



Gilboa Historical Society

Learning about, sharing, and preserving our history

FALL 2011, VOLUME 13:3

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Please check your address on the back of this newsletter. Let us know of corrections or if you will have a temporary address at the time of our December publication. Asterisk(s) next to your name indicate that your membership is paid up. No asterisks? Use the application on page 39 to earn *your* star.

DEVONIAN HISTORY

Highlighted September & October in Hunter

The art of Kristen Wyckoff depicting the Devonian age will be on display at the Catskill Mountain Foundation's Gallery from Saturday, September 3 through October 22. During this time, the Foundation's Bookstore will also be highlighting the Devonian period in our area, with guest speakers and author signings. The Gallery and the Bookstore on Main Street (State Route 23A).

September 3, 4–6 PM

Open house with Kristen Wyckoff in the Gallery

September 10, 1–2 PM

Kristen Wyckoff's art entwined with the Gilboa fossils

September 17 3–4 PM

Diane Galusha: Gilboa Reservoir, and her book *Liquid Assets*

October 11 1–2 PM

Robert Titus: and his books *The Catskills: A Geological Guide* and *The Catskills in the Ice Age*

Published by the Gilboa Historical Society, Post Office Box 52, Gilboa, NY 12076
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**The Gilboa Historical Society meets at 7 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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THE SHANDAKEN TUNNEL

Under the aegis of the Board of Water Supply (BWS), the flow of fresh water to New York City increased dramatically in the first half of the twentieth century. The BWS published a series of annual reports, and those for 1917–1927 describe how Gilboa contributed to this expansion.

* * *

The northernmost reservoir for New York City was formed by a dam on Schoharie Creek at Gilboa. Water collected from the Schoharie Creek watershed was then carried south through a tunnel to the Esopus Creek and eventually on to the faucets and hydrants of the city. The Gilboa Dam could not be built and *simultaneously* hold back the Schoharie waters, so the Shandaken Tunnel had to be operational to allow work on the dam itself to be finished.

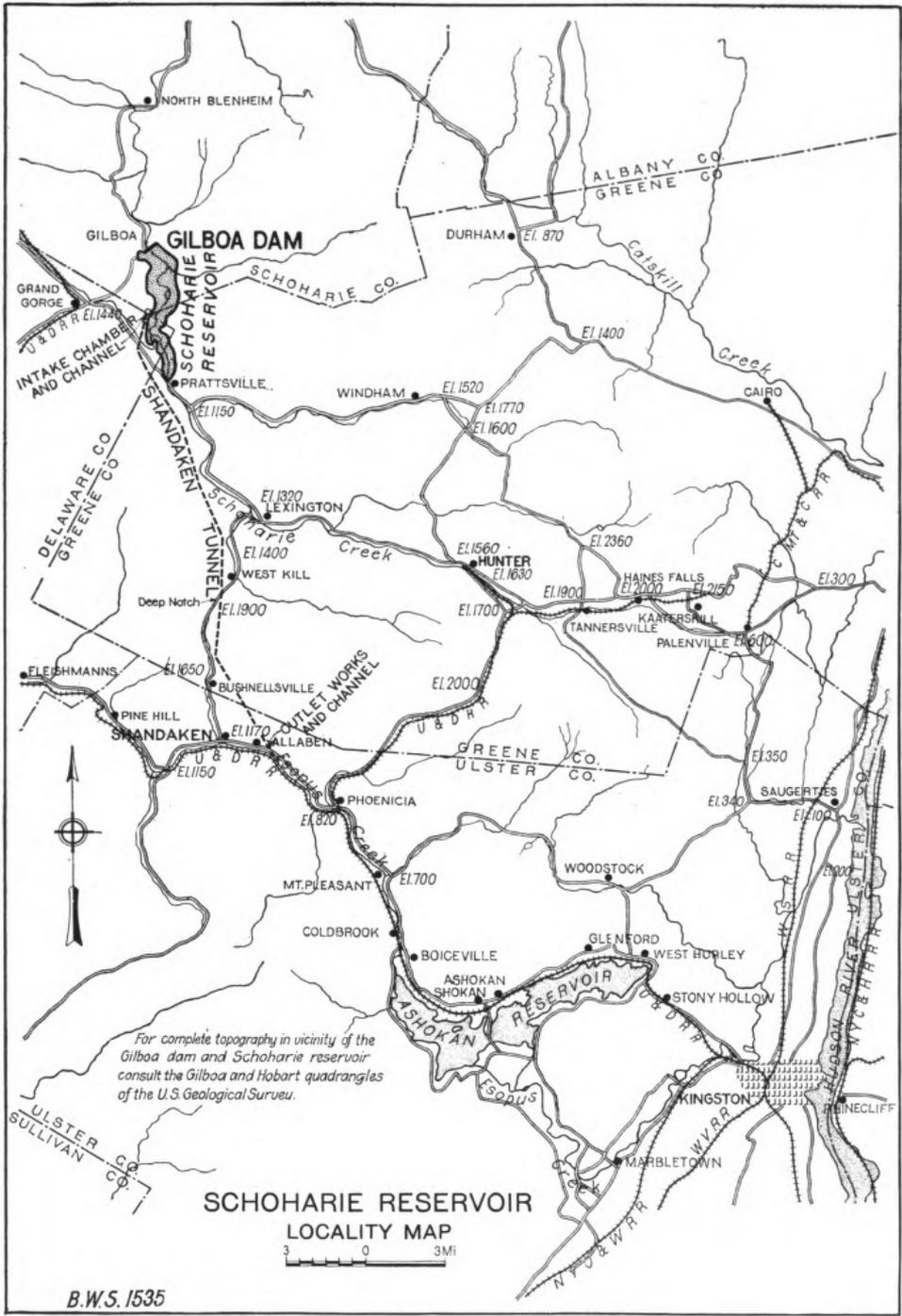
Contract 200 authorized the construction of the Shandaken Tunnel: it was awarded to Degnon Contracting Company in November 1917 for \$12,138,738 with a completion date of November 1924. The Shandaken Tunnel Corporation took over from Degnon on November 10, 1920, and the final accounting for the entire project was certified on October 22, 1924. The cost was \$12,204,665.55—\$65,927.55 (+0.54%) over the original estimate and slightly ahead of schedule, according to the Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1925).

* * *

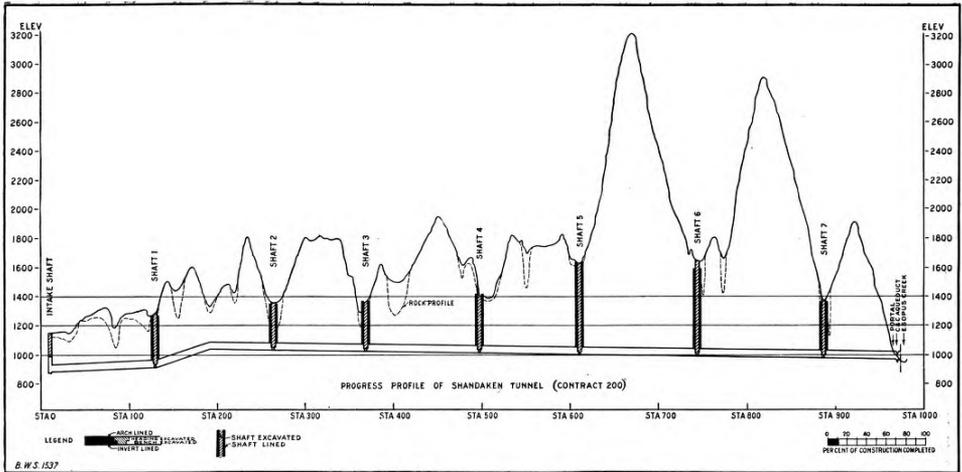
Preparatory infrastructure for the tunnel included access roads to eight construction sites spread out from Gilboa southeast 18.1 miles to the Village of Allaben on the Esopus Creek. The excavation for the roads, started in 1918, was the most seasonal and weather-dependent part of the entire project. The most critical of these roads, Road 6, went west from the dam to Route 30, connecting the dam site directly to existing roads and rails. The original route has been reconfigured slightly to the north and is now called Route 990V.

Construction of the support buildings at the eight work sites was mostly completed by 1919. These buildings housed the workers, provided food and healthcare, and continued in general use throughout life of the Shandaken Tunnel project. Additional buildings were erected, replaced, or repurposed as needed: some buildings were destroyed by fire and an 8-man house at shaft 2 became an isolation hospital. Water supplies were generally augmented as necessary by supplies transported in barrels or tank wagons and sanitation was maintained using Kaustine solution or caustic soda (sanitizers).

