; improved equipment was brought in; the stone-cutting force was increased from 13 men to 70; and quarrying became a 24-hour per day operation. During the season, 209 shifts cut 5,667 cubic yards of facing stones and 1,729 cubic yards of edge stones—a total of 7,396 cubic yards, or 35 cubic yards per shift. The total output of cut stone to the end of 1924 was 16,696 cubic yards, which is 67% of the probable total requirement.

In 1925, the remainder of the facing and edge stones were cut and delivered, finishing runs of crushed stone were delivered to the work sites, and the stone cartouches over the doors of the gatehouse were carved.

Sand pits

Gilboa sand generally varies from coarse gravel to fine sand with streaks of clay. Starting in 1920, it was furnished from a private contractor on Cherry Hill and was able to supply sand until September 6, 1921 when the pit was exhausted. A secondary source, the River Flat pit, filled in until December 17.

The Patchin pit, located near the intake chamber of the Shandaken tunnel about 2.34 miles from the Gilboa dam, became the main source of supply for the rest of the project. The sand was excavated by a Thew shovel, delivered by a narrow-gauge railroad, and put on a screen and washed in preparation for dumping into cement mixers. With the pit and washer both working on a three-shift basis, it was impossible to fully supply the mixers throughout 1922. However, a heavier bedding of sand developed in July, and a larger steam shovel with a 2.5-yard dipper allowed a single shift to supply enough sand for the whole job: sand recovery for 1923 increased by 17% over the previous year.

During 1924, the Patchin sand pit was operated on a single shift from April 17 to November 30 and supplied sufficient sand for all the demands of the contract. The average daily output of the pit amounted to 400 cubic yards, which on the average netted 240 cubic yards of washed sand. The face of the pit at the close of the year was 600 feet long and 40 feet high.

The stockpiles of sand from the Patchin pit were sufficient for nearly all the purposes, with any shortfalls could be procured from two small pits located on private property downstream from the dam.

Crushed stone to the dam site from Stevens Mountain

The No. 5 stone crusher on Church Hill recycled waste stone from the dam site as crushed stone, but Stevens Mountain Quarry was the main source of crushed stone used in the concrete portions of the dam and tunnel.

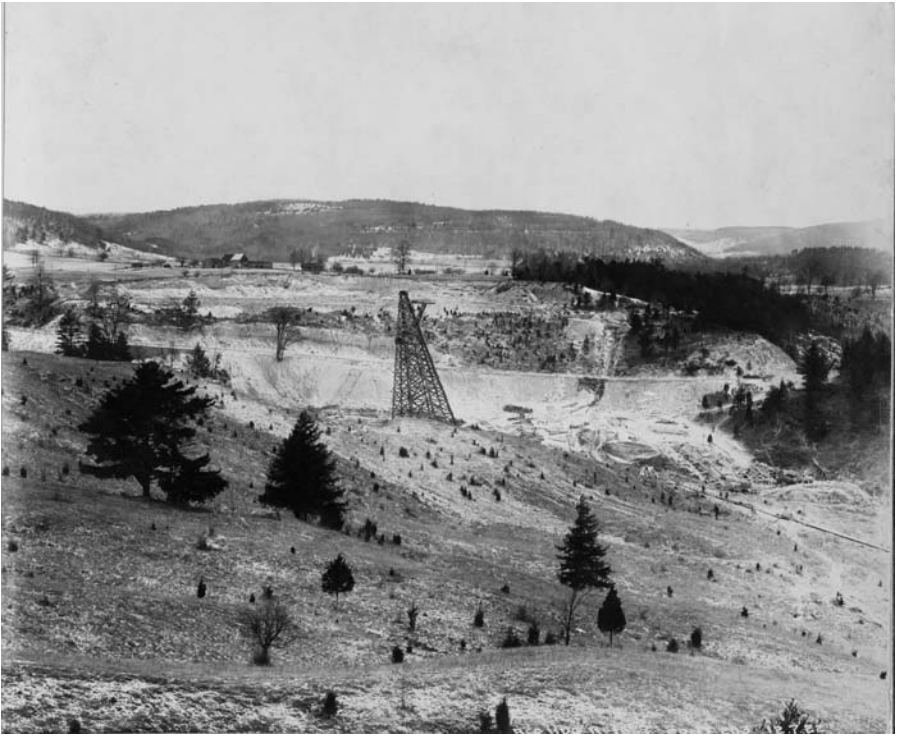
Stevens Mountain's main crusher was a Traylor "Bulldog" with a 42 × 48-inch opening. It sat on a concrete base, and a 300-foot trestle brought loaded trains to it from the quarry. After crushing, the stone passed through a second, finer crusher and then onto a gyrating screen. Any improperly sized stone ("tailings") were recycled through the process to guarantee a product that was suitable for the work. The entire plant was electrically operated and had a capacity of 150 cubic yards per hour.

