



# Gilboa Historical Society

Fall/Winter 2006

Volume 8, Issue 2

## Holiday Foods

Connie Ruehle

Once again, the society is sponsoring the holiday food distribution for two families by the Gilboa-Conesville Central School. We are counting on *YOU* to contribute nonperishables at the Town Hall [10 'till 2 on weekdays except Tuesday], or to arrange for perishables with Connie Ruehle or email to [foodbasket@gilboahome.com](mailto:foodbasket@gilboahome.com).

## Speakers Past and Future

The Society meetings have had fantastic speakers this past year, including James Orlando (service as a page in the U.S. House of Representatives), Dr. Patrice Hallock (the cultural impact of losing one's town), Ray Briggs (the local impact of the War of 1812), and Vern Hall (a detailed look at farm families of 1850).

We'll be sending out a list of future speakers in the next newsletter, but to whet your appetite, we can let you know that the March meeting continues this list of blockbuster speakers!

Remember, our meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month, March through December.

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Post Office Box 52, Gilboa, NY 12076

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Shirley Kutzscher, President  
Connie Ruehle, Treasurer  
Jeanette Reynolds, Secretary  
Wilma Jones, Treasurer

Irene Hess, Richard Lewis, Kathleen Sanzari,  
Linda Stratigos, and Kristin Wyckoff, Directors

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

## DECEMBER MEETING IS THE BOTTLE AUCTION

Linda Stratigos

The Historical Society's Annual Holiday Bottle Auction will be held on December 20th at 7:00 PM in Gilboa's Town Hall. Everyone is invited.

Bring an attractively wrapped bottle of anything you like and it will be auctioned off. Bidders take their chances that the bottle contains something special they would like to have, or something silly that they have no use for. You may not unwrap your purchase until all the bidding is over and then, if you like, you can trade your bottle with someone else.

Tony VanGlad, auctioneer extraordinaire, has volunteered to lead the festivities with the help of his elves, Kristin and Al. And of course, delicious refreshments will be served.

Our local merchants and the Hess family, have once again put together two magnificent gift baskets for our annual raffle. The baskets will be on display at various shops around town during the next few weeks. Tickets are \$1.00 each, 6 for \$5.00. Make sure you buy a ticket or two because these are the most beautiful gift baskets you will ever have the chance to win! The drawing will be held at the Auction, and proceeds will go to the Gilboa Museum, Scholarship Fund, Historical Video and Newsletter.

Take a break from the holiday rush and join your neighbors and friends for some holiday fun.

## Report on the Gilboa Museum

Kristin Wyckoff

The Gilboa Museum had a great summer season in 2006. We opened in July with a display of *Vintage Clothes with a History*; these were complemented by *Sepia Pictures of Old Gilboa* by Marlynn Kessler hanging on the wall. These exhibits really gave the museum a homey feeling. Have you ever walked into a museum and gotten that cold, flat, empty feeling? Well, not in our museum. The paneling may be old, and we haven't spent millions on redecorating, but the Gilboa Museum welcomes a person immediately.

We had over 300 people go through the museum this season, not including two classes from Gilboa-Conesville Central School. We hope more classes from Gilboa or neighboring schools will visit us in the future. I have also had the privilege of showing our museum to the Fulton Historical Society and answering questions about their future museum plans.

We also have inherited the Schoharie Creek Project, which can be a lot of fun for someone who would just like to play around with the 4 hours of video taken of Schoharie Creek and surrounding towns including old music and photos.

If you missed the Esperance Band this July, don't fret. We'll be having them again next year. They created an enjoyable evening for all, and everyone got to see the museum during intermission.

We will miss Marlynn's *Old Gilboa* pictures on the wall next year, but you can still buy one by calling her at 607 588-6413.

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## Attending School at Shew Hollow

*Betty Matalavage*

I'm an eighty-one-year-old who grew up on the farm in Shew Hollow. I attended a one-room red schoolhouse that stood on the corner of Shew Hollow and Souer Roads.

Our farmhouse was the big one that burned down on the corner of Shew Hollow and Decker Road (presently called Starheim Road). Our farm has been in the Shew family and their descendants for over two hundred years.

The older boys took turns coming over to our house every morning to get the ceramic jug filled with water. Each pupil had a cup, brought from home, which hung on hooks near the water jug.

In the winter the big boys would bring in wood for the potbellied stove and start the fire. On a cold day, you kept your coat on until it got warm in the schoolhouse. The stove would sometimes get red hot and often the older boys would have pine-pitch balls in their pockets. When they placed them on the red-hot stove, they'd explode with a loud noise. The teacher would scold, but she was never certain which one was guilty so they got off with no problem.