Workers at the eight sites drilled vertical shafts—a total of 3,238 feet. By the

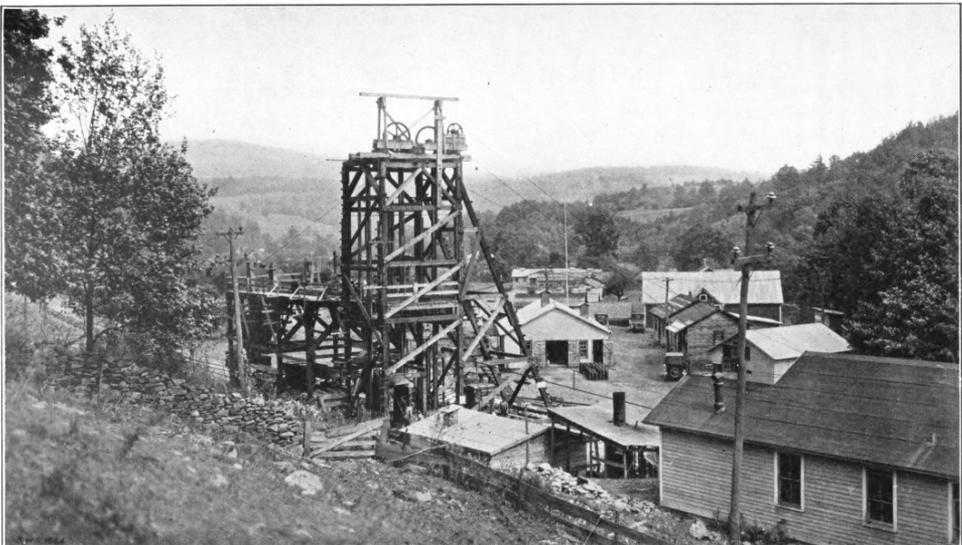


Map of the projected Schoharie Reservoir. 14th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1920)



Profile of the Shandaken Tunnel showing the 8 shafts (the intake on the left; the sump and graded tunnel; and the effluent portal). 14th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1920)

end of 1920, shafts 1, 5, 6, and 7 had been completed; the other shafts were completed in 1921. As each shaft was completed, the miners (called “sandhogs”) were able to access the tunnel’s work sites; air was forced down and then out to the

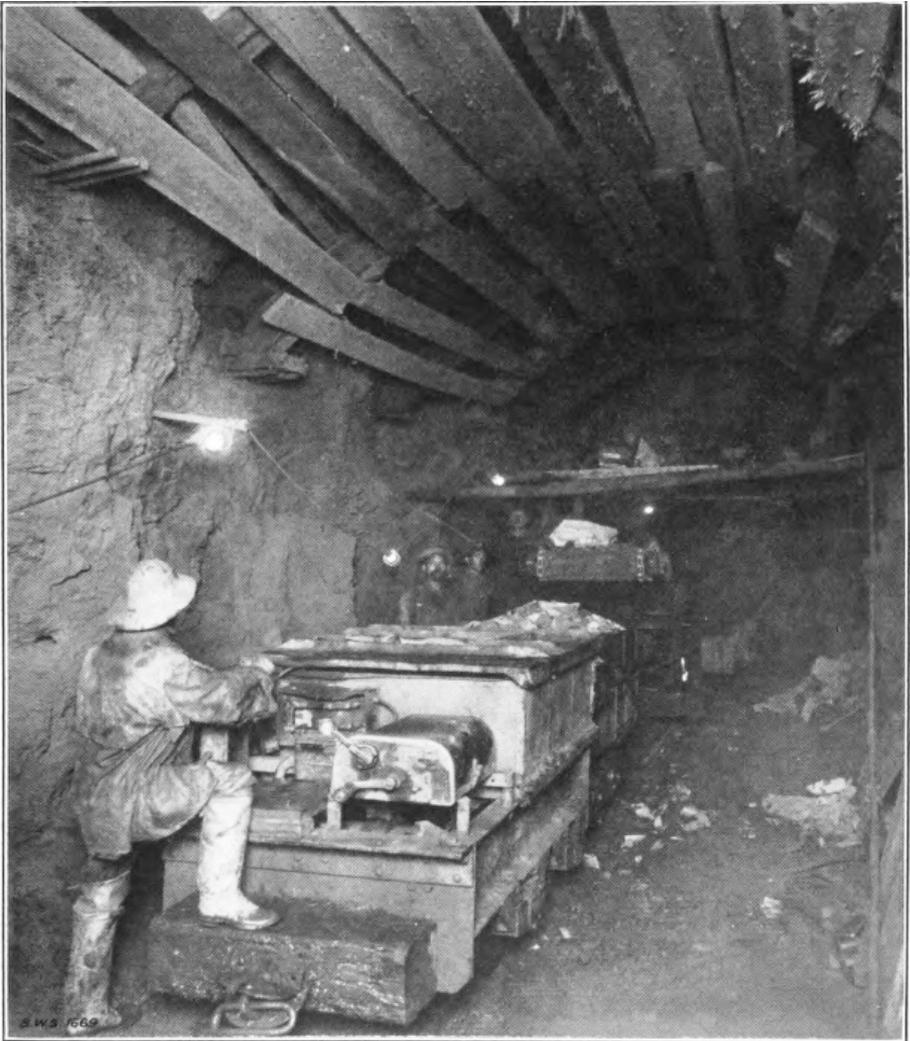


The infrastructure above shaft 4 was duplicated above each of the shafts. The tall structure is the head frame above the shaft, used to transport sandhogs to the work areas, to supply fresh air to the workers, and to remove displaced dirt from the tunnel. The other buildings were used for housing and management. 16th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1922)

two work areas per shaft, and detritus of the digging operation was removed. At the completion of each shaft, tunneling operations began in earnest.

* * *

The work starting in 1921 consisted almost wholly of driving the tunnel, with an average of over 5,000 linear feet—almost a mile—of tunnel driven per month. The sandhogs used electric storage-battery locomotives pulling six or seven end-dump cars, each carrying an average of one cubic yard, to move dirt and rock



Muck from the tunnel was loaded into cars and hauled to shaft 6 for removal. The platform in the background is used to place timbering. 16th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1922)



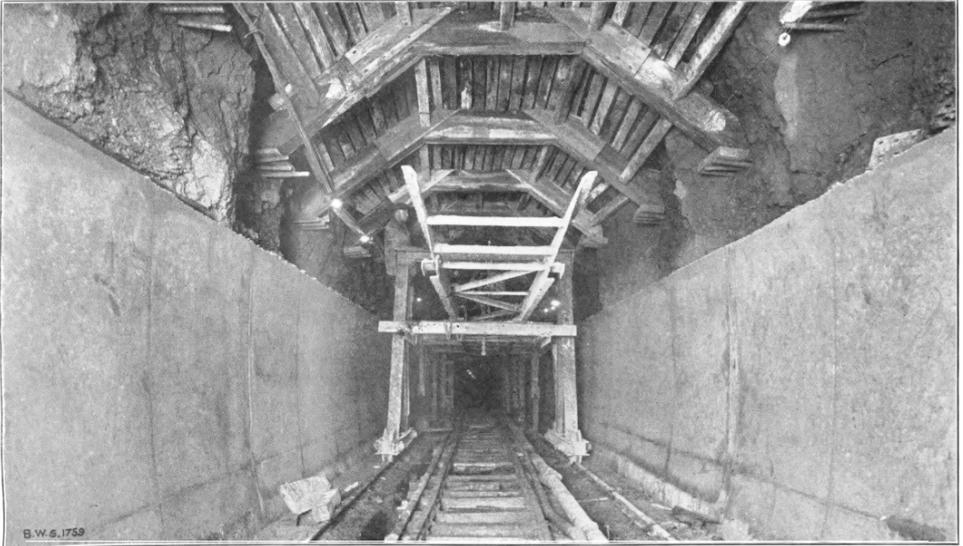
A completely dug-out and reinforced section of the tunnel below shaft 6 being prepared for concrete. 16th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1922)

from the work site to the shaft, where the cars were each carried in cages up the shaft. The cars were then pushed by hand to the tippie and dumped into side-dump cars with a capacity of approximately four cubic yards. These were taken to the dump by locomotives that moved at an average speed of five to six miles per hour. The standard equipment at the base of each shaft included four locomotives and two spare battery boxes so that replacement batteries were always charging. The two locomotives at the top of the shaft were charged between trips to the dump. Four shifts worked 24 hours per day.

Most of the tunnel required timber supports. Arched ribs, usually spaced on 7.5' centers, were formed from three 10" by 10" timbers held in place by steel pins or 3" by 10" planks. There was no hard-and-fast rule—differing soils and space required different solutions. Timbering gangs usually consisted of four to six men placing 2 to 4 ribs (15' to 30') of tunnel per 8-hour shift.

Plenums blew air through tubes to the base of the shaft and then to the work areas. Larger motors were installed as the work areas of the tunnel moved further from the shaft.

Powder magazines were placed at a distance from the head of each shaft to hold up to 10,000 pounds of dynamite; and small magazines—sufficient for a day's supply—were placed nearer each shaft to provide safe storage between loading periods. None of the magazines were heated as “modern non-freezing powder does not require protection against cold.”



Looking to the south between shafts 5 and 6, showing the completed sidewalls and permanent timbering. 17th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1923)

Concrete prepared at plants located at shafts 1, 4, 5, and 7 was delivered to the tunnel through an 8-inch vertical pipe and discharged into a hopper at the foot of the shaft. The hopper emptied the concrete into one-cubic-yard side-

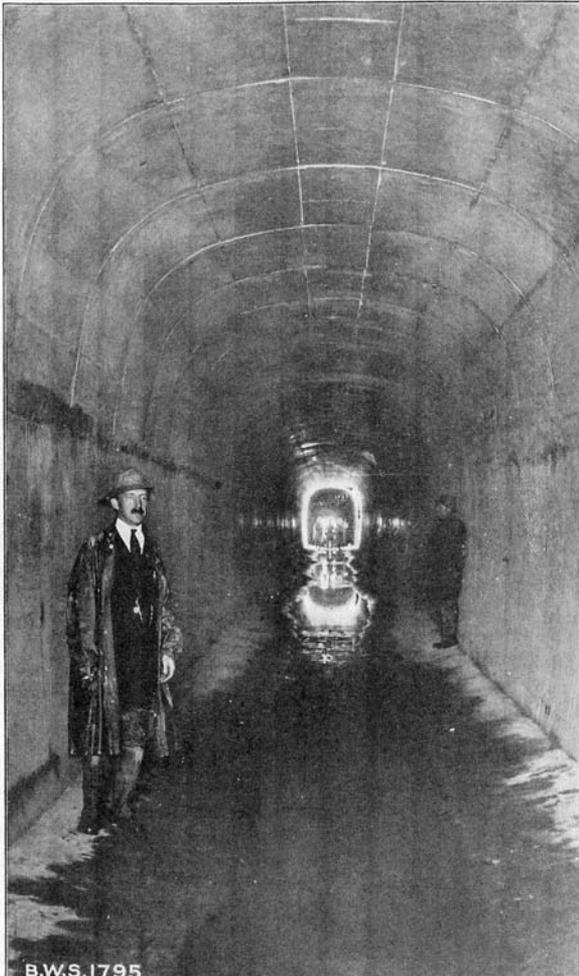


Concreted section of the tunnel about 700 feet south of shaft 5. This was the first portion of the Shandaken Tunnel completed. 17th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1923)

dump cars, which were then hauled from the shaft to the forms in six-car trains. The concrete was dumped from the cars into shallow mixing boxes placed between the track and the side-wall footing forms and was then shoveled and spaded into place.