This crushing operation was about 2/3 of a mile from the work site on the creek. A 3,670 foot-long tramway carried the stone to the dam. The tramway was anchored at each end and supported by ten towers with an average height of 22 feet. The cable had thirty-two 1-yard buckets spaced 250 feet apart and moving at a speed of 500 feet per minute.

The upper terminal of the tramway was near the stockpile of stone and was fed by two 2-yard cars that would be filled, pulled up an inclined plane by a hoist engine, and emptied into the tramway buckets. The lower terminal was near the crusher on Church Hill and the combined stone went by belt conveyor to storage bins over the cement mixer.



Site of the Stevens Mountain quarry had been cleared in 1920. This hill (to the east of the current Gilboa-Conesville Central School) provided the crushed stone for the concrete used in the construction of the Gilboa Dam. Grading of Road 1 (a.k.a. State Route 990V) is shown in foreground. Photo courtesy of the NYC Bureau of Water Supply's Annual Report for 1920.



Schoharie Reservoir. Gilboa Dam. Contract 203, Gilboa Division. Panoramic view of the dam site and vicinity taken from the hill lying southerly from the Village of Gilboa. The view includes from the westerly end of the dam to the Stevens Mountain quarry on the east. [Panorama comprised of six photographs: hdq.r.1627, hdq.r.1628, hdq.r.1629, hdq.r.1630, hdq.r.1631, hdq.r.1632] December 7, 1922. Photo courtesy of the NYC Bureau of Water Supply's Archives.

Cement to the dam site from Conro's storehouse

The cement, stored in an 18,000-bag-capacity storehouse on Conro's flats, was delivered by a different tramway. The start of this tramway was anchored at Conro's and ran east to the mixing site: there were eight intermediate towers of an average height of 18 feet to span the 3,300-foot run.

There was storage for 2,000 bags at the mixer, and cement was delivered to the mixer at a rate of 6 bags every 48 seconds. Water for the mixer was supplied by a 4-inch gravity line from the Manor Kill.

The main mixing plant consisted of an electrically driven 2-cubic-yard mixer fed from overhead stone, sand, and cement bins. The mixed concrete was then raised to the top of a 135-foot distributing tower and dumped into steel chutes for delivery to a specific worksite. The chutes were suspended and could be shifted to deliver concrete to any work site with a 1/2.75 slope.



Prior articles regarding the Gilboa dam construction included the construction of roads and bridges to route traffic around the construction sites; the construction of access for the workers and equipment at the sites; the construction of the Shandaken Tunnel and the Gatehouse, and this article on the development of quarries for sand, stone, and concrete. The next article will tell of rerouting water around the construction site.

The Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply of the City of New York for 1907–1927 are at http://www.northerncatskillshistory.com/Writing_History/200_Documents/BWSAnnualReports/ as searchable .pdf files.

Hornings and Shivarees

According to pagan Norse religions, “horning” is a celebration of the marriage of a fertility god to mother Earth. Later, other societies had a “shivaree,” a mock serenade (using kettles, horns, etc.) to celebrate a couple’s marriage.