The morning started with the older students putting the flag out on the pole. Then we'd all pledge allegiance to the flag, say the "Lord's Prayer," and end by singing "America."

The teacher would hand out the assignments to the students to be done at their desks. Our desks were stationary wooden ones with attached wooden seats. You had to be very careful doing your paperwork, as the desks all had carved mementos from past students and your pointed pencil could puncture the paper you were writing on. The desks were smaller toward the front of the room. The ones in the center aisle held as many as three students and the ones in the side aisles held one or two. My feet never touched the floor all the time I was in the various grades. In my early years, there were as many as fifteen pupils in grades one through eight. I attended this school until the fifth grade, when I went to the Jefferson Central School.

One grade at a time would go up front for a reading lesson. When it was time to recite, you went up to the front seats where it was nice and warm. The whole front wall was blackboards and a lot of our work was done up there—for example, writing and arithmetic.

The school had a small library on shelves under the chimney. We read those books over and over. We also had a big leather case that contained maps of the world, the continents, the United States, and New York State. Another big leather case contained stamps of the alphabet and small pictures, which the teacher used to make up worksheets for us.

You might say I was one of the first preschoolers to attend class, as I used to run across the street at the age of three or four and "go to school." The teacher at that time was Mrs. John Becker and she would let me stay, giving me a pencil and paper or a slate and chalk, and I would stay until my mother came for me. Mrs. Becker walked to school and back home every day from the John Becker farm (which is now 630 State Route 30, north of the sawmill).

I can remember going on nature study walks with the whole school at that age; when I got tired the big boys took turns carrying me on their shoulders. We looked for fossils in the shale banks and in the creek beds. The pupils also made collections of the wildflowers in the spring and the leaves in the fall.

I got my first and only spanking in the first grade because, at five, I insisted on getting out of my seat and running to the doorway to wave at whoever was going by. You see, I was very friendly and at that time you knew everybody who was traveling by the schoolhouse. My teacher then was Adeila Maybe and that afternoon, after school, she told my mother that she'd spanked me. My mother said, "Let me know if she doesn't sit still." Needless to say, I sat!

Later on, when I was in fourth grade, my mother, Jessie Hamilton, was the teacher. She would make me stay in at recess time if I didn't have my lessons done correctly. One day, as I was sitting dejectedly redoing my assignment, one of the mothers came in to visit and

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## THANK YOU

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*Kristin Wyckoff*

We'd like to thank Diane Pickett for her help with signs in the past "Don't Touch the Fossils" and now with "Gilboa Museum" sign at the end of Stryker Rd. It was a huge help directing folks off 990V, to our museum, and giving them the times we were open. Thanks, Diane!

We'd also like to thank Trista Shultes of "Gardens By Trista" who has donated her crew and mulch to weeding and dressing up the fossil kiosk. Trista (Wyckoff) while going to college for Landscape Design and Construction did the original lay out and installation of the Fossils using prickly junipers to discourage children and other folks from touching and sitting on the fossils. She just started her own business this year and deserves a big thank you for her help and donation!

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## OOPS

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In the last issue, we published a "thank you" for work on the 2005 holiday baskets that should have gone to Daniel Shultes and Will Clark.

Again, Daniel and Will, thanks!

And, while we're at it, the photographs of the dam shown in that very same issue were shown courtesy of Marlynn Kessler.

Shew Hollow, cont'd from page 2

I remember her telling my mother that she was “the meanest woman” she’d ever seen!

Recess was a big deal. We played “Hide and Go Seek,” “Tag,” and “Anthony, Anthony” in the spring and fall and, of course, baseball. Our bat was usually a piece of old lumber that was narrow on one end for the handle.

When I was seven, I got hit in the face with the bat, as I was the catcher. My nose was broken and I had a gash in my cheek. The doctor was concerned with the cut but ignored my broken nose!

In the winter, we rode on our sleds down Souer Road beside the school. On a good sledding day, you could come down the hill, cross Shew Hollow Road, cross the meadow on the other side of the road, and continue under the fence to the bottom of the hill. Otherwise, you could take a left on Shew Hollow Road and then right down Decker Road. One pupil would stay at the corner of Shew Hollow Road and Souer Road to direct traffic—if a car was coming, we’d ditch our sleds.

In the fall we’d go into the third floor of our barn and jump into the hay mows. My grandfather usually came

along and would send us back to the school yard to play, as he was afraid we’d get hurt.