The next issue of the newsletter will describe the gatehouse built to control water flow from the reservoir to the Shandaken Tunnel; later issues will describe the construction of the dam itself.

The Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply of the City of New York for the years 1907–1922 are now available as searchable .pdf files online at gilboahome.com. Further issues will be uploaded as they are completed.



Completed tunnel between shaft 7 and the portal just prior to the opening of the gates. 18th Annual Report of the Board of Water Supply (1/1/1924)

Stamford Mirror Recorder, January 9, 1924

WENT THROUGH TUNNEL IN CARS

Shandaken Bore Officially Inspected Monday
TRIP MADE IN FORDS

Inspection Made by Commissioners and Engineers Preliminary to Placing Tunnel in Operation—Party in Two Ford Cars Travel Underground from Allaben to Shaft 5 Westkill

It is known that Ford cars will travel through fire, snow, or water. "They have been observed while flying through the air and over fences. Evidence is now available that they function equally well 3,000 feet under ground without missing a cylinder. Is there any other test the discriminating buyer should expect?

Preliminary to placing the Shandaken tunnel in operation; by means of which the waters of the Schoharie Creek, which normally flow in a northerly direction, may be diverted so that they will flow into the Esopus Creek in an entirely opposite direction; the commissioners of the Board of Water Supply, the Chief Engineer, the Consulting Engineers and the Engineers in charge of the construction of this tunnel made an official inspection on Monday, January 6, 1924.

To make this inspection expeditiously and with comfort rather unusual means were resorted to. Two Ford cars were lowered into the tunnel and met the party at the outlet end of the Shandaken tunnel near Allaben, N.Y., at which point the tunnel discharges into the Esopus Creek. The inspection party embarked in these Ford cars and proceeded northerly to Shaft 5 near Westkill, N.Y., a distance of about seven miles from the starting point. In transit, they paused beneath the highest point in the Catskill Mountain range pierced by the tunnel. The mountain at this point is 3,210 ft. above sea level and 2,210 ft. above the tunnel. At Shaft 5 facilities were provided for hoisting the Ford cars so that they stood on end, were then pivoted and their direction reversed. After singing a few songs and drinking the health of the enterprise in Catskill Mountain water, which had made the trip to the city and back again, the party reembarked and returned to the place of beginning. Luncheon was served at Phoenicia.

The day's experience was another indication that anything can be done with a Ford car.

MY ADVENTURES DRIVING

The Red Ball Express

Art Van Aken

There was something rolling around under my feet. “What the hell is that?” Whatever it was, it was getting between my feet and the pedals, a big problem if I had to shift gears or slam on the brakes. Dawn was finally breaking and I could see the object rolling around the cab of my truck—a thermite bomb! It had become detached from my steering column, and was there to prevent my vehicle from being captured by the enemy. This little bomb had enough heat to melt my truck down to a pile of slag. I really should stop and secure the bomb.

But I didn’t stop. I couldn’t stop; because it was the summer of ’44, and I was driving across France on the Red Ball Express.

Just months before, I had been living on my folks’ farm in upstate New York. I did my basic at Fort Lewis, Washington, and then learned how to drive a military truck in the high desert of eastern Oregon, a vast wilderness roughly the size of New York State. We trained here because at the time the Military High Command thought we would be shipped to North Africa.

But the war wrapped up in the desert of North Africa, so my outfit moved to Camp Roberts, California, to prepare for the Italian campaign, where there was plenty of mud. Suddenly my outfit got the call. We were not going to Italy. There was a much bigger surprise waiting for us. We were headed to Camp Miles Standish in Boston, where a Liberty ship was waiting for us.

My outfit was the 3954th Gas Supply Company and consisted of 120 men. We were well trained for our mission, between the desert of Oregon and the hills and mud in California.

My first ocean-going cruise was on a Liberty ship, and I have to say it really was not too much fun. The ship bobbed around like a cork in that stormy North Atlantic, so most of the other fellas and I spent the time hanging over the rail, first wishing we wouldn’t get sick, and then wishing we would spot land, but the motion of the ship never stopped.

We finally got to England, where our trucks were being prepared and loaded to follow the Normandy Invasion into France. My truck was a GMC CCKW-353 6×6, one of the finest vehicles to come out of Detroit during the war. The Germans made some fine weapons, but we had the trucks. My truck had to be outfitted with some waterproofing equipment, so when we splashed ashore on Omaha Beach we wouldn’t stall out in the high surf. In addition to the full truckload of cans of gas, we each pulled a G-518 trailer, also overloaded with gas.

We drove out of the landing craft through the high surf on Omaha Beach—everywhere there were gruesome remnants of the fierce battle that had raged there. A crude road had been built up the steep hill that overlooked the beach. We had been ordered to use first gear, low range for the climb, as a mishap here would have jeopardized the entire operation.

We all made it to the top of the hill, but there was no place to go. The tanks were all stopped at the hedgerows. We had to wait it out with our camouflaged trucks; the breakout could come at any moment. The following nights were rather noisy; anti-aircraft guns blasting away and little bits of metal raining on my helmet.

Then we got the word: “Operation Cobra” had begun. General Patton had rounded up his men, tanks, and trucks and was advancing at tremendous speed toward the rapidly retreating enemy. Soon we could not keep up with supplies; the combat units were running out of ammo and food. Also the M26 heavy tank was quite a thirsty animal, sucking up gas at about 1 gallon per mile. A better system was needed to get supplies quickly to the front. So the Red Ball Express was born.

A dedicated supply route was organized, with nearly 6,000 trucks carrying supplies over narrow, well-marked roads. The condition of the roads was horrible; they were better suited for ox-drawn carts. There was a one-way road to the advancing Army units and a one-way return route. Only Red Ball Trucks would be allowed to use these roads. We were able to scrape up enough trucks, but not enough trained drivers. Noncombat units were stripped of men who became truck drivers. Some of these fellas had never even driven a car before so the number of accidents from rookie drivers was not surprising. It was speculated that they wrecked or disabled more trucks than the enemy! The roadsides were littered with crashed, burned, and abandoned vehicles hastily pushed out of the way. Many were enemy, but many were ours.

My outfit, the 3954th Gas Supply Company, was up to the challenge thanks to the months of training we had received, but it was still a daunting task. Driving thirty or more hours without sleep in blackout conditions at high speeds on narrow, battle-scarred roads carrying a cargo of gasoline does not exactly increase your life expectancy.

The biggest hazard was falling asleep, your vehicle drifting off the road and into a tree, and being consumed in a big fireball. Pulling off to the side of the road was also hazardous. The Germans loved mines and left plenty behind. I had always been blessed with the ability to stay awake for long periods of time, but after thirty hours of driving, I did have one incident of dozing off behind the wheel. It was only for a few seconds, but as I awoke I felt like I was driving over a cliff! I slammed on the brakes and slid, just missing a tree. Sometimes my

GMC would quit from mud clogging the exhaust pipe as we had to drive off the road to avoid debris or huge bomb craters.

There was not much time for sightseeing as I drove through the French countryside. Occasionally you would see where a German Tiger tank had ambushed a column of American tanks and half-tracks, meeting its own demise from an airstrike. Once we had stopped for a chow break and my buddy Don yelled “look at that!” I observed a small German tank by the side of the road—the turret was rotating slowly toward us! It was just some French kids playing, but it gave us quite a scare. At night, the sky would light up from artillery fire, accented by the red glow on the horizon of burning French villages.

We were told that we controlled the air, but occasionally we would pass by some of our trucks that had been strafed by the Luftwaffe. We were not allowed to stop for anything or anybody—medics and MPs would take care of it.

Dining was never a formal affair; if you wanted a hot meal, fill a helmet with sand, oil, and gasoline, bury your cans of food in it, and light it up. Or put some C-rations on your exhaust manifold as you are driving. It was a rare occasion when I could sleep in a bed; just stopping by the side of the road and slumping over the wheel was a real pleasure. Always had to be very careful where you parked; one of those anti-tank mines could really mess up your day.

It was stylish to drape your truck with captured enemy equipment—machine gun belts, gas masks, and helmets with insignia were specially prized. My truck became overloaded with German equipment—there was just so much of it lying around.

My route would start at the supply depot. I helped load my own truck with a group of guys, as fast as possible, more than 200 5-gallon G.I. gas cans. The American design was an improvement over the German “jerry can.” We improved the spout so you could pour it in a vehicle’s gas tank without spilling it all over the vehicle or yourself. I pick up one of them now and I have to grunt—it did not seem that heavy when I was 19. Then it was up to the front on the Red Ball, driving as fast as possible. We unloaded the gas, sometimes



Art Van Aken in Antwerp, Belgium during WWII, in 1944. Here he poses with a pretty friend and an International M426 gas tanker. He was 19, and in his glory! He's now 85, and is still a truck lover.