Around Gilboa, the words became synonymous and refer to a surprise party for a newly married couple around two o’clock in the morning. It was expected that the couple would then invite their guests into the house to celebrate, and relatives of the couple (or the guests themselves) would bring food and drink. The horning (or shivaree) would continue into the coming day.

These celebrations were often raucous. One couple was slow to answer the door, so the guests climbed a ladder and entered the house through the newlywed’s bedroom, tracking mud and cold air through the house.

You natives out there: please tell us your recollections of hornings in your lives—your own, or ones you instigated in our Catskills home.

Zadock Pratt Museum Prattsville Post-Flood and Recovery Documentary Photography by Larry Gambon

P.O. Box 333, Main Street, Prattsville NY 12468

Sat. & Sun. 11 AM–4 PM
(last tour through the museum at 4 PM)
large groups by appointment 518-299-3395

Invitation to a One-Room Schoolhouse *To the Gilboa Historical Society from the Fulton Historical Society*

The Town of Fulton Historical Society was formed on September 3, 2003, has published two books of town history, and moved the Vintonon 1848 one-room schoolhouse to the village of West Fulton. Located on the site of the West Fulton one-room school, it contains artifacts of the old days, the original desks, and items from other one-room schools of the town.

Open to the public every Sunday from Memorial Day to Labor Day (noon 'til four), by special arrangement (518 827-4813), and on September 6 to host the Gilboa Historical Society.

Thursday, September 6, 2012 at 7:00
Please confirm time (518 827-4813)
Bear Ladder Road at Route 30, West Fulton, N.Y. 12194

WEEK-LONG CELEBRATION HOBART BOOK VILLAGE JULY 1ST-8TH

LOCAL AUTHOR SIGNINGS

Sunday, July 1 at 2 PM: Adam Cornell (a.k.a. Adam Speed)

Sunday, July 8 at 2 PM: Chuck D'Imperio

FREE LOCAL PRODUCT TASTINGS

Every day, 1-4 PM

Free tastings of local smoked salmon, cheese, yogurt and beer

DISCOUNT BOOKS

4 of the 5 Bookstores: 20% discount on books related to U.S. history, biography and autobiography.

Mysteries & More: 20% discount on books written by American authors.

Hobart Book Village
607-538-9080

Gilboa Historical Society Donations

We are making plans for more capital improvements. If you want to donate to these activities, please get in touch with a GHS board member or send us a note with the membership application form on page 39 of this newsletter.

Around the Neighborhood

Saturday, June 16, 10–3: Vintage Post Card Show and Sale, vendors of post cards and ephemera, regional books, and postcard display from Delaware County Historical Association. Refreshments. Free for Historical Society of Middletown members, \$3 for non-members. HSM Hall, 778 Cemetery Rd., Margaretville. www.mtownhistory.org

Sunday, June 17, 10–5: Free admission on Father's Day at Hanford Mills in East Meredith. At 2, historian Robert W. Arnold III will present "Life Speeds Up: Robert Fulton and a Changing New York" made possible with the support of the New York Council for the Humanities. www.hanfordmills.org

Tuesday, June 19, 6:30: "The Fans of Delhi," a geology talk by Dr. Robert Titus. Delhi Historical Society, 5 Elm St., Delhi.

Wednesday, June 20, 7: GHS meeting with Chelsea Smith talking on the dam's dislocation of Gilboa, at the Gilboa Town Hall.

Saturday, June 30, 6–8: Living history tour of Margaretville Cemetery—former residents buried in the cemetery talk about their lives. Historical Society of the Town of Middletown. \$10 adults, \$5 kids 8–15. Tours depart every 20 minutes starting at 6. Reservations not needed. Rain date July 1. www.mtownhistory.org

Wednesday, July 4, 12:30: Rain or shine, Flat Creek Kids Parade at 843 Flat Creek Rd., Gilboa.

Sunday, July 8, 2: Rain or shine, GHS Museum Open House, 122 Stryker Road, Gilboa.

Wednesday, July 18, 6: GHS Ice Cream Social at the Gilboa Museum, 122 Stryker Road, Gilboa (at the school if rain).