At the most, there probably weren’t more than ten to fifteen pupils attending the school, but in my last year, I was the only pupil from May to June. Olive Franklin was my teacher. She had just graduated from college and we’d get all our lessons done in the morning and play the rest of the day. Many a day, we’d ride horseback on the farm team up to the field where my grandfather was cultivating and wade in the brook that ran down through the meadow.

I remember the year that the state mandated TB tests for all dairy cattle. Many of the farms in our valley lost both cows and bulls and there was a mass cattle drive down Shew Hollow Road. All of the pupils and our teacher went out on the steps of the school to watch them go by. There must have been at least sixty head just from our valley alone. The farmers replaced some of their cows with Canadian cows, but it was quite a while before their herds were back up in numbers.

At the end of my fifth grade, the one-room school closed and I went by bus to the Jefferson High School. But that’s another story . . .

### Photographs Found



We have reclaimed the lost photographs of Gilboa village, and are currently scanning them for future use and security. Two examples are above, but we are still missing a note card-sized box of photos. Please forward any information on this to Richard Lewis, (607) 588-6636, or Linda Stratigos, (607) 652-3316, or send an email to [pictures@gilboahome.com](mailto:pictures@gilboahome.com).

Membership application form		( ) Individual	\$10.00
Name:	_____	( ) Lifetime individual	\$100.00
Address:	_____	( ) Senior or student	\$7.00
	_____	( ) Couple	\$15.00
City:	_____	( ) Family	\$25.00
State:	_____	( ) Tax deductible donation:	
Zip:	_____	Gilboa Museum	\$ _____
Phone:	_____	Scholarship fund	\$ _____
Email:	_____	<i>Old Gilboa</i> video	\$ _____
		General fund	\$ _____
		Amount Enclosed	\$ _____
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Gilboa Museum, cont'd from page 1

The homey feeling of Marlynn's pictures will be maintained next season with our new exhibit with an "Old Tyme Kitchen" theme! We have a few utensils, an old-time washing tub with ringer, a butter churn, and maybe room for a spinning wheel. We're looking for additional items from the community that might fit into our theme. If you have anything that might work, please contact any of the members below.

The museum committee meets regularly and more members are always welcome. We have a great team now with many individual talents, and for a bunch of volunteers, I think we're doing a great job! We are continually working out the museum details and trying to improve on what we have and how to encourage more visitors. With time and patience we will clear all these hurdles.

I'd like to thank the committee that works hard with me on this: Richard Lewis, Val & Christl Riedman, Shirley Kutzscher, Wally and Sylvia Van Houten, MaryJane Laban, Jean Schroeder, Janette Reynolds, Connie Ruehle, Marianne Neuber, Kathi Sanzari, Marlynn Kessler. Also without the help of volunteer tour guides, it would be too big a burden for the rest. We appreciate your help, Ann Thorpe, Gerry Stoner, Ellen Thorn, Paul Morrison, Janet Orlando, Irene Hess, and Linda Newerla. Your help has made our little museum a big success!

## FOOD NEEDED FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Please drop off non-perishable goods for this year's distribution at the Town Hall or arrange for perishable goods through Connie Ruehle, Christl Riedman, or email [foodbaskets@gilboahome.com](mailto:foodbaskets@gilboahome.com).

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## Original Thoughts Needed!

Gerry Stoner

The Newsletter plans to publish original contributions on local history. Please consider writing up your recollections of Gilboa or documenting your studies of our community's past.

In connection with this, a few people have said:

- *I don't write very well, and would be afraid to show my writing to others.*

Not to worry: we have a super-competent editor to review and, if necessary, polish your work. How about receiving help from the long-time managing editor of Oxford University Press, Ellen Thorn!

- *I don't type, and my handwriting is horrible.*

In this case, we can interview you or supply a dictaphone, and then give you a typescript to review at your leisure.

- *I am thinking of writing a book: would I retain rights if I submit material to you?*

Yes. Under the copyright law of the United States, copyright is granted to the author upon creation of the material, and is solely the property of the author.

If you would be interested in contributing, please call me at 607 652-2665 or email me at [gerrys@gilboahome.com](mailto:gerrys@gilboahome.com).

## DECEMBER MEETING/ BOTTLE AUCTION

The last meeting of the year will be on December 20th at the Town Hall. Come one, come all—**BYOB**—December 20th at 7:00 PM in Gilboa's Town Hall. Each and every one is GUARANTEED to be a winner!

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