The masthead of a certification of appreciation from the people of Antwerp to PFC Arthur G. Van Aken and the 3954th Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company: “in appreciation of, and as a token of gratitude for, his work in the Port of Antwerp during the one hundred seventy five days of continuous enemy air and V-weapon attacks between October 7, 1944 and March 30, 1945.”

with the help of POWs. Then a quick turnaround back to the supply depot with a load of empties or a truckload of POWs. It was great to see how their faces fell when they saw the mammoth size of our supply depots—that’s when they knew that the war was lost.

As we got closer to Paris, I finally got to meet some of the pretty French gals I had heard so much about. Fraternizing took on a whole new meaning! On one occasion I drove my truck into a small village that had not suffered much damage from the war. I bought a long loaf of bread which was delicious—I had never tasted anything like that before! The local folks told me in broken English that a detachment of the Boche [Germans] had just left—they only had been gone about an hour! I wasted no time in getting back to my outfit. At this stage the war was moving so fast that many small pockets of German troops had been left behind. It was very lucky for me that we did not become better acquainted.

Soon my outfit was detached from the Red Ball and sent to the Port of Antwerp in Belgium, where we faced some new hazards—V-1 and V-2 rocket bombs—but that is another story.

For someone who loves trucks as much as I do, this was an adventure of a lifetime. I survived due to a combination of skill, training, and good luck. Some of my friends did not fare so well—they are still in France, in a field of white crosses.

It has been over 66 years, but I can still can smell the gas and hear the rumble of trucks, as I did my part to win the war, driving on the Red Ball Express.



Art VanAken

Gilboa Museum 2011 Season

Kristen Wyckoff

We had exciting times at the museum this summer—not only a great exhibit of Old Time Music but also the new fossils donated by the DEP.

The open house on July 10th was a spectacular day—lots of sunshine—a little hot, but no rain in sight—and well attended by over 130 people!

Linda Hernick and paleobotany technician Frank Manolini from the NY State Museum were here, and Dr. William Stein from Binghamton University told us about the new fossils found in Gilboa. These three people were on the teams that discovered the fossilized tree-with-crown in Conesville in 2005 *and* the new fossils at the Gilboa dam reconstruction in 2010. They were also delighted to examine our *other* new fossils that had been found in the Oneonta quarry and now on display outside the Juried Memorial Barn.

I know everyone enjoyed Hilt Kelly and the Sidekicks, and thanks to them for giving us such a wonderful time!

Thanks to all those who brought refreshments to the open house and who staffed the museum and gift shop—we really appreciate it.

The museum will be open on Columbus Day weekend (October 8–9), and the Old Time Music exhibit will be maintained through the end of October—if you have company or want a private tour, please get in touch with one of the tour guides or Kristen Wyckoff at 607 588-9413.

School groups are especially welcome *at any and all times*.

THEY LIVED IN THESE HILLS

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

You can help on this: please suggest people and events that should be included, and you might also want to send your written experiences to be published anonymously in this series.

As you can see below, we also are interested in reproducing photographs of interest showing the lifestyles of earlier times. Let us borrow your photos to scan, and we will return them promptly with digital files that you can then have “developed” at local stores like RiteAid or Walmart.

Please give us (email, write, or phone) your comments and contributions: gerrys@gilboahome.com; GHS Newsletter, 152 Starheim Road, Stamford, NY 12167; fax 815 346-5272; or phone 607 652-2665/866 652-2665.



Rich Lewis representing the Conesville-Gilboa Rod and Gun Club in a Schoharie parade in the early 1930s fishing on the bed of Clifton Hubbard's Dodge truck. Photo by Clifton Hubbard courtesy of Laverne Hubbard.

Wally Van Houten (1926–2007)

Good teachers, like other good professionals, truly are “born, not made.” And Wallace “Wally” Van Houten of Middleburgh Central School was a *good* teacher.

In fact, he was the best, at least for me. Practically paralyzed by shyness as I was in high school in the late 1960s, I doubt that Wally took any notice of me—just another awkward freshman in the earth science class. But *he* stood out in every way.

He was a big man, taller and more robust than most of the male teachers in Middleburgh at the time. He was nice to everyone but commanded respect; he showed no favoritism among his students and brooked no classroom shenanigans. He dressed conservatively. His simple homemade ties clasped in place by a Schoharie valley projectile point, probably plucked from his own plowed field beneath Vroman’s Nose, proclaimed his individuality. Intuitively, I knew that Wally was a person who went his own way and this was, to me, a thrilling concept.

I have a vivid memory of an October evening in the backyard of the Van Houten home. We were studying planets and their orbits, and a hobby-type telescope was set up to see, first hand, Saturn’s rings and the red hue of Mars. I was thrilled! Was all of high school science going to be like this? Indeed, all of *Wally’s* science would be like this.

The following spring we explored Thacher Park, where he introduced us to fossils and stratigraphy. Then it was a Saturday spent in the damp, dark, and mystery of Clarksville cave. The best field trip of all was a visit to the New York

Old Time Music

Almost 100 years ago, Emelyn E. Gardner came to Gilboa and Conesville to learn about their folklore and songs. During the summers of 1912–1918, Gardner travelled our area and collected legends, tales, songs, games, riddles, and superstitions.

Gardner’s study, *Folklore of the Schoharie Hills*, showed that our local culture was drawn from the same German, Dutch, English, Irish, Scots, and African-American influences that appear in Appalachia. Please join Rena Kotersky (a music supervisor for TV documentaries on PBS & HBO) at our September meeting for a discussion of Emelyn Gardner and the songs she heard.

Wednesday, September 21, 2011 at 7:00 P.M.

Gilboa Town Hall

Please carpool a member or bring a friend!

State Museum. This was the old museum (in the many-pillared state education building on Washington Avenue in Albany) where, when the elevator door opened on the fifth floor, one stepped into the startling near-reality of a Devonian forest. I was familiar with the fossil tree stumps at Gilboa from Sunday afternoon drives with my family. But there in the museum's reconstructed forest display the murkiness of my understanding became clear. It was a defining day; the image of that forest and Wally's enthusiastic elucidation of its significance have stayed with me ever since.

As a high school sophomore, biology was the next science course in the Regents sequence and once again Wally was my teacher. Field trips did not play a part in this study but the meticulous journeys we made through the "Five Kingdoms" of life in the lab more than made up for it.

Along the way, however, I became derailed by a serious gymnastics accident resulting in six weeks in the hospital followed by several more weeks of recovery at home. While all of my teachers were kind, considerate, and made an effort to help me keep up with classes, Wally was the best. He showed up at the hospital with a box containing a film strip projector and a dozen film strips covering the remaining topics in our biology course. I was amazed that I was being entrusted with these seemingly important learning tools—stuff we used in class—and spent many hours flat on my back studying the film strips that I projected onto the ceiling of my room. It was a great way to learn the material without having to rely on a textbook, and ultimately I passed the exam with flying colors. Sadly, my adventures with Wally ended after sophomore year; remaining science courses were taught by other teachers.

Once in a semi-serious moment, comedienne Lily Tomlin remarked "I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework." Wally Van Houten *always* gave me, and all of his students, *so much more* to take home and think about than just homework!

George C. Cook (1888–1954)

George C. Cook was known as "Cookie." He was a carpenter, but soon started a store in Conesville. This was a real *general* store, supplying the neighborhood with a broad range of groceries, shoes and clothing, etc.

In my recollection, all Cookie's customers had an account with him and they seemed to make all of their purchases on credit. He kept a running total of all the things they had purchased in a small book—he must have had hundreds of these ledgers—behind the counter. Most people would pay when they received income, and he never shut them off if they ran into hard times. He gave the children candy bars when their parents paid their bills. It's no wonder that

Cookie was considered an area treasure, especially in the years of the Great Depression and W.W. II.

It was a delight to see him in operation. In the winter, all the locals would sit around the potbellied stove and talk about the local gossip; during the summer, the local gossip might well be carried out on the porch.

George married Ina Jackson who lived just across the street from the store. I believe this was in 1948, and people met in front of the couple's home for what locals called a "horning." At least a hundred or more people met there in the middle of the night, all blowing the horns of their automobiles. He was awakened and came across the street and opened up his store. He gave the men cigars and the kids candy.

He was indeed a piece of Americana. There must be people around who still remember him and could add to this.

Gilboan Democrats (1930s–1950s)

There were three polling places in the town of Gilboa during 1930s and '40s: the one-room schoolhouse near Route 23 in South Gilboa, the town hall on old Stryker Road, and the Jackson law office in Mackey on Mace Road.

The school in South Gilboa is still there—the Forks-in-the-Road schoolhouse. The town hall (and its next-door neighbor, the United Methodist Church) were moved out of the floodplain up Route 990V: the town hall is the home of the Gilboa Historical Society's museum, and the church again serves the parishioners from the top of that hill. The law office was also moved, and is now on display at the Old Stone Fort complex in Schoharie.

Party politics in the town of Gilboa has remained much the same over many decades, with only a few Democrats winning office, most as a result of the Democratic sweep of 1933: Democrats Elmer Hubbard, supervisor; Sidney Keyser, justice; Emmet Becker, assessor; and Maurice Hager, collector all won.

The next Democrat to win was in 1943 when Clifton Hubbard won the office of superintendent of highways, defeating the incumbent superintendent Louis Kingsley. Hubbard won again in 1945, but in 1947, Emmett Souer (brother of Jesse Hamilton, a member of the State Republican Committee) was nominated to run on the Republican ticket. The result was a tie, with each candidate receiving 257 votes. This was resolved with the compromise that Hubbard would continue for the first year of the two-year term, when Souer would be named highway superintendent for the second.