Wednesday, July 25, 7: Vintage pictures of historic Margaretville in Historical Society of Middletown's new hall, 788 Cemetery Rd., Margaretville.

Saturday, August 4, 10 AM to 4 PM: Drowned towns in the watershed. Talks on the creation of the west-of-Hudson water system, and the effects of this infrastructure on the lives of the people.

Wednesday, August 15, 6: Meet at the Gilboa Town Hall for field trip to New York Wildlife Rescue Center. (Remember to bring pet food for animals.)

Thursday, September 6, 7: The Fulton Historical Society has invited Gilboa Historical to visit their restored schoolhouse on Bear Ladder Road at Rt. 30.

August 15 Field Trip to New York Wildlife Rescue Center

Wes and Darcy Laraway are nationally known for their animal rescue efforts. Wes is a licensed nuisance wildlife control officer with advanced training in handling rabid animals, and the Laraways annually provide hundreds of domestic animals with sanctuary, rehabilitation, and placement in caring homes.

The Laraways are both licensed New York State wildlife rehabilitators as well, and receive animals injured throughout the northeast. The center is licensed to rehabilitate all native species, so you will see numbers of raptors, predators, and less aggressive species as they are being reintroduced into the wild.

The students of Wes and Darcy often support the wildlife center by taking care of the facility and the animals—you will rarely see such a clean, well-maintained operation nor students more dedicated to the maintaining of our environment.

The Laraways and their extensive support group will host the Gilboa Historical Society and introduce their animals (including a truly impressive group of raptors and a bobcat). After your visit, you can keep in touch with this extraordinary non-profit through their regularly updated blog for individuals who want to know about daily life at nywildliferescue.blogspot.com

Wednesday, August 15, 2012

Put it on your calendar. Bring the kids.

Carpool your neighbors who do not like driving after sunset.

We will caravan from the Gilboa Town Hall at 6 PM

Rescue Center Rescue

A rescue center devours canned or dried pet food. Please bring a canned gift of pet food or a bag of kibble on August 15 or purchase a gift certificate from Amy at Crewell Feed Supply, 518-827-5962.



HOT ROCKS

December 31, 1946—January 7, 1947

This story has three parts: a 12/31/1946 newspaper article; the back story of events covered here; and a second news article with “the rest of the story.”

PART I: December 31, 1946

Adapted from article by Barbara Bundschu

The insurance detective planned to capture 28-year-old Brooklynite Olga Rocco as she carried stolen diamonds from a Times Square subway stop.

Two weeks earlier, the detective, Alan Larue, had enlisted the help of 19-year-old Pearl Lusk, a pretty, petite, blonde girl who would play the part of a bystander carrying a new type of x-ray camera concealed in a Christmas-wrapped shoebox. Larue learned that Rocco would be hiding the diamonds in her stockings at the Times Square subway stop, so Lusk’s job was to meet Rocco’s train, aim the camera at her legs, and take a picture that would confirm she was indeed carrying the “hot rocks.” With this information, Larue could make the arrest.

They had tried an earlier sting that failed due to a breakdown in this new technology. The plan came off without a hitch this time on the afternoon of December 31, 1946: the subway rolled into the station and Miss Lusk was standing to the side holding the gift-wrapped package. The train stopped, the doors opened, and Olga Rocco walked out of the subway car and up a set of stairs. Lusk aimed the box at the lower half of Rocco’s torso, and pressed the shutter.

Lusk took the picture, but simultaneously there was a loud roar and Olga Rocco fell to the ground—the victim of a sawed-off-shotgun blast to her hips and legs. Miss Lusk remained dazed beside the wounded woman until police burst through the excited subway crowd, when she told the police that someone shot the woman just as she was taking a picture of her as part of an insurance investigation. Police checked her “camera,” found the cut-down shotgun, and

couldn’t find any insurance investigator. The police took Miss Lusk in custody while Mrs. Olga Rocco, lying on the platform with blood flowing from a deep hip wound, told a policeman: “You fool, my husband shot me!” Mrs. Rocco’s vehemence convinced the police that Alan Larue might have been Alphonse Rocco.