After this election I believe the only other Democrat to be elected in Gilboa was James Lafferty to the position of town justice in 1956.

A WEST CONESVILLE HISTORY

1973 Interview with Paul Stryker

Beatrice Mattice

I interviewed Paul Stryker in 1973 at his home in West Conesville when he was 81 years old. He and his wife, Nina, had been married for 60 years, and both lived many more years.

Strykersville in the Nineteenth Century

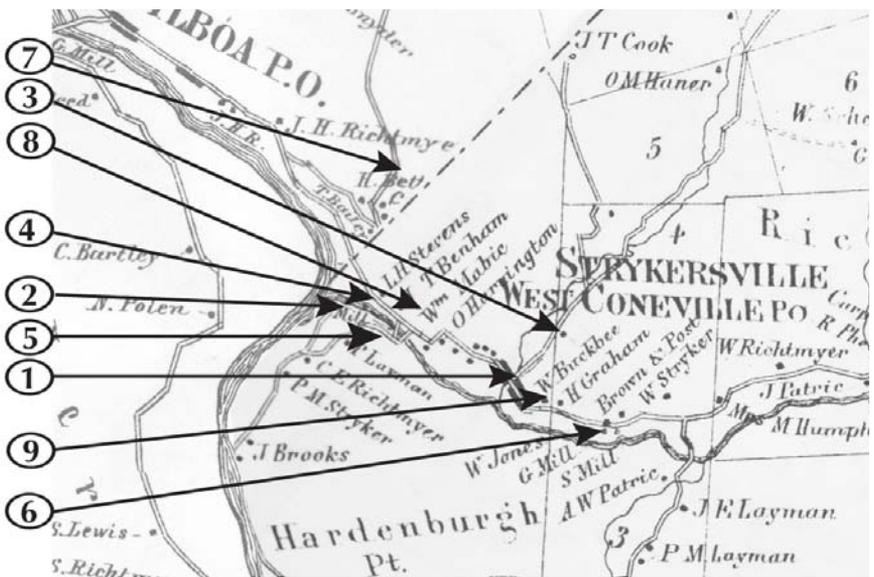
The Strykers were Hollanders who migrated to an area that came to be known as Strykersville ①, and Barent Stryker is said to have built the first mill in town, at the mouth of the narrow gorge above the falls. Many nice big trees were here, and they could be used for the hemlock bark, so sons of the original settlers, Barent W. and Peter M. Stryker, built a tannery at the same place in 1830 ②. Paul said this was a tannery and a knitting mill. A freshet washed out the mill dam and that really hurt the community. The Strykers made money in the tanneries and sold the leather. They must have been trained in tanning before they came to this country.

A cider mill was run by Elijah Morse and was up across from Mike Flores's house, up Bull Hill Road just before Briggs Road ③. In the fall of the year people from far and near would get up before daylight and start lining up way down by the bridge with their wagons full of apples. At noontime the Morses would bring a wagonload of hay and feed for all the horses that were waiting. Lanterns would be hung up and cider would be made all night.

The Stevens sawmill was east of the Waterfall House, at the top of the falls ④. A bridge there crossed the Manorkill and the road turned to the right, down around the rocks and on to Prattsville ⑤. The hill was so very steep. The Mattson house was built later by Ab Clark, and another bridge was built down there that lasted until the reservoir was built in the 1920s. Another sawmill was back of the village, back of Potters (at that time) on the other side of the Manorkill ⑥.

There once was a road up from Kenny Clark's, up around Stevens Rocks, and it came out near the Gilboa Cemetery ⑦. Paul can remember going with his mother in a buckboard wagon to visit Aunt Ted who lived in Flat Creek, and they traveled by this old road. He can remember they had some pumpkins in the back of the buckboard wagon and one rolled off and it rolled and rolled and rolled, because the road was so steep. Paul was just a little fellow at the time.

East of the village, across from the present-day (2011) retaining wall on 990V, was a grist mill ⑧.



Strykersville, now known as West Conesville, is at the intersection of State Route 990V and Bull Hill Road ①. Most of the locations mentioned by Paul are located right around this intersection. Other locations have callouts in the transcript of the interview. Map adapted from Beers Atlas 1866.

[Many of the following locations are in the hamlet of Strykersville ①.]

There was a dam on the stream just after the turn on Bull Hill Road. This dam furnished power for a small water wheel for a cabinet shop. This building is the present-day (2011) Masonic Hall. Addy Jones and George Jones, his son, made hand sleighs, furniture, repaired furniture, chairs. Stryker had a set of rocking horses made there. Later, Ed Brown came from over the mountain, and he was an undertaker and cabinetmaker at this location. Shortly after the original dam went out or something happened, Brown bought the first gas engine, an “Olds,” to power the cabinet shop.

Harvey Davis’s house [2011 Jeffrey Laban] was moved up from Old Gilboa in the 1920s. It was built by Al Layman in Gilboa. A man named Cornell helped Harvey move it. Cornell later had refrigeration sales and service in Oneonta. This house was the only house moved from Old Gilboa.

Emory Stevens owned the farm opposite the Waterfall House ⑧. The house, formerly Dan O’Brien’s, was demolished a few years ago. Stevens was State Assemblyman at one time. Luman Miller’s father, Billy Miller, married the daughter of Emory Stevens. Then the Stevens farm was sold to Rene Brownell. In the 1940s it was sold to Franklin Hess for \$3,300.

Dr. J. T. Benham was a doctor in this community. He would always go when needed. A lot of people owed him money but he always went, and he died a very poor man. [In this 1866 map, a J. T. Benham lived opposite the turnoff to Prattsville ⑧. By Paul's time, his place was where . . .] Will Fancher lives now [2011 this house recently renovated with stonework on the front] ⑨. He was not a big man. Dr. Benham was always nice to young Paul Stryker. He had all the kids in the village scared to death! He would start feeling in his pocket for a jackknife and say, "G.. d.. you, I'll bleed you." He brought Paul Stryker into the world.

Some Buildings of West Conesville

West Conesville School—Old Simeon Richtmyer lived in town and he told Paul various things. At one time the oldest schoolhouse just had boards you sat on all around the schoolhouse. 128 children went to school in West Conesville. The original schoolhouse burned, and they then put up this new one, that Clayton Jackson made over into a house. It was in the same place as the original schoolhouse. A 1907 West Conesville school booklet lists students: Mary Brown, Paul Stryker, Gene Perry, Hazel Myers, Otis Blodgett, Everett Pangman, Milton Pangman, Julia Stevens, Rufus Martin, Maggie Bartley, Marie Stevens, Katherine Stevens, Paul Myers and Emma Couchman. Celia May Reside was the teacher; C. K. Perry, trustee; E. J. Morse was clerk; and A. M. Richmond was collector [2011 unknown owner of house, on Bull Hill Road by the cemetery].

Church—Paul's great-grandfather donated the land and the Methodist Church was built in 1832. The first preacher was a circuit rider, rode horses from one place to another. One preacher was John Bangs. He had a big family, hard

Around Our Neighborhood

Gilboa Museum: Open Columbus Day weekend 12–4 or by appointment (607 588-9413)

Stone Fort Days: October 8 & 9, America's 1776 Pro-Democracy Uprising with historic re-enactments, demonstrations, artisans and crafts, food from Tory Tavern, twilight skirmish, Saturday night dance. Adults \$7.00, students 17 and under free! Old Stone Fort Museum, 145 Fort Road, Schoharie, NY 12157, 518.295.7192, www.TheOldStoneFort.org

Best House Museum: Open Thursdays thru October, 10 AM–3 PM, and by appointment: 1568 Clauverwie, Middleburgh, NY 12122 (just east of the Middleburgh School), 518-827-4239, 518-827-5142

Zadock Pratt Museum: P.O. Box 333, Main Street, Prattsville NY 12468 Sat. & Sun. 11 AM–4 PM, large groups by appointment. 518-299-3395

going, the only pay that he had was whatever the church collection was. He married some woman from over the mountain. [This church merged with Conesville in 1963 and is now a residence.]

Store—There once was a store and post office run by Mary Morse in the 1800s. It was the house this side of Reynolds'. The store where Guy Merwin lives now [2011 Clark] once sat across the creek next to the brick house and Stryker ran it. It was moved across the creek on skids.

Brick House—When the brick house was being built by the Strykers, the brick was drawn in with three-horse teams. His great-grandfather Stryker lived where Potter's live now [1973]. The Potter house was one of the oldest houses in the village [2010 this house may have been demolished a few years ago].

Hotel—There was a hotel, a dandy little hotel, where Florence Brandow lives [1973]. It was a nice little hotel. When John VanValkenburg operated the hotel, it burned one Thursday morning about 3 o'clock in 1900. He remembers hearing that a Haskin once owned it. And, then the grist mill burned. Stryker can remember a man by the name of Lawyer who ran the hotel at one time. He was a one-legged man and he was a barber. The Lawyers drifted around, shortly after that to Gilboa, then over the mountain. The Lawyers ran this hotel when Paul was a little fellow. He was a small child, he can remember. There was a pond this side of Wickerts (where Richard Murphy lived in the 1990s). He used to go up there and catch frogs. Could sell frogs legs at the hotel for 2 cents a saddle. That pond was quite a deep pond, 5 or 6 feet deep. Floods filled it in with dirt.

Life Experiences in Early West Conesville

Mail Route—The local post office closed in 1914. When the Rural Free Delivery (RFD) started, Paul Stryker was one of the early mailmen, just after he and Nina were married. It paid \$100 a month and he had to drive it with a horse or a team, and in the winter with a cutter. Mr. Baker was postmaster in Gilboa then. \$100 didn't seem like enough money because you had to feed the horse and like that. Cecil Mackey drove afterward, then Art Davis and Bob Fancher. You would start out from Gilboa at 10:30 and it would sometimes be dark before you got home. In the winter it would be real bad at a place above Ken DeWitt's [above Manor-kill]. You had to get through with the mail no matter what the weather was.

State Road—The first state road went through here in 1913.

Peddlers—The first peddlers would walk and carry a pack on their back. They would have combs, handkerchiefs, curling irons, hairpins, safety pins, lace, and shoe strings. You would wonder how they could carry the amount of weight. After the peddlers made enough money, they would get a wagon and they would carry tinware and various things.

People were really glad when they started to carry tinware. The people would save rags, always had a rag bag, and they would exchange the rags with the tin peddler for tinware. They had a guy out of Oneonta and his wife was named Mary. She was jolly and always laughing. They would come here and he would stay by the church, and she would peddle the village because the people didn't like him as well as her. After a while they had a store in Oneonta. His name was Joe Ferris. Paul thought they stayed overnight with his family. Sometimes they stayed with Wilson Finsone.

Entertainment—Kissing bees. The neighborhood young people would play “drop the handkerchief,” post office, kissing games—and they would have apples, popcorn and cider. Another entertainment was church donation suppers. Square dances were held at people's houses. Paul's father would play the accordion. Henry Bartley would call off, and Harter Brandow would play the organ. They would usually have two sets of square dancing. Ball games were held on Stubbie's Flats across of Jake Laban's and sometimes if the hay wasn't cut or something, they would play across from Mrs. Wickert's [2010 Ron Vroman's].

West Conesville Village—During Paul Stryker's youth, A. M. Richmond had lived where Emerson Mead lived in 1973; the Stevens family lived where Kenneth Merwin lived (1973); and the Reside family lived where the Wheelocks lived (1973).

Charlie Story lived over in Huntersfield. Charlie had married a Martin woman after his wife died, and Rufus Martin lived there with him. There was a bridge across the Manorkill Creek near Bradley Stewart's barn (1973), and Rufus would come down the mountain and cross that bridge to attend church here. Coral Couchman was a blacksmith in West Conesville.

Win Brink lived on the corner of Leslie Buel's (Pangman Road). Had a big family. Lou Case in Ashland married a daughter of Brink. Ernest Brink of West Durham was a relative of Olive Makely. Win Brink would work around by the day, paid 50 cents a day as a laborer, and he made a living. Usually people had a pig, a garden and a beef. They would bring up a family and wouldn't have to have help to do it. They had maple sugar. Flour you had to buy. Buckwheat and rye they took to the grist [gristmill] to grind. Frank Brown above Gilboa had a gristmill and one was here in West Conesville.

Telephone Line—Sidney Rivenburgh started the telephone line from Gilboa. Old Harter Brandow and his father [Paul's father] worked on the line. It cost \$1 a month for the telephone from Gilboa to Manorkill. Sid and Pa did all the climbing on the poles. He would say it was 70 years ago (about 1903).

Radio—He remembers their first radio so well. Edsal Fancher rented rooms when Paul and Nina lived where Les Buel lives. Edsal built their first radio. It

cost \$12 for two tubes. They could get *Paul Little*, the *Pioneer Wagon*, and western stations just as good. The radio had head phones. You had to be just as quiet. Nina remembered how quiet she had to be.

Village name—The name of the village of West Conesville was formerly Strykersville. It seems there was another Strykersville in New York State that was bigger and had more population. To save confusion with the mail when this post office was established in 1857, the name was changed to West Conesville. Paul is not at all certain about this, but this is the way he recalls hearing about it.

Mr. Stryker said people are for themselves today. It used to be if people had hard luck, the neighbors would pitch in and help. Like, if a farmer was sick, all the men around would get together and get his hay in. “Now the big fish are eating the little fish.”



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.

“Wildlife. How can I help you?” The caller says “I have a bear problem.”

This is a problem that wildlife technicians and biologists deal with all over the state. The black bear is New York's second largest land mammal (the largest is the moose), and my DEC office receives nearly 200 black bear calls annually.

Once thought to inhabit only large forests, over the past two decades black bears have been expanding their range and can now be found in a variety of habitats. As bear populations have increased during the last few decades, so too has the need to address bear questions increased.

Josh Choquette of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will discuss the interactions between humans and bears—in addition to defining the “where” and “how many,” Josh will help people to better appreciate, understand, and coexist with bears.

Wednesday, October 19, 2011 at 7 PM
Gilboa Town Hall
Please carpool a member or bring a friend!

New York Wildlife Rescue Center Northeast Llama Rescue

These two rescue centers at Red Maple Farm will be the focus of our November program at the Gilboa Historical Society meeting. Director Wes Laraway will talk about what he does at his Middleburgh animal rescue facility—known nationwide for domestic, exotic and wild animal rescues.

Wes is also the teacher of the Schoharie County History Class at Middleburgh High School, and cleared and maintains the Middleburgh Negro Cemetery with his students.

This will be one of the few programs at the Gilboa Historical Society where we bet there will be some real wild animals!!!!!!

**Put it on your calendar. Bring the kids.
Carpool those who do not like to drive after sunset.
Wednesday, November 16, 2011 at 7 PM
Gilboa Town Hall
Please carpool a member or bring a friend!**

Rescue Center Rescue

A rescue center can always use canned cat food for a large spectrum of species during the winter, but the most flexible donation is a gift certificate to Crewell Feed Supply that regularly supplies feed for the rescue center.

Please bring a donation to the November meeting or purchase a Crewell Supply gift certificate. You can purchase the certificate through the historical society board or directly with Amy at Crewell Feed Supply, 518-827-5962.

Please look at, and promote, the center's website—where you are free to copy any of the photos or written information from the website/blog.

www.redmaplefarm.net

**Please visit the site and plan to contribute feed
before the November 16 meeting**

All Gilboa Historical Society Newsletters are available free at
<http://www.gilboahome.com/>.
Email this address to friends & family.

TOWN OF CARLISLE CO-HISTORIANS

Schoharie County, New York

Jacqueline Turnquist

The Town of Carlisle, although rather large in area, is small in population and limited in significant history compared with some towns. However, we did recently celebrate our 200th anniversary with an excellent history book and a fantastic 2-day celebration. It was due to this anniversary that I first formally met Ray Briggs, Sr., Town Historian, retired teacher, farmer, champion of all things “Bluebird,” and descendant of one of the town’s founding families.

Because I live in an “old” house of some historical importance, Ray visited me one day more than a year before the celebration to ask if I would be willing to write up something about the history of the house to be included in the historical booklet they were writing to coincide with the bicentennial celebration. I had no way of knowing how fateful my positive response would be. To move the story along, I said “sure,” and became heavily involved in the writing, compiling, and printing of the 350-plus page history book and participated in the celebration planning and activities. Along the way, I became good friends with Ray and was in frequent contact with him.

The folks in Carlisle really responded to the work being done for the celebration, and the book and interest in the history of Carlisle really got a boost—to the point that we began talking about starting a historical society. Again, moving the story along, we did get a historical society going and received its charter in 2008, within a year of its inception. And I was elected president.

Soon after, our town supervisor, Larry Bradt, came to me and asked if I would be interested in being co-historian, alongside Ray. I had to give this some thought. Was I being asked to replace Ray—one of the strongest advocates for the town, a life-time resident whose family was one of the first to settle here two-hundred-plus years ago, a man whose mind was full of names, places, and events of local interest? Me, who moved here only ten years before and who grew up in New England? No, I wasn’t being asked to replace him but to work with him, learn from him, help him so that when the time came for him to move on, there would be someone already in place who could continue to keep the train moving along. Still, I had to ask what my role would be. I didn’t want to be Ray’s secretary, but I would want to be working with him, learning about the history of the town, doing research, keeping the history of the town alive. I talked with Larry to determine what he saw my role as being and I spoke with Ray to be sure he was completely on board with the idea . . . and said, “Yes.”

Now, it is important to know that Ray, historian for the town, is getting on in years and although as sharp mentally as anyone around, he is slowing down physically. Despite his age, he goes full bore, attending historical society meetings, selling history books at the grocery store from the trunk of his car, working on his and his late wife's family genealogy, working on the genealogy of other local families . . . besides his active involvement and leadership in the State Bluebird Society. Keeping up with him isn't easy.

So we have been co-historians for several years now. There is sometimes a blur between the historical society and town historians—we are both involved in the two areas and there is certainly a symbiotic relationship between the two at times.

Our relationship works well for a variety of reasons and on a variety of levels. First, I have the utmost respect for Ray and for his memory and knowledge. Because his family has been a part of the town from the start and Ray has been here his whole life, he has stories, memories, and information about many different things: schools, families, the grange, weather events.

He loves history and he loves talking about the past. As a retired teacher, he has a wonderful way of imparting his knowledge and making history come alive. His interests are also broad—birds (bluebirds in particular), plants and trees, genealogy, farming, the War of 1812. He has a lot to share with me about the town, and we have gone on excursions like finding the locations of all the one-room schoolhouses and exploring the Rock House.

Obviously I can add to the equation with my somewhat-youthful energy and my familiarity with current technology. While Ray makes forays to the Old Stone Fort Library and takes extensive notes on 3 × 5 notecards, I check out things online and record information on the computer. I recently took a class on archiving images—a project I hope to get to soon. Ray has extensive manila folders and files on myriad topics.