Two months previously, Mrs. Rocco had



Barbara Bundschu wrote “Woman Shot by Gun Hidden in Yule Package,” was one of the few female reporters covering spies, crooks and the Cold War in the 1940s and ’50s. A reporter for UPI between 1942 and 1962, Miss Bundschu interviewed Gen. Douglas MacArthur after accepting Japan’s surrender in 1945. Photo courtesy of Bundschu family.

been wounded in another mysterious shooting, and police had been seeking her ex-husband in connection with that since November 1. Now, they redoubled their efforts after hearing Pearl Lusk's strange story from Times Square.

PART 2: Events Leading Up to Shooting and Subsequent Chase

Alphonse Rocco lived in Brooklyn. He was a plumber, but his other activities had often been of interest to the local police. However, like many people from the city, he escaped the summer's heat by vacationing in Gilboa. A number of Gilboa farms took in boarders during the summer—Alphonse made his summer home at the Raymond Brown farm on Keyserkill Road in Broome Center.

Raymond Brown's family included two daughters who waited on tables at the farm. Shirley Brown Kutzscher remembers Alphonse as a handsome man who was always "dressed to the nines"—very dapper. This appearance was evident in his casual, GQ-style dress at dinner or in checked flannel hunting small game in the summer or deer in the fall.

He was extremely gregarious, loving to tell stories of life in the city that seemed especially exotic to the farm girls of Gilboa. His good looks and warmth appealed to young and old, male and female alike. It is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to see Alphonse's personality working in his favor both when fitting into rural society or inducing a naive city girl to believe his story of being an insurance investigator.

Events of early January 1947 after the shooting: The search for Alphonse Rocco started in Brooklyn and Manhattan and had spread first to Cairo (where a car was found that had been stolen in Brooklyn) and then to the northern Catskills.

Having jurisdiction for the area, approximately 50 state troopers had been assigned from Troops C and G, but they were liberally reinforced by off-duty New York City officers. A nearby cafe owner said he served dinner to 90 armed police—the hunt for Rocco was being very actively pursued by the law.

For some reason, they started searching homes in Grand Gorge; and because *daily* newspapers were uncommon and radio did not have extensive *news* coverage, knowledge of the shooting was not widespread in Gilboa. At first, Gilboans did not easily associate the gregarious "Alphonse" with the infamous "Rocky."

In Gilboa, Alphonse stopped at the Raymond Brown farm one evening and "wanted to say hello" to the kids—especially the Brown's son Jim. With some concern, Raymond said he was asleep, but Alphonse insisted. The two men went into the boy's bedroom, and Alphonse sat on the bedside and basically told Jim to be a good boy, and then said "good-bye." He soon left the farm.

Later, troopers visited the Brown farm, and Raymond Brown told them that

he had not seen Rocco. The police searched the buildings on the farm and even went so far as to open the freezer with armed state troopers aiming at the box to return fire if need be. The police told the farmer “not to leave the house”—and could not understand the need for him to go outside to milk his cows.

The Browns clearly felt that the police were not going to give up on the search and that they did not expect to capture Rocco alive. Eventually, the police left; Raymond resumed his outside farm chores; and the Brown women and children left home to stay with nearby relatives.

PART 3: January 7, 1947 *Star-Journal* Harry Lewis Tells How Rocco Invaded Maybie Road Home

Alphonse Rocco and my friend, Frank Nash, knocked on my door about 11 PM Sunday night and I never realized the trouble I was in for.

When I opened the door, I saw Frank with this fellow. He appeared very nervous. They walked into my kitchen and Frank said the fellow was in some sort of trouble. They stood around about 10 minutes and Frank just ran off, leaving Rocco standing in the kitchen. It all happened so fast I really didn't know what was happening. Rocco took off his coat and I saw him handling a gun.

He said he wanted to stay around for a while.

“You'll have to get out,” I told him and he said he didn't have any place to go. He finally left the house and I thought he had gone, but apparently he just went out to the barn near the house and spent the night.

Neither my wife, Lucille, nor I got much sleep. He came back into the house yesterday and said he wanted me to drive him to New York. I told him that I couldn't because the car was bad. I tried all day to get him to leave, but he wouldn't.

We didn't talk much. Lucille kept looking at me. We were both afraid he might do something to our boy, Richard, who is 3 [no relation to our current town historian]. I don't think Rocco slept or ate anything except half a sandwich all the while he was around here.

I became more worried about my wife and son. I told him to go. He could even take the car, if he would only go. He kept handling the gun but didn't say anything.

We hadn't had any coal or milk for two days and I finally decided to go up to the neighbors where we get milk and it was on the way back that some troopers jumped out of the car and advanced over into the fields. I knew they had him then as he had left the house with a blanket and sleeping bag I gave him only a short time before.

Apparently he had just gone over into the woods and laid down.

Finale

The Lewis farm at the end of a long drive was two places up Maybie Road from Flat Creek. Don Brainard recalls that his father, Ralph, was a constable at that time, and lived across the street from the Lewis farm. The police stopped there on the way to apprehend Rocco. Don remembers a large number of burly policemen (remember, this is from the eyes of a child) coming to the door, and his father letting in only a few of them—he was afraid that the weight of all those men might collapse the floor.

The police insisted the constable go with them, so it came to pass that the constable was in the posse as they followed the tracks and saw a sleeping bag behind a stone wall. As they came closer, there was a single shot from inside the sleeping bag—and the troopers returned some fire. With no further resistance from beyond the wall, the troopers came up, saw that Rocco was dead, and coroner Duncan L. Best of Middleburgh made a preliminary examination under the moonlight on the hillside. The police then zipped up the sleeping bag, and dragged Alphonse Rocco down to the street.

According to the January 4, 1947 Kingston *Daily Freeman*, coroner Best conducted the autopsy in Cobleskill. On that same day, the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that Mrs. Olga Rocco was out of danger in Roosevelt Hospital. At first critical, she rallied after losing her left leg as a result of the shotgun blast. When she was told the story of her former husband's death, Mrs. Rocco smiled and said weakly: "At last, I'll be able to get a good night's rest."

Peter Levins of the Milwaukee Sentinel wrote a series of articles on real crimes. The newspaper's November 9, 1947 issue published "The Case of the Lethal Camera." This article recounted the stories of Olga Trapani (for a short while, Mrs. Alphonse Rocco), Pearl Lusk, and Alphonse Rocco. This story was found on the Internet at <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19471109&id=VSkxAAAIBAJ&sjid=XwoEAAAIBAJ&pg=3897,5237416>.

Gerry Stoner reproduced it for non-profit use. It is available courtesy of the the Milwaukee Sentinel at <http://gilboahome.com/ghspublications/Newsletters/LethalCamera.pdf>

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THEY LIVED IN THESE HILLS

Gerry Stoner

These short essays were contributed anonymously by folks who are familiar with the families and personalities described. They are not meant to be an inclusive history of a person or time, but to remind us of some of the personalities and events that occurred in Gilboa and Conesville over the past 200 years.

Please email, write, or phone with your comments and contributions to this effort: gerrys@gilboahome.com; GHS Newsletter, 152 Starheim Road, Stamford, NY 12167; or phone 607 652-2665/866 652-2665.

Gardens at the Hubbards

May 13, 1964 . . . Comment: The garden was a pretty big deal . . . Here is what Socrates Hubbard said about his garden about a 100 years or so prior in the hills looking over Livingstonville:

“The Garden” We had a garden, a small patch in the corner of the meadow across the road from the house It was surrounded by a rale fence. along the fence next the road grew harty chokes seeding themselves and had been there from all time. There was also a Hop vine and a long pole for it to run up. Below the garden in the corner of the fence was an other fine Hop vine and just west of it a fine bunch of Peonas. I used to think them most beautiful flower in the world: In this garden we planted beens potatos etc. generally went to the feeld for green corne peas etc. Then in my recolection (altho I must have been very small) Father surrounded an old colpet bed below the lower woods with a logg fence and made a garden there I think it must have been falieer for

it was soon abandoned and the fence moved. Sage bushes was growing there maney years after its abandonment.