We have worked together on several display boards we use to promote the Town of Carlisle. One features highlights from our history book and another focuses on the caves of Carlisle. We have also used a wonderful display on birds to promote birding in our community (it goes well with our annual bird tour). With his extensive experience working booths for the State Bluebird Society, Ray has a keen eye for setting up display boards that are interesting, attractive, and appealing to the eye to draw in the crowds. We have set up our display boards at both the Cobleskill/Schoharie Sunshine Fair as well as the autumn festival at the Farmers Museum in Cooperstown. The display boards are a great way to generate interest in our town and promote our history.

Unlike many towns and many town historians, our workload is rather light. We don't have any sort of "collection" of town artifacts. We don't have a

museum. We rarely get requests for genealogical information or research, although that is probably our biggest job.

We have started a library, too. The Carlisle Historical Society has purchased several books and Ray has donated some. Our hope is to allow access to the library so people can do research on their families or learn more about the town and the county.

One of the best things to happen is the building of our new town hall. Ray was instrumental in many of the design and layout points, and in providing a “Historian Office” which must be the envy of all other town historians in the county. As co-historian, I requested funds from the town to have large prints of many pictures featured in our history book. They are mounted prominently throughout our beautiful town hall and are a delight to visitors. Everyone comments on how interesting the pictures are and how much they benefit the building.

We are able to house our growing library and files in our office and we have a computer and copier donated to us by our town judge. We have a desk and a large worktable that is great for spreading out some of our projects.

Having co-historians of different generations is, I hope, beneficial to the Town of Carlisle. Part of the reason it works is because of the respect Ray and I show each other. And, we work well together—a teacher/student relationship with the benefit of his experience and my energy.

Unfortunately, as I finished writing this, Ray has moved on. He passed away last night (August 3, 2011) surrounded by his family. I will miss him, his 9:30 AM phone calls, his ideas for the historical society, his knowledge of the town, its inhabitants and its history—something I will never fully achieve.

So, this experiment of “co-historians” has come to an end . . . but I think that the essence of Ray is so strong, it will continue to guide me and other Carlisle historians. Thank you, Ray, for all that you have given me and Carlisle.



Ray Briggs (April 19, 1924–August 3, 2011) went from a Carlisle one-room school-house to BS and MS degrees from Cornell University. He and his wife had 6 children and an “appropriate” number of grands and great-grands. A teacher at Cobleskill High School for 23 years, he had many passions—the family dairy farm, Holstein breed improvement, the Schoharie Bluebird Association, and the NY State Bluebird Society. He was historian for the Town of Carlisle and a proud member of the Sons of the American Revolution.



Jacqueline Turnquist is an industrial engineer who worked for G.E. and Bassett Hospital but has “retired” to be a full-time wife and mother, a part-time teacher, treasurer for the Lawyersville Boy Scout Troop 56, a chicken/guinea hen farmer, a driver and exhibitor of a fully restored 1935 Ford 5-Window Coupe “Henry,” historian for the Town of Carlisle, and president of the Carlisle Historical Society.

EARLY MUSIC IN OUR CHURCHES

Bee Mattice

Before the days of the church organ, people memorized the old hymns. A chorister, or song leader, started the singing by using a tuning fork to find the key. Later on, very small hymnals were used that just had words. Favorites were: "Lead Kindly Light," "Sunset and Evening Star," "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown," "Glory for Me," "Blest Be the Tie," and "Abide with Me."

At the Stamford Methodist Church dedication in 1852 there was no organ, and they sang starting with the tuning fork. Many years later Mrs. Stilson donated a large cabinet organ that was used until the hand-pumped organ was purchased.

The *Prattsville News* of April 20, 1878 reported: "The Conesville Church has procured a new style organ."

Irma Griffin wrote in her 1975 *History of Roxbury* that the Roxbury Old School Baptists sang their hymns without instrumental music.

In 1937 Leo H. DeSilva told that before the Grand Gorge church organ was bought, a melodeon owned by Mrs. J. N. Wright was carried by two men to the church whenever it was needed and that Mrs. Wright played it. Another history of this church told that about the year 1882, the church acquired its first organ.

A newspaper article told this about the West Conesville, then called Strykersville, Methodist Church: The organ was bought for the church around 1900 from Mr. Peter Richtmyer by a group of young people who desired to serve the church. The *Gilboa Monitor* printed the following advertisement: "There will be a sugar party and an auction sale of ladies for supper to the highest bidder at Selon Myers' house on Wednesday evening, March 22, 1899. Proceeds to purchase an organ for the ME church at Strykersville. Everybody is invited." The young people also organized and produced an evening musical program with an admission price of 25 cents. Included among the group were Bina Swartzelder, Ida Patrie, Pagetta VanLoan, Bertha VanLoan, Gertrude VanLoan, Katie Stryker, Grace Conine, Harter Brandow, Levi Stevens, Frank Richtmyer, and Elmer Hubbard.



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MAYHAM ROCKS

Part I: The Memorial Stone

A Synopsis from Several Sources

The Mayham family's impact on the history of Schoharie County is immense, and nowhere more so than in the southern area comprising Blenheim, Gilboa, Jefferson, and Conesville.

In the early 19th century, the Mayham family farmed the land around Mayham Pond (Pine Island). According to local historian Katherine Harrington, *Mayflower* descendent John Brewster sold his mill downstream from the pond to Benjamin S. Mayham in the early 1800s. According to another local historian, Mildred Bailey, the Mayham family was also active on the school board of the Forks in the Road schoolhouse.

Grace Raymond wrote in *The Mayham Family, 1795–1950*, “On a boulder which once stood on the place, an inscription read: ‘In memory of William Mayham, his wife, Abigail Howard, and their son, Benjamin S. Mayham, who changed this valley from wilderness to paradise.’” This boulder was originally found in the Bearkill below the Mayham farmhouse.

This boulder, the Mayham Memorial Stone, was on the Mayham property when the family farm was sold. According to the Stamford *Mirror Recorder* of April 31, 1930 (courtesy of the collection of Bee Mattice), the Mayham Memorial Stone was sold to the Daughters of the American Revolution for use as a Great War Memorial.

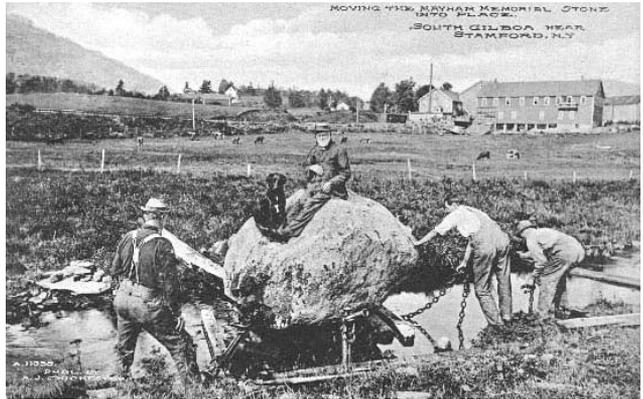
The photo to the right, from 1898, is Benjamin Stephen Mayham, his wife, Susan Wilson, and two of their grandchildren, Benjamin M. and Louise C. Hulley. “I received the photo from Joan Wakefield Richardson, daughter of Sheila Hulley (Turner) Wakefield who is the granddaughter of Louise C. Hulley and great-great granddaughter of Benjamin and Susan Mayham.” Photo courtesy of Teena Mayham Schroeder.



“Moving the Mayham Memorial Stone into place, South Gilboa near Stamford, NY. The elderly man sitting on the boulder may be Benjamin Stephen Mayham who died in 1910.”

This postcard also appears at dcnyhistory.org/mayhammemorial.html.

Photo courtesy of Teena Mayham Schroeder.



*From the April 1930 Stamford Mirror Recorder
and the collection of Bee Mattice*

D.A.R. BOULDER GOES OVER 7 TONS

Trucked from South Gilboa Section Last Week

PLAN WAR MEMORIAL

Huge Stone Formerly Was Mayham Memorial— Moved to Stamford with Consent of Daughter of Mayham Family and also of Present Owners of Former Mayham Property

The Abigail Harper chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution have been trying for the past two years to find a boulder suitable for a memorial for the past wars. It has had to do this without the aid of the State, as the State contributes only toward memorials for the Revolutionary period.

After trips to various points in this section in search of a suitable boulder, Charles Brown of South Kortright and Samuel Kasloff of town, who own the property of the late Benjamin S. Mayham at South Gilboa, solved the problem by giving to the D.A.R. the large boulder that rested near the residence on the farm. Mr. Brown and Mr. Kasloff wanted the boulder removed. One of the members of the D.A.R. wrote Mrs. Lincoln Hulley, who was the wife of the president of Stetson University at Deland, Florida, and a daughter of the late Benjamin S. Mayham, asking her permission to move the boulder and received a reply that, as the farm was out of the Mayham family, she would be glad to

have the D.A.R. have the stone. She also gave her consent to have the former inscription removed which is as follows: "In memory of William Mayham, his wife, Abigail Howard, and their son, Benjamin S. Mayham, who changed this valley 'from wilderness to paradise'." This inscription is nearly obliterated now.

The late Benjamin S. Mayham gave the contract to W. W. Hubble of Hubble's Corners to move this boulder, which weighs about 7 1/2 tons, from the riverbed about one-fifth mile from the site where he had it placed about 25 years ago. Mr. Hubbel was assisted in the work by James Foster and More Shutts of Roxbury, whose pictures appear in the accompanying cut, while Mr. Mayham is shown seated on the boulder. Several attempts were made before they were successful in moving it. It was moved at that time by a windless and horse at a cost of \$150.

The D.A.R. gave the contract to Cook & Son to move the boulder from its site at South Gilboa to the lot on the east corner of the Maselynn property, opposite the Stamford grocery. Mr. H. H. Mase wrote to the D.A.R. and gave his consent to have the stone placed there and stated that he would be glad to do anything to help so worthy a cause. Cook & Son had a special stone drag made to convey the large boulder to its present location with the aid of two large trucks as power to draw it.