Also an other garden was made below the barn a half acre ground was



fenced off of a paster lot a fine wall made round it. This was in the field next below the barn We had in this several years a very fine garden. The first year had quite a lot of watermellons. This was the only patch I ever know of being grown upon the hill. The seasons were too short and cold. We raised corn beans potatos squashes cucumbers etc. etc. string beans was a staple article in these days.

The Kingsleys

The Kingsleys always seemed to help others out. Phil and Louis Kingsley were farmers, and Louis was also a long-term superintendent of roads in the town and was nigh unbeatable.

Young Doug Van Aken had polio, was a patient in Sunnyview Hospital, and had to wear braces. Louie took up a collection among the workers and bought him a nice red wagon, which he really enjoyed. Louie was a real gentleman of the old school.

Louis's son, Alton, took over the farm, and later sold a portion of the land to the campgrounds on the upper reservoir of the Power Authority. When the upper reservoir for the Gilboa Pump Storage Project was being constructed, that young Doug Van Aken had recovered sufficiently from the polio and was hauling gravel to the area. However, the contractors were late paying Doug, so he had no money to buy gas for his truck. Alton had a small gas station at the time and he gave Doug credit for gas. A wonderful way to help someone out.

Fred Van Aken

Fred Van Aken was an Iowa farm boy who joined the United States Navy at age 16 in 1907. Teddy Roosevelt was president then, whose motto was "speak softly and carry a big stick." Roosevelt devised a plan to send 16 battleships, painted white, on a good-will tour around the world as a show of American strength.

Fred took this trip on the battleship *New Jersey*. The journey was known as the "Great White Fleet" and took two years (1907–1909), with stops at many ports. Fred also served in combat areas in World War I while in the Navy, and had a steam engineer's license to operate ships of any tonnage.

Later, he had his own auto repair business until the Depression, when he signed on as chief engineer of the Yonkers General Hospital for 14 years. He then moved to the Conesville area.

In World War II, Fred served as lieutenant commander in the U.S. Merchant Marine. Later, working for the New York State Conservation Department, he was the first observer on the Mount Leonard Fire Tower, walking all the way from Hubbard Road every day.

He retired from duties and spent the remainder of his life on his farm.

GILBOA

Name Adopted from a Biblical Mountain

The act authorizing the Town of Gilboa was passed March 16, 1848. In it, “The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows: §1. All that part of the towns of Broome and Blenheim, in the county of Schoharie, that is included within the following described boundaries shall be a town, and shall be called Gilboa . . .”

According to Roscoe’s *History*, the main village of that area gave its name to the town. The village’s name, in turn, had been chosen at random after a biblical mountain located south of Galilee, west of the Jordan Valley, and where Saul met his death near Jesus’ early home in Nazareth.



Above is a photograph of Mt. Gilboa in Israel. Photo courtesy of Flora Del and LaVerne Hubbard.

It is a shame that these pictures cannot be in color here, but they are online at gilboahome.com/ghspublications/Newsletters/MtGilboa&Iris.pdf and will be at the Gilboa Museum this summer.

Left: There is a trend for young Israelis to build communities that focus on green living. One, Michal, is close to the Sea of Galilee and was halted by the National Planning and Building Council because the new village threatens a national treasure—the rare Gilboa Iris. Photo copyright © 2012 Discovery Communications, LLC. courtesy of Discovery Communications, LLC.

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Our membership year is the calendar year. An asterisk* next to your name indicates that your individual membership is paid up for the current year; likewise, ** indicates a paid-up couple and *** indicates a paid-up family. A dagger† indicates a single lifetime membership; and †† indicates a couple's lifetime membership.

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† The Board is developing a wish list of memorial gifts; please inquire of 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.

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