The D.A.R. are grateful to C. Bathgate Becker who financed the moving of the large stone. The bronze tablet is already in possession of the D.A.R. chapter



Memorial Rock is in the northeast corner of Veterans Park, across from Ace Hardware in the Village of Stamford.

to be placed on the bolder as soon as it is ready. The dedication is planned for next spring.

The bronze tablet is 3 ft. by 2 ft. and will be inscribed as follows:

*In Memory of Our Heroic Dead
The American Creed*

I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in the republic; a sovereign nation of many sovereign states; a perfect union, one in the inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; to support its constitution; to obey its laws; to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.

Erected by the Abigail Harper chapter
of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1930.

The Gilboa Historical Society Annual Bottle Auction

The Historical Society's Annual Holiday Bottle Auction offers you a chance to help our Society, socialize with friends and neighbors, partake of great desserts, and go home with a surprise bottle of anything before the winter sets in. Remember: BYOB (not necessarily alcoholic).

And, please bring nonperishable foods for the winter food baskets.

Wednesday, December 21, 2011 at 7 PM
Gilboa Town Hall
Please carpool a member or bring a friend!

Gilboa Historical Society Museum
Open Columbus Day Weekend 12 AM—4 PM
and by appointment (607 588-9413)
Web Site OPEN 24/7 www.gilboafossils.org

MAYHAM ROCKS

Part II: The Dating Rock

A Synopsis from Several Sources

Apparently early in the family's history, there was a second stone with an imprint from the Mayham family (history dubbed it the Dating Rock).

The Stamford *Mountain Eagle* of August 6, 1985 featured a story about John Tryon, then—as now—an avid sportsman and a local history buff.

*From the August 6, 1985 Stamford Mountain Eagle
and the collection of Bee Mattice*

'DATING ROCK' FROM 18TH, 19TH CENTURY FOUND IN GILBOA

Liz Page

John Tryon of South Gilboa, who is an avid sportsman and a local history buff, rediscovered a piece of the area's history last Tuesday as he was enjoying one of his favorite sports, fishing.

Seated on a rock at Mayham's pond in South Gilboa, with the fish biting his line infrequently, he said the sun caught just right on a rock he has sat upon and cleaned his fish on many times, and he noticed there was engraving on the rock.

Abandoning his fish line for something of greater interest, he said he began to scrape at the moss which has nearly covered the rock over time. His efforts revealed four inscriptions: Abraham Monfort 1782, William Mayham 1812, William Mayham 1824, and B. S. Mayham 1848.

"Mr. Murphy (Fred P. Murphy) always said there was a rock with dates on it around here," said Tryon, recalling conversations from his boyhood days, "this must be the rock he was always talking about."

At first, Tryon said he believed it was the rock allegedly given to the D.A.R. in Stamford for use as a memorial stone in the Stamford green. Village historian Anne Willis clarified that the rock given for use as the memorial stone was the one Benjamin Mayham had pulled from the creek for use as a gravestone. His daughter gave that stone to the D.A.R.

Willis said she knew nothing about the stone which Tryon referred to as a "dating rock," apparently telling the succession of the farm well known in Benjamin Mayham's farming days.

Schoharie County historian Mildred Bailey said she was not aware of the existence of the dating rock either, although she said the name Monfort appears on headstones in the South Gilboa area and it is quite conceivable the farm at Mayham Pond was established by the Monforts.

The inscription of William Mayham coincides with the date. Benjamin Mayham was born in a one-room log cabin in the town of Jefferson. His father, William, moved his family to the farm at South Gilboa in 1926.

Benjamin built the pond with the island that local fishermen know as Mayham Pond. He was known as a prosperous and important area farmer, employing many farmhands. There was a creamery, sawmill, and gristmill at the dam, and he was known to always be the first in the area to own new inventions such as the kerosene lamp, mowing machine, hay tedder, etc.

He also sold ice to city dwellers, loaded into railroad cars near the pond. He had the first sailing vessel on the lake in 1902 and he died in 1924.

Tryon's discovery predates the Mayham history and if the inscriptions indicate the dates the farm was succeeded, it would indicate Monfort was one of the original settlers in the area. Bailey is currently researching, but agreed the date would make him one of the first settlers. She said the land would've been out of the Blenheim or Hardenburg patents.

Excited by his discovery, Tryon is interested to know the origins of the inscriptions. Abraham Monfort would have settled near the area of the Indians at a time when the gentle rolling farmland was nothing but an expanse of wilderness.

Indeed, Tryon may have uncovered an original piece of area history.

After this article was published in 1985, John Tryon received a letter from Mrs. Warren Monfort who was very interested in the story about her family's ancestral property. The Monfort family had moved westward in steps, ending as ranchers in Colorado. Her husband had repurposed the family farm into meat packing, and their son, Kenneth, took over the company in 1971. Monfort of Colorado Inc. continued to grow and purchased the local Swift and Co. packing operation in 1979.

<http://www.pineislandfarm.org/localinks/pineislandfarmhistory.html>

THE DATING ROCK, 2010

Ed Postolowski

No, this is not some magical rock that will get you a date for tonight's dance. The dating rock is a boulder excavated during the construction of Mayham Pond, and hand chisled with the names of four individuals with ties to this property, each dated like a time capsule signifying the presence of these men on our shores.

Recently our own PIF [pineislandfarm.org] member, Dean L., was working on the Mayham Pond dam after a hard rainy season revealed attention was needed. Large fill stone was dumped into the spillway to prevent further erosion.

While Dean was working he noticed a large boulder near the edge of the spillway and figured this could be used in addition to the fill stone. He was going to flip it over the edge with his backhoe, but noticed there was lettering on the surface. After further inspection, he found names and dates.

Intrigued by Dean's email of his finding, curiosity got the best of me and I had to go see it and drove up that weekend to get some photos. Always interested in the local history, I thought this would be good to share on our website. I found there were 3 names and dates.

William Mayham 1812
 William Mayham 1824
 B. S. Mayham 1848

Mayham was obviously who our lake was named after. I shared the pictures via email, and Dean told me there were actually 4 names (not 3) on the rock. He said the fourth name was the oldest and located on the left side of the rock. Oh great, I knew what that meant. It meant that curiosity would force me to make another trip up there sooner than later.



The dam and spillway looking west from South Gilboa Road; the Dating Rock is just to the right outside this picture. Photo courtesy of Gerry Stoner.

When I returned, I walked up to the rock but I couldn't see the name. I looked a bit harder, changing my angle of view to try to see it—but nothing. I opened my bottle of water, poured some over the rock, and bam! The fourth name (or should I say the first): Abraham Monfort 1782

Wow, that was exciting. I clicked away with my camera to document it.

After some research online, I was able to find out much more about the names on the rock; and after contacting the Gilboa Historical Society, found that this was a smaller sister to the larger boulder in Stamford.

As an owner of Pine Island Farm and property in Gilboa, I've always been curious of what this area was like to live in 100, 200 years ago. What was life like in this beautiful valley of the Catskill Mountains.

Well, soon after we bought here, I started receiving newsletters from the Gilboa Historical Society. They gave me great insight to the area's past. Little did I know that our very own Pine Island and Mayham Pond played a pivotal part of life back then as South Gilboa Station.



The mentor of this topic has been Teena Mayham Schroeder, who left us this last year. Teena lived most of her adult life in New Jersey: she was married, had an adult son, and worked as an accountant. She and her husband retired to the Adirondacks where she followed her passion of genealogical research and was a consultant to the NYWebRoots project. As the title of these articles say: Mayham Rocks!

We are also indebted to Bee Mattice for directing us to reprints of the Mirror Recorder and the Mountain Eagle, and to John Tryon for insights into his discovery of the Dating Rock.

Finally, thanks to Dion Hill for cleaning up around Mayham Dam and uncovering the Dating Rock; and to Edward Postolowski and the Pine Island Farm Association (pineislandfarm.org) for sharing their legacy with the Southern Schoharie community.

The Family of Henry Maham of Blenheim Hill, Schoharie County, New York (1753–1950) is a 77-page book by Grace Raymond and is available for free at www.northerncatskillhistory.com/Writing_History/200_Documents/Mayham.pdf courtesy of Teena Mayham Schroeder.

Gilboa Historical Society Donations

We are making plans to provide shade for the new fossils, plant more memorial trees this fall, and work on a structure to protect additional farm equipment that has been donated to the museum.

If you want to donate to these (or other) 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.

The name and address that we have for you appears on the reverse of this application. Please check to make sure that the information is correct, and let us know of alterations or scheduled alternative addresses.

Our membership year is the calendar year. One asterisk next to your name indicates that your individual membership is paid up for the current year; two asterisks signifies a couples/family membership; three asterisks indicates a lifetime membership.

Membership Application Form

Name: _____

Subscription format for Newsletter: Physical Electronic

Email: _____

Address:* _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

* Please specify temporary addresses in effect for our mailings in early March, June, September, and December.

† 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.

- Lifetime membership (\$100.00) \$ _____
- Family membership (\$25.00) \$ _____
- Couples membership (\$15.00) \$ _____
- Individual membership (\$10.00) \$ _____
- Senior or student membership (\$7.00) \$ _____
- Scholarship fund \$ _____
- Gilboa Historical Society *Newsletter* \$ _____
- Gilboa Historical Society Museum \$ _____
- Old Gilboa* DVD (\$19.70 total) \$ _____
- Family Letters* by N. Juried (\$8.40 total) \$ _____
- General fund \$ _____
- Memorial gifts† \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

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